Bad Luck Is Not My Quirk, I Swear!

by Millberry_5

Summary

Izuku likes observing things around him, the world is too cool of a place for him to not. But it's kind of ridiculous how many villain attacks he keeps ending up involved in or finding. At his point he might as well start writing down his analysis, right? And maybe his battle plans? And maybe he should help that crying kid who obviously isn't used to this...

And yes, Eraserhead, you've asked many times, I don't search these out! I just have bad luck!

Basically an AU where Izuku has really bad luck and keeps getting involved in villain attacks, and that's why he starts keeping his journals and analyzing heroes/quirks so much... And then Eraserhead runs into him too many times and half-takes the kid under his wing because if this is going to keep happening, he should at least make sure the kid is prepared.
Izuku is four and a half, still waiting for his quirk to come in, when he is first involved in a villain attack.

His school is taking a field trip to the aquarium, and a villain who can change the temperature of water takes the whole building hostage. Izuku crowds closer to Kacchan as their class hides in the jellyfish room, waiting for heroes to arrive. Izuku looks nervously at the cases around them, remembering what his mother had told him yesterday about how potholes form. If the villain freezes and thaws the water quickly enough and enough times, then the glass could break and then his entire class might die of jellyfish stings.

“Don’t worry, if the villain comes and tries to drop a block of ice on us, I’ll just blow it away!” Kacchan whispers excitedly, a wicked grin on his face at the idea of getting to use his two-month-old quirk.

Izuku holds on tighter to Kacchan’s arm, who takes it as encouragement and trust, and thinks about how if Kacchan angers the villain like that then the villain might freeze all the water in Kacchan’s body and then Kacchan will be dead.

They all wait for fifteen minutes, hushed whispers of fear murmuring throughout most of the group.

Then the villain appears in the big open room beyond them, obviously flustered and disheveled. Izuku sees the moment the man spots their group. He stiffens for a moment, before his shoulders scrunch up and he starts charging at them.

Most of the kids start screaming, Kacchan tries to rush forward to meet the villain head-on. One teacher pulls him back, herding the other children further into room as well. Izuku grabs onto Kacchan’s arm to keep him back with their other classmates as their other teacher, Kumasei-Sensei’s quirk is to bring water to a boil in ten seconds if she’s looking at it, if she uses it part way, then she can protect from the villain freezing things, stands in front of them all, using herself as a shield.

Before Kumasei-Sensei has to do anything, though, footsteps pound from further down the hall and the villain stops and turns towards the noise, before quickly looking around desperately.

Big mistake. Nofukai-Sensei’s spit has binding properties, with gum they can stick an entire table to the wall, they could easily stick you where you stand. Or Kacchan could explode your legs, so you can’t run.

Suddenly, the footsteps turn into a skid, and Izuku can hear the concrete floor breaking. A gust of air blows the villain off his feet and back several meters, Kumasei-Sensei is pushed back about a meter, and the rest of them are relatively unaffected.

Then, he appears.

All Might is right there, with his signature smile, a clothespin for the villain that pushes him further into the ground, and his signature line.

“It’s fine now. Why? Because I am here!”
Izuku knows, at that exact moment, when all of his classmates, including Kacchan, and even the teachers, sigh and smile in relief, tenseness and fear leaving their forms, that he’s going to be a hero, and make it so people don’t have to be scared, just like All Might.

Izuku is almost seven, has been quirkless and friendless, even if he still tags along with Kacchan sometimes, for almost two years, when he stumbles across a villain fight.

Kacchan and the others hadn’t found him for two hours while they were playing hide-and-seek, so he had decided to come out and look for them. They had left.

So he was walking home alone when he passed a parking lot with a crowd around it.

He walks towards the crowd and wiggles to the front, and is blessed with the sight of Endeavor, the current number three hero, fighting a villain who appears to have a teleportation quirk.

Watching for a few moments as Endeavor tries to hit the villain, Izuku notices that one, the villain appears to be able to move about one and half meters to the left or right; two, the villain had started to bleed a bit out of her nose; and three, there was a man next to him that was somehow different than the rest of the spectators.

Izuku split his attention between the fight and the man. Endeavor seems to have finally realized the distance limit and was firing small blasts with one arm while gathering a lot of flames on the other. The man is dressed in black boots, comfortably baggy black clothes, a black belt with a lot of pouches, and has an odd light gray scarf around his neck. Looking up to the man’s face, Izuku sees baggy black hair, eye bags worse than he had ever seen, and red eyes.

The man notices him looking and shoots him a glance, seeming to assess him. Izuku feels himself straighten his posture instinctively at the judging glance and quickly turns back to focus on the fight. The man does the same after a moment.

Endeavor finally seems to feel that he has collected enough flames and shoots them towards the villain, who runs as far sideways as she can and then teleports.

She isn’t caught in the center of the blast, where it’s most intense, but the lower half of her body still gets hit and she goes down, rolling on the ground to try to put the weaker flames out.

Endeavor sprints forward and slams a fist into her stomach, causing her to spew something and then lay completely on the ground, unconscious. A police officer steps onto the former battlefield and brings out restraints that Izuku recognizes as computer enabled for monitoring.

At the same moment, Izuku hears the man beside him groan. Looking up, he sees the man pinching the bridge of his nose with his eyes scrunched closed, like his mom has done the few times she had a headache, but with more frustration on his face.

Izuku looks around for something that might have caused that expression and quickly lays his eyes on the row of burning cars where the rest of Endeavor’s attack had gone.

“Is one of those yours, sir?” he asks.

The man freezes for a second before opening his eyes and lowering his hand, then slowly looks
down at Izuku. Despite the blank expression and almost indifferent gaze, Izuku still feels like trapped prey under the man’s scrutiny.

“No. But they’re someone’s,” is all he says, still maintaining eye contact.

“I suppose that’s true. It is rather unfortunate that Endeavor had to do that to stop the villain,” Izuku agrees, turning back to watch the burning pile.

The man snorts.

“No, he didn’t.” Izuku looks back at the man, slightly shocked, both at the words and the disparaging tone used. The man is still looking at him, “you’re what? Five and a half?”

“I’m almost seven, sir, just a little short. And my mom says I have a bit of a baby face,” he replies.

“Old enough, then. The villain had a one-point-six-meter range for teleportation and could only move horizontally. Endeavor knew this. How could he have immobilized and subdued the villain without injuring her or ruining a bunch of civilians’ cars?” the man asks. Izuku stares at him for a moment while he thinks about the villain’s quirk. And Endeavor’s. He shouldn’t forget the other side of the equation, after all.

“Well, he could have… made a prison on flames? Put fire behind and in front so she couldn’t change vertically, then make more than one-point-six meters of flame on her sides? So that she couldn’t teleport. Then he could get the restraints from the police and undo the front wall. Then immediately move in and restrain her. He’s much bigger and faster and, from her bloody nose, I think she was hitting her limit and going through quirk exhaustion, so she would be already tired and injured. Then there just would have been some burnt blacktop. Right?” Izuku proposes, a little nervous. The man is still staring down at him, but finally blinks once and nods.

“Exactly. That would have caused far less damage. Those are some good thoughts, kiddo,” the man says.

Izuku blushes and looks down in embarrassment at the praise. He hears a small snort of air escape from the man and looks back up.

“The sun sets in half an hour and I don’t see any parents or babysitters around. You good to get home before it gets dark?” the man asks, leaning down to get a closer look at him. Izuku sees a flash of bright yellow between two folds of the scarf. It’s an odd bit of brightness compared to the rest of the man.

Izuku quickly looks around to confirm where he is, then looks back at the man and nods. “Yes sir, I only live a few blocks from here. I’ll be fine,” he replies with a smile. The man seemed grumpy, but he was apparently really caring! About a small child walking home alone, about property damage, even the villain’s health!

“Then get going, you cheeky brat, don’t make your family worry,” the man says, a bit gruff, but not unkind, as he turns Izuku away from the parking lot and gently pushes him towards the street.

“Yes, sir!” Izuku turns and walks back a few steps to reply and wave at the man, before turning back around and jogging down the street to get back home.

When he gets back home, he excitedly tells his mom about the fight, devolving more into talking about the possibilities of the two quirks than usual. It’s more fun, in a lot of ways. His mom is mildly concerned about the man he had talked to but calms down about it when Izuku tells her the man was kind, just grumpy and tired, and had made sure he would be safe without invading his privacy. She
completely relaxes when he suggests he might be a teacher, since that idea apparently makes sense to her.

Izuku is seven and two weeks when he gets involved in another villain attack.

He’s in the department store, his mom had let him stay in the comic section, alone, while she went to look at pots on the floor above. Izuku is a fairly respectful and well-behaved boy, who loves all things heroes, so telling him to behave and entertain himself in a comic book section is usually a good way to make sure the seven-year-old has a good time without causing trouble.

Unfortunately, this day is not a good day to recognize a young child’s disinterest in shopping for kitchen supplies.

It starts with a flickering of the lights. Then Izuku hears a crackle and a crash of metal. He looks over to the doors for his floor to see the metal, garage-style doors are now closed. His eyes widen as he quickly swivels to look at the escalator, the top of which has the emergency doors pulled down. He clutches the All Might comic book (Silver Age Dramatic Recounting, issue #6, All Might Vs. the Grievous Six-Armed-Killer) tightly to his chest as he presses against a shelf and looks around the store.

There’s another crackle and the tone of the PA system for a second before Izuku hears a slightly distorted, slightly masculine voice.

“Attention, all former shoppers on floor one. You are now hostages. Please stay calm. If you do something stupid, then I will have to hurt you, and no one wants that, do they?”

That. Does not make Izuku feel calm. At all.

Nervously, he peeks out further while pressing himself further into the shelf, as though he could phase into and stay hidden in it.

The villain’s back is to him, on top of one of the makeup counters.

Izuku thinks about running up behind him, jumping up and trying to knock him out, like a hero would do. All Might would come from the front, but right now the villain’s back was open to him.

Then, Izuku hears a small whimper and turns around toward the noise.

There’s another child in this section, he looks like he’s about seven as well. Izuku’s age.

Izuku remembers what his class had been going over in social studies the past week or so. Laws. Specifically, quirk laws, hero laws, and vigilantism laws.

They had gone over a few examples of civilians who had thought that they could help but had only made things worse. Which had led to multiple vigilantism laws.

Then they had gone over the best things you could do if you became involved in a villain attack, including a few types of hostage situations.

The other child is sniffling now; and getting louder.
Izuku looks back at the villain, who is still facing away from them.

Izuku moves to the other child, who looks at him with wide, teary eyes as he approaches.

“Hey, hey, calm down, we’re going to be okay. Heroes are going to come soon,” he whispers as he slowly gets closer, trying to put a smile on his face like All Might.

“You think so?” the other child asks, too loud. Izuku flinches a bit at the volume.

“Yep!” he whispers enthusiastically, even softer, kneeling before the other boy, “But let’s keep our voices really quiet if we have to talk. If the villain doesn’t have a direct hostage, then the heroes will have an easier time to stop him and everyone will be safer,” he explains.

“Are you sure?” the other boy asks, less scared, quieter, and a bit suspicious of Izuku.

“Yeah!” He replies, still enthusiastic and quiet, “my school has been going over hero and vigilante laws in social studies, including what to do in different common types of villain attacks. For hostage situations, we stay quiet and out of the way, as unnoticed as possible,” he explains further, sitting down beside the boy.

The boy looks at him, quiet for a moment, before whispering again, “then we should move back a few aisles, there’s a reading area with a lot of corners to hide in.”

Izuku nods. That sounded like a great idea. They moved carefully to the end of the aisle and peek out to look at the villain. Who had turned a bit, but would only really be able to see them if he turned more.

Izuku is still looking when he feels something wrap around his waist and tug.

He turns instinctively and is pulled, thankfully stumbling forward on his feet, by the other boy’s… tail?

