**In for the Long Haul**  
by Verassi  

**Summary**

When Midoriya didn’t show up for class on Monday nobody really gave it a second thought. They should have.
Now, six weeks have passed with no clue as to where he is. When they do find him, he's been traumatized and tortured, leaving him a shell of his former self. They know it'll take a long time for him to heal, but they're determined to help him. After all, they're in it for the long haul.

**Notes**
Hi welcome to my fic~
Still can't believe I got roped into posting this, but what are friends for? Anyway, updates may be slow on this as I have the attention span of a rabbit...but updates will happen~ This first chapter is unbeta'd so I apologize for any grammar mistakes, but the rest are beta'd by the lovely Rzen who is fantastic in every aspect of the word. She does a lovely job of fixing up my three am mistakes.
When Midoriya didn’t show up for class on Monday nobody really gave it a second thought. While it was odd for Midoriya to miss class, they were sure he had a legitimate excuse. Midoriya didn’t just *not* come to class so there must be a reason for his absence. Overall, nobody was worried, they were high schoolers and everybody missed class every once in a while.

When nobody had heard from him by Monday evening things became more problematic. But it wasn’t until Tuesday morning that they knew something was wrong, very wrong.

His head hurt. He was pretty sure he had a concussion, a mild one, but a concussion nonetheless. He groaned in pain. His arms ached and he wearily sighed when he realized that they were strung up above his head by chains. He wasn’t sure how long he had been out, but based on the chafing on his wrists, it had been awhile. He noted that his legs were free, but that hardly did him any good in this position.

He was sitting against a wall made of stones that dug into his back. It was pitch black, so he couldn’t make out any details, but the damp chilliness of the air around him made him believe he was underground. There was a throbbing, pulsating buzz that irritated him, but he wasn’t sure if that was just from his head or something in the room.
He tried to change positions into something more comfortable, but was pulled back by an onslaught of dizziness. With his head reeling it was almost impossible to think, but he forced himself to breathe and just calm down. If he wanted to get out of this situation he would have to keep his head clear, or as clear as he could. He tried to think about what had happened, but everything was a foggy mess of clipped and hazy images that didn’t make sense in the context they appeared in. The last thing he remembered was walking back to the U.A. dorms from his mother’s house. He had felt another presence then…nothing. It was fuzzy.

He tried to summon One for All, but an onslaught of dizziness wracked his body, making him want to vomit. He closed his eyes and tried to focus on clearing his head.

His head grew heavy as if lead were pooling inside of it, dragging him down into the void of unconsciousness. The pull was strong and he fought against it, knowing that being caught unaware in this situation would only hurt him in the future. Unfortunately, the concussion was merciless and it ravaged his mind, forcing him into submission. His eyes slid closed and he slumped, embracing the oncoming darkness.

Far too soon, he was jerked awake by a stinging sensation. It wracked his nerves, forcing them into overdrive. His body spasmed, twitching as muscles were forced to expand and contract repeatedly without his consent. In comparison to other types of pain he has endured, this wasn’t painful so much as it left a tingling sensation all throughout his body rendering him exhausted and weak. However, as the shock continued it started to fray his nerves raw, leaving him in a numb pain that slowly evolved from bearable to excruciating.

He struggled to breath normally as the shock continued, only managing a few unsteady breathes before gasping in pain.

All too suddenly lights flooded the room, leaving him blind as his eyes forced themselves to adjust to the brightness.

There was still that incessant buzzing sound, but blearily he was able to make out a sickly sweet voice, “Oh, look. He’s awake…Ika, you can stop the shock therapy now, there will plenty of time for that later.”

All too suddenly the shocks stopped, but the lingering pain and fatigue remained, causing him to pant while taking in harsh breaths of air. He still couldn’t see very well, the harsh light sending rivulets of pain through his eyes. Everything was blurry, but he thought he made out two figures standing before him.

Someone forcibly grabbed his chin, turning his face upwards; he opened his eyes as much as he could in order to send a glare at the stranger. With that same sickly sweet voice, she purred, “Hello, Midoriya-kun~.” Her eyes were yellow orbs brimming with dark delight. “Now that you’re awake, the real fun can begin.”

It was her voice, he realized, the chipper tone that promised pain, that sent him on edge more than anything. She sounded too happy, delighted even, to be in her position. And her eyes, they were striking, poised with a playfulness that hid her killer intent. He didn’t like the giddiness she expressed and the overall daunting feeling that spread throughout him, but he refused to show his trepidation. He wouldn’t break, no matter what they did, he refused.
Inko didn’t know what to do. She had sent her baby boy home after he had come to visit for the weekend and the next thing she knew she was getting a phone call asking her the last time she had seen him. That was Monday night though, and it was nearing the weekend.

She sat on her couch, eating away her stress and watching the news. U.A. had tried to keep Izuku’s disappearance on the down-low to avoid the press and not instigate the people who took her son. She had been against this in the beginning, wanting everyone out looking for her son, but relented when Aizawa had talked to her about the potential consequences if the public caught wind of this kidnapping.

She wanted to find her son, but the implications that exposing his kidnapping might push the kidnappers to be more drastic sent her thoughts reeling. So she sat watching the news, hoping she would get the phone call telling her they found her son, but it never came.

There was a loud knock at her door. She jumped, then upon realizing what a knock at the door meant, she ran to open the door.

All Might, or rather, Toshinori stood, looking haggard, at her doorstep. He had been coming over more and more lately. Inko knew he felt guilty over her son’s disappearance, but she had insisted that it wasn’t his fault. And, really, it wasn’t. Izuku had been walking home late on Sunday because of her. She had kept him later than she should have and he had decided to walk home, saying he would be fine. He wasn’t.

“Don’t just stand there. Come in.” She ushered him in and he silently obliged. Once he was settled in

She ushered him in and he silently obliged. Once he had settled in he looked down, not able to meet Inko's eyes. Inko's sighed, "Any news?" She knew the answer, but she was still hopeful.

Toshinori met her gaze with a pain riddled look, "...No. We still have no idea as to the whereabouts of young Midoriya."

She nodded sadly, she had been expecting this, but still. She just wanted to know that her baby boy was okay. "Well," She looked at Toshinori, a spark filling her green eyes, "We just need to keep looking. I know my son, and he’s a fighter. I bet he's giving those villains that took him a run for their money as we speak." She turned her head and Toshinori could have sworn that he had seen tears glisten at the corner of her eyes.

He nodded, before verbally confirming her words, “I couldn’t have said it better myself.” He felt as if that was a lame thing to say, but at the moment he felt incredibly lame. In his current condition, there wasn’t much he was able to do besides offer comfort.

To say Ochako was worried would be the understatement of the century. She was pacing back and forth in the commons of the dorm, biting her nails, head down, as she tried to stifle her cries.

It had almost been a full week since Midoriya had gone missing and she couldn’t stand idle while he was gone. He could be hurt. Her pacing back and forth picked up speed and she started mumbling to herself. It was a habit that she unconsciously started ever since they had learned that Midoriya wasn’t just skipping class and no one actually knew where he was. Nobody blamed her for it, they were all equally as worried, save for Bakugou who just seemed angry at his disappearance.
“Uraraka.” Iida put a hand on her shoulder, stopping her in her track, “Maybe you should sit down. We’re all worried, but working yourself up over it isn’t going to help anyone.” He was trying to cover up his own worry over the situation.

“But Iida—” she cried frantically, “What if he’s hurt? What if he needs our help?”

Todoroki, who had been quiet thus far, turned to her, “Standing here, pacing and worrying over it isn’t going to help him.” His voice was deadpan, but there was a shadowed pain in his eyes, “We don’t have any leads as to where he could be and we were instructed not to leave campus.”

Ochako didn’t look convinced, “That didn’t stop you when Bakugou was taken—”

Something fierce overtook Todoroki’s eyes, “That was different,” a look almost akin to shame washed over him, “Yaoyorozu placed a tracker on one of them…We knew the general vicinity of where they had taken him. We know nothing this time.” He turned away, obviously upset with the reality of the situation.

“Deku.” Ochako looked down sullenly. She knew he was right, there was nothing they could do at the moment.

As much as they wanted to help, there was nothing they could do. For once, they were forced to leave the situation in the hands of the adults. They knew that the clock was ticking though and they didn’t know how much time they had left.

Chapter End Notes

    hope you enjoyed. :D
    until next time,
    Vera~
Safe and Sound

Chapter Summary

"Just close your eyes
The sun is going down
No one can hurt you now
Come morning light, you and I'll be safe and sound"
--Taylor Swift

Chapter Notes

first off Thank you to all who left a comment, bookmarked and left kudos. I really appreciate it. Ya'll are the best!

umm, there is a time skip here...there just wasn't enough substance for what happened in between Midoriya being captured and rescued, unless you wanted pure torture for two chapters (don't worry--there will still be plenty of that) besides, this way I can keep ya in the dark over important plot factors that play a role later on..

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It had been forty-four days. One month and two weeks. Ochako couldn’t believe it had been almost two months since Deku had gone missing, since she had last seen his smiling face. He had told her he would see her later.

Liar.

She shook her head before forcing a smile on her face as she left her dorm room. She sent a quick text to Iida saying she was ready, and would meet him in the commons before they both headed to school.

Even if they were still on U.A. grounds, since Deku had gone missing, the buddy system had been implemented for all students. Most of the students weren’t happy with the new rule, but understood the reasoning for it. Still, there were a few students who were against it completely—mainly Bakugou.

Ochako didn’t mind it as she liked the company, but she still had moments when she found it annoying. She felt bad whenever she got annoyed with it though, reminding herself why, exactly, they had had to put forth the new rule in the first place: because Deku had gone missing.

She made her way down to the common area to meet Iida. He was waiting, as always, for her by the door. She waved to him when he looked her way, “Hey, Iida, ready to go?” She didn’t wait for an answer as she started to walk towards the door.

The weather had been off and on for the past week. Yesterday had been a picture perfect day, with a clear sky and moderate winds. Today, though, the clouds loomed low, a dark presence that made itself known through low rumblings and cold drizzling rain. To Ochako, today was a perfect
representation of her inner mood, dull and lifeless.

Normally, it’d take a good five minutes to reach the school from the dorms, but with the terrible weather it only took Iida and her roughly two minutes. While they both had umbrellas, they had somehow managed to get drenched on the way to school. Ochako blamed it on the harsh wind that had whipped the ice-like rain into them. With sullen expressions etched onto their faces, they made their way to class 1-A.

Usually, one would be able to hear the antics coming from class 1-A from all the way down the hall. It was a rowdy class filled with aspiring heroes, so it wasn’t uncommon to hear them from down the hall; however, lately, their cheerful banter had withered away until an almost gloomy aura settled in the classroom.

Ochako and Iida were always early, but when they entered the classroom, there were only a handful of students missing. Ochako glanced at Deku’s desk, noting how bare and sad it looked. She missed seeing Deku in class, mumbling to himself about hero statistics and, more often than not, scribbling down notes in his messy scrawl. His continued absence was like a knife that drove itself into the very core of the class.

“Hey Iida—” Kirishima stopped when he got a good look at them. “Why are you sopping wet? Didn’t you bring an umbrella?” Kirishima took in the drenched forms of Iida and herself as they stood in the doorway.

“Ah, yes, well you see…” Iida tried, and failed to explain how the wind had rendered their rain gear useless, but Ochako tuned him out. Instead, she opted to quietly take her seat.

She didn’t like this. How could anything ever be okay if Deku wasn’t around? How could they sit here doing nothing while he was off somewhere, no doubt suffering? She felt a fierce pressure at her eyes. She blinked, willing the tears to go away. Crying wasn’t going to help anyone; crying wasn’t going to help Deku.

A tap on her shoulder caught her off guard, “Ochako-chan? Are you okay?” Tsuyu’s concerned voice brought her back to the present.

She looked up with tears brimming her brown eyes, “Y-yeah, I’m fine…just,” her gaze wandered to Deku’s desk.

Tsuyu, understanding what she meant, nodded solemnly. “You know the Pro’s are doing everything they can to find him.” She paused, before affirming her previous statement. “They will find him.”

Ochako didn’t answer, letting the silence hang between them. She knew the Pro’s were working hard to find him, but that wasn’t good enough. She didn’t need people looking, promising her they would find him. She needed them to find him.

As the rest of the students ambled into class, their usually enthusiastic personalities were subdued. The classroom, no matter how full it was in reality, felt empty.

Aizawa entered the classroom, looking worse for wear, and all eyes turned on him. He was early. That never happened. Especially as of late. Aizawa was known for being late, and ever since he had been assigned to one of the search parties looking for Deku, he had come to class even later than usual. His mood had steadily decreased with his obvious lack of sleep, but today was different. Today, he had shown up five minutes before the last bell rang.

He didn’t acknowledge the class, just walked forward with a forced calmness. He was stiff,
exhausted, even more so than usual. Everything about his demeanor spelt tension and pain, like a weight had been pressed on him that was dragging him down.

Something wasn’t right.

He was facing the class, eyes intent on glaring at everyone in the room.

No one said a word, this was unusual and so unlike their stoic teacher.

“So…” He sighed, it felt so heavy. Everyone waited with baited breath for what he had to say.

Shouta’s quirk was best suited best for stealth and search missions. Those types of things never garnered much media attention, which suited him just fine seeing as he hated to be in the public’s eye anyhow. The media only ever made things worse. They exploited every piece of information they obtained, and more often than not they ruined things. Whether that be the privacy of someone or the integrity of another, the media held no qualms stomping over people to get a good scoop. It was for that reason that Shouta considered the media to be just as much a villain as a local thief.

Midoriya’s disappearance was something that the school had tried to keep under wraps, both for the sake of the boy and for the reputation of U.A. They already had one student kidnapped during the year. The news would have a field day if they found out another had been taken, even if he hadn’t been taken from school grounds or during the school week. The media didn’t care about those details.

Shouta had thought that keeping something like this from the media was a recipe for disaster—it was bound to be found eventually. The backlash they would receive for trying to cover it up would surely destroy them.

Naomasa, a detective who was close friends with Toshinori, was able to help them keep this information from privy eyes extremely well. Shouta had been surprised at how well Naomasa had been able to help the Pro heroes in their search for Midoriya.

If it weren’t for him, they never would have gotten the location to where Midoriya was being kept.

They had only sent a few Pro’s. Sending too many would have been suspicious. The location had been too public to elicit a large scale investigation. What they had found hadn’t been a pretty sight.

Shouta had seen a lot of gruesome things in his time as a Pro hero; he had seen the worst side of humanity and it sickened him to his core, but he had always been able to maintain his composure. The breaking point for him, though, had been when it was his student who was on the receiving end of this cruelty.

Seeing Midoriya, bloodied and limp, slumped against a wall with his left arm shackled to said wall had shook him to his core. He had looked lifeless, and for a moment, Shouta wondered if he was dead, before he saw the slightest rise in his chest. In that moment, rules be damned, Shouta wanted to kill whoever had dared to harm one of his students.

They—Shouta and two other lesser known Pro heroes—had been able to secure Midoriya and had called in for backup without any issue; Midoriya had been in a near catatonic state, not reacting to any outside stimulus. It made removing him from the bonds that held him easy, but it was unnerving to think of what that meant for the boy’s mental state.
The entire ordeal had left him drained in more ways than one. He dragged a hand down his face, wearily sighing as he realized this was only the beginning.

He took out his cell phone and started making phone calls. Today was going to be a hectic day.

It hurt. Everything hurt, but it was a foggy, far away pain. Wait… pain wasn’t right. Ached was more precise, because if he thought about it, this wasn’t pain. No, he had endured the monstrosity that was actual, tangible pain and this couldn’t hold a candle to that. That had been agony, a sharp, slicing sensation that demanded his attention; Compared to that, this was more like a whimper.

Right now, he felt relatively good. Relative meaning that his mind, at the moment, wasn’t trying to split him in two with the searing, stabbing sensation he had grown accustomed to. Nor was his body boiling with a burning fire that he didn’t believe actually existed. At the moment, his mind felt listless and his body felt rather dull, as if everything were toned down, submerged in lukewarm water, leaving him with nothin but a far away ache. A low, thrumming ache that kept him grounded whilst simultaneously dragging him into the depths of his own despair.

He heard sounds and felt sensations come into being that felt out of place. Warbled, disjointed, like they were coming from underwater or far away…distorted, but painfully familiar. People were talking, mumbling about something that he felt he should know. He should know, should understand them, but they were too far away and the gray unbridled fog was drowning out their voices, leaving him to feel lost and alone. He didn’t like it. He felt trapped, stuck inside the fog of his own muddled self.

He didn’t like it.

A ghostly touch wisped throughout his body, sending chills down in tendrils. The phantom chills slowly transformed. An itch raked across his skin that slowly morphed into a burning sensation. The burning was bearable at first, steadily rising in degrees until he was thrashing, trying to escape the fire in his veins. The scorching, flaring pain was becoming too much. The pain tore at him, no longer content with being in the background of his mind. It hurt; it burned. It burned. It burned

Everything blurred in a haze of ash and smoke. It burned his eyes and he started to wheeze from the embers embedded in his lungs. It wasn’t real, he knew that, but he could feel it. He could feel everything. How could this not be real?

He was scrambling in a panicked frenzy, searching for something, anything to ease his worries. He was on fire, he could feel the heat, see the red flames, smell the smoke and ash. He heard the flickering sparks of the flames as they licked at him, savoring his anguish. It was too real to just be in his head. The smoke curled around him like a snake, squeezing the air from his lungs, crushing him. Everything was black; He was trapped by the opaque gaseous substance.

He could hear them, his friends, his mom, everyone, burning. Burning because of him. It was his fault. His fault his fault his fault. They stared at him, those eyes, demonic in their accusations. He thought he knew them. He had thought they were friendly eyes. He thought they were friends…so why? Why was it him who was burning everything? It was a trick, it had to be. There was no way he would do that. Todoroki was his friend. So, why? Why did it hurt so much to see those flames, angry and explosive, protruding from his friend’s left side.

Blackness burned the edges of his consciousness. He was scared. He wasn’t sure why, but this dreadful feeling of horror flung itself at him. Suddenly he wasn’t seeing the fire, he was staring into
the faces of his mom, and Uraraka, and Iida, and Toshinori, and… and Todoroki, but they were
disfigured.

They were melting from the fire, their skin was wax and their eyes were voids of dole nothing. They
were crying out to him, pleading for him to save them. Asking why he let this happen. Why couldn’t
he save them. They were blaming him. And He… Todoroki was laughing. His face was melting,
causing his demented smile to be all the more disturbing. His left side was a burning inferno of white
hot flames that whipped around, lashing at everything. Why was he laughing? He thought they were
friends, but his wicked grin promised only pain and torment.

Despair. This was despair. Despair despairdespair.

They were taunting him because it was his fault. He was weak and nothing. He was a failure. He
couldn’t even save himself, let alone save anyone else. They knew that, used it as leverage to shake
his will. They wanted him to break and he was teetering off the edge, holding on with all his
strength.

His thoughts rampaged. Too many for him to distinguish, not that he was too keen on listening to his
thoughts. As of late they had only served to haunt him, to cause him even more anguish.

It destroyed him.

He wanted to give in, but something kept him from releasing his grip on his sanity. He couldn’t give
up. There was a reason, but… what was it?

There was a beeping noise, it had been faint, but now it rang clearly. It echoed in his mind and he felt
like it was important, like it was signalling something that he should be aware of, but he wasn’t. He
wasn’t aware of anything but his increasing panic. The beeping grew louder, a jarring screech that
infiltrated his mind. It drove him crazy. It relentlessly drove into him, hammering through his skull in
a steady rhythm.

Once.

Twice.

It continued. His thoughts raced around his mind, entangling it with a ribbon of excruciating
thoughts. It sliced his mind like a thin razor, lacerating him with sharp precision. He couldn’t bear it
any longer. The incessant beeping racked his mind, intermingling with a familiar buzzing noise. It
was too much. He couldn’t take it anymore. The noise, the haunting jeers of his own subconscious…
the fire.

It hurt.

It hurt.

He hurt.

Everything fell apart and his mind ceased all processes; he screamed.

Midoriya Inko was stubborn lady. She was slow to anger and very forgiving. She didn’t like
confrontation and often became flustered when embarrassed. If there was one thing that Inko was
above all else it was a caring mother. She fretted over her only child like he was the last good thing
on earth, and to her, he was. There was nothing she wasn’t willing to do for him. All she wanted was for him to be happy.

She remembered how ecstatic he had been when he was accepted into U.A. and how nervous she had been because her baby boy was growing up. She recalled how he would always come home with a new injury, but would always be wearing that same bright smile that made her heart melt. As long as he was happy and safe, she could bear with any injuries he wore. However, when she got that phone call, what seemed like ages ago, asking her if she knew the whereabouts of her son, her world came crashing down on her.

She had worried non-stop. Not willing to rest until her son was found. The first week had been the worst. Her nerves had been frayed and she was on end, paranoid about every stray noise she heard. It wasn’t healthy, she had known that, and yet, she couldn’t have cared less. Her precious baby was gone; nothing else mattered but finding her son.

By the second week, the reality of the situation hit her. Whoever had taken her son had done so with a purpose. If anything, that knowledge seemed to ignite a fire under her and she was determined to do all she could to help aid the heroes in their search for her son.

Her anxiousness only increased as the days did. Still, she never gave up hope that her son would be found. She wouldn’t allow herself to even think about any other possibility; Izuku would be fine and all would be right in the world.

It wasn’t until a month and a half had passed that her hope had been rewarded. She remembered the moment in a deafening clarity. It had been early morning, before even the sun had risen, when her phone rang. She had answered it, a little annoyed at being woken up at such an early hour. When she heard the voice on the other line she froze. Her eyes went wide, a green pool of unfiltered relief. She nearly dropped the phone in her shock, but caught herself at the last second.

It took her less than five minutes to be ready and racing out the door.

*They found him. He’s alive.*

Those two thoughts consumed her mind the entire way to the hospital. She didn’t care about anything else at that moment, only that her precious baby boy had finally been found.

She arrived at the hospital in record time, her appearance was horridly disheveled, but that had hardly mattered at the moment. She needed to see her son.

She had been told he was in surgery—her heart dropped, a cold stone nestling uneasily in the depths of her stomach.

*Her baby was in surgery? Why did he need surgery? What was wrong with him?* These thoughts had swirled in her head like a cyclone, twisting and growing in strength as all her worry and stress slowly bored upon her. A nurse had to come and calm her down.

After she had calmed down, the nurse had given her an approximation on how long until she would be able to see her son. Inko had nodded her head wordlessly.

She had sat for hours in the waiting room, hoping that she would be able to see her baby boy soon.

When she had finally been allowed to see her son, she had tried to prepare herself for what she would see when she entered the room. She had been told that he had been given Benzo, which was essentially a minor tranquilizer, to help him sleep so she shouldn’t expect him to wake up for a while.
Inko wasted no time in entering the room, eyes immediately locking onto her son’s form on the bed. She gasped, tears welling at her eyes, at the sight.

Izuku was pale, paler than she had ever seen him, and he looked so much thinner. His right foot was in a cast. She had been told that they had to re-break his ankle to set it correctly, but that it would make a full recovery. Her eyes wandered to his right arm, which had been casted and bound to his chest as to keep it from being jostled. She gulped, remembering how the doctor had told her, following his operation, the condition of his arm—the damage had been extensive. They weren’t sure if he would ever be able to regain use of it.

She found a chair and brought it up next to his bed. She sat there for hours until she eventually dozed off.

She had been half asleep in a chair when she heard the scream. It was ragged, coarse, and the utter primitive nature of it sounded so distressed.

The heart monitor was going crazy, signaling to its occupant’s elevated heart rate. She was awake in a second, frantically gazing over the form of her son. He looked worse than she had ever seen him before.

His breathing was heavy and labored, even with an oxygen mask on. His eyes were shut tight, as if he were in pain. He was thrashing about as much as his condition allowed, which wasn’t really very much. She blinked away her exhaustion, and ran up next to her baby boy. She didn’t know what to do. He had been resting peacefully due to the Benzo the nurses had given him earlier, but it had obviously worn off now. It struck a terrible chord with her, seeing her baby look to be in so much pain and her not being able to assuage him.

She was barely aware of the nurses rushing in. It wasn’t until one of the nurses escorted her out of the room, telling her in a calm voice that she would be allowed in as soon as they had calmed him down. All Inko could think was that her precious baby was hurting, and there was nothing, absolutely nothing she could do to ease his pain. She felt helpless.

“W-what happened?” she questioned in a panicked voice, pointing at her son’s room. She wanted, needed, to know what was going on. After a month of not knowing anything, she felt a inexplicable need to know everything that happened to him now.

The nurse sighed before looking at her with woe filled eyes. She was a young nurse, inexperienced with these kinds of things. She couldn’t help but let a little of her own frustrations and sadness, masked as anger, slip through. “The Benzo wore off and he became lucid is my guess. He was having a night terror.”

Inko sniffed, a few tears running down her face. She had never been good at controlling her emotions, and now more than ever, she wasn’t able to reign in the torrent of emotion that stampeded through her. Her baby had been through so much and now, now his own mind was against him.

The nurse gave her a sympathetic look. “We’re going to give him another dose of mild Benzo. Once he’s settled down you can go back in to see him.” She tried to give Inko a cheerful smile, but it fell when she caught sight of the tears falling down Inko’s face.

“I-I feel like a terrible mother…” Inko looked downcast as she said it. She felt horrible. She knew that it wasn’t her fault, but Izuku had gone missing on his way back to the dorms from her house. She had kept him later than he was supposed to stay because she missed him and now…now he had had to endure something terrible because of it.
“Hey now,” The nurse, Jackie, she realized upon looking at the nurse’s name tag, put her hand on Inko’s shoulder. “You’re here, right now, staying by his side, and he needs that more than anything. He needs to know he’s safe, and that there are people he can rely on.” She paused shortly, giving Inko time to let her words sink in. “I know you think it’s not enough, but it is. Being here for him is going to help him dramatically in a way no medicine will be able to do.”

Inko gave Jackie a slight smile before nodding her head. No matter what happened from here on out, she was going to be there for Izuku every step of the way.

Jackie smiled at her once again before going back into Izuku’s room to check his vitals now that he was sedated again. Inko didn’t like that they had to sedate him, but she was told it was the only way his body would be able to heal. It pained her to know that her baby had been hurt to the point where he needed to be sedated in order to rest. She wasn’t sure she wanted to know the extent of the damage done to him. She wasn’t sure she would be able to handle it.

When Jackie returned, Inko had calmed herself down a bit and was waiting anxiously outside of Izuku’s room. Jackie told her he was resting again, and that she could go back in if she wanted to. That was all the confirmation Inko needed to race into the room and find her spot right beside Izuku’s bed.

“The Benzo should last for a few hours, but if you see him stirring at all, just press the call button and someone will come and check up on him.” Jackie had taken on a more professional tone now that she had a patient to deal with. Inko nodded mutely as Jackie left to go about her other duties.

In truth, Inko was beyond exhausted, but she couldn’t sleep. How could she, knowing her baby was so lost within himself that he needed to be put to sleep with sedatives and medications just for his body to heal properly? He looked so worn down, as if he were dead. That terrified her. She could see the rings, deep and prominent, under his eyes, signaling to his lack of sleep. His pale complexion and atrophied muscles told her that wherever he had been must have been dark and constricting.

Her heart clenched at the thought of how scared he must have been. It was a thought she couldn’t bear to think about. How could someone do this to a kid? Her baby was barely even sixteen and already he had faced horrors most heroes only had a glimpse of in their careers. It just wasn’t fair.

She heaved a sigh as she rested her face in her hands, trying not to cry. She was vaguely aware of someone entering the room, but didn’t pay any mind to them, too lost in her own thoughts to acknowledge the presence of anyone else.

“How is he?” A voice called out to her tentatively. She sighed at the voice before turning to meet the owner.

“He’s…” She looked away, not willing to say anything to the boys hero.

Toshinori took Inko’s lack of response as a bad sign. He couldn’t help but feel as though he had let the boy down. It had taken them almost a month and a half to find him and when they did…the condition he was in was not good. He was stable, but he had been told that the damage was extensive. It had made him physically ill to imagine the state young Midoriya had been in when they got to him.

He stood awkwardly next to Inko. “He looks to be resting nicely now…” he ventured, not sure how else to start a conversation.

Inko finally tore her gaze away from her son and looked at Toshinori with big, sad green eyes that reminded him so much of young Midoriya’s eyes. She sighed before turning away from his sight,
“Yeah…a little while ago they gave him Benzo.”

Toshinori bit back a gasp at that knowledge. He shouldn’t have been surprised, after going through such a traumatic ordeal, it would be odd if he didn’t need some form of medication to keep him calm and subdued, but for something like this to have happened to young Midoriya, who wasn’t even a pro hero yet, it made his heart clench. “I-I…See.”

“…Yeah, he,” she paused, “He was having a panic attack of some sort. I-I saw him start to heave and I—it was heartbreaking.” She started to sob, not able to contain her sorrow when reciting the terror she had seen prior to Toshinori’s visit. “He was still asleep, but I could-I could feel it. He was terrified. I don’t know what they did to him, but he was scared. He must have been so scared. All alone—”

“Hey,” Toshinori cut her off, overwhelmed with a need to calm down the grieving woman, and paralyzed by the knowledge of his mentee’s state of mind. “Calm down. You need to breathe, okay?” He put a calming hand on her shoulder.

“Okay…” Inko tried to breathe calmly, but it was hard. She was never one to have good control over her emotions, a trait she had passed down to Izuku. Right now that inability to reign in her feelings was causing her unbearable strife.

They stayed quiet for quite awhile. Listening to the rhythm of the heart monitor as it steadily beeped. She prayed that her son would wake soon, and that the damage that had been done wasn’t irreparable.

Chapter End Notes

feel free to leave a comment and tell me what you thought, I really appreciate them. I hope this chapter was good, I was very sleep deprived when writing it so... I need a nap....till next time
No Way Out

Chapter Summary

"There's no way out of this dark place
No hope
No future"
--Phil Collins

Chapter Notes

Fist off, shout out to my lovely beta ImmortalBlkWolf for being an awesome beta. She's great, this chapter would have been a complete disaster without her! Also, thank you to everyone who bookmarked, left kudos or left a comment!! I always greatly appreciate it!!
Anyway~ I hope you enjoy this chapter, it was really fun to write!

Tenya didn’t know what to think.

Midoriya had been found…but it had taken them six weeks to find him. Who knows what could have happened to his friend in that amount of time. Just thinking about it unnerved him; he knew what villain’s were capable of, what they could do. His brother was a prime example.

He didn’t want to think the same thing could have happened to one of his friends, but here he was, faced with that reality: Midoriya had been captured by villains and had been kept for six weeks. He hadn’t been able to do anything. He hated it. He was supposed to be a hero in training, and he had been able to do nothing, absolutely nothing.

He felt useless.

He was shaken from his thoughts when Uraraka tapped him on the shoulder, “Hey, Iida?”

He blinked, in an effort to clear his mind, and regarded her, “Yes, Uraraka?”

“Are you okay? You’ve been really quiet all day, since homeroom…” She left the implication up in the air.

“I’m fine…” He wanted to believe that what he said was the truth, but the look Uraraka gave him showed that she doubted him, and he couldn’t help but agree with her. “It’s a lot to take in, is all.” This time he wasn’t lying. It was a lot lot take in.

The mien of the classroom had been heavy this morning. Everyone had been in a bad mood, it seemed as though the unfavorable weather made its way into the classroom, with the invisible dark
cloud that lingered in the room.

Then Aizawa had showed up to class five minutes early, earlier than he had ever been, and the entire class had felt the shift in mood.

Aizawa was never early, and he had never had that look on his face. It was pensive and calculated, with an exhaustion ironed into his sharp eyes, but what had really unsettled the class was the haunted visage his eyes held.

His eyes had bored into everyone, making it clear that he demanded their attention. He had sighed. It was a heavy, exasperated sound. Everyone had waited eagerly, if a bit hesitant for him to say something. When he had, nobody knew what to do. It had shaken everyone to their core.

Midoriya had been found.

There was a beat where no one moved.

All hell broke loose after that.

Everyone had erupted into a frenzy of cheers, until he continued and told them the condition Midoriya was in. The cheerfulness had fizzled out into an expanse of worried questions and solacing remarks. Some had been concerned over Midoriya’s condition, while others—mainly Uraraka—had been exuding nothing but positivity. She had been determined that he would be fine, that he was fine, because he was Deku.

Tenya had thought otherwise. Midoriya was tough, he was resilient to just about everything, and he admired that, but six weeks was a long time to be held captive for. He wasn’t sure if he even wanted to know what had happened to his friend. He wasn’t sure he’d be able to take it if something irreparable had been done to him—it would be too similar to his brother.

He shook his head of such thoughts. It wouldn’t do him any good to think about something that he didn’t yet know the extent of.

He glanced around the lunchroom, and he took in the muted, false cheeriness of the conversations going on around him. Uraraka was engaged in a conversation with Todoroki and Tsuyu, but it seemed strained, like she was trying to reign in her emotions.

Tenya was about to join them when he noticed Monoma sauntering towards them. Uraraka and Todoroki seemed to notice as well, because they halted their conversation, and gave a wary in his direction.

Monoma had his usual smug grin plastered on his face. Everyone at the table—Iida, Uraraka, Todoroki and Tsuyu—tensed, a foreboding aura hanging in the air. “I hear they found your classmate.”

Tenya nodded hesitantly. Monoma had never been supportive in the past towards class 1-A, and Tenya didn’t trust him. After all, Monoma had been the first person to tell them that the school would have to replace Midoriya’s spot in class if he wasn’t found soon. While that had been a legitimate concern, Tenya had found that comment to be unwarranted, and thus, as class president, he had reported Monoma to the staff.
Since then, Monoma hadn’t bothered them.

Monoma continued, not caring about the warning glare he was being given by Todoroki, “Six weeks is a long time to be held captive, especially by some no-name villains. I would have expected better from someone in class 1-A. Aren’t you guys supposed to be the best? I bet if it were someone from class 1-B, then-”

Todoroki cut him off, “Leave.” His tone was cutting; the intonation of it was sharp and threatening. It wasn’t a suggestion. It was a demand. It was low and menacing, a lingering threat.

Monoma took a step back, but didn’t stop, “What? I’m just saying that for someone who is supposed to be-”

Todoroki stood up, sending a glare with so much heat behind it Tenya could practically feel the fire at Monoma. His voice had dropped an octave, “Leave. Now. I won’t ask again.”

Monoma took a step back, a timid look flitted in his eyes, like a wounded animal, before returning to normal. He huffed and turned heel and walked away.

After Monoma left, Todoroki cooled down, and went back to his seat. Tenya turned to face his friends, who all wore the same indignant expression as he did. He couldn’t believe that Monoma would stoop so low as to make light of a classmate having been captured for such a long time. Uraraka was fuming, a dangerous visage replaced her usually cheery one.

“How dare he say something like that.” Uraraka was trembling slightly from her anger. “Deku… He’s- He’s strong, stronger than most people in our class…So those villains, they must have been really strong if they were able to keep him for so long. Monoma doesn’t-”

“I completely agree with you, Uraraka,” Tenya interjected. “Monoma was out of line, and I will talk to the U.A. staff about his inappropriate behavior.” In truth, Tenya was livid. Monoma was intolerable, and that type of behavior was unbecoming of a future hero, but as class president, he had a duty to handle these type of situations in an orderly fashion, even if all he wanted to do was smash Monoma’s smug face in.

Tsuyu ended up being the one to steer the conversation to something else, “Aizawa said that Midoriya was at the hospital and in stable condition, maybe we could go visit him today after classes-kerro?”

The idea of visiting their friend lightened the mood significantly.

They spent the rest of lunch making plans to meet after school and visit the hospital. They planned on asking Aizawa if he would accompany them seeing as they would need to get a pass to leave campus, and they thought he might want to see Midoriya as well.

Aizawa had been one of the members of the search team that had found him, and they could tell that he was worried. It had showed in the way he held himself all day—always tense, a little more snappish, and noticeably more worn out than usual. As much as Aizawa tried to hide it, Iida, and the rest of class 1-A, could tell that he cared deeply for them.

They had asked if anyone else wanted to visit Midoriya after class with them and everyone—including, surprisingly, Bakugou—had stated that they wanted to visit him.

When they had told Aizawa, he had stated that while he thought it was a good idea for them to visit, having everyone visit him at once might be overbearing, considering the condition he was in. He said they would be better off going in small groups, so as to not overwhelm him.
In the end, they decided that Uraraka, Todoroki and himself should be the first to visit him, along with Aizawa who claimed he was only going to make sure they didn’t get into any trouble on the way there. Tenya suspected that he was genuinely concerned about Midoriya’s condition as well, and probably felt the need to make sure they all made it to the hospital safely, after all, the last time a student was off campus unattended, things didn’t go well.

