Cardiac Arrest
by AMournfulHowlInTheNight

Summary

All of the dead at Kamino Ward had been accounted for, sans one. One body had been pulled from the rubble, lifeless and limp, and taken away.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Too slow.

Katsuki was too fucking slow. Too weak. It happened so fast.

Deku saw it first. Like he seems to have heard that prick first from what he said. He was always on edge. Made sense he saw it first. Saw it coming. The debris coming from All Might and All For One’s fight. They thought they were safe. Deku knew that was bullshit.

Deku was smiling when he threw them out the way. Serenely too. Katsuki would almost call it zen as he tumbled away. Deku had to know. Had to. And he was fucking smiling like a moron. Smiling while the world ended. And Katsuki couldn’t do shit, too taken aback like the fucking idiot he was to lunge forward and grab the idiot and pull him with them.

But he didn’t. He didn’t.

Then the rubble came down and Deku was fucking gone. Buried. Disappeared in an instant in a mountain of fuck knows what shit. Rebar and concrete and glass that rained down from fuck knows where. From All For One’s pressure blasts probably. Katsuki didn’t fucking know where it came from, but All Might agreed with him later on. That fucking prick All For One dropping those things where ever the fuck he felt like.

Dropping the ruin directly on them.

That wasn’t the worst part though. Not the realisation of what happened, or the cloud of concrete dust and glass or the screams or blood or the carpet of bodies or that Katsuki couldn’t feel one of his arms.

No, it was the fucking miasma that Katsuki had only just escaped from. The one that followed them here.

It was the air thickening into fully fledged hysteria as All For One stepped out of thin air to the base of the mountain of rubble, a fist clenched. Completely indifferent to the screams, to the misery, to the fact that All Might was moments away from coming to smash his face in again. The disregard… It was the careful footsteps and positioning…

Katsuki couldn’t do anything, struggling to breathe, when a moment later a blast sheared through the the rubble as though it were made of fucking paper. It was all he could to hold onto the ground that recoil shot through, when an undisturbed All For One’s probing tentacles rushed the resulting destruction as the second set batted away obstructions deeper within.

Then they retracted and there was Deku wrapped in them. At least Katsuki thought it was Deku, the mop of green hair tinted red with blood and shredded clothing made him nearly unrecognisable by the impact. But Deku had been standing there when it hit… but why the fuck was All For One there? All For One should have been after All Might?

But no, that was definitely All For One… who lifted Deku into his arms, showing Deku’s unblinking staring features and subsequently ran a hand down them. With Deku’s eyes closed, All For One vanished.
There was no sign of the warp that caught Katsuki having caught Deku. None of the black goo… As if… as if it didn’t need to…

It happened so fast.

And Katsuki couldn’t do anything.

Toshinori hadn’t thought anything of the blast All For One had used as a partial deflection. Not until All For One had literally vanished a split second later, leaving the League of Villains gaping at empty air.

“Sensei!” Shigaraki called pathetically and Toshinori would have gone over and punted him into a free standing sign if he didn’t have more important things to worry about. Namely wherever the hell All For One had gone.

“Where the hell is he?” Toshinori demanded from Gran Torino

“He must have warped!” Gran Torino coughed.

“All Might! He’s near the train station!” Someone called and Toshinori prepared to leap.

“You get the rest of the League!” Toshinori called as he bounded up into the air, feeling One For All strain as he did so. He was already running on fumes… but for All For One to bail so suddenly. What had happened? Was he too reaching his limit?

Whatever he was expecting on arrival… it wasn’t this…

All For One was nowhere to be seen. Not him directly, nor his aura of menace. The train station had been obliterated. All For One’s line of destruction through the city ending at its natural destination. Bodies littered the street, some moaning, some unmoving, but all maimed by his disregard for human life.

Then, Toshinori froze at the sight of three familiar faces standing at the base of a particularly large pile of uplifted material.

“Young Bakugou?”

“Stop, Bakugou! It’s too late! You’re just going to injure yourself! Stop!” Young Ida and Kirishima were holding a screaming Bakugou back from a mess of rubble that appeared as though wind had sheared it clean through. But… where is… young Midoriya?

“Buddy, we understand. Just let me do it, with my Quirk, I don’t have to worry about-” Kirishima tried to interject, pulling at him as Toshinori marched forwards. “Maybe he’s still-“

“-Shut the fuck up. He’s fucking gone. What don’t you understand about that? He. IS. GONE! HE ISN’T COMING BACK! THE WARP DIDN’T ACTIVATE ON HIM!” Bakugou screamed at them, piercing the ambient moans. No…
“Kids! Where’s young Midoriya?” Toshinori urged as he sprinted to them and watched them freeze. All For One could wait.

Young Bakugou was shaking violently as he spun to face Toshinori. “Deku’s gone,” young Bakugou heaved and All Might’s stomach dropped into his feet. No. “That fucking bastard dropped a fucking building on us and Deku… Deku shoved us out the way and…” Young Bakugou’s voice terminated with a strangled sob. “He’s gone.”

“He’s gone,” echoed numbly and endlessly through Toshinori’s head without making an impact. “What…” Toshinori struggled to hold his voice together. “Where is he now?”

“That… masked prick took his body. Took him from that rubble. That’s how I knew he was dead. The warp didn’t work on him,” young Bakugou whispered in a broken voice as Toshinori drew him into a bone crushing hug and the boy wailed into his arms, while Kirishima and Ida blankly stood staring on, as if the rest of the world had stopped existing.

It had cost One For All, but All For One had already cost him so much more and there wasn’t even going to be a body to bury for it.
Resume

Chapter Summary

So it resumes...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

That was odd. Midoriya’s phone had been ringing before… Only moments before had Shouto been given the all clear. Now it was saying it had been turned off. Weird.

“You can’t get through either?” Yaoyorozu asked, frowning deeply. “They were at the train station before. Only Midoriya’s phone isn’t ringing. The rest are ringing, but they’re not picking up. Something might have happened.” It was really starting to look that way.

But why wouldn’t they pick up? The cameras had been forced to cut away when the villain had deflected one of All Might’s blows, the shockwave forcing the helicopter out of range. What had happened? Had the villain caused something to happen near Midoriya and the others? Maybe something had fallen near them?

“Keep trying. Midoriya was on his phone moments ago.” But wasn’t now. But wasn’t after the villain’s backhand. His phone could have been damaged if anything was knocked into the area, but Midoriya had his phone. And if the phone was damaged… where was Midoriya? Where was the villain? Where was All Might? They couldn’t go back… could they? “Change of plans, we need to find a hero or someone with the police. We can’t cross back through where All Might and the villain, but we can tell them where we last saw Bakugou and the others and maybe they’ll take us to them.”

Yaoyorozu’s frowned deeper still. “Midoriya and the others might have been near the trajectory of that deflection…” And Yaoyorozu would know all about trajectories when she'd spent so long with artillery as her long range weapon of choice and that only made Shouto’s stomach twist with all the more urgency.

Shouto nodded, swallowing down a lump. “Yeah.”

“Fine.”

Kirishima and Ida had been kicked out the room before this bastard detective crawled in like some lizard person. Katsuki took it back. It was an insult to lizard people. This guy was just scum. They were all waiting on their parents now while this detective wasted his time. They hadn’t looked too hot either. Ida hadn’t stopped wailing and Kirishima wasn’t far behind him. He didn't know what to say. They didn't know what to say.

Katsuki didn’t want to cry. He wanted to wrap his hands around Shigaraki’s throat and squeeze his head off his shoulders. He figured Deku’s mother would appreciate it more. And it might do
something about the itch in his eyes…

“What the fuck do you mean you found his phone?” Katsuki snarled from his hospital bed. The dour face man sitting opposite shrugged. Some detective Katsuki’s arse. Katsuki didn’t care about the bastard’s name, not when he’d not given a shit about Katsuki trying to tell him about the masked bastard taking Deku.

There was a skeletally thin man hovering in the closed doorway that no one had attempted to remove yet, his eyes filled with pools of water. Katsuki could see them dripping down the guy’s oversized shirt. Something about his presence made Katsuki far more uncomfortable than the useless detective who was dodging the answer.

“Well, Bakugou, Midoriya’s phone was found outside the rubble. Got knocked loose when he tossed you out the way. We have it in evidence and it was identified by his friends who were there with you,” the detective droned. That must have been Todoroki and Yaoyorozu then, because if they’d showed that phone to Ida and Kirishima, Katsuki was going to shove it clean up the arse of the most senior officer there. The latter two at least might not know what had happened yet.

“What the fuck does that have to do with the bastard who stole his body?” Katsuki growled across the distance. What the hell did a phone have to do with some creep who stole bodies of dead kids?

“Well… we only have your word for it that Izuku Midoriya’s body was taken…”

Katsuki paused. He allowed the words to sink in. Then he twitched, feeling his freshly relocated arm explode with pain as he did so. “Excuse me, you fucking muppet? You have an entire street lined with cameras and you expect me to believe that you shitheads didn’t check the CCTV footage? It’s a fucking train station. Everyone has fucking CCTV.” Katsuki leaned further forward, baring his teeth at the unflinching, grey faced bastard. “You. Didn’t. Check.”

“These businesses sustained severe damage due to the attack-”

“Bullshit, you prick.” A cover up. It was a fucking cover up. They were going to fucking hide it. “Where the fuck is his body? Why do you have a phone and no body? What the fuck are you going to tell his mother? That he was disintegrated by falling concrete?” Katsuki could see the skeleton move from the doorway and edge his way closer as though he was stepping through a minefield. The thought made Katsuki’s throat close painfully and he swallowed. Fucking Deku and minefields.

“Excuse me, Detective. You’re upsetting my student. I must request that you come back later after he’s had time to rest,” the skeleton spoke in a low and… familiar voice and Katsuki was relieved. So the skeleton was from U.A. then… Explains how he got in… All Might had fucking vanished not long after. Hopefully All Might was fucking chasing the bastard to the ends of the Earth. Fuck knows the police weren’t gonna be doing shit.

“Ah, that’s okay. I’ll come back and speak to him when he’s calmed down,” the detective nodded, jumping at any bullshit excuse. Didn’t even take a statement.

“I’m right here, asshole. Answer my question!” Katsuki shouted. “Are you just going to lie about it?”

“Not now young Bakugou,” the skeleton whispered into Katsuki’s ear and Katsuki froze. That almost sounded like… “That will be all, Detective…”

And without another word, the piece of shit detective was gone, the door snapping shut behind him.
and the skeleton sighed while mopping up his piercing blue eyes.

“To answer your question, young Bakugou, yes, they are going to lie about young Midoriya’s body being taken by All For One,” the skeleton sighed, falling into the seat next to Katsuki. “U.A. were notified by the police that young Midoriya’s heroics were going to be emphasised without the downsides of his actions. They’ve caught Shigaraki and the members of the League of Villains that were present. Young Midoriya’s mother is going to be told that he’s merely missing and not… passed on as you told me. Them finding his phone gave them an out. Without his body formally noted as being taken, no effort will be made towards recovering it,” the skeleton scowled. “I’m limited in what I can do due that bastard All For One still being active.”

“How do you…” Katsuki’s eye widened and it clicked. The eyes, the hair, the voice, the knowledge. “All.. Might…?” Was that really All Might?

“I am here!” And the skeleton was replaced by All Might typical form, only to be gone in an instant, coughing blood in a voluminous spray.

“Shit, are you alright?” Katsuki fumbled for his box of tissues, handing a wad to his bleeding teacher and idol as his brain struggled to catch up. What the fuck was going on? Why… why did All Might look like he was one foot in the fucking grave? What the hell was going on? Who the fuck had done this to All Might?

“I suppose… I have some explaining to do,” All Might, so frail and sickly, whispered through his clutch of tissues and Katsuki could only sink back onto his bed feeling numb. “After… after what you saw, I think you deserve it. And maybe then we can try to understand what happened today and why All For One took young Midoriya’s body.” Understand… What the fuck? What was there to understand? Katsuki was fucking useless regardless of All Might being… sick.

“We wouldn’t fucking be here if I wasn’t such a useless fucking weakling.” Too weak. Too slow. Too useless. Deku might still be-

“Don’t blame yourself, young Bakugou. All For One was the one who left me in this state you see,” and All Might lifted his shirt, revealing a gaping scar that left Katsuki recoiling. The hole must have been fucking huge.

“What the fuck. He did that?” Katsuki struggled for a moment… maybe not All For One then, but he should have at least been able to deal with a fucking building.

“Yep,” All Might grinned toothily, then it faded away. “Six years ago now. He was here today to finish the job, I suspect. Shigaraki was one of his pawns.” All Might shrugged. “All For One was very fastidious about dealing with people like me.”

“This doesn’t make any fucking sense.” And it didn’t. Deku was a nobody. One mother. No father. No other relatives. Nothing going on. Nothing special. “Why the fuck would a prick like that steal a nobody teenager’s corpse when he could be finishing you off?”

“That,” All Might sighed, “is what we need to find out, because the police will not be assisting us and Mrs Midoriya will have no body to bury, otherwise. I think;” All Might's face screwed up, his eyes filling with tears, "I think we at least owe her a body to bury."

Katsuki inhaled sharply. “Fuck the police.” All Might had been crying. All Might was fucking crying. All Might. Crying. Katsuki inhaled slowly and deeply.
All Might winced. “I’m only agreeing with you in this one instance, young Bakugou, because we will likely have to tell young Midoriya’s mother what really happened otherwise she’ll be left with the false hope her son is still alive and well.”

Katsuki clenched his teeth. “What else do you know about this bastard?”

The boy had been… for want of a better term… shattered… Memories from six years prior flickered to mind and the doctor shuddered. It was going to be one of those cases that defied conventional medical help. There was nothing in the textbooks for reanimating a broken corpse, but fortunately at this point in career he had developed experience beyond such limited tools of education. When working in such a career it came with the territory.

Unmoving, lifeless… not quite expressionless, indeed, it was almost serene for such a young person. Little Izuku Midoriya had the slightest hint of a smile, even as he lay there in death. It would be unprofessional to wonder how it happened, but still his thoughts wandered to how it had happened and to the logical outcome of how Sensei had been in the proximity for such a speedy recovery of the body… A body that had been pulverised, seemingly by debris… As though the boy had been caught in the crossfire… But now he looked so happy. What a contrast to the last time he'd seen him…

It was difficult to believe that only eleven years ago the boy had been in his clinic with his mother… Now he was here, not even having reached adulthood. He’d told him to give up and now…? Now… now… The doctor frowned, even as he manipulated the boy’s fragile heart.

No use in dwelling on the past… Sensei was awaiting results.

The boy shouldn’t be alive. No human should live through such an experience. He’d been in medicine long enough to know a hopeless case when he saw it, but Sensei wasn’t taking “no” for an answer. It wasn’t an existing option on the table of outcomes. It simply wasn’t present. The boy was going to survive the experience… or else.

Even if for good reason no one should survive such an experience. Sensei was uniquely positioned and still keenly felt adverse outcomes, but the child? The doctor swallowed heavily beneath his mask.

Sensei no doubt had his reasons… the doctor simply hoped that he fully understood the consequences of them.

Light and sound and then there wasn’t. It was just… dark. He hadn’t really expected anything else. It was the same last time as well, the gradual fade to black.

It was peaceful and that was all he could ask for really. As peaceful as one could ever really expect as their brain slowly died from oxygen deprivation. Hopefully everyone else had made it and were doing well.

Izuku couldn’t feel anything. Maybe that was for the best. It was a building after all. Izuku could take
an educated guess at what it was going to do. It was him or them. What was one of him versus all of them? What was there even to think about?

Was… was death meant to be… noisy… he could hear something… a rush of sound? It wasn’t going away. That… that hadn’t happened under the bridge… had it? Izuku couldn’t remember… And voices? Maybe two?

Was… was he still alive?

How? Why?

In hospital there hadn’t just been two voices…

Why was it so dark? Why wasn’t there any pain?

Izuku could feel again. There was something… someone? Warm. Resting on one hand. Something resting on his face… a mask? Sheets draped over him. Something… in his other arm? A drip?

He flexed his toes and felt those sluggishly twitch… That was a sign?

He still couldn’t make out the voices, even though one of them seemed to have changed slightly.

It was still so dark… was there something over his eyes?

But as time surely passed… he could make out a hand far larger than his own was interlocked with his own fingers. Why? Who?

Where was he?

What was that sound?

And… why wasn’t it moving?

Chapter End Notes

Here you go~
Breathe

Chapter Summary

All they had to do was breathe.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Inko couldn’t breathe. The detectives were very nice. But she couldn’t breathe. Her teacup rattled in its saucer, the grim faced detective opposite paused, his eyebrows creasing in slow motion.

“Mrs Midoriya? Are you alright?”

“I…”

Mrs Midoriya… may we come in?

Your son is missing.

Kamino Ward… when the buildings fell… we found his phone…

There was no trace of him in the rubble so far though.

Her son’s phone, cracked, buckled and bent, was sitting on her coffee table.

Her son was nowhere to be found.

Missing.

Why had he even been there? He said he’d be home late… but where was he even going to go? Surely he was staying overnight with friends… but a deeply traitorous part of Inko’s brain knew better.

For a long time now, Izuku had been alone with no close friends to speak of. Even now, Izuku hadn’t mentioned being close enough to anyone to be privately invited over let alone stay overnight at someone’s house.

Had… Had Izuku gone to look for Bakugou?

Is that why he was so close to the villains? Is that why he was missing?

Because… because she let him go?

Izuku… missing… Gone?

Not coming back?
How would he come back from fallen buildings?

She couldn’t breathe.

What was she going to tell Hisashi?

What was Hisashi going to say?

Hisashi who hadn’t spoken to his son before.

Inko’s breath caught in her throat. She couldn’t breathe.

Toshinori couldn’t breathe and loosened his tie before it became a noose around his neck. Tsukauichi assured him was the latest in policing fashion. In fact, his whole suit was the sort of dreary blue that was the latest in policing fashion. It was exactly what Toshinori needed. Mr Yagi was going to be dreariest person at the police station if Toshinori had his way. Until he interrogated the League of Villains. Then he was going to be the biggest bastard to walk the earth, but baby steps first.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” Tsukauichi grimaced. “We’re more than capable of sorting this out. I know he was your student…” I know he was your student, but we think you’re too close to the issue to be handling this in an unbiased manner, was what Tsukauchi wanted to say. Toshinori could understand that. He also understood that there was a substantial risk of him maiming the next villain he apprehended with his current mindset and only All For One was currently worthy of that dubious honour.

One For All was a flickering, guttering flame, ready to go out in Toshinori because he hadn’t been able to save young Midoriya… All For One’s response had taken him aback. Toshinori hadn’t seen the man flee so quickly since their first encounter when the media had begun to arrive and All For One had abruptly aborted without another word. All For One liked his privacy… which made his exposure to the cameras even stranger.

“I’m positive,” Toshinori bit out shortly, tightening his tie again, for a brief moment imagining wrapping his hands around All For One’s neck and squeezing as he did so. “We should take all available opportunities to locate All For One’s whereabouts and the whereabouts of young Midoriya’s remains.” Toshinori’s voice caught ever so slightly.

Remains. All For One had taken a body. Not even the living, breathing person, but a body. Why? Young Midoriya had been inconspicuous for the most part, the media not having taken much of a shine to him with a class full of royalty from families long into heroics. It should have shielded him from All For One’s interest, but instead this had happened.

Had… All For One worked out the link? The thought alone made what was left of Toshinori’s stomach lurch. All For One made weapons from living people… what horrific experimentation was he capable of with a dead one? He didn’t approve of what the police had done with Inko Midoriya, but Missing In Action was better than Body Stolen By Centuries Old Psychopath For Depraved Experimentation. The Noumu were All For One’s creation and Toshinori was hardening himself for the next abomination to crawl from those laboratories, even if it was what was left of young Midoriya. Then again, at least if that was the case they’d have some closure.
So long as All For One kept young Midoriya’s body, god only knows what he was doing with it. There still wasn’t any confirmation that All For One knew the next successor of One For All… so why did he take young Midoriya? Young Bakugou was more eager than even Toshinori to get to the heart of matter…

“Wouldn’t… doing it as All Might be more effective?” Tsukauchi seemed to hesitantly ask through Toshinori’s cloud of thoughts, and Toshinori didn’t know why Tsukauchi was feeling the need to be sensitive about it. Not when Toshinori had seriously weighed the pros and cons himself before volunteering himself to the police department for their protracted bout of good cop/bad cop.

Tomura Shigaraki hated All Might, but Toshinori wasn’t aiming for hate. Toshinori wanted to unsettle the League of Villains in his stint as the in house bad cop of the police department. Hate would make Shigaraki sink his heels in and play games with All Might… but… how would Shigaraki react to a far more businesslike Mr Yagi? Shigaraki who had completely disappeared in the face of injury… How would he react to Mr Yagi coughing up fountains of blood? Toshinori was rather curious. As were the staff psychologists and psychiatrists, off the record.

“No…. Shigaraki’s already told us what he thinks of All Might, I think a less familiar face might be more beneficial here…” Especially when Shigaraki would be inclined to withhold information just to spite All Might. Tsukauchi’s grimace wasn’t very encouraging, but Toshinori had a feeling that was deeper down than a disheartening look. “But that’s a bit of a longer term goal, first I need to settle in as an employee, eh?” And get his own desk and workload so no one suspected that All Might’s holiday coincided with Mr Yagi’s new job.

All to take a break from U.A., where he couldn’t escape the ghost of young Midoriya’s staring face from the empty seat that everyone refused to fill or the empty seats of nearby of students who’d gone on leave following his “disappearance”. The class knew better. Young Bakugou made sure of that.

Katsuki couldn’t breathe. “He. Is. Fucking. Dead. You. Morons.” He could only see the surrounding table in a haze of red, his hands crackling wildly.

“But—but the police,” the purple haired little shit almost seemed beside himself. If he didn’t keep his fucking mouth shut Katsuki was going to make that a reality when he tore his head off his shoulders.

“All too busy lying to everyone so they don’t have to go after All For One,” Katsuki snarled. “You should have heard the one hundred percent bullshit they were going to feed to his mother. I’m gonna need some of you to help me sneak off to tell her later because my parents don’t want me to tell her either.” And quite frankly, fuck his parents, what the fuck did they know? Inko Midoriya should be planning Deku’s funeral and getting her useless bastard of a husband back in to attend it, even if was an empty casket. Maybe then the bastard would understand that his son’s lifespan was finite and wasn’t going to wait for some prick to be done with some shit job.

Katsuki didn’t know shit about Hisashi Midoriya, but the fact that he didn’t know anything about him meant that he was going to punch him out at the funeral if he bothered to show up. Grief did shit to people. That’s what he was telling the cops at least. He had a plan.

Glasses wasn’t at the improvised gathering even if everyone else was. Katsuki couldn’t blame him. He’d gone with the express purpose of keeping Deku safe and now Deku was gone keeping their sorry arses from being crushed, because Katsuki was too fucking slow.

“Bakugou saw what happened, he’s not lying,” Ponytail sobbed, pulling tissues from her arm. The
Pinky, Invisible and Froggy weren’t much better off. Katsuki tried not to look at them. “They made us identify his phone… we didn’t know or we wouldn’t have-” then she erupted into a wail that made Katsuki want to punt that fucking detective through a window.

Ice Bastard stared ahead. “He stole a dead body. Why would he want a dead body? He can only take Quirks from living people, can’t he?”

Thank god one of these useless fucks was being productive. Better than all of this crying shit. All of them fucking crying. He couldn’t handle it. His parents fucking expected him to cry like some wimp. No point in doing that shit. It wasn’t going to bring him back or fix anything. Not when Deku’s body was still missing. Someone had to keep their shit together and find him. All Might was working on the police end to get some information from those fuckwits within the League of Assholes. That didn’t mean Katsuki and the extras couldn’t do some brainstorming outside of police intel.

“No, he can’t from what All Might said,” Katsuki grunted approvingly. “Living people only. That’s where we got stuck.”

“And you’re sure…” Purple’s lip wobbled and Katsuki glared at him.