How had he not noticed that?

The other boy quickly pulls him to the reading area, which indeed had many nooks and crannies to hide in, and they find an area in a corner created by a couch and a chair, where there’s a table in the corner that they could both hide under together.

They both settle underneath the table quickly, but after a moment, the other boy’s tail wraps around his waist again and pulls him closer.

Izuku is surprised and looks over at the boy, opening his mouth to ask about it, when he sees the other boy’s face.

It’s scrunched up, like he had smelled something really bad and had stubbed his toe right after, but there was someone nearby that he didn’t want to cry in front of, and that he still needed to finish a really hard math problem.

He can feel the tail still holding him trembling a bit. And can see twists and wrinkles in the boy’s shirt from where he is holding onto his own arms really tightly.

Why?

Doesn’t the other boy know that heroes are going to come rescue them? They don’t have anything to worry about, really, they just have to be patient. Sure, it was a little frustrating that they probably
won’t be able to see whatever fight from their hiding spot, but Izuku doesn’t want to ruin a fight and make things harder for a hero!

But why is the other boy looking like that?

Izuku opens his mouth again to ask but closes it. The boy is silent, he should be silent too. He can just ask after they’re rescued.

He leans into the other boy. His body is warm, and so is his tail.

The other boy stiffens for a moment, then presses back against Izuku, as though he can bring them physically closer together than they already are.

After a few minutes, they hear the shrieking of metal as one of the doors breaks. It sounds like it was… torn?

Then, Izuku hears a familiar growl as the villain shrieks.

“It’s Hound Dog!” he whispers excitedly to the boy beside him.

The other boy turns and looks at him with a bit of confusion.

“Who?”

“He’s a hero, who debuted four years ago, who has a mutation type quirk called Dog! It gives him a dog-like, humanoid form, and a bunch of heightened strengths and senses. Its main drawbacks are that if he feeds too much into his instincts and emotions, he becomes too doglike and can lose some of human consciousness. Which is why he usually works alone; team plans are hard to follow if one of the people on your team got too excited and can’t talk anymore!” Izuku says enthusiastically, voice gaining in volume as he goes on.

The boy shushes him, a desperate expression on his face.

“Right, sorry, got excited. But it’s fine, Hound Dog’s here so we have nothing to worry about!” Izuku whispers.

There’s a crash, and suddenly they can see open space through the shelves in front of them, through the books. Hound Dog is on top of the villain, growling. The villain stares for a moment, before whimpering and releasing the tension in his body to signal he was giving up, incidentally baring his neck like he was a submitting dog, to Hound Dog.

Hound Dog snorts, flips the villain over, and cuffs him casually.

“Oh, that was so cool!” Izuku squeaks out as Hound Dog slings the villain over his shoulder after the villain’s legs prove too wobbly to stand on his own.

Hound Dog startles and quickly turns to face them. Silently, he walks away, only to reappear a few moments later in their corner.

The man looks down at the two children, who had poked their heads out from under the table, and nods his head towards the general area, “It’s a good hiding spot for this sort of thing. Good job, kids.”

“I know, right! He found it!” Izuku exclaims, pointing at the other boy, who automatically blushes when Hound Dog looks at him with closer scrutiny.
“You’re the one who knew to hide and keep quiet, and thought of going out of sight under the table…” the boy mumbles.

“Well, obviously! It’s a wooden table and the villain probably has some sort of electro- or techno-kinetic quirk!” Izuku says, still excited. There’s an actual pro-hero. Right in front of him! With one of the more adaptable quirks in the business right now!

Hound Dog gestures with his head for them to start moving, so they get out from under the table quickly, the other boy finally unwinds his tail from Izuku, and they’re corralled by the pro hero out of the area.

“And how did you know about his quirk? I thought you were hiding under a table and couldn’t see most of the fight?”

“Oh! In the beginning, I heard a crackle of electricity. And he got the metal doors down and was able to use the store’s intercom on this floor, even though the closest intercom station is on the floor above! So he had to be doing something with the wiring on this floor, right? Which means electricity or technology! Oh yeah, we didn’t get to see the fight! Which one was it, Mr. Hound Dog?!” Izuku babbles excitedly.

Hound Dog looks at him with an expression that Izuku can’t quite describe, especially with the muzzle covering half of the hero’s face, and just stares at him for a few seconds.

Izuku waits patiently, buzzing with excitement.

“Electric,” the other man replies in his usual gruff attitude, albeit less harsh than he usually talks to the press in the interviews Izuku has watched.

“Oh, so it didn’t work well with you, right? You’re more resistant to a lot of physical attacks because of your quirk, right?” Izuku questions.

“Correct. You… really think a lot about quirks, don’t you?” the man asks, if Izuku wasn’t so excited, he might notice that the other man was a bit uncomfortable with the questions.

“I think quirks are really cool! Especially all of the different ways they can be used for hero work!” Izuku explains.

“Is that your mom?” the boy beside him asks.

Izuku looks up to see that they’re almost at the outdoor exit, where a number of police officers and first responders are waiting, along with a crowd of civilians, including his mother.

“Oh wow, how did you know? Your tail is your quirk right?” Izuku asks, was this a boy with a multi-part quirk? Some quirks had parts that manifested physically and non-physically.

“Yeah.. but she has the same hair and face, and she’s doing the same thing with her hands that you were, and she looks really nervous…” The boy says, a bit of uncertainty in his voice.

Izuku looks back at his mom, who was indeed flapping and wringing her hands like they both do when they had too much energy. Once they get close enough, his mom catches sight of him and ducks under the police line and dodges hands, sprinting towards him.

“IZUKU!” she calls.

Izuku calls back “MOM!” as he runs forward a few steps, barely making it two meters before his
mom catches him in a hug, holding him tight and shaking.

“Hi, mom! Hound Dog saved us!” Izuku tells her. Looking over his shoulder, he saw a blonde man and a woman with redish-goldenish hair talking to the police by the barrier, who had stopped chasing his mom once he called out to her, and they let them through.

“Mashirao!” the woman calls. Izuku sees the other boy run past him and his mom to the two adults.

“Mom! Dad! I’m okay!” The boy – Mashirao, cries out as he’s wrapped in a hug by the two, eagerly returning it with his arms and his tail.

Looking at his limited view with his mother still holding him tight, and why was she still crying, he was fine, Izuku can see the other people who had been trapped on the floor staying in groups as different first responders went around and talked to them, it looks like Izuku and Mashirao were the only two kids that had been separated.

A nice young man, apparently it was his first week on the job, with a cat head introduces himself as officer Tamakawa and asks Izuku about what happened. After a few minutes of Izuku recounting what happened, and Tanakawa-san asking for a few more details, the officer asks his mother for a phone number to contact them at if further testimony is needed and then they’re free to leave.

Izuku and his mother drive back home, without any new pots. They make it home after stopping at his favorite local ramen shop and getting dinner to go.

As soon as they get inside their apartment, Izuku rushes through taking his shoes off and putting away his things, quickly settling down on the couch and turning on the news, maybe there would be better footage of the fight there!

His mom stops tidying and starting to serve their dinner in the kitchen to come over and hug him.

Izuku can hear her crying quietly, but can’t understand why, as she holds him tighter.

“Izuku, honey. I am so, so grateful that you’re all right. I’m so glad to have gotten to raise such a wonderful child and have you be a part of my life. Your father and I both love you very much, you know that, right?” She asks, her voice is filled with overwhelming amounts of emotion.

“Yes, mom,” he answers after a second, her emotions spilling over onto him and making it harder to answer.

His mom gives him one more tight squeeze and heads back to the kitchen.

Izuku is still confused about why his mom is acting this way, but figures it’s just an adult thing and turns back to the television.

The news is moving onto today’s villain attacks. There was a brief holdup by some amateurs at a convenience store, then his at the department store.

“… There is no footage from inside after the villain entered, so the police will primarily be relying on physical evidence from the scene and witness accounts. There were some broken display cases and shelves, as well as one security door, and about thirty-five thousand yen worth of merchandise destroyed. For casualties, of the fifty-two hostages, ten were injured before the hero Hound Dog could subdue the villain, and two are in critical condition. It is unclear at this time if they will survive…” the newscaster says.

Izuku doesn’t listen to her as she continues, though. When she mentioned the casualties, the program
had shown clips.

Two people, with electrical burns running up and down their faces and necks, Izuku thinks he saw them on the one hand exposed by the person convulsing as well, the rest of the peoples’ bodies were covered. While the one convulsed, like that glitch in that video game he and Kacchan used to play together, but wrong because this was a person and people aren’t supposed to move like that, the other seemed deathly still until Izuku realized that they were shivering all over, like they were cold, but they weren’t cold they were burned and the lady said they might be dying but they had been burned but their body acted like they were cold.

Then, because it’s rude to show more than three seconds of someone so badly injured, the news showed the friends and family at the scene who were watching their loved ones being put into the ambulances. Those people were crying, trying to hold onto one another although they could barely stand, let alone help keep each other up, and their loved ones might be dying, and they had to just stand there, and what if they did die? What if one of them was the friend they had made in childhood because they both loved udon so much and then their friend died and they can’t eat their favorite food anymore without remembering that their best friend is dead and not coming back and there was nothing they could do about it because Hound Dog is one person and the villains quirk could hit multiple people at once and Hound Dog was trying to protect fifty-two people who probably weren’t resistant to electrical attacks and-

Oh.

This is why.

Why Mashirao was scared.

Why his mom keeps hugging him.

Why everyone kept telling him he had been a very brave boy.

He could have died.

He could have died, and then his mom wouldn’t have had him.

And neither would his dad.

And his dad and mom barely got to see each other and He Could Have Died.

Izuku cries as the news cuts to a commercial.

Chapter End Notes

This was going to be small, maybe even a long one-shot. But then the kid for the third situation ended up being Ojiro, and now there’s going to be character and friendship driven plot!

Also, I was really just getting this bit off of my chest, but I have another story to finish and I want to outline this before I really get into it. So it might be a while before another update, but I’ll know where this story is going by then.

After that, it should have decently regular and/or close together updates.

(I also have to finish my study abroad, which is really busy and will severely limit
writing time)
I also don't know if Izuku is getting OFA or remaining quirkiness yet, could go either way
Another Day, Another Attack, Another Breakdown

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku manages a few more months before he’s directly involved in another attack. He goes to a local park to make snowmen, the best place since he and his mom’s apartment doesn’t have a yard.

He’s sticking his tongue out to catch snowflakes with the other kids he just met, while their parents huddle under the pavilion by the street, when he hears a crash.

Suddenly there are huge chunks of debris thrown down the street and people are screaming. A few of the parents manage to grab their kids, who had all started running.

Izuku runs into the worm tunnel playset as fast as he can, using one of the side windows to jump in as quickly as he can.

He sees another kid by the main entrance, sticking their head out. They look like they’re five. Izuku quickly scrambles to the entrance and pulls them back in, causing the kid, a girl, to yelp.

“SHH! Come on, it’s safer if we’re further inside,” he explains, tugging her along.

They crawl through the tubes, collecting another boy and girl, and eventually get to the center of the tunnels, what everyone calls “The Cave” despite the fact that it opens to the sky.

Izuku counts as the four of them crawl into the middle with a few other kids. Including himself, there are eleven kids and he seems to be one of the oldest, a crying boy and a trembling girl being the only ones who look his age.

They all drop to the ground as they hear another explosion and everything shakes in reverberation. Izuku hears a screeching of metal that hurts his ears and feels his eyes water.

He sits up to see the boy from before and two others crying, everyone else looks shaken, especially the smallest of them, who can’t be more than four.

The four-year-old is also looking at the tunnels and turning to face them, Izuku sees muscles tense.

He barely manages to grab the four-year-old right before they get to the tunnel and pulls them back to the middle of the cave.