Inko hadn’t slept since Izuku’s night terror. Everytime she tried all she could see was his convulsing figure that seemed so small, and hear his anguished scream. Her baby was hurting, and there wasn’t anything she could do.

That realization just about killed her.

So instead, she sat, and watched his small figure as he slept, chest rising and falling almost hypnotically.

Her emotions were all over the place, an amalgamation of worry and relief. She couldn’t quell her worries though. How could she? Her baby had been gone for so long. Six whole weeks. Even if he was back, the damage had been done. She didn’t know the extent of it, she had only been informed of his physical condition, but even thinking about it sent her into a frenzy.

In all honesty, she was still coming to terms with the fact that her son had been captured by villains, and that he had been hurt by them to such an extent. This brought on a whole new level of anxiety for her.

It was a lot to take in—she had been so worried before, but now an entirely new kind of worry rolled over her like thunder clouds, drenching her in sorrow and bombarding her with fears.

What was she supposed to do? How was she supposed to take this? How was she supposed to help him? There were so many questions she had and so little answers. She was terrified. Things were going to be different now. Things were going to have to change now, because whether she liked it or not, her son had been put through something extremely traumatic, and she didn’t know what to do about that.

Inko was in no way a violent person, but she did have a breaking point, and she was at that point. There was nothing she wouldn’t do for her son. What had been done to him was unforgivable, and she would do everything in her power to find justice for him.

She took a moment to let her gaze linger over the form of her son, who was resting. He looked peaceful now, but she knew that peace was fake, a peace brought on by the sedatives coursing through his system, and soon he would be brought out from that forced restful slumber. She didn’t dare think of the horrors that would now plague his mind when he woke up.

A fierce green fire burned in her eyes at the thought of people hurting her son. She was beyond frustrated with her inability to do anything, but she knew that detective Naomasa was investigating the circumstances surrounding her son’s abduction thoroughly. She knew Naomasa would do everything in his power to find Izuku’s captors and Inko was grateful for that.

A slight stirring caught her attention. She turned her gaze towards the bed where her son was lying. She saw his facial muscles twitch, a sure sign that he was waking. She held her breath, waiting.
It was foggy. Everything felt dull, muddled even. He could hear voices far away, and a rhythmic beeping noise penetrated the darkness in his mind.

Slowly, as if his senses were just waking up, he started to take in his surroundings. He could smell something sterile, clean…like antiseptic. He could feel a scratchy pressure around his torso. Something pricked his left arm, and he felt…light? He could still feel the throbbing of his injuries, but they had lessened, a stagnant pain that was pushed to the recesses of his mind.

Sluggishly, he tried to open his eyes. It took a lot more effort than he would like to have admitted. He blinked slowly, trying to disperse the darkness his eyes saw.

“Izuku?” He heard the familiar, timid voice that unmistakably belonged to his mother.

He turned to face the direction her voice had come from. He blinked once more in an attempt to dispel the inky blackness.

Everything remained dark.

Fear seized him. Why was it dark? He couldn’t see…was this another trick? Something intended to break him? His breathing hitched.

“Izuku, is something wrong?” There was worry in her voice.

This wasn’t right. Something was different…

*This wasn’t right.*

He could hear her. He could *hear* his mom, her voice, her painstakingly familiar voice, but it *couldn’t* really be her, could it?

His eyes were open, but all he saw was a desolate ebony hue. There was no splotchy shapes or blinding light. It was all black.

This was wrong. Everything about this situation screamed wrong, but he couldn’t be sure what was wrong. He wasn’t safe—he couldn’t be—but still…There was no air of danger here. This darkness, it was different from before. It didn’t feel forced; this blackness felt too natural, and he wasn’t sure what to make of that. How could a blackness feel natural, or unnatural? Black was black, wasn’t it? He didn’t know, but trying to sort it out in his head just made him more and more panicked.

He racked his brain, pulling at all memories, and vaguely, he recalled something. A snippet, short and disjointed, but there nonetheless.

_Darkness. Pain. Alone. All alone; he was all alone. He didn’t know how much more of this he could take. Everything hurt, shifting positions aggravated the fresh wounds on his back, and staying still caused his thoughts to reign free. Neither option was desirable._

_He heard something far away…Voices…Wait voices? Why were there voices…Commands. That came from the door…Crashing. What was going on? This was different. This was too disjointed for it to have been planned. They never let him hear them coming…Not like this._

_Suddenly there were more voices, some familiar, others not, but they all seemed so…concerned?_
Rushed? They were...worried. Why were they worried? Did something happen? What was going on?

Everything happened so fast, and he was in so much pain. He was confused, this wasn’t like all the other times...These voices were asking questions. They were frantic almost, not calm and crazy like he was used to. They were asking about him? He didn’t know, but he felt strong arms grab him. It grated his injuries, but he felt...safe. They were trying to move him, remove the bonds that held him immobile, but he felt oddly dissociated from it. He couldn’t really feel them all that much. It was too obscure.

He heard a voice. It sounded familiar, painstakingly familiar. Who was it? He felt he should know the answer, felt as if it was right in front of him, taunting him, yet it evaded him. It was addressing him.

He was only hazily aware of what was going on around him.

“We’ve finally found you. You’re safe.” For the first time since he had been thrown into this endless darkness, he felt a sense of comfort wash over him. He felt safe.

Had that actually happened? Had he been rescued? But, he was still cast in the dark. Why? If everything was different, if he was really safe, then why was he still in the dark? No...it was a trick. It had to be.

His breathing picked up. The beeping that had been steady, now began to accelerate. His memories were telling him he was safe, but the situation at hand offered nothing absolute, and without that certainty he felt lost. He didn’t know what was going on. Panic was starting to set in. A buzzing noise started to ebb its way into his subconscious, its incessant sound bringing forth even more panic.

He heard something shuffle. “Izuku,” the voice that sounded so much like his mom sounded closer, practically in front of his face. “I need you to calm down.” Her voice was soft, worry etched into it, but grounded. He clung to it, not knowing what else to do—even if it wasn’t real—because how could it be? He was still alone, in that awful place—it was soothing, and warm, and familiar.

The droning buzz started to recede, until it had all but faded away entirely.

A hand was placed tentatively on his shoulder, as if asking permission to comfort him. It was an odd sensation, but the firm grip kept him in place, mentally. He felt...safe?

“Izuku.” He lifted his gaze towards the sound. It sounded like his mom, it really sounded like her, but it couldn’t be...could it?

He thought about it. The forced numbness of his body, the prick in his arm, and the smell—everything was still a tame sensation, as if his body didn’t know how to handle them, but it was there—it all reminded him of his many times in the infirmary at U.A. It was warm, too, he noticed for the first time, not the numb chilling coldness of that place. He still couldn’t see anything—that was about the only thing familiar about this situation—but it felt wrong, like that shouldn’t be the case.

He tried to calm his breathing, knowing that panicking in this situation wasn’t going to help him. Panicking never helped anything; it always made things so much worse.

He felt the hand on his shoulder shift, and was reminded that someone was there, someone who sounded so similar to his mom. He swallowed heavily, “M-mom?” His voice sounded hoarse, and it grated on his throat. He hated how desperate his voice sounded, but he needed this voice to be his mom. He really, really needed her to be here with him.
He didn’t want to be alone anymore. He couldn’t be alone anymore.

There was an intake of breath. He trembled, not sure what that meant. There was no verbal response, instead they pulled him into a crushing hug. He tensed, not used to such a soft touch. He had forgotten what it meant to be touched without pain following. It felt so comforting, something akin to hope flooded his senses. He felt light, not shrouded by this cloak of despair and hopelessness, and this tight embrace was so familiar.

It was painstakingly familiar.

This was his mom.

There was no doubt that this was her.

White hot tears made rivers down his cheeks. He was safe. Safe. The word felt foreign after being in his position, but at that moment, with his mom crushing him with a hug, he didn’t think there was a better word for it.

He tried to move his arm—the left one—to return the hug, but found his mobility to be disoriented. There was static coursing through his arm when he tried to move it, pins and needles running rivulets down the appendage.

He settled for smothering his face in her shoulder—or he assumed it was her shoulder.

It was overwhelming. Soon his tears gave way to harsh sobs, but she never lessened her grip on him. She moved a hand to his hair, stroking it and whispering soft reassurances. It made him sob even more.

At that moment, with his mother there, by his side and oh, so real, it didn’t even bother him that he couldn’t see her, because she was there, and she was real, he could deal with not seeing her right now. She wasn’t a cruel trick or an illusion meant to break him. She was corporeal, and tangible, and right there.

She was here, and at that moment, it was enough.

All the fear and the dread that had wrapped around him like a blanket for such a long time was finally falling away, and he felt safe.

He wasn’t sure how long they had sat there embracing each other, but too soon, he felt her slowly release her grip.

“Izuku…” He could hear the sorrow in her voice, the worry that practically dripped from his name as she spoke it.

He flinched slightly, and part of him wondered what it was about her tone that had elicited such a response, but he pushed it to the back of his mind as he swallowed thickly.

Suddenly, not being able to see became a much bigger problem than he had thought it would be. He hadn’t really been able to see much of anything for the past however long, and had grown accustomed to the dark, but this…this was something else entirely.

Before the darkness had been just a means to hurt him; they hadn’t blinded him, but they had effectively taken away his sight just the same, only allowing him to see when it suited their needs. Now though, now that darkness should have ebbed away. His eyes should be able to see…something, but the blackness ensued.
“M-mom…Why-” he didn’t want to ask it, because he knew the answer, “Why is it so dark?”

He could sense the shift in her facial expression. He couldn’t see anything, but he knew her face had morphed from worry to horror.

“W-what do you mean by that? T-the lights are on.” He guessed she was gesturing around the room to emphasize how not dark everything was, but he was oblivious to it if that was the case.

Suddenly, Izuku was overwhelmed. It was as if the reality of his lack of sight had finally hit him. He could have just pretended it was extremely dark out, and that was why he couldn’t see anything, even if that sounded stupid and implausible, he could have convinced himself that that was what was going on…He had convinced himself of that, but when his mom confirmed that that wasn’t the case, well, his flimsy excuse vanished.

He didn’t understand why. Why couldn’t he see anything? His eyes hadn’t been damaged, had they? What had happened to cause this?

He didn’t know.

That scared him. A lot.

“I don’t- I can’t…I don’t understand. I can’t- It’s- Everything is just black,” he shuddered, his voice a mixture of terrified and frustrated.

She took a deep breath, and he could feel the sadness attached to it. It was impossible to miss, even if he currently couldn’t see. Even now, when he was safe, he was still only causing worry for his mom; it made him nauseous.

“I can’t see… I can’t see anything,” he whispered in a hushed tone that he wasn’t even sure his mom could hear it.

“Izuku,” her voice sounded strained, as if she couldn’t believe it, “What d-do you mean?’

Was his sight just…gone? Was he blind?

He didn’t want to even think of that possibility. That wasn’t something he was willing to accept. He refused to believe that he would always be lost in this eternal blackness. So, instead of voicing his thoughts, he just went with, “I- I just can’t see anything.”

He jumped slightly, when he heard the door open, and strained to hear more. He didn’t like not being to see this new person. It aggravated him—scared him a little too. How was he supposed to know if they were a threat or not?

Since he had been captured, the use of his eyesight had been limited, but his eyes had still held the capability to see. It had just been cut off. Now though, he should be able to see, there was no outside force stopping him from seeing, and yet, all he saw was an ocean of black. He was drowning in it.

The words ‘can’t see anything’ swirled around Inko’s head like a cyclone, washing out every other thought. She didn’t understand it. His eyes hadn’t appeared glassy or fogged over. They were still that brilliant hue of green, but she had seen no recognition in them—even when expressing unfiltered
terror, his eyes hadn’t been searching for her in an attempt to seek comfort. They had remained off center. It broke her heart.

The doctor had come into the room, and had addressed Izuku, but she wasn’t paying attention much. She hazily noted that the doctor was asking Izuku something to which Izuku hesitantly nodded.

Her mind was still stuck on those last words. Her baby was scared and suffering, and she couldn’t even give him a reassuring smile because all he saw was the darkness.

She was pulled from her thoughts when the doctor called her name.

“Y-Yes?” she asked.

“I’m going to have to ask you to leave.” The doctor smiled apologetically at her.

She nodded automatically, not really understanding why she had to leave, but one glance at Izuku told her all she needed to know. Even if he couldn’t see her, he had turned his face away in shame, something she knew he did when he was trying to hide something from her. She guessed that the doctor had some questions that he didn’t want her to know the answers to, and while she was saddened by that, she at least understood.

Izuku was a headstrong person. He didn’t like having to rely on others or ask for help. He liked to face things on his own and come up with solutions by himself. She understood that, even if she was against it.

She could never think less of him, and whatever horrors he had faced at the hands of those villains wasn’t something he should be ashamed of, but she knew her son. He put too much pressure on himself, acted as if the world was on his shoulders. He cared about everyone else much more than he cared about himself.

Still, it scared her to think that he had willingly pushed her away in order to spare her feelings, because he didn’t need to do that. He shouldn’t have to do that, but it was a very Izuku-like thing to do. That eased her mind, if only slightly. It showed that the old Izuku was still there, and that, maybe, everything would be okay.

She waited in the hallway, not willing to leave her son’s side, even if she couldn’t stay in the room. She had to know what the doctor had to say about his eyesight. Of course she was worried about more than just that, but if Izuku was blind, his entire way of life would have to be rearranged; she wouldn’t even know how to start with that.

So, she waited—fretted—in the hallway for a long while, until she heard a group of people walking towards her. She looked up and saw Uraraka, Iida, Todoroki and Izuku’s homeroom teacher, Aizawa, making their way towards her.

She gave them a soft smile.

Uraraka was the first to say something, “Midoriya-san, why are you waiting out here?” Her face contorted from curiosity to unease, “Is something wrong?”

Inko was shook her head, “No, the doctor is just checking up on him now, and asked me to leave.” She gave them a tired smile, hoping to appease their worries.

Uraraka beamed, “Oh, does that mean that Deku’s awake?”

Inko nodded. “Yes, he woke up about an hour ago.” She sighed heavily, recalling how he had had a
near panic attack upon waking, and then an emotional breakdown in her arms. “He’s- Well, quite honestly, I don’t know how well he’s doing. The doctor came in about ten minutes ago, and I haven’t gotten word since, but I’m-” She cut herself off, not sure how to express her concerns.

How was she going to tell them that Izuku couldn’t see? That he might be blind? She was lost; she didn’t know what to do. She could feel the pain in her eyes welling up, but she tried to reign in her emotions.

Uraraka came up and pulled her into a tight embrace, soon followed by Iida and a reluctant Todoroki. No words were said, just a silent comfort that somehow made her feel ten times better.

Izuku had such great friends, everything would be fine, she reasoned, because they would all stick with him through the thick of it. She let herself break down, basking in the comfort Izuku’s friends offered.

Aizawa shifted his footing, alerting the group to his presence—which they had forgotten about—and they all turned to meet his gaze. He still looked worn, but there was a light in his eyes that hadn’t been there before. “So, Midoriya-san…” he ventured, keeping his cool, but also conveying his worry, “How is he doing? You said he was lucid?”

Inko nodded hesitantly, “Yes, he woke up, but he didn’t say much… just…” She lingered on the words, reluctant to tell them the reality of the situation, but knowing they deserved to know it nonetheless.

They waited with bated breath, curious to know what Izuku had said.

She steeled her resolve, and stared them in the eyes with a fear filled gaze. She whispered it, but in the deafening silence, it was heard as loud as a scream.

“He said he couldn’t see.”

Chapter End Notes

So, next chapter should be out in a week, give or take a few days. I’m trying to keep on a schedule, but I have a rather hectic schedule this week. Luckily, I’ve already got a nice start on chapter four and five. Thanks for reading and please let me know what you think! I really do appreciate it.

Until next time~
"Disaster has a way of remaking our hearts
Long after all the thunder and the scars
Days pass and bit by bit
we begin to restore our
disaster hearts"
--I Fight Dragons

Chapter Notes

First off thank you to all who left kudos, bookmarked and commented, i really appreciate it. Ya'll are amazing~
Special shout out to my beta: ImmortalBlkWolf for her amazing job at editing this~
Without her this entire chapter would be a discombobulated mess.
I know I was a bit late on the update, but hopefully this slightly longer chapter will make up for it.

“How are you feeling, Midoriya?” the doctor asked in a calm manner.

Izuku flinched at the name—he had gotten used to associating that name with pain—but otherwise gave no reaction or inclination of a response. He didn’t know how to respond. He wasn’t quite sure how he was. He heard the doctor move beside him and tensed. He was alone with this man, someone he didn’t know. He knew he had been the one to send his mother off, but that was besides the point; she didn’t need to know everything the doctor would need to know. Still, he didn’t like that he couldn’t even see them. It was unnerving and had him on edge.

“I-I’m fine.” He didn’t sound fine, and he knew it. His voice grated on him, and it felt as if he had swallowed gravel every time he spoke. It hurt, but it wasn’t something that he found to be unbearable.

He heard a scuffle to his left and turned in that general direction. The shift in positions aggravated the wounds on his back, but they were still a dull throb, most likely due to the painkillers that were no doubt running through his system, so he paid it little attention.

“Young injuries aren’t bothering you at all?” His voice was jovial, but calm and hinted at a seriousness. In a way, it eased Izuku’s mind, if only slightly.

“N-not really…” Izuku gulped, a question weighing on his mind. He needed to know, even if he wouldn’t like the answer, this was something he needed to know. “Umm…What-did s-something happen…” He looked down, even if he couldn’t see it, he could feel the doctor’s eyes on him, “Did
something happen to my eyes?”

There was silence for a moment, before he got a response.

“No. Is there a problem with them?” The doctor sounded concerned…and unsure.

Izuku’s brain stopped for a moment. That wasn’t the answer he was expecting. He didn’t expect the doctor to *not* have the answer.

*What’s wrong with me? Why can’t I see?*

“I can’t—” he cut himself off, he didn’t want to say it, “I can’t... *see* .” It felt bitter on his tongue.

He heard shuffling and tensed. *Where is he going? Why is he moving?* He didn’t like not being able to see where people were, it put him on edge.

“Midoriya,” the voice was right in front of him, “Can I have you look up?”

He hesitated, startled by the voice being so close to his person without him knowing, before he reluctantly looked up. He didn’t know where to hold his gaze, so he just tried his best to guesstimate where he was supposed to be looking.

———

“He said he couldn’t see.”

Shouto just stared, unable to process that information. That just wasn’t possible. That wasn’t fair. Midoriya didn’t deserve this. He didn’t deserve any of this.

Shouto could recall his first impressions of Midoriya. He hadn’t thought much of him. He looked plain and overall unimpressive. Then the sports festival had come around, and Midoriya had proven to be a force to be reckoned with—not only had he proved himself to be strong by making it to the final eight, but he had single handedly saved Shouto from himself. He had shown Shouto that his power was his own, and Shouto had been grateful to him ever since.

In a sense, Midoriya had shown Shouto the light…but now, it seemed as though fate was determined to take that light away, *literally.*

This wasn’t right. How could this even be happening?

He watched in shock as Uraraka and Iida gave Midoriya’s mom a hug; he couldn’t move, frozen in place by this new knowledge. Wasn’t it bad enough that he had been missing for six weeks, and there was nothing, *absolutely nothing,* he or anyone else was able to do about it? Hadn’t Midoriya suffered enough? On top of that, now he couldn’t even *see.* It was too much, and Shouto needed to breathe.

He had to forcibly draw air into his lungs and just...breathe. He made himself calm down, now was not the time to freak out. Midoriya needed them right now, more than ever, and he needed them to be calm and collected, not a mess.

Shouto felt Aizawa’s eyes on him, asking him if he was okay. He wasn’t, he really wasn’t okay in any sense of the word, but he had to be. For Midoriya. He would keep his cool and be the friend Midoriya needed, because he knew, he *knew,* if their situations had been swapped, he would do the
same.

Midoriya was the type of person to push aside his feelings and fears for others. He wouldn’t hesitate to throw himself into the fray if it meant that his friends would be safe. Shouto admired him for that—it took a special kind of person to be able to do all that Midoriya had done—and he strived to be that kind of person.

So, he pulled himself together and waited in earnest with everyone else for the doctor to come out and give them the news.

It was only a few minutes later when Midoriya’s door opened and out walked a doctor. He looked around forty years of age with rustic brown hair that looked as though it had been recently cut and piercing brown eyes that hid behind his glasses. He held himself with an air that put Shouto at ease, knowing that Midoriya seemed to be in capable hands.

He turned to address Midoriya’s mom.

“H-how is he?” Her voice conveyed all the worry that she was feeling.

The doctor looked at her and smiled gently, in a way, it soothed the entire atmosphere. “Well, I’m going to be calling in a neurologist to take a better look at his eyesight, because I didn’t find any physical signs that would suggest blindness. Everything else seems to be in order. His vitals are fine, and he said that the pain is manageable. I feel it would be in his best interest, given the circumstances in which he was admitted, if he were evaluated by a psychologist before we discharge him. We want to make sure he doesn’t present a danger to himself or others.”

Shouto’s breathing hitched. The doctor had just confirmed that Midoriya was blind. Blind. How are we supposed to take this? The thought struck him, and he immediately berated himself for thinking something so selfish. Nevermind them, how was Midoriya supposed to deal with this? How could he be a hero if he was blind? What did this mean for his future?

“What-what exactly is wrong with his eyes? They didn’t-they looked fine.” Midoriya’s mother continued, with fear etched into her voice.

The doctor regarded her with a doleful gaze. “Honestly, I can’t say for sure, which is why I’m calling in a friend from the Neurological department. She has more insight on these types of matters. This isn’t my are of expertise, and so I don’t want to give you any false information. I’ll let the neurologist do a more in depth evaluation before we diagnose anything,” he sighed, knowing that explanation didn’t help.

There was a beat in which no one said anything.

“What-can we see him, now?” Uraraka asked hopefully.

The doctor turned to her, but addressed everyone, “Yes, you may visit him, but I will advise you to be mindful of his current state. He cannot see, so he may be on edge.”

Everyone tensed at that, but nodded all the same.

Shouto took a sharp intake of breath as he took in Midoriya’s current state. He looked so thin and
pale. His green hair fell limply around his face, lacking any vivacity, and Shouto couldn’t be sure, but he thought it looked a little more pale, especially around the roots, than it had been before. He was looking at them with a startled expression, but his gaze was off; he wasn’t looking at them, rather in their general direction.

“Deku!” Uraraka had been the first one to call out to their friend, her voice teetering in between excitement to finally see him again and worry at the condition in which he appeared to be in. Midoriya winced at the noise, shifting his gaze a little to appear as though he was looking at her directly—he was still a little off center from her.

“U-Uraraka…?” His reply was timid and broke in several places. His eyes filled with fear for a second, before he was able to mask. “H-how many-who’s here?” He bit his lip, a sign of his uncertainty and unease with the situation.

Aizawa spoke up, “Midoriya—” They all stopped when they noticed how Midoriya flinched at the mention of his name.

Midoriya seemed to have noticed how Aizawa—and subsequently everyone else in the room—had stopped after saying his name. He turned away from them, his left hand clenching into a fist. “I-I,” he stuttered meekly, “Sorry…”

He sounded frustrated, and Shouto realized how humiliating this must be for him. He had been taken by people—villains—and held captive for a long time. Now, even if he was safe, there were many scars that remained and had yet to heal, both physically and mentally—it was no doubt frustrating for him, having his friends see him in such a state.

“You do not need to apologize,” Iida proclaimed a little too forcibly, “We are your friends, and we’re all here to support you.”

“Iida…” Midoriya said, his tone was steady, if a bit unsure.

“That’s right, Deku! We’re all here for you.” Uraraka exclaimed.

“Iida is right.” Shouto refrained from using his name, but he still noticed the slightest change in posture when he had spoken—it was if he were afraid of something…or someone.

Midoriya’s breathing hitched. Iida and Uraraka thought it was because he was overwhelmed, but Shouto saw the fear in his eyes when he had spoken. Shouto saw how his demeanor shifted the moment he had spoken—at first it had been shocked, but it quickly morphed into a frightened stance, with tense shoulders and eyes warily looking for something, but seeing nothing.

He barely registered Aizawa giving him a pointed glance, as if to ask if he was going to be okay. He must’ve looked more startled than the others. Truthfully, he wasn’t sure how he was feeling at the moment; shock and curiosity were bubbling within him, but more than anything he felt…numb. He felt as though a icy, intangible weight had ghosted itself through him.

“Izuku?” Midoriya’s mother, who had been standing behind them, shoved her way past them to get to her son, who was currently on the cusps of having a panic attack.

Midoriya turned his head to the source of his mother’s voice. His eyes, though still void of any recognition, were searching frantically for her. His breathing was all over the place, the heart monitor a testament to that fact with its rapid beeping. While Uraraka and Iida tried to calm Midoriya down, Shouto stood frozen in place, after all, he knew why Midoriya was acting like this—they didn’t notice it, but he did. Midoriya had been fine, albeit a little tense when they had announced their
presence, but as soon as he had spoken, something had changed in Midoriya’s demeanor. Gears had shifted, and fear had replaced unsureness.

Fear directed at him.

The thought that his voice had done this, that his mere presence had offset Izuku so much that he needed his mother to calm him down, was too much for him. Midoriya was his friend—his closest friend—so for him to now be…afraid of him. It was difficult to comprehend. Why? Why was there fear in his unfocused gaze? What was it about him that elicited such a response from Midoriya? What did they do to him?

He watched in muted horror as Midoriya’s mom calmed him down. It was a little disheartening to watch, Shouto had never seen Midoriya look so…distraught, so broken before. He didn’t like it.

He watched, silently, as Midoriya slowly pulled himself together and apologized to them for freaking them out. It was such a Midoriya thing to do, and Shouto found that disturbing—he shouldn’t be apologizing to them for anything; rather, they should be apologizing to him for not saving him sooner, for not being there for him when he needed them to be.

Uraraka quickly assured Midoriya that it was fine, and he shouldn’t apologize to them. Iida went on about how he should take things slow and recuperate properly. They spoke about miscellaneous things such as the most recent Hero news and class 1-A antics. For a moment, they could all just pretend that Midoriya had been in the hospital for doing something reckless. He was still a bit hesitant, and any unexpected noise sent him on high alert, but he was there, and it was all so vividly real. Shouto watched, he had decided that it would be best if he didn’t speak, lest he cause another relapse from his friend. He noticed the odd looks Iida and Uraraka were giving him, but he just shook his head. Midoriya’s mother gave him a sad look, but again, he just shook his head and remained silent. Even Midoriya seemed to notice his absent presence, but something kept him from speaking out against it. Though, Shouto knew what it was: fear. So he said nothing and let them have their moment of peace.

Suddenly, Midoriya looked up. His face grew contemplative, “Aizawa-sensei, you-you’re here, right?” His voice held a tinge of desperation, as if he was unsure of himself.

Aizawa arched an eyebrow and took a small step forward, “Yes, is there something you wanted to ask?”

His brow scrunched up and nose wrinkled in a way that suggested he was thinking about something important. He then turned to Aizawa, or at least to his general direction, “You…ummm, you were the one to…” Realization dawned on his face, before he swallowed thickly, and his expression turned into a more somber one. “I was-how long was I…” his voice tapered off, before he took a deep, controlling breath and regained himself. “How long?”

“You were missing for a total of six weeks.” Aizawa stated plainly.

Midoriya gulped, but said nothing for a long while. He blinked slowly, his green eyes looking vacantly ahead. “I-I see…That-that’s a long time…” he trailed off, and Shouto wondered what he was thinking. “I’m sorry. I must’ve worried you guys a lot, huh?” His voice trembled slightly, holding back a myriad of emotions.

Uraraka and Iida halted for a second. Nobody wanted to be reminded of the reality of the situation. Midoriya had been missing for a long time, and they had no idea what had happened to him in that time.
“D-Deku…” Uraraka started, but couldn’t finish.

“There’s no need to apologize, Mi—” Iida cut himself off, remembering the reaction Midoriya had had to the mention of his own name.

Shouto nodded his head in agreement, but still said nothing. He wasn’t willing to break the peace that they had, not with how shaky it was right now.

It wasn’t long after that that they had to leave. They had only been there for a short while, but they could tell that Midoriya was tired. His drooping eyes gave them enough indication that he needed rest. They promised to visit him again as soon as possible. He smiled weakly back at them. It wasn’t much of a smile, more like a grimace, but they all understood the implications anyway.

Shouto wasn’t satisfied with that visit. He had thought seeing Midoriya alive would help stifle the fears that had crept through him since he had gone missing. However, if anything, seeing Midoriya look so lost and vulnerable had shaken him even more than not knowing anything. Then there was the fact that his mere presence had seemed to offset Midoriya, that hadn’t sat well with him at all.

He couldn’t see anything, and he hated it. Everything was dark, and while he thought that it might be dark out anyway, he hated—hated—not being able to know for sure. It was the uncertainties of the situation that had him on edge all the time, which in turn, only served to exhaust him.

He thought back to earlier today—how much earlier he didn’t know, telling time was difficult for him now. His friends had visited, and as thrilling as it had been, it had left him exhausted. Not to mention Todoroki…He had thought he could handle at least hearing his voice, but even that had sent him back to that place. Hearing his voice and not being able to see him, to confirm that he wasn’t grinning that maniacal smirk that promised only pain, had upset him more than he thought it would. Todoroki was his friend…and yet, the only thing he could do was stare at his voice in fear, mind consuming him with awful memories of burning fires that weren’t real—that had never been real. He could feel the traces of the burns on his skin as they ate away at him only to then be revealed as nothing more than a mirage, an illusion on his mind.

He had been too afraid to say anything to Todoroki, and that made it so much worse. Todoroki was suffering too, and he couldn’t even acknowledge his existence because it had been too much for him to handle. How could he do that? What kind of friend did that make him? Why was he so…so weak? Todoroki had been there, had really been there in flesh and blood, and all he could do was ignore him. Todoroki hadn’t said anything either, he was probably mad at him, angered that he would react to his voice in such a way…but that wasn’t like Todoroki. He wouldn’t have done that…he couldn’t have done that. He shook his head of the thoughts, not letting himself fall into that hole.

He was alone, alone with his thoughts, which only made matters worse. His mom had left to go get food from the cafeteria, but promised she would be back as soon as she could. That was fine—he wanted his mom to eat. He needed her to be okay. He needed her to take care of herself; he knew she had been beyond worried about him, and that she would forgo her own care in favor of helping him, but he didn’t want her to do that. She shouldn’t have to stop her life just because his had stopped. Still, he wished there was someone else here, because being all alone in the dark only brought about bad memories—memories he wished to forget all together.
He tried to focus on the heart monitor, something the doctor had said he didn’t need any longer, but he had insisted he stay hooked up to it. It was the only thing he could latch onto now, the only thing that kept the buzzing away—when he was left by himself, that was. Without that one tie to reality, he would be lost to the horrors of his subconscious—the horrors of his own memories. The monotonous beeping helped to keep him grounded—helped keep the buzzing away.

He shifted his position so that he was sitting up instead of lying down. It took more effort than he cared to admit, simply because it was still difficult for him to move his left arm. He couldn’t feel his right arm, and absentmindedly wondered if it was even still there, but the slight pressure against his chest confirmed that he still did have the appendage, even if he couldn’t feel it.

His stomach growled, signalling that he needed to eat, but food was the farthest thing from his mind at the moment. The nurses had brought him lunch a short while after his friends had left, but he hadn’t touched it yet. He hadn’t had the appetite to. He knew he needed to eat, but couldn’t bring himself to do it, not unless he was at death’s door—he absolutely hated that he thought that way; he knew it was wrong, but couldn’t force himself to think differently. He wouldn’t—couldn’t—do it unless he would physically collapse otherwise. He knew, because it had happened before, and he he hated that he knew that. Even thinking about food made him nauseous, causing his stomach to roil and lash out at him. He thought he might be sick. The thought of food, its acerbic foulness, made him want to heave. He forced himself to not think about it.

The heart monitor sped up.


He was safe, not in that place. He didn’t have to worry about the food anymore…and yet, it still haunted him. He tried to control his breathing..

Breathe in.
One...
Two...

Breathe out.

He clutched his chest, trying to stifle his beating heart. The heart monitor slowly returned to a normal pace.

One...
Two...

Repeat.

After repeating this process for a good five minutes, Izuku was finally able to calm himself down.

He hated this. Absolutely despised it. He couldn’t even think about something as mundane as food without being brought back to that place, that hell. What was wrong with him? Why, if he was safe, did he still feel trapped? Why couldn’t he just move on, move past this?

He shuddered, taking in a shaky breath as he calmed himself. He was so frustrated, but working himself up over it wasn’t going to help.

He sighed, a deep, morose exhalation.
There was nothing to do here. It was boring and left him with nothing other than to dwell on his thoughts—something he tried not to do nowadays. His thoughts had betrayed him long ago, giving into the nightmare that had been his reality for six weeks, six whole weeks. He had been trapped with them for six weeks. Part of him wondered how he had even managed to survive for so long. Why had they even kept him alive for so long? It didn’t make sense. He couldn’t dwell on it now. His thoughts wouldn’t allow it; they were at war with him as it was. He didn’t need to add another enemy to the fray.

*What happens now? I can’t be a hero—no—I’m still going to be a hero.*

*How can someone like you be a hero? You can’t even feel your arms anymore.*

*My arms will heal! Recovery girl can—Can what? You have no feeling in your right arm, and you haven’t for too long now. Her quirk speeds up the healing process, it can’t reverse damage that excessive. Face it, you’re just Deku now.*

*I refuse to believe that!*

*It’s true, and you know it. You can’t even see now. How are you supposed to be a hero?*

*I will be a hero. My eyes, they never did anything to them. I know they didn’t. So, it has to be something else, it has to be…*

*Heroes are supposed to save people, you couldn’t even save yourself.*

*I—I…What do you want me to say? That I’m giving up? Because I won’t—I can’t—I refuse.*

There was a knock at the door. It startled Izuku out of his war torn thoughts, for which he was oddly thankful. He hesitantly glanced at where he thought the door was, “C-come in.” His voice sounded meek, and he hated it.

There were so many things he hated nowadays.

Mostly, he just hated how weak he had become.

He heard the door open, perking his ears to listen for the footsteps. He heard something click, and a soft hum ran through the room. He figured the lights had been turned on, but his world remained the same: dark and completely void.

Toshinori ran—well, walked at a rather fast pace—through the hospital hallways to young Midoriya’s room. He had been here earlier, but had been pulled away by Naomasa earlier to get some food, and review the ongoing investigation. He had learned some pretty interesting, if gruesome, details about Midoriya’s time in captivity. None of it sat well with him. Whoever had taken Midoriya had done so with a specific purpose—this hadn’t been a crime of opportunity. They had targeted Midoriya.

He was nervous, to say the least. He wasn’t sure if Midoriya was even awake yet, and some part of him hoped he was still resting. As much as he wanted to talk to Midoriya, he had seen the state he had been in earlier, and he knew the kid needed rest more than anything right now.
He paused once he was at Midoriya’s door, fear having taken him hostage. He wasn’t sure if he should disturb him right now, maybe it wasn’t a good time. Still, despite his fears and anxieties, Toshinori’s curiosity won out. He knocked on the door slightly, he heard a hesitant voice tell him to come in, and pushed the door open.

The room was dark, with the curtains drawn and the lights turned off. Toshinori thought that was odd, considering the kid was definitely awake and lucid. He flipped the light switch and watched as the room was enveloped in the harsh fluorescent lights of the hospital. He noticed how Midoriya had gazed slightly to his left and wondered if the boys sight had been impaired at all.

“Young Midoriya—” he stopped mid sentence when he noticed how Midoriya seemed to flinch at the name slightly. His heart dropped for a second. He decided he’d drop the name for now, “—Kid, how are-how are you feeling?”

It physically hurt him to see Midoriya like this, to see him so afraid of...of everything. He had even flinched at his own name, and Toshinori couldn’t help but wonder if the flinching had been a conditioned response—something he had learned through...through torture. It wouldn’t have surprised him if that was the case, but it was still a heartbreaking sight.

Midoriya, or rather Izuku—he wondered if he would prefer to be called that now, since calling him by his surname seemed to elicit fear—looked to his left, and Toshinori seriously wondered if the kid was seeing clearly—his eyes looked fine, that same brilliant emerald hue, but they weren’t focused on anything—before speaking hesitantly. “I-I...” he looked down, as if ashamed of himself, “I don’t-I don’t...I’m not—” He stammered; his voice was barely a whisper, but Toshinori had heard it if it were scream.