“That masked bastard even closed his open and very dead eyes. And he warped alone. There was nothing on Deku, he was just along for the ride. Deku’s dead as a doornail and he got taken anyway…” Katsuki slammed the round table with a fist for emphasis.

“Closed his eyes…” Pink warbled, “why would he do that?”

“Huh?”

Before long, the whole group was staring at Katsuki. “You’re sure you saw him close Midoriya’s eyes?” Froggy croaked.

“Fucking positive. Took his sweet time doing it before he warped. Why?” Katsuki stared at them, they stared back.

“That’s creepy,” Moron remarked, shuddering.

“Bakugou, look at it from our point of view, why the hell is a supervillain closing the eyes of some random victim?” Kirishima asked, looking slightly green. “I didn’t see it, but god… And didn’t he, like, leave the entire League of Villains behind to take Midoriya as well?”

Katsuki’s mug exploded in his hand, showering the table in shards glass. “What the fuck. Why the fuck would Deku’s corpse be worth more than the entire League of Assholes?”

“Could it be his Quirk?” Moron asked, defying his first impressions for the first time in a long time. “Midoriya’s Quirk was crazy flashy

Glitter Blondie bit his lip. “Midoriya’s body truly was unsuited his to his Quirk. I’ve never seen someone’s Quirk shatter bones like his Quirk did him. I too cannot handle Naval Laser without a support belt, but that degree of injury…” He trailed off. “The evolution of Quirks largely prevented such Quirks from occurring. It’s unnatural. His recoil was just as likely to damage him as it was another person. I think it was inspiring that he did so well when it caused those injuries…” Glitter faltered and wiped his eyes and Katsuki looked away.
“Deku was a late bloomer,” Katsuki snorted, “you’d almost think it was given to him it was so late.” Then he froze. *Shit.*

Deku was a late bloomer. Deku hadn’t shown a Quirk for most of his life. Deku who said he’d borrowed it. Deku had an extremely powerful outlier Quirk that tore him apart. Deku with a connection to All Might who’d apparently been taking care of him… and now one to All For One who was in a feud with All Might…

Unless… Deku had the connection to All For One first…

“You bastards don’t… don’t think that…” Katsuki couldn’t breathe. There was no way Deku would be complicit in that shit. He couldn’t have known. Deku was as clueless about those League bastards as the rest of them, he had to have known about All For One from All Might, but the Quirk itself couldn’t have been from any other source. Katsuki couldn’t fucking breathe.

Kirishima had a similar expression of horror. “Kamino. Midoriya recognised All For One at Kamino. He was the first to react.”

“So,” Pink whispered, “was he taken because of the Quirk or because he knew him?”

“What the fuck,” Katsuki repeated into the silence and he turned and stormed from the building.

“Bakugou,” Icy’s voice called and Katsuki spun to face him and… a red eyed Kirishima.

“The fuck do you two want?” He had to be alone. He couldn’t breathe. He was too slow. Always too slow. Too slow to realise, too slow to do anything.

“Buddy, I was there… You don’t need to pretend that you didn’t see it happen,” Kirishima blurted out so bluntly that even Icy winced. “Nobody expects you to just… get it over it just like that. It’s normal to be upset.”

“Yeah, and what the fuck is being upset going to do when a fucking psychopath ran off with his dead body?” Katsuki screamed back across the gap. “I fucking knew he was Quirkless. I. Fucking. Knew. I didn’t say anything and look at what fucking happened. Fuck off with your bullshit being upset.”

Turning again of his heel, Katsuki marched off. He had to find All Might and ask him about Deku’s Quirk. All For One had to be involved. The question was when and how and what the bastard was going to do with Deku’s corpse.

Izuku couldn’t breathe. There was something resting against the inside of his throat and it was all his foggy brain could do not to gag, then… a deeper darkness…

When Izuku awoke next, it was still pitch black. His toes would only faintly wiggle. Hands not much better. But… his hands were… wrapped… with something… almost like they were in mittens. Odd, they hadn’t been there last time. Or had they?

This time he could breathe freely without anything covering his lower face. His eyes were covered? At least that was Izuku’s assumption following his dry, hacking cough and the ache of a mouth that felt like it had gone months without water. At least he was vaguely leaning upwards, or Izuku had
his suspicions that he would have choked on his own tongue.

Everything else… felt strangely muted. Izuku wasn’t in a hospital or a ward. He couldn’t smell the typical scent of one, but instead the faint scent of a cologne that was almost familiar hung about the air. The soundscape wasn’t much better, with that faint rush of air Izuku had heard before (had he? He was still hearing it now after all) still present nearby, with a gentle hum of background noise.

It was too quiet to be a hospital. Not when Izuku, even for more minor altercations, had visitors or teachers fussing. Izuku felt his hands clench almost involuntarily.

Not a hospital.

Then, Izuku heard a rustle, an ever so slight shifting of fabric that wouldn’t have been out of place from the background noise if it hadn’t been so close to him. “Ah, you’re awake,” a deep and horribly familiar voice murmured. “Better late than never.” Izuku would have liked to have called it mocking to further exacerbate his dread, but instead it sounded almost empty. All For One sounded as spent as Izuku felt. It had to have been long enough for All For One to have recovered from the fight with All Might… He had Quirks for that… Right? But All For One sounded as committed to villainy at the moment as Izuku did.

All For One… who was here, then… Izuku almost felt a physical click.

All Might! Izuku realised with alarm. If All For One was here, where was All Might?

Izuku opened his mouth to reply and winced at the dryness.

“Maybe water first?” The enigma suggested and Izuku felt the bonds on his hands fall away. As the mittens came away, All For One’s hands briefly grazed Izuku’s own and Izuku flinched. “My apologies, but the rest of your treatment didn’t agree with the coma that was induced to shield your brain and we had to restrain you… The blindfold is for your comfort as well… the methods we used to stabilise you didn’t agree with your sight either.” Coma… I was in a coma? What did he do to my eyes? Izuku thought vaguely to himself, feeling ill, but didn’t have the time to dwell when the man seemed keen to carry on. “Yes, a coma, little Izuku Midoriya. Do you… remember what happened?”

Izuku shook his head, feeling his head pound as he did so, his growing need to flee eclipsed by his inability to lift his arms and the delicacy in All For One’s voice. Hesitation? Izuku was dully amazed by the amount of tact. Hadn’t seemed like he cared that much when Shigaraki had arrived at Kamino.

“You pushed your school associates from the path of falling debris and it landed on you instead,” All For One gently explained, while Izuku was assisted by the less gentle mental image of multiple tonnes of concrete, glass and rebar and winced.

Then, Izuku felt a hand wrap around his shoulder and he recoiled. “I don’t mean to be presumptuous… but you can’t move on your own, can you?” With no eyes to guide him, Izuku could only hang off every word and every word was more unnerving than the last.

With more horror than any human should have been capable of feeling, Izuku feebly shook his head. Move? Wasn’t Izuku moving a threat to All For One’s ongoing wellbeing? If Izuku could walk he would have bolted for the nearest exit.

“Yes… I suspected as much,” was muttered far more darkly. “We weren’t entirely certain if you’d
ever walk again, but you have some movement in your toes which is a positive sign. Not enough just yet to move your own weight clearly and I’d prefer you not to drown when you have your drink…” All For One carried on, then, without warning Izuku was lifted.

Izuku squawked indignantly, having no true voice for his complaint. To All For One’s limited and fleeting credit, it was an eye’s blink worth of time between Izuku’s realisation and the glass being lifted to his lips.

It didn’t alleviate the sense of violation that came with the resident mass murderer being within touching distance of him and doing so so casually.

Not that Izuku was entirely sure that it was water. It tasted suitably tasteless for it to be filtered water. “Slowly,” All For One ordered. Of course Izuku could have refused… but he’d already woken up once with tubing forced down his throat, along with the implications of the induced coma and the Noumu All For One had kept stored at Kamino, Izuku was fortunate to have woken up at all. All For One could have just as easily stored Izuku in a jar, which sent a shudder running the length of Izuku’s body. Why hadn’t he?

“All For One,” Izuku croaked, feeling the glass move away. “Why?”

“Why what?” All For One lightly repeated, adjusting Izuku’s sheets as if he owned them. Well, he likely did, not that it was helping Izuku. In fact, the thought made butterflies swirl around his stomach as where and who he was with began to register.

“You’re the reason for the debris,” Izuku said bluntly, with a craving for sugar that he didn’t know was possible. What else had to be said? All For One wouldn’t have been throwing buildings around unless he wanted them to fall on people. Izuku was a person. Presumably he was one of those people.

“Indeed, but I was under the expectation that All Might would be intercepting the debris,” All For One said with the air of someone complaining about their morning commute. An unusual shift in tone for someone who sounded a step from the grave himself only moments ago. “Instead he failed dismally and he limped off after I made my retreat with you.”

All Might was safe! Izuku held in a sigh of relief, dwelled on the wording. Where was the League of Villains if All For One had left with Izuku? Surely he hadn’t just… dumped them and left? Izuku’s brain throbbed in protest at the conflict and Izuku let the contradiction drop.

“Why didn’t he?” Izuku probed. Izuku had’t seen the lead in to the exchange, just enough to know about the oncoming result. Why All Might hadn’t made it was clear, when All For One was a monster in a league of his own.

“I misjudged,” was the unsatisfying response.

Izuku paused and replayed the words to himself. “I misjudged.” Not “we”, but “I”. “You said that you misjudged, not All Might… I don’t understand… You wiped out everything bef-” and Izuku had to stop himself. Because All For One hadn’t wiped out everything beforehand, otherwise Izuku wouldn’t be around for All For One to accidentally drop a building on him. That small slice of wall that separated them from imminent death and discovery that somehow survived the initial blast… All For One whose footsteps were heard even as they planned to make their escape. If Izuku had heard him, who was to say he hadn’t heard them?
“Did you know that we were there?” Slipped out before Izuku could stop himself.

“Did I?” All For One if anything only sounded faintly amused.

Izuku’s hands clenched under the sheets. That wasn’t a denial. Izuku had picked a moment when All For One had appeared to be distracted, but… had he let them escape? Izuku swallowed heavily. If he knew that they were there, a few metres more on his pressure blast and they had no Best Jeanist to save them from the impact. All For One had known that they were there and hadn’t done anything to deter them from leaving. Nor had he made an attempt to drag Bakugou back. He knew from the start. How? Why? When?

“You found me under the rubble?” Izuku clarified, feeling his stomach burn. What was there even to find? So many tonnes… and All For One had still retrieved him…

Izuku didn’t get an answer, instead a hand wrapped itself around one of Izuku’s own and Izuku’s brain derailed in a panic, unable to muster the strength to fend it off. “If I wanted to harm you, do you think you would have woken up at all?”

Izuku paused, his brain back in overdrive. “Define harm.” Or was this some scheme of All For One to gain Izuku’s trust? All Might had mentioned that All For One had been a unifying force once upon a time…

“So long as I don’t cook, I’m sure you’ll be fine,” All For One almost purred, smoothing over Izuku’s hand in what would have been a comforting manner if Izuku hadn’t been acutely aware of All For One’s identity. And the amount of people he’d most likely left to die who were no different to Izuku. Trapped, those left screaming in the rubble who hadn’t been saved.

Cooking? Izuku’s stomach sank. “How… how long am I going to be here for?” Until… until he was used/disposed of/otherwise utilised? Izuku wasn’t important. It’s not like Izuku had a Quirk that All For One could steal. Izuku didn’t have any reason to trust him either, just a long string of contradictory actions that were escalating into a type of nausea that shamed Izuku’s pre-exam nerves.

“As long as it takes,” All For One whispered.

It?

Then and only then did Izuku weep, a hand that wasn’t his resting on his shoulder as he did so.

Chapter End Notes

If only people were honest...
Chapter Summary

It wasn't worth considering.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Shouta had expelled students for less. They’d given their statements. They could have been killed. One of their friends had been. Shouta had two shattered whiskey glasses as a testament. Neither had been swept up.

The rest of their friends were going to live with the trauma of what keeping their mouths shut had done… Something that made him knock back another shot of well aged whiskey paid for by the school’s principal.

Not that he really approved of the three cases of alcohol that had been left in the staff room. Even if the alcohol was probably there for him and Vlad first and foremost, he was the last to get to it. It wasn’t going to bring Midoriya back or deal with Ida who was still refusing to leave his room after the confirmation had come through. All it did was numb the pain for the moments like these and Shouta was all too used to bad news, but this… this was different.

Classes hadn’t been suspended before. It wasn’t just the Heroics Department as well, but all classes for a security review. Shouta wasn’t sure if he’d be going back to a school or a prison by the time the review was done. It wasn’t like any of the teachers got to have a say in the process. All contractors, all third party and all entirely removed from the school’s control. A logical end to a process that everyone should have seen coming so much earlier.

Had… had the staff really been that far beyond reproach? Did the students really think their concerns couldn’t be voiced because of retaliation by the faculty? The children didn’t trust the people in their lives who were meant to take care of them. Tsuyu had decent parents, as did Jirou, Ida and Yaoyorozu off the top of his admittedly fuzzy head, so where had this come from? Had the students themselves lost confidence in the system? Or… did they, like Midoriya, not quite believe the hype? Shouta’s stomach was wholly alcohol at this point and churned even more unpleasantly than normally. Background noise at this point.

Todoroki and Ida were a no-brainer after the Stain incident. He’d heard rumours that Todoroki had outright threatened a high ranking cop. Then there was Ida who went hunting after Stain like some vigilante because of his brother. Unexpected but still frightening. Yaoyorozu should have known better than to agree to provide a tracker and Kirishima was only there to look out for his friend.

Todoroki might have even been a problem sooner. Endeavor had been involved straight after… and immediately uninvolved. Shouta had heard some clashes with parents in his time, but none so short as what Todoroki had told his father.

“Where were you when the building fell on Midoriya?” Todoroki had screamed inches from his father’s face outside the main building. “Where were any of you when he died? At least we did
Endeavor didn’t have a reply when his son stormed past him. Death did that to people.

Especially when Endeavor’s only interaction with Midoriya, by all accounts, was to treat him like dirt in their only encounter before he died. Then, his actions at Kamino couldn’t have made him look any better in his son’s eyes. Everyone knew where he was, still looking for a fight and yelling at All Might instead of trying to clear the area. Maybe the media was giving them a pass, but his son sure as hell wasn’t. Shouta wasn’t sure that he was on the media’s side in this case either. The rules were the rules, usually, but rules became the rules for a reason.

A bunch of bright kids aiming to be part of the system and they didn’t even trust it this far in. It should have been a no-brainer to sign on those four dotted lines, they were a liability to themselves and everyone around them. But he… hesitated… because Todoroki had a point. Midoriya had a point, even if he wasn’t around to explain it anymore in his watery eyed way and never would be able to again.

Shouta took another shot.

Nobody higher up wanted to make the decision, wanted the responsibility to kick out the kids that succeeded where everyone else failed at the cost of one of their own. It’d only add to the trauma. Shouta didn’t want it either. Midoriya was dead at All For One’s hands while they all played distraction back at the school. No body to bury, no closure, nothing for the crying students that weren’t in their classes. Nothing for the mother who was being lied to by the police. No funeral. Not so long as the death certificate wasn’t issued. No death while the coroner was told to keep his mouth shut.

He wondered how long that was going to last for with Bakugou’s attitude to what happened. Probably not all that long. The media already thought Bakugou was crazy. Bakugou didn’t seem to care at all about what the media thought of him. It was going to cost him his career at this rate, why not do it early and spare him the misery? It was the pragmatic option. Give him time to recover from the trauma and get his life back on track and get away from his childhood friend being murdered in front of his eyes.

It still sounded like a weak excuse. Bakugou would never accept that and nor would anyone else. Not while Izuku Midoriya wasn’t allowed the death he deserved.

It should have been easy to wipe out the whole class when all of them knew the the plan. He’d have no class to teach and he could go back to work for a year and not have to think about Midoriya’s mangled body being dragged from beneath slabs of concrete and desecrated by a supervillain. He could put it all behind him. He could rest easy… Yeah, right.

They all knew where the kids were going and not a single one of them had warned staff… yet… Yet Midoriya hadn’t been killed picking a fight with the League of Villains… or sizing All For One up one on one. None of them were injured in a direct conflict. None of them had even gone to the original source of the action. If anything, the source of the conflict had somehow found them and then deliberately ignored them to pick a fight with All Might.

All For One hadn’t deliberately targeted Midoriya. Hadn’t hunted him down and taunted All Might with the boy’s death while stringing his corpse up in the air. Hadn’t even seemed to realise he was there at all until it was too late.
No, 1-A’s Problem Child was killed shoving a bunch of other kids out of the way of a falling building. It could have happened to anyone, on any other day, in any other circumstance and it wouldn’t have been anywhere near as tragic… If anything, Izuku Midoriya’s death came off as a tragic accident… as much as a supervillain demolishing a city could be called a tragic accident. Even the supervillain himself seemed to think better of it though, with the frantic dig through the building’s remains. Shouta was trying not to think about those implications. Uncharacteristic nausea was something they were meant to be able to deal with, but the faculty knew about the Noumu and now that they knew about the Noumu? Why else would that bastard want the poor kid’s corpse? Shouta smothered the thought with more alcohol.

All Might seemed to be additionally aware of it with his emergency leave, but someone had to hold things together at U.A. and there was still the spy unaccounted for. The spy who killed Midoriya by proxy… Shouta felt his third shot glass shoot from his hand and dully heard it shatter on the floor. Shouta might save All Might a lock of their hair if he found them first… accidents happened, he supposed. Especially if Bakugou was anywhere nearby. Bakugou should probably be invited to be nearby, just in case. He was the one kid Shouta could definitely rule out before he looked at anyone else.

But petty revenge wasn’t going to solve his paperwork for expulsion. To sign or not to sign.

What was the alternative? What would have happened if Midoriya and the others hadn’t been there?

Shouta had watched the footage he had access to countless times along with the rest of the faculty, trying to process what had happened. Trying to find out why.

Bakugou wouldn’t have escaped without Midoriya’s intervention and without his plan to get the drop on the League while All For One was distracted. Their eyes in the sky from the media could only see so much, but the kids confirmed the rest. All Might couldn’t be everywhere at once with his injuries and Bakugou wasn’t at his best.

All Might couldn’t let loose while Bakugou was there and Bakugou only needed a momentary slip up and he was a goner to either Shigaraki or Compress. Shigaraki in particular was less interested in taking Bakugou in one piece after the latter’s refusal, intending to sic All For One on him, much to the bastards’ glee. (Shouta’s stomach churned again at All For One taking Midoriya’s corpse while leaving the very much so alive League of Villains and Bakugou behind…. What was he playing at? Wasn’t the city enough?)

If Midoriya and the others hadn’t gone, Bakugou wouldn’t have been recovered. None of the other heroes had even thought to reinforce All Might at the time until it was too late. But Midoriya knew, somehow. None of the others knew how either. All Might had outright cried when they asked him about his suspicions so there was no luck there (and if that wasn’t one of the worst things Shouta had ever seen).

The kids were right. The pro heroes weren’t up to the task, but even if they had voiced those concerns, would anyone have listened? Shouta doubted it. They would have been brushed off, like kids normally were. Even though they were right. Even though All Might alone wasn’t enough.

And it had cost them Midoriya.

Shouta downed another shot with another glass, scrunched up the paperwork and hurled it into the bin. They weren’t responsible for what happened, because if U.A. couldn’t defend its students it sure as hell wasn’t entitled to the unconditional trust of them.
He crawled into his sleeping bag, trying to blink away afterimages of dust in grainy CCTV footage and the unmistakable sound of Bakugou’s screams from the hospital and the bloody images of Midoriya’s body vanishing through a warp.

Uraraka’s text message blinked at him on his still lit phone’s screen, leaving an irritating glare spot on the lenses of his glasses. Tenya wasn’t terribly surprised that Bakugou had stormed out with his own suggestion that Midoriya’s Quirk might have come from a supervillain. It did almost make Tenya wish that he had made it himself, but… but was it right to be attending what wasn’t much more than disrespectful gossip when… when the person in question was no longer there to defend himself? It didn’t feel right. Nothing felt right. He wasn’t sure if anything would ever feel right.

Tenya had gone to make sure they were removed from harm, that no one did anything impulsive. To make sure everyone returned safely. And up until nearly the end he thought they’d been successful. With Midoriya’s plan they’d miraculously managed to grab Bakugou, snatch him from the hands of the League of Villains and leave their vicinity. That had to be enough? Right?

Then Midoriya hadn’t returned. Midoriya wasn’t going to return. Ever. Midoriya was gone. Midoriya had saved them. Again.

Tenya couldn’t swallow down the tears. He hadn’t been able to since the news was confirmed. What the point in him going to the class meetup that Bakugou of all people had organised? Bakugou who hadn’t even liked Midoriya? Bakugou who accused Midoriya of consorting with supervillains and the League of Villains during the meetup? Bakugou who didn’t care. What was the point in going anywhere when he had failed in his duty as the Class President?

Midoriya was the first to stand up and defend others. The first to take charge and help others. To go beyond even the law to help others… and maybe that was why Bakugou had drawn the conclusions he had, because for Midoriya the law had always been an afterthought. A suggestion of villainy would cripple most of the members of the class, but not Midoriya. It hadn’t stopped Tenya either, but Midoriya had never acted for a reason so petty as revenge. Midoriya who Tenya had punched in the face. Tenya choked on another sob, facedown, tangled in his sheets.

Tenya had punched the person who lost his life saving him from a collapsing building. Tenya hadn’t told any of the teachers about their plans. Tenya let them go in the first place. He and Yaoyorozu hadn’t told anyone… They were the leaders of the class and they hadn’t told anyone anything and now Midoriya was dead.

How could he face any of his classmates or even be the Class President when he couldn’t look at himself in the mirror?

Resumes were a delicate thing at the best of times and Toshinori Yagi was going to need something convincing to fool an entire office full of gossiping detectives that Mr Yagi was what he seemed. He couldn’t exactly lie, but telling the truth was definitely off the table. It was a delicate process that wasn’t going to be happening with young Bakugou about to chew a hole through his kitchen table. The way he’d almost blasted in his front door earlier with murder in his eyes was also a sign. Not a particularly good sign, but a sign nonetheless.
"All Might," the blond boy grated, incandescent with rage. "This is important."

Toshinori didn’t doubt it for a moment from the way young Bakugou writhed on his chair. "Young Bakugou… are you alright?" The boy went out with his class for lunch. What on earth could have happened? Nothing immediately serious or the police would have been involved.

"Did Deku get his Quirk from All For One?" Young Bakugou exploded and Toshinori felt his pencil snap in two and his jaw sag. *Shit.*

"Where is this coming from?" Toshinori forced out with a slack tongue.

"Did he?" Bakugou demanded, thumping the table erratically with a fist. "Deku never had a Quirk. Fucking never. I remember him telling us after he came back from that fucking doctor that was Tsubasa’s gramps. Cried his fucking eyes out. Showed nothing for years. Fucking nothing. Then, all of a sudden, out of fucking nowhere, he has a Quirk. Said he borrowed one. Quirk that breaks every single fucking bone in his body and All For One and the League of Villains are on our asses at the exact same time Deku gets his fucking Quirk."

Toshinori’s tongue was caught on itself before he could interrupt him. Had young Bakugou and young Midoriya known each for that long? Toshinori hadn’t taken into account that someone might find it suspicious, but for it to be Bakugou of all people… But the boy was still going on. "Then for Shigaraki to be after him constantly at the mall? All For One to take his corpse? There’s only one fucking person around who can give and take Quirks and it’s that bastard." Young Bakugou paused, chest heaving up within Toshinori’s view… Toshinori squinted. Were young Bakugou’s eyes wet? Or were his kitchen’s light’s broken again? "Did Deku know about it?"

Probably not the kitchen light then. Toshinori cleared his throat. "Young Bakugou… What I tell you doesn’t leave this room, alright? It’s vital that no one knows… especially after what happened to young Midoriya."

"If it means I get a straight fucking answer for once then fine," the boy grumbled.