The kid starts crying and gnawing on Izuku’s arm, which Izuku doesn’t bother dissuading. With a mouth full, the kids can’t drag attention to their group with audible crying. He makes it to the middle and by now everyone is staring at their small commotion.

They’re staring at him. Afraid, like the other kid from the store.

Izuku wonders for a moment if they might die this time. He doesn’t want to, but he can’t ignore the possibility anymore, not like a few months ago.

But it’s not hopeless. The fight is loud, which means attention, which means heroes. Eventually.

We just have to wait, like he and the other boy had done at the store. They have to wait and not panic, like the four-year-old had done.
“Sorry. What did you say?” Izuku looked up from his internal monologue, which must have not been as internal as he thought it was, to see it was the oldest girl talking to him. She was looking at him, obviously afraid but also… expectant?

They were all looking at him like that.

Be like All Might. Be the sort of person they could rely on. The sort where people didn’t have to worry just because of your presence.

He couldn’t. He too scared to be that reassuring.

They were still looking at him.

Well, it would be fine, right? He’s not at All Might’s level yet. He can smile and reassure even if he’s still afraid.

“I said we’ll be okay. The fight is really loud. That means heroes will notice and come really quickly. We’re safe in here, so best thing we can do is keep quiet and calm. That we’ll be protected and not involved in the fight!” Izuku explains, his voice going from a wobble matching his weak smile to something more confident and self-assured, even if he can still hear a slight tremble. His smile feels too stretched, but he puts as much power into it as he can.

They all still look nervous, but they follow his lead when he sits down. The four-year-old refuses to let go of him, so he lets them sit in his lap. Everyone huddles together as they wait.

Eventually, the oldest girl starts humming the theme from the new Sunday morning All Might anime. Everyone quickly joins in, including Izuku, albeit a bit distractedly.

All Might was usually something that got all of his attention immediately, but he can’t help but keep an ear out, listening to the fight.

He hears sirens, then yelling and something being said through a megaphone, before he hears sounds of a fight start up again.

One of the other kids starts the song from the Wild Wild Pussycat’s Winter Special, the new team’s showcase of rural Japan in winter having been surprisingly popular, especially among kids.

The kids start smiling, a little nervously, and Izuku keeps his smile on too. He has to shush them, when the oldest boy finally stops crying and tries to belt out the song.

After a moment of silence, the boy starts humming Thank You, Heroes and the others join in quietly.

A minute into the song, Izuku sees a shadow on the wall that none of the others notice. It looks like a typical human body until long limbs stretch from its neck and start swirling around.

Izuku quickly looks up and back and manages to see a flash of black before whoever it was is gone.

A hero? A villain probably would have used the vulnerable kids or at least tried to hide in the tunnels.

Part way through the next song, Izuku can’t hear anymore fighting sounds. At the end of the song after that, just as Izuku is wondering if one of the older kids should see what’s going on, he hears a newly familiar voice from the top of The Cave’s walls.

“Hey, Little Listeners! Don’t worry! The Heroes have everything covered!” Present Mic, 23, UA grad, moved to Musutafu two years ago, currently #3 most popular hero in the city, quirk: voice,
side job as a radio host, notable for his personality, hair style, and directional speaker, exclaims.

Was Present Mic the reason Izuku kept hearing concrete get torn up? Unlikely. It didn’t seem like his voice quirk was that strong physically. He primarily works in villain apprehension because his quirk easily subdues villains without worry of too much damage to anyone or anything, at least permanently.

In the next few moments, three police officers show up through the tunnels, two get out while one stays in her tunnel.

The first one out, holding a first aid kit, smiles, much brighter and steadier than Izuku had, asks them if anyone’s injured, and, when they all shake their heads no, tells them they’ve all been very brave and very good and should follow her coworker out.

Izuku, being closest, is the first to follow the police officer out, so he can only hear, not see, the other kids following behind.

They get out of the tunnels without incident and Izuku gets to look around and see what happened to the area.

The street is completely torn up, barely enough for the few police cars and the ambulance that are left. The playground’s actual ground is pockmarked with craters and torn up turf, and the gazebo and swing set are completely crumpled. Izuku can see a mostly intact merry-go-round laying on its side by the monkey bars, across the playground from where it usually is. The area around the tunnels is miraculously untouched, only some debris seemingly blown towards it.

The police lead them towards the ambulance, where Izuku can see a lot of adults, as Present Mic jumps down from the top of the tunnels and follows them, whistling a pop tune merrily. Some of the kids join in.

As they get close, some of the adults, no uniforms, casual wear that’s unlikely to be a hero costume, probably civilians, probably parents, start calling out names, causing the kids to break out of their somewhat orderly line and scramble for their guardians.

Izuku doesn’t bother, his mother is cooking dinner, he still has plenty of time before she starts worrying about him being late. Although he’s pretty sure she’ll worry once she sees the news about the attack on TV.

Suddenly, he feels someone tugging at his shirt and looks over to see the four-year-old.

Izuku stares for a moment, unsure of what to do, when the kid hugs him, hard.

Izuku feels himself flinch in surprise but manages to give a pat back a moment later. The kid lets go and wobbles as quickly as possible as a woman rushes forward and scoops the kid up.

The police officer guides him, all the other kids apparently ran to their parents, towards the ambulance.

There are two EMTs, plus three police officers, checking the kids over. When the EMT asks him where his guardian is and he reveals he was at the park alone, she signals for someone to come over.

He hears someone grumble “Let me go, Mic. They only need one of us,” before Present Mic and another man are standing in front of him.

“Hey there, little listener! How are you?!” Mic asks him, somehow keeping his voice calm and quiet
despite the enthusiasm that seems as integral to the man’s being as his tangibility. It takes Izuku a moment to get over his fan-boyish excitement to answer.

“Good. I – um, didn’t get injured?” he replies, a little uncertain as to what the hero is looking for and, oh wow, there’s a pro hero, literally a step in front of him, someone who’s so cool he gets to save and help people for his job.

“Yes! It’s a really good job, little listener. I’m glad to do it!” oh spirits, he said that out loud. He really needs to get control of that.

Izuku feels himself blush and focuses on the other man, hoping to get away from how embarrassing he is as quickly as possible.

The other man is dressed in all black except for the light grey scarf, probably the person whose shadow he saw, and bright yellow goggles on his eyes. Wait.

Izuku looks the man up and down again, taking in the outfit, the stubble and long hair, squints to see red eyes through the goggles to confirm, and yep. That’s him.

“You’re the man who didn’t like Endeavor’s apprehension!” he says, gaping.

The EMT sputters and stumbles at that, the man stiffens, and Present Mic halfheartedly tries to hold in his laughter.

“Oh?! You’ve met Eraserhead before, little listener?!” Mic asks, giggling, looking right at him. Oh wow, a hero is looking right at him, asking him a question. And the other man is a hero whose hero name is Eraserhead and that’s such a cool name. Does it relate to his quirk somehow? Or his fighting style? A combination, since most heroes base their fighting style on their quirk?

“Oh-uh Yes. I saw Endeavor fighting a villain in a parking lot, he was watching in the crowd. We talked a bit,” Izuku explains, blushing again.

“Ah,” Eraserhead finally says, seeming to just remember him, “From this past Summer.”

“Summer, huh? You sure get around kiddo! You were really brave at the department store this fall, too!” Present Mic comments. Izuku jumps at that. Present Mic knew him from that?!

“What?” Eraserhead asks his colleague flatly.

“Remember? It was a big deal that two kids had been left alone and no one knew? Hound Dog said they were too quiet and well-hidden for him to realize they were there, as safe as could be, but too close for comfort for him? The news kept showing them reuniting with their parents for the next week!” Present Mic explains, nudging the other man, who just looks down in thought.

“You really need to watch the news more, Eraserhead,” Present Mic continues after a moment, voice a little disbelieving. Eraserhead shrugs with a grunt in response before looking back at Izuku.

“Being so close to three villain attacks in half a year is pretty unusual, especially in this part of the city. Any idea why, kid?” Eraserhead asks, crouching so he can look Izuku directly in the eye.

“Um- uh… no. No, sir. Bad luck, I suppose?” Izuku answers after a moment. Eraserhead’s stare is really intense.

Eraserhead Hum in response, squinting a bit at him. Izuku isn’t sure how to respond to that.
“Well, this little fellow seems just fine. Are you fine with Present Mic staying with you while the police ask a few questions? Since you don’t have a parent here?” The EMT asks, having finished checking Izuku without him noticing during the conversation.

Izuku is about to respond affirmatively when he hears a familiar voice.

“Izuku!” He turns his head so fast it hurts his neck and sees his mother barreling down the street as fast as she can, with her apron still on.

“Mom! Mom, I’m fine! Me and some other kids hid in the worm tunnels!” Izuku exclaims, waving his hands in the air.

His mother finishes her sprint and twiddles nervously in front of him for a moment, hands flapping.

“We got a warning phone call to the apartment and you weren’t back so I put the dinner on hold and then waited for an update and came as I soon as I could but the police weren’t letting people through for a bit and I wasn’t sure you were at this park anyways so they couldn’t prioritize me and I’m sorry I wasn’t with you what if you had gotten hurt? You didn’t get hurt, did you? Oh, Izu, are you okay? I’m so sorry!” His mother finishes as she lunges forward to wrap him in a hug, stopping both of them from flapping their hands anymore.

“I’m fine mom, the EMT just said I’m perfectly fine. I think I have to talk to the police, though?” Izuku explains, hugging his mother back.

“Yes! I can take you two over right now, if you’re able!” Present Mic answers from a few steps further back then he was last time Izuku looked at him.

He looks around for a second, trying to find Eraserhead again, but he can’t see the other man anywhere.

“Oh, Eraserhead?! Don’t worry, he tends to leave early to go back to patrolling, that’s just his hero style!” Present Mic explains, gesturing for them to follow him.

Izuku’s mom insists on holding hands as they walk over to the police officers conducting interviews, and during the interview, and the entire walk back to the apartment.

When they get inside, she lets go of his hand only to immediately hug him. Izuku lets her without fuss.

After a minute of her doing that, whispering reassurance to him that’s he’s brave and loved, she extracts herself to go finish up dinner.

Izuku goes to his room and sits down on his bed before he starts crying.

He’s not sure why he’s crying, because there really wasn’t much chance of anyone getting hurt this time. He thinks.

He’s not really sure, to be honest. He didn’t see the villains, only know that they managed to tear up the street and the playground and it took the heroes a few minutes to stop them but how long did it take to tear up the merry-go-round? The worm tunnels kept them out of sight, but whatever quirks the villain (villains? He doesn’t even know how many people might have been willing to kill him and the other kids) had used had let them tear apart concrete, plastic tubes would have been nothing. If they had been noticed, the tunnels would have taken too long to get out of.

If the shadow hadn’t been Eraserhead, hadn’t been a hero, what would have happened? Hostages?
There were so many they could have killed one to show they were serious and still had enough hostages to spare. So many things could have gone wrong and he has no idea what he could have done, no idea what the right to do would have been, he doesn’t know. He doesn’t know anything!

Izuku hears himself start to sob and quickly lays face down so he can cry into his pillow. He doesn’t want to worry his mom more, she worries enough, especially since the department store incident. The stress isn’t good for her.

Eventually, he manages to stop crying and just breathes raggedly for a minute. He eventually gets himself up and across the hall to the bathroom.

He washes his face and reaches for his wash cloth only to stare at All Might’s smile on it. The unbreakable smile, reassuring everyone.

It makes Izuku feel reassured, in this moment, but also very small. He thinks this is the first time he’s actually felt like a Deku.

He has to use the wash cloth to muffle his sobs again instead of patting his face dry.

