and even the cake is in tiers

by supercrunch

Summary

Izuku sighs. "I think Kacchan's picking fights because he wants Todoroki to notice him. Maybe the two of them just need a little push in the right direction."

"Off a cliff, maybe," says Ochako.

"Let’s be serious,” Iida says. “We all know Bakugou’s crush isn’t on Todoroki.”

(What's Deku doing? His best, probably.)
“Those two are acting kinda weird,” Midoriya says, a spoonful of rapidly-cooling curry rice halfway to his lips.

Tenya looks over his shoulder. Bakugou and Todoroki appear to be engaged in a wrestling match, right there in the middle of the cafeteria. Or an attempted homicide, maybe. Bakugou has his hands wrapped around Todoroki’s throat, grip admirably tight even though he’s being repeatedly kicked in the ribs. Neither of them seem to have made it to the actual food.

“I’m not quite sure that qualifies as weird,” he says slowly. “Weird objectively, yes, but not weird specifically for them.”

“I wonder what they’re fighting about now,” Uraraka adds from where she’s sitting on Midoriya’s right. Slyly, she steals the banana pudding cup off of Midoriya’s tray, replacing it with half her portion of tonkatsu. Midoriya doesn’t notice. “Must be something good. It’s been a while since they’ve gotten into an actual fist fight, it’s kind of refreshing.”

Tenya begs to differ. Seeing two top students from a prestigious school making a spectacle of themselves is both distasteful and alarming, and the only reason he’s not going over there to break the fight up is because this is the third time it’s happened this month. And also because he doesn’t want Bakugou to bite him again. “It’s unsightly.”

“I think it’s fun to watch. Like having lunch and a show!”

“Don’t you think it’s strange?” Midoriya turns to Tenya, spoon still hovering in front of his face but, unfortunately, forgotten. Uraraka takes a cherry tomato off his plate while he isn’t looking. “Well, maybe not for Kacchan, but since when do you see Todoroki getting this riled up about anything?”

“Yesterday,” says Tenya. “You couldn’t finish your soda, and Todoroki and Bakugou argued over who got to have it. Bakugou would have flipped a table if Aizawa hadn’t come into homeroom and made you throw it away.”

“I think they’re fighting about chairs,” Uraraka says, squinting at the disaster from afar. The tables around the two have long since vacated, bystanders preferring to watch the impromptu match from a distance. Bakugou’s got Todoroki in a headlock, now, and Todoroki appears to be trying to suplex him. “Like, my lip-reading’s not the best, but that’s what it looks like.”

“See?” Midoriya gestures helplessly with his curry rice. “Why would anybody fight over chairs? It’s not like there’s not enough seating space. The cafeteria’s huge, this doesn’t make any sense.”

Tenya purses his lips. “I can’t say either of them made any sense to begin with, but I suppose it is odd for Todoroki to be acting so…Bakugou-esque.”

Uraraka’s eyes sparkle as she leans forward to watch. Her hair almost falls into her leftover curry, and Tenya absently reaches across the table to brush it away. “They’re laying claim to their territory!”
Establishing dominance! Each trying their best to be the alpha male!”

Tenya considers informing her that they’re not wild animals, but decides that she may not be wrong. “We don’t know that they’re fighting about chairs. They could be fighting about anything.”

“That’s the thing, they fight about everything,” Midoriya says. His spoon finally makes it to its destination, even though it’s no doubt cold by now. Eyebrows furrowed like he’s deep in contemplation, he chews his food and hums. “I’ve never seen Todoroki act like that. And as angry as Kacchan is all the time, I don’t think I’ve ever seen him assault anyone. Except, y’know, me. But that’s in the past, he’s nice to me now. Kinda. I’d have thought he’s calmed down a little, right?”

“He clearly hasn’t,” Tenya says, watching Uraraka scrape the bottom of her dishonestly-gained pudding. “If anything, he’s even more of a menace than he was at the start of the year. His aggression hasn’t faded, it’s just been redirected.”

“But only towards Todoroki,” Midoriya says. He’s muttering it under his breath, almost, so much so that Tenya has to lean close to hear him. “And Todoroki’s retaliating. They obviously bring something out in each other.”

“Murder?”

“Spirit. A spark.”

“An explosion, maybe,” says Tenya unhappily. “Midoriya, you’ve got that look you always have whenever you’re about to do something ill-advised. Should I be worried?”

Midoriya flaps a hand at him as though there weren’t legitimate reason for Tenya to be concerned. “When do I ever do anything ill-advised?”

“What are you gonna do?” Uraraka chimes in right before Tenya can bring out a bulleted list of all the ridiculous things Midoriya has ever done. Goadling Todoroki into using his fire powers and then getting both arms broken is around the top, along with association with Bakugou in general. “This is a little different from the usual villain problem. Punching stuff won’t help, probably.”

Tapping his spoon against his mouth, Midoriya shrugs and goes back to his lunch. “There’s no reason to punch them, they’re already punching each other. I just think they’re acting out of character,” he says, and then blinks. “Where’d my pudding go?”

“You’ll figure something out,” Uraraka says suddenly, putting her arm around Midoriya’s shoulders and making him turn slightly pink. “Unravel the mystery, Izuku, you can do it!”

“There’s no mystery to unravel,” Tenya says, feeling like a mother scolding her troublesome and perpetually sticky young children. “Bakugou and Todoroki are only behaving how they always behave. Don’t go meddling, Midoriya, you know how you get when you fixate on something.”

Midoriya and Uraraka wrinkle their noses at him in unison. It’s unbearably cute, but Tenya manages not to shield his eyes in an obvious fashion. “I said I wasn’t gonna do anything crazy,” says Midoriya irritably. Tries to, anyway; on him it just sounds petulant. “Relax, I’m not completely dumb.”

“Anything involving Bakugou is sure to cause trouble,” Tenya replies. Somewhere in the background, Todoroki stabs Bakugou with a plastic fork. “Bakugou, Todoroki and you together sound like disaster.”

“I think that’s a bit of an exaggeration,” Uraraka says, forgetting for the moment that Tenya generally
Izuku, predictably, doesn’t listen.

Not obviously, of course. He’s only watching. And thinking, Iida can’t nag at him for thinking, seeing as that’s literally what he keeps saying everyone needs to do more often.

Anyway. Present Mic is saying something about past participles that Izuku can’t really find it in himself to pay attention to, not when Kacchan is sitting right in front of him, the little hair whorl at the back of his head hypnotizing in its spiraly-ness. Izuku can see Kacchan’s laser-focused expression in the reflection of the window. He’s always been good at English. Had even offered to tutor Izuku once, although he’d managed to make it sound more like an insult than an act of kindness.

Izuku had declined, of course, because he has some survival instinct, no matter what Iida says. He doesn’t really trust Kacchan around his notebooks anymore, anyway, even if he’d never dare say that out loud.

But the offer was weird. Kacchan’s behaviour is weird. He keeps doing things. For Izuku, specifically, even though he makes sure to complain about it endlessly. He’d bought him a lollipop yesterday. And keeps holding doors open, and he insists on carrying Izuku’s bag on the way to school, which makes no sense considering Izuku has, you know. A strengthening quirk.

Kacchan highlights something in his textbook and taps his pen against his desk. He has a lot of trouble sitting still, this guy. Has ever since they were little kids, back when Kacchan would come barreling into Izuku’s house every afternoon demanding they go on some crazy toddler adventure. He’d tried to do things for Izuku back then too, little things that Izuku had trouble doing himself. Tying his shoelaces. Opening juice boxes. Remembering the way home from the playground.

And then that had turned into unpleasantness, until even that just…stopped.

The thing is, though, Izuku can remember when Kacchan stopped talking to him. Being rescued from that sludge monster by a loser like Izuku had bruised his pride and he’d cut himself off, which sort of made sense, in a weird Kacchan way.

But the favours. The favours are inexplicable, and more than a little suspicious. He might be trying to form a truce, or he might be trying lull Izuku into a false sense of security so he can break into his house and steal his kidneys.

It’s, well. Sort of nice. The truce, not the kidney-stealing. By no means are they friends, but it’s good to know that they can hold a civil conversation without beating the shit out of each other. Or Kacchan beating the shit out of Izuku, anyway.

Speaking of which. Kacchan’s caught Izuku’s eye in the reflection of the window, and he’s staring
right back.

Izuku flinches and whips his gaze back to the blackboard. Kacchan’s still looking at him and it actually feels like there are pinpricks poking into the side of his skull, because Kacchan is obviously the one person in the universe capable of glaring literal daggers instead of metaphorical ones. He doesn’t seem too angry, though. Mostly he just looks confused, unsure whether or not to maintain eye contact when Izuku surreptitiously glances back the window’s direction.

Smooth, Izuku. Taking a deep breath, Izuku tries his level best to melt off his chair and into the cracks between the tiles, except Kacchan’s sort of right in front of him and he’s still watching him, god help him. This is it. This is the end of their fledgling friendship, and also maybe the end of Izuku’s life. Kacchan’s going to punch him after class. Izuku should really text his mother now to tell her he loves her.

He risks another glance. Kacchan’s looking over his shoulder but not at Izuku, thank the Buddha. Instead he’s…smiling? Smirking, more like, at some corner of the classroom. He looks really smug, although that might just be Kacchan’s face and wow Izuku should really stop staring before Kacchan catches him again, just, just turn around, Izuku, for god’s sake.

Who’s Kacchan looking at, anyway? Sneakily (he hopes), Izuku follows his gaze to the very back of the classroom.

Oh. Todoroki. Right.

There’s the other part of the puzzle. Kacchan’s got a real problem with Todoroki lately, but nobody knows why. It’s not like they’ve had a big fight, or anything. They just bicker a lot and occasionally scuffle. He’d kind of assumed it would be a natural consequence on Kacchan’s part, after what happened at the tournament, but Todoroki doesn’t seem like the type to hold a grudge.

Not that Izuku would really know. Todoroki mainly keeps to himself, even if he can be a pretty good conversationalist. Izuku doesn’t have a lifetime of experience with Todoroki, so it’s understandably a little harder to figure out what makes him tick. Daddy issues, probably. An odd sense of humour, and an unhealthy appreciation for cola. Who answers cola when someone asks about his favourite food anyway? Who, for that matter, gets into an argument over who gets to finish someone else’s leftover Pepsi?

Todoroki, that’s who. And Kacchan, but Kacchan could get into an argument about anything.

Maybe they get along in that respect, Izuku thinks, resting his chin in his palm and letting his thoughts wander. They’re both competitive and absurdly talented, and they’ve already proven to be a good match in terms of skill. Hell, they could even be friends if they’d just stop acting like children.

The sunlight streaming through the classroom window makes Kacchan’s blond hair glow angelically, even though he’s hunched over his desk like a gargoyle. He keeps sneaking glances at Todoroki, clearly willing him to look around. Slowly, he tears a bit of paper out of his notebook and crumples it into a ball, tossing it in Todoroki’s direction when Present Mic’s back is turned. It sails across the class like a mini grenade and bounces off the side of Todoroki’s head. Todoroki looks up, eyes narrowed like a testy housecat, and Kacchan flips him the bird.

Izuku sighs. They fight so often it wouldn’t even surprise him if they enjoyed it. Maybe this is their way of bonding. Like pigtail-pulling, only bloodier.

Almost like schoolyard kids with a crush.
“Wait.”

“Oh,” says Izuku. “Oh.”

“What the fuck are you doing?” says Kacchan, which, yeah, okay, that’s fair because Izuku kind of is standing up in the middle of class for no good reason while Present Mic is trying to teach.

“Oh,” says Izuku, because that’s better than saying I know you have a crush on Todoroki.

Present Mic clears his throat. Izuku supposes it’s meant to be a polite way of attracting attention, but given that this is Present Mic, it sounds like someone is hacking a spitwad directly into his ear. “Did you have something to share with the class, Midoriya?”

Izuku thinks about his life choices. “I’m…very passionate about this topic.”

“Thank you,” says Present Mic dryly. He waves a piece of chalk in Izuku’s direction, and Izuku takes this as permission to sit down. Or to maybe take a flying leap out the window, except that would mean sidling past Kacchan and he’d kind of rather not do that right now. “I’ll remember that when I’m assigning you homework for today. Now open your textbooks to chapter thirty-six, we’re going to be doing the exercises on the second-to-last page.”

Forget chapter thirty-six. Izuku’s fine with melting into the tiles and staring at the back of Kacchan’s head after all, even if it means a less than stellar grade. Kacchan’s staring at his reflection in the window. Todoroki’s staring at him too, probably, because Izuku can feel the hairs rise on the back of his neck. Damn it, why are they so in sync?

He knows why. He knows because these two are a sad combination of emotionally constipated and really obvious, and it’s very likely that he’s going to be the only one who knows for a long time because it’s not like either of these boys are in a position to sit down and talk about their feelings like adults.

Unless they’re already dating. Which would be kind of bizarre.

Probably not. Izuku may not know a lot about romance, but he’s never seen a pair of lovers look at each other like that. Kacchan seems like he kind of wants to pin Todoroki down and do terrible things to him, except not in the fun way. The distinctly not-fun way. The way that results in broken bones and too many trips to the hospital.

Except it could be in the fun way, maybe, if they’d get over themselves and admit it.

The sooner the better, too. The mental image is starting to make Izuku a little uncomfortable.

Hesitantly, he reaches into his backpack and tugs out a yellow notebook. It’s new, one of those 100-yen ones that he’d never got around to using, and he’s been wondering what to do with it for a while.

Well. This is kind of like hero observation, right?
“I’ve figured it out,” says Midoriya, brandishing a bright yellow notebook as he comes running over to the front of the class.

“Oh no,” says Iida.

Ochako shushes him. Midorya’s expression is focused and bright, words tumbling over themselves in an effort to be heard instead of trying to disappear back down his throat. He doesn’t stutter, and Ochako puts her hands in her lap and gives him the most encouraging smile she has in her arsenal. “What did you figure out?”

“Why they’re fighting so often – Kacchan and Todoroki, I mean, it’s because they have, well, that’s – ah.” He cuts himself off suddenly, peeking over his shoulder to check for eavesdroppers. Nobody appears to listening in, but he drops his voice to a whisper anyway, flipping open his notebook for Ochako and Iida to look at. “See? There’s something going on between them.”

Iida squints, adjusting his glasses like that’s going to make Midoriya’s chicken scrawl any more discernible. “Stunted emotional development,” he reads aloud, and then frowns. “I think anyone could have told you that.”

“No, no,” Midoriya gestures vaguely and flips a few more pages. His freckles are more noticeable than they were at the start of the year, because it’s getting so hot out recently. “I meant it might explain their lack of communication, since – okay, look, you know that dumb thing kids do sometimes when they like someone? Picking fights and stuff?”

Ochako taps a finger against her chin. “Like bullying for attention, you mean?”

“Exactly! And Kacchan’s, well, no offense, he is kind of a bully. I don’t think he knows how to, uh,” Midoriya wrings his free hand, clearly unwilling to speak bluntly even about the boy who’s been tormenting him for the past ten years. Bakugou doesn’t deserve Midoriya in his life, honestly. “Kacchan doesn’t really understand how to communicate with people in a healthy way,” he finally settles on. “Like, I’m pretty sure he’s actually good friends with Kirishima, but he keeps making fun of him, you know?”

“So you think Bakugou wants to befriend Todoroki, but doesn’t know how?” Iida says.

“I actually may be sort of think it’s a crush.”

Most of the other students have filed out of the classroom by now. Aizawa’s long-gone, seeing as he never spends more time around his students than he absolutely has to. Bakugou and Todoroki had both milled around for a bit, glancing once or twice in the trio’s direction, but even they had wandered off after a few minutes. The only ones left are Shouji and Kouda, and they’re already halfway out the door.

Ochako is glad for this, because the noise Iida makes is probably loud enough to qualify him as the new Present Mic.

“What do you mean a crush—” he manages right before Ochako can slap a hand over his mouth. He continues trying to speak, even though it’s muffled, and the sensation against her palm makes her grimace. “Mmph! Hmmmph!”
Poor Midoriya’s curled in on himself, notebook held protectively in front of his face and eyes peeking out over the top. Ochako turns her pained expression into a smile. “Oh? What makes you say that?”

Midoriya clears his throat. “It’s just a hunch,” he says quietly, relaxing slightly when Iida stops his inarticulate protests. Ochako releases him, and Midoriya continues. “Don’t you think Kacchan’s been acting weird lately? I mean, he’s being nice to me. Or trying to, he still yells at me sometimes, but he hasn’t told me to kill myself in, like, a month. And right before that happened, he started fighting with Todoroki. Almost right after the sports festival, in fact, when they both sparred.”

“And how does that connect to Bakugou having a,” Ochako stops. She can’t bring herself to say it. “To having feelings?”

“I think,” Midoriya says, voice gaining a little confidence, “that Kacchan’s never really felt challenged before. So when he fought Todoroki, he might, have, uhm, well, gotten attached. I don’t think he’s ever had a boyfriend or girlfriend, so I’m guessing the aggression is kind of his way of getting Todoroki to notice him.”

Iida looks a little lost. “And what does that have to do with you?”

“Oh, that’s probably just because I’m friends with Todoroki,” Midoriya says flippantly. “I mean, I don’t think Todoroki’s the type of guy to date his friend’s bully, you know? So Kacchan kind of has to be nicer to me if he wants Todoroki to like him.”

“I—Midoriya,” Iida says patiently, like he’s talking to a well-meaning puppy who doesn’t understand that humans don’t like dog treats in their cereal. “Don’t you think you’re reaching? Just a little bit? Looking for meaning in places where it doesn’t exist?”

“I think what Iida’s trying to say,” Ochako interrupts, “is that maybe you’re reading too much into it. How do you know for sure that’s how Bakugou feels? Given that he’s mean to everyone, I’m saying.”

Midoriya considers this. “I think,” he says slowly, “the key is that he really does pay a lot of attention to Todoroki. I mean, back in middle school, Kacchan used to keep to himself most of the time. When he wasn’t picking on me, anyway. Now he’s got more friends, granted, but don’t you think he’s been fixated on Todoroki lately? And being more aggressive with him than he is with anyone else?”

“Doesn’t that just mean he hates him?” Iida asks.

“Yeah, I thought so too, but they’re together, like, every time I look at them. I mean it. Like, Todoroki’ll be coming over to me to chat, right, and Kacchan just barges in and picks a fight. Or, Todoroki’ll say he wants to have lunch together, and then Kacchan’ll show up out of nowhere and drag him away. It’s almost like he thinks he has to protect Todoroki from me, or something.”

“I think you’ve got it the wrong way around,” Iida starts to say.

Ochako slaps a hand over his mouth for the second time that day. “I think Iida’s trying to say,” she says, also for the second time that day, “is that that’s a really stunning observation, Midoriya! I wouldn’t have expected anything less!”

Iida squints at her over the hand covering half his face. That’s not what I’m trying to say at all, says his expression.

Oh, I know, Ochako smiles back beatifically. “So what are you planning to do?”
Midoriya takes another look at his yellow notebook, mouth curved up into a pleased little smile as he peruses his hasty notes. “I think that Kacchan could use some help. And I know you guys said not to meddle too much, but I promise I won’t get super involved. Maybe the two of them just need a little push in the right direction.”

“Off a cliff, maybe,” says Ochako.

Iida manages to pull his face away from Ochako’s hand, and he speaks before she can shush him again. “Why? Even if Bakugou likes Todoroki that way, why do you suddenly want to play matchmaker?”

“Everyone deserves to be happy, even Kacchan,” Midoriya says absently. “Besides, it might make him a little nicer to be around. Todoroki’s been a positive influence on him, at least where I’m concerned.”

“Todoroki’s just as guilty as Bakugou!” Iida sputters. “He’s the one who starts half the fights!”

Ochako pats his arm. “Well, look at it this way. If Deku-kun’s right, then getting them together should settle them down quite a bit.”

“Let’s do it,” Iida says immediately.

“That’s the spirit.” Humming thoughtfully, Midoriya jots something down in his notebook and closes it with a decisive snap. Stuffing it into his backpack, he shoulders it and shimmies his way between their desks to get to the door. “Alright. I’m going to start planning this as soon as I get my homework out of the way. Man, this is going to go great!”

Ochako watches him go fondly. *So young, so pure*. “I’m glad he’s having fun.”

Iida stares at her. “Why’d you do that?”

“Encourage him! I’m all for getting the two troublemakers to settle down, but let’s be serious,” Iida says, pushing his glasses back up the bridge of his nose. “We all know Bakugou’s crush isn’t on Todoroki.”

“Well, Midoriya’s probably too humble for his own good,” Ochako agrees. “But I think it’s better like this.”

“And why is that?”

Because it makes him happy,” Ochako says, gathering her things and packing them haphazardly into her new orange backpack. Iida’s stuff is already in his satchel, slung over his shoulder and ready to go. She leaves the classroom, and he follows. “I mean, you know how much he likes helping people.”

“I suppose.” Iida frowns, footsteps echoing a little as they walk down the empty corridor together. “I just don’t want this whole situation to bring him unnecessary grief. Midoriya attracts trouble, you know that.”
“That’s why he has us!” Ochako chirrups. “If either of those guys gives him any trouble, I’ll float them up to the ceiling and leave them there for an hour, that’ll teach ’em.”

Iida gives her a crooked smile despite himself. The doors to the main entrance of the school slide open noiselessly for them, and Ochako squints in the afternoon sunlight with a smile of her own. “Your methods seem a little Draconian, Uraraka.”

“I’m sure I don’t know what you mean.” Skipping over a crack in the pavement, Ochako waves goodbye as she and Iida part ways; Iida lives fairly close to the city centre, but Ochako’s own place is a little closer to the edge of town. “Don’t you dare ruin his plans, Iida, I’m not afraid to float you to the ceiling too.”

“I don’t doubt you,” Iida calls to her retreating back. “But I still think this is more trouble than it’s worth!”

Ochako begs to differ. Whistling tunelessly as she goes, she adjusts the straps of her backpack and makes her way to the train station. Her travel card jingles against her keychain as she tugs it out of her blazer pocket, and a woman’s soothing voice sounds over the intercom as she waits for the next train home.

That’s not all of it, anyway. Ochako doesn’t care how nice Bakugou’s trying to be; there’s no way in hell he’s getting his hands on poor Midoriya. And, well. She wouldn’t really wish Bakugou on anyone, but she supposes Todoroki might as well have him.

She grins and gets on the train.

Chapter End Notes

-bursts into the fandom with a moldy slice of pizza and a computer key stuck to my finger- WHAT YEAR IS IT

i'm gonna be honest i haven't actually read bnha beyond the hero killer part so i'm REALLY behind and don't know who any of the new characters are so if you say something and i don't know what you're talking about then i'm sorry in advance

i wrote this a while ago and never posted it! but, let's be honest, dekubowl is the only true ship and i may not be properly in this fandom but i will not die without making sure there is at least SOME dekubowl content on this hellsite

also want everyone to know i have a dog now. she's brown and her name is mocha and she's ruined my cactuses and several slippers and also tried to take a burger out of my hand and she gets so excited to go on walks that she won't let me put my shoes on. i love her to pieces, she's the worst.

anyway thanks aly for being overall great and supportive, i dedicate iida in this fic to you. i hope he's worthy.
“Would you like to have lunch with me today?” Izuku asks as non-threateningly as he can.

Kacchan stares at him. Really stares, which makes sweat bead at the back of Izuku’s neck, and then turns to look over his shoulder as if Izuku would be this nervous about asking to hang out with someone else. Nobody’s behind him. Class hasn’t started yet, so everyone’s still milling around and chatting in their cliques. “What?”


Kacchan continues staring. He doesn’t immediately strangle him, though, which Izuku takes as a plus. “Uh. Yeah, whatever.”

“Great!” says Izuku with probably more cheer than necessary because at this point he’s just glad to be alive. “I have to see, uhm, Present Mic for a little bit first, though. About yesterday’s homework. Maybe you can wait for me at the cafeteria?”

Kacchan snorts, which should be inelegant but somehow still sounds kind of intimidating. “Grammar too hard for you? Give it here, I’ll explain it so your dumb weenie brain can understand.”

“No need for that!” Izuku says, maybe a little shrill. Sero gives him the side eye and Izuku tries not to blush. “I mean, uh. I need him to grade last week’s essay, too. I ended up redoing it since I wasn’t happy with the first one.”

“You’re a nerd,” says Kacchan. He doesn’t say it too venomously, though, which must mean he’s in a good mood. “I may as well come with you so I don’t have to wait for your ass.”

“No, you don’t have to.”

“Why?”

“Well I-- I was hoping you could go ahead and save us a seat.” Nice save, Izuku! “Else we won’t get to sit at the big table by the window that you like. You know that one always fills up first.”

Kacchan’s eyebrows go up. “How did you kn—” he starts, and then stops and clears his throat. “God, fine, whatever. You have fifteen minutes, don’t be late.”

“Sure thing!” Izuku beams. Kacchan rolls his eyes and turns around so he’s facing the front of the class. It’s just about time for Aizawa to come in for homeroom, so Iida’s herding everyone back to their seats, simultaneously delivering his Thursday lecture about the importance of properly sharpened pencils. Kacchan doesn’t try to engage him again so Izuku picks up a (perfectly sharpened) pencil and opens his bag, looking for his trusty yellow dollar-store notebook so he can flip to its most recent page.
Ask Todoroki: check.

Ask Kacchan: check (I never want to do that again).

Aizawa wanders in about five minutes before the bell rings with a pillow under each arm. “I should convert this desk into a bed one day,” he says in lieu of a greeting. “But I don't feel like going to Ikea. Open your textbooks to whatever page we were on last. Iida?”

“Which textbook, sir?”

“Whichever. Just shut up and read something, all of you, so I can take a nap.”

Izuku decides to do his English revision, seeing as he did sort of zone out of yesterday’s lesson, and actually ends up getting a decent amount of studying done before the next class. He also manages to focus all the way until lunch, even though his secret notebook greets him with banana-yellow cheer every time he opens his bag.

He’s just finishing up some Biology notes when the school bell rings, and Kacchan, on the dot, turns around to tell him to hurry his dumb ass up and not keep him waiting for too long.

“I'll try my best,” Izuku says sincerely, and then makes a big show of taking his English homework out of its folder. Kacchan nods and saunteres off, both hands in his pockets, and someone taps Izuku on the shoulder. He turns.

“Lunch?” says Todoroki hopefully.

Izuku relaxes immediately. “Yes, we’re still on as soon as I’m done at the staff room. You know where to wait, right?”

“Big table near the window,” Todoroki says obediently. Izuku smiles. “Do you want me to get your food for you?”