And Toshinori spoke, not bothering to hold back the tears as he did so.

Katsuki couldn’t fucking breathe. Even with the triple strength cup of coffee All Might had given him, he was struggling to swallow what he’d just heard. Instead he watched its surface ripple and shake in his hands.

All For One. One For All. The Quirk of All For One’s brother that eventually ended up with All Might, who’d given it to Deku. All Might who was originally Quirkless. All Might who was Quirkless again after giving it to Deku. Deku who had the Quirk. Deku who was dead. Deku who wasn’t coming back. Deku who couldn’t pass it on because Katsuki was a fucking dumbass who hadn’t run the fuck away like Deku had told him to back in the forest. Katsuki who killed All Might. All For One who was still fucking free to run around and have another go at a Quirkless All Might.

"I killed him," Katsuki whispered. "I fucking killed him. *I should have fucking moved when they told me to.* I fucking killed All Might too."

All Might recoiled, face creased. "Young Bakugou… You didn’t see the building fall… Even at my best I was hard pressed to manage All-"
“-No,” Katsuki bit out. “In the forest, he knew before anyone that those fuckers were after me. He fucking told us and I fucking ignored Mandalay. And now he’s dead.” Katsuki felt his voice crack before he heard it and saw the expression on All Might’s face. “Now your Quirk…” He couldn’t breathe. He was gasping for air and nothing was coming.

Then he was sent flying, stars in his vision as sat upright from the floor.

“What the fuck…” Katsuki blinked at a sheepish All Might who hurriedly stuck his arm behind his back. “You fucking punched me!”

“Did it work?” All Might shrank, nervously scratching the back of his head with one hand while the other held Katsuki’s coffee. “It’s… it’s not going to bring young Midoriya back, nor are any of you to blame.”

“Bullshit. I-” Katsuki started.

“-Am a child, young Bakugou.” All Might said with such seriousness that Katsuki felt his indignation skid to an abrupt halt. His parents never sounded so… serious. Ever. They just fucking screamed at him and hit until he fucked off. “Security and safety shouldn’t be your concern and rescuing a classmate shouldn’t have ever been young Midoriya’s concern. Yet it was,” All Might continued sadly, ambling over and holding out a hand to Katsuki. Katsuki grabbed it and lifted himself to his feet. “We failed and you all paid the price for it. Please don’t blame yourself for our mistake. Young Midoriya more than anyone wanted to help people and now…” He’ll never help anyone again, Katsuki silently finished, taking his seat back at the table, staring into his coffee.

It fucking stung. Katsuki never got Deku’s deal while he was alive. Never bothered to ask. What was the fucking point? It was obvious, right? Everyone else was in it for the salary, the fame, the glory, the lording over every other extra. That was the point of being a hero according to the hag and everyone else. It was about being cool, at the top of society. So of course Deku was like them, right? He was helping out because he thought that Katsuki was pathetic enough to need the help… Except that’s not what All Might was saying…

All those years spent attacking Deku who looked down Katsuki… but that Deku never existed in the first place, did he? If he didn’t exist, then who did exist? Why did Deku exist? Who the fuck even was Deku? It’s not like they were ever friends, not for a long time now and the more Katsuki tried to think about the green haired kid he went to school with the less he knew.

What was fucking left? Memories that made Katsuki want to fucking retch. Memories and Deku’s notebooks. Maybe some scattered recordings of him? Katsuki couldn’t think of anyone who’d have kept them though, Deku didn’t exactly have any friends or relatives that he could remember. He could ask Deku’s mother… but she didn’t even know that he was fucking dead yet and all that made him want to do was hurl his fucking coffee mug through the nearest window. Fucking shit police.

Maybe after he told her they could put together a memorial since her fuckwit of a husband wasn’t going to be helping her do it. Then they could find the real Deku, since there wasn’t going to be a body to bury. After hearing about One For All, Katsuki had a suspicion after what All For One would be doing with Deku’s and gulped.

“What are you thinking about?” All Might’s voice cut in and Katsuki frowned, feeling more perturbed than ever.
“You ever had the feeling that you know absolutely fucking nothing about someone even after knowing them for years?” Katsuki gulped down some of the coffee, thankful at its abysmal quality.

“Yes,” All Might murmured, poking an empty white sheet of paper.

“Who?”

“Myself. I have to write a resume for the police and I have no idea what to put down.” All Might grimaced.

Katsuki gagged on a hot mouthful of coffee. “What the fuck you don’t know what to write? You’ve been beating the shit out of villains for like forty fucking years? Busting drug rings? Terrorising All For One? Advising the fucking Japanese and American police nearly the whole fucking time. You’re a one man consultancy agency. What the fuck do you mean you don’t know what to put down?” Katsuki practically screamed across the gap.

All Might beamed at him and Katsuki wasn’t sure what to fucking think. “It sounds great when you put it like that, but I’m applying as Mr Yagi, not All Might. So, uh. I need a more, uh, serious approach, like our…,” All Might deflated sagged, “our exam with you and young Midoriya if I’m allowed to interrogate Shigaraki.”

It was as though someone had flicked on a switch in some distant part in Katsuki’s brain. Or maybe less of a switch and more an anti-tank mine. Fucking Shigaraki. Katsuki snarled. “Gimme that shit, this is how we write a fucking resume.” It couldn’t be that fucking difficult. All Might’s work was basically the same as the police, with a shitload more punching of people, but enough buzzwords and vagueness they could make it sound like some vague police bullshit and not like All Might. Mr Yagi was officially a secretary who handled all of All Might’s paperwork… luckily for All Might, he never specified exactly what sort of paperwork… and that left a shitload of room for interpretation. A little bit here and there and Mr Yagi wasn’t just the personal secretary, but All Might’s beleaguered and highly recommended chief intelligence officer who regularly met with one Detective Tsukauchi for police briefings on All Might’s behalf ever since the Villain Factory incidents. It could work.

Katsuki was three hours overdue getting home. His first words stepping in the front door were “go fuck yourself, I was helping a teacher and I’m going to bed” to his mother and he ignored her screams about calling the police. She didn’t fucking matter when All Might called the cops first. It took a few drafts, but they got something presentable in the end. That Detective Tsukauchi sounded like he’d fucking choked on the submission. It made Katsuki warm and tingly on the inside. Maybe he didn’t have to help, but it was the expression of relief on All Might’s face that went a bit towards explaining exactly why Deku gave no shits about the rest of the extras wanting to be the best.

Whatever the motivations of the extras for heroics, Deku was in it for himself in a way that went beyond being number one, whatever the fuck that meant.

Sensei’s projects were delicate at the best of times, but the boy was something else. Not just medically speaking either, as from the doorway he observed Sensei lift a hand to the boy’s face in a manner far from threatening, not that their… patient was going to be seeing it that way. Medically speaking, the child was a miracle on par with Sensei himself as far as the doctor was concerned. Some of the more… esoteric methods they’d used to restore the teenager’s failed body would have utterly destroyed anyone else the doctor was almost sure. “Almost sure” because it was their first time applying the revised methodology and it certainly wasn’t something that was applicable to the
Noumu as a general rule. Their unique makeup made it a moot point.

Something he could have confirmed with further testing if Sensei hadn’t swiftly vetoed it. He’d been told it wasn’t necessary, that it wasn’t something that was going to be required a second time. A wasted investment… that for some reason the ever so plain Midoriya was worthy of… It wasn’t the doctor’s place to ask, clearly… but Midoriya required this treatment while Shigaraki sat through gunshot wounds. It did make an educated man think.

Sensei wanted Izuku Midoriya wholly intact… and the fact of the matter was that they weren’t quite there yet even with the strides made, much to Sensei’s displeasure. Midoriya was hanging on, but how “wholly intact” was a child that couldn’t walk, couldn’t lift his arms and was blind as far as the doctor could tell? That was only from what he’d observed from a distance so far. Sensei hadn’t moved for long enough for him to conduct any further examinations of his own in the short time the boy had been awake. The doctor, rather privately, thought it was quite lucky the boy hadn’t choked on that water, but supposed Sensei had enough experience of his own as well as a litany of Quirks to be making that judgement call. It was another private thought that Sensei perhaps too realised the problems that would occur if Midoriya remembered an old doctor from childhood.

The doctor still shifted nervously even while he waited and yes, his patient at the time had been young. It’d been years since he’d last seen Midoriya, but some memories stuck and he was sure that that particular meeting was going to be one of them. It wasn’t an experience he was looking forward to, with Sensei no doubt loitering nearby as was the case with this project.

Regardless of his concerns, Izuku Midoriya’s feeble whispers were only enough to momentarily displace Sensei’s ire from the doctor’s work, not distract it entirely. So long as the child wasn’t fully functional, in spite of the miracle that had occurred, his work wasn’t yet done. And so long as Sensei remained so close to the boy, it couldn’t be done. It was all he could to to hold in a huff of irritation.

Management was left to Sensei as always, he had the most experience with these matters after all, but there was something about Midoriya that didn’t quite fit the usual pattern. Sensei was just that as the title implied, but his hands currently did far more than merely guide. Sensei wanted a living, breathing, functioning human and he was given one for whatever purpose may be required. It’s… it’s just that the doctor hadn’t expected him to micromanage this one quite so heavily or to hover or to lurk by the child’s bedside. Shigaraki was given a sitter and left to it. In Midoriya’s case, it was though Sensei himself had taken the role of the sitter.

There were some sneaking suspicions though. Midoriya’s prior Quirklessness, Shigaraki’s repeated unfortunate encounters with the boy, Midoriya’s sudden display at the Sports Festival that Sensei had so keenly (almost apprehensively at times) watched, Stain’s abrupt demise, Shigaraki’s subsequent nervous breakdown after speaking to Midoriya, Muscular’s abrupt arrival following what should have been his capture… Sensei’d only just acquired Search before space and time opened and Muscular’s battered body had been wrenched through with no amount of care whatsoever.

In the latter case, Sensei had almost rapturously examined the damage done to Muscular by Midoriya who’d slammed the murderer clean through a mountainside. Then designated him for immediate reutilisation, whereupon Sensei had plucked away at the man ever since. There was a degree of malevolence to that act that the doctor hadn’t seen since…since… he swallowed uncomfortably… He hadn’t seen since Midoriya would have been turning twelve.

The doctor had absolutely no idea what had prompted Sensei’s displeasure, but it seemed to involve Midoriya. Midoriya was the key. A key that Sensei seemed to be turning over in his hand far more intently than Shigaraki and the doctor wondered… What made this one so special?
All he had to do for the moment was breathe. There wasn’t much else that Izuku could do at the moment, even if he could move. Instead, Izuku trembled, paralysed. Why was he still alive and why here of all places?

“I’m not going to waste your or my time by telling you not to panic, because you’re not going to take my word for it,” All For One idly commented to Izuku’s immense relief. “How about boundaries instead?”

Izuku hiccuped, struggling to lift a dead weight of an arm that wouldn’t move. “What boundaries?” The first thing that came to mind was a cell… but would All For One be loitering inside of one? Then again, there were cloning Quirks around if All For One was taking a hands off approach. Was… this even the real All For One? One of the League had a cloning Quirk, didn’t they? That was a… very scary thought.

There was a faint rush of air, as though All For One had gestured. “Food, water, medication, amenities generally, standards of behaviour…” All For One carried on in a light manner that made Izuku’s hair stand on end. It was the same one his mother used when she took him for vaccinations. The one where she was hiding something. “More importantly… what you can expect from me and what I can expect from you. You’re a guest after all. There’s no reason for this not to be civil.”

Freezing, Izuku felt his jaw drop. Amenities? A guest? Civil? How many people had the man killed in a single blow? Over Shigaraki of all people? Izuku brain couldn’t process Shigaraki’s behaviour at the best of time, but All For One was something else. Eventually, Izuku found the words, staring straight ahead without even making an attempt to face him (what was the point?). “You weren’t very civil when you dropped a building on my classmates.” And tried to kill All Might. And kidnapped Kacchan. And forced a Quirk on his own brother? (Had they worked that out yet?) And every other horrible thing he’d done in his lifespan that Izuku didn’t know about.

Izuku didn’t have eyes to guide him, but All For One’s warm, spidery hand wrapping around the side of his face was enough of a telegraph and he was nudged to blindly face the man. “Your classmates?” Confusion or puzzlement? Irritation even? Izuku couldn’t quite pin it down, but there was an edge there. “Your classmates walked away from the experience, little Izuku Midoriya,” All For One’s voice had a strangely strained quality to it anyway. “You did not.” Izuku’s breath caught in his lungs. If All For One meant that more than literally… “If you are going to express uncivil behaviour towards me, might I recommend it being due to the fact that your heart had ceased beating for over five minutes before you were resuscitated, because of the building I dropped on you.”

Izuku stared. “You… killed me?” That made sense. All For One killed a lot of people. That wasn’t too bad. Entirely within expectations really. A villain doing villain things.

“Yes.”

“Then you resurrected me from basically being dead?” Izuku faintly confirmed.

“Yes. Your state of being wasn’t ideal and still isn’t…” That made absolutely no sense. All For One’s hand hadn’t moved, a tangible reminder that Izuku hadn’t slipped into a bizarre dream world. Or maybe Izuku was trapped in some strange limbo and just hadn’t realised it yet.

“Why?” This made… absolutely no sense. All For One didn’t have a reason to bring Izuku back
“Why what?” All For One… almost sounded confused. That… that threw Izuku for another loop.

“You, a prospective hero, don’t understand why you would be saved?” All For One didn’t even sound mocking. “The brainwashing mill must be wor-

“No,” Izuku butted in, “I don’t understand why you specifically would stop trying to kill All Might specifically to save me specifically after you…”

“Maimed each other?” All For One helpfully added.

“Yeah,” Izuku lamely finished.

“Mmm, I can’t answer that question,” All For One sighed, his gripping hand flexing into Izuku’s face, making Izuku sharply jerk his head away. “Whoops, apologies.” And Izuku was freed of the hand. “Your questions are warranted, but all in good time.

“Then what will you answer?” Izuku prodded, shuddering. He could still feel phantom fingers on his face.

“Bits and pieces, but understand that right now you’re only speaking because of the painkillers. Once those wear off, you won’t be feeling nearly as well as you do now… Most of your bones were shattered on impact. That you have so much movement is remarkable.” All For One explained. “What happened to you was and is distressing and there isn’t a great deal of good news to counteract the bad news. I was hoping to deliver the news slowly so that I wouldn’t overwhelm you…”

Izuku blinked. At least he thought he blinked. It’s not like he could tell and that again made the tears well up in his eyes. That he could feel. “There’s good news?”

“You’re alive and capable of some movement,” All For One said quietly, “that’s good news, is it not?”

“You think so?” Alive and in the hands of All For One. That was “good news”. Izuku inhaled deeply, feeling the usual warm drip down his nose. He could deal with this… He could…

“Compared to how you were when I pulled you from the wreckage…” All For One trailed off and Izuku winced again, feeling the moisture being wiped away by a foreign hand. “For now, all you have to do is worry about recovering. Relax. I’ll take care of the rest.” But why was All For One taking care of the rest? What did this have to do with him?

“What about everyone else?” Izuku’s mother, All Might who was still probably injured from the encounter, Kacchan, his classmates… Was Izuku meant to just stop caring about them? Sit here and… well, he couldn’t twiddle his thumbs yet, but as soon as he could…

“What about them?” Cautious? Maybe slightly cutting. Izuku wasn’t sure what to call it.
“I don’t know what’s happening… Can I have a newspaper or something?” Anything. Izuku would take anything. “Do they know…?” That I’m here?

“They only know what witnesses would have seen, little Izuku, me pulling you from the rubble. As to what they infer… well, we’re not exactly on friendly terms.” It was careful, almost too careful.

No one’s coming, Izuku realised, flooded with a sense of calm. No one was going to going to take on All For One a second time because no one thought that he was still alive. All Might couldn’t do it without One For All. Ragdoll didn’t have Search to locate him and if All Might hadn’t found All For One the first time around then he must have hidden well enough for it not to be an issue. No one was coming. No one was going to die trying to save him. Izuku sobbed with relief.

“Regardless,” All For One whispered with finality, a hand cradling Izuku’s chin, “your death is not an acceptable outcome of your stay here.”

No one’s coming.

Chapter End Notes

Here you go.
Captive

Chapter Summary

Hindsight truly is everything.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Captivity was a different experience. Different in that Izuku had been expecting a lot more… pain and suffering and general misery. At least that’s what their textbooks and the internet said about pro heroes who had been captured by villains. The photos had been graphic, but that was to be expected from criminals. So far for Izuku, nothing that had happened was really that different to normal hospital care. If normal hospital care was being personally guided by Japan’s most notorious supervillain. Izuku gingerly licked his lips. Nothing said it had to always be like that though, because it could always change. Izuku felt his fingers twitch. Most likely as soon as he stopped cooperating. Was he even cooperating now? Maybe? Who knew? Izuku didn’t. What was there to cooperate with? There was nothing here so far that went against any of Izuku’s moral principles. Not yet.

If Izuku was honest with himself, he wasn’t even sure how he was meant to react to what was happening. He couldn’t… he couldn’t do anything… Completely at All For One’s non-existent mercy waiting… waiting for what? No one’s coming, not if they don’t know that Izuku was still alive and if All For One’s intended outcome wasn’t an excruciating death… Waiting… just waiting… It was all he could do.

Izuku couldn’t be sure how much time was passing as All For One flitted about the room. All For One wasn’t volunteering it and Izuku wasn’t asking through his sniffles. At least it was the assumption that All For One was doing something from the footsteps and brushing movements Izuku could hear after All For One had finally withdrawn from physical contact. All For One hadn’t been quick about it either. Izuku didn’t think his mother had even held onto him for so long after he’d been diagnosed Quirkless. At least it hadn’t felt like it at the time. Now it was entirely too long, too foreign, too invasive. Too weird for anyone let alone the person doing it.

It wasn’t helping the growing pressure on Izuku’s chest that only escalated with every moment of contact. Or the moist itch around his eyes from the wet fabric. Unable to do much more than twitch a finger, Izuku couldn’t bat All For One away from the previous fluffing of pillows, tucking in of sheets, offered drinks or countless other details that were painting a vivid picture of enforced rest. He supposed he could say something… but was there a protocol to tell a villain who’d brought you back from the dead to stop fluffing your pillows? Izuku didn’t remember reading about it in the manuals. There were strategies for coping with pain and torture resistance, but nothing like this, absolutely nothing. Izuku could feel dull aches and odd prickling sensations as well as the tug of the cannula with every spasm, but nothing that counted as traditional torture. There wasn’t much on dealing with a kidnapper who was being overly nice to after, by his words, accidentally killing you (Izuku was setting new precedents every day, it felt like). Izuku couldn’t see voicing an opinion doing much either, not from his previous experiences in dealing with regular adults. They never listened anyway.

In the meantime while his thoughts wandered, Izuku wasn’t even left to his sniffles uninterrupted while All For One prowled the room. “You’re dripping everywhere, you poor thing.” All For One
sighed, coming back into immediate range and Izuku felt something thick and soft fold over his head. “We blindfolded you after you almost clawed your eyes out the last time you woke up.” There was a drawn quality to his voice. “It was unexpected, but the treatment caused you to become overly sensitive to light. You weren’t in your right state of mind and we… restrained you. My apologies, but it was better than you losing your sight permanently.” That was… strangely considerate of him if he wasn’t lying. Izuku’s own thoughts honed in on the mittens even as All For One’s hands grazed his temples and tugged the blindfold away in slow pulls. Could it be he was telling the truth? The mittens were a detailed touch for a falsification.

“I can’t see?” Izuku couldn’t really shift to dislodge the fabric to check, but the large palm resting on his shoulder was doing far more to dissuade it. He couldn’t see anything glinting through to confirm or deny All For One’s assurances. All he had was the premier villain’s word for his sight being less than competent and what was that worth? It was a lot of effort to fake it, Izuku supposed. It wouldn’t be long before the pretence was dropped and Izuku was palmed off to some other minion and he wouldn’t have to worry about the airs.

“We don’t know yet, but I’m not inclined to have you suffer unnecessarily when you’re still on the same treatment that caused your reaction in the first place.”

If you don’t want me to suffer unnecessarily, then why didn’t you just leave me under the building? Izuku bitterly asked himself, because being forcefully dragged back from death by a supervillain wasn’t an option most people would take. Not with the world of uncertainty it landed him in. At least Izuku thought he asked himself, then he heard a sharp intake of air and froze.

“You don’t mean that,” All For One stated, drying Izuku’s face in slow deliberate motions. Almost painfully slow in its delicacy as All For One dabbed around Izuku’s closed eyes. Clawed at his eyes… perhaps there was scarring Izuku hadn’t noticed yet. Oddly, it only seem to encourage the water to pour more forcefully.

Izuku only thought for a little while, because there wasn’t anything better to do. They were, admittedly, almost distant thoughts, because at this point they weren’t going to have much of an impact on anything. Of his mother and All Might and his inability to see. Of dying. Of his twitching fingers and toes. Of All For One’s proximity (for how long?). Of the coma. Of school and his friends. Of the unlikeliness that’d he would ever be able to be a pro a hero even if he did walk again. Twisting together into one writhing mass, the weight on his chest only grew. “I… I think do, actually,” Izuku confirmed. The prospects weren’t great even with Izuku surviving. What did All For One stand to gain when Izuku lost much as a default? “Why did you bother?” From Izuku’s perspective, it didn’t make any sense, but All For One’s motives had the clarity of coal. Unless he wanted to gain Izuku’s trust then have him suffer a slow and agonising death. That was still an option.

Izuku didn’t remember the collapse. Whatever happened, it must have been on the quick and painless side of the scale and without the ability to get at All Might, perhaps this was the next best thing?

All For One’s dabbing gestures halted. “That’s a terrible thing to say,” he murmured and Izuku felt chills run through him. “How can you say that?” Izuku could have sworn All For One sounded taken aback, but there wasn’t much of a ground for comparison. Not when the only grounds were exchanged taunts in a death match. “Why are you saying that?” Followed in a much quieter whisper that Izuku almost missed.

Izuku shrugged noncommittally, flinching as a new blindfold was secured. Or at least he tried to, it was more of a half-hearted tremble. There wasn’t any need to give him any more ammunition. Izuku shouldn’t have said anything in the first place. All For One didn’t acquire an army of followers in the
past by always being the supreme evil at any given time. He must have some capacity to pretend to be a normal person at some stage or another, but was it real? Only All For One knew and it wasn’t something that Izuku was ever going to be a party to at any rate.

“I understand that you don’t want to speak to me about why you would say such a thing… but surely your life is worth a second chance,” All For One coaxed, uncovering Izuku’s head.

Izuku shrugged again. Try as he might, no amount of jostling would expose light. Whatever All For One was using, it wasn’t a discount blindfold.

“Just… think about it,” All For One carried on, his hand moving away and Izuku’s heart sagged with relief. “Stain, Muscular, Wolfram… All of the countless lives they had already ruined and would have continued to ruin if they didn’t have the misfortune of running into you. Think of how much more you can do once you recover.” Izuku could handle the mockery All For One turned at All Might. That had always been normal throughout Izuku’s life. What he couldn’t handle was that All For One sounded dangerously close to a normal person. There was no mocking lilt, no gentle caresses, just a calm, encouraging commentary that could have just as easily come from any passing person. Except… no passing person ever would have said that to Izuku. Except All For One was the supervillain and was the one saying it.

All For One sounded like what Izuku had always been told supportive people would sound like, only to find out that even his mother wasn’t one of them. Was this one of the tricks of his trade? A mask? Shigaraki had clearly been strung along with some form of this, which only made Izuku’s unsettled stomach feel even worse. Was was All For One encouraging Izuku’s takedowns of villains? Weren’t these people all connected to the man? Stain in particular had been heavily linked to the League, but Izuku hadn’t recalled Stain ever saying that for himself…

Instead, Izuku cleared his throat. “What makes you think I had anything to do with Stain?” The media hadn’t reported on Izuku’s involvement with Stain. Much to the Todoroki household’s collective consternation, Endeavor had been given the full credit. But hadn’t Spinner also said something about Izuku and Stain in the forest? Wasn’t there a suppression order on the whole thing? How did they find out about it?