Toshinori gulped, hurt and pain flashing through his blue eyes before he took a hesitant step forward. Izuku was a headstrong person, he knew, and to see him look so defeated physically hurt him. Right now, he looked as broken as he had sounded. He was so small, thin and skeletal, with a pale complexion that spoke of darkness. Toshinori couldn’t be sure, because of the bandages wrapped around his torso, but he thought he saw scars, red and healing peeking through from under the hospital garb. His right arm was in a sling; it didn’t even twitch when he shifted positions, it just sat there, dead. His eyes though, were the worst. They were ringed by black and blue, signalling his lack of sleep, but what really scared Toshinori was how haunted his green orbs appeared. They no longer held that bright light of determination, instead they were dull, a green pool of murky despair.

“That’s-well, that’s understandable.” He started to walk forward slowly, mindful of the tense posture Izuku was regarding him with. “Afterall, you were put through quite the traumatic—”

“That’s not-I...” Izuku seemed at a loss for words, his gaze, which was fixed somewhere above Toshinori’s left shoulder, appeared to be so distraught, and all Toshinori wanted to do was give Izuku a hug and tell him that everything would be alright, but he stopped himself. Something told him that physical contact right now would be a bad thing.

Tears formed at the base of Izuku’s eyes, washing out the despair with frustration. “I-I need-I mean...I’m a-” he ducked his head again, “I’m a failure.”

Toshinori’s mind stopped, and his breathing halted. This wasn’t something he was prepared for. He suddenly felt very lost. This wasn’t supposed to happen—something like should never have happened to Izuku. He didn’t deserve this.

“Kid-Izuku, no...” he kept his tone gentle as he put a hand on Izuku’s shoulder. The sudden jolt from Izuku surprised him. It had been so forceful, so fear filled. He retracted his hand immediately. “How could you ever, ever, feel like a failure?” He was genuinely curious. He knew enough about
trauma victims to know that this wasn’t an uncommon theme—feelings of defeat and failure—but Izuku was so determined, so resilient and incredibly brave. He had thought—hoped—that he would think of himself as strong for surviving so long, for continuing to live and not give up, but of course, fate was not kind.

“I am though…a failure. I couldn’t,” he squeezed his eyes shut, tears running rivers down his face, “I couldn’t escape. I was there for so long and I didn’t—even fight back, couldn’t escape. And then—then…” his voice rose, cracking in several places. It was clear to Toshinori that he was at his limit. “I can’t even feel my arm anymore…and what’s worse—what makes this even worse is…” he lingered. Then turned his gaze to Toshinori, though it was off center, “I can’t see.” his voice trembled, a tribute to how earth shattering this news was. “How am I—” his voice and resolve broke. He fell into a whisper. “How can I be a hero now?”

A chill spidered its way up his spine and to his neck. The utter defeat and lifelessness in Izuku’s tone as he spoke those words would plague his mind. It was only after that chill had passed that the reality of what Izuku had just said sank in. His arm, he couldn’t feel it…and his eyes, his eyes could no longer see. Just what the hell had they done to this kid, to his kid?

Toshinori staggered back. He needed to sit down for a minute—though he didn’t. If he sat down he knew he wouldn’t be able to keep his composure—he would fall apart completely. His mind reeled. He needed time to think, to pull himself together.

“I just—tried to defy them, but it never—” there was an inhale of breath, “I was just so…so weak.”

Toshinori’s mind frayed out. All processes stopped. “No,” words were leaving his mouth before he had a chance to think about them, “don’t ever think that, Izuku. You were—are not weak. They had a plan. This wasn’t something done on a whim. They planned accordingly, and didn’t give you a chance to fight back. So don’t—I don’t ever want to hear you saying that you are weak or a failure.” His tone was bordering on desperate now. He wanted—needed—Izuku to understand: this wasn’t his fault.

“But—” the inflection on his voice spoke volumes for the words that refused to leave his lips. He didn’t believe him.

“Izuku,” Toshinori had regained himself enough to say this, because he knew it needed to be said. “What happened to you was in no way your fault. You did what you had to in order to survive. Don’t ever forget that.”

Izuku turned away from him, shamefaced. Tears were falling, unbidden, from his cheeks, and Toshinori could tell that the dam was about to break.

“You don’t understand.” There was a finality to his voice, an edge that dared Toshinori to deny it.

Toshinori sighed heavily, a cold, dead weight, falling into the pit of his stomach. “I—I…No, I don’t understand. You’re right, but you have to know…you are strong. You survived because—”

He was cut off by Izuku’s harsh reply, “No, that’s not—I don’t mean it like that.”

“Then…what do you mean?”

“I—they…those people. The ones who had me—they, they wanted information.”

Toshinori had assumed this was the case, but there was something off about Izuku’s voice when he said that, as if that wasn’t all there was to it. “That would make—”
“But,” he spat the word out like venom, “It’s one thing for them to hurt you because you’re withholding information…”

Toshinori paled slightly, not liking where this conversation was going.

“It’s another when they—when they…just hurt you because they can, because it’s fun.”

He froze. He knew he shouldn’t have been surprised—he knew the people who had taken Izuku had been sick and twisted, but it still hurt. It hurt a lot, to see Izuku in so much pain, to see him struggling so much.

“Izuku—”

Izuku swallowed thickly, “I-I just-you know,” he turned to look at him, though his gaze was focused a little to the right of his actual face, “When they want something from you, it’s like a small victory everytime they hurt you, because-because you know, you know that they’re only hurting you because they’re frustrated with you…but when they do it, and they don’t want information there’s just-there’s nothing. Absolutely nothing you can do, and you feel so weak and powerless and pathetic.”

“You’re not-you know you’re not any of those, right? You’re not weak or pathetic. You’re incredibly—”

“None of that matters when they’re hurting you! Who cares how strong you are? It still hurts! And—and you still feel pathetic afterwords for crying out-because it hurt…It just hurt so—so much.” His voice twisted halfway through the sentence, morphing from a frantic shout to a pained hiss.

Toshinori opened his mouth then immediately snapped his jaw closed, cutting off anything he was about to say. How was he supposed to respond to that?

He vaguely noticed a dampness cascading down his own gaunt cheeks, but that didn’t matter right now. The only thing that mattered to Toshinori at the moment was making sure that Izuku didn’t blame himself for this. For any of it.

He strode up to Izuku’s bedside and ignored the slight flinch that Izuku gave at the sound of his footsteps—something he would later berate himself for, but right now he needed to do…something—anything to let Izuku know he wasn’t alone, that it wasn’t his fault. He knew Izuku had formed some sort of aversion to physical contact, but he needed to show Izuku that he was there for him, that he would always be there for him. He pulled Izuku into a hug and held him tightly.

Izuku flinched slightly, again, Toshinori would reprimand himself for that later, but right now…right now Izuku needed this.

“I’m so sorry…” Izuku sobbed into his shoulder, no doubt dampening the shirt Toshinori was wearing, not able to keep himself together once the comfort was there. “I-I failed-I failed you. I’m a failure of a successor.”

“No. No, you’re not. You could never fail me.” Toshinori consoled as best as he could.

“I can’t—how can I be a hero? How can someone like me, blind and weak ,” he said the words with such revolt that Toshinori’s heart froze, “be a hero?”

Toshinori gripped him harder, “We’ll figure it out. I promise. I promise . I’m not giving up on you, kid, no matter what. So you can’t give up on me either, okay?”
“I-I” Izuku stammered between sobs, overcome with emotion.

“I don’t care what obstacles we face. I chose you to be my successor for a reason, and this,” he didn’t move his arms to emphasize, but his inflection spoke for him, “this doesn’t change anything. We will figure it out. So don’t keep blaming yourself. You can’t keep blaming yourself for this.”

Izuku sniffled and clung to him tighter, but said nothing else. They remained that way for a long while, neither Toshinori nor Izuku willing to leave the comforting embrace. It was nice, and for the time being, Toshinori had no doubt that Izuku would be able to heal. It would take awhile, but he could—he would do it.

Izuku was exhausted. His day had been…hectic, to say the least. It was all a bit much for him to comprehend if he was being honest. Too many things had happened today for his liking, and he just wanted to…rest, to fall into dreamless sleep. He doubted he’d be able to, nightmares were a common companion to him now, but the thought of sleeping was so endearing, he thought he might give it a try.

He hoped that sleep would give him time to just assess everything. Time to process his current situation. Time to heal his body…his mind. Time to just…put himself back together, pick up the broken pieces because that’s what he was right now: broken. He needed to be okay, to know he was safe, to just not be…what he had become in that place.

He just…He needed time.

He needed to process everything.

He was still trying to sort through the information the neurologist had told him when she had come to visit him sometime after Toshinori had left. Her visit had been fairly short, but it had left him with more anxieties than comforts.

She had been very kind and understanding, keeping her voice gentle, and talking him through everything she did. It had been comforting to not have to guess what the people around him were doing. It was something he hadn’t even thought of, but when she did it, he noticed how much safer and how much more relaxed he had been, even if it was only slightly. He still tensed whenever a random sound invaded his hearing, but she was always quick to give an explanation and never got frustrated with him, even when he had been rather difficult to deal with.

She had explained to him what she thought was wrong. She had told him that there was nothing physically wrong with his eyes. That had sent him into a spiral. How was it that his eyes were fine, and yet, all he could see was an eternal night, an endless sea of black?

She had explained that a possible explanation could be what was referred to Functional Neurological disorder, or more commonly known as Conversion disorder. He hadn’t known what that was, but she had explained it to him with practiced ease. It wasn’t common, but it did happen, and more often than not, it appeared in people who had been through trauma.

*Like me*, he thought dejectedly.

She had told him that it could go away, that stress was usually a factor in its stability, so there was hope that he would be able to see again. That knowledge had put him in a better mood. His eyesight
wasn’t gone permanently. There was a chance that his eyesight would return —that it could return as soon as a couple days. Though she did warn him that this was a tricky thing, something there just wasn’t a lot of solid research on. She couldn’t give him an accurate estimate on when, or if, his eyesight would return. There were still a lot of unknowns, and that left him slightly panicked.

_I could be blind for a few days... or forever._

For now, he decided to just let it be. His body ached, but he was able to ignore it in favor of resting. His entire being wanted to just fall into oblivion, and yet, it refused. His body longed for sleep, having been deprived of it for such long bouts of time, but his mind couldn’t stand the thought of sleep—sleep equated to nightmares and even more twisted horrors. Even if sleep hadn’t been a solace for him lately, he knew his body needed it, and hopefully, his mind would allow him this one grace.

Today had been harrowing. Inko was well aware of that fact. It hadn’t even been a full twenty-four hours since her baby had been recovered and already so much had happened—too much for her worried self to handle.

She watched as Izuku slept, exhausted from the days events. Watching the simple rise and fall of his chest comforted her; watching him sleep reminded her that he was alive, that he was safe now.

She thought back on the days events with a heavy heart. She was honestly surprised that Izuku had been as coherent as he was, considering what she had been told of his condition. The doctor had said they wanted to keep him here for a few more days to monitor his health and wait until he could get a psych eval before discharging him. Even if she understood why they needed to do that, she still didn’t like it. The thought that her baby could have been hurt so much that his sanity was in question—the rational part of her mind told her that that was not the reason they wanted to give him a psych eval, and that it was just a standard procedure for trauma victims—had her mortified.

She shoved those worries down. There wasn’t any point in her worrying over it right now. She needed to be strong for Izuku right now. She needed to be there for her baby now more than ever before. It was imperative that she remained calm and collected.

Another issue pressed at her now. What was she going to do about Izuku’s schooling? Obviously, he wouldn’t be going back to school for a while still, not until he was deemed in good enough health, both physically and mentally, but she wasn’t sure if she wanted him to remain at U.A. She knew he loved it there, but this—this had happened because he was a U.A. student. He had been taken on his way to the dorms and just being at U.A. made him a target for villains.

However, she thought about all his friends. How they had come to visit him today, and how grateful he had seemed to see them. They had made him happy—they had been there for him when no one else had. They had helped him in so many ways before, and she couldn’t just rip him away from that. She couldn’t—she wouldn’t.

For now, she wouldn’t think about it. She would just focus on Izuku and his healing. He needed her, and she was going to be there for him no matter what. With determination set in her mind, she sat and watched her son sleep. She wouldn’t think about the horrors he had faced, was still facing, instead she was going to focus on helping him, on making sure he was okay.
She was reaching out for that silver lining in the clouds.

Chapter End Notes

I'm not sorry for that incredibly cheesy ending line. Also, if I got any facts wrong, please don't hesitate to call me out on it. I tried to do research for some of these things because I want this to be accurate as well as entertaining, so if I got anything wrong, please let me know! Chapter five is well under way, I have about six pages written so far, and it's coming along nicely. So, hopefully that will be out in a timely manner. Hope ya'll have an amazing day and as always, if you liked the chapter feel free to leave a comment down below, I really love hearing from ya'll~!
Izuku stared at the ceiling absentmindedly, seeing a black nothing, as usual. For once, his mind had decided to leave him alone enabling him to just sit quietly and relax. He was bored, yes, but he’d take this boredom over his mind’s thoughts any day. This was… nice, he decided. Not great or even good, but nice.

He thought back to this morning, when a psychologist had come to visit—to analyze him—his mind supplied ruefully. He didn’t like the feeling that had accompanied him the entire time; he felt judged and scrutinized. It was necessary, he knew, but the idea of someone picking apart his mind like that was disturbing…it was too similar to…He shook his head, not allowing his mind to drift. Instead, he thought about what the psychologist had told him, what he had asked. Izuku had been uncomfortable the entire time, something the psychologist no doubt picked up on, but he couldn’t help it. Anxious and jumpy was his new normal—actually it had always been his normal, now it was just heightened.

He had been told that they wanted to keep him here for a few more days, just to make sure his injuries were healing properly. It made sense, he guessed, since he had been in rather rough shape before they rescued him. He didn’t want to remember all the injuries he had sustained.

His thoughts derailed suddenly as a bone jarring pain washed down his back, bringing about a familiar stinging sensation and caused him to wince. The bout of pain ended rather quickly, but it still took him some time to pull himself together.

He knew that that was only half of it. It hadn’t been that hard to figure out; he had been gone, taken and held captive, for a long time, something he was still trying to get a grasp on. It made sense that they wouldn’t think he was well enough to leave, mentally that is. Some part of him agreed with that, but most of him just wanted to go home and forget this nightmare.

Six weeks. Six weeks in that hell. That was…a really long time to be at someone else’s mercy. To be…
Hurt, interrogated for information he didn’t have. What they had done... it had been...agony, almost like...wait. No, it wasn’t that bad, was it? It couldn’t have been that bad. It wasn’t a possibility and yet...Had he really been...been...

...Tortured.

He opened his eyes wide at the thought. He hadn’t really let himself think about what had happened, the only times being when he was having a flashback and when he had talked with All Might—or rather Toshinori; Otherwise, he hadn’t let himself really think about it. He had known, in the back of his mind, that what they had done to him was torture—that he had been tortured, but now he was coming to the realization of what that meant.

Torture.

It was such a crude word. This one word held the capability of summing up his time held captive by...by her. He didn’t like it. He didn’t like how this one word was able to encompass everything he had endured. It was ugly and tainted and it wasn’t enough. One word shouldn’t be able to hold that kind of power. What they had done felt like so much more than just the word torture could describe, but it wasn’t. Maybe he could add a few more adjectives to showcase how bad it had been, but it still wouldn’t be enough. It would never be enough.

The horrors that he had faced—and was still trying to process—couldn’t be explained away by words alone.

Something wet trailed down his face, and he noticed that tears had started to fall. That was a another thing he hated. He had always been overly emotional, and he had been okay with that. Being emotional had never really bothered him before, it was just how he was, but now it just made him feel weak. It just reminded him of how pathetic he was, how pathetic he had become.

Izuku started to scrunch up the thin, scratchy material of his hospital blankets into his left fist. He struggled with it, his arm not responding well to his commands, but he managed. He squeezed it as hard as he could—which wasn’t much—trying to let his frustration seep out of him. It was almost cathartic...almost.

He tried to steady his breathing, trying to keep himself grounded. He focused on the heart monitor, letting the rhythmic beeping lull him back into reality. He tensed. As long as he could hear the beeping, something real, the buzzing would be kept at bay. He needed something, since he couldn’t see, to keep him tethered to reality; that incessant buzzing that invaded his ears would only drown out his coherent thoughts and drag him back to that place.

The heart monitor kept a steady rhythm allowing him to relax, if only slightly.

His mom had gone to get food again. He didn’t know what time it was, but she had mentioned lunch, so he assumed it was around noon. He didn’t like assuming things, the uncertainty of it filling him with doubt, but he didn’t have a choice right now. All he could do was sit and wait for her to return, hoping that she wasn’t gone as long as he thought she was.

He had his own lunch that he should be eating, but he wasn’t. He didn’t plan on it either. Food had just become another means of torment for him and if at all possible, he wanted to avoid it at all costs. It wasn’t smart, and it wasn’t practical, but it wasn’t something he was able to just...dismiss either.

“This is so stupid,” he bit out, complaining to no one. He was frustrated with himself over everything. He couldn’t do anything, couldn’t even make his body listen to his commands.
It spawned a sense of hopelessness in him. Things were never going to be the same, he knew that—he knew that, but it wasn’t something he was okay with.

Not in the slightest.

He needed things to be normal, but they weren’t. They probably never would be again either, he digressed. This wasn’t something he could just bounce back from, and he was trying, he really was, but his mind wasn’t up to the task. His mind couldn’t forget, couldn’t let go of the past. His world may have gone dark, but his mind was alive and thriving with untamed horrors.

He let himself fall on the bed, head slamming into the pillows. He squeezed his eyes shut, a stinging pain pushed against his eyes. Before the tears had fallen numbly, unnoticed by him, but now they refused to be silent, they raged and clawed their way down his face. It stung his eyes and it hurt, but there was no way for him to stop.

Why couldn’t he just be better? Why was his mind so insistent on him not recovering? Why couldn’t the nightmare just end?

He was jolted from his inner thoughts when he heard the click from the door. He immediately tensed from the sound.

“Izuku, are you awake?” The question was light and soft toned, obviously meant to not startle him, but it still did.

“Y-yeah, mom…” He offered weakly. He had spent more time sleeping in her company than he had awake, and he felt bad about that.

He felt guilty about it. They hadn’t been able to have so much as a simple conversation since he had been here, safe. The only time they had really talked since he had been rescued had consisted of him crying on her shoulder and clinging to her with all his might—which wasn’t much—as he relished in her being. Otherwise, he had always been sleeping—his body was beyond exhausted, and so he found himself sleeping a lot.

He was surprised, actually, with how well he had been able to sleep. He didn’t care why he had been able to sleep so well, just so long as he was able to.

He heard his mom shuffling somewhere in front of him, and there was a rustling of papers and wondered what she was doing. “M-mom?” His voice cracked, and he had to swallow before continuing. “What are-what are you doing?” The smallest hint of fear slipped through. It was an instilled fear—not knowing what was going on only meant that he couldn’t prepare himself for the inevitable pain.

He noticed immediately how she stopped what she was doing after he had asked. She hesitated, he could feel it. In the way that the air around him seemed to grow tense, the way he could hear her foot tapping the floor ever so slightly. She was fidgeting, he realized, something she only did when she was nervous or trying to hide something.

She was hiding something.

From him.

He just didn’t know what.

“Oh, Izuku, honey—” she sighed, it sounded tired to him, “I’m just going through some stuff for work.”
He couldn’t see her, which sent a painful pang through him, but it felt off. She was lying, but why? He didn’t want to think about it right no—he couldn’t, and so, he brushed it off. It was nothing, he told himself, just something to do with his medication or injuries, and she didn’t want to tell him. He wouldn’t blame her if that was the case. He didn’t want to know. Living through it had been enough, having it reiterated to him as if it were just another injury would be too much.

“Ah, okay. Did you get something to eat?” he questioned, not sure how to start a conversation. That was another thing that irritated him. Striking up conversations with his mom had always been easy, been something he never had to think about, but now…Things were so different now, and it was… going to take him time to adjust.

Honestly, he was terrified.

Eijirou was frustrated. He knew that everyone in class had been discontented with the situation, but he couldn’t stand how…how powerless they all had been, how powerless he had been. It was worse than when Bakugou was taken—that time they at least knew who had taken him and had some sort of idea as to where he was being held. This, however, had been something that nobody had been able to make heads or tails out of. It just hadn’t made sense, sure Midoriya was strong, but so were a lot of his classmates. Why single him out?

He thought back on the events of the past six weeks.

Everything had been so normal, the day Midoriya went missing, the only thing out of place had been Midoriya’s absence. They hadn’t thought anything of it.

*They should have.*

They had thought he was sick, or running late.

*He wasn’t.*

The only person who had seemed concerned at all had been Uraraka, and only because she had texted him multiple times since the night before, and he hadn’t even opened any of them, let alone replied. Nobody had thought something bad had happened.

*They were wrong.*

That’s why it had been such a shock when Aizawa had made the official announcement the next day that Midoriya was missing. It just wasn’t possible. There just had to be an explanation. He couldn’t have just…disappeared, or worse, been taken captive. Midoriya was strong; there was no way he could have been captured by villains. The thought just seemed impossible. Midoriya had to be somewhere safe, not in any danger. Midoriya *was safe*, he had convinced himself.

*He was wrong.*

The fact of the matter was, Midoriya had been taken right out from under them, and there was no trace of him, no way to track him, no way to find him. Eijirou had been among the first to suggest they—as his classmates and friends—find him. Everyone had been on board, their only problem laid in the fact that there was simply no way of even speculating where he could be. They were ordered, by the school and Aizawa, to not interfere with the ongoing investigation.
They didn’t listen, but nothing came of it. With no leads and no access to the resources they needed, they were forced to do nothing. The gravity of the predicament had finally started to sink in.

Of course, the reality of the situation only worsened as the days drew on and no sign of him had been found.

It had been a difficult pill to swallow, knowing Midoriya was somewhere, and there was no way for them to find him. In the end, it came down to the fact that they simply couldn’t do anything. That crushed them.

Aizawa had made it clear that they were not to act on their own, and if they did he would not be as lenient as he had been during the Kamino ward incident. Eijirou hadn’t been happy about hearing that, but, unlike with Kamino ward, there really wasn’t anything he could really do. That realization hurt, it hurt a lot.

Six weeks had passed at an agonizing pace for him. Six weeks without Midoriya in their class. Six weeks of unresolved tension. Six weeks in which their class felt utterly…empty, void, and bleak. Six weeks in which every student in class 1-A felt as though they had failed: failed as a friend, classmate and hero.

Now, even when Midoriya was found, safe, there was still a weight in his chest that refused to leave. He hadn’t gone to see Midoriya yet, the only ones who had were Iida, Uraraka and Todoroki—Midoriya’s closest friends, but he planned to make a visit after class ended. He needed to see Midoriya, see him alive.

He was waiting eagerly for them to come to class so they could tell everyone how Midoriya was doing. He was practically vibrating in his seat, waiting with anticipation.

All his enthusiasm was sucked away the moment he saw Uraraka enter the classroom. She looked as if she hadn’t slept a wink last night with the way she dragged herself through the door. Her shoulders were slumped, and her eyes were haunted. She kept glancing at Midoriya’s desk, and a languished look would cast over her eyes before she blinked, and it was gone. Tsuyu quickly went over to her and started a conversation.

Iida wasn’t far behind, and he didn’t look much better, though he did hide it a little better than Uraraka had. His shoulders were more tense than usual, but they weren’t slumped like Urarka’s. His eyes, however, looked pained. It was the sort of pain one would wear when seeing their world fall apart around them—it was the kind of pain that spoke only of misery.

It reminded Eijirou of the way Iida had looked after his brother had been paralyzed by the hero killer, Stain. Hopeless eyes and sagged demeanor—a shell of a person, really.

This didn’t bode well to Eijirou, not at all. He had been hoping that Midoriya was fine—wishful thinking on his part—but it was obvious with the way the two held themselves that this wasn’t the case. Midoriya was strong, that he knew, but this must have been too much for even him.

Then Todoroki walked in. He didn’t think a person could look as…as mortified and distressed and…shattered as Todoroki looked in that moment. There was just a heavy aura that overshadowed him and darkened the atmosphere. It seemed as if the very air around him was weighing him down, and his heterochromic eyes told a story of despair. They were darker, more subdued than usual. There was no flare to his person.

Something had to have happened to elicit such a downcast feeling from those three.
He walked up to Todoroki, his confidence wavering as he neared him. “Hey, Todoroki, bro, what’s up?” he asked nonchalantly.

Todoroki just shrugged, not saying a word. While Todoroki was known for being a man of few words, something Eijirou thought of as manly in its own right, this felt different, out of place. It didn’t feel as though Todoroki had nothing to say, rather, he was too shaken to say anything—that was worrisome.

“You okay, man? You look a little,” he shrugged his shoulders in uncertainty, “worse for wear.” He tried to keep his tone light, but he couldn’t keep a small bit of concern slip through.

“Yeah, I’m—I’m fine.” He didn’t sound fine, he sounded tired and weary.

“Are you sure? I mean, if you don’t want to talk about it that’s fine too. I just—with all that’s happened, I get it if you’re, you know, not fine,” he stumbled over his words, sheepishly scratching his neck.

“I—” Todoroki clamped his mouth shut. He turned away from him and started to walk away, back to his desk presumably.

Eijirou knew that Todoroki was a very private person. He probably didn’t want to talk about whatever was bothering him. The only person he had ever really connected with had been Midoriya, and now he was the source of Todoroki’s woe—albeit unintentionally.

Eijirou was about to let Todoroki walk away when he was reminded of the reason he had been waiting for them in the first place. “Hey, wait up, Todoroki,” he grabbed his shoulder, and Todoroki stopped in his tracks and glanced over his shoulder, “How is—how is Midoriya doing? Like, I’m just wondering, along with the rest of the class, ya know? We’re all worried about him and you, Iida and Uraraka were the only ones who have gotten a chance to see him, so, I—we were just wondering how he was doing?” His inflection ended up conveying more of a question than a statement.

A dark cloud hung over Todoroki. His entire visage wilted, and his eyes were a pool of hopeless gray and melancholy ridden blue.

Eijirou visibly flinched at the change in demeanor. His mien told Eijirou all he needed to know. “That bad, huh?” his voice cracked slightly at that, and his own eyes conveyed a sense of unease that couldn’t be assuaged.

Todoroki just nodded, before speaking in a low voice that sounded thick, “He can’t see.”

Eijirou stopped. “W-what?” he sputtered, backing away grossly, earning the attention of the entire class, “You’ve got to be joking! There’s no way—no way that’s true. You have to be joking, right?” Kirishima knew he wasn’t. Todoroki wasn’t one to jest and especially not about something like this.

“What are you running your mouth about, Shitty-Hair?” Bakugou yelled, clearly annoyed with the entire situation.

Eijirou gulped and gave a glance in Todoroki’s direction. Todoroki just nodded and went to his seat, wordlessly.

“Midoriya…he can’t—he can’t see…” his voice shook, betraying him. He tried to remain calm, he really did, and to his credit he took the news a lot better than the rest of the class did.

It took a second for that information to sink in, but when it did, the entire class was in an uproar—excluding Iida, Uraraka, Todoroki and, surprisingly Tsuyu, who must’ve been told the news by
Uraraka when they were talking earlier.

Eijirou found it difficult to concentrate on anything else all day long. The only thing he could think about was Midoriya, and the state he must be in.

Izuku had been dozing off most of the day. He had awoken once or twice, only to immediately hear the sound of his mom—she had taken to humming. She said it was because she was bored, but he knew it was so he would know she was always there; it was something he was extremely grateful for.

His body was beyond exhausted, and the drugs that the doctors had pumping through his system—he hadn’t really been coherent when the doctor had been explaining things earlier to him and mom—were no doubt aiding in his drowsiness.

It was during one of those brief moments when he was lucid, that someone knocked on his door. He startled at the sudden noise, lifting his head from the bed and glaring in the direction of the noise with alert, unseeing eyes, before his mom was able to stifle his fear with her soothing voice.

Izuku just nodded numbly and sank back into his bed. He figured it was just the doctors coming in to do a check up on his vitals or something. He was not expecting to hear the familiar voice of Kirishima, chipper tone and all, calling out to him.

“Kiri-Kirishima?” he questioned uneasily, because even if the voice sounded familiar, he wouldn’t put it past himself to call out to the wrong person—he had already done that too many times. It was honestly embarrassing, to misidentify someone, even if he had a sound excuse, it still made him feel bad.

“You know it, bro!” Kirishima exclaimed a little too loudly, causing Izuku to flinch at it.

Since he couldn’t see, his hearing had become slightly better, not much, but enough for him to notice the difference.

“Oh, sorry,” Kirishima relented in a quieter tone, “So, ah, how you doing, buddy? You holding up okay?” His tone was worried, but still held that nonchalant easygoingness that Izuku appreciated.

“I-I’m doing…better…” he trailed off. He wanted to say he was fine, he really did, but he couldn’t; he wasn’t fine or good or even okay. He was simply doing better than he had yesterday, which wasn’t saying much, but it was improvement he guessed.

“That’s good, buddy. We were all worried about you, ya know,” Kirishima’s voice was light, Izuku noted, and optimistic.

Izuku could hear him moving, his gait was loud, and Izuku had no trouble following the noise as Kirishima ventured closer to him. He knew Kirishima wasn’t always the best at being stealthy, but it was almost as if he was purposely making himself louder—almost like he knew Izuku couldn’t see, and Kirishima was trying to make sure he could still keep awareness of the situation by way of sound. He smiled at the realization; it was a nice gesture that he appreciated a lot.

“Oh-oh, I-I’m sorry—” Izuku grew uncomfortable at this. He didn’t know how to respond to that. He knew everyone had been worried about him, it was something he had thought about repeatedly over
the past six weeks, but now he was safe. Now, everything should be okay, but it wasn’t.

“Hey, man, no need to sound so down. Everything will be fine, now that you’re back!” He could practically hear the grin in Kirishima’s statement. Hearing Kirishima sound so confident, in a way, lifted his own mood. He let a small smile sprawl across his face.

“Stupid, Deku,” a familiar voice growled.

Izuku froze, he hadn’t known anyone else was in the room; and, that voice had spurred a fear in him, an old fear, a fear instilled in him since childhood. “Kacchan?” his voice broke like glass when he spoke, but that could have been because he still wasn’t used to talking.

“Of course it’s me, Deku.” His vice was still angry, but it was more subdued than usual.

He tried to laugh, but it failed miserably. “I guess I can’t be your rival anymore, Kacchan…” his voice was morose and defeated, masked by a cheery and nonchalant façade.

The entire room went silent. The only person he had voiced his feelings of defeat and resignation had been All Might. He hadn’t even told his mom about it.

“What stupid shit are you going on about? Just because you got a little roughed up doesn’t mean you get to decide that kinda stuff.” Kacchan’s voice was venomous, yet there was a tinge to it, something akin to distress that ghosted at the edges of his words.

Kacchan didn’t stay any longer, instead, Izuku listened as he stormed out of the room, slamming the door on his way out.

He just stared in stunned silence. The echoes of his footsteps engraving their way into his memory.

“Sorry about him…” Kirishima chuckled nervously, “He was worried too, ya know. He doesn’t show it the same way, but he was definitely worried about you.” There was a seriousness about the way Kirishima said it.

As much as past interactions screamed in opposition, Izuku believed Kirishima. Kacchan had changed since entering U.A. Even if he still struck up a spike of fear within him, it was nowhere near as bad as it had been at the beginning of the school year.

“Anyway, I should probably go. There’s still a ton of people who want to see you…” Kirishima trailed off.

Izuku nodded numbly before realizing what he had just said. “Wait, what do you mean there’s still a ton of people who want to visit?” It was only after he asked the question that he realized how dumb that sounded. Of course, class 1-A would come to see him. He was just kinda in a daze at the moment, and Kacchan’s words had ignited something within him. What that was, he couldn’t say for sure.

Izuku sighed in exhaustion. He could barely keep his eyes open. It had turned out that the entire class had come to see him. He didn’t know why he was surprised by that, maybe he had thought they would have spaced out their visits or, perhaps, he just hadn’t wanted to think about it. He knew they would have questions, questions that he didn’t want to tell them the answer to.
He had to admit that it had lifted his spirits a lot, just hearing the voices of his friends and being able to talk to them. Well, they mostly carried the conversations, and he would just sit and listen, but it was still nice.

No one had brought up the fact that he couldn’t see, or asked about his arm, and when it would heal. He knew they were curious; who wouldn’t be? However, he was grateful that no one had brought it up because he didn’t know if he would have been able to handle another emotional breakdown.

He had no idea what time it was, but his mom had told him to try and get some sleep so it must’ve been pretty late. He tried to sleep, but his mind was alive and unwilling to let him fall into the lull of sleep.

He thought back to earlier that day, to when Kacchan had visited. He was surprised that Kacchan had actually come to visit, considering their rocky friendship, but he hadn’t stayed long, so maybe he had been forced to tag along with Kirishima.

One thing Izuku didn’t understand was why he had sounded so angry. It wasn’t odd for Kacchan to be angry all the time, but this was different from those other times. For one, he hadn’t sounded angry with Izuku himself—something that struck him as odd—but rather, his anger was directed at something beyond Izuku. Maybe the person who had taken him? Or just the situation in general? He didn’t know, but it had been odd nonetheless.

Another thing was what he had said; he had never been encouraging towards Izuku, but lately—ever since their fight—he had held himself differently when regarding Izuku. His demeanor had become more of a challenging one instead of overshadowing.

His words, while harsh and crude to an outsider, spoke a different tone to him. They weren’t kind, by any standards, but they weren’t meant to discourage him, either. They had done quite the opposite actually. Kacchan was right, he couldn’t just give up—he wouldn’t give up, no matter what.

She stood at the threshold of the basement steps, glancing at the broken door with cold, golden eyes. A wicked smile had spread across her face, and she preened at the realization. The heroes must’ve finally come and rescued their missing hero kid. She laughed internally. Giddily, she went down the steps leading to the basement. Her partner followed suit.

She looked over the ruins that the heroes had left in their wake, a few walls smashed and chains broken, nothing that couldn’t be fixed. She sneered at the damage done, but thought little of it. Now that their base had been compromised, there was no point in getting angry over damages that they wouldn’t need to fix. This would be the last time she would visit this place anyway. She had been gone for a little over three days, and in all honesty, she wasn’t all that surprised that they had finally found them. They hadn’t gone out of their way to hide him—but precautions had been taken to prevent them from finding him too soon.

Internally, she thought that it had taken them a long enough time. She had had a full six weeks to have her fun, and she had made the most of it. There was still a couple things she wished she’d been able to do, but those would just have to wait until another opportunity arose.

A voice, more masculine and lower, penetrated the stale air. It was worried over the ruins and what that meant for them, but she cooed at him, giving him false security with her candy coated words.
The smile that splayed across her face didn’t need to be seen for the other person to know it was there. She wasn’t in the least bit concerned over their predicament, having already prepared for this in advance—she wasn’t an idiot, she knew who their target had been, how important he was, to both his friends and to their employer. Of course he was going to be found, it had always just been a matter of when.

She bent down in the rubble, and picked up a piece of cloth. It was just a small strip of white, probably from one of the hero’s costumes. It wasn’t important, but she figured she would keep it anyway, maybe it could be of use later.

Her partner seemed to be more distressed over the fact that they had lost their prisoner than she was—she almost looked gleeful. A spark, an insatiable lust for control, ringed its way in her eyes, giving her a slightly crazed look. Their prisoner may have been rescued from his prison, but she wasn’t through with him yet.

She regarded the white cloth-like material once more, scrunching it up in her palm before slowly rising. She turned her gaze to her partner and gave him a warning look. She abated his worries about their employer being angry by stating that they had done what he had asked; though, she wasn’t satisfied. There was still a pressing question she had never gotten an answer for.

*She was going to get an answer, one way or another.*

She chuckled, beckoning her partner to follow her. They ventured deeper into the ruins, searching for something specific. She came to a corner in the basement, the stone was splattered with blood and broken glass had found its way over there as well. However, that wasn’t what she was interested in, no, she cleared away the debris, searching for the device.

She grinned, a nefarious smirk overtook her features as her hand found what she was looking for. She picked up the small device, noticing her reflection on the cracked screen.

*Perfect*, she thought deviously. The game wasn’t over yet, that she was sure of.

Chapter End Notes

So there ya go, some plot is stirring and things will, hopefully, start to pick up pace a little. I still have tons of stuff that needs to happen before I get into the real nitty gritty of the plot, but it’s a start. As always, if you liked it, leave a comment and let me know--I love hearing what you guys have to say~

Until next time, which will hopefully not be too long~
The next few days went by in a blur. The last time the doctor had come in it was just to do some routine tests. Izuku had asked then if he could go home soon, to which the doctor had replied that since everything seemed to be in order, he would be able to be discharged. That had elated Izuku.

A few of his classmates had come to visit often too, they were always ready to talk with him about current events and the goings on at school. Izuku was grateful for that. It meant that he didn’t have to think about anything; he didn’t need to think about the scars that remained on his mind, and body.