Chapter End Notes

What's up, I'm back. I have an outline. I know where this is going and some free time this semester.
I also have a writing Tumblr now? the-writing-mill.tumblr.com
Come say hi if you want.
Hope you enjoyed the chapter!
Honesty? Trauma Doesn't Build Character, Just Coping Mechanisms

Chapter Notes

This is almost 9,000 words and I'm sorry. Not for 9,000 words (this chapter takes up about two years of time, of course its long), but for what the poor child is about to go through.

Also, CW: GORE

Not much, and it's not very explicit, but there is non-lethal impalement in two sections of this chapter. The first starts with "Smiling becomes harder" and the second starts with "Then January comes" it is, unfortunately, poignant enough to be the last section. I will describe what happens in the bottom notes for anyone who needs to skip these sections.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Two weeks later, Izuku is trying to decide which hero factbooks to spend his allowance on, he’s saved up enough to buy four, when a villain fight breaks out on the street. The bookstore goes on lockdown and Izuku can’t help but stare at the metal emergency doors anxiously as an employee leads him to a storage room where everyone else is waiting out the attack.

What if the villain has a quirk that has no problem tearing through metal? Claws or acid or a number of other quirks would be deterred for only a few moments at best. How would those few seconds actually help? What if the villain had a quirk that let them use the doors?

Eventually, the sounds of fighting, muffled in the storage room, stop completely. Izuku wonders what the fight was about. He automatically answers his own question by remembering that’s he’s in a big commercial district. There are even a few banks. Someone was probably robbing a business, most likely one of the banks.

The bookstore’s manager eventually gets a call that it’s safe and they all file out of the storage room and wait for the manager to raise the emergency doors. Izuku looks at the nearest bookshelf, noting the titles before tentatively picking one up to read a bit.

He ends up putting back two of the factbooks so that he can buy one of the books on the security industry’s standard practices.

The employee who led him to the storage room gives him a gentle smile as he leaves. Izuku gives him a smile back, it feels a little too tense, a bit fake, but the employee just waves, apparently not noticing.

Izuku steps out and surveys the scene. The debris is mostly further down the street. Izuku sees broken windows on one of the buildings, he can see the glass scattered out into the street where all of the police are between the overturned cars. He sees one police officer that he’s pretty sure was there during the department store attack with Hound Dog, but he’s not close enough to compare the fur patterns on the cat head. It seems unlikely that the city would have two people with such similar quirks working on hero fight scenes, though.

The building doesn’t have a bank in it, not that Izuku knows of. He walks over to a street directory and looks for the correct building. A bunch of offices, a knitted clothes boutique, and a jewelry store, which is located on the first floor. The villains were probably trying to rob the jewelry store.
Which… why? Selling the jewelry, even pawning it, would be hard. The store owners would know what was stolen and then it would be traced back to the robbers. And that’s before taking into account how silly it was to try to rob in broad daylight in a populated shopping district. Obviously they were going to be caught by heroes before they could get away.

Izuku walks home. Thinking about glass and overturned cars and metal doors. He wonders how many robbers there were and what their quirks were. He was less than a block away and he has no idea.

He gets home without any more incidences and his mother fusses over him for a few moments before hugging him for a minute and a half, crying into his shoulder about how much she loves him.

After she feels like she’s loved him enough and checks him over for injuries and he reassures her that he didn’t even see the fight, he was too far away and inside, he walks into his room.

He drops his new books and backpack next to his bed and lets himself fall onto it face first. He hyperventilates into the pillow, which muffles the sounds but makes it harder to breathe but he can’t let mom hear, she worries enough and there’s nothing to hurt him he just needs a minute and he’ll be fine, he’s just being silly, no need to concern her unnecessarily.

After a few more minutes, he calms down enough that he’s just breathing a little harder than normal.

He reaches for the bag holding his new books and pulls out the security manual.

He wraps his All-Might blanket around him and reads the manual with barely shaking hands until dinner, when he’s able to walk out of his room normally and eat normally. He goes back into his room after helping with dishes and keeps reading the manual.

He doesn’t realize he’s going to fall asleep until he wakes up the next morning as the neighbors honk at each other for not leaving the parking lot quick enough again.

A few weeks after that, he’s walking home from school when something tears up the cross-road two blocks down from him. He stops and waits a second, trying to get a better idea of what’s going on, when something gets thrown up in the air and down the street in his direction. Light grey streaks out to change the black blur’s trajectory and speed, and then Izuku can see Eraserhead rolling on the ground to a controlled stop two car-lengths in front of him.

Eraserhead looks back at him, the only other one on the street.

“Again? This is kind of ridiculous, kid. Double back and find another way home. Try crossing the river, should be safe,” he orders gruffly. Izuku shakes himself out of his own brain, trying to take in the whole scene, responding to the commanding tone.

“Yes, sir! Sorry, Eraserhead!” he yelps before turning around and running back, away from the fight.

“And keep your senses peeled in case the fight moves!” He thinks he hears Eraserhead yell after him.

Izuku manages to cross the river and gets home only half an hour later than usual. His mother asks what took so long, obviously worried that something had happened.
He explains that he was avoiding a hero fight and his mother hugs him for almost a minute then asks him to text or call her the next time it happens.

Izuku nods in agreement and goes to his room, lays face up on his bed, and does not remember the next hour.

He gets up and feels far more tired than he should and tries to do his homework. He manages his Kanji, and tries his math, but only gets part way through before he gives in and turns on the laptop his dad got him for Christmas.

He looks at maps and tries to plan routes until dinner, then makes himself stop until he finishes his homework.

The second he’s finished the small amount of English homework they give elementary schoolers he runs around the room, grabbing paper and rulers and markers and pencils. He goes to bed at midnight, sets his alarm early, and memorizes seven alternate routes from school to home and back when he wakes up.

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Three weeks later, he has to use one of them, then switch to another when the fight moves onto his new path. He gets a little lost while trying to switch routes and memorizes all of the neighborhood’s streets over the weekend to get rid of the anxiety.

Anxiety. It’s a new word for him, he thinks it’s the right one for his worrying.

During the week, he stops following Kacchan during lunch and recess to sneak away and memorize the rest of the neighborhood, pedestrian paths, satellite images of unmapped alleys, parks and their trails, anything he can get his hands on in the library and computer lab.

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He can’t use it later that week, when his mom asks him to pick up tea and spring onions, and he ends up trapped in the grocery store as five villains face off against two heroes right outside.

_Chark and Seisma aren’t really suited for such a closed in, urban space, their special combo move, Volcanic Disruption, is virtually unusable unless they’re willing to endanger nearby civilians. It looks like the villains have someone with iron skin, two with some sort of rubber properties on their limbs, one with telekinesis, no wait, they’re just moving iron skin, ferrokinesis, and the one with goat horns and hind legs. Maybe if Chark distracts them with her pseudo-magma then Seisma can concentrate and use her quakes to throw them off balance?_

“Um, kid? I’m not quite sure what you’re saying, but you might want to keep a little quieter. Out of sight, out of mind, ya know?” interrupts one of the adults hiding in the aisle with him and everyone else.

“Dude!” a young woman, rocking a baby, responds while Izuku looks up, startled. When had he started mumbling?
“Sorry! I’m not good with kids!” The woman sighs at that, frustrated.

“Hey, kiddo? We’re going to be all right, there are heroes out there. They’ll take care of the mean, nasty villains. We just have to wait,” the woman says gently, smiling at him.

Izuku looks at her blankly. He’s old enough and been through enough of these to know that the best option is waiting somewhere sheltered, he doesn’t really need to be told that. Did it look like he was going to try to run or something?

Not that this aisle is really sheltered, the shelves are so flimsy that anything that goes through the glass (they couldn’t get the emergency doors down, and half of them are off anyways because the store is upgrading them) will knock over the shelves. They could also be trapped by the falling over shelves, then. They really should be back in the corner of the store, but the cold section has so much glass they would get badly injured by anything that gets back there. They really should have all gone into the back not-

“Seriously, kiddo. It’s a miracle the villains haven’t noticed our store, you should stay quiet,” the man whispers, voice tense and high-strung. Izuku glances over at the man, takes note of him chewing his lip and tapping his fingers on his jeans.

“Dude!” the woman says again.

“Sorry, but it’s true! He needs to learn to keep quiet in these things. Maybe he just needs a distraction?! Like homework or a coloring book or something?!” The man keeps his voice down, but Izuku is pretty sure it’s getting more and more tense.

“Homework! You expect a child to try to memorize kanji while there’s a villain attack right there!” The woman says, much louder than the man. The rest of the adults shush her.

Izuku, though. He thinks the man might be on to something. He’s been trying to stop muttering so much. He glances over to see the man’s tapping has increased in speed, but it still makes almost no sound.

Izuku takes off his backpack and rummages for a moment, pulling out a pencil and notebook.

He opens to the next page, which is right next to the quirk analysis of Kacchan he had written down after watching a quirk analysis of a new hero on the TV. He thinks for a moment before writing down a quick table of the two sides and their quirks. He knows he’s still mumbling a bit, but he thinks it’s quieter and he has his head so far into the book that his voice is definitely muffled.

He thinks back to the few moments he got to directly see the quirks and writes bullet points under the table about each quirk. Once he does that, he fiddles with his pencil for a few minutes before trying to write possible takedowns, then the damage they could cause. He’d been thinking about that since Eraserhead talked to him at Endeavor’s fight all those months ago. He really had no idea that world was so breakable before that.

Izuku pauses at that thought. Maybe he had known, he just hadn’t thought about it. Maybe he hadn’t wanted to think about it.

Izuku stops writing and looks up when he thinks he hears the fighting sounds getting closer, and has only a moment to wonder why the woman is pouting and the man is smirking before the glass windows on the other side of the store shatter and something flies in.

The people in the aisle shriek and start moving further back in the store.
Izuku quickly puts on his backpack and tries to follow.

The villain with iron skin stands up from behind the counter and Izuku feels himself freeze.

Suddenly the world is… is more. It’s like everything is a little clearer, and Izuku feels so aware of it. The dust swirling through the store, the villain looking around but not really seeing, his own heartrate picking up.

Then Chark is sliding into the store, leaving charred tile behind her. She stands on the other side of the counter and the villain jumps up onto it with a war cry. Chark throws two pseudo-magma balls onto the front of the counter, melting it and causing the villain to fall forward onto the ground. Chark quickly brings out cuffs and puts them on the villain’s hands and feet before dragging the villain out of the store with her.

Izuku calmly steps back to go to the back of the store. Or at least he tries, he can’t seem to stop shaking.

Somehow, he gets back with the others and waits out the rest of the attack there. It only takes a few more minutes for a police officer to come into the store and direct them all outside.

They’re directed to first responders and Izuku waits as still as he can as a paramedic checks him over.

Once that’s done, he’s gently led over to the police and a cat-headed officer steps forward to interview him. Izuku looks at the fur patterns before greeting him.

“Hello, officer Tamakawa,” he greets with a short bow. The cat head blinks at him a few times before the officer’s face lights up in recognition.

“Oh! Little Midoriya! Wow! You got caught up in another one! That’s some luck… Are you okay, young man?” he asks, crouching down to Izuku’s eye level, and why did he ask that? The paramedic let him go to be interviewed, he’s obviously fine.

Officer Tamakawa has him call his mom and then helps him with homework when he pulls it out as they wait for her.

The interview is quick and simple, although officer Tamakawa seemed extra interested in the fact that he actually saw Chark take down the iron skin villain.

He and his mom go home. She hugs him in the kitchen for a minute, sobbing into his shoulder before promising him the best katsudon he’s ever had for dinner. Izuku smiles brightly at that even as he feels his leg bouncing from excess energy.

He goes to his room, lays down on his bed face up, covers his head with a pillow and hyperventilates for an unknown amount of time, his body shaking as he dry sobs.

Eventually he drags himself and his backpack to the desk and pulls out the notebook. He stares blankly at the new entry for a solid minute before actually reading it and getting annoyed by the fact that the villain’s side, despite having two and a half times the people, is smaller.