“No, that’s alright. Just save me a seat, I’ll join you later.”

Todoroki nods. Izuku gently prompts him to go, so he wanders out the door by himself, looking back once as if to make sure that Izuku hasn’t suddenly disappeared. Izuku waves, and Todoroki waves back before retreating into the corridor and hopefully straight to the cafeteria where he’ll eventually complete phase two of Izuku’s incredible master plan.

Izuku stuffs his homework back into his bag and quietly follows.

Stealth, unfortunately, isn’t really his strong suit, especially after he bumps into Hitoshi who is, for some reason, hanging out beside a locker with a juice box in hand. “Hey.”

Izuku shushes him. “We’re being discreet.”

“How come?”

“It’s a long story. But I’m trying to make some friends get along.”

“Okay. Are you coming to lunch?”

“Probably not,” Izuku says, plastered to the wall. “But in case someone asks, I’m not breaking any rules. Go on without me, I have a mission to see through.”

The mission does not involve Present Mic in any way. It does, however, involve blending in with the
lunch rush (the students, not the guy) and tailing Kacchan and Todoroki into the cafeteria undetected. He ends up hiding behind a pillar, trying not to feel too self-conscious, too far away to hear what’s going on at the designated table but hopefully close enough to watch the romance unfold.

Kacchan’s already there, unsurprisingly, two portions of fried rice on his tray and expression sour enough to scare away anyone who dares sit next to him. He doesn’t touch his food. The sun glints off the big glass window and he opens it almost absent-mindedly, summer breeze ruffling his hair and making it look softer than it probably is.

_Todoroki arriving on the scene_, Izuku jots down on his palm so he can put it in his notebook later. Torodoki is also carrying two plates, and he stops dead when his planned seat turns out to be occupied.

_This is it_, Deku thinks, and holds his breath.

Todoroki and Kacchan make eye contact. Slowly, and very deliberately, Todoroki sets his tray down.

In hindsight, maybe Izuku should have expected the bloodshed.

Uraraka was right, though. It _is_ pretty entertaining. And the cafeteria table doesn’t so much as crack when Kacchan suplexes Todoroki right onto it, although it is maybe a waste of the four portions of fried rice that end up on the ceiling. The trays turn out to be remarkably sturdy too. Kacchan’s skull is maybe a bit less so, but then again not everyone remains quite so spirited in the face of repeated blunt force trauma.

Izuku puts his face in his hands. Alright, okay. _Maybe_ he didn’t think this through.

"Wow," says Hitoshi, chewing on the straw of his juicebox. Izuku didn’t even hear him follow. "They’re really going at it. D’you think they’ll die this time?"

"If they kill each other, Iida will kill _me_,” Izuku says.

"That would be a shame."

"Debatable." Taking a deep breath, Izuku sidles out from behind the safety of his pillar, squeezing his way through the crowd of onlookers and stepping into the carnage against his better judgement. “Guys? Uh, guys? Do you want to, uh, maybe consider, like, _not_ crippling each other? Just a thought?"

They pause. Kacchan is trying to give Todoroki a wedgie and Todoroki is just about to elbow Kacchan in the groin. “Deku, where the fuck have you been?”

“I _told_ you I would be late,” Izuku says weakly. “I was hoping you wouldn’t kill each other in the meantime.”
“I thought you were having lunch with _me._” Todoroki says. Izuku tries not to look at the raw betrayal on his face.

“Yeah, what gives, Deku?” Kacchan snarls. “You said lunch. You didn’t say you were inviting the discount Harvey Dent.”

“Izuku _likes_ spending time with me, you belligerent dandelion.”

“Try saying that again with my foot in your mouth—,”

“Okay, this isn’t working,” says Izuku, wringing his hands. “Come on, don’t fight. Kacchan, don’t put your foot in Todoroki’s mouth. He’s my friend, I’d like him alive.”

Kacchan sneers. “Oh sure, I forgot he was _extra special_ to you. I’ll be real nice to him, okay? I’ll only maim him a little bit.”

Jesus. Kacchan was _fine_ in class, but the spite in his voice makes the crowd of onlookers take a collective step back. The hand not attempting to injure Todoroki is balled into a tight fist which Izuku’s almost afraid might explode; he’s genuinely angry the way he hasn’t been since they were in middle school and Izuku first dared to call himself a potential hero.

Izuku blinks. And then revelation hits him like All Might’s fist to the face.

_Oh my god, he’s jealous._

“Y-yes!” Izuku says, grasping at the single thread and pulling. “Yes, you’re right, Todoroki is my friend. Isn’t that right, Todoroki?”

Todoroki looks a little lost. “Izuku?”

Kacchan’s face has slackened. Picking up steam, Izuku gestures with his hands, face breaking out in a sincere, if slightly panicked, smile. “Everyone knows you’re one of my best buddies, yeah?” he continues, not so much pushing buttons as he is slamming his hands on the controls and hoping something lights up. "You’re a great guy, Todoroki. Like a brother to me.”

Todoroki’s jaw drops. Izuku mentally apologises for being so heavy-handed.

"Uhm,” he says.

Kacchan, on the other hand, looks positively _delighted._ “A brother, huh.”

“That’s right!” Izuku chirps as Todoroki sits down on a slightly singed chair. “Just like Iida and Uraraka, except she’s a girl.”

Kacchan turns his predatory smile on Todoroki. “Lucky you. Must be nice being Deku’s _friend._”

“At least he _likes_ me,” Todoroki snaps weakly. “He barely tolerates you.”

“Kacchan’s also my friend,” says Izuku honestly. “Even if we’re not as close as we used to be. Things weren’t so great for a while, I guess, cause he used to be kind of a dick, but we did grow up together so he’s basically family.”

Kacchan’s eyes narrow into slits. Deku regrets having been quite so blunt.

“Please don’t,” says Izuku.

They ignore him, of course, because Kacchan’s more interested in tackling Todoroki around the middle and sending them both right out the open window. Somebody cheers. Izuku has a brief moment of panic before he remembers that the cafeteria’s only on the first floor.

He pokes his head out to check. Kacchan and Todoroki are rolling around in a flowerbed, pulling each other’s hair like a couple of children. Todoroki stuffs a handful of leaves in Kacchan’s mouth, and Kacchan bites his fingers.

Izuku leaves them there. “There goes Plan A,” he mumbles, tugging a pen out of his pocket so he can jot notes on his palm. “But they have a chronic need to one-up each other just like peacocks trying to show off.”

*Mission semi-successful,* he decides, and goes back to the classroom to try and clean fried rice off his shoes.

Tenya typically spends the last fifteen minutes of lunch break organizing his notes, while Uraraka and Midoriya typically spend their fifteen minutes distracting him.

Midoriya’s dragged someone’s chair over so he can lie down on Tenya’s desk and whine, cheek pressed to his Maths notebook and hair splayed all over the place. Tenya sort of wants his book back, but Midoriya does look very comfortable and Tenya decides not to ask him to move.

“I’m sure you’ll figure things out soon,” says Uraraka sympathetically. She’s braiding little sections of Midoriya’s hair, but he either doesn’t mind or hasn’t noticed.

Midoriya pouts. He probably thinks he’s scowling. “I thought for sure my plan would work. They didn’t even try to get along. I mean, I’m not expecting them to be best friends right away, but I thought they might at least pretend to be civilized for an hour.”

“I don’t know why you’re surprised,” Tenya says, not unkindly. “All they ever do is fight over yo —”

Uraraka throws some eraser dust at him. “Don’t give up, Deku-kun. You just have to change your angle.”

“Maybe they need a nice, calm environment,” Tenya suggests. “Have either of them ever considered knitting?”

Midoriya makes a face and sits up. “I bet Kacchan would be weirdly good at it and knit himself some
“knuckledusters or something.”

“That’s probably impossible, but I can’t say I’m not intrigued.”

“There has to be some way to just make them stop fighting,” Uraraka says, resting her chin on the back of her hand. “Like, they don’t fight in class. Or where the teachers can see them, so they won’t get in trouble. Maybe you should make them go on a date in front of Mr Aizawa so they have to behave themselves.”

Tenya experiences a mild spike in his heartrate. “Do not involve Mr Aizawa.”

“I won’t!” Midoriya protests as though he wasn’t just seriously considering it. “None of the teachers will be interested, anyway, since those two are kind of hard to deal with. Lunch Rush wouldn’t give me any fried rice today. He said it was because I came too late, but I think he’s holding me responsible for Kacchan and Todoroki, which doesn’t make any sense.”

“It kind of does,” Tenya says. Uraraka throws more eraser dust at him.

"The teachers will get involved eventually, I bet," Uraraka snorts while Tenya frowns and tries to clean little grey eraser bits off his sleeve. "One day Mr Aizawa's going to get tired of them fighting all the time and throw them in detention. Or juvie. Then they'll have to get along, unless Bakugou sneaks his knitting needles in."

"Did we decide that he knits now?" Tenya asks.

"They'll turn into a modern-day Bonnie and Clyde," Uraraka continues, clearly determined to see this narrative to the end. "Former hero trainees, forced into a whirlwind romance steeped in violence and intrigue."

Mirodiya hums contemplatively. "That does sound exciting."

"And extreme," Tenya adds. "I'm going to have to point out that neither of them is going to appreciate you throwing them in jail just so they can't punch each other."

"Nobody's going to go to jail, Iida. Except me, once I get out of school and eat a whole bakery."

"Hungry?" Uraraka pats his arm.

"Yes. I can't believe I have to starve until I get home," Midoriya huffs, and then yelps when a dollar-store packet of dorayaki hits him in the back of the head.

Bakugou, from the other end of the class, lowers his arm and scowls. There’s a twig sticking out of his hair. “Stop skipping meals, dumbass,” he says, and Tenya wonders privately if Bakugou has a secondary hearing quirk.

“Thanks?” Midoriya calls back. The dorayaki is red bean flavoured, puffy plastic packaging going flat when Midoriya tears open one end. It’s small and a little floppy, and Midoriya staring at it for a long second before putting the little bag down. "Hmm."

“Hurry up and eat,” Bakugou snaps, although the rest of the class pays his outburst no attention. “Four-eyes won’t let you have it once the bell rings.”

Midoriya turns to him and smiles. It’s a very wide smile, close-lipped and eyes bright with adventure, and Tenya is suddenly and inexplicably reminded of those deep-sea fish that are mostly just a bright light and some teeth. “Oh, maybe later,” he says. "I prefer to eat these when they're warm.”
They're innocent words. Innocent, and yet Iida's spine tingles as a chair scrapes across the floor, Todoroki materializing on Uraraka’s left with one hand held out and green stains on the back of his blazer. “I can do it.”

Bakugou’s leapt over a table. Sero screams, and the blond menace comes skidding to a halt so he can shoulder Todoroki out of the way. “No. Give it here.”

“Me,” Todoroki says, waving his hand in Midoriya’s face. It’s his left hand, Tenya realises. The one with the fire quirk.

“Oh no,” says Uraraka.

Tenya slowly pushes his glasses back up his nose. “You're not suggesting what I think you're suggesting, are you? You aren't supposed to use your quirks in school. Not without explicit permission from a teacher.”

Midoriya tilts his head even though Tenya knows this is not news to him. “Oh! You’re right, Iida. Never mind, guys, I’ll go see if Lunch Rush will let me borrow a microwave real quick.”

“Fuck microwaves,” says Bakugou. “You won’t get back in time. I said give it here.”

“It’s okay, Kacchan,” Midoriya says placatingly. “I don’t want you to get all messy. Anyway, I’m pretty sure food won’t taste any good unless you heat it up evenly. You know, kind of like Todoroki does?”

The class goes silent. Uraraka puts both hands over her mouth. “Oh no.”

Todoroki’s hand closes over the room-temperature dorayaki, fingers leaving faint dents on its spongy skin. “My quirk is better than a microwave,” he says quietly.

“Please don’t do this,” Iida says, hands clenched into fists on his desk. “Don’t break the rules right in front of me. Don’t make me report you to Mr Aizawa, don’t make me send you to detention.”

“I can do it,” says Bakugou resolutely, pinching the dorayaki’s other end. “Microwaves are just lots of tiny explosions.”

“No they’re not,” says Yaoyorozu.

“Detention,” says Tenya.

Midoriya turns to look at him with big green eyes that speak of innocence and deception. Almost in slow-motion, Tenya watches his mouth form around the words, casual but just loud enough for the whole class to hear.
“I wonder who could do it better?”

An angler fish, Tenya thinks dimly. That’s what the little sea monster was called.

The dorayaki explodes, and 1-A dissolves into chaos.

He might still have red bean in his hair, but it was worth it.

Community service is maybe not the punishment Izuku expected. He supposes it doesn’t matter, though. The important thing is that they’re all on neutral territory and that Miss Midnight is keeping a distant eye on them, so Todoroki and Kacchan can’t start another brawl without a face full of knockout gas for their troubles. It’s just as Uraraka said; now that there’s no avenue for violence, Kacchan and Todoroki have to behave themselves.

The fact that Izuku has to join them in picking up trash around campus at 4pm on a Wednesday, though, is necessary collateral damage. He’s also going to have to apologise to Iida. The pain on his face as he’d sentenced them to detention is going to haunt Izuku’s conscience for years.

The problem now is that the courtyard is kind of massive. It's nice that they're not all standing in each other's pockets, but that of course means Kacchan and Todoroki have decided to stay as far away from each other as humanly possible without straying out of Miss Midnight's sight. Todoroki's poking around the feature fountain, and Kacchan's aggressively sweeping leaves out of the flowerbeds and flipping Todoroki the bird whenever Midnight isn't looking.

"There has to be some way to get them together," Izuku mutters to himself as he picks litter out of the stairwell. There are a lot of snack packets. "They'll never get along if they won't even stand next to each other."

"I could make them do it," says a voice somewhere to his upper left. Izuku tilts his head back to see an unkempt purple head hanging over the stair railing, watching him intently. "Would that help?"

"Oh, hey, Hitoshi. Do you have after school-stuff too?"

"No."

"We can't just make them do it," Izuku muses. "That wouldn't help in the long run, it wouldn't really make them like each other. It has to happen organically. Oh, ew, this still has jell-o in it."

"You could handcuff them together."

"Where would I get handcuffs?"
"I know a place," says Hitoshi.

"One of them would lose an arm, anyway. You know, like how they say animals will chew their leg off if they get trapped." Miss Midnight is busy bullying Todoroki, so Izuku deems it safe to put down his trash bag and stretch. Hitoshi drifts a little closer. "Actually, that might just be an myth, I don't know if animals really do that."

"They do," says Hitoshi.

"I wish they could just see how much they have in common," Izuku sighs. Midnight clears her throat at him from across the courtyard, so he aborts the break and goes back to looking busy before she can give him more work to do. "There's really no need for those two to fight all the time. Wow, nobody's cleaned under the stairs before, huh? It's full of cardboard boxes and junk-- oh, hello."

He nudges the topmost box with the tip of his finger. A pair of luminous yellow eyes peer over the top, and a white paw bats his hand away.

Gingerly, Izuku reaches into the box and lifts its tenant with both hands. It's a large tom cat with one brown ear and another ear that was probably also brown, although Izuku will never know because the ear is no longer attached to the cat. Its nose may no longer be attached either. It's hard to tell, because there's a spot on its face that could maybe be a nose, but also sort of looks like somebody drew it on with pink marker. Its owner allows itself to be held by the armpits, unassuming paws no doubt hiding tiny razors at the ready.

It's the ugliest cat Izuku has ever seen.

"It's perfect," says Izuku.

"It sure is," says Hitoshi longingly. He's migrated off the stairs so he can look over Izuku's shoulder, sleepy purple eyes following the pendulum swing of a balding feline tail.

"This is what they have in common."

"Cats?"

"Heroism. I mean, this cat is helpless, right?"

Hitoshi looks doubtful. "I think it's probably been in a few fights."

"No, yeah, I know, this particular cat kind of looks like a thug, but I mean cats in general. They're helpless. So what are heroes supposed to do when a helpless person is in trouble? They have to save them." Izuku grins, the cogs of a plan whirring slowly to life in his head, and he looks over his shoulder to make sure nobody's watching. Miss Midnight seems to have caught Kacchan in the act of flipping Todoroki off, and is now lecturing them both. Perfect. "Okay. Let's engineer a little crisis, and let the hero instincts kick in."

He leaves Hitoshi lurking in the stairwell and tucks the ugly cat into the jacket of his P.E. uniform, wincing only a little bit when it hooks its claws into his t shirt. "You're smelly," he tells it as he sprints away from the building to find a tree. There's a fairly big one with a smooth trunk and no
convenient branches. "Take a shower once in a while, huh?"

The cat grumbles at him in a voice like a small rusty chainsaw. Still hidden and holding onto his charge with one arm, Izuku conjures up the mental image of an egg in a microwave and makes the three-metre leap onto the very top of the tree. The cat tries to shred his chest upon landing, but Izuku’s been through worse, and he grabs onto a branch and shimmies into the foliage so he can unearth the cat and plant it on the most conspicuous branch he can find. "Sorry, kitty. Don't worry, Todoroki and Kacchan will rescue you soon."

He wiggles backwards and prepares to jump out of the tree.

The hell-cat digs its claws into the tender skin of his forearm.

"Ow," says Izuku.

*Mrow,* says the cat.

A rivulet of blood trickles down his arm and into the leafy abyss. Izuku breathes out. "Maybe," he says slowly, "I should have picked another cat."

Very gently, he squeezes the cat’s paw between his fingers and pries it away from his arm, wincing at the tiny gouges it leaves in its wake. “Please let go of me,” he whispers into the cat’s remaining ear. “I know how this looks but I promise it’s for the greater good.”

The cat does not oblige. He could wait until it decides to take mercy and release him, which,...yeah, okay, that's not going to happen any time soon because it's just decided to attack him with the other paw and ow, okay, Izuku may have broken every bone in his body and cleared a beach full of trash with his bare hands but he did not expect this to be one of the most painful experiences in his life.

Alright, abort mission. He needs to get out of this tree before the others see him because that’s just going to defeat the purpose of this whole operation. Then he has to decide whether he wants to start over, or maybe switch to a smaller decoy who’s not going to put up so much of a fight.

“What the fuck are you doing?” asks Kacchan, because Kacchan ruins everything.

Izuku considers his options. Technically, the cat’s in the tree. Izuku is also in the tree. They both need help getting down. The cat has kind of morphed into the villain in this situation instead of the victim, but the point is that all the major parts of the puzzle are present, so Izuku has what he needs.

His pride is, unfortunately, also going to be collateral damage.

*I'm a top UA student and protégé to a living legend and I'm in a tree being mauled by a cat who may or may not have a real nose,* Izuku thinks, and then bites the bullet. “So I, uh, might be stuck.”
"How?" Todoroki says, coming over to stand at the foot of the tree. He's genuinely confused, bless him. Izuku decides not to tell him the truth.

"I saw this cat here so I climbed up to rescue it but now I can't get down."

Neither of them laugh at him, which is nice (Miss Midnight does, but Izuku's used to that). Instead Kacchan pinches the bridge of his nose in a way that's strangely reminiscent of Iida. "I swear to god, Deku."

"Don't be rude," Todoroki says. "He did his best."

"He's like a fucking toddler. A grown-ass toddler who can punch stuff but can't win a fight against a tree. I don't know why your mother lets you out of the house, Deku."

"My hands are full of cat," Izuku says weakly. "I can jump but I don't want to spook it."

Kacchan throws his hands up. "Who cares? It's a fucking cat."

"Izuku cares, because he's kind and wants to help."

"Nobody asked you, you red and white candy cane wannabe."

"It's blood orange."

"It's fucking red, you pretentious ass."

"I'll help you, Izuku," Todoroki says, turning away and ignoring Kacchan completely. "Don't be afraid, I'll climb up and get you."

"Fuck that," says Kacchan, shouldering him aside so he can look up at the tree himself. "Just stay still and I'll blast myself up there."

Todoroki gives him the stink face. "Really? You know explosions aren't always the answer, right? Are you trying to save Izuku or blow him up?"

"He'll live. It'll be a hell of a lot faster than waiting for you to learn how to climb a tree."

"I know how to climb a tree."

"Your repressed ass had never seen a skipping rope until last week."

"I had a weird childhood."

"Uh huh. Say, pretend the tree is your daddy issues, maybe that'll help you get over it."

"Guys," says Izuku because it's starting to feel like he's lost a fair amount of blood. "I would like to be able to go home today. Or at least call my mom and tell her I live here now."

"You could work together," says Miss Midnight, perched on the edge of the fountain and making absolutely no move to help. Izuku nods his head vigorously in agreement. "This is good hero training, even if it's a little disorganized."

"Good idea," says Todoroki. "I'll make ice stairs and rescue Izuku, and Bakugou can wait here and watch."

"The hell I will," says Kacchan. "You can handle the cat."
“I don’t want the cat. I want Izuku.”

“I love teenage boys,” says Miss Midnight. “Everything turns into a dick-measuring contest one way or another. It’s fun to watch.”

“I’m surprised they let you near minors,” says Kacchan.

Ice crackles in the warm air as it shoots out of Todoroki’s hand, propelling him slowly upwards until he’s eye-to-eye with Izuku. "I'm here to save you," he says, somewhat unecessarily. "Just give me a second to balance on this so I can carry you down."

"You really don't have to," Izuku tells him. The cat narrows its eyes as if it's wondering whether to maul Todoroki next. "Uhm, by the way, Kacchan's coming up here and he doesn't look too happy."

Todoroki says something awful under his breath. Izuku covers the cat's ear.

"Deku," Kacchan bellowls from halfway up the frozen monolith, fingernails digging into its solid surface and Nikes somehow helping him cling to its side like some sort of horrifying bipedal spider. "Don't you fucking dare leave that tree with him."

"Get off my ice tower," Todoroki snaps, kicking at Bakugou's head the moment it's within reach.

Kacchan grabs an ankle and pulls. "How 'bout you take your ice tower and sit on it?"

"Can't we all just get along?" Izuku says, wincing as Todoroki leaves a shoeprint on Kacchan's forehead. Kacchan's fists spark, and a large crack splits the tower around the middle. "Oh my god, be careful, you're gonna fall."

"Do a flip," says Miss Midnight.

Kacchan turns his head to tell her something that's definitely going to get him in more trouble. He doesn't get to, though, because he's drowned out by a noise like a gunshot as the crack widens and Todoroki's structure fails.

The tower topples. It happens almost in slow motion, shards of luminescent ice falling like hail as Kacchan and Todoroki plummet to the unforgiving ground. What's left over is a meter of solid ice that crashes into the tree that Izuku's in, fracturing its trunk down the middle, both halves swaying until they succumb to the pull of gravity. The cat clings to his face and yowls.

This is it, Izuku thinks, one eye obscured by cat fur and the other barely registering Kacchan scrambling up to run towards him. A pale hand closes around his leg and brings him back to the ground. I could land on my own, but I won't. This is how they'll learn to work together in the face of emergency.

Leaves whip around his face and a twig snaps in his grip. Their branch falls sideways, and Izuku forces himself to ignore the way his body instinctively tries to land on its feet. Todoroki dives with both arms out to catch him, but Kacchan explodes him out of the way. Or maybe, just maybe, today is the day I die.
The cat senses that this cause is lost and leaps way to fend for itself. Izuku, lost in a coffin of foliage, shuts his eyes and bids goodbye to his mother.

Death is soft and smells like perfume and leather. Izuku takes stock of his physical being and notes that the afterlife looks a lot like a high school campus.

"That could have gone better," says Midnight, one arm under Izuku's knees and the other wrapped securely around his back. Her hair tickles his forehead, and he becomes acutely aware of how little material she has on. "I'm afraid you boys have a lot to learn, but at least I found a cute stray. Maybe I should take him home."

She is not talking about the cat, Izuku realises, because the cat has landed safely in Hitoshi's arms and it rubbing its ugly head against the underside of his chin. Face burning crimson, Izuku stares at the sky and wonders if falling from Midnight's arms could kill him if he tried really hard.

"Izuku," says Todoroki weakly from the crook of Kacchan's elbow. Defeated, Kacchan releases him, and they both slump into the dirt and leaves as Izuku wriggles around so he doesn't look quite so much like a nubile blushing bride.

"Can I keep this cat?" says Hitoshi.

"If you like," says Midnight.

*Mew,* says the cat.

Silently, Izuku puts his face in his hands and tries not to pass out or cry.

Chapter End Notes

if you were expecting actual plot then i dunno what to tell you except that im very sorry
listen guys there's this REALLY FAT elderly dog in my neighbourhood and he has no teeth but if you go to the fence he'll waddle over to say hello. you'll have to wait for a
while though because he's really fat and walking anywhere takes a while

originally i had aizawa being like 'sorry i'm late i didn't want to come' but that's probably OOC? i think? i dunno man i'm not up to date and at this point i'm sort of just winging it so if you see something i wrote and it looks iffy then just know that i know, man. i know.

anyway leave a comment or something and i'll get back to you soon, have a good weekend y'all
“I’m not going to speak to Midoriya today,” Iida tells Ochako when she comes into class.

She believes him, to be fair. There’s no doubt in her mind that Iida had spent all morning giving himself a pep-talk in the mirror, debating internally about his duties as class president versus his duties as a friend. Had probably reminded himself multiple times, as he’d tied his tie, that Midoriya had broken their trust when he’d broken the rules, and worked himself up into a state of righteous indignation strong enough to withstand the effect of Midoriya’s inevitable pouting.

She believes him. But she really isn’t surprised when Midoriya gives them puppy eyes and Iida crumbles immediately.

“I’m sorry,” Midoriya says very sincerely as Iida screams quietly into his hands. “I had a plan, but I needed us all to get into detention. I know that must have been really hard for you.”

“Did it work?” Ochako asks. The scratches all over Midoriya’s face suggest that it didn’t.

True enough, Midoriya shakes his head ruefully. He pulls up a chair and parks himself between their desks so they’re all at eye level. “I tried to engineer a little situation so they’d have to work together. They couldn’t do it.” He turns his sad, scuffed puppy face to Iida. “Which I feel really bad about. I put you in that crappy position and it didn’t even work out. I really am sorry.”

Iida’s face contorts. Overwhelmed, he decides to look at the ceiling instead. “Please don’t do anything like that again.”

“I won’t.”

“Alright. I forgive you.”

Midoriya lights up exponentially. “I was so worried you’d be mad at me! And I really wanted to hang out, too, since we couldn’t have lunch together yesterday. I missed you.”

Iida makes a strangled noise. Ochako doesn’t blame him at all.