He was sitting up in his bed, listening to the heart monitor beep, when the door opened. He knew it most likely his mom, but he still jumped at the unexpected noise. He was getting better at not jumping at every noise, but sometimes instinct overcame his rational side.

“Mom?” He always questioned who the person was when they entered the room. He just needed to know who was in the room with him at all times.

“Hi, honey.” He could hear the smile in her voice. She was in a good mood.

He smiled at her, or where he thought she was. “Are we-I mean, am I able to go home today?” he asked hopefully. He had had enough of the hospital, where everything was stale and washed out—he couldn’t even see, and he was already sick of the white walls that he knew were there, just beyond an inky black curtain.

He heard her chuckle slightly. “A little eager to leave, are we?” she questioned to which he nodded. “Everything should be in order; I just have to pick up a few prescriptions, but we should be able to leave soon.”
Izuu let out a sigh of relief at that; he was finally going to be able to go home, things were finally getting back to normal.

The ride home from the hospital passed by in a haze. Izuku dozed on and off for most of the way and fell asleep completely by the time they arrived home.

His mom gently tapped him on the shoulder to wake him up, jolting him awake. Instantaneously, he was up and alert, trying to locate the source of what had awoken him. Once he realized that he couldn’t see anything he panicked, until his mom called his name. “Izuku.” It was slightly frantic in nature, but more worried than anything.

“Mom?” When he realized what was going on an apologetic expression washed over his face. “Sorry, I overreacted, didn’t I?” He mumbled out, shrinking in on himself.

“Don’t be sorry, it’s alright. I shouldn’t have scared you like that.” They both knew that his reaction had been inevitable, but he let it go for now. There was no point in arguing the point anyway.

She helped him get out of the car. His right foot was in a boot, having been mostly healed while he was in the hospital by one of the nurses who had a healing quirk. They hadn’t been able to heal it completely, just enough for him to be able to walk on it, thus he was stuck with a boot. He didn’t really mind the boot, he could still walk with it, though it was a little more difficult, especially since he couldn’t see anything.

They had also given him a probing cane to help him be more independent when walking, but he didn’t want to use it. Using it only reminded him how not okay he was, how much everything had changed. He didn’t use it; instead, he used his mom as a guide to their apartment.

It took him a lot longer to reach the apartment than he thought it would, mostly due to the fact that he hadn’t been active for a long time. This much walking was strenuous on his atrophied muscles. He had to stop a lot, weakly tugging on his mom’s arm to let her know he needed a break. He hated it, but there wasn’t anything he could do about it. His muscles simply couldn’t handle the strain at the moment, and he knew he would need to build them up again.

Once they had made it to the door, he leaned on his mom while she unlocked the door. She helped guide him to the couch where he immediately slumped down unceremoniously, exhausted from the short walk. He would be lying if he said he wasn’t frustrated with his shortened stamina, but it was only to be expected. He was more frustrated with the fact that he had worked so hard to build up those muscles and now, after just six weeks, all his progress had been undone and more.

It wasn’t fair.

He closed his eyes, and took a deep breath. He knew he probably looked no better than he felt, but at the moment he couldn’t care less.

“Izuku,” he heard his mom call, from the sound of it, he guessed that she had moved to the kitchen, “I’m going to make something to eat. If you need anything, just holler, okay.”

He paled considerably, and swallowed thickly, but nodded numbly, before realizing that she couldn’t see him. “Y-yeah, okay mom.” He cringed at how his voice cracked and stuttered.
He dragged a hand over his face in a feeble attempt to...just do something. He didn’t want to think about food, let alone eat it. He knew this was a problem, one he would have to deal with, but now wasn’t the time. It was still too fresh, too raw — he gagged at the thought.

He absolutely despised this—this feeling of utter weakness and shame. He knew that this, all of this, was only to be expected, but that didn’t make it any better. He was supposed to become the next symbol of peace...he was supposed to be a hero, not this...this sniveling coward that jumped at every noise.

He couldn't keep doing this. He needed to do better, be better.

He swallowed thickly and moved positions so that he was slightly more comfortable—it was difficult when he only had one arm to use, but he managed.

It wasn’t too long later when his mom came back into the living room, presumably with food. He had made a motion to get up and try to find his way to the kitchen to eat there, but stopped when he heard his mom.

“I thought that just this once we could eat dinner in the living room.” She said it enthusiastically, as if she were breaking a rule, and in some ways she was. They always ate at the table, never in the living room, but he guessed that it be easier to bring the food to him than it would be to bring him to the food. He hated that, because he knew it was true.

He knew the layout of their home fairly well, but not well enough to navigate it in his current condition. He still hated that fact that his mom was breaking house rules for him like this, it didn’t sit well with him.

He heard her put something on the coffee table in front of him. It didn’t take long before he could smell the aroma of whatever it was that she had made. He closed his eyes tightly and swallowed back the bile that had risen from his throat. He wasn’t going to let his mind trick him, not again.

“I made you some soup,” his mom offered, sensing his sudden tension and apprehension, “It’s nothing special, just a chicken broth. The doctor told me that your stomach had shrunk due to...malnutrition. He suggested that I start off by giving you lighter foods.”

Izuku just nodded at her words numbly, not really paying attention. His sole focus was on the food in front of him. He couldn’t see it, which just made everything even worse. If he couldn’t see it, then how was he supposed to know what it was. What if he was eating...No. It’s not that. You know this. You’re here, at home. Safe. Not there. It’s just soup. It’s not...that.

He steeled his nerves and slowly moved forward. His movements were stiff, uncoordinated, something he equated with not being able to see where the spoon or bowl were, but it didn’t take long for his mom to notice what he was doing. She grabbed the spoon for him and put it in his hand, then directed him to where the bowl was. He felt like a baby, with her guiding him every step of the way, but it couldn’t be helped, and he knew it. It was either this or have her spoon feeding him, and that was something that even his shattered pride wouldn’t allow. As much as he hated this, he could deal with it. He would have to deal with it.

He took one spoonful of the soup and nearly spit it out upon contact. It tasted off, he didn’t know why, but all he could taste was that acerbic, foul, wrong taste, and he couldn’t eat this. It was a battle, but he was finally able to force himself to swallow. He regretted the action almost immediately.

His stomach revolted, a war between his mind and body raged. He knew he shouldn’t be reacting
this way, but his body didn’t seem up to the task of digesting the food—even if it had only been a spoonful of soup. In the end, his body’s urge to rid itself of the food outweighed his mind’s insistence of him needing to eat it. He gagged, soon followed by retching; once he started, he found himself unable to stop himself from heaving up his stomach contents, even when there was nothing left but bile and stomach acid.

It burned coming up; there wasn’t anything for him to heave up besides bile. It left an acidic taste in his mouth, which only further served to throw his mind for a loop. The acidic stench washed over him, sending him back to that place. He was no longer at home, safe; he was back there, at her mercy, and she was trying to…again…He couldn’t do that. He wouldn’t eat it…It wasn’t…It couldn’t be…

His mind was in shambles, unable to even process a single coherent thought.

His breathing was all over the place, his eyes roamed about, trying to search for an exit, but saw only black. He stumbled, unaware of where he was or what he was doing. All he knew was he had to get out. He had to escape.

His heart was banging against his chest as if it were trying to escape. He could hear it pumping through him faster than it should, and it sent a pang through his chest. It hurt. He tried to breathe, but he couldn’t. His chest had closed off.

His leg hit something hard, and he fell down to the ground. Something crashed to the ground and shattered. He flinched violently. The ground felt hard, and cold, so similar to the floor of his cell. No, no, no…I can’t be back. I can’t be back. I just can’t…

He scrambled on all fours, not bothering to get up, the acidic stench all around him now, and he couldn’t focus. He stopped where he was and dry heaved again. It hurt; it burned. He was terrified. He couldn’t escape; there was no escape.

He heard someone calling his name, but it was drowned out by a buzzing noise. His breathing hitched. He was choking on air, trying to calm himself, and failing miserably. At this rate, he was going to pass out. His heart was relentless in its assault against his chest, and breathing was becoming a chore.

He moved until he felt something solid in front of him. A wall? He pressed himself against, pulled his knees up to his chest, and tried to calm down. He needed to think, but he couldn’t. His mind was racing, pulling at every shred of memory he had, trying to figure out what was going on.

Someone grabbed his shoulder. He flinched violently. He whimpered at the realization that he had backed himself into a corner, and there was nowhere for him to run or hide. He was trapped. He was hyperventilating. He couldn’t do anything. He was trapped. Trapped. Trapped. Trapped. There was nowhere to run, no one to save him. He was alone. Alone, alone, alone.

“...ku.”

Someone was calling out, saying something, but it was washed out by the buzzing. That buzzing, it was tearing him apart, drilling holes in his ears, and burying itself in his subconscious. He couldn’t stand it.

“Izuku…” Someone was holding his shoulder steady.

Wait…that was his name. They never called him by that. It had always been Midoriya or Kid, they had even gone so far as to mock his hero name, but they never called him by his given name.
Slowly, he started to bring himself back to reality. He forced himself to breathe, which was a lot more difficult than it should have been.

“Izuku, sweetie? What’s wrong?”

Was that, was that his mom? It couldn’t be though. He was alone, in that basement…right?

“M-mom?” he whispered brokenly. He was at war. On one hand, he didn’t want to be alone, but if his mom was here, that meant that they had captured her too.

“Izuku, honey?”

This was wrong. She shouldn’t be here. Why was she here?

“M-mom…” His voice was frantic, bordering on hysterical, “Why-why are you here? You shouldn’t-you shouldn’t be here.”

“Izuku…You’re safe. You’re not-” she didn’t finish her sentence, instead, she brought him into a crushing hug.

Izuku stopped. This wasn’t…he wasn’t in that basement, he realized. He was safe, at home. Not there. It was as if reality had snapped back into place, and he realized what had happened. All this, because of one spoonful of soup. He couldn’t even have one bite of soup before being brought back to that place. Just how pathetic was that?

He was sick of crying, but the tears had already formed, and they were pushing their way past his eye sockets. He hated this. He was weak. He didn’t cling to his mom this time, but he let himself lean on her. They sat there, for what felt like hours, but couldn’t possibly have been more than fifteen minutes. She never tried to move him, or get him to talk. She simply sat there, holding him close, running her hand soothingly through his hair, whispering sweet nothings in his ear.

He appreciated it. He needed it, more than he thought. It wasn’t long before exhaustion tugged at him, pulling him into oblivion.

Inko carefully lifted her son up from the floor and brought him to his room. She sighed as she settled him into his bed. He looked so peaceful right now, but she knew it wouldn’t last. She just hoped that he could get a good night’s rest. God knew he needed it. She gently ruffled his hair and gave him a kiss on the forehead. She gave him one last longing look before turning away, leaving the room.

She made her way back to the living room, which was a mess. She started to clean up the mess that Izuku had made when he had his…episode. She picked the broken glass from the bowl that had held Izuku’s dinner and threw it away.

She let out a shaky breath, reigning in her emotions. This was…this was difficult. She wasn’t sure how to deal with this. This wasn’t the same as when he got injured fighting villains. Those times his injuries hadn’t been this extensive and, for the most part, his injuries had been self inflicted. This was…this was so much worse.

Inko had to use all of her willpower to keep from crying. Izuku was the one in pain, not her. She shouldn’t be crying,
but dammit, this was taking its toll on her too.

She stared at the floor, not really seeing it. Why did it turn out like this?...She had just made him soup, something light and easy…and yet, he hadn’t even been able to stomach one bite. She had seen it, watched as he internally struggled to fight the urge to vomit. She could tell he was trying, but some things took more than just willpower alone to get through.

All she could do was watch in horror as he lost self awareness. Inko had watched as his eyes lost all focus and became wild. He was no longer in reality, and all she could do was stare in horror as he tried to escape. He had crawled to the corner of the room where he had started to hyperventilate.

She had gone to him, called out to him, only to see him look at her with such panic and fear that her heart had stopped for a moment. It had taken all of her control, and then some, to keep her cool and help bring him back to reality.

Inko sighed, a heavy weight settling into her chest. She needed to be strong for him, he needed her to be strong, but right now, she wasn’t sure she could be.

She wasn’t as strong as Izuku was.

This wasn’t something she could handle alone.

Inko didn’t know what to do, and that scared her. Izuku was her son, her world, and he needed her now more than ever, but Inko couldn’t help but think she wouldn’t be enough.

What if she wasn’t enough?

What if Izuku needed her and she couldn’t be there? What kind of mother would that make her?

Panic welled in her at the thought that she might not be good enough, not be enough for her son.

She curled up on the couch and started to cry. It was selfish of her, she thought, that she felt this exhausted and worn down when she hadn’t been put through nearly as much as her son had. She couldn’t help it though. This was too much. She needed to just...cry, to vent, to let out these frustrations she had.

Her son had been hurt, badly. This wasn’t something she was prepared to deal with. How was she supposed to deal with this?

She let herself breakdown. In that moment she wasn’t the mom who had to be strong for her child. No, she was the mom who had just been dealt a heavy blow and wasn’t prepared to deal with it. As long as Izuku didn’t see her breakdown, then it would be okay; because she reasoned, he needed her to be okay, whether she felt okay or not. And right now, she definitely didn’t feel okay.

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*It was cold. That was the first thing he felt. His body had become accustomed to the cold, but this was so much colder than usual. It was as if the chilling air was conspiring against him, seeping into his bones, freezing him from the inside out.*

*Chains rattled, their echoes haunted him with an eerie tune. The buzzing returned, full force, intermingling with the chains melody to create a cacophony of sound that held him prisoner.*
He looked around, but all he could see was the dim outline of his cell made of slick stone that glinted in the pale light, and rusted bars that kept him caged, as if he were an animal. There was one light, swinging overhead, hypnotizing with its methodical dance. He was entranced, he couldn’t move, and his body grew numb.

He blinked; the scene changed.

He was strapped in a chair. He couldn’t move, he couldn't even feel his limbs. He tried to struggle, but nothing happened. He was trapped.

Trapped.

The word echoed throughout the room, taunting him.

He could hear footsteps coming from behind him. They were light, but confident. He knew that sound, had become all too familiar with it. He tried, feebly, to struggle even more. He didn’t want to see her, to hear her…he didn’t want her to exist. In the end, he could do nothing as she came into view.

Her smile was devilish, a smirk that played at his fears. He struggled to move, to escape; he struggled to even breathe.

She taunted him, brought up his failures. She told him of all the pain she would inflict, all the pain she had already caused. He flinched and closed his eyes willing her to go away. When he opened them again he saw everything in a golden tint, the same hue as her eyes. It was if honey had flooded his vision, and doused everything in its auric color. She was still there, smiling, with a crazed look in her eyes.

She turned away, her long hair gracefully flowing behind her; he couldn’t look away.

His body was wracked by intense pain. It was too much, he tried to scream, but even his vocal cords had betrayed him. All he could do was suffer in a silent, unmoving agony as his mind tried to stay sane.

He couldn’t think. His brain was frayed, and all his thoughts were grasping at every shred of coherence that they could. Everything blurred.

She came back, but now his mom was with her. She was gagged and bound. This time his scream refused to stay mute.

Mom wasn’t supposed to be there. Why was she there? She wasn’t supposed to be here! She was at home, safe from this nightmare, so why, why was she here?

He was panicking, frozen in place, forced to watch in untamed horror as his mom was hurt. There was nothing he could do. She was screaming his name, shouting for him to rescue her, but there was nothing he could do. He tried to summon One for All, but a jolt of pain shot through him so intensely that, for a moment, he forgot everything.

He couldn’t do anything. He could do nothing at all, but watch on in terror.

He was useless.

Weak.

Pathetic.
Izuku shot out of bed, panting, but didn’t scream. He become accustomed to waking silently from nightmares. Screaming did nothing but bring about more pain. He tried to control his breathing, forcing himself to take deep, slow breaths. His eyes stung, but for once, it wasn’t from tears, it was from the sweat that had coagulated on his face. He brought his left arm up to wipe the cold sheen of sweat from his face, rubbing at his eyes to help fully wake himself up. He still felt exhausted, but had no desire to go back to sleep after that nightmare.

Everything was dark, as usual, but he still let out a shaky, uncertain breath. Waking up to total darkness was something he would never get used to, no matter how routine it became.

He shifted to a more comfortable position and noticed something heavy on top of him. A spear of panic shot through him, before the events of earlier came back to his consciousness. He had fallen asleep on his mother’s shoulder after a panic attack—she had no doubt brought him to his room. His room.

He let that realization wash over him. He was home. Safe. He was back in his room, and sleeping on his bed…His bed that should be at the U.A. dorms. Why was it here? Unless…his mom could have brought it back, that would make sense, wouldn’t it? His mind was muddled, and thinking became difficult. This was a problem for another time, for now he was just relieved he had somewhere warm and comfortable to sleep, instead of the scratchy, stiff hospital bed, or the…

He shook his head, not willing to let the unwanted memories come to the surface.

Now was not the time to ruin his relative peace by bringing up bad memories.

Then, shame washed through him. He had freaked out, in front of his mom, over something so stupid, so dumb. Not only that, but he knew if it happened once, it was more than likely going to happen again. That realization didn’t stick with him well. He was safe, at home even, so why was his mind so against him getting better?

He needed to see—or hear—his mom. Izuku needed to know she was okay, that she was safe. That nightmare had left him rattled, and he needed the confirmation that she was okay. He shakily got up, wincing slightly at the uncomfortable feeling that shot up his right foot. It didn’t hurt as much as it just left him feeling a bit unstable.

He tried to remember the layout of his room, but it was all a bit fuzzy. He had no doubt that even if he knew the layout perfectly, without his eyesight to confirm where he was going, he wouldn’t be able to navigate very well. He took slow, uneasy steps in the direction that he thought was the door. It took him a while, but eventually, his hand made contact with the doorknob, and he slowly opened it.

He was about to call out to his mom when he heard her voice. His relief at hearing her voice was quickly drowned by concern when he heard what she was saying.

It was hard to hear, and he felt like he was intruding in on a conversation not meant for him to hear, but curiosity won out in the end. Izuku tried to stay out of her view—which was incredibly hard considering he couldn’t see anything.

“…I know, Mitsuki, I know…but this…” She was talking on the phone, he realized. Her voice was hoarse and thick as if she had been crying.

It didn’t take a genius to know what she was talking about—who she was talking about.

“I know, I know…This is all just a little overwhelming.” His mom sounded tired, very, very tired.
Guilt cast a shadow over him. She was tired because of him, because he couldn’t even get his act together enough to eat one stupid meal. He looked down, and leaned against the door frame.

“Mitsuki…you didn’t see him…He looked so scared and I couldn’t- there was nothing I could do to help him.” She sounded so weary and pained, as if the weight of the world had fallen on her shoulders…

It had, Izuku realized. He was her world—he was the only family she had—and he was…broken.

He wilted at the realization; he had become such a burden to his mom, to everyone.

His eyes became overcast with dark clouds, and he turned around silently, solemnly edging his way back into his room and to his bed. He slumped down on it, sighing as he curled into a comfortable position and just laid there. He had no desire to sleep, but he also didn’t want to get up. He wanted to give his mom a break from him. She had already done so much, and worked herself into the ground for him, all so he could throw it all away by having a freaking panic attack…or was it a flashback? He wasn’t really sure, and had no desire to find out.

He didn’t want to be this weak and pathetic. He couldn’t be, not when people still believed in him. He had to do better—he would do better. He wasn’t trapped in that place anymore, he knew that, consciously, he just needed the rest of him to understand that.

Inko hung up the phone and took a deep breath. She had called her good friend, Mitsuki, in an attempt to help alleviate the overwhelming feeling of hopelessness that had hung over her, but now, if anything, she just felt hollow. She felt as if a part of her had been taken, broken, and smashed.

She had already cleaned up the mess that Izuku had left when he was having his…well she wasn’t sure what it was. It could have been a panic attack, he had expressed many of the symptoms of one, but she couldn’t rule out a flashback either, as Izuku hadn’t looked…present. He had looked so lost and scared, as if he were still trapped, held captive, by those monsters. Anger burned through her at the thought, but she shook it off, not letting herself get worked up over it right now. For now she didn’t want to think about it.

She had picked up all the shards from the bowl Izuku had knocked over and had thrown it away. She honestly didn’t care about the mess, but cleaning had helped taken her mind off of things.

Now…now she just wanted to sleep, to wipe the slate clean and start the day over. Things had been going so great—the day had started off well. It had all gone downhill once they got home.

She should have let him rest longer. She shouldn’t have tried to get him to eat anything, but she had been worried. He hadn’t eaten anything at the hospital, the only nutrients he got were the ones they had put in the I.V., and she had thought that maybe he just didn’t want the bland food the hospital had to offer. Now she understood, just a little bit, why he had been so reluctant to eat. It wasn’t that the the hospital food had upset him, it was just food in general.

That wasn’t enough though. There had to be a bigger reason, there just had to be. His reaction had been too extreme for it to not be a bigger deal. He had reacted as if the food was poisoned, as if eating it would seal some horrible fate for him. It had been horrible to watch, to see him forcing himself to even take one bite, only to immediately spit it out as if it were going to kill him.
She shook her head of the memories, not ready to confront them just yet. Right now, there were others things she could do.

She went to her purse and grabbed some of the files she had acquired. She felt bad that she had lied to Izuku about them when he had asked, but she didn’t want him to worry about her. It wasn’t as if she was going to try to find the people who did this to her son and confront them—the thought was intriguing, but ultimately stupid. She didn’t have the skills to go against villains. No, she was just going to do her best to help the police force in their investigation as much as she could; she needed to help in some way. This was the best she could do.

Naomasa, the lead detective on the case, had talked with her briefly, and she felt as though he were trustworthy. He had given her some of the case files—ones that were made public—that might pertain to this case. She knew he only gave them to her because he understood her need to help, but it was still appreciated.

So, she grabbed the files, went to the computer and started her research. She opened a few tabs, some for the case files and others on trauma victims. She was coming to the realization that she was woefully underprepared to deal with her son in his current state. She didn’t know how to handle him when he was having an episode like he had earlier, but she was determined to learn as much as she could.

Now that her son was safe and alive, nothing would stop her from helping him recover, no matter how long it took. Even if right now it was a lot to bear, she would cope, for however bad it was on her, it had to be worse on her son, and she couldn’t stand that.

Her Izuku was the strongest person she knew, and it hurt, it really hurt to see him so distressed, but she would do everything in her power to help him heal.

Chapter End Notes

Thank ya'll or commenting, bookmarking and giving Kudos!! I really love and appreciate your feedback, whether it be a good review or a critique on something I'm doing that could be doe better!! Also, if you see anything that I'm writing that's inaccurate, lease let me know (I try to do research to keep it accurate, but I make mistakes so let me know when I do!) Anywho, next chapter is in the works, but if any of ya'll have suggestions on things you'd like to see, let me know and I'll see if I can incorporate it in. I have a plot and everything set out, but there's still a lot that I don't have so feel free to leave some suggestions!!
Love ya'll, till next time~
Vera~
It's Not Supposed to go Like That

Chapter Summary

"It's not supposed to go like that
life is a journey, constantly turning
Down an unknown path
But, it's not supposed to go like that"
--Rascal Flatts

Chapter Notes

*laughs nervously* um...it's been a while. Sorry 'bout that. I wish I had a legitimate excuse, but all I can tell ya is it just took forever to write out this chapter and it didn't even turn out the way I wanted... I mean, it didn't turn out terrible, just different from what I had thought~
But hey, at least I wasn't completely unproductive, I got two one-shots done and am in the process of multiple more so keep an eye out for those~
Rzen did an amazing, wonderful job at beta-ing, I would be lost without her guidance~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

During his time in captivity, Izuku had learned that waking up was worse than any nightmare he encountered whilst sleeping.

Sleeping was a luxury he hadn’t had the pleasure of experiencing often; when he did fall into oblivion, his body and mind had simply been too tired to conjure up a nightmare, or at least, nightmares he could remember upon waking—there had been a few instances where he had recalled the horrors his mind had displayed for him, but they had been few and far between. When he was asleep, everything was moot, intangible, void—the emotions as well as sensations may be there, but they were dim when compared to reality.

Sleeping twisted everything, warped his mind’s take on the world into a ghoulish rendition of horror; waking brought about the bleak grimness that was his reality down in that basement. Waking up brought a reality worse than almost any nightmare he had.

He would wake up, only to be racked with an uncomfortable ache that had instilled itself into his being permanently. A cold chill would settle into his bones, as if that was their home. Everything would slowly shift into place; he would be met with that desolate cell, rusted chains would be on display with blood painting the walls. The grim stench of the underground, rot and decay, would fill his nose with their gruesome odor. The crushing weight of his situation would break his will, bend his resolve, shatter his pride.

Before, waking up had been misery.

Now was different.
Now he was safe.

When Izuku woke up the pain was still there, though it was a far cry off from what he had become used to. This pang that rattled his nerves felt more like a whimper instead of the roar it had been. A stiff soreness ran down both his legs and arms, but it wasn’t nearly as excruciating as past experiences told him it could be.

The coldness that should have seeped into him never came, in its stead, there was a weight of warmness enshrouding him, enveloping him with a sense of security that had him feeling safe. He clung to that shred of safety, that sense of comfort, unwilling to relinquish it once he had it. It was only when he shifted, and the weight of warmth slid with him that he realized what it was—a blanket.

The realization hit him hard. He had become so desensitized to material things that the mere presence of a blanket sent comfort through him in waves. He let the solace that the blanket offered wash over him, reassure him of where he was—it tethered him to the here and now.

Izuku curled in on himself, scrunching up the blanket, completely immersing himself with the soft fabric. He let his hand—the left one at least—sift through the folds of it, taking in fleece-like material with fervor.

For just a moment, Izuku felt completely relaxed, cocooning himself within his blankets, taking in the clean scent of them. He forgot about the basement, forgot about the chains, and the gruesome air. It didn’t matter in that moment, because he was home, and that meant everything would be okay.

He stayed like that for what felt like hours, and could have been too, before he decided he should get up. He didn’t really want to get up—he would be content with staying in his room, in his bed, all day, or even for the rest of his life if it meant he could forget reality, but he couldn’t.

He had promised himself he would do better, that he would try, really try to get better, and staying in bed, avoiding reality, wasn’t going to help him. He knew it would take time, he knew that, and yet… he couldn’t help but feel as though he was a failure for his inability to just bounce back. It was a stupid thought, Izuku knew, but that didn’t stop him from thinking it.

With much effort, he forced himself to sit up. Slowly, he wrapped the blanket around him, unwilling to let go of its comfort. He needed it, as much as he hated to admit that. It was like an armour cloaking him from the whispers of that basement.

It took him awhile to untangle his right foot—which was still encased with a boot—out from under the blankets, but eventually he managed.

Izuku took a deep, steadying breath. He blinked slowly, darkness enshrouding everything. Without his sight, orienting himself was difficult. He knew the layout of his room, as bare as it was now since all of his stuff should still be at the U.A. dorms, but that didn’t stop the tendrils of worry from clawing at him. If he didn’t have his eyesight, he couldn’t reaffirm his memory, he couldn’t reassure himself on where he was going. He didn’t like having to rely solely on his memory for this, there were too many variables. What if mom had reorganized things? What if he was remembering things wrong? What if he miscalculated his steps?

He forcibly pushed his doubts aside. He could always call out to his mom, let her know he was awake…but he didn’t want to burden her like that. He knew she wouldn’t mind, that she might even be glad to be able to help him, but he didn’t want to have to rely on her for something as trivial as walking from his bed to his door. Besides, he thought, he had made it to the door earlier (or was it yesterday?) when he had woken up from a nightmare…
He shook his head, ridding himself of the memory. Now was not the time to dwell on his mind’s attempt at destroying his sanity, he chided himself. With his blanket securely wrapped around him, Izuku stood up and took a tentative step forward. It was a slow process, with Izuku doubting almost every other step, but eventually he found the door.

He opened it slowly. He could hear his mom in the kitchen, and he used her voice as a guide to help him find his way to the living room. Each step he took was laced with hesitation as he could only feel his way around the apartment by kicking his legs out—his right arm was in a sling, unmoving and unfeeling, while his left held his blanket securely to him; he wasn’t willing to relinquish his hold on the blanket in order to help him maneuver the apartment.

He had only made it about halfway—or what he thought was halfway—when his shin hit something hard.

He yelped, whether in fear or pain he wasn’t sure. He had obviously miscalculated where he was in relation to everything else.

He heard his mom stop whatever it was she had been doing, and a pang of guilt rang throughout his chest. He knew it was rather pathetic of him, but he couldn’t help but feel relieved by the knowledge that his mom was willing to stop everything to help him, even if it was something as small as him not being able to navigate the small apartment. Again, his chest ached in a guilty fashion.

“Mom?” He hated how his voice wavered.

“Izuku,” her voice sounded startled, but welcoming. “I didn’t think you’d be up so early.”

He tilted his gaze downwards, a hurt, barely detectable, shined in his eyes. One of the biggest things that bothered him about his situation was his inability to tell time.

To him, time meant nothing anymore. He hated it. Minutes washed into hours which blended into days that became months, all without him noticing a lick of it. He hadn’t needed to know what time it was, it wouldn’t have made any difference, even though he desperately wished he could have at the very least had a semblance of it. Time had become waiting for the next onslaught of pain, the next meal, the next reprieve of unconsciousness—those were the ‘ticks’ that told time for him, the ‘tocks’ that he lived his life by; with his eyesight gone, this feeling of a limbo, being caught in between two points, only intensified.

“Oh…What—” he flashed the briefest glance up at his mom, or where he thought she was, casting her a forlorn expression, “What time is it?” Izuku winced at the desperation that had wedged its way into his tone. Knowing when things happened, how long until he could expect something else to happen, were things he hadn’t had the luxury to. He never knew when something—anything—was going to happen, that small sense of control had been stripped off him.

His mom didn’t seem to notice his slight anxiety towards the subject, or at least, she didn’t give any kind of verbal cue to it. “It’s seven thirty in the morning, honey,” her voice remained light as she spoke.

“Oh,” was all he could manage to say. This was the first time he’s been told the actual time, and not just an estimation. For the first time in six weeks—it was still hard to imagine that he had been gone that long—he actually knew the exact time; but nothing had changed, he still felt lost in a void caught between point A and point B. Knowing the time now didn’t do anything for him without a frame of
reference for everything else, though he’d rather not dwell on it at the moment.

He heard her footsteps coming closer to him, and he instinctively flinched, tugging the blanket closer to him, immediately followed by him mentally berating himself for reacting that way to his mom.

Her hand found his shoulder; he forced himself to not physically react to the touch. He felt like a child, following his mom around, having her guide him to the couch presumably—he didn’t actually know where she was guiding him, but the couch would be his most logical guess. However, for once, that knowledge doesn’t make him feel ashamed…rather, he feels safe, knowing that she’s here.

“So, how are you feeling?” she questioned.

They made it to the couch, where they both sat down. He immediately latched onto his mom, shifting up against her. He didn’t care how it may have looked, or how pathetic it may have seemed, he liked the comfort she gave. She noticed this too, as she slung an arm around him, bringing him in closer.

“I-I…not too bad I guess…” he trails off, looking vacantly ahead. “I’m still pretty tired, but—” he scrunches up his nose, “I don’t really wanna sleep right now.”

Instead of questioning him, his mom just hums in acknowledgement, for which he is grateful. After a small bout of silence, his mom shifted positions. Izuku could tell, just by how tense she appears, that she was weighing over something important.

“Izuku, about yesterday,” she starts. Her voice sounded drained, an increasingly normal tone for her, he notices. The knowledge doesn’t sit well with him.

“I’m sorry,” he blurts out, already knowing where she was going to take the conversation, “For, you know, freaking out…I shouldn’t have—shouldn’t have freaked out over something so stupid.” His voice took on notes of frustration mirroring his internal strife.

He could feel his mom running her hand up and down his arm in a soothing fashion. It did calm him a little. He pulls his blanket a little closer to him, savoring in the warmth and comfort it brings.

“Honey, no. Don’t-don’t be sorry,” her voice was porcelain, frail and thin.

“I just—I’m trying. I’m trying really hard to keep it together, but it’s…I don’t know if I…” he lingered, not wanting to finish the sentence.

“Oh, honey, I know you are. I know.”

He let out a mirthless laugh, cynical even. “We’re gonna have to figure out a way for me to actually eat food, aren’t we?” He tried to keep his tone light, but the gravity of the situation pulled it down.

There’s a short pause, Izuku thought she may be nodding to herself, but without his sight, he wouldn’t know.

Eventually, she sighed, another thing Izuku had noticed that she seemed to do a lot more now.

“Yes,” her voice was drawn out, a serious tone accompanied by overtones of sorrow. “Izuku, you have to eat, you’re already skin and bones as it is. You can’t afford to skip meals.”

“I know, it’s just,” he swallowed thickly, “I c-can’t” he choked on the last word, bile rising in his throat at the mere thought of it.

“Izuku, I know it’s hard, but—”

“No,” he bit out desperately, “I know, I know, but…you don’t understand. I can’t…it’s too similar
to…” he trailed off, shaking his head, not wanting to state it out loud. It wasn’t something he wanted to remember, nor was it something he was willing to share. “I can’t eat that…I won’t. I won’t. I won’t.” It became a mantra. The real world ebbed away as he was pulled back into that bleak basement.

“I won’t eat that…it’s not-I couldn’t-how could…?” he whimpered out despairingly.

“Izuku, honey,” he felt something shake him slightly. He blinked rapidly, in an attempt to dispel the darkness—though it never faded—as his mind snapped into the present. He’s not there he reminded himself. he’s here, at his home.


“S-sorry.” He was not sure if he was saying it for his mom or himself.

Inko watched as her baby boy brought himself back to reality. It was painful to watch, but she couldn’t bring herself to look away. The lost look slowly ebbed away from his features, and awareness returned to his glassy orbs.

“Let’s talk about it later, okay?” She didn’t want to bring the conversation up if it was only going to cause him more harm than good. It was something that would have to brought up soon, but for now, she’d give anything for just a normal conversation with her son.

She felt him nuzzle in closer to her. He let out a sigh that could almost be considered happy. “Mhmm.”

He looked tired, Inko thought. With the way he curled up at her side wrapped in a blanket he looked almost peaceful. His breathing started to even out, Inko thought he may have fallen asleep when he jerked his head, blinking rapidly.

“Izuku?” she questioned.

He stifled a yawn, “Sorry. I just… Can we put on a movie or…umm, maybe a podcast? Anything that’s not this… quietness.” He bit his lip, as if unsure how to continue. It was clear that he was uncomfortable with quietness of the morning. She immediately felt bad about that, she should have known that the quietness would bother him. The fact was, there were so many things she didn’t know—so many ticks and triggers that she would have to learn for Izuku’s sake.

“Of course, Izuku.” It came out as a manic stutter, causing Izuku to flinch minutely at her voice before gaining control over himself again. “Why don’t we listen to a podcast? I’m sure there are plenty we could find online that you would like.” Inko didn’t know the first thing about podcasts. She had never listened to one, but she knew Izuku had listened to a few hero ones in the past, so she figured she could find one of those to put on.

Inko hadn’t even noticed what time it was, too enthralled by the podcast they had tuned into. They
had started off with a fairly short podcast, one that went over various heroes from the past. It was nothing particularly interesting, but Izuku had seemed to enjoy it.

The hero podcasts had eventually gotten a bit old for Inko. She loved heroes, no doubt, but all those stories had started to run together and became boring. However, Izuku’s eyes had lit up, and he had even given his occasional quirk analysis on certain heroes—her heart leapt with joy at the sight. It was nice to see the Izuku she knew show through, even if it was only in these short moments. After a while, even Izuku had grown bored of all the hero talk, though she suspected he was only growing tired because he knew she would be. He had asked in a meek voice if they could listen to something else.

She had read off the names of all a ton of random podcasts and let Izuku pick out which one he wanted to listen to. Surprisingly, he had chosen to go with a Sci-fi mystery podcast.

Izuku had always liked mysteries. They forced him to think outside of the box, and offered him a different outlook on things, but she hadn’t thought that ‘sci-fi’ and ‘mystery’ really went well together. Sci-fi wasn’t really her cup of tea, so she didn’t think she would enjoy it at all, but soon she found herself encapsulated by the story, much like Izuku.

They had sat in uninterrupted silence during the duration of the first episode, only discussing it after the episode had ended. Both of them had agreed that the story was much more compelling than they thought it would be and decided to continue listening to it.

They were on the fifth-going into the sixth episode when Inko noticed the time. It was well into the afternoon. Time had flown by so quickly. She noted to herself that she should start on making dinner.

Dinner, she hadn’t eaten anything all day, neither had Izuku.

Their day had been so nice, Izuku had even looked content. She didn’t want to bring up something that would no doubt bring the mood down, but it was necessary. Izuku couldn’t continue not eating. It just wouldn’t do. If things continued this way, she would be forced to admit him to the hospital, something she absolutely did not want to do.