He turns on his laptop and searches for any news on the attack already reported.

By the time dinner is ready, each villain has half a page and Chark and Seisma each have a whole page. It makes him feel calmer to be able to read everything so plainly.
He tries to keep going about his days, he really does, but villains keep getting in the way.

He tries to do a creek walk with Kacchan and his friends, even if Kacchan didn’t like him helping him out of the creek last time, and has to hide in a dead-end alley on the way to the park when a fight between two groups of villains breaks out suddenly on the road he’s on.

The fire escape ladders are too high for him to grab to get up to the roofs, the buildings close enough that he could have walked over a block and down another fire escape to safety, and maybe the park.

Instead, he’s trapped, and he can barely see any of the fight, so he just waits in the alley, scribbling down what information he can, wishing he knew more kanji so he could write faster.

He gets home and lays face down on his bed until he feels drained of enough energy to actually focus and tries to find kanji learning resources online. He has trouble with the first few results, all either too basic or too advanced, and emails his dad asking for help, since his mom is out for the day.

His dad emails back some good websites and a few pdfs and wishes him luck, as well as making sure he knows he’ll forget some a few times before he consistently knows them.

The sites are better than the teacher Izuku has this year and he doesn’t realize how long he’s been studying until he smells his mom making dinner.

He doesn’t know it yet, but he’ll be the only one who knows anywhere near Kacchan’s level of kanji for the rest of the year, although they know the same amount, Izuku knows too many words they’re not tested on to get better grades.

Izuku tries to do a river walk by himself the next weekend, on the new paths the city installed, and ends up having to hide in a culvert during another fight because the stairs are too far away and despite the textured walls giving handholds, he knows he can’t climb the walls quick enough.

He finishes his writing quick enough to put his notebook in his day bag, so he forgets to show it to Eraserhead who shows up to stop the hydrokinetic villain.

Instead, when Eraserhead sees him come out of the culvert, the hero just sighs and comments that he was lucky it hadn’t rained recently so there was nothing for the villain to use in his hiding spot.

Izuku nods at this, he hadn’t thought about the possibility until he was already hiding, that the hero thought of it automatically makes Izuku grateful that they have heroes so thoroughly trained to help people.

Izuku goes home, sprawls out on his bed face up, shaking and doesn’t like being in small spaces for
the next three months.

Izuku tries to go about his regular routine.

He gets involved in four more attacks on the way to and from school over the next four months after the river incident.

On the last one, Eraserhead is there again.

“Again?” the man asks, raising an eyebrow. He looks more tired than usual, Izuku thinks.

“Yes, sir. Sorry. It’s the quickest way home,” Izuku explains, abashed. Eraserhead is quiet for a minute.

“Jeez, kid. Your luck is awful,” he finally says.

Izuku nods and doesn’t tell Eraserhead about introducing Present Mic and officer Tamakawa the week before after his class fieldtrip to the zoo was interrupted by a desperate con man with an animal communication quirk running from loan sharks. Or how he took care of a four-year-old with a new bear quirk who had been separated from her mother and was too freaked out to stay human shaped without his help.

He goes home and curls into a ball on his bed as he shakes and writes in his journal, which calms him down enough that he accidentally takes a nap.

After that week, he tries varying how he gets home, how he goes anywhere.

It works for a week and a half before he ends up in the hospital.

A villain was fighting a new hero near a park and a younger kid, five or six, he thinks, saw their parents after the initial dust had cleared and ran towards them. Izuku grabbed them just in time to avoid the next attack, but his foot got crushed in the debris that followed.

So now, here he is in the hospital, his mother fluttering around behind the doctors as his foot gets healed enough that he’ll only have to wear a light brace for a week.

His mother holds him and sobs into his hair for the entire cab ride home.

When he finally has written enough that he’s stopped crying and only his hands are shaking, he comes out to find his mom has made them a small feast for dinner.
He tries. It doesn’t work.

He’s crossing a bridge on the way home when it gets destroyed.

He’s glad he’s a strong swimmer, and the river below is weak.

He grabs onto a buoy and then a kid around his age as he floats past. He manages to drag the kid onto the buoy with him and realizes the other is unconscious.

He checks to see if the kid is still breathing, the answer is yes, thank goodness. The boy even starts snoring after a minute, Izuku moves him so that he’s breathing through an open mouth with shark-sharp teeth and tries to watch the fight on the destroyed bridge.

They eventually get rescued and Eraserhead just sighs and asks him if he’s injured. When he answers no, the hero gets the police to rush him through checkup and interview, letting him go home without having to wait for his mom.

When he goes home and does his best to transfer all of his notebook into a spare he realizes it’s almost full, filling up faster than any school notebook since he started doing analysis of the quirks and fights he sees on TV as well as the incidents he’s involved in.

He manages to salvage most of the notebook, and enough of the other things he can do his homework.

He researches how to dry out books and tries to do so with shallow breaths and a shaking that abates just in time for dinner. Dinner is heavy enough that when he hits the bed he goes to sleep right away.

His books are still legible enough to use on Monday.

Eraserhead is there the first time he ends up as a direct hostage. That actually calms him down a bit. He’s never known of someone dying when Eraserhead is involved. He focuses on that and stays very still as the woman holds her claws to his throat.

Eraserhead is there with Lady Oxy and a lot of police. They get a bag of money and throw it ten feet in front of the villain, twenty feet in front of them, per the villain’s instructions.

The woman slowly walks them forward and Izuku sees Present Mic out of the corner of his eye.

She keeps her claws pointed at his throat as she steps in front of him and leans down, arm stretching the three feet between them to make sure he still counts as a hostage.
Izuku covers his ears and hopes he guessed the plan right.

The villain is unprepared and stumbles from the soundwaves. Within two seconds, Eraserhead has her wrapped up and immobile.

Present Mic says he did a really good job staying calm and Eraserhead nods in agreement. Izuku feels something warm in chest grow.

The feeling is replaced by dread as he’s told he has to go to the hospital, even though he seems fine.

His mother cries on him at the hospital for ten minutes. When they get home, Izuku hears her crying to his father for half an hour over his own muffled gasps and sobs in his blanket cocoon on the corner of his bed.

They get take out that night.

It becomes an odd routine. Go to school, follow Kacchan, get chased by and from Kacchan, go home, eat a large dinner. Go to classes and do homework when he can.

Inevitably, once a week or so, get involved with a villain attack.

Sometimes he just has to reroute, sometimes hunker down alone or with other people, sometimes he’s in the middle of a fight.

The teachers become used to him coming in late, or with bags under his eyes. He sometimes has trouble sleeping now, it can take hours to relax enough after an attack to sleep if it’s in the afternoon or evening.

He becomes used to letting adults fuss over him during and after attacks, especially his mother. He becomes used to telling other kids to be quiet and still and hide during an attack.

He becomes more used to staying calm when he’s in the fight or a hostage, used to figuring out which debris won’t crush him and probably won’t be used so he can use it to hide. He even manages to run out of the fight twice without being noticed by heroes or villains.

Eraserhead is at one of those fights though, and looks at him for two seconds before marching him over to the ambulance and making him go to the hospital to get checked on.

It’s a bit funny, Eraserhead says that he doesn’t even patrol Izuku’s area, but he ends up at about a quarter of the incidents.

Izuku doesn’t count a rerouting as an incident anymore though, even if he sticks around for a few minutes to write in his journal for them, which is a new habit. Eraserhead isn’t at many of those.

Honestly, he starts seeing Eraserhead almost as much as he talks to his dad. (which might be because his dad got transferred again, to the eastern United States, so they have to email more, but still)
He’s at four full notebooks, technically. Eight if you count the duplicates he keeps at home since the river/bridge incident.

Smiling for others during incidents becomes easy. He even starts calming down teenagers, even though he’s eight, almost nine, but still much younger than some of the other people.

Smiling becomes harder after another incident in a store. He honestly doesn’t even remember why he was in there.

He’s hiding with a few others inside one of those jewelry counters that are hollow rectangles with room for employees inside, telling everyone that they just have to be quiet.

They hear a crash and all eight of them turn as one to see a hero, Bubbler, Izuku distantly registers, laying on a crashed counter, glass like theirs, shaped like theirs.

Bubbler has a spike driven through xyr gut.

He hears the little girl beside him breath in harshly and covers her mouth before she can scream.

There are two people huddling behind the counter Bubbler just crashed into.

The villain stalks through the store, porcupine-like spikes regrowing out of their body.

Izuku sees the signature electric blue combat boots and skull face mask and recognizes the man as Blue Pin. Robber and serial killer.

Izuku watches the ensuing fight in HD clarity, Bubbler getting up with a struggle while making soap. But the soap and bubbles come too slow to be enough and Izuku distantly thinks that xe must be going through quirk exhaustion.

Blue Pin does have to step slower, more carefully, though, and Bubbler uses that to their xyr advantage, getting in a few punches before using a takedown.

Then Blue Pin pushes on the spike already driven through Bubbler, who screams, and scrambles away, sliding a bit on the soap on the ground, using the half-destroyed counter to stand up.

He notices the two still cowering behind the other counter. He smiles, and Izuku has never considered if All Might and his smile have an anti-thesis before, but now, he knows they must and Izuku doesn’t want that anti-thesis to exist at all.

“Hero, huh? How… pathetic.”
Blue Pin pops off one of his spikes and juggles it casually between his hands. Izuku can’t help but flicker his eyes between Blue Pin and the two soon-to-be victims.

“Eenie… Meenie… Miney… M-“

Izuku doesn’t have time to even blink, and suddenly Bubbler and Blue Pin are back on the ground, then sliding out of view.

Izuku barely has enough awareness to pull back a boy that looks to be about eleven from sticking his head out into the fight.

He manages to get everyone to move back and they listen to the fight continue.

There’s grunting, and thuds, and then Izuku hears Bubbler scream again and he’s shaking and he. Can’t. Smile. Anymore.

After eleven more seconds, the fighting stops, then another seven of silence. Izuku counts them so he knows it was only eighteen seconds, but it feels like eternity, stretched out and he feels too stretched, too small, there’s nothing any of them can do. Are they all going to die? Is he going to die?

“It’s okay. He’s… knocked out. You’re all okay,” Bubbler says, and xyr voice is so shaky and wrong but its xyr voice and suddenly everyone else is crying and Izuku slowly gets up and cautiously crawls under the counter and looks out to see that Blue Pin is on the ground not moving and – oh. That’s why Bubbler screamed.

Xe’re holding a spike in place where it’s going down through xyr eye. From that angle, it’s probably going into xyr mouth. And the spike in xyr gut is still bleeding. The soap and bubbles around the two are red.

Izuku isn’t really sure what to do so he starts looking around for the police. This is when they usually come and make him talk to the paramedics.

They aren’t coming. He can’t hear them.

“Hey, kid,” Izuku whips his head to look at the injured hero, “Sorry, but there should be a little round device where I fell. Can you press it for me?” xe ask. Xe’re slowly trying to sit up, but xe keep wincing.

Izuku nods and makes his way to the other counter, careful not to slip on the sudsy floor. He hears a few of the kids scream and start sobbing just as he finds the device.

He feels his heart race and looks back to see that the others are just scared of Bubbler’s injuries.

Izuku presses the button.

In two minutes, the police and paramedics arrive, quickly moving Bubbler, who gave up on trying to sit up.

It takes a while to go through the checkup and interview this time, in part because the paramedics notice that he cut himself on some glass. Izuku takes a moment to realize it must have happened when he was picking up the beacon. The paramedics and police insist on him going to hospital because of it.

He insists enough to get his hand bandaged there so that when his mom comes they can go home instead of having to go to the hospital again.
Izuku doesn’t join in the weekly video call with his dad that evening. He pretends to be asleep when his mom comes in and goes back to shivering in fetal position as soon as she leaves, staring at his hand.