“How did you get hurt?” she says because Iida looks like he’s actually going to burst into tears. “Was it Bakugou?”

“It’s a long story,” says Midoriya quickly. “But no, it wasn’t Bakugou.”

She gasps. “Todoroki?”

“No! It was my own fault, promise. Collateral damage. But now I’m out of ideas,” He sighs, deflating so he can rest his chin on the table. “This may be harder than anticipated. Just throwing them together won’t work. I’m going to need to rethink my strategy and come up with something more sophisticated if I want them to get over their awkwardness. Really get in their heads, you know?”
“That might be hard. They are very stupid,” Ochako says.

Midoriya doesn’t explicitly agree, but he does grin. “Todoroki’s kind of a mystery, but you’d think I’d know how to deal with Bakugou after having known him for so long.”

“Nobody knows how to deal with Bakugou. I don’t think even his parents know. I bet he was born and they had to call an exorcist instead of a midwife.”

“Kirishima knows,” says Iida helpfully. He’s still staring at the ceiling, so he doesn’t notice the meaningful look Ochako gives him. “I think Kirishima may be the only person Bakugou hasn’t tried to punch yet. Although, that may only be because Bakugou knows he’ll hurt himself.”

“Kirishima,” Midoriya says with awe.

“Wait,” says Iida, abruptly realizing what he’s done. “Forget I said that. I didn’t mean –”

“Of course! I was missing the most obvious clue all along.”

“I—”

The chair scrapes as Midoriya scrambles to his feet and back to his desk. “Thanks, Iida!”

“You’re welcome,” Iida sighs.

This time, Ochako doesn’t even try not to laugh.

Izuku thanks the Buddha that Kirishima is, out of all of their classmates, probably the easiest one to approach.

“Can I ask you a favour?” he says, tugging on Kirishima’s sleeve as the other boy is rooting around in his backpack for lunch money.

Kirishima smiles at him. Izuku smiles back on reflex, and marvels at Kirishima’s ability to look friendly even with a mouth full of crooked shark teeth. “Sure thing, my man. What d’you need?”

Izuku clutches his yellow notebook to his chest and glances at Kaminari and Ashido. “It’s, uhm, it’s a little private.”

“Oh? Okay, go on without me, guys,” he says and waves the others off with promises to meet them in the cafeteria as soon as he can. “Sounds spicy,” he says, waggling his eyebrows ridiculously. “Are we doing something top secret?”

“A little bit,” Izuku replies. Kirishima’s not actually that tall up close, he notes. A lot of his silhouette is really just hair. “Maybe I should start from the beginning. It’s about,” he says, and then pauses because the skin on the back of his neck is starting to prickle in a very specific way. “Uhm, by any
chance is Kacchan behind me?"

“Oh, yeah,” says Kirishima cheerfully. “Your instincts are killer!”

“Funny you should say that,” Izuku croaks, shoving the incriminating notebook into his blazer. He can actually feel Kacchan breathing down on him and the proximity makes little tendrils of horror work their way up his spine. “Hey, Kacchan. Did you need something?”

“Bakugou’s just waiting to go to lunch with me and the squad,” Kirishima says. “What did you say you needed help with, by the way?”

“I just…wanted to know if you had an extra thousand yen, is all. I forgot my wallet and Iida and Uraraka are out of cash.”

A crumpled-up bill is shoved into the back of his collar. Izuku almost shrieks. “Stupid Deku,” grumbles Kacchan from behind him. Without warning, he appears in Izuku’s periphery, a large bruise on his chin and suspicious green stains on his blazer. “You’d forget your stupid freckles if they weren’t stuck to your face.”

“I’d probably look better without them,” Izuku says weakly.

“Don’t be dumb.”

“Uhm, okay.” The money is starting to make its merry way into his shirt, and Izuku contorts a little painfully to get it out. “Thanks, I’ll pay you back tomorrow.”

“Don’t bother.”

“What? But—”

“Just shut up and take the money,” Kacchan snaps, and then scowls when Kirishima laughs. “You shut up too. Come on, we’re leaving.”

“Okay, okay. But hey,” he says, clapping Izuku on the shoulder. “I know a man has his pride and all, but you don’t need to be ashamed of asking for money when you really need it, alright?”

“What? Oh. Oh, yeah, sure.”

“What the fuck are you doing?” Kacchan tsks and snatches Kirishima by the wrist, dragging him away from Izuku and out the door to join the others at the cafeteria. Izuku, unnecessary money in one hand and notebook falling out of his blazer, watches them go and sighs.

That was a bit too close. He’d forgotten that getting Kirishima alone would be difficult without Kacchan getting suspicious, because they’re always together and Kacchan is unfortunately even sharper than Kirishima’s hair. And there’s no guarantee Kirishima won’t spill the beans, come to think of it. He’s a nice guy, but he doesn’t always think before he talks. Having him in on the plan may turn out to be a liability in the long run, because Kacchan has a short temper and Izuku does not have a hardening quirk to save him.

Okay. Covert operations, then. Humming to himself, he turns around to hide his notebook back in his bag, considering and discarding scenarios in his head.

Kacchan tolerates Kirishima’s existence. Probably even enjoys his existence, so Izuku needs to find out what it is about Kirishima that’s so effective. Has to be discreet, because Kirishima can’t know about the ultimate goal of getting Kacchan and Todoroki together. But he can ask about Kirishima
and Kacchan’s friendship, try to understand how their relationship works. It might be too late for
Izuku to get along with Kacchan personally, but maybe the information will be of some use to
Todoroki.

Someone taps him on the shoulder. A thousand yen bill is held in front of his nose. Izuku blinks, and
then goes a little cross-eyed as Todoroki tries to press the note against his forehead.

“I heard you needed money,” is all he says. He has a black eye. It’s the one without the scar, so the
overall effect is kind of raccoon-ish.

Izuku peels the note off his face and frowns. “I don’t actually need—I mean, Kacchan gave me
some. Thank you, though.”

“Take mine.”

“What am I going to do with two thousand yen?”

Nose scrunched, Todoroki plucks Kacchan’s money out of Izuku’s hand and throws it into the trash.
It’s immediately picked up by Kaminari, who pockets it and sprints for the door. “No.”

“Hey! What do you mean, no?” Izuku says, too taken aback to properly scold him. “Did you
actually just throw money away for no reason?”

“Don’t take money from strange men.”

“It was Kacchan,” says Izuku. “Whom I have known my whole life, might I add.”

This seems to displease Todoroki instead of reassuring him. “He’s still strange. Use my money. And
you don’t have to give it back.”

“I can’t just not pay you back.”

“It’s a present. It’s bad manners to give back presents.”

It feels like the conversation is escaping from him a little bit. Still, Todoroki looks so serious that
Izuku can’t find it in him to argue. “Oh my god. I-- okay. Alright, I will use your money. Just so you
know, you’re also really strange.”

Todoroki nods. There’s no discernible change in his expression, but his steps do seem to be strangely
bouncy as he leaves the classroom to go to lunch.

Izuku looks at the money in his hands. The money that he certainly doesn’t need, seeing as he got his
allowance last week, but Todoroki had seemed adamant about not returning it. Just like Kacchan, in
fact. He should have known that they would compete over being generous.

Shrugging, he goes to lunch, and decides to use the money to buy Iida some orange juice.
**Goal:** Get Kirishima to talk about his friendship with Kacchan (in progress)

**Attempt 1:** Join their group for lunch

**Result:** Kacchan sat between us, couldn’t get Kirishima alone.

**Attempt 2:** Talk to him after school

**Result:** Kacchan tagged along. He said we were too stupid to navigate by ourselves (rude). Todoroki came too for some reason even though he lives on the other side of town.

**Attempt 3:** Pick Kirishima as my bio lab partner this week (try to get Kacchan and Todoroki to sit together?)

**Result:** Kacchan and Todoroki started another fight before we could even get to the lab. I asked Kirishima after they settled down but he’d already picked Kaminari.

**Addendum:** I think Kacchan told me to be his partner but I couldn’t hear him very well because Todoroki was trying to strangle him. I’m with Ojiro, though. He’s good at lab work!

Izuku sighs and shuts his notebook. A week’s gone by with no results, which is especially frustrating because Kirishima is his one ray of hope in this project right now. He’d been worried about how to finagle information out of him without telling him the whole plan, but that’s not going to be an issue if he can’t even get a chance to talk to the guy.

“Rough day?” says Hitoshi from inside a supply cupboard.

Izuku tucks his book under his arm and opens the door. “What are you doing in there?”

“Looking for bleach,” Hitoshi says, holding up a bright orange bottle. The school bell rang about ten minutes ago, so they’ve just missed the daily stampede for the exit. “Aren’t you going home?”

“I am, I just wanted to avoid the crowd.” And, how. The corridor leading to the main door looks massive when it’s deserted like this. Their footsteps echo across the polished floors as Hitoshi emerges from the closet with both arms full. Izuku very kindly doesn’t make a joke about him coming out. “You remember those two friends I was trying to set up?”

“Not having much luck?”

“No,” Izuku sighs again. He’s been sighing a lot lately. Maybe this is why Iida has such a great lung
capacity, actually. It’s not from running, just exasperation. “There was another guy I was hoping to ask for advice, but getting him alone is proving to be really difficult. I mean, it’s great that he always has company, but this needs to stay private. I’m not even sure I can tell him all the details.”

“Why?”

“What if it gets out? That won’t go over well for me, plus it’ll ruin the plan.”

“I could make him keep it a secret,” says Hitoshi. “I could make him forget what he heard. It’s easy.”


Hitoshi remains thoughtfully quiet for a second, and only speaks up again when they’re about to exit the building and go their separate ways. “Why don’t you just text him?”

Izuku stops in his tracks. “Oh my god. That’s all I had to do. You’re a genius.”

“I try.”

“Great! I just have to ask for his phone number tomorrow and we’re golden.”

Hitoshi nods, bleach bottles wobbling in his arms as he digs around in his pocket for his metro card. “Good luck. Tell me how it goes.”

“I will!” Izuku says, and, excitement mounting, runs all the way home so he can barrel through the front door and terrify his mother.

Cupid smiles on him the next day, because Kacchan, for once, wakes up a little late and doesn’t walk Izuku to school like he’s insisted on doing lately. Kirishima gets to class just a little after Izuku’s said hello to Iida and Uraraka, and Izuku, sensing an opportunity, makes a beeline for the door.

“Good morning!” he chirps before Kirishima even has a chance to sit down. “Hey, uhm, I’m sorry if this is a little weird, but I wanted to ask you something.”

Kirishima drops his backpack on his desk. “Sure, bro.”

“Could I have your number?”

Kirishima blinks at him. Izuku smiles back, tilting his head a little when the information isn’t immediately forthcoming. “Kirishima?”

“Okay!” says Kirishima abruptly. “I mean, yeah, sure, uh, you gonna write this down?”

He rattles off the number so Izuku can key it into his phone. There isn’t a rock emoji, so Izuku picks the star that most closely resembles Kirishima’s hairstyle and saves it next to his name. “Great! Thank you!”


“I am!” Izuku says, although he can’t elaborate on why. Kacchan comes sprinting through the door
twenty seconds before the bell rings, giving Izuku a particularly evil look as though it’s somehow his fault that the alarm clock didn’t go off or whatever. Izuku doesn’t let if faze him. He gives Kirishima another smile and manages, just barely, to focus on the rest of the school day.

The good mood stays until later that night when Izuku texts Kirishima hello. He receives a reply in less than a minute. Kirishima texts with bad spelling and a lot of exclamation marks, it turns out.

“How am I going to ask him about Kacchan without being weird?” Izuku muses aloud in the solitude of his bedroom. The All Might poster above his bed doesn’t answer. Rolling over, Izuku kicks his feet in the air and hums. “I can’t just bring it up out of the blue, especially since Kirishima and I aren’t even that close. I’ve never even texted him. Maybe I should try having a normal conversation first?”

His phone buzzes. It’s not Kirishima, though. It’s a picture of the cat from the other day, now clean but unfortunately still ugly. It’s cuddled next to a chewed-up plush toy on what must be Hitoshi’s bed. It’s such a nice picture that Izuku doesn’t even ask how Hitoshi got his number.

*He looks happy*, Izuku texts back, which is partially a lie because the cat’s weird face is about as emotive as a cardboard box. *By the way, you were right, it was easier to just text him.*

Hitoshi just texts back a thumbs up. Izuku, yellow notebook in hand, grins to himself and sets about turning Kirishima into an ally.

“*You’re big on texting,*” says Kirishima three days later.

Izuku makes a questioning noise. His attention is on Todoroki, because earlier he’d tried to slip a 1000-yen bill into his back pocket and Todoroki had choked on his yoghurt. Iida had had to do the Heimlich. Todoroki’s still a little red, which might be leftover adrenaline or it might be the fact that Kacchan had seen what happened and immediately come over to pick a fight. “You’d think he’d leave him alone for at least ten minutes, Torodoki did almost just choke to death. Also, sorry, what was that?”

“I said you’re big on texting,” Kirishima repeats. Izuku turns to look up at him, and then suddenly remembers how aggressively he’s been pursuing a chance to talk.
“Oh no. I made you uncomfortable, didn’t I,” he says half to himself, hands coming up on their own accord to plaster themselves to his cheeks. “I am so sorry, I swear I’m not trying to be annoying on purpose.”

“No way, bro!” Kirishima says loudly enough to make Kaminari give them the side eye. He doesn’t seem to notice. “Seriously, I don’t mind spending time with you and stuff. You’re rad.”

“Are you sure? Oh gosh. I’ve been so focused on trying to talk to you that I didn’t even notice how much I was pestering you.”

“Hey, it’s totally cool!” Kirishima scratches the back of his neck awkwardly. Izuku hates himself a little bit. “Uh, well, we have time now. What did you wanna talk about?”

“It’s kind of embarrassing.”

“Hey, I ain’t gonna judge.”

“I wanted to ask about your relationship with Kacchan,” says Izuku, feeling his ears turn warm. Kirishima’s mouth turns into a little round ‘o’ of surprise. Eye contact is suddenly difficult, so Izuku shuffles his feet and looks at the floor. “I know that’s a little weird. I just, I notice he seems to like you. And you’re together all the time, so I just wanted to, I dunno. Ask.”

There’s a second of silence. Izuku chances a glance up; Kirishima’s face is doing something very complicated, contorting in a way that looks like he’s torn between shock, epiphany, and tears.

“Sorry,” Izuku says immediately. “I sound like a stalker. Forget I said anything.”

“No.” Eyes clenched shut, Kirishima reaches up and puts both hands on Izuku’s shoulders. It’s like being squeezed by a heavy and very sentimental python. “No, I get what you’re trying to say.”

“You do?”

“Yeah. Midoriya, man, you’re a brave guy. I know it isn’t easy to put yourself out there like that.”

Izuku supposes he has a point. Kacchan is a bit like Bloody Mary, after all— keep talking about him and eventually he shows up. “Thanks, I guess.”

Kirishima nods. “I’m super flattered. And, listen, I just want you to know that Bakugou and I are friends, okay?”

“I know,” Izuku says. It’s kind of the reason he’s been so pushy in the first place.

“Just friends. Promise.”

“Uhm, okay. Gotcha.”

Kirishima wipes his eyes. Must have hay fever or something. “Oh, man. You’re cute as hell, dude. I did not expect this. I mean, I had a little suspicion, but still.”

“Well, it’s not like I said anything,” Izuku says, bemused but still a little embarrassed. “And I’ll back off on bothering you, promise.”

“Hey.” Kirishima’s grip tightens on his shoulders, and he leans forward so that Izuku is forced to maintain eye contact. Somewhere in the background, Todoroki and Bakugou’s argument screeches to a halt. “You’re not a bother. And I can’t give you an answer right now, but this isn’t going to change our friendship. We’re bros to the end.”
“Good to know.” The classroom’s deathly silence almost feels like it’s sucking him into a vortex of social awkwardness. Hairs rise on the back of his neck. “I don’t expect an immediate answer, I just wanted to, uhm, put it out there. So you can think about it and get back to me. Or something.”

“You’re a man’s man,” says Kirishima earnestly.

“Thanks, I guess.” The bell rings, and Izuku wants to cry with relief when Mr Aizawa comes in and tells them to get their asses back to their seats so they can start homeroom. “I’ll see you at lunch?”

Kirishima wipes his eyes again. “Wouldn’t miss it for the world, bro.”

Iida says lunch that afternoon is supposed to be curry, which is slightly ruined by the fact that Todoroki and Kacchan have not stopped staring at Izuku all day.

They hadn’t overheard, though, thankfully. Izuku knows this because Kacchan turns around after homeroom, slams his hands on Izuku’s table and demands to know what he’d said to Kirishima.

“Nothing,” Izuku squeaks before Yaoyorozu tells them to be quiet and get ready for class.

Izuku’s desk cracks under Kacchan’s fingertips. Izuku gulps. Maybe he should move today. There’s an empty seat between him and Yaoyorozu that he could use. It may have had an occupant once, but whoever it was has been replaced by a glue stick and a couple of grapes. Nobody’s really mentioned it yet, but someone does keep replacing the grapes every few days.

He manages to escape at lunch, because Uraraka, bless her, drags him to their usual table and parks him right between Iida and herself. Kirishima tags along. He brings Kaminari, who apparently feels the weight of Kacchan’s evil eye all the way across the cafeteria because he tries to vacate the seat before Kirishima pulls him back down to stay. He doesn’t seem happy about it. Izuku is, if only because Kaminari blocks him from Kacchan’s view a little bit.

The last seat is taken by a boy from 1-B that Izuku doesn’t know. Captain Redundancy, Kacchan had called him once. He’s got crazy thick eyelashes and spikey hair, and he pounces on Kirishima’s back and steals one of his potatoes.

“Bro!” says Kirishima, lighting up immediately. “Don’t stick your fingers in my food, bro, that’s nasty.”

“Nah, bro,” says Captain Redundancy. “My fingers are steel, bro, germs don’t stick to ‘em.”

_Tetsutetsu_, right. The one with the similar quirk to Kirishima’s.

Iida coughs. “That is most certainly not how germs work.”

“He’s strong, he’ll live.” Tetsu waves a hand flippantly and sits down, one arm wound tight around Kirishima’s shoulders. “Line’s too long, I’m gonna wait ‘til it thins out. Hope they still have potatoes, though. Potatoes are the best part.”
“Take some of mine,” says Kirishima immediately, spearing one with a fork and holding it in front of Tetsu’s mouth. “No bro of mine is gonna go without potatoes.”

“Thanks, bro. You tried the protein shake recipe I sent you yet?”

“Not yet. I haven’t been lifting a lot lately.”

“Why not, bro? You need to keep your strength up.”

“You’re the one who gives me strength, bro.”

“Bro.”

Uraraka puts her face in her hands. “Why are boys like this?”

“I wish I could tell you,” says Kaminari.

Izuku, however, is more preoccupied by the strong hand that still rests on Kirishima’s shoulder. Kirishima leans into the touch absently, feeding Tetsu potatoes in between bites of his own meal. “You guys get along really well, huh?” says Izuku.

Tetsu speaks with his mouth full. “Of course. We’re best bros.”

“We even have the same birthday,” says Kirishima proudly. “October 16th.”

“We’re Libras. Li bros.”

“Fascinating,” says Izuku, leaning forward a little as the beginnings of an idea starts to form in his mind. “And you’re friends.”

“That’s what we just said,” says Tetsu.

“Do you spend a lot of time together?”

“Sure,” says Kirishima. “We have the same hobbies, we do lots of stuff together. Right, bro?”

“Right, bro. You gave me some of my best broments.”

“Bro.”

“Bro. Sleepover tonight?”

“Hell yeah. But you have to promise not to slap my ass in front of my grandma again, bro. It ain’t good to surprise her at her age.”

“Sorry, bro. You just have such a sweet ass, it’s like you sat in sugar.”

Kirishima blinks, and then shakes his head at Izuku, alarmed. “It was a friendship butt pat! We’re, like, totally platonic.”

“Brotonic,” says Tetsu.

“Nothing you need to worry about,” adds Kirishima.

“Why would I be worried?” says Izuku. “It’s great that you’re close.”

Kirishima melts back against Tetsu’s side. “You get it!”
“I sure do,” says Izuku, not noticing the way Iida goes rigid beside him. Uraraka, on his other side, puts a hand over her mouth to stifle a laugh. “Platonic soulmates. You two sound like a match made in heaven.”

“We sure are,” says Kirishima, feeding Tetsu more curry. “Dude. Brotatoes.”

“Bro.”

“Bro.”

“Don’t do it.” says Iida.

“Please do it,” says Uraraka.

Izuku’s going to need another notebook.

Chapter End Notes

do i update on time? no. but is it worth the wait? also no.

i'm actually genuinely busier than i want to be right now though so i'm gomen

anyway i was in morocco a while ago and i was standing around on a mountain when i was approached by a man holding a very small goat. he put it in my arms and told me its name was jimi hendrix. it was really soft. noisy, though.

also the other day there was a sale and i bought three pairs of heels. did i need them? no. but when you see a shoe sale you have to honour izuku's spirit somehow. the jordans were watching over me. you know i had to do it.

here is a poll for you: does iida wear boxers or briefs?

i should have called this fic 'all hands on deku' lol
“Bakugou?”

“Power bottom.”

“But a prude.”

“Ooh, really?”

Ashido leans forward and steeplets her fingers in front of her mouth. “Bear with me. I know he looks like he’d throw a hissy fit if you didn’t let him top, but a guy like that would want you to work for him. That being said, have you noticed he’s like a cat? Anyone who wanted to touch him would have to coax him into it first.”

Hagakure’s uniform bobs, which probably means she’s nodding her head. Understandably it’s a little hard to tell sometimes, with her. “I get that. But Midoriya’s already passed that hurdle, right? Would he really need to do the extra coaxing?”

“I mean, we are talking about Bakugou,” says Tsuyu. “Dating him just means he wouldn’t explode you. I think he’d still make you jump through hoops.”

“But would Midoriya do that, though? He seems so sweet, I can’t imagine him initiating things,” Hagakure points out.

Ashido snorts. “Are you kidding? I bet he’s a freak.”

“What? No way.”

“I’m serious!” Koda glances in their direction, so Ashido lowers her voice to a stage whisper. “Have you seen how he gets when he’s interested in something? I bet you anything he’s got a little black book of crazy sex stuff he wants to try the moment he gets into a relationship.”

“He’d write down the results and compare them so he only has the best toys and stuff,” says Tsuyu. “And he would try everything.”

“He’d be good at it,” Aoyama chips in. “A brain like that and a strengthening quirk? Oh, yeah. Super cute as a bottom, but he’d make a fantastic top. What do you think, Jirou?”

“I think I’m a lesbian.”

“Bah.” Flipping his hair, Aoyama steals a look across the room at Midoriya, who is pouting sweetly at a History textbook. He does that a lot when he thinks, they’ve noticed. “All I’m saying is, don’t judge that little green book by its cover. He and Bakugou would be an interesting pair, once he convinces Bakugou to stop being pissy.”

“Okay,” says Hagakure, leaning forward to (probably) mirror Ashido’s pose. “What about when you
pair him up with Todoroki? Todoroki is a top if I’ve ever seen one. Anyone would bottom for him.”

“I’d bottom for him,” says Aoyama.

“You’d bottom for anyone,” says Jirou.

Tsuyu hums. “Good point. I can see them switching it up every now and then, but I can’t decide if Todoroki would be as kinky as Midoriya or kind of vanilla.”

“Kinky,” says Yaoyorozu, who had been sitting next to Jirou and pretending not to listen up till now. “He’s worse than he looks. You should hear him swear.”

“Ooh, that’s like the opposite of Kirishima. He’s a lot nicer than he looks, right?” says Ashido. “And he’s honestly pretty cute if you ignore the hair.”

“The bigger the hair, the closer to god,” Aoyama says. “But he probably would be cute with it down. I wonder what he looks like in the morning.”

“You would,” says Tsuyu.

“Okay, weird question,” says Hagakure suddenly. “What about Iida?”

“Vanilla,” the others say in unison.

“But husband material,” adds Aoyama.


“Hey guys,” says Uraraka. “What are you talking about?”

Ashido’s mouth snaps shut. Uraraka’s smile doesn’t reach her eyes and Jirou, not very subtly, holds on tight to her chair.

Tsuyu clears her throat. “Nothing.”

Yaoyorozu studiously avoids Uraraka’s eyes. “Class stuff.”

“Need any help?” Uraraka perches on the edge of Ashido’s desk, expression bright and hands folded neatly in her lap. Aoyama edges his seat away from her. “You should involve Iida, if it’s class stuff. Should I call him?”

“Please don’t,” says Jirou.

“Say, Ochako,” says Hagakure cheerfully. Tsuyu would kick her in the shin, if she could find it. “What’s your ideal kind of guy?”

“Me? Hmm. I’d want someone sincere, and nice.”

Ashido brightens up somewhat. “What about his looks?”

“Oh, I dunno. I like muscles, though.”

“That describes most of the guys here,” Hagakure says. “Which I would be happier about if they weren’t, y’know. Teenage boys.”
“Lesbian,” says Jirou pointedly.

“Nice and has muscles,” says Tsuyu. “That kind of sounds like—”

“Oh my god,” says Aoyama, suddenly. He points to the back of the class, and the rest of them swivel around like a pack of superpowered meerkats. “Look at that. Look at Todoroki.”

“Oh no,” says Yaoyorozu. Bakugou’s standing at Todoroki’ desk, hands in his pockets but arms tensed as though he’s clenching his fists. Todoroki’s shoulders are hanging out somewhere around his eyebrows. Neither of them are making eye contact. “Not again. It’s too early for another fight.”

“They’re not fighting,” says Aoyama, horrified. “I think they’re just talking.”

Ashido leans forward to watch. “I don’t believe you.”

“I’m serious. Bakugou’s been standing there for, like, ten minutes, and they haven’t punched each other once.”

“Is Mr Aizawa hiding somewhere?” says Hagakure.

“No, Iida would have seen him. He’s physically incapable of ignoring authority,” says Yaoyorozu.

“This is wrong,” says Jirou. “This is unnatural.”

“There’s no way they’re not gonna fight,” says Ashido, voice hushed. As they watch, Bakugou nods stiffly and shuffles back to his own seat. Todoroki stays where he is and grinds his teeth, but doesn’t do anything more dramatic than that. “Bakugou’s just going to go get his gauntlets. He’ll come back and start yelling any minute now, you’ll see.”

Bakugou does not come back. He stays at his seat and frowns at his own reflection in the window. Aoyama gasps, and Jirou puts a comforting arm around his shoulder.