“Please, little Izuku, Endeavor was nowhere near Stain. We even have video proof of that,” All For One chided. Video? Who had a video? “The police might be embarrassed by their inability to capture a serial killer, but that’s not an area we have to worry about.” We? Who was we? Criminals collectively? All For One and his underlings? “You should be proud of your achievements.”

“I-I am, just…” Not when it came from a mass murderer.

“Just not when it’s me pointing it out?” All For One asked far too wryly and Izuku cringed. All For One paused, almost coyly, “I suppose I shouldn’t tell you then, that you technically have the credit for the capture of the League of Villains as well?”

Izuku inhaled and almost gagged on his saliva. “WHAT?” The League of Villains captured? How was Izuku responsible for that? He hadn’t done anything!

“If you eat, I’ll tell you,” All For One smoothly interjected, as had probably been his plan from the onset. Outrage might have bubbled to the surface if Izuku had some means of expressing it. One For All wasn’t an option if Izuku couldn’t even move to use it. Who knew what it'd do to his arms?

“You’re bribing me?” It was a tempting one as well. Tempting in that Izuku really wanted to know what happened to All Might and Shigaraki was a possible pathway. That and the curdling in his stomach might not just be anxiety… but it was mostly anxiety. Maybe some hunger. If it was
possible to still be hungry with All For One’s increasing bizarre behaviour.

“Hmm, I suppose I am. I’ll be back shortly. Slow and deep breaths.” Followed by footsteps and Izuku outright holding his breath. Were bribes normal? Was any of this normal? Food and information on Shigaraki? Recovery was lip service, an excuse, but All For One wasn’t behaving like it was anything but something he was taking seriously. Izuku was hours into being awake though, maybe it’d change?

At this point, who knows how many hours into wakefulness and captivity, Izuku would have physically thrown his arms up if he was physically capable of it. Right now All For One had deflected to food of all things, but why was he bothering? It always came back to that lynchpin. Why did he save me? Why is he bothering? What happened to Shigaraki? Why didn’t he go after All Might? Where is All Might? What happened? Why? Why? Why?

“You know, I said breaths as in the plural. You’re going to pass out,” All For One’s deep voice radiated back into being and Izuku gasped. A gust of air and Izuku was certain that All For One was in his usual spot once more. He needed information. He needed All For One to stop. Doing. That. Maybe it was a new type of torture and interrogation tactic? Izuku sniffed the heat haze in front of him experimentally. It smelt like rice. It didn’t smell like much else though. Izuku supposed that some poisons didn’t have a smell or taste, but would All For One bother with poisoning someone he’d just admitted to dropping a building on? Izuku frowned. Maybe he would. Izuku didn’t really know all that much about All For One as a person or even as a villain. Just that someone who was alive for over eight generations of a Quirk probably wasn’t the best person to test his luck on.

“I’m fine with you feeding yourself in future, but…” All For One voice soothed, “you’re not quite there yet. We can work on it, of course, but…” His voice lingered and Izuku’s brain repeated what All For One said.

“You’re going to feed me?” Izuku repeated, knowing his knuckles were bone white beneath the sheets. “Don’t you have better things to do?” Izuku found himself asking, almost desperately. “Don’t you have, I don’t know, minions? Underlings?” Izuku frowned. “Subordinates?” Izuku tried. It sounded better. “Where are the League?” Not that Izuku really knew enough about the League to guess who’d be loaded with the thankless work of keeping a prisoner breathing. Shigaraki would either strangle him or disintegrate his throat in a fit of rage. “You said you’d tell me…”

There was a chuckle and Izuku jumped. “I think they’d be more likely to strangle you than feed you after the grief you’ve caused them.” Weren’t the League of Villains an extension of All For One? Shouldn’t Izuku be a problem to All For One as well then? “I’ll tell you after your food, as I said before.” Well, that was typical.

“Them?” Izuku probed. “Not you?”

“No, little one, not me,” Izuku was breezily assured. “Tomura was the one outraged by your presence.” And Izuku felt it as All For One spoke, the spoon nudging against his lower lip as if he was some invalid. Izuku’s lip wobbled in spite of itself. I shouldn’t be here.

Keep it together. Hold it together. Izuku wasn’t holding it together, sniffling in spite of himself.

“It’s natural to be upset, little Izuku. It’s normal for people in your position to feel what you are, there’s nothing to be ashamed of in your circumstances. It’s not something I expect you to come to terms with in an afternoon.” If that wasn’t the most jarring thing Izuku had ever heard from the most jarring person, Izuku would eat his favourite All Might hoodie. It was too reasonable to come from someone who killed so many people over a grudge. How could All For One bounce from what he
was at Kamino to this?

“Did this work on Shigaraki?” Izuku instead asked somewhat spitefully. He could not eat and be force fed, or he could eat and see if All For One really did answer Izuku’s question. So, with some hesitation, Izuku bit down on the spoon.

“Too well, I think,” All For One mumbled under breath and it took all Izuku’s will to make sure his food went towards his stomach and not his lungs. Was that an admission?

Izuku ate a glacial pace. The spoon that patiently rested near his lip until he was done chewing was almost surreal. “It’s so… bland.”

“I’d offer something more appealing than rice, but from my experience, your stomach wouldn’t cope with it just yet,” All For One offered… sympathetically.


“All Might wasn’t the only one maimed in that encounter,” All For One explained, pressing another spoon to Izuku’s mortified lips. “He ripped so much away from me.” As the spoon dipped away, he spoke again, “they say that talking to yourself is the first sign of insanity, but in my experience it’s more of a testament to the loneliness of the individual. But if we’re going to fix that, please enunciate clearer.”

Izuku almost choked on his few remaining grains of rice, feeling what was left of his blood rush to his face. Of all of the things All For One had to comment on… “You still haven’t-”

“Yes, yes. I know,” he cut in. “Tomura didn’t leave when you did. He delayed and was captured while I retrieved you.” There wasn’t any hesitation. No sadness that Izuku could detect. Not the tiniest drop of remorse. Nothing. Kacchan was more enthusiastic when he used to talk about camping sleeping bags.

“You… you just left them there?” And All Might. All Might had to be okay, then!

“Yes.” No hesitation. No feeling.

“Why?” But leaving All Might? Leaving the chance to kill him? That didn’t seem right.

“Why not? Tomura could have left any time he so desired once the gate was opened.” Still, nothing.

“But you of all people knew he wasn’t going to with All Might there,” Izuku pointed out. There was no way Shigaraki was going anywhere with a chance at All Might in front on him. Absolutely none. What made All For One change his priorities so quickly?

“Did I?”

“Yes.” All For One had thrown the entire League of Villains to the side, all to get Izuku’s lifeless body? Even with so little food in stomach, he already wanted to be ill. What did All For One know that Izuku didn’t?

“Oh well, in that case I guess the credit for them being securely in residence of Tartarus must go squarely to you, then, since you knew that All Might needed help and went there without his knowing in the first place,” flowed outwards and Izuku shook his head.

“You didn’t have to-”
“-Yes. I did,” he said simply and Izuku was once more at a loss. “More pressingly, I need to check those dressings of yours, because if they’ve started to stick again…”

“Dressings?” Izuku repeated, knowing his fingers were white from frustration as All For One changed topics yet again.

“You weren’t just crushed by the collapse. One of the lacerations was so deep that we had to be careful not to accidentally snap your spine in half whenever you were moved. Right now they’re slowly healing, but I can’t tell you whether or not there’ll be nerve damage following their full recovery. The process was rather… experimental and the results are unpredictable. If it was perfect your sight wouldn’t be the way it is,” All For One… babbled and Izuku for a brief moment wondered if this was what he sounded like to other people.

Dressings, repeated itself in Izuku’s head. “Did-did you do the dressings?” Then he braced for the answer. What else had been done while Izuku was asleep? How many other surgical procedures that Izuku didn’t know about?

“I did everything, little Izuku, apart from some of the more complex surgical procedures,” All For One stressed. “I’m sure my doctor would have offered enthusiastic assistance, but there are some boundaries that he won’t be crossing while you’re here.”

“Everything?” Izuku didn’t think he’d been so absolutely petrified in his entire life. Not even when he was hanging on to All Might for dear life. How long had the coma been?

“Everything,” All For One quietly confirmed, solidifying Izuku’s fears. No wonder All For One had moved him so casually. It was a habit. “My brother, when he was younger, had his bad days. I’m not going to hurt you, but I have doubts about the good doctor at times. He was very curious about your blood results.”

“Is he responsible for the Noumu?” Slipped from Izuku’s dry mouth.

“Yes, he is, so you’ll understand my concerns, I’m sure.” Concerned would be putting it mildly. All For One’s giving and taking of Quirks turned people into dolls according to All Might… which meant whoever this doctor was, he had to be the one turning them into monsters. And he was looking at Izuku’s blood test results. Izuku was glad he was already green, hopefully All For One wouldn’t be able to tell the difference.

“Maybe… maybe not him, then?” Izuku suggested, hoping he wasn’t involved in some villainous implementation of good cop, bad cop.

“Yes, that was my response. Now, this is going to be uncomfortable and I can’t really offer you anything to hold onto since I need both hands…”

Uncomfortable didn’t begin to describe it, but Izuku didn’t doubt in the slightest that All For One had been the only one taking care of them. There was nothing inexperienced in how the gaping wound on his back was pointed out to him, how it stretched from one side to the other. The explanation of the dressing process being irritating due the sheer size of the thing, that stubbornly refused to close up. Yes, All For One had definitely been the one responsible with the amount of frustration dripping from every word.

Izuku couldn’t feel it at first, the plucking and tugging away of the adhesive on his skin as piece by piece it came away. Then it reached the wound and Izuku seized as what came away most definitely wasn’t adhesive, even with whatever fluid was being used to ease the process along. It pulled. It wrenched. Izuku whimpered.
“You're okay, you’re alright…” Izuku didn’t feel okay, he could feel his eyes watering as it began to throb. “These wounds are unfortunately deep even with our best effort. Still oozing… What a surprise. Waterproof dressings are a wonderful invention,” All For One murmured. But it didn’t stop. It pulled. And pulled. And kept pulling, a never ending sensation and Izuku became acutely aware that perhaps any pain medication he’d been given might have worn off.

“Why… why are you-?” Izuku struggled out, feeling the brush of gloved hands. Izuku gave up. Talking was too much effort for the waves of nausea that came with every pulse of pain.

“I think it’s in both of our interests if the good doctor isn’t involved in dressing these… His bedside manner unfortunately hasn’t improved over the years.” There was something in All For One’s voice that it had Izuku rapidly blinking beneath his blindfold. It reminded Izuku of when All For One had greeted Kacchan at Kamino. “As soon as I could take care of myself, I threw him out.”

Snorting in spite of himself, Izuku jerked and flinched, part of something coming away with a hiss.

“Careful. Now, if you behave yourself, I might have another treat waiting for you…”

“I can’t do much anyway,” Izuku grumbled.

“But you might hurt his feelings and that would be dreadful.”

It was extremely hard for Izuku to tell whether All For One was being serious or not. On one hand, a prospective bribe that might never be delivered, and on the other, a doctor who seemed to want to… experiment on Izuku. Even without the bribe, it was still for the best if Izuku just didn’t say anything.

Even if Izuku had the distinct impression that All For One was itching for something to be said to this doctor. Why All For One didn’t do it himself was anyone's guess.

For a moment, the doctor had wondered if the boy was catatonic again, but no, Midoriya was just entirely indifferent to his presence. Some people talked. Most begged. They did anything they could to avoid the silence. Midoriya seemed to revel in it. Or perhaps he just didn’t care. As such, the doctor took his observations, careful to avoid the boy’s blindfolded head. Miraculous as ever, but without more testing he had no explanation for the possibility of the recovery. Most people didn't recover. Not to this extent.

Midoriya shouldn’t be alive and Sensei didn’t seem to be sharing any secrets on what made this different. Sensei had his reasons, as always, but his unwillingness to share them was grating.

“Any questions?” Not that he was expecting any. The boy hadn’t said a word so far.

“Why am I here?” Whispered the child and the doctor paused in his tracks. Midoriya didn’t sound how he once did, he was nowhere near as lively. Death did that to people. How long had it been since his last visit? Midoriya hadn’t come back after that appointment...

But it was a good question. An unexpected one, but a good one. The doctor didn’t have the answer to that. Sometimes he wondered if even Sensei had the answer to it. Everything so far hinged on keeping the boy alive, but to what end? If it was for the mere Quirk then surely Sensei could deprive him of it at his leisure. In the same way that society could be toppled far more efficiently without
Shigaraki’s involvement, but still Sensei drove him on… unless Midoriya was wanted for more than his Quirk. It was an uncomfortable possibility.

“That is an excellent question, Midoriya. I was hoping you could provide me with some insight,” the doctor frowned.

“He hasn’t said anything to you?” Midoriya was frowning himself from the way the blindfold shifted. Interesting. Both of them were in the dark.

“No. You’re completely unaware of a possible reason?” The doctor tapped his clipboard and Midoriya shrugged.

“I can think of some… but, he dropped a building on me,” Midoriya said as though it explained everything. In all fairness, to a degree it did. Those who Sensei targeted seldom walked away from the experience let alone were treated for it… unless… was what happened to Midoriya an accident? “That should have been the end of it,” Midoriya said with chilling finality, nestling further into his sheets as well as he was able with a sigh. It was a sad gesture, so lacking in movement, something with more reflex than genuine care that the doctor almost winced.

“What about an accident?” The doctor pushed.

Midoriya paused. “Maybe.” Midoriya made a noise of contemplation. “Even if he did I don’t think he’d care enough to bring me back.” Indifference, followed by a small smile. “I’m nobody important.” The doctor very much so doubted that from his own sleepless nights, Sensei’s constant hovering, the extremes that both had gone to keep the fragile husk of a child from expiring. So much effort hadn’t gone into any procedure since Sensei’s own near demise. Clearly not a nobody.

“I very much so doubt that. Your accommodation would be very different if you were a nobody.” As would the treatment.

“For now,” Midoriya murmured, “but I don’t know much longer that’ll last for…” Midoriya exhaled quietly. A possibility, certainly, but this much effort only to let the boy die anyway? It seemed too kind a fate if Sensei had something particular in mind.

“You’re not going to be let off that easily,” the doctor noted. Nobody who owed Sensei anything ever did get off particularly easily…

“He doesn’t get to make that decision,” Midoriya yawned. “I was okay, you know… with him just leaving me there. I don’t owe him anything after he killed me. It would have been better if he just… left me.” Buried in tonnes of concrete rubble, lacerated, lungs hardened with dust, almost bisected, with most of his bones and skull shattered. That Midoriya still considered it preferable… “Instead I’m here.” It did speak of prior history.

“But you’re alive.” Blind, battered and in questionable condition, but there were some prospects of recovery. Not great prospects, but prospects nonetheless.

Midoriya shrugged. “This isn’t living.” In that instant, the doctor was filled with a sense of dread. That… wasn’t what Sensei was going to want to hear. The assumption had been that Midoriya was a standard teenager, but this… this wasn’t right.

It was such an apt statement that for a brief moment, the doctor wondered if the child knew, if perhaps Sensei had told him what exactly had happened. He doubted it, Sensei hardly seemed to want to cover the topic himself, but this wasn’t what was expected. It didn’t meet his assumptions about what a standard child experienced. Why was this one so different? What had happened in the
intervening time period? What had changed little Izuku into the teenager now?

Instead, the doctor made a note on his clipboard. “Very well, is there anything else?”

“You’re Doctor Tsubasa, aren’t you?” The boy’s ragged voice whispered and the doctor froze. He remembers. He was so young. He still is young. “I remember you.” A foreboding pause. “I’m not surprised that you’re here.” The doctor recoiled. For six words, the boy may as well have lashed him with a terrifying familiarity. “What happened to your grandson?”

“I-I have nothing to say to you on that topic.” Nothing that he could say. Nothing that he wanted to think about.

And the doctor fled. To give Sensei the bad news. To hide from another from sightless gaze that tolerated no excuses.

“I take that it went smoothly,” All For One asked in what Izuku assumed was a hopeful tone of voice.

Izuku had mixed feelings on how the meeting with his old doctor had gone. Objectively speaking, he was confident his blood pressure was double what it had been before the man had entered the room. Izuku was never going to forget the voice, the indifference, his mother’s reaction to it… Never. “Is seeing him going to be normal?”

“Not for you, no.” Izuku’s relief must have been audible or visible because he heard All For One’s brief chortle. “Yes, I’m sympathetic, but he has a somewhat unique skillset.”

In any normal situation, Izuku might have quizzed All For One on the elder Tsubasa’s skillset, but a far older problem gnawed at him. “Do you know what happened to his grandson?” Izuku found himself asking, lips moving before he could stop them. He didn’t really have anything to lose at this point. “I-I used to go to school with him in elementary school, but for some reason he didn’t come to middle school with Kacchan or me. Mum asked, but I don’t think she could find the family because they moved…”


Frowning, Izuku thought to himself. He could lie about it, but there wasn’t anything to gain from it when the grandfather was there to dispute it. There were no friends in this building. “Not friends, technically. Tsubasa had wings, you see. It was weird, because he could float even without beating them, so he had some suspension of the normal laws of physics when he used them and he had agility with them that other people with similar Quirks didn’t. I wrote notes on them and he thought I was insulting him. Um, he used to chase me using them. Him and Kacchan’s other,” Izuku felt for a word, “friends,” he finished lamely. Tsubasa’s disappearance arguably made Izuku’s life at school much easier. It opened up a world of new hiding places that Kacchan and his other minions couldn’t spot without an aerial perspective. That didn’t mean Izuku wasn’t curious. “But when he didn’t go with us…”

“Being a clever child, you were curious,” All For One concluded, almost eagerly. Izuku really didn’t like the sound of that. “His grandson was one of the few joys in his life, for all the time spent in his work. I was often regaled with stories his schooling activities against my consent,” All For One
irritably noted and there was a rush of air as he reclaimed his perch next to Izuku. Followed by Izuku almost jumping a foot into the air as All For One fluffed his pillows. Again.

That still didn’t answer the question. “But why didn’t he go to our school?”

“His family moved, that I know.”

All For One had already given himself away. Tsubasa overshared information, which means All For One definitely knew more than he was letting on. “I don’t think you’re telling me the whole story.”

“I’m not going to get anything past you, am I?” Delighted. Izuku would call that voice delighted. Something else was happening here and that threw Izuku more than the prospect of a gruesome death. “It’s something you best ask the doctor.” Likely because the villain knew full well that Tsubasa didn’t want to talk about it, but it did make Izuku’s heart sink. The younger Tsubasa’s reason for moving wasn’t going to be a happy one. “But I have your promised bribe in the meantime.”

_Bribe? “You were serious?”_

“Of course. I told you about Tomura’s mishap before, didn’t I?” Well, he had, but that was no guarantee that it was going to be a continuing thing. There was a click and Izuku heard another voice that almost made him weep with relief.

“Weeeelccoooonneee, listeners to your Friday night! Music all night, every night as we count dow-” and with another click Present Mic’s screech was gone.

A radio. All For One’s bribe was a radio. Izuku’s jaw dropped. Even the music stations had regular news coverage. Izuku would be able to follow what was happening outside. Even if the call in or dedicated news stations weren’t possible, there was still something. It was something!

“Now, this is a conditional bribe, little Izuku,” All For One sternly began, placing the device on the sideboard next to Izuku’s bed with a _clack._

Immediately, the hair on the back of Izuku’s neck rose. “What sort of conditions?”

“You have to be able to turn it on and use it yourself.” Izuku could almost hear the toothy smile and felt his fingers furiously twitch. If that wasn’t a challenge, Izuku didn’t know what it was.

“Is… is that really it?” If something seems too good to be true, it usually is and All For One had the advantage if he starved Izuku for information. Unless, there was some other factor in consideration that Izuku had missed.

“That’s it,” All For One airly called. “If you can use it, it’s yours to keep. Provided you continue to eat, of course,” All For One darkly added. What would make him think that was going to be a problem? There wasn’t a reason to not eat, yet.

“I think… I think I can do that.” _While I figure out how you’re going to kill me next time._

“Good, good. More importantly, what were you saying about the younger Tsubasa’s Quirk?”

Only then did Izuku remember that waxing poetic about Quirks to someone who could steal them probably wasn’t the best idea.
Sansa was always told that he had the face of the cat that ate the canary. Having set eyes on Toshinori Yagi, he had the feeling that he was the canary. Shadowed eyes stared him down from across the new detective’s desk where skeletal arms clad in navy blue, almost black, sat neatly folded. Whispers had followed both the newbie and Tsukauchi from the ground floor up to his office. Whispers that were still going and the more Sansa saw of the Yagi, the less he saw them stopping.

Four decades of experience in consulting, can you believe that? Where were they hiding this guy?

Did you see his qualifications? American. Is he even a native or is he an import? Yagi’s native passing response about speaking Japanese fluently corrected that assumption, to the humiliation of the man’s junior. Not that Yagi even stopped to look at the person he verbally treaded on.

I heard he used to work for All Might.

Screw that, I heard he was the brains of All Might’s entire operation. If he’s here All Might must be retiring. Wonder if Nighteye’s agency knows anything? I should give them a call.

Change of career then? Why our humble abode? He could get a job anywhere.

A little birdie told me he was into big game hunting.

Shit… You don’t mean that asshole who was at Kamino? Is this guy fucking crazy? Even the higher ups don’t want to touch that with All Might MIA.

Who’s the poor bastard assigned with him?

Tsukauchi, naturally. Hope he knows what he’s getting into, because this guy outranks him in the experience department. Any orders he takes are because he feels like it, even management seems hesitant around him.

I read his resume. You should have seen the amount of arrests this guy has behind in America and here while he worked for intel. All the people I asked at Might Tower swore the guy was a coffee runner. Holy shit. Yagi had grinned at that one. All teeth, no smile. It made the whole floor nearly soil themselves in terror.

You think his resume’s fucking scary? They had him do a test interrogation with some low level thug. He almost dropped the guy with a fucking heart attack twenty seconds in. Nobody knows how either, because that’s not his fucking Quirk. What the fuck.

They were taking bets on when he was going to get Tsukauchi killed going after the boss of the League of Villains, All For One. To Tsukauchi’s credit, he made polite conversation with his stony faced colleague as he led him throughout the building. Yagi made everyone else a nervous wreck, but Tsukauchi didn’t even seem to notice the aura of menace that hung off the blond.

Personally, Sansa was just up here to offer Tsukauchi’s new partner in crime fighting a coffee. Both of them were going to need it with them after the Shigaraki case was dropped on them. But now… now he wanted to close his still open mouth and get the hell out of there as fast as humanly possible.

“May I help you, Tamakawa?” Yagi’s deep voice rolled across the space.
Sansa gulped. “Erm, yeah, hi Yagi, just wanted to know if you wanted a coffee from across the street?” Sansa rushed out.

Yagi stared at him inscrutably. Sansa felt his fur stand on end. “I appreciate the offer, Tamakawa, but I have a great deal of work to do.” And Yagi looked away and he was dismissed.

Sansa should have taken the opportunity to leave, he should, but… “Yagi, it’s your first day. You’re allowed to take it easy.”

“Quite, but does that mean that I should, Tamakawa?” Sansa was either shrinking or Yagi was getting taller, his voice carefully even, unchanging, almost apathetic. “Izuku Midoriya’s mother is still waiting for an update on her son, who for some reason, has been listed as missing instead of deceased. I have interviews to schedule with witnesses of the boy’s death, CCTV footage to acquire and a meeting with the coroner to arrange a death certificate. Only then can she be comfortable in holding some sort of ceremony after the boy’s death, following him saving the lives of his classmates I might add.” Yagi stood and Sansa reflexively took a step back. Tall! Too tall.