Two weeks later, Bubbler holds a press conference in an eye patch and a wheelchair and announces xyr retirement.

He feels pretty… numb? After that incident, especially after the press conference.

Numb doesn’t stop the incidents, though. He gets good at hiding. He learns to write virtually silent, although someone with enhanced hearing can probably still hear him, and learns to mouth words instead of mumbling them during fights.

He’s pretty sure he still mumbles when he’s writing in his room afterwards, though. But he thinks that helps him calm down as much as writing the mumbles down do.

His notes get bigger, longer, as time goes on. He starts seeing what objects likely will or won’t be used in a fight, which helps him hide better. He starts writing down different ways different heroes can take down the villains, what they should avoid to prevent villains from taking them down.

He also gets involved in enough freak accidents and natural disasters that he learns to deal with those too. He learns a lot about how rescue heroes work from those and starts writing down rescue strategies too after a camping trip with his mom and the Bakugos (where Kacchan only pushes him around a bit, probably because he’s too tired from hiking? Although he doesn’t seem that tired) results in them getting trapped by a mudslide, their campsite destroyed. A new hero team, calling themselves the Wild Wild Pussycats, rescues them.

And Izuku is instantly smitten, getting the little bit of merch for them there is that he can, including a new pillow case. It’s rare for teams to form as permanent units, but Izuku doesn’t understand why after seeing the Pussycats work so effectively together, and they seemed so happy to work together. Well, except maybe Tiger, who kept hunching in on herself, but she seemed happy to work with her teammates who looked at her in concern when Tiger wasn’t looking. Maybe her pet cat had just died or something?

Still, the Pussycats are happy and jovial and the experience lifts Izuku’s spirits, even if he has to spend the car ride back and three more minutes on the couch letting his mother hold him and cry and fuss before she goes to make dinner.

Izuku’s noticed that she’s put on weight from all the take out and the extra food at dinners she makes after he gets involved in an incident.
He sees her crying as she packs up clothes too small to donate and stops telling her about incidents if she doesn’t get called to them. Between Eraserhead and officer Tamakawa, he gets to leave a lot of incidents without her being called. Present Mic, who he sees the least, doesn’t see him enough to let that happen. As much as he admires the pro hero, and is an avid fan of his radio show, he starts dreading seeing the man at incidents.

Eventually, after enough incidents, he starts smiling kind of like All Might again to other hostages and civilians during incidents.

It feels hollow, but none of them can apparently tell. It eventually gets more genuine, more bravado-filled, even as he sees a few more heroes get hurt. None as badly as Bubbler, but a few broken and sprained bones, plenty of lightly-bleeding cuts and scratches, bruises.

Izuku also collects a few more scratches and bruises. If he’s bleeding then his mom is always called. Between those light injuries and Kacchan, Izuku gets pretty used to pain. That’s good, he thinks. It makes it easier to stay calm during incidents that way.

His dad gets to come home for a week that August and hugs him and mother so much during that week, but he keeps Izuku at arms’ length when he tells him that, hands on his shoulders so Izuku can’t get closer or leave.

“Izuku. Are you alright?” his dad asks instead of praising Izuku, like he had about his grades (still five or so points below Kacchan, consistently, but second in the class, second or third in his grade is pretty good), about Izuku explaining staying calm during incidents, about helping a bunch of people who are lost because he has the neighborhood memorized.

Izuku isn’t sure why his dad asks that, but he answers honestly, because his dad is reserved but warm and always gives him good advice and helps him research or find resources and looks so happy whenever they do a video call, and he knows his dad loves him.

Izuku says he’s fine, but his dad doesn’t stop staring at him intently for a few more moments before he reaches up and ruffles Izuku’s hair.

He hears his parents talking late into the night that night. But he doesn’t know what it’s about. But dad wasn’t able to come home for new year’s or in the summer like usual, so they probably have a lot to talk about.

His dad has to go, as he always does, at the end of the week.

That week that was blissfully absent of any incidents (only a few reroutes) ends and the day after his
dad leaves, he does his homework in a supply closet until the fight on the first floor of the bookstore ends.

Present Mic opens the closet door, immediately jumping back (checking for accomplices, as well as staying out of the way of any civilians freaking out) and stares blankly as he sees Izuku packing up his homework, blinking a few times.

“Hey, Little Listener! How are you doing?! You weren’t hurt right?!” Present Mic asks, an easy smile on his face.

“No, Mic, sir,” Izuku answers, shaking his head as he comes out of the closet, “There are only two other people on this floor, by the way, I saw them run into the bathroom,” he explains, pointing at the bathroom on the other side of the balcony. The balcony is small enough, with only two walls of books and some clear tables and white chairs, that Izuku can confidently keep track of how many people are on it.

“Okay, Midoriya-kun! Let’s go get them, then!” Present Mic exclaims, putting a hand on his shoulder and guiding him towards the bathrooms. Mic never likes to leave him alone when he finds him involved in an incident, Izuku’s noticed.

They find the two friends in the bathroom and they all go down together to get checked on and interviewed. Officer Tamakawa isn’t there, but Eraserhead is and heads over once he sees them instead of leaving.

“Any injuries?” he asks, bluntly.

“No, sir, I was hiding in a supply closet the whole time upstairs,” Izuku responds, easily, waiting.

“Why?” Eraserhead always asks, unless Izuku was being so stupid that he just tells him what to do next time, and gives him pointers on staying safe. It usually sounds exasperated, but Izuku suspects the man just naturally interacts with kids to make them think hard about what they’re doing, to question everything.

“The villain has a weak seismic quirk, only able to make people stumble from fifteen feet away. The balcony is firmly anchored concrete and the closet has no shelves and is bolted to the floor. If it can survive earthquakes, it can definitely handle the villain’s quirk. I was two feet away from the closet with no way to leave the building so I thought it was safest,” Izuku explains.

Eraserhead just nods his head. Izuku chose the right strategy, then.

“Alright, let’s get you interviewed so you can go home, then,” Eraserhead drawls, guiding Izuku towards a paramedic and police officer, so Izuku can get his mandatory checkup at the same time.

“Shouldn’t we call the kid’s mom, Eraserhead?!” Present Mic asks, a little forcefully.

“The Problem Child has to waste enough time without waiting for his mom to come pick him up. He’ll be fine,” Eraserhead explains evenly, Izuku nods along.

“Problem child?!”

“He gets involved with enough problematic situations. I’ve already explained this to you, Mic,” Eraserhead replies dryly.

“Yeah, you’ve told me! Not said it to the poor kid’s face!” Mic says, scandalized, both dramatically and earnestly.
“He has said it to my face before, actually. Two weeks ago, when I was hiding behind an overturned car and signaled him so he could get me out,” Izuku calmly explains as he lets the paramedic check him over.

“Why were you-?!” Mic starts to ask, before just gaping at Izuku.

“He was trying a new way home, the guy with the dirt quirk decided to smash through the street as he was walking home,” Eraserhead explained.

“But that’s-”

“Ridiculous. Yes.”

“Didn’t you say that he-”

“Attacked in the middle of the day, yes. Problem Child’s school had a half-day for exams.”

Izuku listens with half an ear as he quickly finishes up his interview with the police.

“Present Mic, sir, thank you for your help today,” Izuku says, bowing, before bowing at Eraserhead who nods back. Eraserhead signals the police officer to let him go home on his own.

Present Mic opens his mouth, probably to protest, but Eraserhead frog marches him away with a hand around his mouth before he can say anything.

Later, Izuku pants heavily while looking at the ceiling for six minutes before finishing his math homework, the only thing left for school tomorrow.

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Fall comes in full, and Izuku continues his routines. More school, more incidents, more notebooks (not counting home copies, he’s up at twelve now).

Some new things come too, a new homeroom teacher, Kacchan exploding him more often once he hears Izuku say he wants to be a hero, new Wild Wild Pussycat merchandise (Izuku tries to replace all of it once Tiger comes back from Taiwan, the new pillowcase is double sided so hopefully it will be recognizable longer than the last one).

Eraserhead eventually puts his mother on speed dial. And Present Mic finally gets her number so he can call her about Izuku as well.

He learns to do a really good All Might impression, so that if his version of an All Might-esque smile isn’t enough for hostages, he can make them less nervous by making them laugh. The face of All Might also helps them calm down, the symbol of peace’s visage enough of a reassurance. Every time he sees the effect, Izuku’s awe of All Might grows even more.

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Winter comes and Izuku can no longer use his fingers to count how many times he’s been taking hostage. On the bright side, he actually freaked out the last villain by giving an attempt of Eraserhead’s bored/disappointed/not-worth-my-time glare. It unsettled and distracted the villain enough that a sidekick, Kamui Woods, could sneak up behind and capture the villain.
Izuku gets a light cut on the collar bone, cutting through his shirt, and that’s it, but his mom still freaks out and cooks way too much food for them that night.

Izuku spends the time she cooks looking up how to sew online. He messes up the stitching on his attempted mending so much that he takes the Hage-brand handkerchief Present Mic gave him last time he was at an incident (Izuku had tumbled down a muddy hill, trying to avoid the epicenter of the fight, and Mic insisted on trying to clean him up) and makes an impromptu patch out of a bit of it. The style reminds him of a jacket he saw on a lady the other day and he decides he likes it, especially how it makes his plain shirt say “bald” for no reason. It’s kind of funny, somehow.

Then, January comes, with a quick visit from his dad that he’ll barely remember in the future. When Izuku looks back on this month in the future, he might consider a certain incident as what really started everything. Certainly, if anyone ever makes a musical or a movie out of his life, it would probably be considered the inciting incident, everything else before being background and set up for his path.

He’s nine and a half, and Kacchan and his friends had just beat him up for trying to stop Kacchan from claiming an entire park as his and kicking all of the younger kids out. They had run off into the woods after a few minutes, Kacchan declaring the park was too boring for anyone who wasn’t a wussy baby.

He’s walking back home, down a street of shops. There are a few people, enough to make the street active, but not enough to make it crowded, all of the holiday sales having ended already.

Suddenly, there’s screaming and Izuku hears metal screeching down the street.

He instinctively takes stock of where the incident is, estimates how much time he has as metal starts ripping and twisting in the air fifteen seconds? Depends on whether there’s only metallokinesis or a magnetic ability, which would allow for quick repulsion he quickly looks around jumps into the nearest store, a convenience store, dragging a nervous looking boy with him into the store.

The only employee in the store with them and four other people looks young, probably in high school. She’s twisting her hands and looks way too nervous. Her voice too.

“O-o-okay. Everyone!” She tries to smile, it looks painful. “Let’s try, um, let’s try to- to sta-stay calm!” Her voice cracks at the end. Everyone looks a little more nervous at that.

Izuku quickly looks over the others, an older woman, one that looks to be in her forties and is swaying slightly bloodshot eyes, swaying, flushed. Drunk, maybe hungover, the other two both look like they’re in college or just graduated, a man and a woman. No one seems to be moving to take charge.

“Is there a storage room where we can hide?” he asks. The others startle at him speaking, and he feels the other boy shift to try to hide behind him as they all look in their direction. Considering how much taller than Izuku he is, it doesn’t really work.

“Um… Yes!” the employee says, then does nothing. Izuku waits a moment, during which he can hear the sounds of a battle starting up down the street.

“Can we go in there? And where is it? And does the store have its emergency doors operational?”
Izuku prods. The employee jumps.

“R-right, its over there,” she gestures towards a corner of the store, “And I forgot to put tho-those down. Give me a moment!” She says, a little hysterically.

She makes it one step when Izuku hears metal tearing down the street and he turns to look, pulling the other boy, whose hand he still hasn’t let go of, but the boy is holding on so tightly and Izuku doesn’t mind, behind him. He’s just in time to get the boy out of the way as the glass doors shatter and a hero, Kumu Verita, flies in, holding someone to her chest. Given her protective stance and the other person’s outfit, probably a sidekick.