The spiky blond hair on Bakugou’s head remains unpulled by Todoroki’s fist no matter how long Tsuyu stares at it, so she turns away and focuses instead on Ashido’s indiscreet dry-heaving. She’s starting to feel a little light-headed herself.

“Huh,” says Uraraka.

“That’s it? Why aren’t you as shook as the rest of us?” Aoyama manages from the safety of Jirou’s shoulder.

Uraraka blinks, and then smiles. “No reason. I just have a feeling this might start to make more sense soon.”

Privately, Tsuyu disagrees. Then again, she doesn’t get to think about it too hard, because all she can focus on is her intense feeling of vertigo until Iida starts his Monday lecture about good hygiene and the world finally starts to feel more normal again.
“I hope you’re not losing sight of your original goal,” says Iida.

Izuku flaps a hand at him and scribbles a little in his notebook. It’s a pink one, this time, because, it’s the closest thing to red that he’d been able to find. “I thought you didn’t approve of my project.”

“I don’t. But I especially don’t approve of leaving things half-done.” They’re sitting side-by-side, squeezed together on Izuku’s chair so they can both see what he’s writing. Izuku, perched on the very edge, leans into Iida’s shoulder so he doesn’t fall off.

“I’m not leaving anything half-done,” he assures him. The page feels reassuringly smooth under his fingertips. He loves new stationary. “Call it a side quest. I foresee this one being a lot more straightforward than the master plan.”

“The master plan of emotional manipulation.”

“Yeah.”

“God help us if you ever decide to become a villain,” Iida sighs. Izuku snorts. The day Izuku turns to villainy is the day Kacchan suddenly decides he loves him.

“Look, it’s pretty simple once you think about it. Kirishima and Tetsu are like the opposite of Kacchan and Todoroki; they get along great but they only see each other platonically. Therefore, all I really have to do is get them each alone and try introduce the idea of romance. Subtly,” he adds, and underlines that for good measure. “I already came on too strong at first. It would be weird if I just started following Tetsu around and pointing out how nice Kirishima’s smile is.”

“I promise you that Kirishima would not be surprised if you did.”

“Yeah, they already compliment each other all the time,” Izuku says wistfully. “They have a great relationship. I hope Kacchan and Todoroki end up like that someday.”

“Doubtful,” Iida says, pushing his glasses up the bridge of his nose. “You don’t even know if either of them swing that way. Kirishima and Tetsu, I mean.”

“A bond like theirs transcends gender,” Izuku says sagely, looking around his desk for his eraser. Iida points it out from behind Izuku’s pencil sharpener. “Anyway, we’ll find out for certain once I get them together.”

“I think you’ve got that backwards,” says Iida, glancing up when the bell rings to signify the end of their lunch hour. Some stragglers make it through the class door a second later, and Iida rises with some difficulty to herd them back to their seats. “I’d tell you not to get into trouble, but thankfully these two are a bit less insane.”

“Sidequest,” Izuku reminds him. He shuffles sideways so he can sit properly in his chair, and then frowns. “Hang on. You know you didn’t say that about Kacchan and Todoroki. About which way they swing. You didn’t question it.”
“Call it a hunch,” says Iida. Izuku doesn’t know why he rolls his eyes.

At least Kirishima’s easier to deal with than Kacchan.

Izuku drops hints. A lot of hints, actually, both to Kirishima and to Tetsu. Neither of them really seems to notice, but Izuku takes comfort in the fact that at least he doesn’t have to worry about them trying to murder each other, or him, when he least expects it.

“Tetsu’s a good-looking guy,” he says to Kirishima one day as they’re waiting for Tetsu after school.

“You’re really cute too,” says Kirishima earnestly.

“I hear Kirishima’s great with kids,” he tries again when he and Tetsu run into each other in the hallway.

“I promise you he’ll make a great dad someday,” says Tetsu, clapping him on the back.

“You’d work perfectly as a pair,” he says meaningfully while they’re waiting in line at the cafeteria.

“Way ahead of you,” says Kirishima. “We’re making a hero team when we graduate.”

“The He-Broes,” says Tetsu. “Or She-Broes, for girl members.”

“We don’t have any girl members,” says Kirishima, leaning into Tetsu’s side. “Or any other members.”

“Not that we didn’t try,” says Tetsu, intertwining his fingers with Kirishima’s. “But nobody else wanted to join.”

“I can’t imagine why,” says Izuku, smiling into his lunch tray.
Tenya feels them coming before he actually sees them.

“I hope you’re not trying to rob me,” he says mildly as Bakugou backs him up into a locker. School doesn’t start for a good half hour, so nobody else has made it to the academic building. “I’d have to report you, and you’ve already done detention once this month.”

“We’re not robbing you,” says Todoroki, although he has the good sense to tug Bakugou back by the shirt. “We just wanted to ask you something.”

“Like what the fuck is going on with Deku,” says Bakugou.

Tenya pushes his glasses up his nose. “You’re going to have to be more specific. Midoriya does a lot of questionable things.”

“I want to know why he has a notebook with Kirishima’s name scrawled all over it.”

“It’s pink,” says Todoroki.

“You must know, since you’re with him all the time,” says Bakugou. “And Uraraka was no damned help.”

“She laughed at us for ten minutes and wouldn’t say why,” Todoroki adds sullenly.

Tenya could probably guess why. “Is there any reason you can’t just ask Midoriya yourself?”

Bakugou makes a face and breaks eye contact. Neither of them answer, and Tenya pinches the bridge of his nose because there are times when dealing with his classmates makes him physically feel himself ageing, and this is one of them. “You’re like children.”

“I’ll break your glasses.”

“Have you ever been kicked by a foot going seventy kilometres an hour?” says Tenya mildly.

“Don’t threaten Iida, you idiot.”

“Don’t call me an idiot, my grades are better than yours—”

“Because you cheat off Izuku, I bet, and even then there are two people better than you—”

“Boys,” says Tenya, very patiently, he thinks. “I’d sincerely like to help, but I really do think it’s best that I don’t get involved.”

“Best for who?” says Bakugou.

“Whom,” says Tenya. “Also, me.”

“You’re our only hope,” Todoroki says in a manner that he probably thinks is imploring. His expression doesn’t actually change, but Tenya appreciates the sentiment. “We just want to know what’s going on with Izuku and Kirishima. Please.”
There’s a second of silence. Todoroki kicks Bakugou in the back of the knee.

“…please,” mutters Bakugou like it’s hurting him.

Tenya’s heartstrings twinge despite himself. “It’s probably not whatever you’re thinking. You would benefit from being more open and communicative, though. A lot of problems would be solved if people were more straightforward. And perhaps more observant,” he adds as an afterthought.


“Don’t thank him,” Bakugou rolls his eyes. “You and the baby-faced hyena are no help. Come on, you, we’re gonna go investigating.”

Tenya sighs. There is no point in encouraging open and honest dialogue between a glacier and a Molotov cocktail of bottled-up emotions. “Don’t involve Kirishima in your petty feud.”

“It’s not petty,” says Todoroki as Bakugou physically drags him away. “But we’ll try.”

“No we won’t,” says Bakugou, which Tenya about expected, really.

“You’re sure you don’t wanna come along, man?” Kirishima asks, brows turned up like he’s genuinely disappointed that Izuku doesn’t want McDonald’s. Which is understandable, actually. Izuku’s usually always up for McDonalds, but they stopped giving out hero pens with their Happy Meals last month and Izuku isn’t interested in collecting Hello Kitty merchandise.

“No thanks, I don’t want to third wheel,” he says.

“Suit yourself, man,” Tetsu shrugs. “We’ll be getting stickers without you.”

“We’ll show you tomorrow,” Kirishima says, throwing an arm around Tetsu’s shoulder. “But we should probably get going before the work rush starts. Wanna share a McFlurry, bro?”

“Only if it’s Oreo.”

“You mean Broreo?”

“Bro.”

“Bro.”

Izuku waves them off. The smile drops off his face once they’re out of sight, and then his shoulders
slump in defeat. “I’m getting nowhere.”

“Don’t give up now.”

Izuku looks up. “Hitoshi? Is that you?”

“No,” says an air vent.

Izuku squints, and can just make out a pair of purple eyes behind the grate. “How the heck did you get up there?”

“Dismantled an AC unit.”

“Why?”

“So I could map out the air vents. They run all over the school. Neat, huh?”

“I guess so,” Izuku says. There’s a shuffling noise, and then a thump. “Are you okay up there?”

“It seems I might be stuck.”

“Alright, let me go find a ladder.”

“Thanks. There’s one in the janitor’s closet down the hall.”

Hitoshi waits patiently for Izuku to poke around the supply cupboard until he can find what he needs. He carries it back over one shoulder, leans it against the wall and hopes it won’t fall over while he’s climbing up. “Crap, this thing’s screwed on.”

“Here.” A screwdriver pokes out from between the grills. Close up, Hitoshi’s face is more clearly visible in the darkness, hair a little dusty from crawling around in the ceiling. “Sorry. I can’t get at the screws from in here.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Izuku says. It’s a flathead. A perfect fit.

“Is your project not going as well as you’d like?”

A quick look around confirms that there’s nobody in the corridor, everyone having gone home for the day. It’s lucky that he keeps running into Hitoshi when school is deserted, Izuku thinks. “They’re fun to be around, so I guess I can’t complain about that. But subtlety isn’t working on them.”

“Subtlety? You were just going to ask Kirishima for some help with talking to Bakugou, right?”

“Yeah, at first, but I think he needs some help too. He’s a great match for that friend of his, but I don’t know how to make them see each other romantically. I’ve tried pointing out what great boyfriends they would make. It isn’t working.”

A little plaster comes loose along with the first screw. Izuku hands it to Hitoshi to hold on to. “I’m not surprised being subtle didn’t work,” says Hitoshi flatly. “I don’t know them but they seem like meatheads.”

“They’re very nice meatheads,” Izuku says, smiling. “I just don’t want to come on too strong and freak them out. Plus, they’ve got a great dynamic going on already. I’d feel terrible if I made it weird for them, you know? Like, if I suggested they date each other when before they’re ready, then that might make them feel awkward. Here, another screw.”
“A great dynamic,” Hitoshi muses. “Your first subjects didn’t get along at all.”

“Nope. Still don’t, in fact.”

“But you’re still using the same approach?”

Izuku frowns. “I don’t think I am. The first time around I tried to get them to spend time together. I also tried to get them to work together, as heroes, but I didn’t factor in how competitive they can get for no reason.”

“And subjects B?”

“Already spend all their time together, they just need a push in the right direction.”

“So they’re fundamentally different. Your approach should be fundamentally different as well.”

The third screw comes away, leaving the grate hanging precariously by one corner. “I don’t follow.”

“You tried to get subjects A together by making them spend time together, which is something they wouldn’t do on their own,” Hitoshi says, counting off his fingers. “Subjects B already do that, so the same approach won’t work.”

“But I haven’t been using the same approach, though.”

“You’ve been complimenting them, and I saw you send them off to McDonalds together. You’re trying to push them together, but that’s redundant because they do that all the time. You’re not helping them change their dynamic. Also, I thought you loved McDonalds.”

“I’ve already got all the hero Happy Meal toys,” Izuku says before gripping the screwdriver between his teeth. The grate comes off with an accompanying shower of plaster, and Hitoshi snakes an arm out to take the screwdriver back. “Hmm. When you put it like that, I guess I haven’t varied my methods much.”

“You know them better than I do,” Hitoshi says, poking his head out as Izuku leaps off the ladder. “However, I would take comfort in the idea that their relationship is solid. It will likely stay that way even if you say accidentally say something awkward.”

“They are very stable,” Izuku hums. Hitoshi shimmies halfway out of the vent, and Izuku holds both arms out to catch him. “Should we put the grate back?”

“Leave it open,” Hitoshi says, falling neatly out of the ceiling and into Izuku’s arms. “I might need access later. I’ll put the ladder back.”

“Okay.” Releasing Hitoshi, Izuku picks his backpack up from where he’d left it next to a locker. “Thanks for the talk, Hitoshi. I’m gonna go rethink my angle like you said.”

“No worries. Sorry for getting plaster all over you. Wow, this thing is heavy.”

“Strengthening quirk,” Izuku grins. “See you tomorrow.”

Hitoshi grunts at him and ambles off with the ladder dragging behind. The scrape of metal makes Izuku wince, but the cogs in his mind whir to life, and he’s so lost in thought he almost walks right into a disassembled air conditioner on his way to the school entrance.
“Guess what,” says Ochako, hanging off Midoriya’s back and only feeling slightly guilty when he yelps.

“Don’t sneak up on me like that!”

“I wasn’t sneaking,” Ochako points out. “You were doing the Midoriya face.”

“The what?”

Ochako puts her hand on her chin and furrows her brow. “Assuming the height of All Might’s hair is zero point five meters, remove that from his total height of two point five metres, that would mean I need to gain forty centimeters to reach him. My current daily calcium intake is one thousand two hundred milligrams, which can be safely increased to up to three thousand, which could give me a growth spurt of up to—”

“Oh my god, stop, I get it,” Midoriya says, covering his face with both forearms like a kitten. “I know I’m embarrassing, you don’t have to call me short while you’re at it. Also, All Might’s height is two hundred and twenty centimeters without the hair.”

“I think it’s cute,” Ochako says, gleefully watching Midoriya’s ears turn red. “But you should probably pay attention to what’s around you. Which is incidentally what I wanted to tell you about.”

Curiosity wins. Midoriya peeks at her from behind his arms, and Ochako leans their heads together so they won’t be overheard. Everyone’s busy getting ready for homeroom, though, so nobody really pays them attention except Bakugou, who shoots her a truly poisonous look. She gives him a sunny smile and leans in even closer.

“Have you been watching Bakugou and Todoroki recently? Maybe noticed anything different?”

Midoriya frowns. “I’ve been a little distracted. What’s up?”

“Come on!” Ochako grins, drumming on the table in excitement. “I’ll give you a hint: when was the last time you saw them fight?”

“Some time last week,” Midoriya says slowly. “But the frequency seems to have gone down, come to think of it.”

Ochako claps her hands. “I saw them talking the other day. Just talking, at, like, a normal volume.”

“Huh,” says Midoriya. It’s impressive how quickly he changes gears; the pinkness has gone from his cheeks, leaving only freckles behind. “So their hostility has decreased. Interesting. Could it be that the plan worked after all? Maybe their inability to co-operate as heroes has made them realise the need to get over themselves.”
“You’re doing the Midoriya face again,” Ochako says helpfully. He doesn’t hear her, though, so she laughs, ruffles his hair, and makes sure to give Bakugou an extra smug smile as she makes her way back to her seat.

“A fundamental difference to my approach,” says Izuku to his All Might alarm clock. It doesn’t answer him. Izuku would be rather surprised if it did, to be honest, but at this point the help would not go unappreciated.

The pillow makes a *pomf* noise when he flops back onto it, hair still wet from the shower and stomach full from dinner. He has homework to do. Doesn’t feel like looking at it, though, so he’ll put if off until later and probably stay up way past midnight. “Kacchan and Todoroki are starting to get along. Having them spend time together may be a workable solution. But, their relationship is only at level one. Kirishima and Tetsu are at level eight. Maybe they’d need a different kind of push.”

“I’m sure I’ve been hinting at romance, though,” he sighs, rolling over to pout at the wall. It doesn’t answer him either. “I keep saying Kirishima’s handsome, you’d think Tetsu would have gotten the message by now.”

Except that their relationship is already bordering on homoerotic, so Tetsu probably thought Kirishima was beautiful to begin with. Hitoshi’s right. They’re so used to complimenting each other that nothing Izuku says could surprise them. Izuku had called them soulmates and neither of them batted an eye.

What *can* he do, then? Get them both naked and lock them in a room? No, that would be criminal. Have them take a bath together? They probably already do that. Give one roses and pretend it’s from the other? Possible, but Tetsu had mentioned having a pollen allergy or something.

“Why did I think this would be the easy side quest?” Izuku makes a face as he runs his fingers through his bangs. He should have dried his hair. He’s left a damp spot on the pillowcase that’s going to seep into the pillow and give him acne, or something. He doesn’t need acne. The freckles are already bad enough.

He sits up, grumbling like a grandpa, and then gets briefly spooked when his foot nudges something solid and smooth. It’s a shoebox. Nikes, of course, stuffed haphazardly under his bed and half-wrapped in a plastic bag because the box had had All Might on it and he hadn’t wanted to throw it away. He’s never worn the shoes, either. They’ve been sitting on a special shelf in his cupboard ever since his mother bought them as a gift for getting into UA.

The plastic bag goes in the trash and the box goes onto the shelf as a stand for the shoes. They look like a store display, and All Might and the Nike logo stare at him from the one clean shelf in a nest of
tacky size M shirts.

“Just do it,” he says, and then lights up when inspiration strikes.

“Kirishima!” Izuku says way too loudly for a Friday morning.

Kirishima pauses with a Pocky stick in his mouth. “What?”

“Can you follow me to the locker right now immediately! I, uh, need help carrying something.”

“Don’t you have a strengthening quirk?” asks Kirishima.

“I’ll do it,” says Todoroki.

“No you won’t,” says Bakugou, tackling him to the ground.

Izu takes advantage of the chaos to hook his fingers into Kirishima’s collar and drag him out of the room, checking furtively over his shoulder that they’re not being followed. “Listen, I have something to say to you and it’s very important.”

Kirishima clears his throat. They come to a stop outside of the lockers, where the last of the morning rush is making its way to class. “I’ve been preparing myself for this. Lay it on me, man. I’m listening.”

“I think you should date Tetsu,” Izuku says in a rush.

Kirishima stares at him. “What,” he says, which, okay, that’s fair.

“You’re perfect for each other,” Izuku presses on, taking Kirishima’s larger hand in his. “I’ve never seen a couple so compatible. If you want to stay friends, that’s absolutely fine, but have you ever considered romance? You could be married someday. You’d be the ultimate power couple.”

“Hold on, I don’t understand,” Kirishima says a little plaintively. “This is kind of out of left field, dude. What about you?”

“What about me?”

“What about,” Kirishima gestures vaguely with the hand that’s not being held captive by Izuku. “You know, us? Isn’t that what this whole thing was about? You joining the squad? If Tetsu and I get together, what happens to you?”

“Don’t worry about me,” Izuku says earnestly. “We’ll still be friends, right? We’ll see each other all
the time. But you and Tetsu, you make each other so happy. Everyone can see that. The decision is yours, of course, but I just thought I’d tell you what I think, because it looks like you guys haven’t considered the idea of being together. And you’re a great person, so all I want is for you to be happy, and Tetsu can do that better than anyone else, and — why are you crying?”

“Every day you become more of a man,” says Kirishima, wrapping both arms around Izuku’s shoulders so he can sob into his hair. “You’re the bravest man I know, Midoriya. So selfless. So pure.”

Mystified, Izuku pats him. “There, there, there’s no need to cry. But, look, just think about it, okay?”

Kirishima gives him a truly terrific sniffle. He pulls away, though, scrubbing at his face with the sleeve of his blazer. His nose is blotchy and red. “You really think I should date Tetsu?”

“Yes! At the very least, give it a shot.”

“I dunno. Tetsu’s my bro, you know?”

“He could be your bro and more!” Izuku says, gesturing wide. “You could have a bromance. That’s a romance between bros.”

“I guess?”

“And Tetsu’s super handsome!”

“He’s a knockout.”

“He thinks you are too,” Izuku continues. “And he’s manly, and, and, he shares all of your hobbies, and you can celebrate your birthday together, and your family already likes him.”

“They love him.”

“And so do you! Platonically, at the moment, but maybe also romantically at some point. The point is, he’s basically the ideal boyfriend.”

“Not to be heteronormative,” Kirishima says. “But isn’t that, like, mad gay?”

Izuku pauses. “Well, yeah.”

“I dunno. I’m really committed to the macho aesthetic.”


“Yeah?”

“So, that’s twice the men. Double the manliness.”

“That’s even better than the standard amount of manliness,” Kirishima says, eyes sparkling as the possibilities dawn on him. “And we can smooch.”

“All you want!” Izuku beams. “Have you ever wanted to smooch Tetsu?”

“Well, yeah,” Kirishima shrugs as though Izuku had just asked if Kacchan had anger issues. “Who doesn’t?”

“So why don’t you ask him to smooch?”
“What if he says no?” Kirishima deflates. “What if he doesn’t want to be my bro anymore?”

“You both seem very comfortable in your masculinity,” Izuku reasons. “Too comfortable, maybe. Would he really get upset if you told him you liked him more than he thought you did?”

“No,” says Kirishima. “No, he wouldn’t. Our bond is stronger than rock. Stronger than steel!”

“So just,” Izuku says, squeezing Kirishima’s face in a moment of passion and giving him unflattering fish lips. “Just do it.”

“Are you quoting the Nike slogan at me?”

“You can be best friends and boyfriends! You can be soulmates!”

“Alright,” says Kirishima, eyes still glistening with unshed tears and hope. “I’m gonna give this a shot. For your sake, I’m gonna go ask Tetsu out, like a man.”

“That’s the spirit!” Izuku cries. Kirishima shouts in tandem, and they stand there in the corridor hyping each other up and riding the endorphin high until the bell for homeroom rings and they have to sprint back to class so Aizawa doesn’t give them detention.

“Bro!” roars Kirishima much later, bursting into the 1-B classroom and startling Monoma into dropping his lunch money. “Bro, where are you? I need to ask you something.”

“I’m right here, bro,” Tetsu says, standing up. “What’s up? Are we going to the cafeteria?”

“Come with me for a sec,” Kirishima says, and drags Tetsu by the hand into the boys’ bathroom. Nobody’s in there right now, and Tetsu scratches the back of his neck and leans against the sink.

“I know we haven’t actually established any boundaries in our relationship but I dunno if I can help you pee, man.”

“That’s the thing, bro,” says Kirishima, a fire in his eyes and fingers tangling themselves in Tetsu’s blazer. “I wanna erase all boundaries with you, bro.”

“Bro?”

“I wanna make you my boyfriend. My significant other. My significant bruh-ther.”

“Bro,” Tetsu says in awe, wrapping his arms around Kirishima’s waist. “Are you for real? You wanna date?”
“Yeah. Nothing has to change, bro. We’ll still be best buds, but we can totally bang.”

“Oh my god. You’re super hot, I’m super hot, that’s a great idea.”

“Right? Midoriya suggested it.”

“Right on, Midoriya. But wait,” Tetsu says, frowning deeply. “Isn’t being boyfriends totally gay?”

“Yeah, bro,” says Kirishima, bouncing in excitement. “But I thought about it, bro. Listen. What if,” he says. “What if, we just say no homo when we’re about to make out?”

“Oh, right,” says Tetsu in relief. “Great idea, bro. That’s okay then.”

“So we’re dating?”

“Hell yeah we are.”

“Nice,” says Kirishima, reaching up to tangle his fingers gently in Tetsu’s hair. Tetsu’s arms tighten around him, and Kirishima nuzzles his new boyfriend’s nose with delight.

“No homo,” he says, leaning closer to press his lips against the corner of Tetsu’s mouth. “Full bromo.”

Chapter End Notes

AU in which everything is the same except Midoriya and Bakugou switch characters:

Bakugou: I know you want to go to UA but you’re vulnerable without a quirk. I’m going to become a hero and protect you because that’s what friends do!

Midoriya, loading a glock: Shut the fuck up Baka-gou. I don’t need a quirk to kick your ass.

I’d pay to see that kind of hero, though. He just happens to have a gun. No quirk needed, just a bullet between the eyes of the villain of the week. They call him Gun Guy. He’s not very popular.

Speaking of popularity, I believe with all my heart that there’s a legion of brand name sports wear waiting for Iida to graduate high school so he can be the face of their next campaigns. You best believe Adidas is ready to slap some stripes on our boy Ingenium.
nike has a line of running shoes they want him to approve, and puma wants a collab with uraraka for their anti-gravity lightweight sneakers.

reebok's gunning for todoroki but for some reason the only ads he does are for thermoses because he feels a kinship with them idk

thanks everyone for your input, the majority of people believe that iida wears mainly briefs.

this week's poll: does todoroki have one cold nipple and one warm one. Is one nipple always perky from the cold and the other one is normal. Is that the real reason he froze himself. So his nipples would match. Dial 1800 to place your vote.

i should really go to bed
A little green book of secrets. That’s what they’d called him.

Toru rests her chin on her hands and stares hard at the back of Midoriya’s fluffy head. The whole invisibility thing can be annoying sometimes, but it does come with a few perks; her body image issues tend to be pretty straightforward, for one, considering her body doesn’t actually have an image. She doesn’t need to wear makeup (she’d tried, once, but then she’d just looked like a floating pair of lips). And she can stare at pretty much anyone without them noticing. Like now. Midoriya has no idea he’s being watched.

Then again, Midoriya’s not always the most observant. Bakugou and Todoroki are living proof of that.

“I’m saying,” says Ashido, gesturing for emphasis, “that size is one of the cornerstones of a successful dick down.”

“There are no problems that can’t be solved with a little ingenuity,” Aoyama retorts. “The toy industry has come a long way, y’know.”

“You should reconsider your heteronormative views on sex, Ashido. Dicks aren’t everything,” says Jirou loftily.

Ashido rolls her eyes. “I’d take you seriously if you weren’t trying not to laugh. Anyway, you know I’m talking specifically about people in possession of a pocket rocket.”

“I will pay you to never say that again.”

“Pocket rocket,” says Ashido. “Womb raider, love lance, manaconda, cocktopus—”

“Stop—”

“Rumpleforeskin—”

“The point is,” Aoyama cuts in, “you don’t win a battle based on brute strength alone. A successful warrior is someone with ingenuity and creativity.”

“Like Midoriya,” says Toru.

Aoyama looks over his shoulder, and then brightens up. “Actually, that’s a great example. That boy hasn’t hit his growth spurt yet, but I’m sure he wouldn’t let that stop him from having a great time.”

“Are you sure he hasn’t hit his growth spurt?” Ashido hums. She looks like she wants to put her feet on Jirou’s desk, but aborts the movement because Iida will no doubt give her an earful. “Midoriya is full of surprises.”

“He’s compact!” says Toru. “Dense but powerful.”
“This is an absolutely terrible mental image that you’re giving me,” says Jirou.

“I’m not saying he’s deficient,” Aoyama waves a delicate hand. “I’m saying he’s probably proportionate. He’s only, what, a hundred and sixty centimeters? Now, if he were built like, say, Iida —”

“Or Koda,” says Jirou.