“Izuku,” she waited for him to turn his head in her direction before continuing, “We should take a break for a little bit.” She watched as his eyes fell, a resigned look overtaking his features. It occurred to her that she might have worded that poorly. To him, it might have come off as a final statement, something he would have no say—no control—over, instead of a suggestion, as she had meant it. Guilt came over her instantly. “I need to make dinner, but after that we can continue, sound good?”

She saw Izuku visibly flinch, blanching at the prospect of food. “I-um… Yeah, I guess we should eat.”

She smiled sorrowfully. “Is there anything you feel like eating?” A hopeful tone breached through her own despair ridden thoughts. “Like, anything at all?”

Izuku grew a thoughtful expression, clearly giving it serious thought. He gulped, paling a bit. “I-I don’t know… Not really, but I know I need to have something.”

“Not even something plain, like rice?” she supplied.

His eyes held a panic in them, he shook his head fervently, “No, especially not that.”

Inko didn’t even want to think about why her son had reacted that way to the mention of rice. She was sure she wouldn’t like the answer. She didn’t know what to do, at this point she’d settle to get
him to eat anything.

She sighed; Izuku wilted at the notion. She knew that he felt terrible over, well everything. He shouldn’t feel bad about any of it, but she knew he did.

“What—what do we have?” He gestured anxiously. This was his way of showing that he was trying, really trying to improve. It made her heart flutter.

She started to list off everything she knew they had in the apartment, gauging his reaction to them. She was running out of things when Izuku interrupted her, a complex thoughtful expression on his face.

“Wait… Um-do we have something cold by any chance, like maybe ice cream or something?” His eyes it up in the way they always used to when he thinking about something. He started to mumble, though for once, she couldn’t decipher what his mumblings were about, it was too jumbled and quiet to distinguish anything.

“Ice cream?” she questioned. It seemed like a really random thought, but if it was something he would actually eat then she wasn’t going to complain.

“Um-yeah… I just—I might be able to stomach it because it’s not…” he gestured vaguely, “And it wouldn’t be…” He kept his explanation obscure. Inko assumed it was because he didn’t want tell her the specifics of his reasoning—she could tell he was trying to keep her in the dark over anything having to do with his time spent captured.

Startled, she nodded, before recalling that Izuku wouldn’t be able to see her nonverbal response, “All-right, I think I may have some ice cream in the freezer.” She shifted her position, motioning to get up from her spot on the couch. Izuku jumped slightly, but once he realized what she was doing, he relaxed, clinging to his blanket.

She went to the kitchen and grabbed two bowls. The only flavor she had was Rocky Road, she hoped Izuku would be okay with that, but if he wasn’t she would be willing to go buy some for him.

She returned to the living room, two bowls in hand, to find Izuku still on the couch, but with that lost look in his eyes again. It pained her everytime she saw them.

“Izuku?” she called out.

Reality slowly set in in his green orbs. He turned in her direction, “Mom? Where…” He shook his head, “Sorry, I just… forgot, for a moment…”

A pained smile graced her face, and she closed her eyes. “It’s fine, Izuku. I have the ice cream.”

He perked up at the mention of it.

She sat down next to Izuku, letting him reposition himself so that he was comfortable. She saw him grimace slightly as he shifted and was reminded of the fact that he still had injuries that needed to be tended to, injuries that the doctor’s quirk weren’t suited to heal, meaning they would have to let them heal naturally.

With her help, Izuku took his bowl of ice cream from her and tentatively took a bite. She waited as he tasted the ice cream, a myriad of emotions shifting through his face, but he was able to keep it down, for that she was thankful.

His eyes shone bright, a sparkling emerald hue that made her heart soar with joy. It wasn’t much, and
it most certainly wasn’t healthy, but it was a start. If she could just make a list of the foods that he would be able to stomach, then she could talk to a nutritionist over a new diet for him. For now though, she opted not to think about it, instead pressing play on the laptop for the next episode of their sci-fi mystery podcast. She really was invested in how it everything was going to pan out, and Izuku seemed just as interested.

Naomasa had seen many a gruesome cases in his line of work, that didn’t mean he ever got used to it. This case was one of those cases would would haunt his nightmares for many nights to come.

He had gone back to the crime scene to investigate for any clues over the past few days. He hadn’t anything to show for it, nothing new had been found. However, Naomasa had reason to suspect that the culprits had returned to the scene sometime in between them rescuing Midoriya and returning to investigate the basement. Something Eraserhead had said about the area when he had rescued Midoriya, something that had been left on one of the tables but was gone by the time the investigative team had come in.

It could have just been a lapse in memory, Eraserhead had even said himself that he just vaguely noted it, but something told him it wasn’t.

The basement had been bare of most everything, the only things there had been some of the heavier torture devices—the kind that couldn’t be easily moved or were chained to walls, floor, and ceiling of the basement. The thought that anyone, let alone a fifteen year old kid, would be subjected to this made him sick.

There was a bench off in the corner of one of the rooms. It was wooden, with straps—broken, or snapped—hanging limply from the sides. Bricks were piled in a heap off to its side.

*The Tiger Bench* his mind supplied him. A deep anger swam in his eyes, as he transfixed himself on the bench. He knew what it was, what it was used for—the pain it caused. It was one of the tamer—if you could call any form of torture tame—torture devices that he had seen here, but it was still a repulsive sight.

Midoriya was just a fifteen year old kid.

He shouldn’t have had to endure this kind of abuse.

*No one should.*

People did go through it though, and more often than he cared to admit.

Villains were cruel; they didn’t care whose life they destroyed to attain what they wanted, sometimes *all they wanted* was to destroy another person. It was a bleak outlook to have, but years of witnessing the worst of humanity had groomed the more pessimistic side in him. Still, he held hope for better days, held faith in the pro heroes who defended them everyday.
She cursed under her breath. She hadn’t expected anyone to be here, in her basement right now—actually she hadn’t even thought she would be here, but there was one thing she had needed to do before she could leave this site in good conscious. The investigative team had already left, swept the place of all evidence she might have left behind. That damned detective just didn’t know when to let bygones be bygones she thought ruefully.

He was smarter than he looked. She had heard him muttering about a piece of evidence that had been snagged, a piece of evidence that she had come back for. She had been an idiot for leaving it here in the first place. It wasn’t as though she knew the heroes were going to rescue the brat that day, but even so, she never left the basement without it.

It didn’t hold sentimental value or anything of the likes, she cared not for those things, but she had had it since she had first become a hitman. It was her favorite torture method: crude, plain and easy to elicit a response from. It was a wonder how a measly pair of pliers could cause so much pain. She could hear him mumbling to himself again, going on about something or another, nothing she particularly cared to hear about. What she needed was for him to leave; staying hidden for this long wasn’t going to cut it for her. The detective was standing in the main room, right off the basement steps. She was off in a room to his left.

It would be easy to get out now, but if she wished to remain undetected then she would have to wait for him to leave. She would rather not be discovered as it would just make things more difficult if she were spotted.

She shifted on her feet; rubble on the floor shifted with her as well. The sound created a small echo. A slew of curses slipped past her tongue.

Naomasa was going through his phone, searching through his photos, when he heard a sound. At first he brushed it off as a rat or something of the likes. Then he heard the methodical sound of footsteps clambering off the walls. He wasn’t alone.

There was no point in hiding once her position was found out. She would rather not, but she couldn’t risk getting caught, something had to be done. It looked like she was going to have to use her quirk after all. She cracked her neck, flashing her golden eyes as she approached the detective.

Pulling out his gun, Naomasa fixed his gaze towards the hallway where the noise was coming from. He couldn’t pinpoint its location due to the echo, so he was left to guess.
“You’re not supposed to be here.” The voice was like a caramel coated lie. A sickly sweet nectar that was as poisonous as it was tantalizing.

“This is a crime scene,” he started off in a commanding voice, “If anyone shouldn’t be here it would be you.”

He saw two flashes of gold stare at him directly. He held his gun up in response.

She came out of the dark and into view. Golden irises staring intently at him, pale blue hair falling to her hips, and a curvaceous smile on her lips.

“Now, now, Officer-san. That’s no way to treat a lady,” she tsked, wagging her finger in a disapproving manner. She started to stalk forward, a ferocity in her step.

Her eyes were molten gold, dazzling in the shadows of the basement. He couldn’t look away, couldn’t move his arms, couldn’t even feel his arms anymore. His eyesight was going blurry, a strange buzzing filled his ears, drowning out every other sense.

“Wha—” his voice was fuzzy, filled with cotton. Everything went numb, the only thing that he could distinguish in this drowned out emptiness was the droning sound of buzzing that had invaded his mind.

Is this her quirk? What the hell is she doing?

“See, now that’s a much better way to treat a lady,” he heard her voice say in passing. It was clandestinely sweet, a sultry voice that feigned innocence.

What is she doing?

He couldn’t feel anything for the longest time. It was an agonizing feeling, this absolute murkiness that tugged at his mind. Muddled splotches of senses started to form only for some invisible tide to reign them in, drenching him in nothing. The buzzing permeated his mind, growing more and more intense before it stopped altogether.

All at once, his senses snapped back into place. He was on the floor of the basement, the female nowhere in sight. He had no doubt that she had been the one to take Midoriya; her aura had been calm, calculative and deadly. She had fled the scene quickly, not letting him get a good glance at her. Pale blue hair and blurring auric eyes, that was all he was able to distinguish about her. For now though, at least he had a lead.

He stumbled to his feet, nerves still unused to having feeling again. He had only made it a few steps when he smelled the smoke. Blearily, he looked around, noticing the putrid gray cloud wafting in throughout the hallways of the basement.

Haziness washed over him, a dull throb in his chest indicated the heaviness of the air. His legs refused to hold his weight any longer and he fell to his knees. Breathing became easier, if only a tiny bit. Out of the dark cloud of smoke, he couldn’t see any fire, but he could feel the heat.

A fire.

Someone—though he had a very good idea who—had started a fire down here. He needed to get out. His legs refused to work, his nerves were still frayed from her quirk. What the hell did she do? Why won’t my body listen to me?

Heat cascaded throughout the area, engulfing him in an invisible flame. The exit wasn’t far off from
where he was, but he’d have to crawl to it.

He pulled himself through the basement as fast as his limbs would allow, his body’s inability to function at a normal capacity making it difficult. Whatever that villainess had done, it had really screwed with his senses.

The stairs were in view, unfortunately, the flames had also decided to come out of hiding and flickered into the edges of the staircase.

His vision was blurring, breathing became a chore, and his limbs had become weak against the fire’s influence. The stairs were in reach, but his body had reached its limit.

He didn’t have the stamina to make it out in time, he knew that, but there had to be something he could do. He couldn’t allow himself to die here.

His vision faded, and his breathing had morphed into a wheezing hack. He was out of time.

Pale blue hair swished elegantly in stride with her gait. Golden eyes took on a steely nature as she disposed of the can of lighter fluid she had. It wouldn’t do well to be caught with it in hand. At least now, she had killed two birds with one stone: any evidence that could have been left behind in the basement wouldn’t survive the fire she had started, and she doubted that detective would be able to gain control of his senses fast enough to escape. Still, as pesky as it had been to have to deal with the detective, she couldn’t deny the fact that he had had on him some valuable information on him.

As she walked, her tan trench coat billowing in the wind, she scanned over the information that had been in one of the folders she had snagged.

Now that she had this information, it would be much easier to appease her employer.

Chapter End Notes

hehe, so hope you enjoyed that~ (ye can thank Rzen for that ending cliffy too, she helped me write that scene out) Next chapter shouldn't take as long as last time, but who knows? I get busy and I am working on multiple other things, plus I have a life (albeit a very small one). I do have the outline done though, for the next chapter so at least I know where I plan on taking the next chapter. Let me know what you thought~ I love hearing from all of y'all~
Until Next time
Vera~
Fix You

Chapter Summary

"When you try your best but you don't succeed
When you get what you want but not what you need
When you feel so tired
Stuck in reverse"
--Coldplay

Chapter Notes

I am so sorry this took forever, okay. Like, seriously, I am very sorry about that wait. Life happened and I had other fics I was working on and then I had to work six days last week--I'm a part time manager, I'm not supposed to work more than 20 hours, but I worked 36 at least--so I didn't have the time. Eventually though, I got it done and... I actually like how it turned out? Lots of Dadmight to go around this chapter~ Rzen did an amazing job as always at being my beta/editor, so thank ye for that Rzen!! you da bomb, girl!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Everything was off, Shouto thought. The day just felt… wrong. It shouldn’t have, but it did. It was a normal Friday, except it wasn’t. Midoriya wasn’t here. He was at home… recovering.

That knowledge should have comforted Shouto, but it didn’t. Instead, it just made him feel worse, feel even more useless—there was nothing he could do to help.

He spent the majority of the day going through ‘what-if’ scenarios where Midoriya wasn’t taken, where they were able to rescue him sooner, where things didn’t end up the way they did. It was a futile attempt to block out his own feelings of ineptness; it only served to frustrate him more and more.

He hated this feeling—he wasn’t used to it. Shouto had never felt like this before, this particular feeling of… despair. It was unique to him. In the past, the word ‘despair’ meant something different to him, it was a personal word, holding meaning to him, and his situation, but now… the despair he felt wasn’t for himself. It was for Midoriya.

He couldn’t stand that.

How could this have happened? It wasn’t fair. It wasn’t right.

Midoriya was… he was something else. He was Shouto’s first real friend; he was important to him, and this entire situation had him on edge—it wasn’t right, nor was it fair.

He shook his head of the thoughts, trying to concentrate on the lesson at hand.
It was no use though, and Uraraka kept sending him sidelong glances as if to make sure he was okay. Truth was, he wasn’t sure if he was okay. He should be, by all means, but he couldn’t say that he was, not without it being a lie.

He didn’t know what he was at the moment, but ‘alright’ or ‘okay’ weren’t the correct terms to use. Emotions weren’t something he was typically good at—he felt lost in a wave of uncertainty.

However, now wasn’t the time to be thinking about these types of things, so he pushed them to the side and tried to concentrate on the lesson at hand.

By the time the end of class came, Shouto wasn’t even sure what the lesson had been about. He had tried to concentrate, he really had, but his mind had wandered more than he cared to admit, making it difficult for him to focus.

So lost in his own thoughts, Shouto didn’t realize that Uraraka and Iida had come over to his desk.

“Todoroki?” Uraraka sounded concerned.

His head snapped up at her voice, he turned to meet her worried gaze, “Yes?” he asked, unsure if he really wanted to know what she had to say.

He noticed her brows knitted together, a sure sign that she was worried. She bit her lip anxiously, something he noticed she did often whenever she was nervous. “Are you doing okay? You were spacing out all class long,” Uraraka supplied worriedly.

“Do you feel unwell?” Shouto turned his head to Iida, who looked just as distraught as Uraraka, but he was able to hide it better. His jaw was tense and his eyes were hard to read. It was the note of sympathy in his voice that gave way to his true feelings, “Or is there something else that is ailing you?” Iida’s question held the same note of concern that Uraraka’s did, and Shouto couldn’t help but wonder if he was really that transparent.

“I assure you, I’m fine.” He tried to convince them that nothing was wrong, but he doubted that it was very convincing.

“Are you sure?” Uraraka clearly didn’t believe him. “You really don’t look fine.”

Shouto didn’t know how respond. Part of him wanted to just say nothing, to brush them off and go to the dorms, but another part of him wanted to tell them what was bothering him. It was an internal tug-of-war.

In the end, he sighed, and decided that he should try talking to them. They were his friends, and if Midoriya was here, he would tell him to not keep his emotions pent up. “I am… unsure. Today has been odd for me. Everything should be fine, right? Midoriya is back. He’s safe, and even went home yesterday, but it’s not fine. Things aren’t back to normal.”

His remarks garnered sympathetic looks from both of them.

Iida grew contemplative. “It’s true that Midoriya is back, that he’s safe, but I understand your feelings. He may be back, but things aren’t fine.”

“I know,” Uraraka cut in, “Why don’t we all go visit him! I bet he’d like that. We could check up on him. Besides, I bet it’s boring staying home all day with nothing to do.”

Iida nodded in agreement. “I agree, I think it would be a nice sentiment if we all went and visited Midoriya, it may help boost his morale.”
Shouto was hesitant to agree, but did so anyway. He really did want to see Midoriya; he just wondered if Midoriya wanted to see him—or rather hear his voice. He didn’t forget Midoriya’s reaction to his presence the last time he visited, and he didn’t want to cause a disturbance if Midoriya didn’t take to his presence well again.

In the end though, he did want to see his friend, and hopefully this time, his mere presence wouldn’t bring about such a reaction in who he considered to be his closest friend.

Ochako was elated the entire walk back to the dorms. She wanted to see Deku again as soon as possible, and maybe, they would be able to cheer him up. He needed all the support he could get right now.

Her, Iida, and Todoroki made plans to visit Deku tomorrow in the afternoon. She wanted to see him now, but maybe it would be better to just give him a day or two to get accustomed to things at home, afterall… he was blind now. She didn’t know what was wrong with his eyes, they looked normal, but he clearly couldn’t see when they had gone to visit him earlier this week.

She was discussing some minor detail with Iida and Todoroki in the common room of the dorms when Kirishima came over.

“Did I hear you guys mention that you were going to visit Midoriya sometime soon?” His tone indicated excitement and enthusiasm over the prospect of visiting Deku soon.

“Yeah, Iida and I were going to ask Aizawa-sensei if we could have a pass to go visit him tomorrow. Do you want to join us?”

Kirishima beamed at the prospect. “If it’s no trouble, yeah. I know I’m not as close to him as you guys, but I’m worried about him still, along with everyone else in class.”

Ochako nodded her head in agreeance. “Yeah, even though he’s back, things are still weird, but hopefully,” her voice took on a happier note, “we can cheer Deku up, and things will go back to normal again.” She knew that was a lie, nothing would ever be the same, but she held out hope for it because being pessimistic wasn’t going to help anyone.

Katsuki’s mind was in overdrive, a turbulent mess of conflicting emotions. His mind had been in dissonance ever since Deku had gone missing. He didn’t care about stupid Deku, or so he thought, but not seeing the cheeky faced bastard walk into class everyday for six weeks had left him with a bad taste in his mouth.

Now, he was back, but he was different. Katsuki didn’t like it. He was supposed to be that overly optimistic, never giving up nerd, not the quiet, timid person he had seen at the hospital. There had
been no spark in his eyes, only hesitation and weariness. It wasn’t right, and it irritated Katsuki to no end.

His irritation must have shown.

Shitty Hair kept giving him weird glances all day, and he hated it. He was discontented with everything right now, and he didn’t know what to do. He wanted—needed—to punch something, let out his frustrations.

“Hey, bro, are you okay? You’ve had a scowl on your face all day, which isn’t necessarily odd, but you just seem even more mad today.” Shitty Hair just couldn’t keep his trap shut.

“I’m fine,” he gritted out, for once, unsure of the words he said.

“Are-are you sure? I mean, it’s okay for you to be a little shaken—”

“I’m fine.” There was a finality to his voice, an edge that left little room for disputing. Luckily, Shitty Hair didn’t have a death wish and backed off.

The same couldn’t be said for the rest of what had been deemed ‘the Bakusquad’—the name was ridiculous, but Ashido had insisted on it.

Ashido and Kaminari tried to talk to him, boy did they try, but he was having none of it. Didn’t anyone understand that he just didn’t want to talk about anything? He had nothing to say on the matter except that Deku better recover quickly so everyone could quite worrying over his dumb ass. It was bad enough that the whole fucking class went sideways after stupid Deku was found; he didn’t need them trying to talk to him about things that he didn’t even understand.

He didn’t care about stupid Deku. He really didn’t… and yet, there was something, he didn’t know what, inexplicably gnawing at him. It had been since the day Deku had been officially declared missing.

He wanted it to go away. He didn’t need these shitty emotions. Deku was just a loser, a nerd, a stepping stone for him to become the number one hero, but without him there, it became obvious just how lost the class was.

It didn’t make sense. Why did everyone act like the world stopped when Deku went missing? Class 1-A acted as though their hope had been taken. He didn’t understand it; he did understand it, though.

He knew that shitty Deku had inspired these extra’s, and they didn’t know what to do with him gone, but he wasn’t like that. So why did he feel that same sense of loss as them? It didn’t make sense.

Since he wasn’t paying attention to his surroundings, he didn’t notice Shitty Hair was still there until he tapped his shoulder.

“Hey man… you still with us? You kinda spaced out on me…” He hated how Shitty Hair sounded concerned.

He was fine, just thinking, that’s all. “I thought I told you I was fine,” he seethed.

Shitty Hair didn’t back down though, instead his concerned look only grew, “Hey man,” he started, alarm raising in his voice, “I was just checking up on ya. You’ve been spacing out all day, and I was getting worried.
He didn’t need Shitty Hair to worry about him. *He was fine.* “I thought I told you I was fine, Shitty Hair.”

“Yeah, well,” he relaxed slightly, “I was just making sure. You know you can talk to us,” he gestured around the classroom, though Katsuki knew he was referring to the deemed ‘Bakusquad’, the only people he could actually tolerate in class.

“Anyway, I actually just wanted to let you know that we—Uraraka, Iida, Shouto and I—were planning on visiting Midoriya tomorrow at his apartment if you wanted to join.”

“Fuck no! I don’t want to visit that freaking nerd.” He was livid, but he wasn’t sure why. A sudden anger had washed over him, but he couldn’t place its origin. It had nothing to do with Shitty Hair or his concerns.

“Okay,” Shitty Hair assuaged, or tried to, putting his hands up in surrender, “just know the offer still stands if you change your mind.”

“No chance in hell am I gonna visit that stupid ass nerd,” he huffed out before walking away.

He didn’t want—didn’t need—to visit stupid Deku. He didn’t care what happened to that half-baked loser, but he’ll be damned if he lets the nerd off the hook for missing so much training.

He stopped in his tracks. His relationship with Deku had never been good, and he had no intentions of mending it—it didn’t need to be mended, they were fine where they were right now—but... and he hated how there was a ‘but’ to his line of thinking. It genuinely bothered him that Deku was in his current position. Why? He didn’t care what happened to that half-baked loser, but it did.

For whatever it was worth, Deku was never placated with him—Deku was always challenging him, forcing him to prove just how much better he was. It didn’t matter how big or small the gap was, Deku would make sure he fought tooth and nail in a futile attempt to prove himself to Katsuki. *As much as he hated to admit it, Katsuki had acknowledged him... during their fight that one time. He had seen that Deku was a worth adversary.*

He shook his head of such thoughts. Deku didn’t matter, and he didn’t need to check up on him; he would be fine. There was no need to worry about him.

Maybe that was the crux of his frustration; everyone was acting like he was some broken toy, but he wasn’t—he couldn’t be. Those idiots didn’t know Deku the way he did. There was no way Deku would have succumbed to whatever those shitty villains did. He was much too stubborn for that, and yet here everyone was, acting like the freaking world had ended because he got a little roughed up.

Deku was fine, he had to be, because Katsuki didn’t know what he’d do if he wasn’t.

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Toshinori had never wanted class to end faster than he did right now. Yesterday he had talked with Naomasa, who was going back to where they had found Izuku today. He couldn’t say he agreed with Naomasa’s decision, and he had a bad feeling about the entire ordeal, but he trusted him. Naomasa was smart, he wouldn’t get himself into a situation that he couldn’t get himself out of.
For now, his main concern was Izuku. He knew that the kid had been discharged from the hospital yesterday, and he was hoping to stop by the Midoriya’s apartment today after class got out to check up on Izuku. Which brought him to his current predicament: waiting for class to get out.

If he really wanted to, he could leave now, he knew that. Ever since the Kamino Ward incident, he had become pretty useless, and so it wouldn’t be a surprise to anyone if he suddenly went home. Leaving class early was out of the question, of course, as he would never do that, but the thought was entertaining.

Eventually, classes did end, and he was able to leave. It had taken long enough, he thought, as he made his way to the Midoriya household. He desperately hoped he wasn’t going to interrupt something when he got there; he hadn’t thought to let Midoriya Inko know he was stopping by—a stupid decision in hindsight. Maybe he could leave a quick text or call, let her know he was coming over, but a selfish part of him wanted to come unannounced, that way, even if he had come at a bad time he would at least have gotten to see Izuku.

Izuku…

There was so much he didn’t know about Izuku’s condition. It was… disheartening to not know more, but then, he wasn’t sure he wanted to know. He had seen the state Izuku had been in before… back at the hospital, and while the physical injuries would heal—he still didn’t know the extent of the physical injuries—the mental scars were much deeper, and would take a much longer time to heal.

He hated thinking about it; Izuku was just a child. To think that something like this could happen to him, it wasn’t fair.

It wasn’t right.

It happened though, and now all they could do was move forward, work through it, and help him heal.

He tried not to dwell on his thoughts as he walked to the Midoriyas’ apartment.

It was a rather nice day out today and so he tried to enjoy the scenery as the Midoriyas’ apartment complex came into view.

The Midoriyas’ apartment was small, but quaint. He had been over there multiple times since young Midoriya had been taken, however, those time had been under far less pleasant circumstances than now. Still, he hesitated from knocking on the door.

He could faintly hear voices coming from inside. With great trepidation, he found himself knocking on the door, alerting the tenants to his presence.

He waited nervously for a beat, before the door opened slowly.

“Yes, who-oh, Yagi-san? Why-what are you doing here?” Midoriya Inko asked, clearly startled by his sudden appearance.

“Please, call me Toshinori,” he was comfortable enough around the Midoriyas’ to be okay with them calling him by his name, “Oh, umm, Midoriya-san, I wanted,” now that he was here, he didn’t know what to say, “Umm, I wanted to see how young Mid- how Izuku was fairing.”

Something like concern flashed through her eyes, but it was gone just as quickly as it came. She opened the door, allowing him entrance, “Alright, Toshinori. Why don’t you come in? Oh and,” she gave him a warm smile, “you can call me Inko.”
Smiling, he nodded as he entered.

His attention was immediately brought to Izuku, who was gazing curiously—if a bit fearfully—in his direction from the couch. His eyes looked tired, but all too alert at the same time, as if they were expecting something horrible to happen. They were the eyes of someone who was haunted—they didn’t belong on a child.

“Izuku, my boy,” in hindsight, his declaration may have been too sudden as Izuku jumped at the sound and clutched the blanket that was wrapped around him tightly before regaining control of himself.

“All-All…” his voice cracked, and he stopped mid-sentence. He remained quiet for a moment longer. “Toshinori?” he finally questioned. It surprised Toshinori that he called him by his name. He couldn’t recall a time in which he had ever done that before. It was certainly odd, but not unwelcome.

Something in his tone didn’t sit right with Toshinori, though. It sounded too defeated, too worn down… it almost sounded as if he had given up—not on life, but on something else, some kind of hope that he had previously been clinging to. It was unsettling.

“Hey, kid,” he waved, then realised how stupid that was, and quickly put his hand down. “Toshinori-san…” Midoriya Inko stated warmly, “Feel free to make yourself at home.” He nodded silently as he entered their home.

She then turned her attention to her son, “Izuku,” he startled slightly, but relaxed once he realized it was just his mother, “I’ll be in the kitchen if you need anything.” He swallowed shakily then nodded, something, he wasn’t sure what, taking over his features as he turned his gaze back towards Toshinori.

Izuku was staring intently in his direction, an unknowing fear etched into his eyes—it was primal, an instinctual fear that didn’t belong on anyone’s face, let alone a child’s.

“You look better,” he mentioned as he sat down in a chair adjacent to the couch in which Izuku was resting. Izuku had a blanket—a fleece blanket with an All Might design that made Toshinori smile a little—wrapped around him like an armor. While he wasn’t lying, Izuku did look better than the last time he had seen him, he still looked rather worn down and ragged. His skin was pale, eyes were forever lost in a shimmering expanse of unfocused emerald. Bandages peeked out from beneath his shirt and lined his arms, reminding Toshinori that Izuku was still recovering from physical injuries as well as mental.

Izuku nodded, “I… yeah, I-I guess.” He looked lost, unsure of himself, or what to say. “T-today has been a pretty good day.” There was a frustration lingering in his voice as he said it.

He was hoping that Izuku would elaborate, but when he remained quiet, Toshinori prompted him, “Yeah?”

There was moment where Izuku didn’t respond. Toshinori saw a battle raging in his eyes, and wondered if he should change the subject. Just as he was about to do so, Izuku spoke up.

“Mom and I… We were listening to a podcast,” he said contentedly.

“Oh really? And what was this podcast about?”

“It was sci-fi, lots of aliens, and a corrupt government,” Izuku answered simply.
He wasn’t sure what he was expecting Izuku to say, but it certainly wasn’t… that. “That’s… interesting, maybe you could tell me a little more about it?”

Thus began a long winded explanation on the entire story of the podcast—Toshinori didn’t mind though, because Izuku had shown a bit of the old him when talking about it, and going through several theories he held over the plot.

About midway through his explanation, Inko returned to the living room—she had announced her presence so as to not startle Izuku—with some tea. She offered him a cup, which he accepted graciously.

Things appeared to be going well, Izuku was less tense, and Toshinori could pretend that nothing was wrong with him. He listened intently as Izuku nerded out over the podcast, genuinely intrigued with what Izuku was saying.

Then the phone rang.

It was a clear, sharp tone that sliced through the air, not caring about subtly. The sudden noise caught them all off guard; however, their reactions were all very different.

He jumped slightly, but was otherwise fine—it was just a phone ringing after all. Inko jumped slightly as well, a note of concern bubbling in her features as she hurriedly went to pick it up—she went into another room to take the call.

Izuku froze. His features were a mask of undiluted fear. He was tense, his form visibly shaking, and Toshinori could only imagine what was going on in his head right now.

“Izuku… kid?” he questioned, but Izuku wasn’t with him. His mind was far away, eyes gazing ahead, but seeing nothing.

He tried again, not sure what to do in this situation—he had seen trauma victims before, dealt with a few, but never like this. This was a completely new experience for him, “Izuku? Kid, stay with me.”

Owlishly, and with great hesitance, Izuku blinked. The fog lifted from his eyes, and he snapped his head to Toshinori—or as close to it as he could guess.

He winced at the movement, pain shrouding his features for the briefest moment. “Toshi-Toshinori?” The fear in his voice was unsettling.

“Hey, kid. Just calm down, okay. It was just the phone ringing,” he kept his voice low and as soothing as he could. He didn’t want to startle Izuku any more than he already was.

“I,” he gulped, “I’m sorry… I didn’t mean to—”

“It’s fine. No worries, it caught us all off guard.” He tried to alleviate the situation.

Izuku nodded hesitantly, the fear receding, but the tenseness remaining. “I guess, but it’s still—I shouldn’t be reacting like this… It’s stupid,” the bitterness ran strongly through his words.

“Izuku, it’s not stupid—”

“It is,” he cut him off, “It was a phone ringing, and yet, I acted like it was…” he trailed off, clutching his blanket tightly.

Toshinori was not cut out for this. He was guessing on every action; he didn’t know how to deal
with this kind of thing. For now, he wouldn’t push it—this was beyond his ability to deal with—instead, he opted to change the subject. “So, I heard that the entire class came to visit you while you were in the hospital.”

“Hmm?” Izuku stopped for a moment, clearly not expecting the topic change, but the relief that flooded through his eyes was enough to tell Toshinori that changing topics was a good idea. “Yeah… they did. It was nice… but…”

“But?”

Izuku tilted his head, wincing slightly at the movement before continuing, “It was a little overwhelming?” He sounded unsure. “I don’t really know—I just—” he cut himself off as he winced again.

“Izuku, are you okay? You're not in pain, are you?”

“No, I’m—I’m fine… just a little sore, I guess.” He tried to brush it off, but Toshinori could tell he was uncomfortable.

“Are you sure? Do you have any pain medication you can take?”

“No, it’s-really, it’s not that bad. I’m just a little sore is all.”

Toshinori decided to give him the benefit of the doubt, mostly because he didn’t want to get into an argument over it. If Izuku said he was fine, and could handle it, then he trusted that it was fine.

Izuku relaxed a little when he realized Toshinori wasn’t going to bring it up again. His eyes lazily drifted over to the kitchen—or at least in that general direction.

It seemed Izuku’s eyesight hadn’t gotten any better—it didn’t surprise him, but it was still concerning, and it brought more questions than it answered.

“Izuku…” He didn’t want to bring this up, but at the same time he really did want to know, “Your eyes…”

He saw Izuku stiffen and almost, almost relented in asking all together, but a selfish part of him wanted to know. Izuku had been gone for a long time, and a lot of damage had been done, he knew that, but he didn’t know what the damage was. He wanted to know, because the more he knew the more he could understand. He just wanted to help Izuku, not knowing all that had happened killed him, but at the same time it also spared him.

Not knowing meant he spent hours lying awake at night wondering about the horrors these villains had put a child through, but it also meant that he didn’t have to know what these horrors were. It was a double edged sword, but in the end, he needed to know, if nothing more than to ease his mind.

It was selfish, he knew, but he hoped that in knowing he could help Izuku, even if it was only a little bit.

“What exactly is wrong with them?” It was concerning to him that Izuku’s eyes looked perfectly fine. They even dilated appropriately. What could possibly be wrong with them?

Immediately, Izuku’s face darkened, and he turned away from Toshinori.

“It’s…” Izuku muttered out the last bit in a voice so low that Toshinori couldn’t decipher what he had said.
“I didn’t quite get that last bit.”

“I said it’s stupid,” he bit out.

“Izuku, I’m sure it’s not stupid—”

“It is though.” There was a self loathing buried deep within his tone, and Toshinori didn’t like it, but before he could say anything Izuku continued, “there’s nothing—there’s absolutely nothing wrong with them. Or at least, that’s what that doctor said.”

He opened his mouth to respond, but the words died on his lips. That… didn’t make sense. How could his eyes be fine, yet he was still blind? It just didn’t add up. “Izuku, I’m not sure I know—” he stopped himself. He didn’t know what to say to that. Was there anything he could even say about that? “That doesn’t make sense.”

Izuku let out a mirthless laugh, “Yeah, no kidding, but my eyes—they’re fine… physically, I mean. I don’t—It’s not—hmm—” Izuku seemed struggle to find his own words, “I was told by the neurologist that it was called… umm, it was called conversion disorder? I don’t—I’m not sure, but I think she said that.”

**Conversion disorder.** He had heard of that before. He wasn’t sure what it was, but he was sure he had heard of it before. “Well, I can’t say I know exactly what that is—” *yet,* he added silently, “—but it’s not stupid.”

Sighing, Izuku twisted the blankets with his left hand. It was clear that he was uncomfortable with the situation. “It is though,” he whispered, pain and shame washing over the words, “I can’t see because my own mind just-just decided that I couldn’t? How is that—” Izuku turned to face him, resolve set into his unseeing eyes, “tell me-tell me how that’s not stupid.”

The inflection on the word ‘stupid’ didn’t settle well with Toshinori. It was full of shame and self loathing, a twisted hate that didn’t belong there.

“Izuku.” He needed Izuku to listen to him, but it seemed Izuku was done listening as he had turned his face away, and curled on the couch in a defensive position. Still, he needed Izuku to hear what he had to say. “Izuku,” he repeated firmly.

“*It’s so stupid,*” he mumbled finally, “I’m back. I’m safe now. Why can’t I just be fine? I understand that’ll take time for my injuries to heal and for my reactions to go back to normal, but this,” he didn’t move his hands at all to emphasize the ‘this’, seeing as one arm was still in a sling and the other was clinging to his blanket like a lifeline, “They took enough from me as it is—” there was a shaky intake of breath, “I don’t need—*why does my own brain have to be against me too?*” The tears could be heard in his voice as he spoke.

Whatever words he planned to say died in his throat. Words alone were not enough at this moment. Izuku didn’t need pretty words to help him. Nothing he could say would quell whatever turmoil Izuku was in. He needed something stronger—something more tangible, more real—than any flimsy string of words he could put together.

Still, he couldn’t say nothing, “Izuku.” He got up from his seat and moved to the couch where Izuku lay. While Izuku did flinch at the initial change in pressure on the couch, he didn’t move away or show any signs of distress at it.

“Kid, it’s not going to be easy, believe me. I know that the road to recovery is a long one,” he settled a hand on Izuku’s shoulder, prompting another small flinch from the kid, “but,” he let the weight fall
on the word, “it has to start somewhere.”

“I know—it’s just—”

“It’s unfair, I know,” he cut Izuku off, not allowing his doubts to come forth, “It’s really, really unfair kid. You don’t deserve this. You don’t deserve any of this.” Just thinking about it was making Toshinori upset, and he could already feel the burning sensation at the back of his eyes.