“To make matters worse, Katsuki Bakugou claims that Izuku Midoriya’s body was stolen by the leader of the League of Villains. If this is correct, an investigation will have to be opened into the theft of the boy’s body and his mother will have to be informed. That’s not even covering the interrogations that have to be conducted of Shigaraki and his ilk. Now tell me Tamakawa, should I take it easy on my first day or should I perhaps do my job?”

Piercing blue eyes stared through Sansa, Yagi leaning heavily on his desk, his voice still perfectly even and it was all Sansa could do not to whimper. “No, sir, I’ll leave you to do your job, sir.”

“I’m glad we understand each other. I might take you up on that offer some other time though,” Yagi stated with another indifferent wave of his hand.

Sansa fled the room. He was ashamed to admit it, but his reaction wouldn’t have helped those whispers that continued to stalk Yagi throughout the halls in a dark cloud.

Tomura Shigaraki was thoroughly sick and tired of the white walls, the white ceiling, the white rims on the white reflection of still whiteish glass, the white straitjacket and the white everything. He didn’t think he’d been more bored in his entire life. There was that one time he’d played Spider Solitaire which was a close second, but even it wasn’t anywhere near as dreary as Detective Tsukauchi who sat opposite the glass. Tsukauchi who appeared whenever he felt like it, without warning, without rhyme or reason. Who. Never. Shut. Up. Tomura wanted to pull his hair out. At least the screams might vary, because his tone of voice sure as hell didn’t.

“Still not feeling very talkative, huh?” What felt like an eternity hadn’t made the “friendly chats”, as Tsukauchi called them, anymore pleasant. Tsukauchi wanted information on Sensei and it was a cold day in hell before Tomura had anything to tell the police or their pets the pro heroes about Sensei.

Where is All For One?

What does he want?

What are his motivations?
What is his end goal?

Why is he so obsessed with killing All Might?

Did All For One ever mention Izuku Midoriya? Tomura almost cracked a tooth thinking about that last one. As if Sensei would deign to waste his time on that brat.

How long has the League of Villains existed?

Who is your supplier?

Are you the leader?

Who manages the money?

And on and on it went, but more importantly, Sensei hadn’t been captured! But surely… surely Sensei would come back for him… right? Tsukuiachi implied that Sensei was free. That meant Sensei was free to come and rescue him from this boredom. So where was he and why was it taking so long? Perhaps he’d been injured even further by All Might and that again only made Tomura clench his teeth even harder.

“What do you think?” Tomura snapped. “I have nothing to say to you.”

“You just did,” Tsukuiachi lazily pointed out from behind a newspaper? Was that… was that the sporting insert of the newspaper? Was he seriously reading about a fucking baseball game during an interrogation? “Say something to me. I mean, I’ve had better conversations with brick walls, but it’s something, I guess.”

“Shut up,” Tomura snarled through gritted teeth. This was All Might’s fault. All of it was All Might’s fault. It was All Might’s fault that Sensei suddenly left in the midst of the battle without a word. It was his fault. All of this was that bastard’s fault.

“Careful, Shigaraki, you keep grinding your teeth like that and they’ll muzzle you again and you don’t want that for your big day,” Tsukuiachi yawned, rising to his feet.

Tomura shuddered. A mouth guard. They forced a mouth guard between his teeth like he was some common animal then they sedated him. That’s what they usually did. He was already bound to a chair. What did these idiots think he was going to do with turrets trained on him? He couldn’t do anything, but Sensei could. Sensei when he finally came. How long had it been? But… “Big day? What the hell are you talking about?”

“You’ll be pleased to know that my superiors finally gave me a buddy!” Tsukuiachi’s haggard face cracked into a bright smile. It was the first and only time Tomura had seen the detective smile in the too white prison. It made him want to latch on with all five fingers and make that expression disappear for good.

Tomura snorted derisively. “Who cares?”

“You do, because he’s been assigned to all of my cases, including yours,” Tsukuiachi nodded. “His desk is setup, already covered in files and he is ready to go.”

“As if some noob scrub can handle someone of my level,” Tomura drawled. A junior. In here. Sif. They’d have to grind on the trash in the lower security prisons before they had a chance here.

“To the contrary, he’s been in the business longer than I have, but he worked in a specialised third
consultancy wing for the police. His employer recently released him from that contract so he could work for us directly. He’s very eager to start work,” Tsukauchi nodded, his head bobbing up and down so fast that Tomura wanted to kick it off.

“Not like he’ll get very far, will he?” Tomura found himself sneering back.

“Oh, I don’t know about that. He likes All Might more than you do. I’m sure that you’ll have a lot in common.” Tomura wanted to melt the smug smirk off his face.

“I doubt that.”

Tsukauchi’s white teeth only seemed to gleam whiter and Tomura wanted to scream, for all the good that was going to do.

Where are you, Sensei?

It was all Toshinori could do not to grimace. Secreted in the comfort of his kitchen, he could drop the role that young Bakugou had lovingly created for him. Not the word Toshinori would usually apply to anything Bakugou did, but the boy had chosen every word in that resume carefully and taken notes. Finally, at the end he had been presented with a notebook titled *Career Analysis For the Future* and Toshinori held in tears while the boy stubbornly avoided eye contact.

It was filled with tiny details on behaviour, responses, facial expressions, backstory explanations, an entire guidebook to Toshinori Yagi’s entirely plausible (if slightly misleading) life that ran in parallel to All Might. It even had a dedicated section on his cover as a coffee runner at Might Tower. Young Midoriya would have loved that book.

“Are you sure moving him into a lower security area is a good idea?” That was the plan so far. Shigaraki felt safe knowing none of his interrogators could reach him. Apparently, it was quite the issue with the higher security Tartarus prisoners who liked to mock and goad their interrogators. Toshinori had been largely joking when he suggested they shove Shigaraki into a standard interrogation room and play good cop, bad cop for real. It came as a huge surprise to both Toshinori and Tsukauchi when their bosses and head warden from Tartarus gave the go ahead.

“Not really, but with his hands tied together he’s not much of a threat,” Tsukauchi explained with the wave of a coffee mug in one hand and some cheap cake in another. “They’re more worried about what you are going to do to him from what the Chief said after the induction. They’re even going to assign some guards.”

“If he’s restrained I don’t think we’re going to need the guards.” If worst came to worst, Toshinori still had enough juice to rip Shigaraki’s head clean off his shoulders before he could hurt anyone if it was needed. Shigaraki was already responsible for the deaths of everyone at Kamino when he involved All For One, including young Midoriya. Toshinori couldn’t see himself losing any sleep over that act of self defence.

“They’re to restrain you, not him,” Tsukauchi grunted from around his cake.

“Oh.” Toshinori thought back to his interview and smiled. “I suppose I did make a bit of an impression in the demonstration, didn’t I?”
“What were you thinking of to even do that?” Tsukauchi asked after a swallow of coffee.

“Hmm, interviewing All For One.” And then ripping up the table from the floor and beating him with it for robbing young Midoriya of his full and happy lifespan. “Young Bakugou’s notes said that I should maintain a more unapproachable air for my cover.”

“He’s not wrong, but did you have to scare Tamakawa so badly?” Tsukauchi sighed.

Toshinori shrugged helplessly.

*If only young Midoriya was around to give his view on this situation...*

Chapter End Notes

And another. Since people have been asking, this is likely to be finished before WOAC is posted.
**Quirks**

Chapter Summary

What's the difference between a quirk and a Quirk?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Imperfect. All of them were, the patterns weren’t lining up, the central dolls didn’t quite fit… Momo’s matryoshka dolls sat listlessly about her as she poured them out. Green. All of them were green. All of them a specific shade of green. Happy faces, then sad faces, then entirely faceless. Some of them patterned with chunks of falling stone. Imperfect.

Momo had never had this problem before as she pulled out another imperfect doll from her stomach. This one had rivers of tears running down its face in blue paint. Her hands shook.

“Honey… are you alright?” Her mother asked from the doorway of her bedroom. Midoriya… Midoriya hadn’t ever visited her home, had he? He wasn’t with the others when they came for the study group... Never saw her dining room, never drank their tea, never asked him about his notebooks he wrote in during the Sport Festival, never really spoke… Now they never would. It was too late. “Momo? Come and eat honey, you’ve been going all afternoon.”

“I-in a minute,” Momo responded after a delay, watching doll after doll fall to the ground. Some of them broke, their wooden casings so fragile.

“I’ll give you ten, then I’ll come back and check, alright?”

“Yes.” Momo’s mother stepped away and Momo was left to her thoughts. She was fighting a losing battle and erupted into quiet sobs.

Bakugou said it had only taken a minute. Midoriya was there… and then he wasn’t. A building toppled, him pushing the others out the way knowing what was going to happen. He had to know, but he still did it anyway. Midoriya never made it out of U.A., would never have another conversation with any of them, would never become a pro even though he died a hero, would never achieve his dreams. His mother would cry over his empty grave for what she lost, like the how class stared shellshocked at his empty seat in class as Aizawa-sensei realised that perhaps it was for the best if they had a break.

And it was all Momo’s fault. She could have said no, could have refused to give them the tracker. Refused to help… but then Bakugou would have died. Kirishima, Todoroki and Midoriya’s lack of trust in the pro heroes was correct. All Might, held up as he was with the boss of the villains, never would have reached Bakugou and Bakugou, tired from the camp, didn’t have the energy to do anymore than stall his attackers. It was a foregone conclusion if they hadn’t been there, but was it worth it? They had exchanged one possibility for a definite. Bakugou’s potential death for Midoriya’s definite death. It didn’t feel worth it, neither of them should have died, but one had died.

She had watched the aftermath, trying to capture the moment it had all gone wrong. All she had was conjecture for All For One had toppled many buildings and they just so happened to be under one of
them. It was almost a freak accident. It didn’t look deliberate so much as negligent and All for One had sniped one of the escapees from his trap without even realising it. Not until it was too late.

Bakugou said that the villain had stolen Midoriya’s body. Closed Midoriya’s empty eyes and carried his broken body away. All For One who had given Midoriya his Quirk if Bakugou was right. To what end, Momo didn’t want to imagine. Midoriya was as terrified of him as any of them. She could remember being told about the rows of bodies in tubes in the warehouse and breathed in slowly and deeply.

Momo had seen it then, clearer than ever, Bakugou’s rage spilling forth as he told them why Midoriya’s funeral would be delayed. The police concealing the death, his parents forbidding him from telling Midoriya’s mother, All Might’s disappearance from the public eye. Waxing and waning without control, into explosive outbursts. Monoma had been a victim of one of those outbursts. He’d approached them at lunch to gloat, but he hadn’t known. No one in 1-B could have known, not with the police hiding Midoriya’s death and not without missing Bakugou’s declaration before class had started. But it happened anyway.

“Where’s Midoriya? Maybe he ran awa-” and Monoma never finished the sentence. Bakugou issued an explosive uppercut so hard that Monoma bounced off the cafeteria’s ceiling and back to the floor with a crunch. Kirishima hadn’t made it time. Todoroki had smirked. Ida wasn’t there to lecture them. Midoriya wasn’t there to stop Bakugou and never would be again. And Momo? Momo had just watched with everyone else, feeling absolutely nothing.

She hadn’t made it in time and the more she thought about it, the more she realised that she didn’t want to, because they all had time to reach Bakugou before he struck… but… Monoma wasn’t worth it. Monoma could have avoided it. That level of self-control was well beyond Bakugou now, but no one in 1-B had bothered to so much as ask about Midoriya.

“Does anyone else want to talk shit about Deku? You may as well haul your fucking arses over now while I’m in the mood to-.” He hadn’t gotten the chance to finish the sentence, passing out in Midnight-sensei’s arms.

“I’ll talk to Bakugou. Can you please take Monoma to Recovery Girl?” Midnight sighed and effortlessly lifted Bakugou and hoisted him from the cafeteria. To the principal’s office, no doubt.

1-A watched and said nothing. Uraraka’s face was set in a deep frown. Asui was as expressionless as ever, but her gaze towards 1-B was anything but friendly. Kaminari and Mineta were making a token effort to see if Monoma was still breathing, grimacing all the while. Satou had offered to carry Monoma to Recovery Girl. And Momo did nothing but watch while Kendou made her way over.

It was salt in the wounds, for someone to even suggest that Midoriya would run away when he chose to stay behind. It was farcical when he died doing the opposite. Now there wasn’t even a body left to bury and all Momo could do was sit and reflect, because it wasn’t good enough. It was her fault. She had to do something.

She didn’t know what she could do. Bakugou was out for blood, as was Todoroki. Kirishima was attempting to find out what Bakugou was doing. Ida wasn’t contactable. The rest of the class was still reeling and, even after classes had resumed, the five hadn’t turned for their various reasons. Momo couldn’t look at Midoriya’s empty seat. It made her think of the equally empty burial site. An empty grave.

Perhaps… perhaps the dolls had a purpose after all and Momo began to gather them. It was something, better than the numbness and uncertainty that haunted her every step.
Katsuki was bouncing a rubber ball off All Might’s wall. He didn’t give a shit what the neighbours thought of it. Pricks. All Might himself was hunched over a huge file of papers from the police station, a corkboard filled with multicoloured string hanging behind him. There was enough red for it to almost pass for a stringy murder scene itself and that was just All For One’s involvement. The dark green was Deku, more muted and Katsuki averted his eyes. There wasn’t as much green as there was red.

So far so fucking good. Nobody suspected that All Might and Toshinori Yagi were the same person. There was going to be hell to pay if anyone worked out that his Quirk was gone. My fault. My fucking fault. Katsuki hurled the ball and it smacked into the wall with a satisfying thud.

Every single criminal bastard and their mother would stream out the woodwork, all wanting to be the hottest shit with no All Might to smash their teeth in. And who was gonna stop them? Endeavor? Fuck no. Bastard couldn’t handle his own son giving him shit let alone what turned up at the USJ. Endeavor and the current top brass would’ve had their shit pushed so far in that an area of medical study would have sprung out the ground to deal with it. They couldn’t handle All For One now and Katsuki didn’t see that changing in the near future.

That was with All For One doing fuck knows what. Unbidden, Katsuki could see the masked bastard leaning over the body, closing Deku’s glassy eyes and - THWAP- jerked as the ball collided solidly with his head. Katsuki grunted and snatched the ball mid bounce. Fucking Deku would have known what was going on.

“What’s the deal with All For One?” Katsuki grunted instead, shaking away the image. “Anything new?’

“Not a great deal. All For One has been missing from our radar for some time now. I’ve…” Katsuki watched All Might swallow heavily. “I’ve been looking at other missing person reports in addition to young Midoriya’s…”

All Might was doing what both Tsukauchi and Katsuki had agreed upon. All For One left a trail of victims whenever he used his Quirk. He was easy to find when people bothered to look and that was how All Might found him the last few times. Follow the bodies and maybe they’d find out what that prick did with Deku’s body.

“And? Is that bastard still around, stealing Quirks?” Katsuki growled, leaning forward as he did so. All For One left trails of Quirkless, maimed or otherwise experimented on people behind him. That much he knew from peeking at All Might’s files. It made his stomach fucking churn. A cold steel table… a fucking tube… with Deku limply floating in it, that’s all Katsuki could see.

Had Deku saved Katsuki from one of those fucking tubes? Had Deku known what was coming next? For him not to trust All Might or the other pros, because he knew what they didn’t about All Might’s injury. Did he know about the Noumu before the rest of them? Katsuki swallowed heavily. Deku seemed to know shit about everything, especially if it was connected to All Might…

That masked bastard had no use for a corpse. No known use. Katsuki had spent just enough time squinting at the section of the debrief on the Noumu to realise that him taking a corpse was out of character. It didn’t make him feel any better about what happened to Deku. Maybe Deku’s death had given that murdering fuckwit some inspiration for a new line of assholery.

“If he is, I don’t know what to make of his choice of victims…” All Might was frowning and Katsuki didn’t think he’d seen something so wrong appearing in his life. It was unnatural. “These
Quirks are peculiar and are the only ones I have so far where it seems to be him. The rest have other
other suspects. One for the numbing of pain, another for paralysis… Another for electrical currents.
There’s another one here that allowed its holder to place someone into suspended animation… I
honestly don’t know if these are connected to him, but these are missing perpetrators. He was
making Noumu before without these Quirks,” All Might gestured in frustration.

Meanwhile, the Quirks were playing in Katsuki’s head. Pain numbing. Paralysis. Electrical currents.
Suspended Animation. He was fucking positive Deku would have dived on them if he was still
around. But he wasn’t. He died, because Katsuki was too slow and too fucking useless to save him.
“All Might, could any of those have medical applications? You hit him pretty fucking hard, he was
shaking his hand after the first blow.” All For One definitely felt the first round of blows. Anyone
who could take All Might on head to head was hardly fucking human by Katsuki’s estimates.
Bastard was in good enough shape to steal a body from the rubble after the fact as well.

“Possibly, but why Suspended Animation?” All Might scratched his head. “These don’t line up.”

“It sounds like he wants to store something or someone if you ask me,” Katsuki grunted. Paralysis to
keep them from moving, electrical currents for… fucked if he knew, nerves maybe? Pain numbing to
keep them from feeling whatever the hell he was going to do to them. Suspended Animation meant
he wanted to keep something. “Can’t be Deku though, Deku’s dead. Can he bring back the dead?”
That thought was fucking messed up as well, but someone had to ask it.

“Only himself, as far as I know,” All Might sighed. “Other people are his pawns. He never went to
any lengths before to save people, not when he had legions of disposable pawns. I can’t see him
starting now.” Then what was different about Deku? Deku was Quirkless up until… up until All
Might handed over the Quirk.

“Does… does he know about Deku’s Quirk?” Katsuki realised with a mounting horror.

All Might paused, the colour draining from his face. “Shit.”

It was at that moment that Katsuki decided that some more research on Quirks was in fucking order.

The perp was crying. Honest to god bawling his eyes out across from the the blond haired man with
icy blue eyes that just stared through people rather than at them. Positioned in a chair mere inches
from the accused, Yagi was close enough to lick the man’s eyeballs if he chose to… and with what
was happening now, it was starting to look like a possibility.

“I’m not particularly interested in helping you, Mr Ito. That’s Detective Tsukauchi’s deal, he’s all
about understanding and helping people. Me though,” Sansa watched in horror as Yagi gazed down
from an insurmountable height over clasped hands, “I’m more interested in the truth.”

“I-I-I,” the small man with round glasses was trembling so violently that his glass of water wobbled
violently despite the table being bolted to the floor. Sansa knew for a fact that all of his colleagues
held nothing but the deepest contempt for accused child killers… but Yagi was something else. Yagi
was banned from dealing with those with heart problems for good reason. Sansa could feel the ill
intent leak from the room like it was a tangible presence. Mr Ito’s chair was going to have to be
thrown out after it was drowned with disinfectant. Though he had a sneaking suspicion that his
room, hidden behind the mirror, was going to need much the same due to some of its pale occupants.
If he hadn’t already known what Yagi was like prior to this demonstration, he would have been in
the same boat.
“Japanese, Mr Ito, requires that you speak in whole, coherent sentences,” Yagi delivered so frostily that Sansa wouldn’t have been surprised to see the window ice over. “Do you speak Japanese, or have you lost the ability?”

After all, no one knew Yagi’s Quirk. No one really wanted to either. Yagi, despite his lithe form, snapped another accused’s arm like a twig after the man had charged at Tsukauchi with a weapon. Dropped him to the floor in a lock with the broken arm forced into an angle was entirely too wrong for a human to look at let alone have done to them.

Yagi’s expression hadn’t changed. Hadn’t twitched, not even blinked as his fist solidly landed itself into the accused’s stomach on their way to the floor. The presumed weapon tumbled from the man’s hands and Tsukauchi moved to fully restrain the bloodied mess on the floor. They were still waiting on the labs to identify whatever the accused was holding, but those screams were never going to leave the police watching. Nor was Yagi’s indifference.

Giran was his name, some prolific fixer who had connections to the League of Villains and had supplied them with illegal Support items and cannon fodder previously. Not that he ever would again. The moment Giran’s arm had been corrected and set into a cast, he was shoved back into the room with Yagi at the Chief’s orders and the interrogation had resumed. Giran sang like a bird. Every phone, every contact, every location. Even a snippet on the poor Midoriya who died at Kamino and how much Shigaraki hated him. Yagi had grinned at that, like a shark did when scenting blood. Nothing but sharp teeth and pain as Giran was pushed for details, fully aware that no one was coming to save him, not with All For One off the grid.

“What the fuck is this guy’s problem?” One of his paler colleagues grunted from behind him. Sansa knew he wasn’t referring to Mr Ito, but Yagi who was eyeing off the man as if he were an unctuous piece of dirt attached to his shoe instead of a human being. Azuma hadn’t been in Giran’s interrogation or Yagi’s behaviour wouldn’t have come as a surprise. Yagi, out of all of them, loathed offenders where children were the victims. It was one of his redeeming qualities, one of the few that all of the police agreed on in debate.

“Mr Ito, where were you last Thursday night, between 6pm and 9pm?” Yagi repeated, still inches from Mr Ito’s face.

“I was at home!” Mr Ito shrieked. “Ask my wife!”

Yagi grinned, flesh peeling back from his teeth. “Really? That’s interesting… Will she confirm that?”

“Yes! Of course she will,” Mr Ito, leaning back as far away from Yagi as was possible, snarled.

“Yeah, I don’t think so,” Yagi casually remarked. How he did that while almost being up Mr Ito’s nostril was beyond Sansa. Of course the wife wasn’t going to confirm it though, she was the one who had reported her husbands suspicious absences occurring during the same time frames as the children disappearing. Turns out Yagi’s suggestion to plaster the case all over the media had been the right suggestion after all… and the deeper they dived the worse it appeared for Mr Ito. As it turned out, Mrs Ito’s keen memory stemmed from her husband’s constant disappearances during key family events. Family events which others also recalled that he wasn’t present in attendance. Family events that lined up with the missing children.

“You missed your wedding anniversary dinner with her you know, she’s still very upset,” Yagi added. “She was waiting for hours, sent texts, called and you never answered.”

“That’s a lie!” Mr Ito screamed back at the unmoving Yagi.
“How about your mother-in-law’s birthday? You weren’t there for that either,” Yagi tutted, opening the folder on the table and revealing the expansive phone records of Mrs Ito. “Or your son’s baseball grand final, or the family New Year’s party, or even your own promotion party. So Mr Ito, where were you?” They already knew where he was, they had already found the bodies after all thanks to the help of the rest of his family. A quiet spot in the woods local to his house where he liked to “reflect” as his wife had scornfully put it. The only thing they were missing was the why.

Ito cracked like an egg. All drool and mucus, wailing in front of the unsympathetic Yagi’s unrelenting barrage. “They deserved it!”

“Really, Mr Ito? How did they deserve it exactly? Did they not get off your lawn when you told them to?” Yagi drawled.

“They bullied my son!” Mr Ito lunged for Yagi and found himself pinned to the table by his throat, gasping for air.

“Uh, should we… do something?” Azuma mumbled, rushing to his feet.

“Not yet,” Tsukauchi whispered.

“How?” Yagi breathed on Mr Ito eyeballs and Sansa felt an itch develop on his own.

“He’s Quirkless! They told him to jump off a school roof! It. Never. Stopped. I complained to the school, they did nothing. I told the police and they laughed it off. So I took matters into my own hands and stopped it permanently.” Mr Ito was thrashing under Yagi’s death grip. Yagi whose expression had yet to change.

“So you killed them.” Yagi wasn’t asking a question.

“Yes!” Mr Ito’s voice reached a pitch that made Sansa cover his ears. “No one else was doing anything, so I did.”

“Did you ever tell their parents about the behaviour before you took it upon yourself to murder them? Before you robbed them of their chance to develop and grow?” Yagi’s voice was perfectly level, but Sansa felt his ears flatten. The voice wasn’t the problem…

“They—they wouldn’t have done anything,” Mr Ito stuttered, but it was too late. Far too late. “Rotten parents breed rotten children.”

“I don’t know about that, Mr Ito. I interviewed your son and he’s an all star student with a bright future ahead of him in baseball and in his business degree. Guess the apple fell far from the tree here, didn’t it?” Yagi idly reflected and Mr Ito gagged under Yagi’s hands.