“Or Satou,” says Ashido.

“Or Shoji,” says Toru.

Aoyama pauses. “Now there’s an idea. He can turn his extra arms into anything, right?”

“You’re a freak,” says Jirou.

“But Midoriya has the energy of someone, y’know, gifted,” says Ashido. “Although I do see what you’re saying, he’s pretty petite.”

“He’s thick,” says Toru, looking away to observe Midoriya closely. He’s perched on the corner of Iida’s chair, dwarfed but not overshadowed, laughing about something he’s just said. Uraraka hasn’t arrived yet, which is the only reason they’re having this conversation. “Like, overall.”

“That’s a valid point, actually,” says Ashido. “Thickness is where it’s really at.”

“But we all agree that Midoriya would know what he’s doing, if you give him a little practice,” Aoyama says. “We just need to figure out what his strong suit is. Thickness or length, or creativity.”

“Thickness, I’m sure,” says Toru.

“There’s no way of knowing that,” says Aoyama.

“Just look at him!”

“Yeah, that doesn’t prove anything, not until you check for certain.”

“Come on, thickness!” says Toru with gusto. “It’s Midoriya.”

“Yes?” says Midoriya from across the class.

Jirou smacks Toru on the arm. “Good going, dummy. Try talking louder next time, maybe you can fill in for Present Mic.”

Toru wonders if it would be prudent to take all her clothes off and flee. Midoriya makes a little huffy noise as he gets off the chair and ambles over, expression cheerful and slightly confused. “Did you call me? What are you guys talking about?”

“Nothing,” says Ashido.

“Ojiro’s tail,” says Jirou.

Midoriya’s eyebrows furrow, and he glances in Ojiro’s direction. “Well, I guess it is pretty thick. If you compare it to your average animal tail, I mean.”

Aoyama grins. “We just wanted your opinion on things, since you’re analytical. Which d’you think if more important, thickness or length?”
Toru discreetly kicks his shin, but it’s too late now. Ashido’s already pulling up a chair for him. “I say thickness, myself. I just think it gives you better grip,” she says.

“It’s mostly muscle, as far as I know,” Midoriya says, perching on the edge of the seat. He’s still a little unsure, but he relaxes slowly as thoughts come to him. “I think his build means he utilises power over reach.”

“He excels at close contact situations,” Jirou agrees.

“It’s still fairly flexible, though,” Midoriya points out. “His tail is completely prehensile. At least, I think it is. The last time I saw him spar, he got pinned. That surprised me, actually, since martial arts are supposed to be his strong suit.”

“Oh, really? I didn’t see that coming,” says Ashido, fighting to keep a straight face. “I just can’t picture him going down.”

Aoyama reaches across the desk and pats her on the shoulder. “Come on, don’t be too hard on him, he’s probably just a little stiff.”

“He had such a great winning streak,” sighs Ashido. “D’you think he just couldn’t keep it up?”

“Maybe we should see if he’s doing okay,” says Jirou. “Ask him deep, penetrating questions, and all that. Really pump him for answers.”

“It was just one spar,” Midoriya says, a little mystified. Toru, with no fear of being seen, stuffs her fist against her mouth to keep from giggling. “I’m sure you don’t need to go to that extent. Although, I guess it’s nice that you’re so invested in his progress.”

“We won’t do anything drastic,” says Ashido. “Don’t worry. We’ll think about our actions long and hard.”

“Okay. What brought this on, anyway?” Midoriya asks, head sweetly tilted. “And why’d you need me?”

Jirou points in Toru’s direction. “Hagakure’s really interested in Ojiro’s tail.”

“Hey! I am not!”

“Sorry for interrupting you, Midoriya,” says Ashido. “You were chatting with Iida, right? We won’t keep you any longer.”

“Uhm, okay,” Midoriya says, chair scraping as he stands. “Sorry I couldn’t say anything more worthwhile, I guess.”

“That’s not true,” says Jirou seriously. “Rest assured, your opinion made a vas deferens.”
Toru whines the moment Midoriya’s out of earshot. “Why did you tell him I was interested in Ojiro’s tail, of all things? He’s gonna think I’m some sort of weirdo!”

“You’re the idiot who went and got his attention,” says Jirou. “That’s what you get for yelling in class.”

“I didn’t mean to!”

“There, there, Midoriya’s very unassuming,” Aoyama says cajolingly. “He knows what it’s like to be interested in quirks, I doubt he’ll think it’s weird. In fact he’ll forget about it by lunchtime.”

“You’re laughing at me,” grumbles Toru.

“I’m not laughing,” Aoyama says, and then giggles.

“Don’t pout,” Ashido says, grinning wide. “That was a close call. It’s a shame we never did get our answer, though. I guess we’ll just have to hear second hand from whichever lucky person manages to seduce Midoriya.”

“I volunteer,” says Aoyama.

“He’s out of your league,” Jirou snorts.

“Maybe so,” Aoyama sighs. “A man can dream, though. I live my life in the hope of being gently cradled in those burly arms.”

“He does have nice arms,” says Ashido. “But his heart’s his biggest muscle.”

“Kind of like Ojiro’s tail,” Jirou says, and Toru kicks her too for good measure.

“No,” says Tenya. “No.”

“He hasn’t even said anything yet,” says Uraraka, putting her backpack down on her desk.

“He doesn’t have to,” says Tenya, pointing at Midoriya’s face. Midoriya’s happy, freckled face. “I know that look. He’s got another terrible idea in that fluffy head of his and I already know I’m against it.”
“But Iida,” Midoriya says, clutching his sleeve. Uraraka clutches his other sleeve, because she likes to make him suffer. “She likes his tail.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m talking about Hagakure,” Midoriya says as though this is somehow obvious. “I was chatting with her and the others this morning. They wanted my opinion on Ojiro’s tail, because Hagakure’s obsessed with it, apparently.”

“I don’t think this is the kind of information you should be spreading,” says Tenya, going slightly pink.

“She’s worried about his performance, that’s all. I mentioned that he lost his last sparring match against Shoji. They were all concerned, I guess, but they singled out Hagakure specifically. Asked some really specific questions about length and thickness and how that would affect his performance in close contact.”

“What kind of conversation was this, exactly?” asks Uraraka, eyes narrowing.

“The point is,” says Midoriya urgently, shaking Tenya’s arm, “that she obviously likes him. Why else would she be so thorough?”

“I wonder,” says Uraraka.

“Even if she feels that way,” says Tenya, willing himself not to crumble when Midoriya looks at him imploringly, “which you’re not sure about, might I add, that doesn’t mean she would want you to meddle. Also, I’m not sure if you remember that you have a strengthening quirk but I can no longer feel my right arm.”

Midoriya lets go hastily (Uraraka does not). “Okay, but, have you considered the fact that they opportunity is literally right there and it would be a crime not to help them out?”

“You keep saying that!” Tenya complains. “You’ve taken on two similar projects already and now you’re eyeing these two. You’ve gone mad with power, Midoriya.”

Midoriya’s eyes glint in a way that makes Tenya nervous. “Oh, but I haven’t. I said my last side quest would be easy, remember?”

“No way,” says Uraraka gleefully. “Did you get Kirishima and Tetsu together?”

“I did, before the weekend, and they’re the happiest couple I’ve ever seen. And now that I’ve finished that task, I’m ready to move on to the next.”

Tenya’s kind of impressed despite himself. “It’s only been a week or so since you started, I thought.”

“You shouldn’t doubt Deku-kun,” Uraraka grins. “He’s unstoppable when he puts his mind to something.”

“Because I want to help them,” Midoriya says, fixing Tenya with his dewy green stare. “Like a hero should.”

“You’re not trying to get in the way of hero work, are you?” says Uraraka.

“That would be uncharitable,” says Midoriya. “That would be downright villainous.”

“I would never!” Tenya protests. “But I’m really not sure that this counts as hero work—”
“And he’s doing it so responsibly,” Uraraka adds. “Systematically.”

“Getting one couple out of the way before moving onto the next,” Midoriya agrees. “Formulating a plan of attack to help those in romantic need.”

“No lovers left behind.”

“And submitting all my homework on time while I’m at it.”

“All of your homework?” asks Tenya. “No late assignments? No staff complaints?”

“Nope,” says Midoriya, popping the ‘p’. “And I got a 97 on our last modern literature essay.”

“That was your weakest subject,” says Tenya. “Well done!”

“He’s a great example, isn’t he?” says Uraraka.

Tenya nods enthusiastically, glasses slipping down his nose. “Your attitude is admirable, Midoriya! Why, if the rest of us had half of your drive and initiative, we’d all graduate early.”

“Great!” Midoriya beams. “So I’ll get to work on Hagakure and Ojiro as soon as I collect some more notes.”

“Wait, that isn’t what I meant—”

“See you later, Iida,” Midoriya beams, getting up to skip gaily back to his seat. “I can hear Mr Aizawa’s sleeping bag squeaking outside, I should go get ready for homeroom. Thanks for giving me your blessing.”

“I didn’t!”

“Just let it go,” Uraraka says, patting him gently on the shoulder. “You know he’d do it whether or not you said no.”

“I take it back,” Tenya says slowly. “Every single one of Midoriya’s problems are in some way his own fault. If the rest of us tried to be like him we’d be dead.”

“You’re probably right,” says Uraraka. From the back of the class, Todoroki throws a paper airplane at Bakugou’s head. Bakugou, without breaking eye contact, puts it in his mouth, chews, and swallows. “But it’s Deku. Someone up there is looking out for him, even through his poor life choices.”

Tenya wishes he could say the same for himself. Uraraka finally lets go of his arm, and Tenya wonders if Mr Aizawa will let him skip homeroom so he can run to the store for some aspirin.
It’s a beautiful day. The sun is shining, the birds are singing, and the love of Tetsu’s life is standing in line for cheese snacks.

Something thumps him on the back of the head. It feels kind of like a fist, and while Tetsu is no stranger to being punched he does tend to shrug off any impact smaller than a car crash, so he waits until the second punch before he actually looks up. “What’s up?”

“Hey, asshole. Where’s your other, stupider half?”

“Oh, it’s Brodoroki and Bakubro. Or would Brokugou be better?”

“I’m neither of those things,” says Bakugou. “And I sure as hell ain’t your bro.”

“Kirishima,” says Todoroki.

“No, I’m Tetsu,” says Tetsu.

Bakugou squeezes his eyes shut and counts to five. “Okay, I take it back. You’re clearly the stupider half.”

“Of what?”

Bakugou breathes out very loudly. Todoroki takes a seat opposite Tetsu. Kaminari, who is the only other person at the lunch table, silently gets up and walks away. “You spend a lot of time around Kirishima.”

“Not enough, man. I’d spend every minute with him if I could.”

“You’re disgusting,” says Bakugou, turning a chair around so he can sit on it backwards. It’s pretty cool-looking. Tetsu should try that one day. “Where is he?”

“Seventh in line at the snack stand,” Tetsu says immediately, because he hasn’t actually taken his eyes off his man ever since they tragically parted twelve minutes ago. “But someone’s trying to buy sixteen cake pops. Why not just get a whole cake slice?”

“He’ll be occupied for a while,” says Bakugou to Todoroki. “We can use this idiot in the meantime. Listen, I want to know what Kirishima’s deal is.”

Tetsu perks up. He likes talking about Kirishima. “Well he’s handsome, and manly, and kind—”

“No, you fucking fool. I mean his connection to Deku. They’ve been attached at the hip all this week, I want to know what the fuck is going on.”

Tetsu frowns. “Who’s Deku?”

“Midoriya,” says Todoroki.

“No way, his first name is Deku?”

“It’s Izuku,” says Todoroki while Bakugou clenches his fists. “Which is not the point. What is the relationship between Kirishima and Midoriya?”
“Oh, they’re bros. We’re all bros, in fact. We went to McDonalds together and Midoriya gave Kiri the Crimson Riot pen from his Happy Meal because he already had one. I’d say they’re pretty tight.”

“Fucking Deku,” says Bakugou.

“Don’t jump to conclusions, he doesn’t need two pens. It might not mean anything,” says Todoroki quietly. “When did this friendship start?”

“Maybe a week ago, after Midoriya asked for Kiri’s number.”

The table cracks a little under Bakugou’s grip. “He did, did he? ‘Might not mean anything’ my ass.”

“Let him finish,” says Todoroki.

Tetsu scratches his ear. “Yeah, he’s big on texting, Kiri said. It’s cool, though. He’s real supportive, and he really gets Kiri, y’know? I mean, not as much as I do, obviously, but he’s the one who suggested the whole dating thing. It never would have crossed Kiri’s mind if Midoriya hadn’t brought it up, but Midoriya said he knew it would make Kiri happy— hey, Brodoroki, I didn’t know you could make steam. You’re like a one man sauna!”

“It sounds like you’re taunting us,” says Bakugou, dropping the large chunk of high-pressure laminate he’s somehow managed to break off. “You better fucking not be, troglodyte.”

Tetsu blinks. “It’s Tetsu.”

Todoroki grabs the back of Bakugou’s shirt just as he lunges across the table. “Leave it, it’s not worth the suspension,” he says with an uncomfortably straight face. “Come on, we have to have a discussion in private.”

He drags Bakugou away kicking and snarling like a wild animal. Tetsu deactivates his quirk and watches them go, frown only dissipating when Kirishima puts a hand on his shoulder and offers him a view of the snack haul. “What was that about?”

“I’m not really sure,” says Tetsu, opening his mouth so Kirishima can feed him a chip. “Your friends seem to really care about you, though. Bakubro was super mean to me. And he might have threatened me, so I think that means I just got the shovel talk.”

“The shovel talk? Really? That’s weird,” Kirishima says, plopping down next to him. “I haven’t actually told them we were dating.”

“Must have figured it out themselves,” Tetsu says, kissing his cheek. “All your friends are so smart. They asked a lot about Midoriya, too, for some reason.”

“Oh, yeah that makes sense. They’re both basically obsessed with him.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, it’s why they fight all the time, but it’s nice they came together just to look out for me. I’m so happy they care,” Kirishima sighs. “Want some of my brotein shake? It’s strawberry.”

“Yeah, thanks. Why wouldn’t they care about you? You’re basically perfect and the most valuable human being in existence.”

“Stop it,” Kirishima says, clearly delighted. “That’s you, babe.”

“Babe,” says Tetsu, heart soaring. “That’s even better than bro.”
“I know,” says Kirishima, shyly leaning into his side. “I just thought about it last night.”

“Man, we’re so in love.”

“We sure are,” says Kirishima. “By the way, what happened to our table?”

“I am in so much trouble,” Toru says, plastering herself onto Aoyama’s desk the moment she steps through the classroom door two days later.

Aoyama’s got one shoe off and is painting his toenails purple. “What did you do?”

“Nothing,” says Toru dramatically. “It’s,” she says, and then lowers her voice to a whisper. “It’s Midoriya.”

Aoyama pauses. The fourth toe on his right foot remains half-naked, and he raises one eyebrow and sits back. “What’s Midoriya? He can’t be causing you trouble, he’s an angel.”

“No, it’s just—did you see him yesterday? He followed me around all of lunch, and you know what he talked about? Ojiro.”

The acrid smell of nail polish lessens when he puts the brush back in the bottle, and Aoyama wiggles his toes as they dry. “Why?”

“You know why! It’s because you and the idiot brigade told him I was obsessed with Ojiro’s tail, and now he’s probably trying to be supportive because he thinks I’m some kind of tail fetishist. Or, or, he figured out what we were talking about earlier and he’s trying to catch me out, oh my god.”

“Now why would he be trying to catch you out specifically?” Aoyama says, scooching over so Toru can share his chair. Toru bristles at the knowledge that he’s not taking this as seriously as he should be.

“Because I’m the weakest link? I don’t know. I’m not good at coming up with excuses on the fly. I’m useless, I’ll let it slip.”

“There, there,” says Aoyama. “You’re not useless, you’re great. You have that something about you, that je ne sais quoi.”

“Will you stop speaking French?”
“I am French.”

“You’re part white and you’ve been to France once.”

Aoyama harrumphs. “France is a state of being and I have the soul of a chain-smoking fashionable Parisian. Anyway, you’re jumping to the worst conclusion. Maybe Midoriya’s just trying to hang out with you, you know how he is with his aggressive friendship.”

Toru wrinkles her nose. “Why keep talking about Ojiro?”

“Because he thinks you like his fighting style?” Aoyama offers. “Which is our fault, granted, but it’s harmless. Maybe he’s trying to find something you have in common, is all. Hell, maybe he’s interested in Ojiro.”

“You think he likes Ojiro?”

“Well I didn’t mean it like that, but go off, I guess.” His toenails appear to be dry, so he gets to work on a clear top coat. “Hey, maybe he just likes you.”

Toru gasps. Aoyama flaps a hand at her and tells her to quiet down. “I was only joking, Midoriya’s nice to everyone.”

“But yesterday he asked me what I looked for in a guy,” Toru whispers. “The only other person who’s ever asked me that was Kaminari.”

“Oh,” Aoyama says, looking thoughtful. “Well, maybe he does like you. Wait a week and see if his behaviour seems suspicious. You know what this means, right?”

“That I should start making plans for Valentine’s day?” Toru says, turning pink (probably).

“It means,” says Aoyama. “That you might be the one to finally answer the question that’s been plaguing us all year.”

“Which is?”

Aoyama comes closer. “What does his dick look like?”

“Oh my god!” Toru yelps and pushes him away. “This isn’t happening, there’s no way I’m going to find that out.”

“Find what out?” asks Ashido, stepping through the door with Jirou behind her. “Why isn’t Iida yelling at you for painting your nails in class?”

“I said I’d come to his house at night and paint his pink if he bothered me,” Aoyama says breezily. “Hagakure’s going to be the one to look at Midoriya’s dick.”

“I’m not!”

“Oh, are you gonna spy on him?” Ashido says, perching on the edge of the table. “Because that’s a little illegal.”

“No!”

“She thinks Midoriya likes her.”

“You’re the one who said that,” Toru retorts. “And you also said he might like Ojiro.”
“Ojiro’s a good catch,” says Ashido.

“If he dates Ojiro then we can just ask him,” says Jirou.

“No, Ojiro’s a gentleman, he wouldn’t kiss and tell,” says Aoyama.

“Guys,” Toru whines, clutching Ashido’s leg. “Come on, I’m being serious here. I’m scared he’s suspicious that we’ve been talking about him or something.”

“So?” says Ashido. “We talk about all the guys, and I’m pretty sure they talk about us.”

“They better not be,” says Jirou. “I’m off-limits, and so’s Momo.”

Aoyama snorts. “Maybe he thinks Hagakure’s got the hots for Ojiro and he’s trying to bring them together.”

“She does love his big strong tail,” Ashido says, fluttering her lashes.

Toru smacks Ashido’s thigh. “Don’t be dumb! What am I supposed to do?”

“Seduce him,” says Ashido, matter of fact. “Find our answers once and for all, but don’t be too obvious about it. Don’t make him suspect you have ulterior motives.”

“Alternatively, be super upfront about your ulterior motives,” says Jirou. “Tell him you wanna smash and be done with it, that way he knows what he’s in for.”

“Ooh, ask if you can take photos,” Aoyama suggests. “Or at least bring a measuring tape or something.”

Toru puts her face in her hands. “Why did I think you guys would be helpful?”

“There, there,” says Aoyama, patting her on the shoulder. Unlike the others, he has the decency not to laugh at her too loudly. “You’re overthinking things. Like I said, he probably just wants to be friends with you. I wouldn’t be surprised if he had a chart somewhere with friendship meters drawn on them. He probably just thinks he hasn’t filled your positivity quota yet.”

“Or he likes you,” says Jirou. “Or Ojiro.”

“Or both,” says Ashido helpfully. “Polyamoury’s great, as long as it’s transparent and consensual.”

“And Hagakure’s the most transparent one of us all,” says Jirou.

“I hate you guys,” says Toru with feeling.

“Aww, we’re only kidding around,” says Aoyama. “You know we don’t mean it.”

“Really?” says Toru morosely.

“Really,” says Aoyama, clapping her on the shoulder. “Except for one part.”

“Which is?”

“I really, really want to see Mirodiya’s dick.”
“We’re heroes,” says Todoroki in a quiet, measured voice. “We’d never make it past first year if they knew.”

“So what?” Bakugou growls, tossing a pebble up and down in his hands. Caresses it, as though he’s trying to memorise its consistency. “Are you saying it’s not worth it?"

“It is,” Todoroki replies. “All I’m saying is we can’t get caught.”

Silently, Koda shuts the door and decides he’ll go find another bathroom to use.

“You smell happy,” says Hitoshi.

Izuku checks the air vents, a supply cupboard, and the inside of a locker before it occurs to him that Hitoshi’s just sitting on the hallway floor, juice box in one hand and a familiar ugly cat on his lap. “Oh, hey. How’d you smuggle that in here?”

“Same way I smuggle everything,” says Hitoshi. “I still haven’t named him. I can’t decide between Nospurratu or Chairman Meow. Or Paul, maybe.”

“Paul is a nice name, I guess,” Izuku says, reaching out to pet it and then aborting when it hisses. “Still haven’t forgiven me, huh?”

“He won’t bite,” says Hitoshi, which Izuku doubts. “How’s life?”

“Oh! I wanted to tell you that your approach was flawless,” Izuku gushes, parking himself on the floor right next to Hitoshi and out of the cat’s reach. “Literally all I had to do was be upfront about what I thought of their relationship, and it worked. They’re dating now. They’re the sappiest couple I’ve ever seen, it’s fantastic.”

“Congratulations,” says Hitoshi. The cat, noting the approval in its master’s voice, flashes its claws at
Izuku in warning. “Back to the main mission?”

“Well, not exactly,” Izuku grins. “Another case has presented itself.”

“Oh?”

“A girl from our class seems to really like one of the boys. I’m not super close friends with either of them, but it’s so obvious I can’t not help.”

“You’re a busy man,” says Hitoshi. The cat, suddenly all big yellow eyes and one-eared affection, rolls over for its belly to be scratched. “Plan?”

“In the works,” says Izuku. Maybe he’s still riding the high from Kirishima and Tetsu’s union, but he’s feeling a little proud of himself as he digs a blue notebook out of his backpack. “I’ve been watching them. It’s only been a couple days, and to be honest watching the girl is a little, well, difficult. But, I have a couple of preliminary observations. They don’t interact much more than regular classmates do, and they’re both fairly normal compared to the other subjects.”

“Alright,” Hitoshi hums. “What does that mean for you?”

“It means,” Izuku says, opening the notebook, “that they’ve got the most straightforward relationship we’ve seen so far. They’re average, healthy students with a casual friendship. One likes the other, but is too shy to say it. They don’t spend enough time together for those feelings to develop beyond a crush. Honestly, they’re just high schoolers. It’s kind of refreshing.”

“Your analytical skills are pretty awe-inspiring,” says Hitoshi. The cat flicks its ear in annoyance.

“Well, it’s only because you pointed out that I should be looking at the fundamentals of these relationships,” says Izuku, scratching the back of his neck bashfully. “I thought pretty hard about it, it was good advice.”

“I’m happy to help,” says Shinsou. “As always, I could just make them like each other.”

“No, that won’t last,” Izuku says, putting his notebook away. “Anyway it would be really cute to watch them fall in love. Kind of like being in a shoujo manga, you know?”

“Would that make you the protagonist?”

“Nah, I’m just a side character,” Izuku shrugs. “I’m really not the protagonist type.”

Hitoshi side-eyes him, although he doesn’t say why. “What will you do now?”

“I don’t know yet. Might be useful to talk to the girl, find out how she feels. I have to tread lightly, I think. Don’t want her getting spooked. There’s a very real danger of screwing up their relationship, unlike Kirishima and Tetsu.”

“Okay,” says Hitoshi. “Let me know if you need to bounce ideas off me. Cat-kun and I are willing to listen.”

“I don’t think your cat wants to talk about my problems,” Izuku says. “It hates me. Maybe you should name it after Kacchan, come to think of it. Call it Catsuki. Or, actually, don’t. He’ll know I came up with that.”

“He’ll warm up to you,” Hitoshi says, using the cat’s paw to pat Izuku on the knee. Its claws come out and leave scratches on his pants. “Eventually. A long, long time from now.”
“I can’t wait,” Izuku snorts, and sits there trying to coax it into playing until Hitoshi puts it in Izuku’s lap in a moment of bad judgement, and it pees on him.

“I did not think he would do that,” Hitoshi says, staring at the wet patch on Izuku’s leg. “He’s house trained, I swear.”

“He knew what he was doing,” Izuku scowls. The cat’s tail swishes as it stalks back to Hitoshi, pausing to look over its shoulder with the most smug expression Izuku has ever seen on a cat.

“Alright, demon, you’ve made your point.”

*Mrow,* says the cat, and Izuku decides it’s probably time to go home.

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Chapter End Notes

hi i'm on some really gnarly meds that won't let me sleep and it's been three days so I think my sense of humour's abandoned all logic so if this is bad then i'm sorry??? I really am but my grip on the waking world was tenuous at best and now i genuinely feel like a balloon only barely attached to my head so please forgive me just this once

due to last chapter's poll my eyes have been opened not only to the details of icyhot's icyhot nipnops, but to the idea that the carpet matches the drapes, which i will go so far as to extend to the rest of his body. leg hair, arm hair, underarm hair....half and half, baby.

this week i ask: of the 1A boys, who's gonna be the first to lose their v-card?

AU in which someone (probably kirishima) figures out that Bakugou's a lot less cranky after getting dicked down, so whenever he starts acting up somebody hauls him off to fuck him quiet

todoroki keeps accusing him of being pissy just because he won't admit he wants to fuck bakudeku hate sex

bakugou enjoying himself immensely until he figures out that a) pretending to be cranky doesn't work with iida because iida just gives him a stress ball, which is a problem because b) iida has a size 12 shoe

The Adventures of Bakuhoe.
“You said we’d be able to cut through anything. We’ve been here for half an hour, what’s the hold up?”

“It’s not my fault,” says Bakugou, lifting his welding mask. “This chainsaw fucking sucks. Who’d you even get it from?”

“Hitoshi,” says Todoroki.

Tetsu oohs appreciatively at the next shower of sparks. “Not that this isn’t fun,” he says cheerfully. “But I kind of need to pee. Is this gonna take much longer?”

“Why don’t we take a break, then Bakugou can tie you up again after you’re done peeing?” says Eijirou.

“Stop using your quirks,” says Todoroki.

“I need both legs attached to my body,” says Eijirou.

“Why did you even come here if you’re going to be uncooperative?”