Some of the adults start screaming.

“Come, on! Back room!” Izuku shouts, face carefully bright-eyed and neutral as he turns and starts corralling everyone to the back. It’s fairly easy to do so when they are going somewhere they already think of as safe and know where it is, even the drunk woman seems aware enough of the danger to hurry.

All seven of them get to the storage room and Izuku can hear someone stomp in just as they close the door.

The employee and the man are both breathing heavily, starting to hyperventilate, really, and Izuku goes about calming them down. Pointing out that Kumu Verita is really good at teamwork and stalling, so she can keep the villain in the same spot until whoever she’s working with gets in position and can take out the villain easily. (Well, maybe, there’s only one entrance for the heroes so getting the drop on the villain will be hard, they don’t need to know that, though)

Izuku gets them to calm down enough and prompts them to start talking to each other about themselves, the old lady easily leading the conversation so that the adults are introducing themselves and having a regular, adult conversation and Izuku can look and see how the other boy is doing.

He looks over and the kid is shaking, and also… glaring? Intensely. Izuku wonders what he did wrong until the boy whispers out, “Your… arm…”

Izuku glances down to see his arm, he had held both behind his back when calming down the others, to puff up his chest and appear open and confident, is riddled with cuts, most of them bleeding.

There’s quite a bit of glass stuck in both arms, actually.

The one the boy is looking at though, also has part of a handle stuck in it.

He can’t quite feel it, from the adrenaline, most likely.

Izuku glances back up to see the boy shaking even more. Izuku quickly puts on his brightest smile, which both visibly shocks the boy and makes him shake a little less.

“Don’t worry, if I don’t remove it, then I can just wait for the fight to finish and get medical help afterwards. I’ll be fine!” he whispers back.

The boy looks confused at this but nods back and Izuku hides the arms behind him again. He can hear the fighting noises in the store still. But the store’s shelves are mainly plastic bio-plastic, hopefully, but either way, can’t be used by someone with metallokiases, and Kumu Verita has been working with Best Jeanist lately, between the two of them and maybe the sidekick they should be able to easily beat the villain, Best Jeanist is likely going to be in the nation’s top 30 this next season, after all.
The boy is looking at him again, as well as the drunk woman, so Izuku’s pretty sure he started mumbling instead of mouthing again. But it also clues him into paying attention and realizing the adults are having trouble continuing conversation.

He only has to take charge for another few minutes, keeping everyone at a reasonable volume and asking questions so they keep their minds from worrying too much when they hear knocking on the storage room door.

“Police. Anyone in there?” A familiar voice asks.

“Yes, sir!” Izuku responds, casually moving to the side, arms out of sight, as the door swings open and officer Tamakawa steps in.

“Hello, Midoriya-kun. Everyone else in here okay?” he asks.

“Yes, sir!” Izuku responds as cheerily as he can.

“All right, if you folks want to follow my coworkers out, we’ll get you checked out and you can get on with your day,” officer Tamakawa explains kindly.

The employee helps the drunk woman out and the others file after, Izuku steps out last, arms still behind his back, and is surprised to see the other boy still standing there.

“Yes? Is something wrong?” officer Tamakawa asks him, kneeling down on one leg to get to the correct height to look the other boy in the eye.

The boy looks away and points at Izuku. Officer Tamakawa looks back at Izuku.

“Oh, Midoriya-kun? He has really bad luck, so he’s kind of used to this! That’s why he’s so calm. And maybe a bit cheery,” officer Tamakawa explains with a small, comforting laugh. The boy shakes his head, still looking away and pointing.

“His… arm…” he says, barely louder than his whispers from before.

“Eh?” Officer Tamakawa asks.

“Oh, um. You asked if everyone else was fine. I was honest about that. I probably need medical attention though,” Izuku explains. The boy nods before scurrying away to another police officer.

Officer Tamakawa looks back at Izuku as he takes his arms behind his back and Izuku has never seen officer Tamakawa’s ears move back like that, or his eyes widen like that, but he has no time to think about it much as officer Tamakawa picks him up and carries him out of the store, bridal style. The man takes him to an ambulance swiftly, thankfully avoiding any of the other involved civilians, promising that he can give his statement later. Izuku is grateful, his arms are starting to ache so he’s pretty sure that the adrenaline is starting to wear off a bit.

The paramedics are carefully putting him in the ambulance when he sees Eraserhead approach officer Tamakawa, who points towards Izuku’s ambulance.

Eraserhead stalks over after a moment, takes a second to observe Izuku, then climbs into the ambulance and promptly stays out of the paramedics’ way.

As the doors close and the ambulance starts moving, Eraserhead pulls out his phone. And quickly fiddles with it.
“Midoriya-san… Yes, I’m sorry. He’s in stable condition. But you need to get to Hanayamaki Hospital… He is in stable condition, nowhere near critical… I’ll explain when you get there… yes, I’m coming to the hospital with him… I’ll explain when you get there… I’m sorry, but this has gone on too long, too far… Yes, goodbye, see you in a bit.”

Izuku doesn’t quite understand what Eraserhead is getting at, or why he’s coming to the hospital with him this time, but he figures he’ll have to wait until they’re at the hospital like his mom.

Eraserhead hangs up the phone then hangs his head, sighing.

“Problem Child. Is your quirk bad luck or something?” he asks tiredly, head still down. Izuku feels his heart clench at that. Things never go well after he answers that sort of question.

“No, Eraserhead, sir… I’m quirkless. I have the toe joint and everything,” Izuku says. He hopes he gets ignored, or even scorned, he doesn’t think he can handle someone else pitying him, especially someone he sees so often.

“What.”

“Quirkless, sir. We got the x-ray, so although bad luck would be a likely quirk to get misdiagnosed as quirkless, I definitely don’t have it,” Izuku explains. Now that it’s a theoretical possibility, though, Izuku kind of wishes he had that quirk, it would at least be a decent explanation of why his arms are starting to hurt so much each time the ambulance goes over a pothole.

Eraserhead just lifts his head and stares at him with an unreadable expression for the rest of the ride.

Chapter End Notes

First section: Izuku is at a department store, hiding with some kids in a jewelry counter pen, when a hero gets thrown into a counter across from them. He realizes the villain is a well known robber and serial killer who grows and detaches spikes like a porcupine. The hero manages to take down the villain before he can kill two civilians who were hiding separately, but Izuku sees the hero after the fight. Two weeks later, with an eyepatch and in a wheelchair, the hero announces xer retirement.

Second section: Izuku is walking down a shop-lined street after a Kacchan encounter and hides in a convenience store. They don’t get the emergency doors down fast enough and a hero smashes through the glass doors, protecting her sidekick. Izuku and the other civilians run into the back storage room where he keeps everyone calm, and the only other child points out to Izuku that his arms are hurt. He hides this until the police get him out and officer Tamakawa gets Eraserhead to go to the hospital with Izuku. Eraserhead calls Izuku's mom and tells her to meet them at the hospital, then finds out that Izuku is quirkless.

(also, does this count as whump?)

Anyways, hope you enjoyed (or cried)! If you want to talk more than the comments really allow (or scream at me more), you can check out my new writing Tumblr! the-writing-mill.tumblr.com
Chapter Notes

Let it be known that I did no editing on this chapter. I might come back and do that, I might not.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Shouta waits out in the hospital's hallway, looking through a glass window as the doctors and nurses work. They apply local anesthesia to the Problem Child’s arms.

Said child keeps glancing at him in worry. He doesn’t like it. He’s never liked seeing a child - small, defenseless, and inexperienced by nature – in danger. An actual injury is even worse. He hasn’t seen Midoriya bad enough to be in the hospital for a while, and he can admit that the hospital trips are usually overkill. Not this time, though.

He watches the nurses carefully flip him so they can remove the shrapnel – shrapnel – from the child’s arms. And apparently parts of his back.

And how did they not see that?! The boy’s shirt is obviously soaking from the back. Healthcare professionals, in the trauma unit, should know better, the fact that they don’t is ridiculous and incompetent and-

No. They were concerned with the handle sticking out of the side of the kid’s arm. Which was put as top priority from the ambulance workers. Who are trained to deal with the most obvious life-threatening injuries. Of course, they all looked at the bit that guaranteed the kid would need surgery and listed it as priority. Everyone did their job correctly, the Problem Child’s current problem just slipped through the cracks a bit.

Which… basically sums up the entire problem.

Shouta breathes deeply and watches the doctors wash and disinfect the wounds.

His mind quickly wanders back to the ambulance. Well… wanders back to quirkless.

And the Problem Child’s body language, preemptively flinching as though Shouta was going to yell at him for genetics he couldn’t control.

But more importantly, quirkless. It changed his estimation of a lot of the problem child’s behaviors. Mildly reckless and well-controlled with a lack of care for rules is suddenly just extreme recklessness. Except for those times when a quirk outburst would have made everything worse.

Discovering the kid had more mettle than most adults was a pleasant and easy surprise. The sudden decrease in presumed control was far less pleasant and would need troublesome readjustment of his mental image of the Problem Child.

He breaks out of his reflection as he hears low heels clicking down the hallway in a hurry, the pace almost familiar. He turns to see Midoriya Inko rushing down the hallway, a young receptionist following a bit behind, hurrying to catch up.
“Midoriya-san.”

The woman stops short a few steps in front of him, hands flapping. Then she opens her mouth. Shouta points to the window before she can ask anything. She turns and looks through to see her son face-down with the last few bandages getting put on his arms. His back is still visibly covered in cuts.

She covers her mouth with her hands, and Shouta can’t tell if that’s a gasp or a sob she’s failing to keep completely in. The woman starts wobbling towards the window and Shouta uncharacteristically reaches out to steady her.

Midoriya-san stops walking and uses him to keep herself steady, grabbing his arm tightly with one hand and using the other to muffle her crying.

The receptionist gives Shouta a nod with an awkward look on their face before leaving to go back to the front desk, abandoning Shouta to a distraught parent physically relying on him.

Reaching out was a mistake. But Shouta can’t really get her off without being cruel, or worse, causing the woman to collapse in the hallway, so he’s stuck with the physical contact.

“What happened?!” the woman finally asks, obviously distressed.

“He was involved in another attack. He hid in a store, but the emergency doors didn’t get put down in time. A hero and sidekick were launched through the door before he and the other civilians could get to the back room. He had shrapnel lodged in his arms, from the back. He wasn’t ever in critical condition, but he needed immediate surgery,” Shouta explains.

The woman looks at him for a moment as her lower lip trembles increasingly. Shouta has only a minute to prepare before she starts crying and – is this her quirk? There’s so much. How? – the side of his shirt is soaked within moments.

“Er… Ma’am? Midoriya-san? Your son is about to get flipped back over. He’ll see you crying,” Shouta explains.

“Eh?”

The woman stops crying, although her eyes are still quite wet, and looks up at him in confusion before glancing back and forth rapidly between him and her son.

“I suppose I shouldn’t worry him about me. He is the one who’s hurt,” she says meekly as her gaze finally settles on her own fidgeting hands.

Shouta sighs, which causes her to look up.

“You don’t usually come to the hospital. A-and over the phone, you said that you – um – that you…”

“It’s something for both you and your son to hear,” and he’d really rather only say it once, instead of having this conversation two, or worse, three times.

He watches the Problem Child’s arms as they finish getting bandaged for a moment.

“I need coffee. They’ll move him to an overnight room in a bit. I’ll meet you there,” he says, turning and walking down the hallway before Midoriya-san can respond.
Thankfully, Cat-fine Café, only a five-minute walk away, is a 24-hour business.

He throws out his empty cup outside of the hospital twenty minutes later. It’s a thankfully quick process to find a free person at the desk and flash them his hero license to get directions to the Problem Child’s new room. And a quick report of his condition.