“Right, I think now’s a good time. I’m going in,” Tsukauchi called over his shoulder as he bolted for the interview room’s door. Sansa could only stare.

With Giran a snivelling wreck who cried when Yagi’s name was mentioned and Mr Ito starting to resemble Giran in the same way, Sansa didn’t think it’d be long at all before the man was unleashed on Shigaraki and the League of Villains officers. After the pile of convictions that flooded out the door due to Yagi, Sansa didn’t think there wasn’t a single cop in Japan who wouldn’t be looking forward to Shigaraki’s interrogation after what had happened at Kamino.

If there was anything any of them agreed on about Yagi, it was the mess he made of offenders who harmed children.
There was a two hundred year old criminal delicately drawing diagrams on the palm of Izuku’s hand. A line here, an arc there. Delicate squiggles in other places. Each line a different Quirk, some strokes a different application. His brain starved of sight, Izuku could almost see All For One’s description of his Kamino loadout. Another part of his brain was similarly amazed that his hand was, likely, still going to be attached after the experience. “Overall, I’ve found the brute force and recoil needed to match All Might blow for blow unnecessary. There are other Quirks with better synergy that require less strain and have more impactful results.” Something more impactful than Quirks that already levelled a city… Izuku shuddered to think of it.

“But why use those instead of more efficient Quirks?” Izuku asked, twitching slightly as All For One drew a square on his hand. “You could have, I don’t know… poisoned him? He’s got strength, but no immunities. Most people don’t.” The moment it left his lips, Izuku clamped his jaws shut. Stop giving him ideas, his brain screamed at him.

“How pragmatic,” All For One purred and Izuku cringed. “I had my reasons. Namely an inspirational piece that I saw while perusing national television. I wanted a more personal touch.” All For One being inspired by television. That was… normal. “Your ability to maintain range on Todoroki with pressure blasts and without direct contact was an interesting style. I was curious to see how much force was required to correctly execute the end result.” Okay, that was less normal. That made Izuku’s stomach drop like a stone into a lake.

All For One had stolen Izuku’s idea. All For One had used it on All Might. All For One might have even killed All Might if it wasn’t for the… distraction that Izuku’s death posed, for whatever that unknown reason happened to be. But why? Izuku’s technique wasn’t that new or different was it? All Might had long since used pressure blasts as part of his arsenal.

“What? Why me? I- I didn’t even use it for the first two rounds.” And ended up with precisely one recommendation to his name. Nobody was interested in how people handled situations without a Quirk. Kacchan and the Sludge Villain proved it and so did the heroes watching the Festival. The recommendation was a favour called in by All Might. All Might who he was never going to see again. Izuku swallowed heavily.

“Precisely,” All For One said so immediately that all of Izuku doubts about the Sports Festival came crashing back. “You made it through the first two rounds with no application of a Quirk, but by purely taking advantage of your surroundings. In the first you used the field itself and appropriated Bakugou’s technique to soar your way to victory with almost no strain. In the second you recruited others to fight on your behalf. Again without lifting a finger. Only in the third were you pushed to it and you didn’t have to do that either, did you?” Izuku could almost hear the predatory smirk. “You provoked Todoroki. I’m sure you had your reasons beyond a school game. I warned Tomura before your exhibition had even commenced that you were a threat to him.” To him, echoed through Izuku’s head. “You’re extremely rare, little Izuku.” All For One concluded by drawing a circle on Izuku’s hand.

“No I’m not,” Izuku immediately denied. It was common sense. Using One For All back then would have killed someone and severely injured Izuku. It wasn’t an option.

“Give yourself some credit. You’re the first person I’ve seen so much as attempt to use the school’s format against them,” All For One pushed. “You know what they say about imitation being the sincerest form of flattery. Your showing was very impressive.” To the supervillain who’s meant to be your arch enemy and not your future colleagues, Izuku’s brain filled in. It really wasn't helping.

“If you say so.”
“I insist.”

With that, All For One launched into another recollection of another encounter and Izuku had a thought… If All For One’s Quirk loadout was new to him on the basis of Izuku’s showing… how hadn’t he killed all of them as they cowered behind the wall when he blew away the rest of the surrounding areas? And why hadn’t All For One asked him about his Quirk yet? It had to be coming eventually. Questions for another day and he dragged himself back to the present conversation.

With the supervillain who killed him and wanted his opinion on Quirks. Not exactly how Izuku had expected this to go, especially the handholding.

Neito had screwed up. His classmates told him that, his parents agreed and that nutcase Bakugou had sealed the deal. He had to do something to fix it. Sitting in the Ida family’s dining room with Tenya Ida opposite, a tray of tea and biscuits before them, only made it even more obvious. Ida was the only one who was willing to speak to him. The other responses from 1-A were frosty to say the least and Neito… Neito didn’t blame them. Not after the stupidity of what he’d said, half baked and with no idea of what happened to Midoriya. Midoriya who was, admittedly, one of the more tolerable members of 1-A. Midoriya who was dead.

“He’s really… gone?” Neito repeated, trying to shake off the phantom sensation of his jaw and skull shattering from a single punch. Neito had only been punched, but the full force of a falling skyscraper was far more menacing. Neito knew that Midoriya wasn’t walking away from that. Anyone with half a brain should have known that.

“Bakugou saw Midoriya’s body being taken by the villain,” Ida nodded stiffly. Neito could still see his opposite’s shoulder’s shake in spite of his level voice. “Midoriya’s eyes were,” Ida visibly swallowed, “open until the villain shut them. He died on impact.”

Neito now had a fair idea of precisely why Bakugou had hit him. Bakugou had seen the worst of what happened and Neito felt his conscience tweak. He shouldn’t have said anything, not when the police weren’t being entirely honest it seemed.

“I… I offended your classmates by suggesting Midoriya had run away. I-I didn’t think,” Neito stammered out, acutely aware of Ida’s darkening expression. “I’m sorry I said something so stupid without confirming what happened first.”

“It’s not your fault,” Ida said simply and Neito almost dropped his teacup. “It’s a surprise to you that the police did something so shameful, but it’s not to me.”

Neito blinked and set his teacup down. “What do you mean, Ida?” Ida’s family had been in the pro hero business for a very long time. By sheer probability alone he had to have heard of the police doing less than legitimate things in their course of duty.

“What I tell you now doesn’t leave this room, correct?” Ida glared and Neito hurriedly nodded.

“Not a word to anyone.” Neito could do that. Hopefully.

“Endeavor wasn’t the one who took down Stain. Another thing Midoriya won’t ever receive credit for,” Ida spat and Neito felt his world slow down. “I’m tired of hiding from people who should know.” Midoriya… was the one who captured Stain? Was that why Ida, Todoroki and Midoriya had been injured on their internships? Why wasn’t it in the news reports?

“What, why didn’t the police tell the media? How did that even happen?” Neito found himself
leaning in to Ida whose hands shook as he poured them more tea.

“I stumbled across Stain in my internship, he was about to kill Native. Midoriya was in the area and noticed that I wasn’t with my supervisor and he came to look for me and prevented Stain from killing Native and myself. He summoned in Todoroki for reinforcements and together we captured Stain.” Ida’s head was to the ceiling, but Neito spied a moist glisten. “The police told us that we could either accept responsibility and be punished or allow Endeavor to claim the credit for Stain’s capture.”

Neito felt his jaw drop. That was outrageous that—“that’s illegal!” Neito felt burst out. “It’s been well accepted for years that everyone is allowed to use their Quirks for self defence so long as it’s reasonable. None of you did anything wrong. Did they just expect you to stand there and be murdered by the maniac?” Neito watched Ida nod and savagely bite into another biscuit.

“He gave me the opportunity to run… but, I wasn’t going to sit there and let my brother’s attacker get away,” Ida confessed and Neito shrugged. Ida’s reasons for not running were irrelevant. Stain was still about to kill an innocent person.

“Does it matter? Native was still there. Were you just meant to let him to be murdered because being a pro hero was his job? That’s appalling!” Was Neito really going into a field where the police expected bystanders to just let him die if he was on the ropes? Clearly the three were in a position to help and the police wanted to punish them, not their useless officers. What else was there that the school and police weren’t telling them? “I can’t believe that was their excuse. It sounds more like they were embarrassed because they couldn’t catch a single lunatic when three students did. I would have told them to shove it and exposed them for what they are - incompetent!” Neito thumped the table and saw the ghost of a nod from the alarmed Ida.

“If only we’d known this before… before Midoriya…” Ida murmured quietly. “We could have done something.”

“I understand.” Neito did understand, feeling the flush of shame work its way up his spine. Midoriya hadn’t run away from anyone in his lifetime it seemed and 1-A was the same. They were caught up in constant disasters because they stayed to help. “I owe Bakugou an apology, along with the rest of your class. Do you happen to have their numbers?”

Bakugou and 1-A weren’t going to accept a standard apology from what Neito had just heard. He was going to need more...

"Say, Ida, what exactly is Bakugou up to at the moment?"

Ida spoke and Neito nodded. He had an idea.

It was up there as being one of the stupidest ideas Izuku had ever had in his entire life. At least it was only an idea so far and no errant mumbles had alerted All For One to its existence. He knew exactly where it had come from though…

Izuku still wasn’t sure exactly how much time had passed, but he was assuming that he was being fed three meals a day, with his dressings changed once a day as well. He wished it was just the dressings, but after being towelled off by All For One following a shower as though he were particularly disobedient, yowling pet cat. Izuku could indignantly and with horror add a daily shower to that list as well. Now, taking that into account, Izuku had counted over twenty meals which left him with the deeply unsatisfying conclusion that he’d been awake and in All For One’s care for around a week. A vague week in which he was inching closer to All For One’s promised radio. A
radio which mentioned a Friday on the day it was turned on and left on his side table.

That was a solid week of struggling, fidgeting, flexing and frustration. Izuku’s arms might have the same approximate mobility as lead piping, but at least he could lift them now. Lift and slightly reposition himself, if it came down to it. He wasn’t going to give All For One more reasons to invade his personal space if he could help it, not when All For One didn’t seem to need one at the best of times.

“Ah, you can hold them up for longer now,” All For One’s almost perkier voice registered. “Almost there. What about your legs?”

And there was the source of Izuku’s extremely stupid idea. He could roll his ankles and his toes rolled even more naturally than his fingers, but his knees and calves stubbornly refused to move. They may as well have been locked in position. The sensations were there, but his brain almost seemed to have forgotten how to move them. Izuku was sorely tempted to trickle One For All down, but if he couldn’t move his leg who was to say what the Quirk would do to it? His arms were already riddled with atrophy and Izuku shuddered to think at what the Quirk would do to the untoned muscle. All Might had told him what One For All did to an unprepared vessel and Izuku… Izuku was anything but prepared anymore. And, naturally, that was where the idea came in… His extremely stupid idea.

Asking All For One for anything was a risk, as Izuku had come to discover. Not because All For One wanted anything in return, but because he didn’t. Izuku still had absolutely no idea where he stood with his murderer as the man towelled off Izuku’s hair. There was nothing, apart from an absentminded comment and pat about how it kept its shape even while soaked. There were no threats, no signs that he was going after Kacchan or All Might… But Izuku was at least a week in and All For One was over a century old at the minimum and had seemingly faked his death for six years. A week might have felt like an eternity to Izuku, but it was all of five seconds to All For One…

All For One could wait, but the longer Izuku waited, the less likely the news would be to have follow up coverage of Kamino and the recovery efforts. Izuku didn’t want to wait and at this point, what could All For One even do?

“That-that Quirk you used on Kurogiri while he was unconscious…” Izuku broached, feeling as though he was ascending an executioner’s platform.

“Yes? What about it?” Eager. All too eager. Izuku would almost call it a hunger, the way All For One’s vast focus would instantly shift to him. It was strange to have someone so focused, but being who it was made it that much worse. No topic was an obstacle, All For One latched on and held on as if he was starved for conversation… and that might well be the case. Izuku hadn’t seen him speak to anyone else apart from Dr Tsubasa and even those exchanges were fleeting, impersonal and businesslike. Tsubasa didn’t get the same complaints about Quirk mechanics from All For One that Izuku did. Nor the same compliments. The “good doctor”, if anything, was almost flung to the side in All For One’s haste to be rid of him.

“What exactly is it?” Izuku continued, wishing he could assume a bracing position. Or the foetal position.

“Forced Quirk Activation and it does precisely what the name implies,” All For One explained. Already the cogs were turning in Izuku’s head… A Quirk that could activate other quirks. “What exactly about it is Forced?”
Izuku heard All For One’s knuckles crack and recoiled. “Sorry, that was unintentional.” Another thing that left Izuku on eggshells was the constant apologies. It was strange to hear it from anyone let alone a mass murderer. “It’s involuntary on the part of the receiver. I can activate or suppress any Quirk regardless of the consciousness or consent of my target. I admit, it was quite the find.” Izuku could believe that, most Quirks that interacted with other Quirks were rare by default. For once, though, Izuku wasn’t interested in its ability to trigger Quirks, but the mechanism behind it.

Now, the moment of truth. “Does it only work on Quirks… or the whole central nervous system? I think it would have to work on the whole central nervous system for you to even have control over the Quirk, unless you were adding something else to the mix?” Izuku had the explanation of the loadout, now he just needed the specifics confirmed.

Izuku heard him breathe in and out… “Are you suggesting what I think you’re suggesting, little Izuku?” Quick, too quick. Too eager.

Grimacing, Izuku raised his arm with some effort. “The arms are a work in progress, but I can’t get any movement above my ankles regardless of what I do. The nerves must work or I wouldn’t have any movement down there at all, meaning it’s a brain problem. So I was wondering…” If you would trick my brain into seeing my legs again, Izuku finished internally, once again recalling what a stupid idea it was to ask All For One of all people for anything. Izuku couldn’t trust him to do anything. Izuku wouldn’t, but with how he currently was, what exactly could be done to him? All For One had already killed him once. What was a second time?

“You are a clever boy, aren’t you?” Izuku didn’t know what the emotion in All For One’s voice was, but it unnerved him more than he would have liked. “You’re wondering if you can use it to correct your nervous system’s blind spot. If Forced Quirk Activation does work on the whole central nervous system, I can see the afflicted limbs even if your brain doesn’t and assist in it remaking the link. What an unconventional approach. If it performs as we expect it to, then we have a potential shortcut in your recovery.” There it was again, the thing that disturbed Izuku the most, All For One’s near smothering interest in Izuku’s recovery, that seemed to eclipse all else. Not having the why was eating holes into Izuku and he was sure All For One had noticed it all too readily. Not that All For One seemed to be actively malicious in withholding his reason… not when Tsubasa didn’t know either. All For One was hiding things from his own minions and that was almost worse.

“That’s my thought…” That All For One had leapt on without any prompting or further explanation. All For One knew his Quirks, but… there was something dull in how he approached them. As though there was no interest in it which left Izuku feeling most lost than ever. All For One had said he’d been watching Search for years… but where was his motivation in using his other Quirks? There wasn’t any, not until had Izuku had become involved and had ended up All For One’s personal Quirk sounding board with almost nothing else to do with his time. Then Izuku could only guess how many hours went by, because All For One had an endless catalogue that he was only too happy to share. Not that it wasn’t interesting, but Izuku really needed that radio.

“I see…” It was the gentlest caress and simultaneously more terrifying than any falling building. All For One’s hand lingered on Izuku’s exposed neck. Near the spine where it’d be so easy for the man to turn Izuku’s broken body into a puppet. “It’s not something I’ve experimented with previously. Give me time and I’ll see what I can do for you while you make your attempts in the meanwhile.”

All For One had finished speaking, but his hand lingered and Izuku once more reminded himself that All For One had killed him… and was planning for something even worse for Izuku to still be alive. Not that it seemed to deter All For One from their conversations and that only made Izuku even more suspicious.
Why kill someone, bring them back, discuss Quirks with them… and never ask about their Quirk.

*Unless, Izuku thought with cold dread, he already knows about my Quirk.*

Sensei was animated. More so than the doctor had seen in a long time, not since sometime before the Sports Festival and, prior to that, his injuries.

“Little Izuku raised an interesting possibility with Forced Quirk Activation.” Interesting didn’t begin to cover it. Why was a child with no Quirks of his own so obsessed with them? How did the boy know so much about them? A child with a Quirk that he “developed” well after the accepted time. It was all the doctor could do not to eye Sensei suspiciously.

Sensei was almost on a first name basis with their… guest. Well, it really was first name basis. The doctor had heard the man call the boy by his first name in the long months he’d been in the induced coma. Casually, with familiarity that preceded the death. Sensei knew the boy and the boy knew Sensei… He only knew of one person that could give Quirks, but why to this child who clearly thought that Sensei was hostile towards him? Was it a test of some sort? A mistake? If it was a mistake, why not take the Quirk back?

“I suppose Midoriya did. I can’t fault his logic. If it can activate Quirks without limitation, then presumably it can the rest of the body,” the doctor offered neutrally. “Of course, unless it has its own inbuilt limitations.” There was also the risk of tripping off the boy’s own Quirk which was destructive to say the least, and while Sensei would swan away from it, the boy would not. Not in his current shape. He’d told Sensei that before. Sensei would er on the side of caution with his guest and that was new as well.

“I suppose then we’ll have to experiment to see its viability for his suggestion,” Sensei stated and the doctor knew he was in for the long haul. Some hapless fool could always be obtained to run these tests and they wouldn’t be missed. But it raised other questions…

Prisoners didn’t have their ideas taken as recommendations. Prisoners didn’t have long and fruitful discussions with Sensei about his Quirk and its applications. Prisoners were not personally cared for by Sensei in any capacity. Even Shigaraki didn’t have the level of contact with Sensei in years that Midoriya had in scant months.

Which brought about the most important question - who exactly was Izuku Midoriya? And why did Sensei know about him before even the doctor did?

Chapter End Notes

*Merry Christmas and happy holidays.*
Izuku Midoriya wasn’t normal. There was no conceivable way that the boy was some average bystander who Sensei had conveniently saved. It was too convenient. What were the odds of Sensei saving someone with a scary intuition for Quirk usage? Staring down at the results before him, the doctor could only wonder.

“How was he right?” Sensei murmured, watching the test subject twitch at the end of Sensei’s long black tendrils. Arms, legs, hands, feet, all moved in coordination. A Quirk meant for activating Quirks, now repurposed without a single bit of outside engineering. With enough practice, Sensei could no doubt control multiple puppets from the impromptu threads…but how had Midoriya stumbled across this idea? It wasn’t anything resembling the boy’s own Quirk…

Usually people struggled with using their own Quirks creatively, but this test was only one of many spurred on by Sensei’s discussions with what should have been an otherwise average child. Izuku Midoriya was anything but average as the doctor had come to discover. So much data, so little time to review it, all because of one child.

Sensei clustered his Quirks into categories, but the boy wanted specifics. Every nuance, every function, every setback of every Quirk. No Quirk was the same to Izuku Midoriya. By virtue of genetics, the boy was entirely right to hold such a view. Even a more generic enhancement Quirk was something he could dissect and make into something more with its unique functions. In Midoriya’s world, there was no such thing as a weak Quirk. Not when Sensei had the Quirk he did. The doctor suspected that it was less the boy’s ideas that prompted these experiments, but rather his criticism of Sensei’s existing Quirk usage.

“Izuku has a certain gift with Quirks.” Then Sensei began to tremble. “Can you believe he criticised me for not poisoning All Might to bypass his resistance to blunt force?” Sensei chuckled. “I was too inefficient for his standards.” Inefficiency and Sensei weren’t concepts he’d often contemplated in the same sentence. Having seen the results of Midoriya’s speculations, he was prepared to think otherwise. If Sensei had flaws, the boy was working his way through them, bit by bit. An unsettling thought. “He has limitless ideas on applications and tests for the full capacity of Quirks. Years of experience.” But how? How did Midoriya have so much experience? Being Quirkless, he was the last person who should know anything about Quirks.

If it wasn’t for the ongoing tests that Sensei had been conducting, it would have taken the doctor for
more than a little surprise. “Including yours, it seems, Sensei.” Who in their right mind would lecture Sensei on using Quirks correctly? Izuku Midoriya, apparently, who didn’t care about Sensei’s status or not care enough for it to stop him. Even the doctor struggled to adapt to the… unique Quirk that belonged to Sensei. Limitless possibilities, but also limitless potential for combinations to go wrong, for unintended mutations to occur. How could Izuku Midoriya have any knowledge of it? How could a child, thought Quirkless for years, have knowledge Sensei found valuable?

“Especially mine.” The tendrils tugged and the puppet stood and rose to its feet. “He’s raised many valuable points about my Quirk,” Sensei said softly and the doctor strained to hear his next words. “I’ve been lax in years gone by…”

“I find it strange when he was thought Quirkless for so long,” the doctor thought aloud. “One would think his Quirk would be easily triggered by environmental conditions.” It seemed to be an exceptionally powerful strength Quirk… and not one Sensei had taken either. Easily triggered… supposedly, but not in Midoriya’s case.

Another interesting point was Sensei’s seeming lacking of interest in the Quirk itself. Their spy had reported back to say the Quirk was called “Superpower”, as if that wasn’t an infuriatingly standard name. There were at least another seven Quirks the doctor knew of with the same name and same applications and it hadn’t stopped Sensei’s critical observations and reallocations before. There was a distinct difference in how this was being handled.

While the doctor’s mind whirled, the test subject took a step forwards, slow and deliberate, Sensei no doubt tugging at delicate nerves not usually within the Quirk’s purview. But still, the Quirk held, even with a user who hadn’t been born with it. It was a shame that Midoriya had chosen a different career path…

“Once upon a time, doctor, I would have agreed with you. Now though, I’m not so sure that Izuku was ever in a position to trigger those conditions.” Something dark hovered in Sensei’s tone, his mouth downturned and the doctor closed his own mouth in favour of adding to his notes. Another question floated around the doctor’s skull. Why didn’t Sensei treat “Superpower” like a generic enhancement Quirk? More than anything “Superpower” was bypassed for Midoriya’s other areas of expertise that seemed to relate little to the Quirk.

“I find it difficult to see how he could have avoided it for so long,” the doctor mumbled from the side of his mouth.

“You’d be surprised,” Sensei said, lips quirked upwards. “Now… I believe this Quirk needs a new name…”

The doctor added it to Sensei’s ever growing list. Midoriya would most likely be given the honour of naming it, along with the seventeen other Quirks he’d redefined.

Midoriya who’d been told to give up. Midoriya who died because he refused to give up. Midoriya who was here. There were no answers, not without asking the boy himself.

Those bastards had bagged him, like some scene out of kidnapping movie. Tomura could only see black, black and more black as he was moved. Least it wasn’t white, but moved where? They hadn’t said anything before they hooded him. They’d just shoved it on and he was being wheeled away.

“Where the he-” Tomura started and took a blow to the head.
“Shut up. You aren’t here to speak. If I had my way I’d have left you rotting back in your cell, but management has other plans,” a gruff voice grunted. “So be a good boy and keep your mouth shut, so I don’t have to listen to your fucking voice, right?”

Shit. It was the crazy one. Toga would’ve liked this one. If they were all in here with him, maybe they’d already met the bastard…

“Wher-?” Another blow to the head. Tomura reeled, seeing stars through the blackness of the hood.

“Stop. Fucking. Talking.” An animal. This fucking guy was an animal. An insect. He’d crush this pathetic guard as soon as Sensei came and removed the restraints. “Scum like you don’t get to ask questions.”

This time, Tomura kept his mouth shut. He was being transferred. This guard wasn’t happy about it… So where were they going? Did it have something to do with Tsukauchi?

Bumps. An elevator that Tomura could hear, a ramp, chains close by and finally… an engine roaring to life… footsteps beside him. For a moment, hope sparked. Had Sensei arranged something? Was this part of an escape? Was he finally going to be free?

“Morning, Shigaraki!” A cheerful and painfully familiar voice called and Tomura’s hopes sunk through the floor.