“I didn’t,” Eijirou says. “Bakugou found me after school and said ‘hey does this rag smell like chloroform to you’ and I woke up here.”

“I came because Brodoroki said you and Kiri would be here,” Tetsu says. “I did think it was kind of weird that you guys wanted to hang out in a basement, though.”

“Alright, fuck it,” Bakugou says, dropping the chainsaw on the floor. It makes a worrying screechy noise against the tiles and then dies. “This isn’t working. Do we have a plan B?”

“No,” says Todoroki. “I tried at the last minute to get some bleach but for some reason the school’s all out.”

“Fuck. We’re going to have to keep them here while we come up with something else.”

“Can I go to the bathroom?” asks Tetsu.

“Fine. Make it quick.”

Tetsu snaps the duct tape binding his wrists and stands, stretching out his arms with a satisfied noise. “Thanks. See you in a second. You guys want anything from the vending machine on my way back?”

“Coke,” says Todoroki.

“Pepsi,” says Bakugou.
“I’m good, thanks,” says Eijirou, blowing a hands-free kiss to his boyfriend as he jogs up the basement stairs. “By the way, why am I here?”

“You know why,” Bakugou scowls. The welding mask perched on his head casts intimidating shadows on his face, and Eijirou wonders if he should try doing something similar with his hero costume. “You make a move on Deku, you die. That’s how it works.”

Eijirou considers this. “What counts as making a move on Midoriya, exactly?”

“Dating him, you fuck.”

“So…why am I here, then?”

Bakugou stares at him. Really stares, which wouldn’t normally bother Eijirou except this time Todoroki’s standing next to him and their expressions are so alike it’s disconcerting. “You are dating Midoriya,” says Todoroki. “You will no longer be dating Midoriya once you are dead.”

“Oh,” says Eijirou, relaxing. “Alright, there’s your problem. I’m not dating Midoriya, I’m dating Tetsu.”

“What,” says Todoroki.

“What,” says Bakugou.

“Yeah, I’ve never dated Midoriya. I mean, I think he might have liked me at one point,” Eijirou says a little bashfully, “but pretty soon after we started hanging out, Midoriya convinced me that me and Tetsu would make a great couple. He was right, obviously.”

“What the fuck,” Bakugou says, sounding more outraged than angry. “Tetsu? Since when?”

“Since a couple weeks ago. You haven’t noticed? We’re so lovey dovey.”

“You act exactly the same.”

“No, we make out now.”

Bakugou and Todoroki share a very long look. Eijirou doesn’t try to decipher their silent conversation because this seems like the kind of thing they need to work out themselves. “My heart belongs to Tetsu,” he adds, though, just in case they didn’t get it. “Midoriya was our wingman. Right, babe?”

“Yeah, totally,” says Tetsu, clomping down the stairs. “What are we talking about?”

“How our relationship started. They thought I was dating Midoriya, isn’t that nuts?”

“That’s dumb,” says Tetsu. “Why would they think that?”

Bakugou reaches for the chainsaw again, but Todoroki grabs him by the back of the shirt. “So neither of you are interested in Midoriya?” he says, tugging Bakugou backwards. “Are you certain you’re telling us the truth and this isn’t some elaborate ploy to get out of having your legs disassembled?”

“Yeah,” Tetsu says. “Also when I got to the vending machine I realised I didn’t have enough change for cola so I just got you guys milk.”

“They’re way too stupid to pull off a ploy,” Bakugou says, yanking the mask off and throwing it
over his shoulder. “All of this was a waste of time.”

“It’s nice that you guys like him so much,” Eijirou says, scooching over so Tetsu can join him on the floor. “But you’re not gonna get anywhere like that, you know?”

“I don’t need your fucking advice,” Bakugou snaps.

“Let him finish.” Todoroki takes the strawberry milk and hands the chocolate one to Bakugou. “What do you propose we do, then?”

“Well the main problem that I can see is how hostile you guys are to each other,” Eijirou says sincerely.

“Which is crazy considering how much you have in common,” says Tetsu.

“We’re nothing alike,” say Bakugou and Torodoki at the same time.

“The point is,” Eijirou continues, “that you’re dealing with Midoriya, who hates it when people are mean to each other. He can see that you’re competing over him, which is totally not what he stands for, you know?”

“It would kill him if he thought he was the reason you guys were enemies,” says Tetsu.

“Exactly,” Eijirou nods along. “So instead of—sorry, my arms are falling asleep. Do you mind if I break out of this duct tape? Thanks. So, instead of fighting all the time, you should show him that you guys can get along. Then he’ll know that if he picks one of you, the other one won’t go berserk and blow up the school like so much dollar-store dorayaki.”

“That would be a problem,” Todoroki mutters around his straw. “Bakugou’s a sore loser.”

“What makes you think he’s picking your half-and-half dairy substitute ass?” Bakugou slurps chocolate milk angrily at him. “Fucking whatever. So, what, we just have to pretend to coexist until Deku decides who to date?”

“I’d venture to say you should try to be friends,” Tetsu says, wrapping an arm around Eijirou because he doesn’t like to go more than a minute without cuddling. “Midoriya’s perceptive. He won’t even consider it if he thinks you’ll end up hating each other again. Look at us, we’re inseparable, and Midoriya loves spending time with us. He seeks out harmony, man. He’s like a little baby bunny that just wants to belong to a loving family.”

Bakugou rolls his eyes. “Right, sure. So you want me to spend my evenings cozying up to Scarface Mcgee? I’m going to lose my savings feeding him because he’s only ever had cold soba and crackers.”

“My allowance could buy you,” says Todoroki.

Bakugou throws his empty milk carton at him. “Fine. Play nice in front of Deku, I can do that. Come on, you’re gonna tell me all about yourself so I can impress Deku with how well I know you.”

“Not if I get to know you first,” Todoroki says, a fire in his eyes.

“How nice,” says Eijirou, watching them go. “I thought they’d never see eye to eye, but they’re finally starting to get along.”

“I hope things work out for them, however it turns out,” Tetsu sighs, running his fingers through
“Did you know,” says Midoriya after school, “that the first high school romance shoujo manga was probably written in the early sixties?”

“That’s nice,” says Ochako. “Are you a fan of shoujo?”

“Nope,” says Midoriya. “But I have borrowed and read 57 assorted volumes this week. But did you also know that reciprocal liking is a valid psychological phenomenon? A 1984 experiment by Gold, Ryckman and Mosley showed that male participants showed an increased interested in female confederates who made eye contact, leaned in and listen attentively despite disagreeing on important issues.”

“Okay?” says Ochako.

“What are you getting at?” asks Iida.

“I’m saying that the trope about liking someone because you think they like you is very plausible,” Mirodiya grins. “Furthermore, feelings can come from odd places. Adrenaline and cortisol are released when you’re stressed, but also when you’re attracted to someone. Sometimes people mistake fear, nerves or even embarrassment for lust.”

Iida’s eyes narrow. “And what are you planning to do with that information?”

“Nothing yet,” Mirodiya says sweetly. “I just thought it was really interesting. Lots of shoujo plots make sense when you think about them scientifically. I always thought the big *doki doki* in the background were far-fetched, but apparently they’re not. It’s all just love and adrenaline.”

Iida doesn’t look convinced, which Ochako doesn’t really blame him for. “Are you gonna spook them and hope they fall in love?” she asks because they’re probably thinking the same thing. “We’re talking about, you know, project 3, right?”

“Yes, them. And no, I’m not that mean,” Midoriya says.

“You were seriously considering getting Bakugou and Todoroki arrested so they’d have to get along,” says Iida.

“That was Uraraka,” Midoriya says. “And let’s be honest, those two would rise to the top of the juvie food chain immediately. It’s not like they’d suffer together, they’d just be less supervised. Which would backfire, I think. But my point here is that when you break attraction down into its components, it looks pretty simple. Love is formulaic.”
Iida sighs, and Ochako can’t help but pat him sympathetically. “I’ve said this before, Midoriya, but you’re an imp in the guise of a cherub.”

“I’m helping,” Midoriya says, feigning hurt. Ochako giggles. “I’m not gonna do anything drastic, relax. This is, like, the one regular couple we’ve seen. No bro-ing, no trying to stab each other in the hallways. I want to protect that innocence. This operation is strictly vanilla, scout’s honour.”

“You were never a scout,” says Ochako. “You just liked the uniform and wore it every day for a week until Bakugou teased you and you cried.”

“I was six!” Midoriya says, turning a little pink. “Who even told you that?”

“Your mother, the last time Iida and I came over.”

Midoriya puts his face in his hands. “Fine, I had weird taste in clothes back then, okay? Don’t laugh at me, it’s not like I still run around in silly outfits now.”

Ochako puts a palm over Iida’s mouth before he can say anything. “So is this why you’ve been on a shoujo binge? Do you want any recommendations? There’s this one I really like about a high schooler trying to make her best friend see her as a girl, instead of just a martial arts rival.”

“I still have a couple volumes of Ouran to get through,” Midoriya says, throwing his backpack over his shoulder. “But you’ve given me a great idea. Ojiro? Ojiro!”

Izuku chases him all the way to the school gym, karate gi folded over one arm and school satchel bouncing against his hip. “Ojiro! Do you have a minute?”

Ojiro stops and waits obligingly for Izuku to catch up, tail swishing in greeting. “Yes? What’s up?”

“I wanted to ask if you could maybe do me a favour,” Izuku says, skidding to a stop. “Would you like a sparring partner?”

“Sure. Wanna come with?”

“No, not me,” Izuku says and rubs the back of his neck. “I was actually wondering if you’d be willing to train with Hagakure. Hand-to-hand combat is one of her weak points, so she needs the practice. The other day she was telling me how good she thought you were, so it just occurred to me that you would be the ideal sparring partner. You could help her improve.” Which isn’t even a lie, come to think of it. Hagakure’s decent, but not amazing at martial arts, and she had very explicitly said how much she liked Ojiro’s tail work.

Ojiro’s eyebrows furrow. The tip of his tail curls almost into a question mark, kind of like a curious cat’s. Interesting. “Oh. Why isn’t she asking me this herself?”

“She’s shy. She got really embarrassed the first time we talked about it, so I don’t think she has the nerve to bring it up. Sorry. I know it’s not really any of my business. I just thought it was worth checking to see if you were up for it.”
“I guess so. I could always use a partner, since I normally just ask whoever’s at the gym,” Ojiro says, looking slightly pleased. “Did she really say she liked my fighting?”

“Essentially, yeah,” Izuku says, choosing not to bring up the fact that it was technically Ashido and the others who spearheaded that conversation. “Ah, man, she’s gonna be really mad at me for butting in, though.”

“Well, I don’t have to tell her you asked me on her behalf,” Ojiro says thoughtfully. “I’ll ask her tomorrow after school and see if she’s interested. Maybe once she gets comfortable I can tell her it was your idea.”

“Sure!” Izuku beams. “Thanks, Ojiro, this is really nice of you.”

“Yeah, no worries. See you tomorrow, I guess. I’ll tell you how it goes.”

Izuku waves goodbye and lets Ojiro go, watching his tail drift from side to side. Seems like he’s in a good mood. Izuku is too, for completely different reasons, but Uraraka and Iida have probably already gone home for the day. He’ll tell them about it tomorrow, he figures, almost skipping to the door.

He decides to take the scenic route home. It’s a nice day, and it’s made even nicer when he passes by McDonalds and sees Bakugou showing Todoroki the joys of french fries dipped in ice cream.

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*Goal: Get Ojiro and Hagakure to spend time alone, preferably in situations that will stimulate mild adrenaline and cortisol production.*

*Attempt 1: Hagakure agreed to sparring. I went to use the weights so I could keep an eye on them.*

*Result: They were awkward at first, but it turned into a good session (I learned a few things myself)! Agreed to do it again sometime soon.*

*Addendum: Hagakure asked if she could strip, but Ojiro said ‘absolutely not’. Try to convince him to say yes next time?*
Attempt 2: Rain. Stole Hagakure’s umbrella so they’d have to share.
Result: Unsuccessful. Yaoyorozu made her a new one.

Attempt 3: Put a gecko in Hagakure’s blazer pocket while she was busy sparring with Ojiro
Result: She kept it.

“Why a gecko?” asks Hitoshi.

Izuku shrugs. “I thought it would scare her and Ojiro would come to the rescue. He seemed more afraid of it than she was, though. She named it Tailman Two and took it home with her.”

Hitoshi makes a thoughtful noise and feeds Izuku a chicken nugget. “What’s this about adrenaline and cortisol?

“Your brain makes it when you’re attracted to someone,” Izuku says with his mouth full. “You know how they say your heartbeat speeds up when you see someone you like? Stress hormones.”

“Hence the training.”

“Plus she needs it. They’re about five sessions in, it’s going well.”

“Okay. So you’re trying to get the chemical reaction first and hoping the romance comes after?”

“People who experience mild traumas together often fall in love. It’s plausible. Feelings are complicated.”

“Your thought process is intimidating,” Hitoshi says, raising his eyebrows.

“Stop it, you’re making me blush.” Smothering a fry in ketchup, Izuku pops it in his mouth and thinks. “I should step up my game. If there’s anything I’ve learned from Kirishima and Tetsu, it’s that sometimes it’s a good idea to just go for it. I don’t want to freak them out, though.”

“You could simulate a near-death situation and see if that works.”

“I literally just said I don’t want to scare them,” Izuku snorts. “There are less lethal ways to stress them out. Like shyness. Did you know Ojiro gets shy?”

“I’ve only spoken to him to brainwash him.”

“Right, I remember. Well, he does. Especially when you compliment him, it’s really cute. They both are. Hagakure’s really bubbly and Ojiro’s tail wags when he’s happy, although I don’t think he’s noticed that. Maybe I should plant the idea in his head that Hagakure likes him. But not explicitly, that would be mean.”
“And would get you in trouble,” Hitoshi says and steals some of Izuku’s milkshake.

“But she should be the one to say it. I don’t think it would be convincing if it came from me.”

“I’d offer to help with that, but that would be the least convincing option of all. How will you get her to open up?”

“I considered asking her friends for advice, but they’ll tell her everything. I don’t know if there’s any way for me to convince her to confess to him.”

“She doesn’t actually have to say anything to him, technically,” Hitoshi gestures with the last nugget. “He just has to hear her.”

“Intriguing,” Izuku says, leaning back in his chair. “Tell me your thoughts.”

“I’m gonna need another box of nuggets first.”

“Sure thing.” Izuku laughs, and makes sure to get extra barbecue sauce because he knows that one is Hitoshi’s favourite.

Kirishima’s hair smells like Old Spice and gel. It’s a nice smell, Tetsu thinks, even if the spikes are a little too stiff for him to comfortably rest his cheek against.

Bakugou hasn’t stopped jiggling his leg since he sat down. Todoroki is, by comparison, completely rigid, back straight and hands in his lap like a red and white adolescent statue. Kaminari’s next to them, picking at the lid of his yoghurt and eyeing them like he’s not sure if he should run. It’s a weird group. It’s even weirder because Iida keeps coming by to tell Tetsu to go back to his own class, but school hasn’t actually started yet so there’s no reason to stop sharing Kirishima’s seat.

Midoriya comes in about five minutes later, looking pretty cheerful and only perking up more when he spots Todoroki and Bakugou not ripping each other’s hair out. Tetsu waves him over to sit down, and Midoriya glances around the table before he makes himself comfortable on his own chair, which Todoroki and Bakugou had insisted be kept empty. “Hello. Funny seeing you here, Tetsu.”

“I just thought I’d walk my boyfriend to school,” Tetsu says.
“Get lost, Calamari,” Bakugou says flatly. Kaminari nods, chugs his yoghurt, and abruptly vacates his seat to hang out with someone else.

“You two seem to be in a good mood,” Midoriya says cautiously. Bakugou bristles, and Kirishima clears his throat so Midoriya doesn’t notice Todoroki elbowing Bakugou’s side.

“We were all just hanging out,” he says brightly. “How’s your week been?”

“Great, actually,” Midoriya says. “What were you guys chatting about?”

“Brokugou bought the new Doom,” Tetsu says. It’s a detail Bakugou had mentioned in passing, so he’s kind of proud of himself for remembering. “He was just inviting us and Brodoroki to come over and play sometime. Right guys?”

Mirodiya zeroes in on them immediately. Todoroki, if possible, sits up even straighter. “I didn’t know you liked video games, Todoroki.”

“Uhm,” says Todoroki.

Bakugou rolls his eyes so naturally that Tetsu wants to applaud. “Raspberry Ripple over here’s not allowed to play anything above PG 13. He’s been bugging me to show him good games ever since he added me on Steam.”

“He means violent games,” Todoroki says, taking the hint. “You’re the reason people say video games are a corrupting influence.”

“And your gaming experience is based solely on farming sims.”

“Stardew is a good game,” Todoroki sniffs.

“Christ, shut up,” Bakugou tells him. “What about it, Deku, you want in?”

Midoriya blinks. “Uhm, sure, if you don’t mind.”

“That’s a great idea! You should all spend some quality time together, really cement that friendship,” Kirishima says. “Tetsu and I won’t be able to join you, though.”

“We haven’t even picked a day yet,” says Todoroki’s mouth. His eyes say thank you.

Tetsu flaps a hand at him dismissively. “Doesn’t matter, Kiri and I have very busy weekends. All free days for the foreseeable future are gonna be spent making out.”

“No homo,” says Kirishima, making Midoriya giggle. “You guys go ahead, tell us how it goes.”

“Oh right,” Midoriya says, smile morphing into something less confused and more organic. His teeth are very white, and his freckles shift a little when he happily wrinkles his nose. “The three of us hanging out for the first time ever. I guess it’s a date.”

Silently, Bakugou and Todoroki melt in their seats. Kirishima hides a smile in Tetsu’s chest. Unseen by Midoriya, Tetsu flashes the hopeful romantics a thumbs up and mentally wishes them good luck.
“Take a walk with me?” Midoriya asks sweetly, and Toru chokes on her tea.

It’s only room temperature (and from a bottle), thankfully, so it doesn’t burn while she hacks up an invisible lung. Midoriya pats her on the back way too hard, but it distracts her from the liquid in her windpipe and she manages eventually to get her breathing back under control.

“Sure, where to?” she chirps as if she hadn’t just almost died. Midoriya still looks concerned, but he jerks his thumb towards the door. 1-A is empty save for all the blazers hung on the backs of the chairs. Everyone else is clearing heading to the cafeteria for lunch, but Midoriya turns right instead of left outside the classroom.

“Where are you two off to?” asks Iida, breaking away from the lunch rush to stand in front of them. Toru wishes she didn’t have to crane her neck so much to look at him.

“Just out for a walk,” says Midoriya innocently.

Iida raises an eyebrow. “Really. Would you like some company?”

“No thank you,” says Midoriya. “We’re bonding. I appreciate the offer, though.”

“Just the two of you?” says Iida. His tone suggests that he doesn’t approve. This isn’t new to Toru, though, since Iida disapproves of her and her friends a lot. “Nobody else?”

Midoriya seems unfazed. “Yes, just us two. We’re going to wander around and chat.”

“Wouldn’t you rather do that in the cafeteria? You shouldn’t skip lunch.”

“I’m not going to do anything terrible to her, you know.”

“We may have different definitions of terrible.”

“I know, I know. Sorry, Iida, but you’re kind of in the way.”

“I’m not budging,” Iida says, folding his arms. His very muscular, very intimidating arms. His arms that are attached to a very large torso that does a pretty good job of taking up more of the corridor than it logically should, and Toru turns to Midoriya to suggest that they save the bonding for another time.

Midoriya just shrugs. “Have it your way,” he says, and picks Iida up like a sack of potatoes.

“Excuse me,” Iida splutters into Midoriya’s back and scrambles for balance once he’s deposited next to the lockers and out of the way. His shirt’s come untucked and his glasses are crooked. Somebody whistles. “You are not supposed to use your quirk without permission!”

Midoriya flexes his arm. “I didn’t.”
Iida’s too flabbergasted to reply. Toru is too, but Midoriya takes her by the shoulder and gently leads her down the corridor and further into the academic building. Toru glances at his biceps a couple of times but can’t quite find it in her to ask him to flex some more. “I, uhm, what was that about?”

“Nothing, Iida’s just a big worrywart. He thinks I’m a corrupting influence.”

Toru thinks of big green eyes and sun-kissed freckles. “I don’t see how. Did you want to talk about something?”

“Oh, right. I hope this isn’t too out of left field,” Midoriya says a little hesitantly. “I’ve actually been thinking about our conversation from the other day, you remember? With Ashido and Aoyama and Jirou, during homeroom? When I overheard you?”

Toru feels her heart stop for the second time that afternoon. Thank God he can’t see her face right now. “Oh, that?” she says a little shrilly. “That, I, you know, it was just a stupid chat, we weren’t being serious about any of it. How much did you hear?”

“The important parts, I guess? It was interesting, though. I didn’t know you guys were so curious.”

“W-well, I guess, I mean, we probably shouldn’t have dragged you into it—”

“Who else would you have asked?” Midoriya chuckles. He’s got a nice laugh. Like sunshine and dandelions and protein powder. “Like, it’s weird, but it’s a valid question. Not something I’d think to ask myself, but I can see why you’d want to know.”

Toru coughs. “Really? You’re not offended? You’re not singling me out because I’m the weakest link and you know I’ll incriminate myself?”

“What?”

“Nothing,” Toru says, wringing her hands. “I, uhm, what are we talking about?”

“You wanted to know if girth or length were more important, right? After thinking about it, I can say that girth is probably more valuable,” Midoriya says. Toru glances at his zipper. “Gives you more power and control.”

“Oh! Is, uhm, is that important for you?”

Midoriya raises his eyebrows. “Well, of course it is. You don’t think so?”

“I really wouldn’t know,” Toru says. Midoriya nods.

“Right, makes sense that you wouldn’t, you’re built differently. I guess you’ll understand better if you see for yourself.”

“Can I?” Toru squeaks. Holy shit. I have to call Aoyama and tell him to find some measuring tape.

Midoriya nods again. “Well, sure. I mean, I’m only making this conclusion myself because I’ve practiced with Ojiro a couple of times. It was a good experience, actually. Even if he does always end up getting me on my back.”

“Oh my god,” Toru whispers. Midoriya just tilts his head at her like he hasn’t proven all of Aoyama’s weird fantasies right. “You and Ojiro? Oh my God.”

“Is that really so weird?”
“No! No, he’s a great guy! Absolutely amazing!”

“I think so too,” Midoriya smiles. He comes to a stop outside the music room and leans against the door. Nobody else is around. The sounds of chatter from the cafeteria float up through the open corridor windows, but their little corner is private. Toru, acutely aware of the way Midoriya’s pants clings to his hips, swallows and wishes she’d brought a camera. “But that’s not all I wanted to talk about.”

Toru might pass out. “It’s not?”

“No,” Midoriya says quietly. “I actually wanted to ask you how you feel about Ojiro. What do you think of him?”

“Like, as a person?” Toru manages to say. “Uhm, I don’t know him that well. We’ve only just become friends, and we’ve sparred a few times in the gym. He seems really nice, I think? And, uhm, he’s sweet and he works hard and he seems like he’d make a really great boyfriend.”

Midoriya lights up. “You think?”

“Yeah!” Toru says, relieved that this seems to be the right answer. “He’s, like, ideal. He seems like he’d never forget an anniversary and he may not be romantic, I don’t know, but he’s sensitive and patient. And cute, too.”

“You think he’s cute?”

“Yeah, sure,” Toru says, which isn’t a lie. Ojiro’s got great pecs.

Midoriya’s smile almost reaches his ears. “I see. I’m really, really happy to hear that. I think he’d be a great match for you too.”

“He would! I— wait, what?”

“You know,” says Midoriya earnestly, bouncing a little in excitement. “As a partner?”

“Like a sparring partner?”

“That too,” Midoriya giggles. “But I meant romantically. I figured you were interested when you started the whole tail analysis thing, and I know it’s none of my business, which is why Iida keeps nagging me, but I just really wanted to help out.”

“Tail analysis,” Toru repeats. “Because we were talking about his tail. Which is what you heard us talking about.”

“Mhm. I thought it was really nice that you worry about him so much.”

Oh. “I, okay, I see why you would think that, but I’m not actually in the habit of analysing quirks the way you do.”

“I know! Which is why it’s significant, right?”

Toru puts her hands up to stop him. “No, you’ve got the wrong idea. We weren’t actually talking about his tail.”

Midoriya blinks. “You weren’t? Then what were you talking about?”

“…his tail, you’re right, you got me.”
Midoriya relaxes. “Right. And I’m sure it’s mutual since he keeps talking about you, about how much you’ve improved and how gung-ho you are and that one time a ladybug landed in your hair but you didn’t notice and he didn’t have the heart to tell you—”

“No wonder my dad laughed at me! Wait, he talks about me?”

“All the time,” Midoriya says. “Which is why I’m so stoked to hear such nice things about him from you.”

Toru sighs. “Right. I just said a lot of really embarrassing stuff for no reason, didn’t I.”

“I wouldn’t say it’s for no reason,” Midoriya says slyly.

“Why?”

“Because he probably heard you.” Enthusiastically, Midoriya slides open the music room’s door. Ojiro’s perched on an overturned bongo drum near the entrance, face bright red and tail curled up behind him like it’s trying to hide. Toru’s heart tries to escape her body via her throat.

“Oh my god,” she whispers, also for the second time that day. “Ojiro? You were here the whole time?”

“Yeah, sorry,” Midoriya says, not sounding sorry at all. “I might have orchestrated some of that. I’ll just go ahead and leave you two alone.”

“No don’t leave me here—”

“Did you really mean all that?” Ojiro stammers before Toru can drag Midoriya back by the sleeve. “Do you really think I’m cute?”

“What is happening,” Toru whimpers, covering her face with her hands and wishing she couldn’t still see through her eyelids.

Ojiro stands and very intently studies the floor. “Midoriya asked me to wait for him here. I heard him outside but I also heard my name so I got curious and listened in and then I overheard all of that and—” he stops, and covers his own face with his hands, mirroring Toru. “I had no idea. No wonder he was so insistent I spar with you.”

“That was his idea?”

“I wanted to!” Ojiro protests. “I—I mean it didn’t occur to me at all that he was trying to set us up but you’re really nice and cheerful and I’ve honestly always thought you were pretty great so when he said you liked my fighting I was kind of happy and I went along with it without thinking?”

Toru screams quietly into her palms. “You like me?”

“I don’t know,” Ojiro says helplessly. “But you’re blushing and it’s really cute.”

“How can you even tell?”