As expected, multiple lacerations and punctures through muscle, a few cutting to the bone. Miraculously, the handle wasn’t bone-deep. The boy is going to be monitored for the night and released first thing in the morning. With a prescription for a week’s worth of painkillers.

He swears under his breath when he gets to that bit. It makes sense, healing quirks sometimes mess with growing bodies in unpredictable ways, or predictably complicate growth, so they’re usually a last resort. Especially for an elementary-schooler. But still, the kid is just… the whole situation brings up a headache whenever he thinks about it.

Shouta finds the room easily, and peeks in to see Midoriya-san crying on a chair next to her son’s bed. Every few seconds she starts getting up and reaching like she wants to hug him, but then seems to remember his arms and sits back down, crying with new strength.

Seriously, if that wasn’t her quirk or somehow related, he’d eat his scarf.

The boy seems similarly flustered, albeit with far less energy. He seems worried about his mother, if his aborted movements towards her when she cries harder are anything to go by, and Shouta supposes that’s the sort of heart-warming thing that would make Hizashi tear up and shout.

Shouta takes a moment to breathe and regret not getting a second cup of coffee before he opens the door and walks in.

Both of the Midoriyas look up at him and the mother stops crying as he enters, although her eyes are still very wet. So are her son’s.

He grabs one of the two chairs left along the walls and places it at the foot of the bed, backwards so he can rest his head while talking to them.

No one says anything for a moment, Shouta just observes them and distantly wishes that his life wasn’t so ridiculous. Not that he has much to complain about compared to the kid in the hospital bed.

“Eraserhead, sir?” said kid finally asks after almost an entire minute of silence.

Shouta groans before looking directly at the mother.

“Midoriya-san, your child is a trouble magnet beyond anything I’ve ever seen. I can’t go even two weeks without running into him involved in an incident outside of my patrol route. He’s passingly familiar with over half of the police in the area. And every time he’s involved, he’s nothing more than an untrained, unprepared citizen with barely any meat on his bones,” Shouta deadpanned. He sees the kid flinch a few times as he speaks.

Good. The kid had become way too content lately. It was one thing to be used to something so you could keep a calm head, to be content, especially in mortal peril, was the height of foolishness. If it took some “harsh” words to make the kid see it, so be it.

“Eh?! What do you mean? What could he do different? He’s just a child!” the woman responds.
“I said untrained. He could train. I said unprepared. He could at least keep a few things in his backpack. He’s a skinny piece of broccoli of a child and I don’t think he could run a block without keeling over sometimes,” he responds.

“B-but that’s – He…” the woman seems worried still, which is quite illogical, he’s pointing out what should be done so no one has to worry as much.

“Ma’am, last week I saw your son duck into an alley and hide in a dumpster during a fight. He struggled to get into that, and the dumpster still got hit and pushed down the alley into a wall. He could have gotten seriously hurt, even more than he is now. He also could have left a multitude of ways beforehand if he had any training,” he explains, huffing a bit and crossing his arms over his chest.

Midoriya-san just stares at him for a moment before slowly looking over at her son.

“Izuku? Sweetie? What’s he talking about? You didn’t tell me about ever hiding in a dumpster,” she warbles out. That shocks Shouta for a moment, although he takes care not to show it, and he looks to see that the Problem Child is shrinking in on himself on the bed.

“Um… you asked where I had been playing. And I said we’d gotten rough by a muddy lot, which was true. I got caught up in that afterwards, which wasn’t playing!” the boy quickly explains.

“I-Izuku!” the mother exclaims, bursting into tears again, “Why didn’t you tell me?!”

“I-I just wanted to do my homework! And I needed to get the clothes off from the mud anyways, even before the dumpster!” he hurriedly responds. Which might even be true, but the kid definitely needs to work on acting as well. He definitely can’t lie.

Or be trusted to tell his mother what he’s supposed to, apparently.

“I thought that- I thought that the scrapes and bruises were just from you and Katsuki and friends playing in the woods! Not villain attacks!” she wails, going back to full blown crying and abortive hovering over her son. At least she still has the presence of mind to not hug her injured son. Probably where the kid gets it from. But regardless.

“Kid, you realize me and the police only let you go home so quickly so often is because we thought your mother was taking care of you, right?” he asks, raising an eyebrow into what Hizashi has reported his students call the eyebrow-raise-of-I’m-So-Done-With-You-doom look.

The kid looks rightfully abashed, blushing a bit and raising his shoulders like he can hide between them like a turtle.

“Eh! You let him go home from villain attacks without coming to the hospital?” the mother responds, and Shouta can sense, under the confusion and distress, just a hint of protective anger that sets off his danger alarms. Midoriya-san apparently has a mother bear side under her sweaters and tears, good to know.

“Yes. I apologize. Me and one of the officers that run into your son very often thought that it was too disruptive to keep him past what we thought was absolutely necessary. We miscalculated what was necessary by assuming you knew what was going on without informing you ourselves. For that, I am deeply sorry,” he says gravely, bowing as much as he can in the chair.

And it’s true, as much as he also wants to avoid a mother’s wrath, he should have made sure that the poor woman really knew what was going on. And letting the child’s care lapse because of his mistake is truly unforgivable.
He looks back up after nearly ten seconds to see Midoriya-san looking at him appraisingly through her still wet eyes.

“I… I appreciate that you were trying to help my son live as normal a life as possible,” she says, shakily, and Shouta almost doesn’t catch his reflexive snort when she tries to call any life nowadays normal, “and I also appreciate that you have apologized so quickly after being presented with your mistake. And you’ve looked out for him quite well from what I can tell, if I couldn’t even tell the difference between Izuku rough-housing and getting involved in a villain attack,” and Shouta can hear a frustrated undercurrent to her voice there, he feels a pang of sympathy for her as a mother, she must be blaming herself quite a bit right now, “I’m trying not to be angry at you, or even the world. But right now I don’t know what we can do.”

Shouta watches the woman’s trembling lip and decides that his reassessment of her can be done later.

“Like I said, untrained, unprepared, no meat on his bones. I’d advise that he pick up at least one martial art, take a first aid class, perhaps parkour or gymnastics or something that gets him used to moving quickly through something besides a gym class track. There are… also a few companies that essentially teach people to play victim for hero tests, demonstrations, and research. That’s something you two might want to look into, but he really should do at least some self-defense and learn first aid,” he explains.

The two look at each other nervously.

“I understand that seems like a lot, both time-wise and money-wise, but there are actually some less thorough first aid trainings that the government pays for, and you don’t have to try to pick up four or five things at once. Maybe just one of the free programs and then once you finish that, pick up one martial art for at least a bit.”

“I think we’ll be able to figure it out, sir. It’s just… a lot to think about,” Midoriya-san explains, still seeming pretty nervous and a bit uncomfortable.

Shouta nods at this before digging through his pouches to find his edible paper and pencil. He quickly writes his number on a sheet before tearing it off and handing it to Midoriya-san.

“I have your number, but at this point, with how often I get involved, you and your son should have mine. Please program that number into your and your son’s phones under A-Sho and then eat the paper.”

Izuku nervously reaches for his mom’s hand as they stand in front of the gym.

There were many martial arts gyms, dojos, studios, etc., closer to their apartment, but after the first two rejected him due to concerns of “liability”, they opted to do a ten-minute walk and twenty-minute train ride across the city to the Shinriku Gym. The website said that “anyone, regardless of quirk circumstances, is welcome” which was different from most other websites that said they offered accommodations for any or most hard-to-handle quirks. Hopefully Shinriku’s unusual phrasing meant that they excepted unusual people like him.

It would be nice, since the gym was half karate, half parkour. Apparently two sisters ran the business.
together and focused on their own part, according to the website.

“Ready, sweetie?” his mom asks, squeezing his hand and looking down at him with a smile.

Izuku takes a deep breath and exhales before nodding back.

They enter into a brightly-lit, small reception area and his mom walks up to the desk, where a person with an owl head sits, and greets his mom.

While they talk, Izuku looks around the room.

It’s… average looking. The walls are light blue, the minimal amount of furniture is light grey plastic or a mid-toned wood. The lights are bright and the area looks clean. There’s one door on each wall, the front door, a door labelled “parkour”, one labelled “office”, and one labelled “karate”. A magazine rack by one of the chairs is most of the way full with bright covers. Izuku walks over to see they’re almost all martial arts or parkour magazines, with a few pamphlets for the gym itself.

Izuku picks one of the pamphlets and a parkour magazine out and settles down in the chair.

After a few minutes, he hears the door open and someone take a few steps in before they stutter to a stop.

“Ah-” Izuku looks up from his magazine after a moment and sees a blond kid with his hair combed back and a bag slung over his shoulder gapping at him. Izuku tilts his head in confusion.

“You… You’re-” the boy stops again, but this time his tail swishes out from behind him and Izuku knows that quirk, probably won’t ever be able to forget it.

“Ah! You’re! You’re from the department store with Hound Dog! Ma-” Izuku cuts off himself when he realizes that he doesn’t know the boy’s family name. And sure, they went through a villain attack together, hid together, back before Izuku knew how to really handle villain attacks -oh, like he knows how to handle them now. He still can’t do anything, but… well, that’s why he’s here now-but does that sort of experience mean you can use someone’s personal name? Izuku doesn’t think so, but he’s not sure, he doesn’t usually have to worry about it, Kacchan and his family are the only ones outside of his own family that he doesn’t call by their family name, after all.

“Ojiro! Ojiro Mashirao!” the other boy says after a moment, blushing as he hurries from the door to where Izuku is sitting, giving a small bow when he gets there.

“I’m, um, I’m Midoriya Izuku,” Izuku replies, returning the bow.

They both stand there for a moment just looking at each other. Izuku waits for the other boy to say something, hoping he’ll have some way of breaking the awkward silence engulfing them.

“So, you… uh, go here?” Izuku ventures after a few more moments of awkwardness. The other snaps out of his silent stupor at the question.

“Yes. I do karate here four times a week, and parkour once every other week,” Ojiro-kun replies, “You, uh, I haven’t seen you here before. Are you just joining?”

“Yeah, um, although my mom and I were thinking of signing me up for parkour two days a week and karate two days a week. How long have you been coming here?” Izuku asks. Ojiro-kun’s tail twitches then stiffens at the question.

“I’ve been here for almost two and a half years. I… I started a few weeks after the incident,” he
wincing when he mentions the department store, and Izuku feels a flash of pity for him.

“That’s really impressive,” he says, because that’s kind of similar to what he wants people to say instead of pitying him and he doesn’t know what else to say.

“Thank you, my parents were pretty insistent. It’s helped a lot and I really like it. Are you also here for… um,” Ojiro-kun tapers off uncertainly.

“Kind of? I’ve… actually been involved in some incidents after the department store, so I’m going to try this,” Izuku explains, not really sure how to explain Eraserhead and his recommendations.

“Oh,” Ojiro-kun responds blankly. They lapse into awkward silence again until his mom calls his attention back to her.

“Izuku, do you want a tour before I sign the paperwork?” his mom asks from the desk.

“Oh… Sure!” Izuku replies, putting the pamphlet and magazine back.

“Ojiro-kun, do you want to take a break from your extra warm-ups today and show Midoriya-kun around the dojo?” the receptionist asks.

“Yes,” Ojiro replies, then he grabs Izuku’s hand and starts leading him towards the door labelled “karate” with a bounce in his step. Izuku lets himself be led and feels something brush against his back. He glances down to see it’s Ojiro-kun’s tail.

It feels nice. Izuku looks back at Ojiro-kun and can’t help but hope that the boy might still be open to being his friend once he finds out that Izuku’s quirkless.

Chapter End Notes

Semester is over. I have an internship this summer, but I should be writing more. Hope y’all liked this (and Ojiro) and feel free to find me over at the-writing-mill.tumblr.com

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!