“Tsukauchi,” Tomura hissed. “Where. Am. I?” He was going to turn all of them into dust the moment his hands were free. That guard would be first.

“A prison transport, Shigaraki. You should be familiar with them already.” That voice pissed him off.

“Why?” Tomura snarled, violently shaking his head to remove the hood.

“We’re going to have a friendly chat down at the station. It’s much more comfortable than constantly coming here for interviews,” Tsukauchi continued in an infuriatingly bright voice. “My partner will be formally introduced to you as well.” Yeah, Tsukauchi had mentioned that before, hadn’t he? Some noob was going to be talking to him. Great.

Tomura laughed harshly, the sound bursting from him. “You idiots. Sensei will know, Sensei will come. What will you do then?” Tomura drawled.

“Eh, if you say so,” Tsukauchi said so indifferently that Tomura would have stared at him if he could. “General consensus is that your Sensei is taking a holiday after what All Might did to him,” Tsukauchi blithely carried on. No, it can’t be. “If he’s around, we haven’t seen hide nor hair of him. Maybe he’s fled the country, we don’t know.”

“You’re lying,” Tomura snapped. “As if that weakling All Might could do anything.” Tomura felt part of brain betray him, the memories of Sensei’s bloodied form six years ago, the desperation to save him. The despair… Sensei had never been the same afterwards. No one ever was after injuries like that.

“Keep telling yourself that, if it makes you feel better. On the bright side, if you’re right, we’re not going to have a terrible lot of warning,” Tsukauchi added, his tone of voice unchanging. “It’ll be out of nowhere.”

“Why,” Tomura said slowly, “do you sound so pleased?” This had to be some sort of trick, to lull him into saying something about Sensei. It had to be.
“The change of scenery. I’ve never really liked white. Reminds me of funerals.” Tomura could almost hear the shrug.

“Good for you, Tsukauchi, but I can’t see anything,” he hissed venomously. “Maybe if this hood came off I could see what you’re talking about.”

“I really wish I could help you there, Shigaraki, but one of the conditions for taking you out is following the advice of the warden,” Tsukauchi explained.

“And the warden thinks that me being blinded is going to make a difference?” Tomura spat.

“We don’t make these decisions, we just follow them. We’re just as stuck with them as you are that hood.” Tomura wasn’t going to make the mistake of thinking that Tsukauchi was sympathetic. He was the enemy, they all were, he couldn’t trust any of it. Their filthy lies about Sensei.

Instead of responding, Tomura ground his teeth. Bridge joints, sirens, screeching, a horn… sirens that made Tomura perk up for a split second before they passed him by and he deflated. Tsukauchi’s incessant, droning, humming and the flick of pages that might or might not be a newspaper. For what felt like hours, he listened to every idiotic sound until the truck coasted to a stop.

“Oh good, we’re here. Getting permission was surprisingly difficult, all things considered.” Tomura heard a newspaper flap shut and a sharp metallic pop as Tsukauchi got to his feet. “I mean… you’re not that high up the pecking order.”

“What the hell is that meant to mean?”

“Well, you don’t seem to know your Sensei’s real name, so we figured…” Tsukauchi trailed off.

“What the fuck does that mean?” Shigaraki lunged, thrashing in his restraints, even as he was wheeled down the ramp.

“It means exactly what I said it means. My bosses said that, not me,” Tsukauchi added.

Tomura was going to kill fucking all of them. How dare they.

“In we go!”

Tomura felt the material of the floor change again. On and on until he bumped over another joint and came to a rest.

“Now the hood can come off,” Tsukauchi sighed and with a wrench from him, Tomura could see again.

“The hell…” It was an interview room. A perfectly normal interview room, mirrors and all. Apart from… “Why the hell are there guards here?” Tomura sneered. “Are you that frightened of me?” Losers.

Tsukauchi smiled grimly. “Actually, those weren’t requested by the warden, he’s fairly confident about your restraints holding. My bosses required those for… other reasons.” Tsukauchi grimaced and Tomura found himself staring blankly. Why would they have two armed guards if they weren’t him?

“You people are weirdos.”

“Yeah, we get that a lot,” Tsukauchi sighed, dropping a stack of folders onto the steel table in front
of him with a solid thud. “Now, before we proceed, I need to introduce my colleague.” Tsukauchi knocked on the table three times and the door behind Tomura swung open. Footsteps.

He. Couldn’t. Breathe. There was something, in the air. A Quirk? What… what the hell was it? It was crushing his lungs. Air! He needed air.

“Good morning, Tomura Shigaraki,” a cool voice greeted him. “I’m Detective Yagi, Detective Tsukauchi’s partner or buddy.” Sharp contempt clung to the word “buddy”, as if it did something personal to offend him. Then he stepped into view. A seven foot tall emaciated corpse was staring down at him, darkened eyes narrowed, an angular face set with a straight mouth.

“Wha-wh-,” Tomura gasped for air. The air… was solid… where had it gone?

“Problem, Shigaraki? It’s polite to formally introduce yourself back, or did your Sensei struggle with basic socialisation? Nevermind, I think we already know the answer to that one,” Yagi might have said under his breath… if it wasn’t for his complete lack of attempt to hide the indifference dripping from his voice or to lower the volume.

“I-I-can’t…. breathe,” he wheezed to both of them.

“That’s unfortunate, but neither are people who died at Kamino,” Yagi said shortly, dropping into the camping chair next to Tomura. “Now, shall we begin?” The guards behind Yagi advanced to stand on either side of him.

There might have been a wince from Tsukauchi, and a slight, helpless shrug. Tomura was on his own, unable to breathe with… whatever the fuck this thing was.

“Deep breaths help, Shigaraki, deep breaths,” the skeleton intoned. “It wouldn’t do for our record if you dropped dead on the floor without a reason.” Without a reason seemed to carry an additional layer of menace that hitched Tomura’s breathing back into life.

“Stop using your Quirk on me. You pigs aren’t allowed to do that,” Tomura hissed. “You can’t do anything.”

The skeleton sighed theatrically. “I regret to inform you, Shigaraki, that your weak constitution is not a result of my Quirk.” Yagi grinned, teeth bared. The rest of his face hadn’t moved. “My Quirk is more… distinct. More finely tuned for people such as yourself, shall we say.” What… what did that mean? What the hell was this guy saying? Was he some sort of torturer?

Tomura swallowed heavily. “What the fuck is your problem?” Tsukauchi… Tsukauchi was nothing like this, none of the fucking guards had shit on this guy.

“I don’t have a problem, Shigaraki. It’s just work. We’re here to help after all.” All of the blood drained from Tomura’s face, he could feel it. Work? Who the hell called this “just work”?

“Yeah, Shigaraki, we don’t want to be pushy, but we do have a job to do,” Tsukauchi’s mild voice was almost swallowed by the density of the air. “It’s nothing personal.”

It didn’t feel impersonal. It felt like the skeleton hovering inches from his face was going to take a bite out of it at any given moment. It felt like he was waiting for a reason to do it, the weight on Tomura’s lungs never lifting.

“We need some help understanding what you’ve been doing,” Tsukauchi said lightly. “Can you help me understand what exactly prompted your appearance at the Unforseen Simulation Joint at UA, or the “USJ” as it’s often abbreviated to?” Tsukauchi’s face was almost welcoming, then Tomura
made the mistake of looking to his right and was greeted with Yagi a mere two centimetres from his face and almost yelped. “We definitely know that you were there, can you tell us why?”

“Ha! Don’t you already know why?” He snarled. “Are you really that stup-?” And his voice abruptly cut out as though he’d been noosed.

“There’s no need to be rude, Shigaraki. As I said, we’re here to help.” Yagi’s icy blue eyes gleamed in the shadows of his face.

It didn’t feel like help. It felt like phantom hands were wrapped around his throat. He couldn’t breathe. Was this what Sensei felt like?

“If you use your manners, Shigaraki, we’ll be on our best behaviour… Won’t we, Detective Tsukauchi?” A neutral voice… that Tomura didn’t trust for a second. Not when the air itself was trying to smother him.

“Of course,” Tsukauchi nodded. Tomura spotted a folded up newspaper next to him, a cheerful baseball team on the almost invisible edge.

Swallowing thickly, Tomura couldn’t shake the ghostly hands placed around his throat.

“Now,” Yagi repeated, “what prompted your appearance at the USJ? What was your reason for being there?” His voice might have been calm, but the crushing hands… weren’t fading. Yagi smiled from between the guards and Tomura trembled.

This… this wasn’t like dealing with All Might. This Yagi was a freak, a freak looking for a reason. Sensei, help!

“Bakugou… where are we?” Neito frowned at the blond, next time he ask before they left. There was a decrepit apartment building looming over them and a small huddle of drenched people off to the side beneath a balcony’s overhang. Cameras and microphones hanging from them gave Neito a far idea of who they were if not why there were here specifically. Nor why they were soaking wet.

“Deku’s mother lives here,” Bakugou grunted. Well, that explained why the media were here.

“And… we’re here to… do what exactly?” Neito asked cautiously. Ida’s explanation only made him even more wary of Bakugou. The other teenager was never stable to begin with, but Midoriya’s death had only pushed him further over the edge. He’d almost attacked a bystander who mentioned Midoriya’s name on the way over. Neito had dragged him away with prejudice, narrowly avoiding burns and his eardrums being ruptured.

“We’re checking up on her, you idiot. The fucking police never told her what happened to Deku,” Bakugou grimaced, spittle flying as he spoke and Neito winced.

“She doesn’t know,” Neito repeated with dawning realisation. Oh! So Midoriya’s mother wasn’t part of the coverup. That was exceptionally cruel to mislead the woman into thinking there was a chance that her son was going to be coming back. What were the police thinking? People sued for less.

“Fucking no and no other bastard, including the police, have been to see her yet since they gave her the news that he was missing,” Bakugou growled. “Deku didn’t have much in the way of family or family friends. His dad was some absentee Father of the Year asshole and I never heard about or saw any other relatives when we were younger. She doesn’t have anyone and she was never close to my
“Hag. No fucking surprises there as to why.” If Bakugou’s parents were anything like Bakugou, Neito didn’t blame Midoriya’s mother for not wanting to be involved. “I’m not expecting his prick of a father to be at the funeral either.” Harsh, but it explained a lot.

“Are we going to… tell her what happened?” Neito cautiously broached. That wasn’t going to end well for anyone.

“Not yet. Know a guy who’s working on getting the formal shit sorted so no one thinks she’s crazy for organising the funeral,” Bakugou grunted. “Can’t even do that yet, fucking police. Got all the shit ready to go and everyone will think she’s a nut for trying to bury him now. Shit investigations.”

What was there to say about that? Of course, after what Ida said about Stain, it wasn’t a surprise that they’d shift the blame elsewhere, hoping that no one would notice their mistakes. They were going to charge children for saving Native’s life and the life of a fellow student and countless other would be victims of Stain. The police caring about a single Heroics student, a dime a dozen category, would have been unusual. Instead they lied to protect UA’s reputation and their own. Couldn’t mar Bakugou’s triumphant rescue with the death of one of the rescuers after all. Perhaps that was the reason for Bakugou’s rage…

Once the boss of the villains had appeared, where was the cordon to prevent his destruction from reaching people like Midoriya? What was Endeavor doing instead of evacuating people from the area? The other villains had already been dealt with by the time Endeavor had arrived and the casualty toll had to have been made worse by the lack of action by so many heroes. Half the school had seen Todoroki’s confrontation with his father. He wasn’t the only one asking that question. Not when other people started hearing about missing and presumed dead family members. Midoriya was “missing” when everyone else had the benefit of closure.

Todoroki definitely wasn’t high on the list of forgiving any of the people involved. Not with the choice words he said to father. Todoroki had refused to go home or go anywhere near the man at all, which explained what Endeavor was doing on campus. Bakugou didn’t seem to have any idea where Todoroki was living either. “I don’t blame him. His dad’s a bottomless bag of dicks, but fucked if I know where he went,” Bakugou had… fumed. Well, it was only natural Todoroki’s classmates would more of an insight on that particular dynamic.

“We’re here,” Bakugou grunted and he knocked firmly on the door. Footsteps approached and the door opened.

Neito did a double take. “What the fuck are you doing here, Icy?” Todoroki blinked back at them with only a mild expression of surprise. One that seemed stuck on Neito more than Bakugou.

“Avoiding the old man. You?”

“Checking up on Deku’s mother, since everyone’s been a fucking asshole. I don’t think those useless fucks have so much as sent cards in.” That must be the parents, because after the… incident, 1-A and 1-B students had sent in cards.

“I offered to come along… just because,” Neito added and felt Todoroki stare. Todoroki was perhaps questioning Neito’s living status while in the presence of Bakugou.

“No one else was available. Glasses sent him to apologise.” An understatement of the screaming match that had occurred, but Bakugou wasn’t exactly in a position to be refusing help.

“Right… Well, I guess you guys can come in. Had to scare off some paparazzi earlier. They wanted an interview,” Todoroki opened the door further to let them in.
Neito stepped in after Bakugou and swallowed. “Todoroki… I take it that Mrs Midoriya isn’t taking it well?” The apartment was an unmitigated disaster. Furniture awry, unpacked groceries, clothing left lying about. Neito cringed just looking at it.

“No. I don’t think so.” Toneless as ever, Todoroki pointed towards a clean corner where he’d started to neatly arrange things. “She’s asleep at the moment. Do you want to help?”

Bakugou cracked his knuckles. “Yeah, don’t wake her up. I don't think she’d have been sleeping well with the fucking media camped at her house. I sure as fuck wasn’t.” Neito had forgotten about that, but it was entirely likely that Bakugou was dealing with the same scum outside of his house that Mrs Midoriya was.

“I’ll start over here,” Neito offered, pointing towards a particularly egregiously high pile of clothing that seemed to have been dropped and not picked up. Meanwhile, Bakugou had wandered off to grab something else from a cupboard.

“Hmm, wondering if I should cook lunch for her,” Todoroki inclined his head. “She’ll wake up soon.”

“Can you even cook?” Bakugou growled, aggressively sweeping something into a dustpan. “The last thing she needs is some idiot burning her apartment down.” In addition to her son dying, Neito silently added.


“I… can go shopping. I somehow don’t think she would have stocked the house if this is the current state of it.” Neito waved a hand at the general disarray. He strongly doubted that anything had been stocked. Was she even feeding herself?

Todoroki stuck out a hand and Neito blinked at him. “You can copy Quirks right? When you go, can you replace the ice blocks above that mob of journalists outside? Just ease it in under the bottom of the balcony.”

Neito smirked, thinking back to the soaked huddle downstairs. “Of course, Todoroki.” He could do that.

“Right side for ice, left for fire,” Todoroki explained after Neito leaned forwards to tap his hand. “Avoid the left, because you’ll set your clothing on fire.” Neito nodded in response, taken aback at the non-existent hesitation. “I’ve already got a list; I was going to ask Mrs Midoriya if she could pay for it, but then we'd have to wake her up. How are we paying for this?”

“I’ll cover it.” Bakugou grunted. “Everyone put in some money towards it from class. Ponytail put in a small fortune for anything Deku’s mother needs and Kirishima took the money I gave him for the night vision and put it straight back into the pool. Plenty for groceries.”

How organised. Maybe Bakugou was less of a savage than Neito had first thought if 1-A trusted him with the fund for caring for Mrs Midoriya. Maybe his instability was selective.

“Alright, pass it over.”

Neito left with a bundle of yen, a list, a large block of ice which he carefully installed to the underside of balcony and a spring in his step.

He ignored the subsequent crash and shrieks of the people behind him. The blunt icicles tapered with a weak upper connection to the main block were a personal touch.
Izuku couldn’t shrug off his nervous twitch. His arms moved nearly normally, but came with crushing fatigue and a sense of weight. He’d almost fallen from the bed in his attempts to reach the bedside table, only for All For One to casually lift and tuck him back in. The price of having the rails down, it seemed.

“If you need help finding it, I can show you where it is,” All For One offered. An extremely kindly offer coming from the man in question. Why was he being so helpful? Izuku felt his face twist and made an attempt to shove down the emotion that was bordering somewhere between confusion and terror.

“I don’t get you,” Izuku instead sighed.

“I’m sorry if I didn’t live up to your expectations of torture and general misery,” All For One responded with the lightest touch of sarcasm. “Though recoveries like yours are their own form of torture, and not a discriminating one either.” There was an almost disgruntlement in how that was worded that set off Izuku’s twitch again.

“But why? Why wait for a recovery at all?” Izuku prodded.

“Why not?” All For One smoothly answered. Evasive as ever.

“You didn’t help anyone else you buried,” Izuku pointed out. Izuku had no idea if that was really true or not, but he could take an educated guess. If Shigaraki was in a cell somewhere, he doubted All For One had so much as stopped to glance at anyone else.

“I didn’t feel like it.” That was typical.

Izuku took a deep breath. “You know, for how much time you’ve spent telling me about your Quirks… you’ve never once asked me about mine.”

Silence. Only the sound of All For One’s soft breaths. “I already have an idea of your Quirk, little Izuku.”

“All For One sighed. “Because I already have a suspicion as to the answer, little Izuku, and it’s not one that I wanted confirmed. Even though your stay here has just about guaranteed its confirmation. As did All Might’s disappearance from the public eye,” All For One added as an almost afterthought.

It didn’t stop Izuku’s breath from catching in his throat and not his lungs. All Might’s missing? What happened? But that was something he could hopefully discover with the radio. “Why not?”
“My brother’s Quirk was never meant shatter a fragile child’s bone with a finger flick,” All For One bluntly stated and Izuku winced feeling his rapid breaths reach a crescendo. He knew. How long has he known? “When I gave it to him, it was a crutch. Something to help him cope with his illness.”

Izuku doubted that. The Noumu proved that All For One was willing to give people Quirks for other reasons. “Imagine my surprise when Tomura told me about a child with All Might’s speed who interfered with his operations.”

Izuku’s fingers locked on one hand, the other was pinned by All For One’s own clawed fingers. “But… why would that surprise you?” Izuku could hear the rattle in his own voice. One For All was in its ninth incarnation. Tenth if he counted All For One himself. It being passed on shouldn’t have come as a shock.

“It being passed on was no great surprise, but All Might’s choice of victim most certainly was,” All For One said so bitterly that Izuku was thrown for a loop.

“Victim? I’m not-,” Izuku attempted to interject but was cut off with a gentle squeeze of his hand. Why would Izuku as the candidate even surprise him? Izuku was a Quirkless nobody. Was that why he was surprised?

“Izuku, you will never have natural use of your hands again because of that Quirk,” All For One deployed with the tact of a large nuclear bomb. The use of Izuku’s first name was every bit as creepy as Izuku’s first realisation of it being used. “You will go for the rest of your life with chronic pain, because All Might knowingly gave you a Quirk that’s not suited to you in any capacity. How many bones have you shattered? Did he even teach you how to use it properly before its consequences were thrust upon you? Did he tell you about its history? Did he tell you about me?” All For One pushed and Izuku leaned away from him only to be lightly tugged back. “These are questions that he should be answering, not you. You’re not responsible for his inability to make an informed decision,” All For One edged out. It was wrong to hear it worded like that.

“But I can answer them,” Izuku started, feeling All For One’s grip tighten, then closed his mouth. Easily, if All For One wanted answers. The reasoning should have been obvious. Except All For One wasn’t accepting that for an answer.

“That doesn’t mean that you should be answering them,” All For One almost hissed. “This never should have been your problem.” One For All… a problem? Izuku was thankful that his blindfold hid his bemused blink. One For All was going to be passed on whether All For One liked it or not. It wasn’t Izuku’s problem.

“Problem?” Izuku repeated, against his better thoughts, feeling a swell of irritation. “I don’t think having it made much difference when you killed me.”

And All For One froze in his tracks. “I suppose not… but it doesn’t excuse All Might’s behaviour.” What behaviour? What was it that All For One was so offended by? All For One wasn’t even trying to defend himself this time, either. For someone who snipped at All Might’s every breath of air, it was unsettling for All For One not to pounce on the opportunity.

“I don’t think you’d ever excuse him anyway,” Izuku sighed. “What did he even do to you?” And that was a question Izuku wanted answered more than even knowing why he’d been saved. He could have a rough guess as to why he’d been “saved”, but All For One’s overflowing contempt went beyond other villains. It was infinitely more personal, in every biting word, every cutting remark. All Might had done… something to All For One. Something more than just receiving a Quirk. Something that struck at All For One on a personal level.

“What didn’t he do? He took almost everything from me.” Izuku lingered on the almost. It wasn’t a
Izuku shook his head. “You’re over a hundred years old, aren’t you? Don’t you have time to just… rebuild?” The League of Villains had been alive and well until All For One had abandoned them and All Might might have lost their rematch if All For One hadn’t withdrawn when he did. What did All For One even have to lose? His brother was long dead. One For All was spoken with the same intonation as a particularly profane curse word. Izuku was desperately needing *whys* in all aspects of the old man beside him.

“When you reach my age, you will quickly discover that not everything can be saved or rebuilt,” All For One uttered so menacingly that Izuku leant away. “It’s never the same again, not that All Might ever had any respect for that. Someone in his position never would.”

Izuku inhaled slowly. The only permanent thing that came to mind was… death. Had-had All Might killed someone that All For One was close to? If he had, there was nothing in the media about it. All Might would never be able to hide something like that and Izuku couldn’t see him doing it. All Might would never.

He could ask All For One, but was it even safe? So far All For One’s ire hadn’t obviously been directed at Izuku, but that could always change. Izuku already had an association with All Might and One For All… Instead, Izuku kept his mouth shut while the man beside him fumed.

“I’ll never get it back,” All For One lamented. *Get what back?* Was the unasked question.

“But…” Izuku struggled to word his question.

“Why are you here when I’d happily drop All Might’s corpse into a shallow ditch?” All For One asked wryly. “You aren’t All Might,” All For One stated. “You never will be All Might.” Izuku trembled. All For One seemed relieved by his own statement.

“That doesn’t mean anything to me,” Izuku confessed. He wasn’t trying to be All Might. Not anymore.

“You’ll understand when you’re older.” Izuku would have groaned in exasperation if it wasn’t for the closeness of the fiend to him. Best not to risk it.

“How did you even find me?” Izuku instead asked. All For One wasn’t anywhere near the building that had fallen. Then again, he seemed to be able to track All Might, probably… with… *Search…* Izuku could feel the bile inching up his throat. *Search needed sight…* Was it enough just to see an image of someone or did they have to see the person directly? Ragdoll wasn’t very specific on that part of her Quirk. If it was the latter… *when* had All For One seen Izuku in person? When they escaped Kamino? All For One definitely would’ve seen him then.

All For One’s silence dragged on, before - “I think you already know the answer to that, don’t you Izuku? You’re an intelligent child.”

“Search,” Izuku said dumbly.

“I felt every single one of your broken bones mend after Muscular’s actions,” All For One said softly and it was then Izuku realised that All For One was much much closer than he had any right to be. An arm wrapped around Izuku’s shoulders and he froze. All For One had seen Izuku before Kamino… The Sports Festival maybe? “I don’t know how you destroyed finger after finger against Todoroki. Why didn’t the pain stop you? Pain is there for that reason.” By this point, Izuku was completely encircled. He couldn’t breathe. “But you ignored it repeatedly.” Too close. Far too close.
“It’s fine,” Izuku automatically said, but it was the wrong answer. The grip tightened.

“It. Is. Not. Fine.” If indignation were a tangible force, Izuku would have been crushed. “It is not acceptable for you to maim yourself for a school sporting event.”

“It-it wasn’t that bad,” Izuku shook his head violently. He could still use his hands after the fact… And who was All For One to be lecturing him on injuries? That was… over the top, coming from the guy who killed him and unceremoniously dragged him back from the dead.

“No one else felt the need to throw themselves on landmines,” was the tart reply.

“Most people don’t feel the need to mass murder civilians either,” Izuku shot back, feeling All For One reel him in. I’m going to die, Izuku thought with a surreal sense of relief. It hadn’t taken as long as he thought it would.

“They aren’t me.” Not an encouraging response and it was then Izuku felt the fingers resting on his neck.