“I don’t know, I just can,” Ojiro shrugs. He’s red all the way down his neck, Toru notes absently. “I always could. Maybe that means you’re,” he mumbles. “I dunno. Special, or something.”
“Oh my god.” Everything smells like flowers, and there should be a classroom behind Ojiro but right now it just looks like a lot of sparkles and blank paper. “Am I having a seizure?”

“It kind of feels like that, huh?” Ojiro laughs nervously. “My heart’s pumping like crazy.”

“Mine too.” It’s so loud she’s pretty certain Ojiro can hear it, in fact. “I think my stomach’s trying to fly away. I can’t believe you just told me you like me.”

“I only said it because you said you liked me!”

“I didn’t! I just said you were the ideal boyfriend!”

“That’s the same thing! Arguably it’s even worse! It’s the same as saying you want me to be your boyfriend!”

“Oh my god, you’re right, it is worse,” Toru whines. “Can you please just do me a favour and forget I ever existed?”

“I don’t want to.” Taking a deep breath, Ojiro straightens his shoulders and looks her in the eyes. In the actual eyes, somehow, not just the general direction of her face. “But that’s neither here nor there. I, uhm. I should take responsibility for this and, uhm,” he says, looking very determined and also very embarrassed, which is weirdly endearing. “I would like to take you out to dinner tonight if you’re free.”


“Oh okay,” says Ojiro, tail wagging hesitantly. “Okay.”

Chapter End Notes

JustAPassingStranger: Can you imagine lida trying to stop midoriya by standing in front of him so he cant go past.. and midoriya... just?? Picks him up?? Like nbd?? Because i can and the image has cleaned my soul and mowed the lawn

a little wholesome content this time.

mcdonalds features a lot in this fic. partly that's because i find the image of deku with happy meals hilarious, but also because there's a mcdonalds near my old high school and we used to go there to hang out when we saved up enough money. it was also the only place that would deliver to us after class lol. i passed a lot of my high school life with shitty burgers and not-shitty friends. mcdonalds is nostalgic for me, so i write about it here too.
i've made a proper commissions list [here](#) check it out if you're free, and reblogs are highly appreciated. if you want to chat, just shoot me an ask. based on the comments on this fic you all seem like you know how to party.

a dear friend of mine told me she made friends with a boy in college who spent a lot of time with her and frequently complained that the girl he liked only thought of him as a friend:

her: you should tell her how you feel! be honest so she can give you a proper answer
him: how?
her: well i think you should just come out and say it. tell her 'i like you'.
him: okay. i like you.
her: yeah! just like that!

so if you're judging deku for being the way he is, just know there are people like this who exist.

i just love to imagine todoroki being a Rich Bitch when it comes to bakugou.....oh you have new nikes? yeah i didn't like the feel of the new jordans so i bought 50% of the company and asked them to change the design,....., but let's be real i'm sure todoroki probably owns and lives in at least 3 pairs of crocs

anyway i think there's one chapter left! maybe two if i think of something else to write. see y'all next time!
“Does your shirt actually say ‘pants’?” asks Kacchan in disbelief.

Izuku looks down at his chest. “Oh, yeah, I got it on sale. Cool, right?”

Kacchan pinches the bridge of his nose. “You’re not wearing that stupid thing in my house. Go home and change.”

“I just got here and you’re sending me back?”

“You live down the street.”

“That’s so far away,” Izuku complains. “Just let me in.”

“You can come, the shirt can’t.”

“Right, I’ll just take it off, then.” Izuku rolls his eyes and sidles past Kacchan to get into the house. “It’s been a while since I’ve been here. Do you still have that big hole in the living from when you blasted yourself through the wall?”

“We patched that up,” Kacchan says, face oddly blank. “Go upstairs, Half-and-half is already here.”

Izuku takes the stairs up two at a time, bare feet thumping on the wood. Kacchan’s house is largely the same as he remembers it, still tidy but marked with little reminders of their growing up. Scratches on furniture and burns that never quite scrubbed out, and cabinets that had to be rearranged every year to cover up Kacchan’s noisy accidents. The hallway’s bright yellow now, instead of cream, but underneath the new paint job there’s a badly-drawn All Might in permanent marker because six-year-old Kacchan had decided that the house needed better décor.

Izuku hesitantly turns the knob to Kacchan’s room. “Hey, Todoroki. Wow, it’s cold in here.”

“Anti-summer measures,” Kacchan says, kicking the door shut behind him as Izuku makes himself comfortable on the floor. Todoroki’s in a soft grey button-down and jeans, leaning against the foot of Kacchan’s bed with lordly composure.

“How are you okay wearing a tank top?” Izuku says, baffled.

“I’m tough. You want food or something?”

“I’d like a drink,” says Todoroki.

“I was asking Deku. You can go get your own,” Kacchan replies.

Todoroki scoffs. “You know, the first time I came here I was expecting to find Bakugou living in a dumpster. I thought that might explain his personality.”
“Go home, then,” Kacchan says, flipping him off.

“Make me.”

“Do you hang out here often?” Izuku says before Kacchan can start dragging Todoroki across the floor. “It’s pretty far for you to travel, right?”

“Yes. It’s a nice house, though. Cosy.”

“Kacchan’s parents have good taste,” Izuku says, choosing not to mention that Kacchan’s ‘cosy’ house is about five times the size of Izuku’s apartment. “Well, they would, obviously, being designers.”

“I’ve met them,” Todoroki says. “They’re wasted on him.”

“Do me a favour and keep your daddy issues at home,” says Bakugou, starting up the TV. It’s an old flat screen, and he hooks it up to his laptop and hands Izuku a controller. “Play the tutorial or whatever. I’ll be right back.”

They watch the intro and Izuku fumbles through the murder of a few hapless demons until Kacchan returns with snacks and some mugs. “Tea or coffee?”

“Tea,” says Todoroki.

“Wrong, it’s coffee,” Kacchan says. Izuku snorts and immediately gets himself killed.

“Aw, I thought I was starting to get the hang of it,” he says sadly to the loading screen. “Doom’s very you, though, Kacchan.”

“You mean it’s violent and tacky,” says Todoroki.

“Nobody’s asking you to stay. Here, Deku, milk and three sugars for your diabetic ass.”


“Wear one of my hoodies,” Kacchan says immediately, reaching for a conveniently folded square of cloth at the end of his bed. It’s black and looks way too big for Izuku.


“You’re not wearing a hoodie,” Izuku points out.

“I—I’m not,” Todoroki says, obviously crestfallen. “Because my quirk— my quirk! My left side is warm. Sit next to me.”

“You hate using your left side,” Kacchan says.

“Yes. Now it’s finally good for something,” says Todoroki.

“Don’t sit with him, Deku, there’s no sense warming yourself on just one side. Take the hoodie.”

“I’ll put my arm around you, it’ll be fine.”

“Can’t you just turn the AC down?” Izuku says.

“No,” say Kacchan and Todoroki at the same time.
Izuku rolls his eyes. “Alright, I’ll do it.”

There’s a mad dash for the remote before Izuku can even put his coffee down. The air conditioning gets colder, then warmer, then colder again, and Kacchan and Todoroki wrestle on the floor and bump into furniture until Kacchan’s mother comes in and yells at them to stop wasting electricity.

It’s a lot more comfortable after that. Izuku sips his coffee while Todoroki lies face-down on the floor and Kacchan tries to pull him out the door by his ankle. “This game’s soundtrack is pretty good.”

“I thought you liked pop,” Kacchan grunts. Todoroki kicks lazily at his shins. He reminds Izuku of a housecat who won’t get off its owner’s laptop, and Izuku turns away so they don’t see him smile.

“This is good too. Is it only single player, though? I don’t want to hog the controller.”

“It’s fine, we’ll watch,” says Todoroki, making a soft skidding noise as he slides across the floor.

“No, I couldn’t,” Izuku says, exiting the game. “Do you have more controllers? Let’s play something else with co-op.”

“There’s that dumb cooking game Half-and-half likes,” Kacchan says, dropping Todoroki’s leg. “The one where you fight a giant meatball?”

“You don’t fight him, you feed him,” Todoroki says, sitting upright. “The maps change so you have to work together.”

“Together, huh,” Izuku says, eyeing the Wii in the corner. “Hey, Kacchan, do you still have Mario Kart? You used to be so good at that.”

“I’m good at Mario Kart too,” says Todoroki quickly. “I could beat him.”

“Like hell,” says Bakugou. “You’re on, candy ass.”

Izuku grins. “I’m in the mood for some friendly competition. Best two out of three?”

It’s not friendly. It doesn’t end at three games, either.

Izuku’s coffee cup sits forgotten on the floor, melted ice leaving rings of condensation that drip down the sides and onto the floor. They’ve eaten six packets of chips between them. Kacchan won’t stop screaming at the screen, and Todoroki’s threatened to ice his bedroom more than once.

“Get out of my fucking face, Yoshi,” Kacchan barks, jerking around wildly as he steers. Todoroki grumbles something under his breath and leans forward, bangs falling into his eyes as his little Yoshi sprite takes a corner.

“I’m going to kill Bowser,” he says flatly. “I’m going to kill Bowser, and then I’m going to kill you for picking him.”

Izuku whines, firmly in fifth place and driving a cute pink car because for some reason they’d bullied him into using Princess Peach. “No, I missed a power up! Peach! Peach, why can’t you drift?”
“She can drift, you just suck ass— did you just fucking banana peel me you dickbag asshole?”

Yoshi takes first place. Todoroki pumps both fists in the air while Kacchan hollers at the scoreboard. “Cheap trick! I would have won if you hadn’t killed me off at the last second!”

“All’s fair in love and war,” Todoroki retorts, tossing his head. “Four-three. I am the superior racer.”

“Fuck you and fuck your Smedley references,” Kacchan hoots angrily. “Again! We’re not stopping until I’ve obliterated you!”

“I haven’t even won once,” Izuku sighs. He’s not terribly bothered, though. Kacchan and Todoroki are vibrating with energy, focused on each other and the game and rage-eating their way through all of Kacchan’s pantry. Todoroki’s animated in a way Izuku never usually seen him, and Kacchan’s mother’s already come in twice to tell him to stop screeching but he clearly hasn’t listened. Izuku couldn’t get them more hyped up on adrenaline if he threw them into a sudden death match against All Might.

The next map loads and Izuku almost forgets to drive. Kacchan’s knee is pressed against Todoroki’s, although neither of them have noticed. He’s never seen them touch before. Hit each other, yeah, but not like this, casually and without intention to hurt. Not like they’re friends.

“Out of my way! How does my entire ass taste, Deku?”

“Last place just means I can blue shell you, Kacchan.”

“What thefuck, you better not.”

“Do it, Midoriya.”

“I will kick your ass, stay away from that power up— son of a bitch.”

Todoroki snorts as Bowser goes careening off a cliff. Yoshi, once again, takes first place. “How does my ass taste?”

Kacchan tackles him. Todoroki goes rolling onto his back and both controllers clatter on the floor, and Izuku scrambles to rescue them before they can get destroyed. Kacchan’s got Todoroki in a headlock. Todoroki manages to pull Kacchan’s shirt over his head, blinding him for long enough to shove him over and jam an elbow in his sternum.

“This isn’t how I wanted you to work off your aggression,” Izuku sighs, and then yelps when they knock over his coffee cup. “My All Might socks!”

“Fuck your All Might socks,” Kacchan wheezes. “Wash them later.”

“Coffee stains! My mom got these for me!”

They ignore him. Izuku, feet wet and All Might dyed brunet, feels the first spikes of irritation he’s had in a long time.

“Enough,” he says, yanking Todoroki bodily off of Kacchan and tossing him onto the bed. Todoroki bounces on the mattress and lands on his back. “Can you two morons stop trying to cripple each other every other day?”

Todoroki blinks, either from the shock of being thrown or from the shock of being called a moron. “Midoriya?”
“Don’t you Midoriya me,” Izuku replies hotly. “You’re acting like children! Every little thing sends you two into these ridiculous pissbaby fights. Normal people don’t behave like this!”

Pissbaby, Todoroki mouths as Kacchan gets to his feet. “Chill, Deku. Is this about the socks?”

“No! Maybe! That’s not the point!” Izuku says. “And don’t you tell me to chill, you big dumb meathead. You’re the least chill person on the planet. I thought maybe you and Todoroki were finally learning to coexist but you can’t go an hour without breaking something.”

“We are getting along,” Todoroki says, wounded. “We weren’t really trying to hurt each other this time.”

“Fuck you, Deku,” Kacchan snaps. “I’ve been hanging out with him voluntarily for your sake, because you’re so insistent that everybody holds hands and get along. I feed him. I have him in my house after school. I binge-watched all his favourite TV shows. We’re acting like best fucking friends over here. What the hell else do we have to do to prove that? Do I have to make out with him in front of you so your stupid green head understands we don’t hate each other?”

“Yes,” says Izuku.

Kacchan’s mouth clicks shut. “I don’t think he really meant that,” Todoroki says after a second.

“Of course not,” Izuku rolls his eyes. “A girl kissed him on the cheek once and he cried because he thought she’d given him cooties.”

“I was seven,” Kacchan says, throwing his hands up.

“And you haven’t changed! All you know how to do is study and punch things. You’re afraid to let Todoroki know he’s important to you. Even the thought of physical affection scares you!”

Todoroki clears his throat. “I don’t think kissing me really has anything to do with—”

“I am not scared,” Kacchan says quietly.

Izuku looks him in the eye. “Chicken.”

“Fuck you!” Kacchan roars, stomping over to his double bed and grabbing Todoroki by the collar. “I’ll show you who’s fucking scared of physical affection! Come here, you!”

“Wait,” says Todoroki. “This isn’t—”

“Pucker up, Shortcake,” Kacchan growls and kisses Todoroki full on the mouth.

Mario Kart music continues to play from the TV. Sunlight streams through the window, and Izuku’s spilled iced coffee sits in a murky puddle that will no doubt stain the floorboards forever. Torodoki’s hands, which had been pressed to Kacchan’s chest to push him away, slowly relax and migrate up to rest on Kacchan’s jaw. Izuku counts ten seconds before they break apart and come up for air.
“Oh,” Kacchan says.

“Oh,” Todoroki says, and kisses him again.

Forgotten in the background, wet socks and all, Izuku cheers.

“So you did it,” says Uraraka, patting Izuku on the back and making him glance shyly away.
“You’ve stopped the fighting for good. I believed in you from the very start, I want you to know that.”

“I was wrong,” Iida says. “As much as I don’t like the idea of you meddling like that, I have to say everything worked out exactly how you wanted. Well done, Midoriya.”

Izuku leans back happily in his seat. The morning sun is refreshingly bright, and 1A’s pre-homeroom chatter in the background is soothing. Everyone’s milling about in their cliques. Kirishima’s talking to Tetsu at the door, since Iida had nagged them both about intruding into the wrong classes. Hagakure’s surrounded by her friends. Izuku can’t quite tell, of course, but she seems to be distracted, glancing to the back of the class in Ojiro’s direction. His tail swishes lazily back and forth, speeding up just a bit whenever she looks his way.

Kacchan’s in Todoroki’s lap. He’s using him as a chair, more accurately, because Todoroki had decided that morning to sit in Kacchan’s seat instead of his own. He’s almost completely blocked from view, face pressed between Kacchan’s shoulder blades and arms dangling limply at his sides while Kacchan plays candy crush on Todoroki’s phone.

“I can’t breathe,” says Todoroki.

“Die, then,” says Kacchan.

“So romantic,” Izuku sighs.

“I suppose it’s an improvement,” Iida says. “Although I don’t know if we’ll see Kaminari again. He came in, took one look at them and then walked back out.”

“He’s probably just having some trouble processing it,” Uraraka says, patting Iida on the arm. “I
think everyone’s a little weirded out. They were assaulting each other just a month ago.”

“And now they’re in love!” Izuku says, clapping his hands together gleefully. “Or like. Or lust. Maybe lust, actually. They kissed for a really long time. I think they forgot I was there. I mean I left after a couple of minutes, but I could have sworn I saw Kacchan’s shirt get tossed out the window when I was going home.”

“Go on,” says Uraraka.

“Do not,” says Iida.

“And now everything is perfect,” says Izuku. “I love love.”

“You’re doing the lord’s work, Deku-kun,” Uraraka says seriously. “Maybe you can start a matchmaking service if you ever get tired of being a hero.”

“First of all, Midoriya is never going to get tired of being a hero,” says Iida. “Secondly, how do you really think that’s going to work out? Nobody’s going to care about the matchmaking. They’ll just use it as an excuse to spend an hour alone with him.”

“If he gets paid for it, at least everyone’s happy,” says Uraraka.

“Thanks, Iida, but I really don’t think anyone’s going to want to pay to hang out with me. I’m not sure that many people would even do it for free,” Izuku says, not understanding why Iida sighs so loudly. “I guess helping people find love is kind of like hero work, though. Do we know any love-based heroes?”

Uraraka tilts her head. “Miss Midnight’s the closest one I can think of, but I’m not sure her whole theme counts as love, exactly.”

“Probably not,” Izuku hums in response. Iida nods, and Izuku’s gaze drifts down to Uraraka’s hand still resting comfortably on his arm. She’s got such cute fingers, like a cat’s. “By the way, I’ve been meaning to say this for a while, but don’t you think you and Iida would make a great couple?”

“I know,” Uraraka says. “I just haven’t asked him out yet. It was never really the right time.”

Iida splutters. “Excuse me. We’re underage, and we have school and hero work to worry about, you know, the idea of romance at all is highly inappropriate, I don’t think, I mean, such an idea is, it’s just —”

“There, there,” Uraraka tells him. “I’ll buy you ice cream and I promise I’ll ask for permission before holding your hand, okay?”

“Okay,” says Iida meekly.

Izuku puts his chin in his hands as Iida tries to disappear slowly into his collar. “I love love.”

A crumpled-up piece of paper bounces off his forehead. Izuku looks up and sees Kacchan waving him over from the window seat. Todoroki’s still trapped under him, but seems fairly comfortable with his hands resting on Kacchan’s lap. “Hah! Oi, Deku, I just beat Raspberry Delight’s high score. Come watch me obliterate him some more.”

“Don’t listen to him, Midoriya,” says Todoroki, muffled. “I’m better than he is, I’ll show you.”

“The only thing you’ll be showing him is your defeat,” Kacchan says and then squirms. “Poke me all
you want, bastard, I’m not ticklish.”

Izuku grins and gets to his feet to join them. “Alright, but I wanna play too. I’m gonna have to warn you though, I’m very good at Candy Crush.”

“Say, Jirou. You and Yaomomo—”

“Are already dating.”

“Alright then,” Izuku says, flashing her a thumbs up. She grins and saunters off to join the crowd of students stampeding off to lunch, one hand holding a soda bottle and the other sneaking comfortably into Yaoyorozu’s blazer pocket. Uraraka goes to Iida’s desk, and Iida, red-faced, offers her his arm so they can go to the cafeteria together.

Izuku lets them go. They probably want some privacy. Besides, he’s already got lunch plans.

He finds Hitoshi in the courtyard by the fountain, very intently studying a pigeon wing on the ground. There’s no bird attached. Just the wing, for some reason, with none of the feathers out of place.

“I can’t help but imagine,” he says when Izuku comes up behind him, “that the pigeon must have dropped its wing like a lizard drops its tail when you startle it.”

“I doubt that,” Izuku says. “Although it’s a lot better than imagining what must have happened to that poor bird.”

“Eaten, probably. Why leave the wing though?”

“Some people don’t like wings,” Izuku says good naturedly. “They’re not easy to eat. Fun when you fry them, though. Or barbecue them.”

“Did you know that this is where I first met Paul?”

“Is that what you’re calling him?” Izuku asks, plopping bonelessly onto the stone edge of the fountain. The sound of running water almost makes him want to take a dip. Maybe he’ll go to the pool on the weekend. “Oh, the tree’s growing back. There’s a little shoot coming out of the trunk, that’s so cute.”
“That tree is a survivor,” Hitoshi says, sitting down next to him. “If I got blown up and then crushed by a solid block of ice, I wouldn’t be growing any limbs back.”

“Humans don’t usually do that, I think.”

“Not with that attitude. Lunch?”

“Sorry, I’ve actually got something to do today.” Stretching his arms over his head, Izuku tilts his face up to catch some sunlight. “By the way, Project 1 was a great success. Kacchan and Todoroki like each other now. They kissed a few days ago while we were at Kacchan’s place. It was really satisfying. Like when you’re reading a story and wondering if the main characters will ever fall in love even though you know they’d be perfect for each other, you know?”

“I wouldn’t call either of them the main character,” Hitoshi says, inspecting his nails. “Those two owe me some money. Congratulations, though. You’re three for three. Any other projects you have your eye on now?”

“Not right now, no,” Izuku says. A flyaway lock of hair falls across Hitoshi’s forehead, and Izuku nudges at a pebble with the tip of his shoe. “Thanks, by the way. I couldn’t have done any of this without you.”

“You’re welcome,” Hitoshi says.

Izuku meets his gaze. The bags under Hitoshi’s eyes had always worried him at first, but now they remind Izuku less of sleepless nights, and more of secret books read under the covers long after his mother had told him to go to bed. “There’s this Korean restaurant that’s just opened up near my place. I hear their kimchi soup is to die for.”

“I like kimchi,” says Hitoshi.

Izuku knows. “Would you like to go with me sometime? My treat. A proper thank-you for all the advice.”

Hitoshi regards him quietly. “Is this a date?”

“If you’d like,” Izuku says, a little shy.

Hitoshi smiles. It’s a small thing, barely there, but just enough to make his eyes crinkle a little at the corners. “I think I’d like it to be.”

“I think I would too.”

“We do have a lot in common.”

“Like fluffy hair?”

“Among other things.” Hitoshi deliberates for a second, and then slowly reaches out to place his hand over Izuku’s. “I’m free on Saturday. I’ll buy dessert.”

“It’s a date,” Izuku says. He squeezes Hitoshi’s fingers and stands, not even trying to keep the goofy grin off his face. “I’ll see you at half past noon at my house. I’ll text you the address. Don’t be late.”
“So that’s what happened,” Izuku says, stirring more sugar into his tea. “I’ll be honest, I didn’t think it would work out as well as it did, but everything seems to be perfect for now.”

All Might sits on the loveseat across from him, suit hanging off his shoulders and jacket pooling around his waist. It’s a grey and orange pinstripe, which should be weird but somehow works. That may just be Izuku’s hero-worship talking, though. All Might’s one third the size that he normally is and Izuku still thinks he looks great.

“That’s some impressive analytical work on your part, young man,” All Might tells him, making Izuku preen. “I suppose that helping your friends find their happiness is heroic in its own right.”

“That’s what I said!” Izuku says and nearly spills his tea. “And Hagakure and Ojiro are so cute, and Tetsu and Kirishima are really nice and supportive, and Todoroki and Kacch—uhm, Bakugou, they’ve stopped fighting!”

“That was starting to become an issue.” Delicately, All Might bites into a sandwich, chewing slowly so as not to upset his injured stomach. Teachers bustle around in the background, but nobody bothers their little corner of the staff room. “My. It’s only been a month since we had lunch together. When I asked what you’d been up to I didn’t think you’d be this busy.”

“A hero’s work is never done,” Izuku says seriously. All Might snorts, and Izuku makes sad eyes at the cupcakes. “But everyone’s happy, and that makes me happy.”

“You’re a good boy, Midoriya,” All Might says, giving him the banana one. Izuku peels off the wrapper and immediately gets frosting on his fingers. “You’re going to make a good hero. I’m glad I picked you.”

Izuku kicks his feet happily and eats his lunch. Saturday seems like it’s too far away, but for now he’s content on a leather sofa with the person he’d always wanted to be. All Might leans against the arm rest, relaxed and unguarded the way he can’t be when he steps out from behind their four walls.

Izuku doesn’t mind. Without his quirk, without his persona, All Might’s still always going to be a hero. Maybe one day Izuku will be too. That’s a long way away, though. In the meantime, this is good.

“By the way,” Izuku says, sipping his tea. “Have I mentioned my mother is single?”
things that make my dog happy:

- human friends
- chicken
- car rides
- when you refill her water bowl just when she was getting thirsty
- walks
- my blanket
- digging up the plants and then acting sad when you call her a bad dog but then doing it again the next day
- butt scratches
- that fat old dog down the street
- when you shake the broom at her and say 'rrrr'

ambition pushes you to do great things, but recently i've been learning that it's nice to love little things too.

anyway, here's the end to a slightly crazy fic. i don't really have any favoured pairings in bnha, so the conclusion was kind of decided on a whim haha. thank you so much for reading this far (some even from the very beginning!) and especially thank you to the people who took time out of their day to leave a comment. seeing a familiar username makes me feel like i'm getting to know you a little bit, even though i don't know what you look like. writing this has been a blast so thanks for letting me talk nonsense and bully iida.

i know this fic is silly and fun and not very deep but i hope it has made you smile! as always my commission info is here. feel free to come chat if you have a tumblr.

you might see me around sometime, i don't know. maybe the adventures of Bakuhoe will speak to me.
“Does your shirt actually say ‘pants’?” asks Kacchan in disbelief.

Izuku looks down at his chest. “Oh, yeah, I got it on sale. Cool, right?”

Kacchan pinches the bridge of his nose. “You’re not wearing that stupid thing in my house. Go home and change.”

“I just got here and you’re sending me back?”

“You live down the street.”

“That’s so far away,” Izuku complains. “Just let me in.”

“You can come, the shirt can’t.”

“Right, I’ll just take it off, then.” Izuku rolls his eyes and sidles past Kacchan to get into the house. “It’s been a while since I’ve been here. Do you still have that big hole in the living from when you blasted yourself through the wall?”

“We patched that up,” Kacchan says, face oddly blank. “Go upstairs, Half-and-half is already here.”

Izuku takes the stairs up two at a time, socked feet thumping on the wood. Kacchan’s house is largely the same as he remembers it, still tidy but marked with little reminders of their growing up. Scratches on furniture and burns that never quite scrubbed out, and cabinets that had to be rearranged every year to cover up Kacchan’s noisy accidents. The hallway’s bright yellow now, instead of cream, but underneath the new paint job there’s a badly-drawn All Might in permanent marker because six-year-old Kacchan had decided that the house needed better décor.

Izuku hesitantly turns the knob to Kacchan’s room. “Hey, Todoroki. Wow, it’s cold in here.”

“Anti-summer measures,” Kacchan says, kicking the door shut behind him as Izuku makes himself comfortable on the floor. Todoroki’s in a soft grey button-down and jeans, leaning against the foot of Kacchan’s bed with lordly composure.