Izuku sat up, his eyes were glassy and pained, tears were streaming steadily down his face now. “I just don’t understand—”

“I know.” He was trying to keep his composure, but his own emotions were getting the better of him, “I don’t understand it either. It wasn’t-this isn’t something you should have to deal with-no one should. I wish,” he took a moment to pull himself together before continuing, “I truly wish there was more I could do to help you, Izuku, but I’m powerless.” He was rambling, but once he started he couldn’t stop. His own ineptness came crashing through, and it refused to let him shut up, “I can’t do anything, and it hurts, because you’re in pain-you’re suffering, and all I can do is watch. I am- was the symbol of peace, someone you could rely on, but now I’m… I can only offer you my support and I’m—”

He was cut off by Izuku crashing into him with a hug. It was fierce and needy, and a little more forceful than he probably intended, but Toshinori chalked that up to Izuku having to guestimate where exactly he was. He could feel the raw emotion coming off of him in waves. He was shaking slightly from the choked sobs that were racking his small frame.

It was a really awkward hug, Toshinori thought, with Izuku only being able to use one hand, but it was a needed comfort, and so he returned the hug instantaneously, wrapping his own rail thin arms around the sobbing boy.

“Izuku” he whispered out.

“I just-I worked so hard to get to where I am. I don’t want-I don’t want it to be over,” he choked out in a broken whisper. “I’m trying. I’m really trying, but nothing is working—it’s just… it’s not good enough. I’m not good enough.”

Toshinori’s chest physically hurt. It ached for Izuku and his suffering, a deep sorrow that etched its way into his bones and ran through his being. “You are good enough, Izuku. I need you to understand that, okay? You’re more than what you give yourself credit for. I know you’re trying, kid. We all know you’re trying. It just-it takes time.”

“I know that… but how much time? It’s exhausting. Its really exhausting, trying to be okay, and get back to normal. I don’t know if I can-I know it’ll get better. I know that, but I’m having a hard time believing it.” The defeatist tone in his voice was harrowing. “Can I still even be a hero now?”

It was a big question. There was a lot of weight in those words, and Toshinori’s answer was important—he could feel it. Izuku wasn’t just asking him. He was waiting for a confirmation or denial. He couldn’t answer it lightly, but he wouldn’t lie either. He needed his answer to stick with Izuku. His answer needed to be something Izuku could fall back on whenever he was in doubt.

“Izuku,” he started, his tone somber. Once he had Izuku’s full attention, he continued, “Nothing, and I mean nothing that has happened to you can stop you from being a hero. I know you, I know what kind of person you are, and if those villains,” he let a bit of his anger slip through at the mention of the villains, but was able to reign it in, “if they thought that they could break that then they are sorely mistaken. You’re strong, Izuku, one of the most resilient people I know, and I have no doubt that,
given time, you’ll make a fine hero—one of the best.”

He wasn’t sure if his words would suffice. This was something he was generally good at, giving speeches, but now it felt so much more important that his words got through to Izuku, because there wasn’t anything else he could do but stand by his side while he recovered. He knew that, in and of itself, would mean a lot, but it didn’t feel like enough; it would never feel like enough.

Nothing was said for a moment, and Toshinori thought he might have said the wrong thing, but then Izuku cut through the silence with a shaky voice, “I-I,” he struggled to form any words, “thank you.”

It was just one sentence, two words, but it was enough. Even if it was just a little bit, those words had helped Izuku—they had given him hope.

Out of the corner of his eye he spotted Midoriya Inko, watching them from the kitchen door. She looked tired, exhausted, but the smile she wore was one of thanks. She must have heard at least the tail end of their conversation.

He gave her a smile, not willing to pull away from the embrace just yet, letting Izuku have this moment of comfort last just a bit longer.

His phone started to vibrate in his pocket—he was suddenly very grateful of the fact that he had put his phone on vibrate before coming over—and he was forced to relinquish his hold on Izuku.

Izuku looked slightly hurt at the action, but Toshinori explained that he just needed to answer a phone call. Not bothering to check the caller I.D. Toshinori sat up and answered the call.

As soon as he heard the voice on the other end he knew it was serious. He gave Inko a look, one that suggested he needed to take this phone call someplace that was not here, and she nodded, gesturing to the kitchen. He nodded and walked past her into the kitchen.

Inko felt a little guilty that she got sidetracked by that phone call. It took longer than she would have liked, but at the very least Toshinori had come over after classes, so she didn’t have to worry about Izuku for the moment.

She hated that she felt this way, but it was such a relief when Toshinori turned up—it meant she didn’t feel the need to be by Izuku’s side all the time. It wasn’t his fault, but Izuku was a lot to handle, and it was almost nice to not have to worry about him, even if only for a few minutes.

She felt immense guilt over feeling this way. Izuku needed her, and she needed him, so why was it so exhausting taking care of him? She knew it was because neither of them knew what to do with the situation, they were both struggling to grasp the circumstances, but it was tiring all the same.

So, she was almost relieved when she got the phone call and was able to slip away for a few moments. The call was from a friend she hadn’t spoken to in months; they hadn’t any clue what she was dealing with and had just called to catch up. It had been nice to talk to her friend, to be able to pretend that everything was okay right now. Even though she enjoyed chatting with her friend, she ended up cutting the conversation short, wanting to get back to Izuku—as much as she liked having this time where she didn’t need to worry about him, she still did worry about him.

What she saw when she left the kitchen was Izuku grabbing onto Toshinori like a lifeline. It hurt her
physically to see her son under such duress, and she wanted nothing more than to run up to him and make all his fears go away, but she relented. Toshinori looked to have the situation under control, and so she let him continue handling it.

It was the right decision. She didn’t know what they had been talking about, but to hear Toshinori, the former number one hero, telling her son that despite everything, he could still be a hero, it was comforting. No matter how bad it got, if Izuku could rely on them to always be there then she had no doubt that he would recover.

It wasn’t until after their conversation had ended that Toshinori got a phone call. His face, upon answering the phone, became serious, and he took the phone call to the kitchen, where he could have some privacy, as she had indicated to him.

Inko went to sit beside Izuku, who looked worn down after that conversation—he still tired rather easily, and he looked emotionally spent. She just sat in silence, by Izuku’s side when Toshinori came back into the room, a restrained expression on his face.

“I must take my leave here,” his tone had taken on an urgentness that concerned both her and Izuku as he tensed at the words. “I’m sorry, this is rather sudden, but something came up. I’ll call you,” he was addressing her now, a slight panic arose in his voice, “when I have more information.”

He left after that, not bothering to close the door on his way out. Inko was worried about what had happened. He had seemed distressed by the phone call, and she wondered who it had been from.

“That didn’t sound good.” Izuku murmured.

Inko nodded her head in agreement. “No, it didn’t.” There was a foreboding note in her voice as she said it.

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**Chapter End Notes**

man, I'm mean ain't I? Two cliffy's in a row... wow. At the very least, I have a good head start on chapter nine, so granted life doesn't hate me I can get that done in a timely manner and not... as long as it took to get this one out. Also, feel free to give suggestions or ask about things in the comments, I'm always happy to listen to suggestions and see if I can work them into the fic--it actually helps me flesh out future chapters a ton, because I know where this fic is going, I know certain things that happen, but there's a lot that's still up in the air. And, of course, if I get any information wrong, feel free to let me know.
I hope ye enjoyed this chapter and I will see y'all later.
Until next time,
Vera~
Toshinori walked through the hospital hallways, a nervousness festering as he made his way to the hospital room that his good friend had been admitted to.

He had rushed over to the hospital immediately last night after he had gotten the phone call from the hospital. They informed him that Naomasa had been admitted with several third degree burns on his legs, arms, and back. Naomasa hadn’t been awake yet, so he decided to stop by first thing in the morning. He still hadn’t gotten a chance to actually talk to his friend.

He had felt bad for leaving the Midoriyas’ in such a rush, especially after his conversation with Izuku, but when he first got the call from the hospital his brain had stopped. The only thing he could process was that his friend was in the hospital, receiving treatment for burns.

He knew he should’ve advised Naomasa to leave it be, to not go looking for trouble, but he had let him go. Now, it seemed he was paying for his lapse in judgement

He knew now that Naomasa would be fine. Someone had contacted the authorities, who arrived shortly thereafter, extinguished the fire, and rescued him before any permanent damage could be done. Even knowing that, he was still worried. Naomasa was his friend, a close friend, and to think that now the villains were targeting the police force was rather disconcerting.

It meant that the villains weren’t afraid of them, which only meant that their attacks would become bolder. They had to be more vigilante now.
Before he knew it, he was standing before Naomasa’s room. He knocked, waiting anxiously for a reply. Once he heard a reply, he entered hesitantly.

The room itself was bright, the windows having been drawn, and Naomasa was sitting up in bed.

Naomasa looked to be in rather high spirits, given the circumstances. He was awake and sitting up, bandages wrapped around his forearms, disappearing beneath his hospital gown, but overall, nothing about his demeanor spoke of disheartenment.

“Toshinori, you came. I didn’t expect you until later.” His tone may have been jovial in nature, but there was an underlying seriousness that told Toshinori that he had important information to share.

Toshinori nodded his head, happy to see his friend alive and well, “Yes, of course. I came as soon as I got the call from the hospital last night…” His tone grew more somber, “Naomasa—”

“I know, I know.” he held up his hand in a stop gesture, and nodded his head, already knowing what he was going to say, “It was rather reckless of me to go back to the crime scene like that, although, in my defense, I didn’t think one of the villains would actually be there—”

“Wait,” Toshinori interrupted, “You mean to tell me that one of the villains who held Izuku was there?” He hadn’t gotten any specifics over what had happened, only that Naomasa had been injured—burned—and was at the hospital. The news that Naomasa had come face to face with one of the villains that had hurt Izuku put him on edge.

Thoughts raced before his mind. He needed to get as much information as he could on the villains. “Did you get a good look at them? Could you identify them? Did you catch what their quirk was? Maybe we could run that through the quirk database and—”

“Toshinori,” Naomasa cut him off, “calm down.” His voice was calmer, calmer than any of Toshinori’s thoughts. How could he be so calm in a situation like this? Didn’t he understand that this person, this villain, had hurt Izuku, had… tortured him. Still, he did force himself to calm down and rationalize his thoughts.

He had come here to make sure his friend was okay, that was his first priority, everything else could wait. “I’m sorry, I got a little ahead of myself.” He backtracked, bringing himself back to why he had initially visited, “How are you doing?”

Naomasa chuckled slightly at his antics before responding, “Honestly, not too bad. One of the nurses on staff had a pain alleviating quirk, so the pain isn’t too bad right now. I’m more mad at the fact that that villain stole my damn trench coat…”

He gave Naomasa a pointed look. Now wasn’t the time for jokes.

“Right, sorry. I shouldn’t be making jokes, but she did, in fact steal my coat, and I am mad about it,” he defended himself. “Although, that’s not my main concern right now.” He sighed before continuing, turning to face him, his expression grave. “She did manage to snag the files I had on me… the files on Midoriya. It had everything on them: his medical information, psych evaluation, medication, everything. With it… there’s no telling what her next move will be, but it doesn’t look good.” There was bitterness and self loathing in his voice as he said this, balling his hands into fists.

The villain was female, Toshinori noted. That would narrow down the search results drastically. Female villains weren’t uncommon, but they certainly weren’t as common as male villains.

“That,” Toshinori started, “that’s not good.” He sighed, “The villain… did you get a good look at her? If we knew who we were looking for, it might make things easier.”
“I know,” Naomasa nodded, but there was a strain in his eyes, “I did see her…but” an uneasiness tinged his face, “her quirk… it was some kind of sensory manipulation. It messed with my head. I couldn’t feel anything and… my memories of the event are fuzzy. I’m sorry, but I don’t think I remember enough for a sketch artist to come in…” He looked down, frustration washing over his features.

Stiffly, Toshinori nodded, “I see… that does put a damper on things. However, a sensory manipulation quirk isn’t common… we can search the databases for anyone with a quirk matching that description, and work from there.” His tone may have been light, but he felt anything but confident.

“Golden eyes,” Naomasa said unexpectedly, “She had golden eyes… that’s all I remember, two golden eyes that pierced through everything.”

Toshinori nodded. It was something. It wasn’t much, but it was something.

Yawning, Izuku blearily tried to blink away the sleep from his eyes. It didn’t work, he was still immensely tired, but that was only to be expected. He hadn’t slept well last night. He had gone to bed fairly early, around eight, according to his mom, but he had woken up sometime during the night due to a nightmare.

He didn’t remember what it was about. He didn’t care what it was about. The only thing he could remember was how he felt afterwards, when he had woken up in a panic. It had left him feeling vulnerable, and out of place, left in complete darkness with no way out; a blurry amalgamation of images and sensations that boiled down to one tangible thing: fear. He had spent a long time just huddled in the darkness, clinging to the blankets, to anything that could be used as a tether to the present. It had taken some time, but eventually he had brought himself out of his nightmare induced trance.

It had been daunting, and left him feeling incredibly vulnerable. He wanted to just forget about it, but he couldn’t. The nightmare never ended, it only dulled. He could never escape. The reality of his situation was slowly, but surely, crashing down upon him. He didn’t know how much longer he could stand it.

He was blind, that was something he hadn’t been able to admit to himself before, because the reasoning had been so… so dumb, but the fact remained that he couldn’t see. He couldn’t, and he would have to learn to live with that… in case… in case it never healed.

His eyesight would heal, it had to. They said it could heal. He tried to remain positive, he really did, but it was hard. How could he be positive when he was so… so defeated?

He was a mess, a jumpy, jittery, scared mess; he hated it. He hated himself for it. It was all slowly consuming him. He could do nothing to stop it—he could do absolutely nothing as he was slowly suffocated by his own misery.

He took a deep breath, trying to steady his thoughts. He was getting better, it was just going to take a while. He knew that, he really did. It was just going to take a while for him to be okay with that.

He didn’t know what time it had been when he had been jolted awake by his nightmare, panic and terror being the only things he could process at the time. He had spent the next however long just
trying to keep himself grounded in reality. He had no clue what time it was, or if he should even be awake right now, but he was. He had been awake for a long time now, and he thought he should probably get up soon.

After he had calmed himself down, it occurred to him that he didn’t actually know what time it was, and consequently, he didn’t know if his mom was up yet. There wasn’t anything he could really do without her now, as much as that bothered him. He despised the fact that he was like a child, lost without his mother’s guidance, but it was true. He was lost without her now.

Hesitantly, he moved to get out of bed. His right foot, the one that was still in a boot—which annoyed him, but he couldn’t take it off yet—hit the side of the bed oddly. He paid it no mind as he went to stand up. As soon as his foot made contact with the floor, he felt a fresh, stabbing pain sear through his ankle. He fell back on the bed, but he was no longer in his room.

His mind had taken him back to that place…

An incessant throb pulsated up his ankle and into his shin, a splintering crack in his bones that tore at his nerves. The strain on his legs had slowly built up over the hours until it had become an unbearable pressure that bore into his bones—it hurt... it really, really hurt.

His shins were raw by now, the straps having dug into the bone a long time ago—now they frayed on open nerves, throwing bouts of pure agony running up his leg. He dared not look at it. He knew his ankles—his legs—were never meant to look like that—bones should never twist at that angle, it wasn’t natural.

He couldn’t move from his uncomfortable position; he was trapped, strapped down, and immobile. He couldn’t use his quirk either. Not only was he too physically exhausted—he hadn’t been allowed to sleep for days now—but they had done something, messed with his senses, and he couldn’t summon the power of One for All.

He was immobilized.

Trapped. There was no way out.

Nowayoutnowayout...

He couldn’t stop the thoughts from invading his mind. He was trapped, fear settling in like a second skin.

Every movement caused his nerves to explode in agony, he tried to stay as still as possible.

His bones had been broken bit by bit, hour by hour the pressure had grown until each second dragged on in an eternal wave of torment. He had watched in slow terror as the bone gave way to the pressure and snapped—his scream had echoed throughout the room in harrowing clarity, a cry, raw and primal, that tore his throat to ribbons as it clawed its way out.

He hadn’t given in though. No matter how much pain he had endured, he would never give in to what they wanted.

Sometimes, he wished he had.

The pain never ceased, only dulling minutely, before a shift in the air would cause it to flare up again. He gritted his teeth, trying to ride out the pain—pain that never ended.

The chilling air stabbed at the open wounds...
The could feel it, the dampness of the air, numbing him… but then, he couldn’t. It was gone, replaced with warmth.

He was in that place… but, wasn’t he home?

He was home. He was home… right?

If he was safe… at home then… he shouldn’t feel this kind of pain anymore, because he was safe—safe from that place, from those people. He was safe now… right?

He was… safe. Not there … Right?

Yes.

No.

He had to be.

The coldness returned.

*You’re still there. Can’t you feel the numbing air? Smell the mold and iron in the air? You’re not safe. It was a trick, and you were foolish enough to believe it.*

He could feel it. He wasn’t safe. He hadn’t been rescued. It had all just been a lie.

A light buzzing droned in his skull, reminding him of where he was, and what was soon to come.

He whimpered—he wanted it to stop.

The droning buzz drowned out his thoughts, the pain flared up again. He needed it to just… stop. Just stop. Stopstopstop.

Please… just… end it already.

He couldn’t help the cry that escaped his lips. *It hurts so much, and it’s only going to get worse.*

*Pathetic. You’re pathetic.*

His breathing quickened, and fear overcame all his other senses. A fog descended on his mind, clouding everything with a misguided terror. He could feel the cold shackles around his wrists, but everything was dark. He couldn’t see anything. He was there, and it was black, everything was dark.

*What’s going on? It hurts, but I don’t know what’s going on…*

He remained like that for awhile, sitting in a fear induced haze, wondering when the next onslaught of pain would rack his body. It was random, but continuous. The pain never halted, but it did falter.

After a particularly distressful jolt, in which he yelped at the pain, he came to the realization that pain was never going to get better—it was never going to end.

*He just wanted it to end.*

His hand fumbled for something, anything to grab onto, it didn’t matter if it was the chains or dirt or anything, he just needed something to distract him. His hand snatched something warm, something soft. That wasn’t… right. There shouldn’t be anything like that here… unless.
His hold on the soft material tightened, until he held it in a vice grip. It had to be real… it had to be, but if it was, that meant…

He was safe.

He was home.

He wasn’t there.

He took a shaky breath, the buzzing finally receding from his head, the cold air became warm, and the smell of mold and iron morphed into a sweet scent of apples and cinnamon. This was home.

His nerves were still on fire. They demanded his attention. They weren’t content with being on the backburner; this time the initial throb lasted longer, the jolts that ran up his leg continued for a longer period of time before thinning out into the dull pulsating flare of pain they had been.

Deep breaths. He needed to take deep breaths, and just ride it out. It wouldn’t last forever—it couldn’t—he just needed to grit and bear it for a few moments longer. He bit his lip as a fresh wave of agony split his leg in two. It was prying his bones apart, digging into the muscles and ripping them at the seams—just like it had the first time.

Blood. He tasted blood. He didn’t care.

Another wave thrummed through his leg—it hurt so much. He could feel the tears that pricked at his eyes, but he didn’t care about anything other than riding out the pain.

Deep breaths, he told himself. He needed to breathe. Focusing his attention on his breathing instead of the pain was a method he had used multiple times during his captivity. It was a distraction, and while it didn’t take away all the pain, it did make it more manageable.

It took awhile, a long while actually, but he was able to cope, he was able to lessen the pain. He had had to use this method so often that it had almost become second nature for him. He hated that. He hated that pain had become such a commonality that his coping methods were second nature.

Laying back down, he curled in on his side. He didn’t want to get up now, not when his blanket was keeping him warm, tethered to the here and now. He just wanted to relish in its warmth and comfort for a bit longer before getting up. It wasn’t as though he would miss anything—his days had become rather dull. He would wake up to see nothing, calm himself down enough to stumble around the house until he found somewhere to sit, and then waste the day away doing nothing. It was boring, and it reminded him how different things were now—how different he was. He didn’t like it.

A knock at his door set him on edge, the noise had been unexpected, and he was still trying to keep himself from panicking.

It took him a moment to realize it was his mom—it had to be. He muttered out a meek, “Come in,” before sitting up on his bed, hand still clasped around the blanket like a lifeline.

“Izuku, are you alright?” worry was etched into her voice. Izuku wondered if it would ever leave. He seemed to cause her constant worry, and now, it was only worse, because he really wasn’t okay. He couldn’t quell her fears as he once had, because her fears were his too.

“I-I…” He was at a loss for words. He could lie… but she didn’t deserve that, but he couldn’t just push all his insecurities on her either. She shouldn’t have to deal with his demons.

He heard her walk up to him. He stiffened automatically, a reflex that he tried to stifle once he
realized he had done it. He could feel the pressure shift as she sat down beside him on the bed.

“You can tell me when something’s wrong. You know that, right?” Her voice was so warm, so comforting.

He wouldn’t cry; he couldn’t. Not again. He forced himself to calm down, reign in his emotions, and take a deep breath before speaking.

“I…” he sighed, “I’m tired.” He settled on telling her a half-truth. They were the only words he could say—he couldn’t lie to her, but he couldn’t tell her everything either, that would mean reliving it, and he… wasn’t ready for that.

He was tired. He was tired of living in constant fear, of being in constant pain, of not knowing what would happen next. His life had become a constant state of not knowing anything, not even where he was. His mind trapped him with tricks and memories, while his body kept him incapacitated and in pain.

His mom seemed to understand the underlying distress in his voice, as she always did, because she just sighed and bought him into a hug, “I know, honey. I know you are, but you have to keep trying, okay? It’ll get better—”

“It might not.” He said it so calmly, as if he had no doubt, or was resigned to his fate—it scared him. He was supposed to be optimistic… but the defeatist resignation in his words and tone said otherwise.

*It might not get better*, he knew that, and some part of him had accepted to that.

“It will,” his mom’s voice held nothing but conviction, there was no trace of doubt, “It will get better, honey, don’t give up on that, okay.” It gave him hope—that hurt worse than the resignation.

He curled into his mom, and in turn, she hugged him tighter.

“It hurts.” he whispered out brokenly.

“I know,” she whispered back, “I know it does, but you’re strong.”

Part of him wanted to tell her everything. Tell her that he wasn’t okay, that his own mind was against him, and he couldn’t keep fighting it. He wanted to just cry into her and have her take all the pain away, like she did when he was a kid and had a nightmare. She had always saved him then… now though, now the nightmares were real. They weren’t scary things his mind had concocted. They were memories of things that *had* happened.

The other, more dominant part him knew she wouldn’t be able to help. She couldn’t fight his demons for him. He couldn’t confide in her, and that scared him more than anything. She had always been the one person he could tell anything… but now… he couldn’t. He couldn’t, and it hurt because he wanted to. He wanted to be able to confide in her, but he couldn’t—not when the memories were too fresh.

A dull throb went through his leg, reminding him of earlier. His breathing hitched, and he tensed as the pain flared. The pain wasn’t bad, not in comparison to earlier that morning—was it still morning?

His mom noticed his change in expression, “Are you okay? Izuku… are you in any pain?” Worry had seeded itself permanently in her voice now.

He could just as easily lie about this, but he was, in fact, in pain. “I… yeah, a little. It’s not—It’s not
that bad,” his words slurred slightly as another bout of pain flashed through him.

“Izuku…” she drew out, “if your injuries are bothering, you need to tell me.”

“It’s not that—I just—it’s not a big deal is all.”

He could feel her running a soothing hand up and down his forearm. It felt nice, comforting. “Izuku, honey,” the sorrow was drawn out in her tone, “You shouldn’t have to be in any pain.”

He just turned his head in response.

“Izuku, I need to know when you’re in pain. There could be an infection or something wrong,” the warning was clear in her tone.

He looked up at her—her general direction, “I-yeah… my foot,” he gestured to his boot cladded foot, “it kind of…” he gulped, “started to hurt earlier…” he trailed off, not willing to give her more information. He could feel her shift on the bed, ‘But, it’s not bad anymore…” He didn’t want her to leave.

“I can go get you your pain—”

“No,” he whined, and he hated that too, but he didn’t want her to leave. He needed her to stay—he couldn’t be alone right now. “Don’t go,” he whispered, it was so hushed even he could barely hear it.

“Oh, Izuku,” she sounded heartbroken as she hugged him closer.

“What time is it?” he asked suddenly. He needed a change in topic, not wanting to think about the past any longer.

His mom seemed to understand that he needed this distraction right now. “It’s almost noon.”

That meant he had been up… for a while then… right? Or maybe not, he didn’t know when he had initially woken up. He didn’t like not knowing… how close to noon was it anyway? A few minutes? A few seconds? He didn’t know… he never knew.

“Izuku, are you alright?” He hadn’t even realized that panic had started setting in. He was pathetic… panicking over not knowing the exact time?

“Y-yeah,” he squeaked out, voice breaking in several places, “I just…” he didn’t want to admit it, because it was so stupid, so pathetic. “I just… tired is all. I didn’t sleep well…” He ended up changing the conversation topic.

“Nightmares?” It may have been a question, but there was a knowing tone in her voice.

He just nodded silently, not willing to say more.

“It’ll get better, honey,” her voice soothed him, it was warm, and held all the confidence that he had lost, “I know it will, because you’re strong.”

Izuku had heard his mom say those words to him a lot. They used to fill him hope, now though, they just felt like lies.

He wasn’t strong—he was broken.
It broke Inko’s heart to see Izuku like this. She could feel the tension rolling off him in waves, it was tangible. She absolutely hated that he was put in a position like this.

He wasn’t okay, she knew that; he knew it too, he was just unwilling to admit it. It made her heart hurt physically to see him struggling like this. She knew he was trying, she could see the war that was constantly raging in his eyes, the never-ending battle between reality and his own mind.

It wasn’t something he could fight alone though.

She shook her head as he clung to her. She wanted to help him, but she couldn’t help what she didn’t know, and Izuku was clearly reluctant to share anything regarding his time spent… captured.

She sighed, “Izuku, honey,” she waited for him to give her an indication that he had heard her before continuing, “I think it’s time we got up and ate something.” She kept her tone light.

“I’m not hungry.” Izuku murmured.

“You should still try to eat something… is there anything you feel like eating?” She knew that at this point, her only chance at getting him to eat was to let him decide what he ate, but he had to eat something. He couldn’t afford to not eat.

There was an intake of breath, and Inko worried she had upset him. She knew he was in a rather fragile state of mind at the moment—even more so than usual—and any misstep could cause that fragility to shatter.

“I-um…” there was resistance in his voice, “cold… it has to be cold…” the rigid finality caught here off guard. He had eaten something along those lines yesterday when they had ice cream for dinner. Still, it was something, something she could work with.

“I think I can find something for you,” she put on a mask of confidence. She would make this work. She needed to make things work.

They both got up from their positions on the bed, Inko much more confidently than Izuku. He seemed to be very conscious of his right foot, and Inko worried that it hurt more than he let on, but remained quiet on the subject.

Izuku had already made it clear that he wasn’t going to talk about it.

When they had made it to the couch Izuku sat down. She could tell that he was exhausted, the bags under his eyes told her of the sleepless nights he refused to admit to, and his body was still weak from malnourishment.

She was about to go to the kitchen when there was a knock at the door.

She casted a sidelong glance at Izuku, who had jumped at the sudden noise, but had quickly regained himself.

They were all nervous, not sure if now was a good time to visit Midoriya; Shouto, however, was
nervous for a different reason. He knew Midoriya wouldn’t object to being in the others’ company—except maybe Bakugo, who he was still surprised had even showed up—but his company might not be so welcomed.

He hadn’t forgotten Midoriya’s reaction to him; it had been on his mind ever since it happened.

He stood anxiously, behind Uraraka and Iida, with Kirishima and Bakugou beside him. They had all agreed to meet at eleven thirty. Now, it was twelve-sixteen, and they were outside of the Midoriyas’ apartment.

Iida knocked on the door, and they all waited.

A moment passed, and no one opened the door.

“Do you think now is a bad time?” Kirishima asked, unsure as he fidgeted with his hands.

Uraraka’s tone conveyed the worry she must have felt, “Maybe we should come back—” She was cut off by the door opening. Midoriya’s mother stood at the threshold, looking rather haggard. Her hair was a mess, and her eyes shined with exhaustion and weariness.

“Midoriya-san,” Iida started, talking for all of them, “All of us wanted to check up on Midoriya, and were wondering if he was willing to have some visitors?”

“Yeah, we wanted to cheer Deku up!” Uraraka said gleefully. Kirishima and himself nodded in agreeance, while Bakugo just grunted in annoyance.

“Oh,” Midoriya’s mom chanced a glance behind her, presumably at Midoriya before returning her gaze to them, “I don’t know if now is a good time. Izuku, he’s had—”

A meek voice cut her off, “Mom? Who’s at the door?” It was timid and shy, as if unsure of itself.

Midoriya’s mother turned away from them, “It’s your friends… from school. If you’re not up to it, I can—”

Again, Midoriya cut his mom off, but this time his voice sounded a little stronger, “No. No, it’s fine. They can stay…” something else was said, but Shouto didn’t catch it.

Midoriya’s mother smiled at them, “Well, come in then.” They all shuffled in awkwardly. “I’ll be in the kitchen if you guys need anything.” She left them to stand in the middle of the living room.

Midoriya was sitting on the couch, staring in their direction, but his eyes weren’t focused on anything.

No one said anything, creating a palpable tension in the room.

Iida took a step forward, “Midoriya—” he stopped when Midoriya flinched at the name.

Midoriya’s eyes widened in realization at his response, “Sorry, I just… it’s just that…” he was scrambling for words.

“It’s alright,” Iida assuaged, though his calm demeanor was betrayed by the worry encased in his eyes as he looked at Midoriya.

“Why don’t… you guys can—” a war seemed to be waging in his mind as he thought, “You can just call me by my name, I guess…” He sounded a little disheartened, and Shouto thought about the
implications of his gesture. No one called him by his name, even though they were all pretty close
friends… and Shouto could understand his hesitance, because he wasn’t giving them permission to
call him by his name because he trusted them—Shouto knew he did trust them—he was giving them
permission because he didn’t have a choice. That would make anyone uncomfortable.

“Alright, Izuku.” Iida said as confidently as he could, though the tension was thick.

“Izuku,” Uraraka tried to break the tension, but her loud voice only offset Midoriya—Izuku—even
more, and he flinched, albeit much less than he had to his own name, at her voice. “How are you
doing? We’re all worried about you, but I’m sure things are going better now that you’re home.” Her
voice exuded nothing but confidence in it, a resilient declaration that Izuku was fine, and that things
would go back to normal.

Izuku nodded, “I-uh… yeah, things are… better.” He didn’t sound better, if anything he sounded like
it was taking all his willpower to remain calm. “Who’s all here?” He looked around the room, but his
eyes never stopped moving to focus on anyone or anything.

Shouto was reluctant to announce his presence, afraid of Midoriya’s reaction.

“There’s only five of us here,” Kirishima started, and Izuku snapped his head in his direction, “Me,
Iida, Uraraka, Todoroki,” Shouto noticed that he drew back slightly, barely noticeable, at the
mention of his name, “and Bakugo.”

“Bakugo is here?” He didn’t sound angry or mad, just… confused, perplexed at the notion that
Bakugo would be here. He didn’t even call him by his childhood nickname, which was odd.

“Don’t go thinking I care or anything, Deku. I’m only here because this dumbass,” he gestured to
Kirishima, but made no attempt at a verbal cue, leaving Izuku to speculate, “dragged me along.”

Kirishima gave Bakugo a sidelong glance, clearly not buying his reasoning. However, no one said
anything for a beat, and Shouto hated how Izuku grew uncomfortable with the silence. It occurred to
Shouto that they’re being a little inconsiderate to Izuku—not just because there’s an awkward
silence, but because they forgot that he’s blind now. He can’t see them.

Iida seemed to also notice, and spoke up, “Izuku, are you sure it’s alright for us to stay. We would
understand if we were intruding—”

Hurt crossed over Izuku’s eyes, “No,” there was something close to desperation in his tone, “It’s
fine, really, I’ve just… I could really use the company, actually. Today has been…” He didn’t need
to say anything for them to understand.

“Izuku… we’re all here for you. You know that, right?” Uraraka’s voice was filled with pity. That
almost made Shouto angry. Izuku didn’t need pity, he wasn’t a frail piece of glass that would shatter
at the slightest touch—he was their friend, but then… Why was he so afraid to talk to Izuku, if not
because he was afraid of Izuku’s reaction?

It was hypocritical of him to be angry with Uraraka when he was essentially doing the same thing.

“Yeah, bro, we’re here for you. Anytime you need it,” Kirishima joined in, his voice confident.

Bakugo huffed in response, “Dumbass Deku.” He rolled his eyes and crossed his arms as he turned
away from them, annoyance written on his face.

“I know that… and you guys are amazing friends…” Izuku’s voice lingered, unable to finish the
sentence.
“But… there are some things you’re just not ready to talk about. Some things need a little more time to process, right?” Shouto finished for him, because he could understand the feeling. Sometimes people just needed time to come to terms with something by themselves, not with friends or family.

There was a shaky intake of breath, and Shouto looked at Izuku, where he saw fear in those green orbs. They were directed in his direction, but not focused on anything. Shouto could tell he was trying to quell his emotions, and so far, he was doing a pretty good job, but it was still noticeable.

“I-I… yeah, I just…” his voice was shaky and rough, “I need a little more time,” his voice cracked. He turned his head away from them then.

Shouto faltered, along with everyone else… the fear had been prominent… and it had been directed at him. He was causing Izuku to be uneasy… just by being there and talking.

*It had been a mistake to come here.*

Before anyone could say anything, Izuku started to cough. It was ragged and hoarse, but only lasted a few moments before it stopped.

“Izuku, are you alright?” Iida asked with concern, “I could grab you a glass of water if you need one…”

Izuku perked up at that, “Uh, yeah, sure… Thanks Iida.”

Shouto watched as Iida left the room.

The atmosphere had been filled with tension. It only got worse when Todoroki started to speak—Midoriya didn’t take to his voice well. Tenya found it odd that he was reacting in a such a way to the voice of a friend, but then again, he also didn’t know the specifics of what had happened to Midoriya while he was… captured.

When Midoriya had started to cough, he offered to get a glass of water for him—if anything, he wanted to get out of the room for a moment to gather himself. Seeing Midoriya like this… was difficult. It reminded him of his brother, and he didn’t need those thoughts. It wrought open old wounds—ones he wasn’t quite ready to deal with again.

He went to the kitchen, where he found Midoriya’s mother going through the cabinets.

“Midoriya-san, are you looking for something specific?” He knew this must be trying for her, and he wanted to help her however he could.

“Oh,” she startled, turning to look at him, “Iida, right? You’re one of Izuku’s friends…”

He nodded, “Yes, I am. I visited him at the hospital.”

“Oh, yes I remember,” she sighed, “Thank you for that. I know it is hard to see him like this, but he really needed that normalcy.”

“Oh of course.” Tenya nodded, “It has been… trying, I must admit. Izuku has…” He paused, struggling to find the right words, “He’s different now.”
Her eyes were downcast as she nodded, “Yes, he is.”

Tenya felt out of place here, with Midoriya’s mother reminding him of his own family after Stain had hurt his brother. He could understand her feelings very well, but it still didn’t feel like this was his place to bud in and offer advice.

“Do you need any help?” He asked instead, seeing as she had been looking around the pantry, as if in search of something.

Midoriya-san looked startled before a shadow fell over her eyes, “No, that’s—that’s okay. I was just going through the food we had, trying to find something Izuku will eat…”

“Is he not eating?” He asked the question before really thinking about it.

Midoriya-san shook her head, “He’s not…” She sighed, looking towards the living room, where Izuku and everyone else currently were, “I know he’s trying, he really is, but if he doesn’t eat something…”

“You’d have to readmit him to the hospital, right?” Tenya finished her thought. It was rather obvious that Midoriya hadn’t had a decent meal in a long time, his frame was skeletal, and his muscles were all but gone, atrophied from disuse and malnutrition. He couldn’t afford to be skipping meals.

She nodded in affirmation, “Yes, I would, and I can’t do that… Izuku, he needs this,” she gestured around vaguely, “He needs stability…”

“This must be hard on you as well.” Tenya commented.

Again, Midoriya-san sighed, pain flooded her eyes, and Tenya worried she might cry, “It’s… Izuku has it worse so I shouldn’t—”

“Don’t sell your emotions short. Midoriya may be struggling right now, but so are you.” He knew what she was going through—the feelings of ineptness and regret, then worry and anger at himself for feeling bad when his brother was in worse condition—he had felt them all too much when Tensei had almost died. “You can’t let them pile up. It won’t help anyone if you run yourself into the ground… Look, our situations aren’t the same, so I can’t promise that this will help, but when my brother… when Tensei got injured, we—my family—found support groups for it. To help us cope with the change, and it really helped.”

Midoriya-san gave him a warm, but tired smile, “Iida…thank you.”

Before she could say more, they were cut off by the sound of an explosion. It was mild, and not very loud, but it startled them all the same.

“What was that?” Tenya asked, knowing that Midoriya-san was just as unsure as he was.