“How are you okay wearing a tank top?” Izuku says, baffled.

“I’m tough. You want food or something?”
“I’d like a drink,” says Todoroki.

“I was asking Deku. You can go get your own,” Kacchan replies.

Todoroki scoffs. “You know, the first time I came here I was expecting to find Bakugou living in a dumpster. I thought that might explain his personality.”

“Go home, then,” Kacchan says, flipping him off.

“Make me.”

“Do you hang out here often?” Izuku says before Kacchan can start dragging Todoroki across the floor. “It’s pretty far for you to travel, right?”

“Yes. It’s a nice house, though. Cosy.”

“Kacchan’s parents have good taste,” Izuku says, choosing not to mention that Kacchan’s ‘cosy’ house is about five times the size of Izuku’s apartment. “Well, they would, obviously, being designers.”

“I’ve met them,” Todoroki says. “They’re wasted on him.”

“Do me a favour and keep your daddy issues at home,” says Bakugou, starting up the TV. It’s an old flat screen, and he hooks it up to his laptop and hands Izuku a controller. “Play the tutorial or whatever. I’ll be right back.”

They watch the intro and Izuku fumbles through the murder of a few hapless demons until Kacchan returns with snacks and some mugs. “Tea or coffee?”

“Tea,” says Todoroki.

“Wrong, it’s coffee,” Kacchan says. Izuku snorts and immediately gets himself killed.

“Aw, I thought I was starting to get the hang of it,” he says sadly to the loading screen. “Doom’s very you, though, Kacchan.”

“You mean it’s violent and tacky,” says Todoroki.

“Nobody’s asking you to stay. Here, Deku, milk and three sugars for your diabetic ass.”


“Wear one of my hoodies,” Kacchan says immediately, reaching for a conveniently folded square of cloth at the end of his bed. It’s black and looks way too big for Izuku.


“You’re not wearing a hoodie,” Izuku points out.

“I—I’m not,” Todoroki says, obviously crestfallen. “Because my quirk— my quirk! My left side is warm. Sit next to me.”

“You hate using your left side,” Kacchan says.

“Yes. Now it’s finally good for something,” says Todoroki.
“Don’t sit with him, Deku, there’s no sense warming yourself on just one side. Take the hoodie.”

“I’ll put my arm around you, it’ll be fine.”

“Can’t you just turn the AC down?” Izuku says.

“No,” say Kacchan and Todoroki at the same time.

Izuku rolls his eyes. “Alright, I’ll do it.”

There’s a mad dash for the remote before Izuku can even put his coffee down. The air conditioning gets colder, then warmer, then colder again, and Kacchan and Todoroki wrestle on the floor and bump into furniture until Kacchan’s mother comes in and yells at them to stop wasting electricity.

It’s a lot more comfortable after that. Izuku sips his coffee while Todoroki lies face-down on the floor and Kacchan tries to pull him out the door by his ankle. “This game’s soundtrack is pretty good.”

“I thought you liked pop,” Kacchan grunts. Todoroki kicks lazily at his shins. He reminds Izuku of a housecat who won’t get off its owner’s laptop, and Izuku turns away so they don’t see him smile.

“This is good too. Is it only single player, though? I don’t want to hog the controller.”

“It’s fine, we’ll watch,” says Todoroki, making a soft skidding noise as he slides across the floor.

“No, I couldn’t,” Izuku says, exiting the game. “Do you have more controllers? Let’s play something else with co-op.”

“There’s that dumb cooking game Half-and-half likes,” Kacchan says, dropping Todoroki’s leg. “The one where you fight a giant meatball?”

“You don’t fight him, you feed him,” Todoroki says, sitting upright. “The maps change so you have to work together.”

“Together, huh,” Izuku says, eyeing the Wii in the corner. “Hey, Kacchan, do you still have Mario Kart? You used to be so good at that.”

“I’m good at Mario Kart too,” says Todoroki quickly. “I could beat him.”

“Like hell,” says Bakugou. “You’re on, candy ass.”

Izuku grins. “I’m in the mood for some friendly competition. Best two out of three?”

It’s not friendly. It doesn’t end at three games, either.

Izuku’s coffee cup sits forgotten on the floor, melted ice leaving rings of condensation that drip down the sides and onto the floor. They’ve eaten six packets of chips between them. Kacchan won’t stop screaming at the screen, and Todoroki’s threatened to ice his bedroom more than once.
“Get out of my fucking face, Yoshi,” Kacchan barks, jerking around wildly as he steers. Todoroki grumbles something under his breath and leans forward, bangs falling into his eyes as his little Yoshi sprite takes a corner.

“I’m going to kill Bowser,” he says flatly. “I’m going to kill Bowser, and then I’m going to kill you for picking him.”

Izuku whines, firmly in fifth place and driving a cute pink car because for some reason they’d bullied him into using Princess Peach. “No, I missed a power up! Peach! Peach, why can’t you drift?”

“She can drift, you just suck ass—*did you just fucking banana peel me you dickbag asshole?*”

Yoshi takes first place. Todoroki pumps both fists in the air while Kacchan hollers at the scoreboard. “Cheap trick! I would have won if you hadn’t killed me off at the last second!”

“All’s fair in love and war,” Todoroki retorts, tossing his head. “Four-three. I am the superior racer.”

“Fuck you and fuck your Smedley references,” Kacchan hoots angrily. “Again! We’re not stopping until I’ve obliterated you!”

“I haven’t even won once,” Izuku sighs. He’s not terribly bothered, though. Kacchan and Todoroki are vibrating with energy, focused on each other and the game and rage-eating their way through all of Kacchan’s pantry. Todoroki’s animated in a way Izuku never usually seen him, and Kacchan’s mother’s already come in twice to tell him to stop screeching but he clearly hasn’t listened. Izuku couldn’t get them more hyped up on adrenaline if he threw them into a sudden death match against All Might.

The next map loads and Izuku almost forgets to drive. Kacchan’s knee is pressed against Todoroki’s, although neither of them have noticed. He’s never seen them touch before. Hit each other, yeah, but not like this, casually and without intention to hurt. Not like they’re *friends.*

“Out of my way! How does my entire ass taste, Deku?”

“Last place just means I can blue shell you, Kacchan.”

“What the fuck, you better not.”

“Do it, Midoriya.”

“I will *kick your ass, stay away from that power up—son of a bitch.*”

Todoroki snorts as Bowser goes careening off a cliff. Yoshi, once again, takes first place. “How does *my* ass taste?”

Kacchan tackles him. Todoroki goes rolling onto his back and both controllers clatter on the floor, and Izuku scrambles to rescue them before they can get destroyed. Kacchan’s got Todoroki in a headlock. Todoroki manages to pull Kacchan’s shirt over his head, blinding him for long enough to shove him over and jam an elbow in his sternum.

“This isn’t how I wanted you to work off your aggression,” Izuku sighs, and then yelps when they knock over his coffee cup. “My All Might socks!”

“Fuck your All Might socks,” Kacchan wheezes. “Wash them later.”

“Coffee stains! My mom got these for me!”
They ignore him. Izuku, feet wet and All Might dyed brunet, feels the first spikes of irritation he’s had in a long time.

“Enough,” he says, yanking Todoroki bodily off of Kacchan and tossing him onto the bed. Todoroki bounces on the mattress and lands on his back. “Can you two morons stop trying to cripple each other every other day?”

Todoroki blinks, either from the shock of being thrown or from the shock of being called a moron. “Midoriya?”

“Don’t you Midoriya me,” Izuku replies hotly. “You’re acting like children! Every little thing sends you two into these ridiculous pissbaby fights. Normal people don’t behave like this!”

_Pissbaby_, Todoroki mouths as Kacchan gets to his feet. “Chill, Deku. Is this about the socks?”

“No! Maybe! That’s not the point!” Izuku says. “And don’t _you_ tell me to chill, you big dumb meathead. You’re the least chill person on the planet. I thought maybe you and Todoroki were finally learning to coexist but you can’t go an hour without breaking something.”

“We are getting along,” Todoroki says, wounded. “We weren’t really trying to hurt each other this time.”

“Fuck you, Deku,” Kacchan snaps. “Why do you think I invited his dumb ass over here in the first place? Have you ever in your life seen me willingly hang around anyone I don’t want to?”

“You hang around _me_,” says Izuku.

Kacchan puts his face in his hands and screams. Todoroki clambers off the bed and stands there for a second before awkwardly patting Kacchan on the back. “Midoriya, do you think I hate you? Because I don’t. I think you’re great.”

“I don’t hate you either, you absolute dumbass,” Kacchan says, which Izuku somehow doesn’t find convincing. “Use your dumb green head.”

“I like him more,” says Todoroki.

“Fuck you, no you don’t.”

“I’ll prove it. Mariokart, one more round.”

_Not Mario. Arm wrestling._

“Juggling.”

“What the fuck? When did you learn to juggle?”

“I didn’t have a lot to do as a kid.”

“Guys,” says Izuku, righteous fury having fizzled somewhat into righteous indignation. “I have no doubt that you would find a way to compete over literally anything on earth but maybe let’s not start that again right now.”

Kacchan looks away from Todoroki to scowl at Izuku’s feet. “Fine. We’ll clean Deku’s stupid socks. Whoever gets the stains out fastest wins.”

“Deal,” says Todoroki, reaching out with both hands. “I’ll grab him, you get his feet.”
“Guys,” Izuku says again, and then yelps when Todoroki picks him up around the middle. “Not that I don’t want you to rescue my socks but do you even know what you’re fighting about?”

“Why are you so heavy?” Todoroki grunts in his ear.

“Muscle is a lot denser than it looks and I have been working out a little more recently because I’ve been keeping an eye on Ojiro and—I mean, you do know I can get my socks off on my own?”

“Should have known the pretty boy was useless,” Kacchan snorts, grabbing Izuku by the ankles and lifting. “What the fuck? You are heavy. Hey, take your shirt off and show me your gains.”

“No,” Izuku says, planting his wet sock in Kacchan’s face. “Put me down, I’m not a ragdoll! And quit pulling before you break my legs!”

“You break your own legs every month anyway!” Kacchan retorts, soldiering through Izuku’s gross feet trying to push him away. “Would you fucking stay still?”

“Don’t tell me what to do!” Izuku says and wriggles until Todoroki’s clutching his armpits instead of around the waist. Todoroki grunts. Izuku’s shirt is bunched up so it looks like a ridiculous blue crop top, and Kacchan lets go of one leg and sticks a finger into Izuku’s bellybutton.

“Alright, you’re ripped,” Kacchan says begrudgingly. Todoroki makes a noise of appreciation and Izuku headbutts him under the chin. All three of them go toppling onto the floor.

The door opens. Kacchan’s mother pokes her head in to see what all the fuss is about, and then snorts when she notices the pile of tangled limbs and outrage. “Oh. I thought you idiots were fighting again, but it looks like you’ve sorted out your differences. Izuku, honey, you’re looking good.”

“Thanks,” Izuku huffs.

“You kids need anything? Some snacks? Condoms?”

“Why?”

“Well I assume there’s a reason my stupid son invited his childhood crush over for the first time in years,” Mrs Bakugou says, and then shuts the door quickly to avoid the wet sock Kacchan throws at her. “Oh, sorry. Do you like Todoroki now? You do stare at his ass a lot.”

“Mom, get out!”

“I’m not saying I blame you, he’s a handsome kid.”

“Thank you, Mrs Bakugou’s mother,” Todoroki says.

“I am not afraid to fight you,” Kacchan says. His mother cackles and shuts the door before he can scramble out from under Izuku’s legs, so he ends up just faceplanting into the floorboards and screeching. Izuku stares at the back of Kacchan’s neck and tries to figure out why it’s getting so red.

“We should have gone with juggling,” says Todoroki.

Izuku removes his head from Todoroki’s stomach. “Todoroki is your childhood crush? I thought you just met this year.”

Todoroki frowns at him. Kacchan’s face is still pressed against the floor, but Izuku can distinctly imagine the expression he’s making. “I know the innocent Bambi thing is sort of your aesthetic, but I will not hesitate to hit you if you’re mocking me.”
“I’m not mocking you!” Izuku says. “Your mom’s right, Todoroki is good looking. It’s not weird that you would like him.”

Todoroki picks at his jeans. “You think I’m good looking? Wait. Bakugou likes me?”

“No, I hate you,” Kacchan says, lifting his head off the floor. “And don’t listen to my lunatic mother, alright? This is what I get for telling her anything, I swear to god. I’m gonna tape over all her dumb fucking soap operas tomorrow.”

“Wait, but who’s your childhood crush?”

Kacchan sits up and stares at him. “Deku. You cannot seriously be this fucking stupid.”

Izuku makes a face. “Don’t call me stupid.”

“You are stupid.”

“You are stupid.”

Midoriya,” says Todoroki apologetically. “I hate to say this, but you are a little bit dense.”

“You too?” Izuku says, slightly hurt. “I can’t believe you’re ganging up on me.”

“Deku,” Kacchan says flatly. “There is one person in this room whom I have known since childhood.”

“Me?” asks Izuku.

“So who could that woman have been talking about?”

Izuku sits up and adjusts his shirt. “But you like Todoroki.”

“What in the flying fuck gave you that idea?”

“I’ve been watching you for weeks!” Izuku cries. “You spend all of your time looking at each other or competing over something petty and childish. You can’t keep your hands off each other. Last week I saw you on a date in McDonalds!”

“That was not a date!” Kacchan says. “We spent the whole time talking about you!”

“Why?”

“Midoriya,” Todoroki says, looking him in the eyes. “Izuku.”

“Yes?” Izuku says, flustered.

Todoroki opens his mouth, and then shuts it again. Sighing, he turns to Kacchan. “I’m going to do it. You’d better get over here if you don’t want to be left out.”

“Fuck that,” Kacchan says, scrambling over to shove Todoroki’s shoulder. “I call right.”

“Guys?” says Izuku.

“Shut up,” Kacchan says, and presses his lips to Izuku’s cheek. Todoroki kisses his other side, and Izuku goes rigid as they draw back and stare at him expectantly.
His face is going to catch fire, and then he’ll have to become the next Endeavour. “Uhm?”

“I thought you understood,” says Todoroki. “I thought you knew how I felt and you just didn’t feel the same.”

“He didn’t understand,” Kacchan says. “Jesus Christ. I should have known. Deku wouldn’t notice a come-on if you sat in his bed with your dick out.”

“I would be very alarmed if you sat in my bed with your dick out,” Izuku says shrilly. A voice in his head (that sounds like Iida’s) points out that many events of the past month suddenly make a lot of sense. “Oh my god. Oh my god? Is this real?”

“I think he’s having an aneurysm,” Todoroki says.

“He’ll live,” Kacchan says. “He has to pick.”

“Do you want his heart to stop? He can pick later. Give him a minute to calm down.”

“Fuck that, I’ve been waiting for ages. I’m kissing him.”

“Fine. How are we going to do this? One of us has to go first.”

“I’ve known him longer.”

“You’re also an asshole.”

“I was an asshole. I’m nice to him now.”

“You’re not capable of being nice. He thinks I’m handsome.”

“What the fuck, Deku, I’m better looking than he is, right?”

“You’re both very attractive,” Izuku says, and then puts his face in his hands. His skin still tingles where they kissed him. Todoroki’s lips are cool and smooth, and Kacchan’s are warm and in need of a chapstick. “Too attractive. Why me? I don’t understand. I—I—I—Kacchan hates me, and Todoroki, you’re, I don’t know. You’re out of my league. Is this why Iida keeps rolling his eyes at me? Was I the last one to know?”

“Yes,” Kacchan says. “Now will you hurry up and pick one of us?”

“I can’t!” Izuku whimpers. “You’re both—this is crazy!”

“Okay,” says Todoroki. “Us both?”

“Greedy,” says Kacchan, looking Todoroki up and down. “I guess you’re not ugly, even if you do have a stupid colour palette.”

“I suppose I could tolerate you, even if you do look like an angry dandelion,” says Todoroki.

“What?” says Izuku.

“You can’t pick,” says Kacchan. “So we will.”
“We pick you,” Todoroki says. “Although I’m going to be the one to marry you.”

“He’ll have my kids,” says Kacchan.

“How?” says Izuku.

“We’ll figure it out,” says Todoroki, gently taking Izuku’s hand away from his face. “Iida was right. Maybe we should learn to communicate better.”

“Not our fault Deku’s dense as a brick wall.”

“I think that may be partly due to lack of self-esteem which is at least slightly your fault—”


“I’ve already had my first kiss,” says Izuku. “Remember that girl in kindergarten?”


“We’ll find her,” says Todoroki. “I suppose it doesn’t matter now. I’ll let you go first if Izuku sits in my lap.”

“Deal,” says Kacchan, locking eyes with Izuku. He’s very intense, Izuku thinks numbly. And actually kind of handsome. And his palms are very rough and for some reason he smells like caramel, which is probably the nitroglycerin. A pair of arms snake around his waist and, okay, maybe Izuku should pay better attention to his surroundings because Todoroki is behind him and pressing his mouth to the shell of Izuku’s ear.

He shivers.

“Oh,” he says. “Oh.”

“Yeah,” says Kacchan. “Oh.”

“I guess this works,” Uraraka says, not looking very happy even as she says it. “It’s better than just Bakugou, anyway.”

“They’ve finally stopped fighting,” Iida says, consolingly patting her on the arm. “Although I’m not going to be cruel and say I told you so, Midoriya, because at least your other attempts worked out the way you wanted.”

“Thanks,” Izuku says, going red. Todoroki’s arm tightens around his shoulders, and Kacchan, who’s
sitting in Todoroki’s lap with his feet resting on Izuku’s knees, clears another level of Candy Crush.

Izuku picks shyly at Kacchan’s hem. The morning sun is refreshingly bright, and 1A’s pre-homeroom chatter in the background is soothing. Everyone’s milling about in their cliques. Kirishima’s talking to Tetsu at the door, since Iida had naged them both about intruding into the wrong classes. Hagakure’s surrounded by her friends. Izuku can’t quite tell, of course, but she seems to be distracted, glancing to the back of the class in Ojiro’s direction. His tail swishes lazily back and forth, speeding up just a bit whenever she looks his way.

Izuku’s gaze drifts down to Iida’s hand still resting comfortably on Uraraka’s arm. He’s got such big hands. Strong and safe. “By the way, Iida, I’ve been meaning to say this for a while, but don’t you think you and Uraraka would make a great couple?”

“We would,” Uraraka says. “I just haven’t asked him out yet. It was never really the right time.”

Iida splutters. “Excuse me. We’re underage, and we have school and hero work to worry about, you know, the idea of romance at all is highly inappropriate, I don’t think, I mean, such an idea is, it’s just —”

“There, there,” Uraraka tells him. “I’ll buy you ice cream and I promise I’ll ask for permission before holding your hand, okay?”

“Okay,” says Iida meekly.

“Called it,” says Kacchan without looking up.

“I thought they were already together,” says Todoroki, frowning.

Izuku puts his chin in his hands as Iida tries to disappear slowly into his collar. “I love love.”


“Cold soba and crying over your lack of a father figure,” says Kacchan.

Todoroki calmly pushes him off his lap. The phone clatters to the floor and Kacchan lands on his behind. Iida sighs, and Kacchan does something pretty impressive with his legs to topple Todoroki’s chair sideways.

Izuku puts his face in his hands. Todoroki and Kacchan roll into someone’s desk, and Uraraka picks up the phone to set about ruining Kacchan’s winning streak.

“I’m not sure what’s going on,” Iida says quietly to Izuku. “But I can’t truthfully say I mind.”

“Join the club,” Izuku says his idiots scuffle on the floor. Everyone else ignores them. Izuku’s learnt enough from watching Ojiro that they’re not actually trying to hurt each other this time. He figures it’s safe to ignore them too. “Honestly? Just go with it. I think everything will work out just fine.
“Say, Jirou. You and Yaomomo—”

“Are already dating.”

“Alright then,” Izuku says, flashing her a thumbs up. She grins and saunters off to join the crowd of students stampeding off to lunch, one hand holding a soda bottle and the other sneaking comfortably into Yaoyorozu’s blazer pocket. Uraraka goes to Iida’s desk, and Iida, red-faced, offers her his arm so they can go to the cafeteria together.

Izuku lets them go. They probably want some privacy. Kacchan and Todoroki wait for him by the door, but Izuku tells them to go on without him. He’s already got lunch plans.

He finds Hitoshi in the courtyard by the fountain, very intently studying a pigeon wing on the ground. There’s no bird attached. Just the wing, for some reason, with none of the feathers out of place.

“I can’t help but imagine,” he says when Izuku comes up behind him, “that the pigeon must have dropped its wing like a lizard drops its tail when you startle it.”

“I doubt that,” Izuku says. “Although it’s a lot better than imagining what must have happened to that poor bird.”

“Eaten, probably. Why leave the wing though?”

“Some people don’t like wings,” Izuku says good naturedly. “They’re not easy to eat. Fun when you fry them, though. Or barbecue them.”

“Did you know that this is where I first met Paul?”

“Is that what you’re calling him?” Izuku asks, plopping bonelessly onto the stone edge of the fountain. The sound of running water almost makes him want to take a dip. Maybe he’ll go to the pool on the weekend. “Oh, the tree’s growing back. There’s a little shoot coming out of the trunk, that’s so cute.”

“That tree is a survivor,” Hitoshi says, sitting down next to him. “If I got blown up and then crushed by a solid block of ice, I wouldn’t be growing any limbs back.”

“Humans don’t usually do that, I think.”

“Not with that attitude. Lunch?”

“Sorry, I’ve actually got something to do today.” Stretching his arms over his head, Izuku tilts his face up to catch some sunlight. “By the way, did you know that Todoroki and Kacchan apparently had a crush on me the whole time I was trying to set them up?”

Hitoshi snorts. “Everybody knew. You’re the only person on the planet who didn’t.”

“Figures,” Izuku says, punching Hitoshi’s shoulder when he laughs. “Well, they told me. Finally. And also called me stupid a lot.”
“You probably deserved it,” Hitoshi says. Izuku punches him again. “You don’t seem too upset about it, though. I take it to mean that you’re happy with the way things turned out.”

“I guess I am,” Izuku says, nudging at the pebble with his shoe. “We’re still figuring things out, but I think right now it fits. We fit. It’s nice.”

Hitoshi nods sagely. The bags under his eyes had always worried Izuku, but now they remind him less of restless nights and more of sleepovers spent binge-watching cartoons with your best friend. “There’s this Korean restaurant that’s just opened up near my place. I hear their kimchi soup is to die for.”

“I like kimchi,” says Hitoshi.

Izuku knows. “Would you like to go with me sometime? My treat. A proper thank-you for all the advice, even though you know I had the wrong idea. Bastard.”

Hitoshi grins. “Will your boyfriends mind?”

“They’re probably going to tail us to the restaurant and try to spy on us from another table. You game?”

“Absolutely,” says Hitoshi. His teeth are very white. Izuku thinks he should smile more. “I’m going to talk very loudly about how much fun we’re having and how much we have in common.”

“Like fluffy hair?”

“Among other things.” Hitoshi fluffs up the top of Izuku’s head, and Izuku giggles and bats him away. “I’m free on Saturday. I’d buy dessert, but your bodyguards might actually beat me up. They already look kind of pissed.”

“I told them they didn’t have to follow me,” Izuku sighs. He pats Hitoshi on the back and stands, laughing out loud when a white paw emerges from inside Hitoshi’s blazer. “I’ll see you at half past noon at my house. I’ll text you the address. Paul can come too.”

“So that’s what happened,” Izuku says, stirring more sugar into his tea. “I’ll be honest, I didn’t think it would work out as well as it did, but everything seems to be perfect for now.”

All Might sits on the loveseat across from him, suit hanging off his shoulders and jacket pooling around his waist. It’s a grey and orange pinstripe, which should be weird but somehow works. That may just be Izuku’s hero-worship talking, though. All Might’s one third the size that he normally is and Izuku still thinks he looks great.
“That’s some impressive analytical work on your part, young man,” All Might tells him, making Izuku preen. “I suppose that helping your friends find their happiness is heroic in its own right.”

“That’s what I said!” Izuku says and nearly spills his tea. “And Hagakure and Ojiro are so cute, and Tetsu and Kirishima are really nice and supportive, and Todoroki and Kacch—uhm, Bakugou, they’ve stopped fighting. Kind of. They’re not actually drawing blood anymore, I guess.”

“That was starting to become an issue.” Delicately, All Might bites into a sandwich, chewing slowly so as not to upset his injured stomach. Teachers bustle around in the background, but nobody bothers their little corner of the staff room. “My. It’s only been a month since we had lunch together. When I asked what you’d been up to I didn’t think you’d be this busy.”

“It sort of just happened,” Izuku says and scratches the back of his neck. All Might smiles and offers him a banana cupcake. “I mean, the thing with Kacchan and Todoroki. I was a little afraid to tell you, but I’m kind of happy. They make me happy.”

“You deserve to be happy,” All Might says, delighting Izuku. “You’re a good boy, Midoriya. You’re not hard to love, and I’m not surprised that you’ve attracted the attention of those boys. You’re going to make a good hero. I’m glad I picked you.”

Izuku kicks his feet and eats his lunch. It’s weird not having two warm bodies pressed against his sides, but for now he’s content on a leather sofa with the person he’d always wanted to be. All Might leans against the arm rest, relaxed and unguarded the way he can’t be when he steps out from behind their four walls.

Izuku doesn’t mind. Without his quirk, without his persona, All Might’s still always going to be a hero. Maybe one day Izuku will be too. That’s a long way away, though. In the meantime, this is good.

“By the way,” Izuku says, sipping his tea. “Have I mentioned my mother is single?”

Chapter End Notes

surprise! bet you thought you'd seen the last of me lol

uhm, sorry for the sudden addition. a lot of people mentioned that they expected this to go down the todobakudeku route. most people were really nice about it, and i thought it was an interesting idea so i decided to try writing that version to see how it would go. i know this addition is kind of pointless, but i'm amused that it's kind of like a visual novel. ch7 is how i originally planned it to go but i guess you can choose whichever one you like better.
please don't take this as serious shipping fic, though. first and foremost this was a silly story i made up to make some people laugh. the pairings are just for fun. i don't actually have any ships (in bnha or in general) so don't think too hard about it! i was just hoping this update would be an interesting take on how the fic could have gone. i hope you don't mind the lack of definitive ending.

leave a comment if you like! at the time of writing i haven't actually replied to last chapter's comments but i'll get to that soon.

ok see you guys i should probably go to bed lol have a good week!

if you liked this, consider a [commission](#)

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