His question was answered when Uraraka came from the living room to the kitchen, her eyes wild with fright. “Midoriya-san, you better come quickly… It’s Izuku. He’s not—I don’t know what happened, but…you should come see. We don’t know what to do.” She didn’t wait for a response, she turned heel and went back to the living room, her whole demeanor screaming worry and fear.

They wasted no time in leaving the kitchen to go see what was wrong.
“So, umm…” Izuku was at a loss for words it seemed, since Iida had left an awkward tension filled the space, “You guys can… make yourself at home. You don’t have stand around… if you haven’t sat down already. Though, I haven’t heard you guys move much, so I doubt you’ve sat down, then again…” he was back to his usual mumbling, Shouto noted.

“Nah, it’s all good man, you don’t have to overthink it so much.” Kirishima easily pulled Izuku from his mumbling. He sat down on the couch on the opposite side of Izuku, with Bakugo following in toe, sitting on the edge of the couch. Uraraka sat on the chair adjacent to the couch, but Shouto remained standing.

He had to ask… it would weigh on his mind too much otherwise.

“Izuku,” he called out firmly, but gentle. He waited for Izuku to turn to him, his eyes glazed over with a slight fear that only solidified Shouto’s reasoning for asking. “Are you… why are you afraid of me?”

He waited for Izuku’s response, a knot of anxiety forming in the pit of his stomach.

Uraraka was quick to defend Izuku, not knowing why he was asking him such a question. “Todoroki, how could you ask something like that?”

Kirishima aided in her inquiry, “Yeah, bro, not cool. Izuku’s not afraid of ya—”

He was cut off by Bakugo elbowing him in the side, “Shut up.” Bakugo sent a glare in his direction, but it wasn’t hate filled—well, there was hate, as always with Bakugo, but there was more to it than just anger—his eyes held an understanding in their heated gaze.

“I-I… Todoroki, I’m not afraid of you.” His voice was urgent, but there was doubt in it. That doubt confirmed his unease, because it meant that some part of Midoriya did fear him.

He needed to know, if only for his own guilty conscious. “You’re nervous right now… more so ever since I engaged in the conversation.”

The fear was evident on his face, but it wasn’t all fear directed at him, some of it was just general anxiousness, still it only served to further prove his point.

His voice cracked, “I’m not—I’m not—”

“Stop lying, Deku,” Bakugo grit out, turning his head away.

Both Uraraka and Kirishima stayed quiet.

“I’m not lying… it’s not like that…”

“But you do fear me, I can see it. It’s written all over you face.” He kept his voice calm, but it broke with his next line, “Why?”

“No!” Izuku was frantic now, “It’s not like that… it’s just…”

“Just?” he questioned.

Izuku turned away, “Nothing.”

The tension in the room grew.
“Izuku… are you okay?” Uraraka ventured, even though it was quite obvious that Izuku was, in fact, anything but okay.

“I’m fine,” he said it a little too quickly, and Shouto could see his breathing was more spastic than it should be. “I’m fine. I’m fine.”

He wasn’t fine, that much was certain. He looked to be on the cusps of a panic attack. His eyes looked vacantly ahead, a dull haze filtering them.

“Bro… Izuku, are you sure you’re okay?” Kirishima gave him a worried glance, but hesitated to move in case it only further upset Izuku.

It took Izuku a moment to gather himself, and calm his breathing down, “I’m-I’m fine… just.” He turned to face Shouto’s direction, “I’m not afraid of you. I’m not.” It sounded like he was trying to convince himself more than anything.

“Stop fucking lying, Deku,” Bakugo stood up, his hands twitching in frustration, “It’s obvious you’re scared of frickin Icyhot, You flinch whenever he speaks, and even now, as you were talking to him, you were fucking scared. It’s pathetic.” Irritation, and the barest amount of concern, flitted through Bakugo’s voice.

“I’m not—I—I’m not afraid of Todoroki—” he shook his head violently, but his voice betrayed him when he said Shouto’s name. It was weak… and terrified.

Shouto tried to think of a reason why Izuku would be afraid of him… did he do something? No… that was impossible; the last time he had been with Izuku they had been on good terms. If it wasn’t him… then maybe it was something about him, something unique to him… The more he thought about it, the clearer the answer became, or perhaps it was his own bias, but either way, the one thought that struck with him was his quirk—the fire half of his quirk. He had never liked it before and… Fire had the power to hurt a lot of people. What if… they had used fire to hurt Izuku… then his fear would be…

“Are you afraid of my quirk? My fire?”

Izuku’s eyes went wide, and he swallowed, “I-I…”

Shouto’s eyes went wide, worry and fear flitting through the heterochromatic eyes. It was true… Izuku was afraid of him “You are, aren’t you?”

Izuku said nothing, but there was something else in his eyes, a hidden fear. The fire might be part of it, but there was more to it than that…

“Well, say something, Deku.” Bakugo seemed to be more annoyed by Izuku’s lack of response than Shouto was.

“Guys,” Uraraka chimed in, “Maybe we shouldn’t talk about this right now. We came here to cheer Izuku up, not interrogate him.”

“Yeah, let’s save all this for another time.” Kirishima agreed.

As much as Shouto wanted to know why Midoriya feared him, they were right. Now wasn’t the appropriate time—they hadn’t come here with the intention of making Midoriya more nervous.

Bakugo said nothing. Anger and irritation still fleshed out across his face, but he eventually did relent. Sighing he turned away.
His hands sparked. He was obviously frustrated, and igniting small explosions from his hands seemed to ease his tension. Usually, it was fine. He had enough control over his quirk to not hurt anyone, however, this time Midoriya wasn’t prepared for the sound of the blast as he ignited his quirk.

Compared to the explosions Bakugo could emit, this one was tame, but the sound still rattled them and echoed through the apartment. Everyone was fine, besides being a little shaken from the explosion. They were able to just shake it off—they were used to it.

However…

They turned to look at Izuku, who had gone stalk still, eyes wide with undiluted terror.

Izuku wasn’t as fine as them.

Shouta needed a break. This week had been harrowing, and he just needed to take a step back from it all. Spending a weekend cooped up in his apartment, with a mug of coffee, and a book was the perfect remedy.

He sat on the couch with his cat, Mittles, resting easily on his lap, her black fur blending in with the blanket he had draped over him. Her tail flicked about restlessly as she yawned, it appeared as though she had missed him. She was a more social and needy cat than most, always sleeping on his lap or be nearby. Shouta didn’t mind it. He found it comforting.

He was in the middle of his book, a mystery novel, with supernatural elements. It was a classic, and he was rather enjoying it. He was on page 276 when his phone rang.

It was his work cell, which confused him.

He had the day off. No one should be calling him.

It rang again. Mittles flicked her ears in irritation. When Shouta made a motion to get up, and grab his phone, she pounced off his lap, meowing in protest as she stalked away.

Checking the caller I.D. only served to further his confusion. Very few people had this number, and all of them were known and trusted colleagues, so for the caller to be unknown sparked immediate concern. This couldn’t be good.

On the fourth ring, he answered, “Hello? Who is this?” He got straight to the point, this wasn’t an open number. It wasn’t a number that could be dialed accidently—whoever was calling him wasn’t calling a wrong number. They were calling him specifically.

He was startled by the feminine voice that greeted him. It was light and cheery, for a moment he thought that maybe they had gotten a wrong number, until the voice addressed him by his name.

“What do you want?” Shouta demanded, his voice straining a bit as tension filled the room.

“It’s not what I want, Aizawa-kun,” her voice was candy coated misery, and she let his name roll off
her tongue in mock companionship, “I’m in no position to be making demands after all… not when you hold all the cards… however, I do have a few tricks up my sleeve.”

Shouta gritted his teeth as he listened to her babble on, trepidation ghosting its way through him.

The explosion had caught them all off guard, but Eijiro thought it might have caught Bakugo off guard the most. It wasn’t unusual for Bakugo to let off steam by igniting small explosions in his hands, Eijiro thought it might be some kind of coping method for him, but this time, though the explosion had been small, the noise emitted by it had been rather loud. A firecracker like sound, sharp and precise, that went on for a mere five seconds before dissipating into the air.

It had startled them all, but they were able to get over it. It was only when Eijiro’s gaze moved to Izuku that he realized how bad the situation had become. It probably didn’t help that they had been making Izuku uncomfortable before with their incessant questioning, but this was on a different level.

Izuku had just… stopped.

He wasn’t moving, save for a slight tremble that ran through his body, and his eyes were lost, a glassy film covered them.

“Izuku?” Uraraka was the first to address him.

He didn’t even flinch, but terror started to overcome his features.

Todoroki took a hesitant step towards Izuku, “Are you okay? What’s wrong?” His voice was steady, but the fear was clear.

Izuku didn’t react to the question, his demeanor remained frightened.

“Izuku, bro? You alright?” Eijiro didn’t know what to do in this situation. Something like this had never happened. He turned to Bakugo, to see if he had any insight, but he was frozen in place. His eyes were wide at the sight of Izuku. “Bakugo… it’s not—”

“Shut your goddamn mouth.” Bakugo growled at him, causing him to relent. They were all clearly shaken by this new development, and Eijiro didn’t want to accidentally make things worse.

It was quiet. No one dared to do anything for a beat, in case they only made the situation worse. They looked at each other, trying to figure out what to do.

Their attention was turned back to Izuku when he let out a shaky whimper, “No…” it was quiet, but the only emotion it had held was fear.

“Izuku… it’s okay. You’re okay…” Uraraka tried to soothe, but she was at a loss. She turned her head towards the kitchen, “I’m going to go get Midoriya-san… I don’t think this is something we can handle by ourselves.” She got up, and quickly made her way to the kitchen.

Eijiro silently agreed, none of them knew what to do in this situation; it was best to let Izuku’s mom handle this.
When one of Izuku’s friends came to the kitchen, asking for help, she wasn’t sure what to expect. She feared the worst had happened, that Izuku had had some kind of panic attack while she was in the kitchen.

The truth wasn’t too far off.

Both her and Iida hastily left the kitchen, following Izuku’s friend, to see everyone standing in mute horror as Izuku sat, unmoving, on the couch. His eyes were glassy, and his fingers—on his left hand—trembled slightly. He was paralyzed by fear, unable to do anything, as memories flashed through his mind.

“What happened?” Her voice broke in several places, panic etching its way into her tone as she looked between Izuku’s friends, searching for an answer.

Her eyes landed on Katsuki, and she froze. He was standing there, his own eyes wide with uncertainty. He looked confused and pained. His hands were shaking, and he stayed mute.

“We were just talking…” Izuku’s friend, Inko knew her to be Uraraka, spoke hesitantly, “Everything was fine, but then…” she gazed at Katsuki worriedly.

“Bakugo got angry. He didn’t mean it,” another friend of Izuku’s piped up, he had red hair, but Inko didn’t quite remember his name. “But, he accidentally set off a small explosion…” he casted a worried glance at Katsuki, who still had yet to move, “and I think that—I think that may have set Izuku off.”

Inko looked over the group to see that they all wore guilty expressions. “It’s not—this isn’t the first time this has happened,” she sighed out tiredly. She hated to see Izuku like this, and her heart hurt for him—these episodes, flashbacks or whatever they were called, always left him emotionally and physically drained afterwards.

“We,” this time it was Todoroki that spoke up, his voice thick with regret, “probably didn’t help the situation… we were making him uncomfortable before this,” he gestured to the situation, “happened… We should—we should probably leave…” His voice was morose and somber, a melancholic lament.

Inko wanted to dismiss his suggestion—they couldn’t have known this would happen. Izuku’s triggers were still mostly unknown, however them being here wouldn’t help anyone either.

She walked over to the couch, where Izuku was sitting, and knelt down to his level. “Izuku, honey? Are you alright?” she asked in the softest voice she could.

He didn’t react, it was as though he were somewhere else all together.

“I—” she sighed, “It may be best if you leave… when he’s—when Izuku gets like this… I don’t know how long it’ll take for him to come back…” She could see them all visibly deflate at that, a mixture of resignation and despair clinging to their features as they nodded their heads in understanding.

She turned her attention back to Izuku, who was still unresponsive. Hesitantly, she put her hand on his shoulder; the reaction was immediate.

He flinched violently, and shook his head, his eyes scrunching up. She released her grip from him—obviously physical contact was a no-go right now.

“No…” he whimpered out, his voice pained and tired, “Please… no.” His voice broke, and her heart
broke with it.

He was shaking now, fear having overridden his senses.

She didn’t even notice when all of Izuku’s friends had left, giving meek goodbyes. Her focus was solely on Izuku.

“Izuku,” she started, but stopped when he whimpered again.

“No… stop.” His voice was becoming more urgent, now desperation clawing at the edges.

She wasn’t trained for this—she didn’t know what to do in this situation. All she had to go on was what little knowledge she knew off the top of her head. She needed to keep a level head, acting rash or hysterical wasn’t going to help her in this situation. Izuku needed her right now, and she wasn’t going to let him down… not again, never again.

She took a deep breath and took the time to evaluate the situation. Izuku wasn’t responding to her calling out his name, and physical contact of any kind only sent him into a spiral so she had to find a way to ground him to reality.

“Izuku, honey, you’re safe,” she cooed. One thing she did know was that she needed him to know he was safe, that he was in a safe place and not wherever his mind was bringing him. “You’re at home. Your friends were just here, and I was in the kitchen, do you remember?”

He turned his head in her direction, but gave no indication that he had heard anything she said. Fear plastered itself on his face. His green eyes were fogged over and glassy, unseeing orbs diluted with pain and dread.

“No… stop. Stop it.”

Her heart ached for him; there wasn’t anything she could do but be here for him.

Izuku whimpered again, but this time it sounded pained, a strained, pitiful sound that was pulled from his throat unbidden, “I-I don’t know… please, I don’t-I don’t know!”

He was shaking violently now, scrambling to get away from whatever horrors his mind was showing him. She wanted desperately to reach out and wrap him in a hug, hide him from all his fears, but she couldn’t—right now that would only make things worse.

She didn’t know what he was talking about, but the anguish in his voice spoke volumes for the context she didn’t know.

“Izuku, you’re safe. You’re at home.” She continued to talk to him calmly, trying to get him to calm down, and come back to reality.

The entire time she tried to get through to him, he was trembling, his eyes filled with trepidation and uncertainty. Anytime her voice became too high pitched he would react by backing away, further into the couch, so she kept her voice as low and soothing as possible.

She kept up a constant stream of dialogue, even if he wasn’t responding, she could tell that the constant noise was helping.

It took a long time, maybe half an hour or so of Inko constantly talking to him, asking him questions for him to finally give a coherent response.
“Mom? Where am I?” He looked around cautiously, but the anxiety never faltered. “I can’t where am I?”

“Shh, honey, it’s okay. You’re safe. I’m right here. We’re in the living room at home. You’re safe,” she cooed repeatedly.

He was still unsure of his surroundings. “I’m home?” His hand reached out, searching for something the verify her claim. She intertwined her hand with his.

“You’re safe now, sweetie. You’re at home and you’re safe,” she said reassuringly.

Izuku blinked slowly, comprehension overtaking the glassy orbs. “I-I am home, aren’t I?” His voice cracked, but this time it wasn’t out of dread, but relief.

She pulled him into a firm hug; he graciously accepted the comfort.

“Oh, baby, you’re safe. You’re here now, and I won’t let anything hurt you now,” she whispered as she held him. She knew she couldn’t keep him safe from all the horrors of the world, but if she could at least be there for him, be someone he could lean on for support, then things would be okay.

“Mom…” For once, there were no tears. Inko wasn’t sure that was a good thing or not, but for the moment it didn’t matter.

“Honey… do you want to talk about it?” She knew the answer, but she asked anyway.

“No-no… I just… can I go to my room? I don’t-I need… I just want to be alone for a little bit.” Izuku asked her. He sounded resigned and tired—very tired.

She wanted to know what had happened. She wanted to understand his pain, but she decided not to push the subject any further. He needed time, she knew that. He had to come to terms with it himself before he would let her help—she hated that he was like that, but there wasn’t anything she could do to change it.

She helped him up and brought him to his room, where he found his bed and curled up in it. She offered to stay with him, but he refused, saying he was tired, and wanted to be alone. She agreed reluctantly, before heading back to the living room.

Today had been a disaster, and it wasn’t even four in the afternoon.

Iida had been right, this wasn’t something she should be trying to deal with alone. She just wasn’t enough for Izuku right now. He needed more than she could offer. He needed professional help, someone who could help him deal with his trauma.

She couldn’t do that— today had been proof enough that she had no idea what she was dealing with. It hurt to come to terms with that, but it was a realisation she had needed to come to. Izuku needed help, and she couldn’t do this alone.

With a resolve set in, she went to the computer to start researching. After she had done some more research, she would talk to Izuku about it. She knew he would be against it, but he needed it, and she wouldn’t force him to go if he absolutely didn’t want to. She didn’t know what she’d do if he didn’t agree to see a therapist, or some other kind of professional, but she decided not to dwell on that right now.
Shouta listened to the caller’s words with disdain. Her voice juxtaposed what she was saying, and he found it thoroughly disturbing. How could someone sound so peppy when making a threat?

She prattled on and on about how even though they had taken Midoriya back, he wasn’t safe—he never would be again. “You may have taken Midoriya-kun,” he hated the way she said his student’s name, “back, but that doesn’t mean he’s safe. In fact…” her voiced changed pitch, raising an octave, “I would say he’s in more danger now than ever.”

“Why do you say that?” he asked, a lingering threat lying in wait on his tongue. He wanted to hang up, but this could be a lead.

Through the phone he could hear her giggling, “My, my, Aizawa-kun… eager to hear all the answers are we? But that’s not how this game is played. No, no, no… you mustn’t ruin the surprise by cheating—”

“Listen here,” he couldn’t condone this. He inadvertently activated his quirk, his hair raising along with his temper and eyes tinting red. “I don’t know what game you think you’re playing, but if you even so much as harm one hair on my student’s head, I swear, no matter where you hide, I will find you, and I will end you.”

From the corner of his peripherals he saw Mittles tense at his threatening air, a hiss forming as her tail puffed up.

“Aizawa,” her voice was monotonous now, a serious note having replaced the chipper tone, “It’s a little late to be playing that card… I mean, just look at the state Midoriya-kun is in now. He was your student then, and look what happened.” He tensed at her words, flinching slightly as the truth of the statement hit him. He had already failed Midoriya once, he wouldn’t stand to do so again.

At his lack of response, she continued, “Look, I just wanted to call to let you know that this isn’t over. Now that your detective has given me some valuable information, my job has become so much easier,” her deadpan voice was somehow more ominous than her dreadful cheeriness had been. It gave off a sense rigid finality. “Make sure to give that detective, granted he’s alive, my thanks. I look forward to how this game progresses, Eraserhead,” her tone changed into that sickly sweet tone as they said their farewell, “Ciao.”

Shouta was left listening to the dial tone after she had hung up.

In his frustration he threw his phone across the room. “Goddammit!” he yelled, vexed at the situation. He felt powerless right now. The villain who had taken Midoriya and held him for six weeks had just called him and mocked him, toyed with him, and it was unnerving.

She had said something about getting information from a detective. When had that happened… there hadn’t been any attacks on any of the detectives besides…

What information had she gotten from Tsukauchi? He hadn’t know that she had gotten any information from that exploit—all he knew was that Tsukauchi had gone to investigate the crime scene and had been attacked by the villain, but he hadn’t heard of any information being stolen.

This villain was determined to see this ‘game’ through until the end, but if Shouta had anything to say about it, he was going to put an end to the game before the villain could make her next move.

He meant what he had said: if that villain even made one move to hurt any of his students, he wouldn’t hesitate to put an end to them—rules be damned. The well being of his students’ was more
important.

Chapter End Notes

Oh... umm... someone in the comments gave me the idea for that one line about the trench coat and the villain stealing it, so thank you commentor for that!! I really found your comment funny and so I decided to use it~
Also here's what you need to know about Mittles the cat: She protec, she attac, but most importantly, she sleeps on Aizawa's lap
Until next time,
Vera~
Inko left Izuku alone for the rest of the day. He never came back out of his room, and while Inko was worried, she let him be. She knew he needed time to process everything that had happened. She was going to let him have time to recuperate and just be alone, she knew he needed it. After she made herself dinner—she had asked if Izuku was hungry, but she hadn’t gotten a response—she decided to turn in early, and get some much needed sleep.

However, sleep evaded her; she felt even worse for wear than yesterday. She sighed, dragging a hand down her face as she got out of bed, and pulled herself into the living room where she took a seat on the couch.

Yesterday had been a disaster, but now, she needed to figure out what their next step was.

What was she going to do? Things couldn’t continue this way. Izuku wasn’t eating, wasn’t sleeping enough, and now, she had to question his mental stability. It hurt. It really hurt to think about it, but she didn’t have a choice. Izuku needed help, and she couldn’t offer it…

She couldn’t.

That was a difficult pill to swallow, but it was the truth. Izuku needed professional help, help that she alone couldn’t provide. She had searched online for a therapist, and when she had exhausted her options online, she called the doctor that had treated Izuku. He had been kind and helpful, but ultimately, the conversation hadn’t been pleasant, and it left her with nothing but a feeling of misery that settled deep in her bones.
There weren’t many options that she was left with. She couldn’t force Izuku to go to therapy—she couldn’t. He had been at the mercy of others for too long for her to take away his control over this. However, if he didn’t get some kind of help, and his conditioned worsened… she would have no other choice but to admit him to the hospital. She was caught in between a rock and a hard place. However, she would have to talk to him about it, discuss their options, and go from there.

She rubbed her eyes, still exhausted from her lack of sleep that night.

This wasn’t something she should be dwelling on right now, there were other more pressing matters to deal with at the moment.

She did need to have a conversation with Izuku about this, today even, but there was something else she needed to do… something she had dreaded over for the past few days.

Izuku had bandages that went around most of his torso, and while they covered older, scarred over wounds—from what the doctor had told her—the bandages still needed changing, and she would be the one that would have to change them.

She didn’t know the damage that lay hidden beneath the white linen cloth, but she feared to see it nonetheless. She didn’t know what—if anything—Izuku had to say about it. He didn’t like talking about his time spent in captivity, let alone his injuries received there.

Inko sighed heavily at the thought.

Yesterday might have been a disaster, but Inko couldn’t help but think that this was only just the beginning. Things were going to get worse, they always did, before they could even start to get better.

Katsuki avoided everyone in the dorms the next day, opting to stay in his room. He knew he had fucked up, he didn’t need everyone else yelling at him for it. Shitty Hair had come by his room yesterday when they had first arrived back, trying to talk to him, but Katsuki wasn’t having it.

He didn’t need anyone telling him that he had screwed up, nor did he need someone to console him and tell him it wasn’t his fault, because he knew damn well that it was his fault. He had been an idiot… why couldn’t he have just controlled his goddamn quirk?

It was just a small explosion, not even noteworthy—Deku had taken the brunt force of worse before, so why? Why did he react so much worse this time around? He knew the answer, somewhere in the back of his mind, he knew why Deku had reacted so harshly, he just didn’t want to admit it. Admitting it would mean he would have to face the fact that Deku wasn’t alright, that his time spent taken by those villains did change him.

He couldn’t do that—Deku was fine… but he wasn’t. He wasn’t alright, and Katsuki couldn’t stand that. Deku was always fine, he always got back up, blow after blow, as if nothing could hurt him, as though it was nothing, but this time… this time he stayed down. He tried to brush it off, but he couldn’t. What was Katsuki supposed to make of that?

How could he… He had finally accepted the fact that stupid, crybaby Deku was a rival—he was making his borrowed power his own. Katsuki wouldn’t admit it, but he liked their rivalry. Deku had always pushed him to be better, even more so since school had started, but he couldn’t do that
anymore…

Katsuki hated admitting he was wrong, and he rarely was, but right now, he knew he had been wrong. He had thought that nothing could break Deku, he was simply too stubborn to give in, but after seeing him yesterday, he knew that to be wrong. Everyone had a breaking point, he just hadn’t expected to ever see Deku reach his.

It had shocked them all, and nobody, especially Katsuki, had been prepared for the aftermath when Deku finally reached his breaking point.

There was a knock at his door, causing him to startle.

“Go the fuck away, Shitty Hair,” he called out, not even bothering to check who was at the door.

The door opened regardless, “Ah, man, hate to break it to ya, but Kirishima left like an hour ago, something about asking a teacher for help or something…”

Katsuki hadn’t expected Kaminari to come to his dorm. He had thought—hoped—that nobody would bother him today. He didn’t need their comfort—he didn’t want it.

“Go away,” he growled, turning away on his bed, “or I’ll break your goddamn face in.”

Either Kaminari hadn’t heard him, or he didn’t have any self preservation, because he completely ignored Katsuki’s threat, and walked into the room.

“Hey man,” he started, his voice light and cautious, “I just came to invite you to lunch with me and the squad…” he paused, a pensive look crossing his eyes, “and, like, you haven’t left your room since you got back yesterday… You alright?”

“Of course I’m fine,” he barked out, but even as it left his mouth, he knew it was lie. He really wasn’t fine, he wasn’t sure what he was right now.

“Okay, okay,” Kaminari relented. “Whatever you say man.” He didn’t sound convinced, and that angered Katsuki even more.

He turned to face him, sending a glare, eyes glowing red, at Kaminari, “I said I’m fine.” His words spit like venom.

“And I never said you weren’t,” he refuted.

“It was implied,” Katsuki scoffed, turning away from Kaminari. He sat up, crossing his arms in an attempt to control his quirk—it wasn’t as though he didn’t have control over it. More so, it was the fact that he was unreasonably angry right now, and just wanted to be left alone.

“Well, we’re gonna go to lunch, just text us if you decide you want to join,” Kaminari turned to leave, an awkward air filling the room.

Katsuki took a breath, before he could stop himself he spoke, “That damned nerd isn’t supposed to be broken. He’s a stubborn ass, he’s not supposed to break.”

Kaminari stopped. “Wha-what do you mean?” he startled. Katsuki was not a talkative person, but right now the words wouldn’t stop.

“Deku,” Katsuki bit out, “It’s not right. It’s wrong.” He didn’t turn to look at Kaminari—he couldn’t. He was in too much turmoil; he needed to be alone right now.
“Midoriya?” He asked, though it wasn’t a question, more of a confirmation, “Look, man,” his voice wavered, “what happened to Midoriya was awful, but he’s here now. We have him back, and soon enough, he’ll be back—”

“No,” Katsuki cut him off, “he won’t. He’s not coming back any time soon… if ever,” he silently added the last part. The words sounded bitter coming off his tongue. He didn’t understand why. He hated Deku—he couldn’t care less what happened to that weakling, but then, it caused him distress to admit that he wasn’t okay.

Kaminari cut off his conflicting thought, “How could you say that? Midoriya is tough, and he was fine back at the hospital—”

Katsuki’s anger rose again, “He wasn’t okay, you fucking idiot. Or are you fucking blind?” he turned to glare at him, not caring about the fear that sparked in Kaminari’s eyes, “That bastard is lying. He’s lying through his fucking teeth, saying he’s fine, saying that he’s fucking okay when he’s not,” his voice broke on the last word.

He could feel the burning sensation behind his eyes, his anger was boiling over now. He was so goddamn frustrated right now, and he needed to let out his frustration—usually that meant fighting, namely picking a fight with Deku, but that just wasn’t an option at the moment, and Katsuki wasn’t okay with that.

“Bakugo,” Kaminari started, caution and hesitance reigning dominant in his voice, “are you—”

“Go away.” He sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. He really didn’t want to deal with people right now. He wasn’t in the mood nor the mindset to be around anyone, especially if all they could offer were candy coated words that held no merit. “Just,” he got up, not taking his eyes off the ground, “get out.” He opened the door, and gestured for Kaminari to leave.

Kaminari stood there for a moment, shocked by the strong reaction Katsuki had given to his inquires, but eventually did reign in his shock enough to silently head over to the door. As he was passing he gave Katsuki a wary glance, “You have friends you can talk to, you know. If you need us, just text us…” he let the offer linger before leaving.

In his frustration, Katsuki slammed his door closed. He knew he was unreasonably angry—he had no reason to be upset like this. There was no rhyme nor reason to his anger—or, maybe there was, but he wasn’t going to admit to it.

He sighed again, running a distressed hand through his hair, the entire situation weighing down on him. He wasn’t okay with it.

He had never liked Deku, had never thought anything notable of him until recently… but now, it seemed as though everything that idiot had worked for was just… gone, erased like it didn’t matter. It upset him. It wasn’t right—how could he be the number one hero if his competition had been forced to forfeit?

This wasn’t how he wanted to beat Deku. It wasn’t meant to end like this. Those damned villains had ruined everything. He couldn’t—wouldn’t—stand for it.

There had to be something he could do. Here had to be something someone could do. He couldn’t let things end here. Not like this.
Toshinori sat in the teachers lounge, going over the case for Izuku. There really wasn’t much to go off of. They only had circumstantial evidence, and whatever Naomasa could recount, which left them with a file that was much too small to work with.

He wasn’t officially a part of the investigation, seeing as he was retired. He may be a teacher at U.A. but even if that gave him a closer relationship to the students, it wasn’t enough to warrant him access to the investigation. If anything, it made this case a conflict of interest for him; he would be biased. Of course, this investigation was on a need to know basis, and the public had no idea about Izuku’s kidnapping and subsequent rescue—a fact that Toshinori feared would blow up in their face. He knew it would have been bad publicity, but if it were to get out now, after six almost seven weeks, the backlash would ruin them. Still, he wasn’t apart of the investigation, and thus, his intel was limited.

Naomasa had promised to keep him in the loop, and Toshinori was grateful for that, but he needed more. Seeing Izuku, seeing him so distraught and in pain was unbearable. He had to do something. Something else Naomasa had told him was bugging him right now, though. Naomasa had told him that they still needed Izuku’s account on what had happened… and Toshinori wasn’t sure if Izuku was in the right mind to give it. He had said that it could wait, but not for much longer. They needed it on the record, meaning they would have to interview Izuku, and get all the details.

He wasn’t sure if any of them were ready to hear it.

He was drawn from his musing when the door opened. Quickly, he shut the case files—in hindsight, it probably hadn’t been the best idea to bring these files here in such a public place.

He turned to see who had opened the door, thinking it was another teacher trying to get some papers graded over the weekend, and was surprised to see the distraught face of young Kirishima. He was glancing around the room expectantly.

“Are you looking for someone in particular, young Kirishima?” he asked, gaining Kirishima’s attention.

His eyes looked frantic for a second before he regained himself, “Oh, All Might,” he sheepishly scratched his neck, “I was just… looking for Aizawa, but I guess he’s not here…” he sounded upset, and Toshinori worriedly wondered why.

“No, he has the weekend off. I believe he was going to spend the weekend just relaxing at home.” Kirishima’s expression grew crestfallen; Toshinori was pained to see one of his students so obviously distressed, prompting him to ask, “Why? Was there a question you had?”

Kirishima looked at him, shock predominant on his face, “No, not really just…” he lingered, “Nevermind, it’s not really important.”

It was a lie, Toshinori could see that clearly by the way Kirishima held himself. He couldn’t be sure what was causing Kirishima to act so timid—he was usually so confident and boisterous—but he had an idea. He didn’t want to make Kirishima uncomfortable, but he also did want to help him. Even if he was relatively useless in terms of being a hero now, he was still a teacher, and had a duty to help students however he could.

“Are you sure?” he started, his voice conveying more confidence than he felt at the moment. “I’m still learning how to be a proper teacher, but I would like to help you if I can.”
He noted the way Kirishima shifted on his feet, a discontentedness rolling through his eyes, before he sighed. There was something very heavy laden in Kirishima, which worried Toshinori to no end.

He was already constantly worried about Izuku, now, it was becoming even more clear that he should be concerned about the other students in class 1-A as well. Izuku wasn’t the only one suffering right now.

Kirishima sat down at the table, sitting across from Toshinori. Kirishima wouldn’t look him in the eyes though, instead his gaze was downcast.

“Me and a few friends… we went to see Midoriya— **Izuku** yesterday and…” His voice trailed off, an ominous note hanging in the air.

Even if Toshinori had speculated over what was causing Kirishima such distress, it still hurt to know that he was right in his assumptions. Izuku… he was still coming to grips with things. He was a little less than okay at the moment, and he should have expected for it to be especially hard on the students. They were kids—this wasn’t something they should have to deal with, no one should.

“I’m guessing it didn’t go as well as planned,” he suggested, keeping his voice calm and collected.

“No… it didn’t.” Kirishima’s voice was thicker with emotion now, “Maybe it was a bad idea to have brought Bakugo… I just thought, ya know,” he gestured vaguely, looking up at Toshinori. “I didn’t think… it was supposed to be a friendly visit… not…”

Oh. This didn’t sound good. He had heard of the students plan to visit Izuku, and had thought it would be a good thing. It didn’t sound as though things had gone as they had expected however.

He wondered though, why Bakugo would have gone. Weren’t he and Izuku not friends? He thought they didn’t get along… though maybe that was why he had gone to visit. In the six weeks that Izuku had been gone, he had noticed how much more secluded Bakugo had become. Bakugo had always been easy to anger, but in those six weeks, he had become less volatile, and become more of a recluse. He did his work, trained hard—with even more vigor than usual—and just stayed out of everyone’s way.

For the most part it had appeared as though Bakugo had been apathetic towards Izuku’s capture. However, maybe that had been a front, a way for him to control his emotions. He and Izuku clearly didn’t get along, but they also have a long history with each other—even if they truly did hold great antipathy towards one another—their shared history made things much more complicated. Clearly, this had affected Bakugo more than anyone had given him credit for.

He ventured to ask what, exactly went wrong, “Young Kirishima, what exactly happened?” He feared the answer.

Kirishima looked at him and his eyes were so, so sad as he spoke, “We just wanted to make him feel better, ya know? Cheer him up, but… we did the exact opposite.”

Toshinori didn’t ask for the details, he needn’t know them to understand, “Kirishima, you know it’s not your fault, right? Izuku, he’s not in a good place right now—”

“I know that,” Kirishima defended, “What he went through… I can’t even imagine how hard that must have been, and Midoriya, he’s super strong, both physically and mentally, and I think,” he cut himself off briefly, “I think that it surprised us, to see him like this— to see him so… so unsure of himself. Like, he’s the same age as all of us, but now… he’s so much different.” Kirishima was rambling now, the act reminded Toshinori a bit of Izuku.
“Young Kirishima,” he paused, gathering his thoughts before continuing, “I know this is difficult for you, and it’s not something you should have to deal with—”

“But that’s just the thing. This,” he gestured around, “this kind of thing is the exact type of thing we’ll have to get used to. As heroes, this is something that happens… and I don’t know if I can… it’s just really, really hard. There should have been—we should have been able to do something.” His voice faltered at the end, giving way to the concern, and overall unsureness he was no doubt feeling.

Toshinori stopped, because Kirishima was right. This was something that happened—it didn’t happen often, but it was a general concern for people who pursue this career. However, even if it was something that went along with the job, it didn’t apply to high schoolers like Kirishima… and Izuku. This wasn’t something they should have to worry about—but they did. Izuku had been captured, and they were all dealing with the after effects. It wasn’t fair, and it wasn’t right, but it was the cold, hard truth.

“Kirishima, I understand your feelings, I really do, this is hard, and I won’t lie, age and experience doesn’t make it easier to deal with, but you can’t beat yourself up over it.” He needed Kirishima to understand this. He was just a kid—a kid who didn’t deserve to have to deal with this, “You can’t focus on what you could have or should have done. You can’t change the past, all you can do is think about what you’re going to do, how you’re going to make things better. Your friend is hurt right now, and you’re hurting as well because of it, but you can’t focus on what you didn’t do. That’s not going to help anyone. Focus on being there for your friend, for helping him get better.”

Kirishima looked at him, something akin to thankfulness flitting in his eyes.

Toshinori sighed, before saying his last piece of advice, “Young Kirishima, things may be bad right now, but don’t lose hope that things will get better, because they will. And, don’t forget,” he paused to show the significance this statement would have, “you’re a kid too. You have to give yourself a break too. You may be worried about your friend because he’s hurt, but that doesn’t mean you should disregard your own health. You can’t help if you burn yourself out.”

Kirishima stared at him for a moment before nodding, something resolute in his eyes. “I… All Might, thanks, I really think I needed that.” There was an awkward pause, in which Toshinori didn’t know what to say, and Kirishima said nothing. After a beat, Kirishima gave a thankful nod as he got up, and made his way to the door without a word, his expression much more relieved than it had been when he first arrived.

Sighing, Toshinori went back to the files he had been looking through, opening them to look them over again. He stared at them for about five minutes, not taking in anything, before shutting it again, and pushing it aside.

He sighed. Kirishima made him realize that in his concern over Izuku’s health, he’d neglected to take into account that the rest of the class had been affected by this as well. They needed support too, just like Izuku—they just didn’t need it in the same way Izuku needed it.

He would have to bring this concern up with Nedzu, see if there was anything they could do. It wasn’t fair to expect these kids—who were only fifteen—to be able to take this kind of blow in stride. They were all struggling and needed help, and as a hero, retired or not, it was his job to help them.
Izuku wasn’t okay, that much he knew. He thought he could handle it, he really did, but… he couldn’t. He couldn’t keep it together, no matter how hard he tried to just act… normal, it all fell apart when he heard that explosion.

Loud sounds only ever meant pain; always, every time he heard a sudden loud noise, it was always followed by pain. He knew he was safe, that he wouldn’t be hurt anymore, but that sound… it had been so similar to… he had thought he was back there. All his rationality had left him, and he was back in that place.

He hated this, he absolutely hated this. His inability to keep it together had ruined everything. Everything was crumbling around him. His sanity was in shambles and… he was tired of fighting it.

He was so, so tired.

Was it even worth it to try and piece back his life? He knew there were people still waiting for him, willing to support him, but how long until they realized that this was a lost cause? He was a lost cause..

He had screwed everything up with his friends—Todoroki had to hate him now. Now that he had admitted to being afraid of him… Todoroki probably thought he was weak and pathetic. He sure felt pathetic.

Izuku knew this couldn’t continue, this tightrope he was walking was bound to break soon. Hell, it was already fraying at the ends. Soon enough, they would give up… they would realize that he wasn’t worth all this trouble, that he wasn’t going to get better, that he was too lost within his own mind to recover. It had taken him forever to come back to reality this time… it was different from the other times.

The other times he could usually bring himself back, but this time, he was gone. He had been back there, and he could feel it: the pain, the chillness that made its home in his bones, the questions that he didn’t know the answers to—or worse, the questions he did know the answers to—the agony, the hunger, the isolation from everything, even his own senses… everything had come back full force. He had been back. His friends had vanished, their comforting, albeit a little awkward, presence had been replaced by the her cold, threatening one.

It had been too real; he couldn’t bring himself out of it, he had been trapped there… again, but this time it had been his mind that had kept him prisoner the entire time. He had been held prisoner by his own mind, and that thought scared him. It scared him a lot.

How was he supposed to be a hero if he jumped at every unexpected noise? If he was held captive by his own mind, and had to be coaxed out of it by his mom?

Izuku knew he needed more than what his mom could offer—he loved her, and he knew this was tough on her, he really did, which was why he felt so guilty about his current condition, but this wasn’t working. Her constant presence helped, it helped a lot, but he needed more. He didn’t know what he needed exactly, but he needed more than what she was able to give.

That knowledge killed him. His mom had always been able to quell his fears, for her to suddenly just… not be enough, it scared him. If she couldn’t help him, then maybe he really was a lost cause. Maybe they were trying to fix something that was irreparable.

Maybe he would have been better off if he had…

His thoughts trailed back, and he forcibly stopped them. He wasn’t going to think about that—he
was never going to think about that. He couldn’t—he wouldn’t.

He shifted on his bed, not quite ready to leave its comfort, but still needing to change his position. He could hear footsteps from outside his door. It had to be his mom, she had been hovering over his room since yesterday—he guessed it was since yesterday at least. He knew she was worried about him, but he didn’t want to talk about it, he couldn’t. He just… he wanted to be left alone.

Still, it wasn’t fair of him to keep her worried over him. She didn’t deserve that. She didn’t deserve any of this.

There was a knock at his door, and while he had been expecting it, he still tensed at the sound.

“Izuku? Are you up?” He heard the timid voice of his mom calling out to him.

Despite not wanting to talk, he responded, albeit meekly, “Yeah?”

He could hear the door open; he turned away from her. “Oh, Izuku,” he hated the pity in her voice. He didn’t need pity—he didn’t want it. He remained quiet as she walked up towards him. He didn’t have anything to say.

He was just… tired.

He felt the bed cave in under his mom’s weight, and he tried to move away from her even more. Even if he couldn’t see, he knew he must look pathetic right now.

“Are you feeling any better, honey?” Her voice was soothing, comforting.

He still didn’t say anything. He couldn’t. He felt her put a hand on his shoulder, rubbing circles. It was comforting, but he still couldn’t bring himself to say anything.

“Izuku,” she continued, taking his silence as a cue to continue, “about yesterday…”

His breath stilled. He knew they would have to talk about this—he knew this was coming, but he wasn’t ready for it. He tried to make himself as small as possible, wilting in on himself.

“Izuku,” the sorrow was etched so deeply into her tone that he thought it might never leave, “I know things are hard. I know you’re struggling, but I can’t help you if I don’t know what’s wrong.”

He knew that. He knew he was struggling, but he couldn’t tell her why. He wanted to, he really did—she was his mom, and he could tell her anything—but this… this wasn’t something she needed to know. The things they’d done… the things he’d done to survive… the pain he endured, it wasn’t something he could share with her; it wasn’t something he was able to tell, he just couldn’t.

She sighed at his silence, and he felt guilty. Why was this so hard for him? Why couldn’t he just tell her he needed more time? That he couldn’t be strong right now?

“If you won’t talk to me, will you talk to someone else? A professional?” He hated how resigned her voice sounded.

At this, he did respond, “I-I can’t,” he choked out. In a painstakingly slow gesture, he sat up.

“Honey,” her voice was pained, “you can’t continue like this… you know that. It’s not healthy, and I won’t allow it.”

He gulped. He knew this was an inevitability. He couldn’t continue like this—he would drive himself insane, but the alternative—talking about it—wasn’t ideal either. How could he talk to a
stranger about things he couldn’t even admit to himself? “I-I know, I just,” he took a shuddering breath, “I can’t.”

His mom waited a moment before speaking. When she did, her voice was calm, betraying the anxiety that Izuku knew lay just beneath her skin, “Izuku, I can’t do nothing. You need help, help that I can’t provide.” She took a controlling breath. “You have to talk to someone.”

“I know,” he broke out, his voice no more than a whisper. “I know that. I know, but… I just…” he couldn’t finish his sentence, frustrated with his own ineptness.

She brought him into a hug, it was sideways, and crushed him against her shoulder, but it was comforting nonetheless.

“I know, honey, I know, but can you…” she took a breath, “Can you try? For me?”

His eyes went wide at that. He didn’t want to, he really didn’t… but, he had promised himself he would do better hadn’t he? But he was actively hiding from the things that could help him… He could try couldn’t he. He could give it a shot… it couldn’t get worse. Besides… he had been making life so difficult for his mom, it wasn’t fair. She didn’t deserve that. He couldn’t do that to her, so… he still really didn’t want to. He really, really didn’t want to, but if it was for his mom… then… he could try.

He nodded silently, not able to voice his answer.

He felt her tighten her grip around him, “Thank you, Izuku,” relief flooded her voice. “I know this is difficult for you, you don’t like having to rely on people, but it’s not always a bad thing to have to rely on people. Especially when all those people want to do is help you.”

“I…” He didn’t know how to respond to that—he knew it was true, that he would only get better if he allowed himself to get the help he needed, but knowing something and acting on it were different things. It was easy to say something like that, it was something else entirely to act on it.

They stayed like that for a while, neither one saying anything, until eventually his mom did move.

“She shifted from her position, jarring Izuku, who had fallen into a light sleep against her, “Izuku, I think it’s time we both got up and made something to eat.”

He yawned, he was still tired, but much more relaxed now that he had been in the comfort of his mom for a while—maybe cooping himself in his room to deal with his issues alone hadn’t been the best idea.

“I’m not—”

“You’re not hungry, I know, but Izuku… you need to eat.” Her voice was firm, and he knew she wouldn’t back down this time.

“I… okay,” he wasn’t hungry, but maybe he could try to eat something… He needed to eat, he knew that, food was just… not something he craved nowadays. He had his reasons… reasons he would rather not think about, but it wasn’t like he could just forgo eating for the rest of his life. The sooner he was able to eat food easily again the better.

They both got up, Izuku following his mom’s lead, and they made their way to the living room.

Izuku tensed when they entered the living room, even if he couldn’t see anything, this room brought him back to yesterday, when his friends had been here… and then there had been that sound… it had
“Izuku?” His mom’s voice brought him out of his thoughts.

“Huh? Oh… sorry, I just kinda spaced out I guess,” he said very unconvincingly.

His mom didn’t make any verbal cue, but he could guess that she was wearing a sad expression on her face, the kind she used to wear when he was a kid and would come home with bruises, saying he tripped or fell on the way home.

Instead, she told him to wait in the living room—he could find his way to the couch easy enough now—until she finished making food. She didn’t ask him for any suggestions, probably because she knew he wouldn’t have any. Eventually, he did hear her come back into the living room.

“I made smoothies,” she started as she gave him a glass, he held it, unsure of himself, “I didn’t have much to work with, but I hope it’s something you can handle.”

He nodded wordlessly. A smoothie… he hadn’t really thought of that… maybe something like that… it might be fine. He took a sip. It wasn’t bad. It was… nice? He took another sip, keeping in mind to not take too big of a drink at once.

“How is it?” his mom’s voice was timid and unsure. He immediately felt bad; he knew she was running out of options for him.

“I… it’s not bad, I think I can manage.” He could feel the tension leave her as he spoke.

She sat down next to him. They drank their smoothies in silence.

It was nice. Things were going good, and Izuku thought today was going to be a much better day than yesterday had been.

“Izuku,” he heard her set her cup down on the table, and he turned to face her general direction, unsure what this seriousness was for, “this may not be the best time… but there is something else we need to do today.”

He stop drinking, and gave her a wary expression—he didn’t like this. What could they possibly need to do now?

“You’ve been home for a few days now… and we need to change your bandages.”

Izuku stopped. No. He shook his head, without saying anything. He didn’t—she couldn’t… he couldn’t let her see the scars. She would see—she would know what they had done to him, the damage they caused, and he couldn’t let her know that.

He wanted to protect her from that if at all possible… but he knew, by her tone, that she wasn’t going to let him run away from this. Not this time. He wasn’t ready… he wouldn’t ever be, but it didn’t look like he had a choice in the matter.

Chapter End Notes

I swear, I didn't want to end it there, it just sorta happened.
Also, I highly recoment the song "hold on Forever" by Rob Thomas, it is super sweet
and wholesome. 10/10
Until next time,
Chapter Summary

"So let it hurt, let it bleed
Let it take you right down to your knees
Let it burn to the worst degree
May not be what you want, but it's what you need"
--Rascal Flatts

Chapter Notes

.... it's... been awhile, hasn't it. Oops. I did not mean for almost two months to pass before updating this, I swear. Life just kinda got in the way and stuff, but I promise I didn't forget about this fic. I have the outline for it finished and everything so hopefully, no promises though, I can write out the chapters quicker.
Rzen, you're a fantastic beta and I love you!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fear settled deeply into Izuku’s unseeing eyes. He couldn’t do this. He couldn’t—he really, really couldn’t.

“No… please, you-you can’t…” Desperation clawed at his voice. Panic was itching its way through him, preparing to launch itself full force at him.

The wounds he had, the scars… she didn’t need to see them. They were scars that he had to bear alone—no one needed to know of them, or the horrors that accompanied them. His eyes shut tight at the memories. He couldn’t relive them… once had been enough, if he had to do it again… he couldn’t.

He wasn’t that strong.

“Honey,” his mom sounded worried now—he hated that, “we have to… they could get infected.”

He shook his head. He didn’t care. It couldn’t be worse than her knowing what had been done to him… what he had… no, she didn’t need to know.

“I don’t care,” he pleaded. He didn’t care, either. Keeping this from her, keeping his mom safe, that was more important than his overall health.

His mom had a different viewpoint, “Izuku,” he could feel the pain in her voice as she spoke, “this isn’t something you can avoid.”

He knew that of course, he knew that, but it still stung to not have a say in the matter. They were his
injuries… shouldn’t he have some say in what happened to them? Of course not, he thought bitterly, he hadn’t had control over anything for however long now.

It hurt… it shouldn’t hurt like this. He was back, but it still… it wasn’t okay.

He didn’t have control anymore—he knew that, and it hurt.

Bracing himself, he quietly nodded and gave up his defense; there wasn’t a point to fight it anymore… there wasn’t any point in fighting at all.

He was frustrated, and the defeatist in him won out in the end. He couldn’t keep fighting this… He just… He hadn’t wanted her to see his scars because that made it real. If his mom saw those scars… there was no going back, there was no denying it anymore.

He didn’t think his mom was strong enough to handle it, he knew he wasn’t. If she saw the damage, if she knew, he would break. Even though he knew that… he just didn’t have the strength to fight anymore. She was going to find out, and it was going to hurt. It was going to kill him, but there was no way to stop it.

“Izuku…?” His mom’s questioning voice brought him out of his thoughts, and he realized he was trembling, and tears had found their way down his cheeks.

“I-I,” he struggled to form any words.

A knot twisted in his gut, and he leaned forward. Air struggled to make it to his lungs, causing him to choke. Everything felt heavy, it weighed down on him, a dark feeling swelled up within him until pressure was put on his back, and slowly, very slowly the darkness went away.

“Izuku, honey, it’s okay. Just breathe. Take a deep breath…” His mom’s calm voice helped ground him.

He heeded her advice and took slow, deep breaths, trying to quell the fear drilled within him.

Her voice was steady, though he could tell she was terrified, “Honey, I know it’s scary, and I know you don’t want to do this, but please.” He hated the anguish that drowned her voice. “Please, for me… I’ll change them as quickly as I can,” she pleaded, begged him even to listen to her.

It hurt—it was agonizing, “I can’t.”

She sighed, and his defenses crumbled. His breath hitched as hot, angry tears cascaded down his face. “If you see them… I can’t… You can’t—” he choked out before breaking off into a sob.

It was too much for him.

There was an intake of breath from behind him, and he felt the pressure on his back deepen, though it never lost its comforting presence. “Oh, Izuku,” sorrow dripped from her tone like honey, “I know it’s difficult—”

He stopped her, “No… it’s not that… I know you don’t have a choice,” his voice hitched, “but if you see them… that’s it. It’s over, but I can’t… I can’t—I can’t—” he couldn’t finish the thought.

She said nothing but took him into a hug. He winced slightly at the touch, which only caused him to let out a frustrated sob.

She remained quiet, which somehow made everything worse.
“M-mom,” he choked out, “I— why can’t I just be okay?”

She didn’t say anything for a moment. That terrified Izuku; he needed his mom to comfort him, but he knew she couldn’t. It killed him.

“Izuku,” her voice was firm, “I know you’re trying to be strong.” He could feel her take a deep, steadying breath as if to prepare herself.

He needed to be strong… he needed to protect her. She didn’t deserve to see his pain or suffer with him, but being strong was going to break him. He couldn’t do it… but he had to. Something told him that if he didn’t do it now he would never be able to. He couldn’t have that. He wasn’t allowed to be broken forever; he needed—he desperately wanted—to get better, to heal, to not… to not be what he currently was: broken. If he couldn’t do this, then how would he ever get better? Even if it hurt, he would just have to suffer through it—this is what it took to heal, to be alright.

“But you don’t have to be. Please, Izuku, don’t push yourself. You don’t have to be okay, you don’t have to pretend.”

He didn’t need to be strong? Could he really just… not be okay? Was that acceptable?

Everyone had told him how strong or brave he had been. They made it seem like his time in captivity had been valiant, like he had beat those villains by surviving, but that couldn’t be further from the truth.

They had all said he should take his time healing, but they made it seem like it would be easy. It wasn’t. They said he could take his time; they wanted him to just get over it. He knew that wasn’t what they really meant… but sometimes it felt that way. He couldn’t just get over it. He had tried, but he couldn’t. His mind wouldn’t let him.

He took in a shuddering breath. “I can’t do this right now,” he managed to say it clearly, though the anguish had woven its way into his voice permanently by now.

His mom shifted positions, “Oh Izuku,” her voice broke along with his composure.

“I promise, I’m trying,” he was sobbing now, angry sobs that bubbled up his throat in harsh, unrelenting torrents, “but I just can’t do this right now.” He leaned into her further, trying to hide his face. It didn’t matter that he couldn’t physically see her, he couldn’t face her. He was too ashamed of his weakness.

It shouldn’t be this difficult. Izuku knew he should be able to function like a normal human, but he couldn’t. It was as though his demons were forcibly dragging him down, further and further away from his sanity.

He let out another harsh sob.

His mom soothed him as he cried, “It’s okay, baby, just let it out.” She rubbed soothing circles in his back as he clung to her. “I know it hurts, just let it hurt. You can’t feel better until it hurts.”

It did hurt. It hurt him in every sense of the word. Izuku's body ached from old wounds, his heart throbbed for comfort while his mind screamed for peace. It was a cacophony of sensations that scraped and clawed at him, but for the first time, he stopped fighting it. He just let it hurt, let the pain wash over him and embraced it.

For just a little bit, he was letting himself not be okay.
She looked at the file in her hands, leisurely going through the pages. It was amazing all that detective had on record on his person. It must have been a stroke of luck that they had the fortune to run into each other, or rather, that he had the misfortune to be at the scene at the same time as her.

She wondered if he had managed to make it out alive… She hoped he did, that would make things even more interesting. It was no fun if they didn’t fight back after all. Midoriya had been the prime example of a good prisoner in her eyes—he had fought back. In the end, his resilience had been his downfall, which was the fact that she was all too gleeful to be privy to.

Chancing a glance at her watch, she wondered where they were. They had agreed to meet here, at these coordinates in the forest at this time.

She hoped her employer hadn’t been lying; she didn’t take well to liars.

She had done her job, all she wanted was her payment, or well, the rest of it. They had paid half up front eight weeks ago when they first came to her for help, and now, since Midoriya was back with the heroes, she wanted the rest. Of course, her job wasn’t done yet, but she had lived up to her end of the deal: incapacitate the U.A. brat whom always interfered with their plans. When they had come to her, they had been looking for an assassin, but she didn’t kill children.

Her morals may be skewed, but she didn’t want that blood on her hands. Besides, it was so much more fun to torment and torture than it was to slit a throat.

She had done more than enough to completely break Midoriya—she had fun conditioning him to fear his name—out of the game, as her employer liked to refer to it as.

She waited a few more minutes, eyes scanning over the file for the second time when she heard them arrive. Silently, she rose from her spot, ready to meet her employers for the second time in her life.

She looked over to see the purple warping gate of Kurogiri. “You’re late,” she remarked coldly.

Shigaraki took his time walking out of the gate, Kurogiri returning to his former humanoid form once Shigaraki had stepped out, “Yes, well, I was busy.”

She rolled her eyes, “Of course you were…” She sent an intense glare his way, her eyes flaring. “Down to business.” Golden irises lit up, a small ring of yellow orbiting the pupils. “I completed what you asked of me, now for my payment.”

Shigaraki gave her a pensive look, “Don’t think I’ll allow you to use your quirk on me, Kuraka…”

She felt the familiar pull of Kurogiri warp gate, and she blinked once, washing away the ring around her iris, and deactivating her quirk.

“I would never,” Kuraka returned playfully. “You know I hold my employers in the highest esteem… now…”

“Yes, well about that—” Shigaraki started, but stopped when Kurogiri interrupted.

“You said you had more information?” he inclined professionally.

Kuraka nodded, a smile playing on her features, “That I do, but I’m much more interested in what
Shigaraki had to say… mhm?” She tilted her head, intrigued at what he had been about to disclose.

Shigaraki didn’t hide the frustration that crossed his demeanor, but Kuraka noticed that Kurogiri looked poised, ready to intervene, and her smile fell a bit. “Kuraka, I hired you to get rid of that U.A. brat… to kill him.” he seethed aggressively.

“You hired me to take him out of the picture,” she rebutted. “I did that… He won’t be able to interrupt your plans anymore, so I don’t see the problem.”

Shigaraki looked hesitant for a second, before anger won over rationality, “I don’t care about that… You didn’t do what I paid you to do. You cheated,” he accused, and she faltered for a step. “I ordered you to kill that brat, to send a message to those damn heroes…”

This time, Kuraka hesitated before calming herself down enough to respond. Her voice was that same cheeriness she used when taunting someone, but it felt forced, “I don’t kill children, Shigaraki.”

“But you’ll torture them?” Kurogiri interjected.

She nodded, “If I had killed him it would have been the end of it. People die by villains all the time… killing a child would be a tough blow, but it wouldn’t break the hero society as it is now. There would be a backlash, and there would be chaos, but ultimately, society would get over it.”

Shigaraki was listening to her now, “And torturing him helps us how?”

“Easy,” she remarked, “Now the heroes know exactly what they’re dealing with. They won’t take you lightly; they’ll fear you… but more importantly… that brat, keeping him alive gives us leverage.”

Kurogiri, who had remained silent during her speech, spoke up, “You say that keeping that boy alive is the surefire way to destroy the hero society… but I haven’t heard about his capture or torture in any news outlet… Seems no one knows about it.”

A wicked smile spread across her features, “Exactly.” She took the folder and handed it to them. “Look at his file and tell me what you see.”

Kurogiri snatched the folder from her outstretched arm, distrust evident in his eyes and wariness leaking from his posture. He slowly handed the folder to Shigaraki who plucked it out of his hand enthusiastically. She waited eagerly for them to read over the file.

Shigaraki was the first to comment, “You blinded him?”

She shook her head, “I did not. Well,” she looked thoughtful, “at least not in the physical sense. I never touched his eyes… and yet, he’s still blind, just…read the description.” She indicated to the folder, a cold annoyance flaring to life in her wild eyes.

Her smile turned to a devious grin as she saw the gears turning in Kurogiri’s mind. “I see. Interesting…” His voice was meticulous, articulating each word with precision.

She smirked. His eyes scanned the papers diligently, pausing for brief moments before crinkling with confusion on several occasions.

At one interval, he glanced up at her, curiosity in his eyes, “Some of these comments from the practitioner… they are quite intriguing.”

Kuraka beamed, she had an inkling as to which parts Kurogiri was reading and she was rather proud
of herself for eliciting such a fear in the kid; even if he had been rescued, his mind was in tatters. There were certain remarks made by the doctor that she found to be... very interesting.

Shigaraki looked at her, growing frustration in his eyes as he glared at her, “Why is this information still unknown to the public.” He turned his accusations on her, “Why didn’t you leak it to the press the moment you had him?”

Her eyes turned feral. “Because,” the words dripped like bitter honey, “now it becomes a coverup. The media—the public—won’t be looking at the villains, all their eyes will be pointed at U.A. for covering this up. Their selfish need to keep everything quiet will be their demise.”

She stopped, remembering something else. She dug into her pocket and pulled out the device she had found at the now burned down building. It was a phone—Midoriya’s phone. She had kept it when they had first taken him, making sure to disable any tracking abilities the phone may have had on it.

“Here,” she tossed it to Kurogiri, who caught it easily, “this is Midoriya’s phone. I’ve had it since I captured him... it has, quite a bit of information on it.” She grinned devilishly, then turned heel, flipping her hair out of her face as she started to walk away—she had a few more errands to do today. “Just look at his text messages and some of the notes he stored there... I’m sure you’ll find something you can use against them in there,” she paused before adding flippantly, “I know I sure did.”

Kurogiri glanced at her hand—the one she had tossed the phone from, regarding the bandages that were wrapped around it, “What happened to your hand? You seem to be missing a finger.”

She waved him off, “It’s not a big deal, just part of the job, besides,” there was a glint in her eyes, “I can assure you, the other guy is way worse.” With that, she turned and started to walk away.

“What about your payment?” she heard Shigaraki call after her.

Sighing, she stopped and turned, “Oh, I’m sure I’ll hear from you again. When that happens, we’ll discuss it more in depth.” She turned and waved her hand, “Well, ciao.”

Kuraka knew they would ask for her help again real soon. She hadn’t given them everything she knew, only what they needed to know for her plan to kickstart. In the meantime, there was a particular hero she wanted to pay a visit to.

This wasn’t how Inko planned this day to go. She knew it wasn’t going to be easy, nor was it going to be fun, but this was too much. Izuku was hurting. He was in pain, and there wasn’t anything she could do about it except be there for him. She could try and comfort him, but ultimately, there wasn’t much else she could do. She wanted to do more; she longed to be able to help more... but all she felt was useless as she watched her baby suffer.

There were some things that not even a mother could fix, and this was one of them.

She couldn’t in good conscious bring herself to disturb Izuku right now. He was sleeping—probably for the first time in a while—against her side. He had fallen asleep some time ago, after sobbing into her for a solid hour.

It hurt her to see him like this. He wasn’t okay, and they both knew it... but Izuku wasn’t ready to
accept that. He wanted to be okay, and who could blame him? The thing was though... he just wasn’t. He tried to just pretend nothing had happened, and she admired his strength—her baby boy was so strong—but he needed to know that he didn’t need to be okay right now.

He was allowed to be broken and be hurt. His body, his mind—they needed more time to heal. He just needed a break. If she knew Izuku though, he wouldn’t cut himself any slack. He would blame himself for any faults, even if they were out of his control.

She looked down at him, he was the most peaceful she had ever seen him in the last few days. She hated how the only way for him to rest was to exhaust himself to the point where his body couldn’t stay awake.

Gently, she let her hands sift through his hair. It was thinner than before and lighter in color, barely noticeable really, but she could tell. She would always be able to tell, and sometimes she despised that.

They remained like that for a while, with Inko running her hands through Izuku’s hair while he finally got some rest, but eventually, it did end. Izuku started to stir; something between a flinch and a shiver wracked his body, causing Inko’s heart to twinge.

As softly as she could, she nudged him, “Izuku, honey?”

It hadn’t taken much to for him to wake up completely, because as soon as she spoke, his eyes shot open wide, dull green eyes looked around in a daze. It took a moment before clarity filled his eyes, and when it did, a resigned shadow fell over the usually bright green orbs.

He blinked sluggishly. “Mom?” he asked groggily, with a hint of trepidation lingering in its wake. He tensed up, waiting for an answer.

She quickly responded, “I’m right here Izuku.”

She could feel the tension leave him as he fell back on her, “Did I fall asleep?”

Inko nodded, before realizing her mistake and giving a verbal answer, “Yeah, you did, honey. How do you feel?”

Izuku mumbled something, turning his face away from her.

“I didn’t quite catch that,” she prompted softly.

Slowly, Izuku sat up, and turned in her general direction, “We still need to change my bandages... don’t we?” There was a fearful lilt in his voice as he spoke softly.

She sighed, “Yeah... we do honey.”

“Ohay,” his voice shook, “I-I... let’s just get it over with.” Slight tremors coursed through his body as he spoke, voice breaking in several places, and fear rose the tone an octave.

“Izuku...” She knew this needed to happen, but she didn’t want to rush him into anything he wasn’t ready for.

He stopped her though, “No, it’s... it’s fine,” his voice shook but was otherwise vacant of any emotion other than slight fear. “We should... it’s better to just get it over with.”

She nodded, “Alright.” She helped Izuku up off the couch and guided him to the bathroom. She felt
like an executioner as she did so, leading her only son to his doom—it was not something she was happy about.

Izuku remained quiet the entire time, a slight tremor racking his body the whole way, but he appeared set in his resolve.

The tiled floor having indicated they had made it to the bathroom and Izuku’s breath hitched. “Are you sure you’re okay…?” she asked worriedly.

“Yeah,” he nodded, but it sounded like he was trying to reassure himself more than anything, “just… just do it fast.”

She put a comforting hand on his shoulder, before helping him pull the sling off his right arm. Once she did, his arm fell slack, limp and unmoving; she sighed as she took his shirt off, exposing the bandages that wrapped around his torso.

There was an intake of breath, and it took Inko a moment to realize it as her own.

“It’s not…” Izuku started, trying to alleviate her worry, “it’s not that bad… just, it looks worse than it is. I promise.” She knew he was just trying to calm her down, but it didn’t help much. He was her only son, she was always going to worry about him, and now even more so.

She calmed herself as she started to remove the bandages. It was easy, they come off with little resistance… then there was a slight tug, and Izuku’s breathing halted.

“It’s fine. It’s fine.” Izuku’s voice squeaked out. She couldn’t tell if he was trying to calm her down or himself. She suspected it was both.

She continued unwrapping them, careful not to irritate his skin as she did so. Everything was fine for a while, the scars at the top of his back aren’t nearly as bad as her mind had made them out to be. It hurt all the same though; regardless of their severity, these are marks on her baby’s body. People—villains—had beaten him, and she didn’t think she would ever get over that fact.

It was not until she hit his shoulder blades that an amalgamation of scars—worse than any others he had—presented themselves.

The sight caused her to freeze. She had seen scars before, Izuku had even had some self-inflicted ones on his hand from his quirk, but these were… different. These scars hadn’t been by accident. They were angry, a bright red that stuck out from the stretched skin and riddled down his spine.

The scars, they looked… painful.

She had to take a step back for a brief moment to collect herself.

She could see Izuku growing uneasy from the bathroom mirror, “Mom? I… it’s not that bad.” The way he strangled the ‘that’ led her to believe that it just was that bad, but right now she can’t worry about that. She had to finish, she can tell the longer she took to do this, the worse off Izuku would be.

Taking off the rest of the bandages weren’t trying to do, but it was impossible for Inko to do with a straight face. Her heart ached for the bruising that was just beginning to fade, and the welts that still angrily marred Izuku’s back. They’re far worse than any of the wounds he’d sustained from his quirk… because at least then, it had been by his hand. These, however, were not done by his choice, and she knew most of these marks would never entirely go away.
Without realizing it, she gently traced one of the welts, causing an immediate reaction from Izuku. He whimpered, and she looked in the mirror to see his face reflecting nothing but unbridled fear. His eyes were dull, unfocused, but swelling with anxiety and unsureness.

She wanted to finish this up quickly but stopped short. Something came to mind, something that she knew won’t go over well but needs to be addressed, and if she changed the bandages now, it’ll be too late.

She gently prompts him, “Izuku…?”


“Nothing,” she quickly assuaged him, “but Izuku… I know this is already difficult for you, but… you’ve been home for a few days now and well…”

He gulped and nodded instead of giving a verbal prompt for her to continue.

“Well…” She found it more difficult to ask than she thought. The topic, she knew, would make Izuku uncomfortable. “Honey… you haven’t been able to have a proper bath in months…” she stopped when Izuku tensed.

“I…I…” he couldn’t seem to get any words out, and his posture was tense.

She continued, albeit with more caution in her tone, “I know you wanted to get this over with but—”

“I know,” he barked out rather harshly. It was only then that she looked up and in the mirror’s reflection noticed the battle raging in his eyes, “I know that… and I’m—I’m honestly surprised I’ve lasted this long without one… but I don’t know,” he stopped, clenching his hand into a fist, “I don’t think I can.”

She sighed, “Izuku—”

“I know, I know,” he interjected, “I don’t have a choice.”

He mumbled something bitterly, and though she wasn’t sure she thought it was something like, “I never get a choice anymore.” The thought broke her heart into pieces. At this point, Inko wasn’t sure she’d ever be able to repair her damaged heart.

“Fine. Let’s just get it over with.” Izuku’s voice was bitter; it was harsh, but it’s also determined.

Izuku didn’t think he had any pride left. He loathed that feeling—the helplessness; the hopelessness.

It had been bad enough that he needed to have his bandages changed—it had caused him more than one break down, but then… his mom had mentioned his hygiene, or rather, lack thereof, and it took all of his composure to remain sane at the mention of it.

He should have been relieved, he hadn’t appropriately showered since before he had been taken. Once he had been a… prisoner, he hadn’t even been treated as a human most of the time. Any time they did ‘bathe’ him it was hosing him down with frozen water—it had been painful and degrading.

He hadn’t been happy at the prospect of water being thrown at his person again, in fact, the thought...
sent a frill of fear through him, but he had resigned himself to his fate by now. He just wasn’t going to get a choice in these things anymore.

So, with a heavy heart, he had let his mom guide him and help him bathe. He despised the fact that he needed her help, but he did. He couldn’t see—which, if he was honest, only served to terrify him—and his right arm was dead weight. He couldn’t feel it let alone move it. He was petrified at the thought that he might never be able to use it again. It might be dead weight to him for the rest of his life… and he didn’t know how well he’d be able to deal with it if that was the case.

He had felt like a child, needing his mom’s help, and he felt incredibly vulnerable throughout the entire ordeal, but he forced himself to suck it up. He didn’t have the right to complain about this. He had complained enough for today—he just didn’t have it in him to fight anymore.

Everything was too exhausting.

For awhile, it had seemed like everything would be fine, he had been able to not think about unpleasant things until soap got into one of his more significant injuries. The stinging pain had been immediate, and all too similar to back there… when they put salt in his wounds.

He panicked.

His arms were beyond sore, his wrists having been chaffed almost to the bone now, with blood streaming down his arms freely. He tried not to move as the shifting of his weight only caused his arms to hurt even more. They were strung up with chains behind his back and raised until his arms had dislocated from the position.

His screams had only lasted a few minutes before he forced himself to breathe and bare with the pain.

He squinted as she came into view, her golden eyes piercing into him. He tried to look away, but the slight eye contact was enough for her to entrance him under her quirk.

She blinked almost lazily; he screamed.

Her quirk, he couldn’t be sure what it was, but from what he had experienced, it was some sort of sensory manipulation. With one look she could put him in agony for hours, though she did like to use physical force as well.

He had seen her weapons of choice, crude instruments that she caressed with care before striking him.

They had been at this game for hours now, it seemed. She would ask him a question. He would refuse to answer it, which was always followed by pain. He couldn’t answer her though—he didn’t know the answers to what she was asking.

He didn’t know the schematics for U.A. and he sure as hell wouldn’t tell her if he did. So, he endured her onslaught.

Then she had asked him a question… and he did know the answer. He knew she knew it too, but she wanted him to answer. She tried to break him; he wouldn’t break, but his arm would.

“I don’t like liars, Midoriya,” she purred, and he flinched instinctively.

It was only after he had relaxed that he felt the sharp, stinging pain in his back. He yelped.
It hurt, but he could deal with it. It wasn’t that bad.

When she repeated the action four more times, he felt less confident but managed to hold in his cries of pain. This he could deal with, the pain was something he had built up a tolerance for.

She had walked up right in front of him now and forcibly grabbed his chin, “Midoriya,” he hated the way his name rolled off her tongue, “it would be better for everyone if you just gave me an answer.”

It was a stupid thing to do, and he knew it, but he couldn’t hold it back; he spat in her face, “I will never tell you anything. I’d rather die.” He had meant it too. He refused to sell out his friends.

She gritted her teeth, frustration pooling into her entire visage as she fixed her gaze on him, her golden eyes whirling to life, and his vision faded, morphing into something else entirely.

Flames.

Fire, it surrounded him, engulfing him in an eternal heat that never ended. He felt the fire raking his legs, clawing their way up to his torso. It burned.

He knew it wasn’t real, but it felt real. His nerves were torched, fraying, and spastically shooting pain up and down his limbs in rivulets.

This time he couldn’t hold back the screams.

He was jolted from his memory by someone calling his name.

He hadn’t even realized he had been thrashing around, crying out that he didn’t know, that he wouldn’t answer.

“Izuku. Izuku, calm down.” His mom’s voice was frantic but steady, and it pulled him from his memory, held him in the present.

He clung to that semblance of sanity. It was his lifeline.

“I don’t… I don’t know,” he gasped, clinging to her, “I don’t know.” It was beginning to turn into a sob, and he felt two strong arms wrap around him.

It was comforting, warm… it was home.

He was almost in a trance as his mom helped him dry off and rewrapped his bandages. He hardly noticed any of it. His only concern was clinging to his mom, keeping hold of that tiny thread of sanity his mom provided.

Izuku let his mom lead him to his bed and help him into it. He didn’t want to admit it, but he was still a little fearful, the memories were still fresh in his mind.

“Just rest, honey, okay?” His mom’s voice was soothing. “You did well today. I know you must be exhausted.” She ran a hand through his hair, brushing the tangled mess out of his face.

At this moment, he really, really wished he was able to see. He needed to see his mom right now. He needed to know she was here.

She started to leave and panic set in.

“No.” It was said too hastily, and he chastised himself for that.
She stopped though, “Izuku… is something wrong?”

He took a deep, shaky breath, he couldn’t do this right now, “Stay,” he pleaded, voice breaking, “please.” He felt his bed shift, and her comforting weight settled in next to him, “Of course, baby. I will always be here.”

With his mom there, by his side, the unease that had creped on him slowly receded until it was nothing more than an unpleasant memory. She was a pillar, someone he could always count on.

Izuku knew how much it hurt his mom to see him like this, but he was grateful she was here. When she was here, his doubts faded, and his anxieties were quelled; he was safe.

Chapter End Notes

I'm really sorry Y'all had to wait two months for... this.

School is a bitch, life sucks (some of the time) and hockey takes up my weekends so... I am busy this semester, but I promise I'mma make a better effort to write these chapters for y'all.
Until next time,
Vera~

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