“… Who did you test it on?” Izuku inhaled shakily. Oh god, he actually did it. One of the Noumu? How many people had All For One already kidnapped or maimed? Who had suffered for this to be used on Izuku.

“No one you or greater society would care about,” All For One shrugged. “Forced Quirk Activation is going to need a new name…” He paused for a moment. “Also, this is going to sting.”

Izuku barely had time to brace himself before he felt every single nerve seize and a sharp pain at the back of his neck. There was a flex, as if mapping what as available and then the feeling shifted down from his neck to the rest of him.

“You were entirely right, you know. Quirks are the simplest thing for this particular Quirk to interface with, but that doesn’t rule out other avenues of application. It’s merely more difficult,” All For One explained and Izuku felt his hand move without his consent. “For instance, I have to target away from the Quirk, against this one’s better instincts. It’s surprisingly difficult.”

“This is a distraction,” Izuku spoke through gritted teeth around the Quirk. All For One didn’t want to answer the questions, but at least Forced Quirk Activation’s new use didn’t remove all control then… He could still speak.

Then, Izuku’s leg twitched and the rest of him moved to push himself into a sitting position against All For One’s grip and Izuku’s mind went blank.

It worked. All For One had really tested it.

“Yes it working?” Entirely too smug for his own good.

Feeling the tentacles retract, Izuku didn’t dignify it with a response, reaching a blind arm towards the bedside table.

Chapter End Notes

Merry Christmas and happy holidays!
Awake

Chapter Summary

If your eyes are open, are you awake?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The date repeated itself endlessly in Izuku’s head. *It can’t be.* The host’s voice cheerfully called the date and time with no regard to Izuku’s situation. Izuku didn’t recognise the voice, they weren’t a hero that Izuku knew or heard of prior to being here. An intern maybe? Someone who would never understand, would never have the knowledge of what he’d just done. Still, the announcer went on, now a hum.

“Six months? I’ve been here for *six months*?” Izuku croaked to All For One. All For One who had yet to let go. If anything, his grip was even firmer than before.

Six months of school gone. His grades would never recover even if he did escape. He’d be held back a year and shoved into a class filled with unfamiliar faces. Faces that hadn’t experienced what he had with 1-A. Faces that wouldn’t be Ida, Uraraka, Kirishima, Tsu or Mineta or Kaminari or Kacchan or anyone else. Would they still even speak to him if he came back? Izuku didn’t know, he couldn’t know. What were they thinking? What would they think?

Six months of everyone assuming he was dead. His mother, burying… burying something, not him. There was nothing to bury. Would there be a service? Would anyone even be there? His mum and All Might would have to be there, but would 1-A attend? 1-A who hadn’t come to help Kacchan… Would Kacchan be there? It seemed more likely than Izuku’s father making an appearance. His father who never called, never seemed to care. His father who didn’t exist beyond a salary.

Six months where All For One could have made another attempt at All Might. Six months where All For One couldn’t have spent the whole time bedside. Scheming, planning, awaiting the right moment to make his next move. The next opportunity to strike.

Or… that would have been Izuku’s assumption, but All For One wasn’t brimming with confidence and swagger. Quiet, sometimes amused, reserved, overly helpful and, at times, snide, but never really at Izuku… All For One was nothing like his display at Kamino. Unreadable for Izuku and he didn’t seem particularly likely to gloat evilly about his plans to come. Not to Izuku at any rate.

Six months in the care of All For One and Tsubasa. Six months of… Izuku really didn’t want to think about what they did to save him from crush injuries. Medical care from the creators of the Noumu had been enough to make him gag. Thinking about it any further at the moment wasn’t going to help the ball twisting in his chest.

Six months of his life gone… What happened in those six months? There was no way of knowing, no way of going back. It was gone. Just like Izuku. So much time was lost, was never coming back. Did it even matter if he escaped at this point? Did it matter if he was found? Six months was more than long enough for people to move on and get over it. For the world to keep spinning, with him not on it.
A long delay then… “It’s closer to seven, really.” Izuku felt the wince through the arms wrapped around him. “You waking up was miraculous and most of my time has been spent ensuring that you did wakeup.”

Izuku watched the radio shake in his hand. Izuku set it down. “Why… what possessed you to wait that long?”

“It’s not that long for me, Izuku,” and Izuku could hear the smirk in All For One’s voice.

“Right, you’re older than most people’s great great great great grandparents,” Izuku faintly exhaled. “Seven months is nothing to you.” What was seven months to centuries of scheming? All For One wasn’t making any great sacrifices here with his lifespan being so long.

“Are you calling me an old man?” Indignant or amused? Izuku couldn’t tell.

“Would you prefer elderly citizen?” Izuku queried weakly, feeling his stomach heave. He survived seven months in a coma and was going to die because he called All For One old. Kacchan would have found it funny. Izuku strangled down a sob.

“No,” All For One slowly whispered, almost as if it was to himself. “Old man is fine.” Another involuntary shudder ran through Izuku, courtesy of his captor.

Izuku bit down a hysterical laugh. Guess Kacchan was out of luck.

Seven months. All For One had been loitering around him for seven months. Seven months of doing what? “Seven months still feels like a long time though for you to be sitting around, doing nothing,” Izuku aimed into the dark beyond. He wasn’t entirely sure he wanted the answer to that question. He wasn’t sure he wanted the answer to any of his questions, because when the person answering was All For One, you were guaranteed some sort of misfortune.

“Your care required far more attention than nothing. So much has gone into keeping you alive and coherent. The time went by quickly and…” All For One paused awkwardly, “I was willing to wait substantially longer.”

“You not telling me why is making this worse.” Not that All For One cared if he was making it worse. If he did, he would have put Izuku out of his misery the first time he asked.

“Breathe slowly and deeply. Panicking isn’t going to help, even if it is the natural response to stress. My goal isn’t to cause you harm,” All For One was coaxing, as if Izuku was a particularly problematic lion that’d fallen from the sky.

“I don’t have any proof of that.” There was absolutely nothing to say that All For One wasn’t planning an event that was bad news for everyone. Just because Izuku hadn’t seen it yet didn’t mean that it wasn’t there lurking in the background.

Why did his chest hurt? It was so tight, like his ribs were flexing inwards.

“I would love to tell you, but the consequences of your new found knowledge may be… undesired,” All For One enunciated clearly. “I do have a reputation of profound villainy to keep afloat, after all and excessive detailing of plans fits neatly into that niche.” All For One paused theatrically and Izuku felt him extend an arm that had to be for showmanship. “But this isn’t one of those times, for reasons with little to do with overt villainy.” His voice dropped to something far more mundane and his arm dropped. Mundane enough for Izuku to spin his head to blindly stare at him.

“How do you do that?” It was like All For One had slipped on a mask and for a moment been
someone else. Someone who sounded far too normal to be the resident supervillain. Someone who could have lived next door to Izuku happily for years without Izuku ever knowing his name or day job. Perfectly ordinary and forgettable. Ordinary enough to explain why All For One had managed to get away with his actions for so many years.

“Decades of practice. Society happily created a set of expectations for what they feel to be threatening.” The centuries old fiend shrugged and Izuku shrugged with him. “I simply play to it.” Why was All For One playing to expectations? Shouldn’t he be the baseline for for villainy? There was a standard and All For One didn’t meet it now that Izuku thought about it. While his actions certainly screamed villain, his presentation didn’t match up with the modern view of a villain. Then again, All For One wasn’t exactly modern himself. He was original stock.

Izuku nodded, then frowned at the drone of the radio. Why wasn’t All Might being mentioned? This station normally did a round up and it had uneventfully bypassed it. “I’m stuck with guessing.”

“It’s not that bad. The fun parts is figuring out how things work,” All For One patted Izuku’s shoulder. “I have something for you as well,” All For One added and Izuku found himself lifted and deposited back into a sitting position on the bed. All For One footsteps echoed away, then back again. “Here, hold out your hands.” With unsteady hands, Izuku groped at the offered object with no small amount suspicion. Hard edges, a hinge… heavy, very heavy.


“Open it,” All For One encouraged and All For One’s hands curled around Izuku’s own, guiding him to opening the cover. Resisting a violent twitch, Izuku felt the first page. Smooth, some sort of raised print? He flipped the page and felt folds. Another page. A set photo? The pages alternated between foldouts, prints and, from the glossy feel, photos.

“What is this? I can’t…” Izuku pointed at his head.

“It’s for when you can see again. It’s a scrapbook of all of the details and photos I could find on your associates and your family,” All For One murmured. “News articles, posts from fan sites, social media, some of the more credible rumours and anything else I could find… A snapshot of the last seven months.”

Izuku’s heart throbbed painfully. This is what All For One meant by being occupied? Izuku opened his mouth and no words would come out. Hands smoothing across thick edges, thin edges, slips of paper, the gloss of photo paper. It could be an elaborate hoax, but if Izuku ever regained his vision it’d be immediately exposed. So why? Why?

“It’s a more substantial apology for the time I’ve stolen from you.” All For One had already apologised. At least once a day, and if not that, it was more. Not that Izuku had accepted it.

“You… you’ve been stalking my friends!” Izuku narrowly avoided shouting at him. How did All For One even know… Then it clicked. The Sports Festival.

“If it makes you feel any better, I was stalking them before you died. Interesting Quirks and interesting people. Bakugou’s apparently moved in with your mother and the youngest Todoroki is considered missing despite making it to school everyday.” Kacchan… living with my mother and Todoroki ran away from home? Izuku shook his head. Oh no he doesn’t.

“No! Just…” Izuku almost dropped the book in frustration. “Stop derailing! Why were you stalking them beforehand?”
“Tomura was curious, so we had to look into your class before Bakugou was abducted.” If words could shrug, Izuku just heard it happen. It didn’t sound entirely honest. Classes 1-A and 1-B could be identified from the Sports Festival, but Izuku’s mother? No, that was deeper digging.

“Okay,” Izuku breathed deeply, “is there any particular reason you’re stalking mum?” There was anxiety, then there was whatever Izuku was feeling that anxiety was patting sympathetically on the back.

“I neither confirm nor deny any allegations of stalking your mother.” He was enjoying this, Izuku could hear the glee. “But Bakugou’s leaving of his own home was quite… explosive, and so was his new place of residence.”

Kacchan leaving home made the news. News, if it was within the last seven months, should be in book Izuku had just been given. That meant whatever made Todoroki go missing must have been in the news as well, but was he really missing if he was at school everyday? Sounded more like he’d run away from home. Was that because of Izuku?

“You want me to read the book, don’t you?” Izuku sighed, still hearing no mentions of All Might on the radio.

“Yes.” Simple, to the point and mundane.

A book with seven months of life that wasn’t his in it. Izuku couldn’t smother his tears. Naturally, All For One still did it for him.

Eijiro wasn’t entirely sure what he was witnessing wasn’t a weird dream. If Kamino was a vivid nightmare, then the time after it was an ongoing, frantic struggle to wake up. Midoriya being… gone, Bakugou not being himself and just… everything. Everything was wrong.

What he’d just heard Bakugou say only magnified the feeling.

“There’s a Quirk stealing, multiple century old individual running around, preying on our country and he was the individual at Kamino who killed Midoriya?” Monoma asked slowly, reflexively stirring his drink.

Eijiro was glad Monoma had repeated it, because Bakugou sounded like he was on the verge of some sort of psychotic episode when he first told them about Kamino’s villain. Almost as bad as when they had to pull him back from digging through the rubble. Frenzied, unreasonable and entirely understandable. That didn’t make it any less concerning. Bakugou was different now. Everyone thought Bakugou was a tough dude. Key word there being thought. Maybe before Bakugou was the most amped up, manly guy in 1-A, but now there were cracks around the edges. Bakugou’s angry, irritable face wasn’t twisted in a scowl. It was set downwards, like he was about to start crying at any moment. Eijiro hadn’t seen him smile properly since before the building fell. They were all hollow. Empty and despondent.

“Yes,” Bakugou grunted over hot coffee.

“This Quirk stealing fiend is called All For One and is All Might’s archnemisis because…?” Monoma trailed off.

And All Might had an archnemisis… that no one had ever heard of before because he was such bad news. Almost like the guy had been erased from mention.
“I don’t fucking know. All Might injured him ages ago and All Might thought he might have died, but fucked if I know what caused it. Being a bastard and All Might punched his shit in is what I’d guess.” Even Bakugou of all people somehow seemed muted. As if the entire situation wasn’t real, as if the restaurant around them was just some mental space and not filled with staff and other patrons.

Other people, happy, laughing, sitting out there in the open. Why were they even in this corner?

“Then why do you think this All For One stole Midoriya’s body?” Monoma was trying. Eijiro had no doubt about that, but he’d seen Monoma’s mind melt the moment Bakugou explained that All For One could outright steal Quirks and regift them to other people. “All For One can take practically any Quirk. Why would he need to steal a corpse when he can stack strength Quirks? He…” Eijiro watched Monoma’s face crumple. “It makes no sense.”

Bakugou’s face set in a deep, angular frown. “All For One made Deku’s fucking Quirk in the first place. All Might thinks he wants it back.”

“I’m sorry, dude, what?” Eijiro felt erupt with no control. That couldn’t be real. There was no way. There was no way Midoriya would ever associate with League of Villains scumbags. Midoriya was nothing like that. Nothing.

“All For One is responsible for Deku’s Quirk. He was Quirkless for his whole life, then just shows up at the fucking entrance exam with a Quirk and somehow passes it. Broke most of his bones doing it.” Bakugou never looked up once, all Eijiro could see was a shadow being cast over his face. “We don’t think he ever personally dealt with the bastard before this happened, but that Quirk definitely originated from him. I don’t know when he got it, but it’s not like he could use it in public.”

Monoma recovered first. “That… explains a lot.” It really did, in the most sick way imaginable. “All For One can stack Quirks, right? Why does he want it back?”

“All Might doesn’t have a fucking clue and I don’t either. Quirk used to belong to All For One’s brother, maybe he’s fucking sentimental? I don’t know.” Bakugou slammed his mug down after a long drink. “That’s where we come in.”

“Bakugou, I know you want to help find him, but this seems like…” Eijiro fished for a word. “Like overkill.” Midoriya was dead. He wasn’t coming back. Eijiro wanted to help as much as the next person, but here, here he just couldn’t see the point.

“You don’t fucking get it. All For One can only take Quirks from living people,” Bakugou growled. Eijiro blinked and felt a spark. “Bunch of people went missing recently. Guess their fucking Quirks. Pain numbing, paralysis, electrical currents and suspended animation. There weren’t any missing person’s reports with those sorts of Quirks before Deku got taken. If All For One wasn’t using them before, why the fuck would he need them now? The only thing that’s changed is him taking Deku.”

Eijiro swallowed deeply, feeling his milkshake bubbling away uncomfortably. Midoriya might be alive? What were the odds? Was he still Midoriya? Eijiro was willing to risk it. He’d done the same for Bakugou, he’d do it again for Midoriya. But this time, this time they’d have to be more careful.

“How long does it take for him to steal a Quirk? Even if Midoriya survived, there’s no guarantee that he’s still alive.” Monoma sounded too reasonable, too detached. Midoriya might be alive!

“Because, Egghead, Deku’s Quirk was something special. It can’t be taken without permission and I don’t see Deku giving up his Quirk to that asshole in his lifetime.” Bakugou folded his arms. “No fucking way would he give it up.”
“You’re not getting it.” Monoma glanced at Eijiro. “He’s not getting it. You understand what I’m saying, right?” More tactful than he would have put it before Kamino. Monoma attempting to be nice… why did people only do this after someone had died? When it was too late? When the person who needed it most was never coming back?

Eijiro was pretty sure he knew where Monoma was headed. Did Eijiro understand that Midoriya might already be floating in a tank along with other people that All For One had left vegetables? That’s what Monoma was really asking. It hadn’t stopped Eijiro from going after Bakugou and nothing was different now. All they would be doing is trying to fill in the gaps and All Might would do the rest. They were just researching.

“I get it man, don’t worry.” But there was so much to worry about, like All For One catching wind of their investigation. The League of Villains couldn’t be all he had if he was an old guy. There had to be more. “If there’s a chance Midoriya’s alive, then we should look into it.” Or risk never finding him at all, dead or alive. No body to bury, nothing for his parents. It was unmanly to even think about. Midoriya had already done the same for them.

“But how are we going to look into it?” Monoma’s hands were flat on the table.

“With you, genius,” Bakugou gestured at Monoma. “We’re gonna find people with Quirks similar to what All For One took and we’re gonna do some testing with Recovery Girl.”

“That’s illegal,” Monoma bluntly stated.

“No it’s fucking not, Recovery Girl’s doing some fucking research paper on pain management and all of the ways Quirks could help in recovery. Got a bunch of cancer patients and people from the chronic pain clinic at the local hospital as volunteers.” Bakugou reached into his duffel and flopped a stack of glossy pamphlets onto the table. “She’s been advertising for people with all sorts of Quirks to come forward to help with the study. All Might told me about it.” Weird, why was All Might talking about medical studies for pain management? Eh, wasn’t important. Probably for some charity event.

Eijiro held up one of the copies and felt his eyes hone in on one specific section. One shining section that stood out on the droll piece of paper.

“But what has that go to do with us? We aren’t licenced yet and even with Provisional Licencing we wouldn’t be allowed to without supervision.” Monoma was glaring over the pamphlet instead of reading it. He really should have read it first.

Monoma wasn’t out of the ordinary in going out of his way to dodge the Quirk laws… Eijiro hadn’t forgotten 1-A’s response to his plan for Kamino. Something villains would do, eh? Eijiro wasn’t sure if he wanted to be a pro hero if they were just meant to leave people to die because of a piece of paper. Better to man up and do something than just stand back and let people die, be injured… or be crushed trying to help others. Eijiro wasn’t going to stand back and watch, he’d be on the cutting edge.

“Read the pamphlet, moron. She wants students to help out as well. It’s an after school internship opportunity. Teach us all about handling ailing people on the field.” Bakugou wasn’t smirking. More baring his teeth while Monoma’s eyes scanned the page. “You copy their Quirks, then we can test them to see what the fuck All For One’s doing with them. All in a controlled, supervised, legal fucking environment. Happy?”

Eijiro was going to hesitate a no from Monoma’s expression.
Collapsing onto the table, Monoma sighed. “I know you want to help, Bakugou, but this is a class for future field medics. You blow things up, he can basically turn to stone and I’m whatever’s accessible in my surroundings. We’re not suitable for it.”

SLAM! Eijiro and the people at the tables immediate opposite jumped. “What the fuck is wrong with you, idiot? *We’re in the fucking Heroics course. Do you know what that means? It means we fucking save people.* The fuck are you going to do if someone’s got an injured neck or spine? Fucking sling them over your shoulder like a sack of potatoes and then they never fucking walk again?” Eijiro leaned away from Bakugou’s sparking hands and hid a grin behind his hand. “No, shit for brains, you lift them correctly, then fucking move them, but how the fuck are you going to know how to do that without being taught? You just gonna pull some magical fucking solution out your ass?” Monoma was planted as far back as he could possible go into his seat. “No, you learn how to do it fucking correctly, moron.”

“Yeah! We can get more skills and see what’s going,” Eijiro pumped a fist and Bakugou leaned back and grunted in the affirmative. “And find out what sort of condition Midoriya would have to be in to require them.”

“I agree that skills development is a good idea, but what am I meant to tell the rest of class when I apply for it?” Arms folded, jaw set, Eijiro leaned back and waited for the explosion. Yeah, that really wasn’t the right thing to say.

No explosion, instead it was the most superior look of disdain that Eijiro had seen in his entire life. As though the haze and muted colours had pulled back and lifted. Bakugou stared down on Monoma, like he was he some hapless piece of gum that was attached to Bakugou’s shoe. “It’s a public fucking hospital, Monoma. Just invite all of 1-fucking-B and tell them that you’re there to show up 1-A in being charitable or some shit.” *You fucking idiot,* was the unspoken clincher. “It’s your motivation for everything fucking else when you give us shit. Be useful with it for once.”

Monoma sneered. “What would Midoriya think of you being a nurse?” Eijiro rolled his eyes. That was just low.

“Midoriya would be at my fucking graduation ceremony, crying his fucking eyes out and saying how happy he is that I fucking made it through,” Bakugou threw back unhesitatingly. “He also wouldn’t be here working this shit out because he would have realised what the fuck was going on three seconds after hearing the Quirks’ names.” Bakugou leaned heavily on the table. “Here’s an idea, Monoma, how about you toddle back off to Fuckhead Lane where you came from, have a think about why you’re at hero school, then fill out that paperwork if you’re serious? And don’t bring Midoriya into shit when you don’t know shit about him.”

Eijiro gaped. Bakugou was going way too far. Telling someone to leave UA was just… yeah… no. “Dude, chill isn’t that bit harsh?”

“Fuck no. Jazz Hands over here cares more about his fucking reputation than doing his fucking job. We aren’t here to pander to every uneducated fuckwit who walks past. If he doesn’t want to do anything productive, then why the fuck is he here?” Bakugou would’ve been inches from from Monoma’s face if there wasn’t a table in the way. Up one of his nostrils, maybe.

“It’s still his decision, man. It’s not our Quirk.” That’s what it came down to, Monoma’s choice in using his Quirk. He was the only they knew of who could pull off something like this, so if it was a no it was back to the drawing board.”

“That’s true. What about my choice?” Monoma puffed up. “It’s a lot of extra work.”
“Your decision making skills are shit and so are you if basic first aid is too much for you,” Bakugou hissed across the table. “I’m tired of this shit, but so fucking help me Monoma, if your name isn’t in that fucking basket, the cafeteria’s getting a new hole in the ceiling.” Then, more levelly to Eijiro. “I’m fucking out, parents are gonna ride my ass if I’m not home soon. Fucking idiots.”

“Hey, yeah, whatever you need to do. I’ll take care of paying,” Eijiro nodded. Bakugou had already smacked in a lot of his own money with these meetups. Monoma wasn’t the nicest guy around, but bailing on the bill after he’d already helped them with Midoriya’s mother was even lower than the comments involving Midoriya. Not cool to use a maybe dead person for ammo.

Then, Bakugou was out the door, slamming it forcefully behind him.

Not a smile at the whole table in their first class meeting, but they didn’t have an idea then, no prospect of Midoriya being alive. Nothing to look forward to, no hope. What happened had happened, everyone regretting not telling a teacher about their plans. No happy outcome for them with All For One fleeing and All Might going MIA from teaching and hero work.

Now though, now they had something. Eijiro smiled toothily and turned to Monoma. “I’ll take care of the bill man, want anything before we go? I gotta do that application too.”

Monoma was staring, but that was fine, because they had a plan.

There was something.

The burn of bones breaking and crumbling, in slow motion. Crushed, he was being crushed.

Skin parting from glass? Concrete? What? What was it? Where was he? He didn’t know. Pain, so much pain.

Then nothing.

Couldn’t move, couldn’t breathe. His lungs… wouldn’t move. Why?

Hands numb, legs, numb, his eyes wouldn’t shut… Why wouldn’t they shut? Eyes drying out…

The concrete dust in his eyes, in his eyes, his lungs… He couldn’t see, he couldn’t gasp, he couldn’t breathe.

Blackness.

There was nothing. Where was he?

Starting, Izuku’s abrupt return to awareness was firmly anchored by the unnaturally firm grip on his hand. As though All For One’s own had locked into position and seized.

“Izuku, is everything alright?” All For One’s voice was more than a little terse.

“Um, my hand?” Izuku weakly answered, squeezing what little he could of All For One’s hand in demonstration. In return, his hand was immediately released.

“My apologies.” It sounded more genuine than his mumble to Kacchan, Izuku thought. But what did Izuku know? He had a week of… something and it wasn’t nearly enough to explain All For One’s
behaviour. Not the saving his life, not the radio, not the constant contact and not the scrapbook, which, after sleeping on it, Izuku was convinced was a bribe.

“Why were you hanging on like that?” At an unholy time of morning (Izuku suspected it was their equivalent of morning).

“Pain Numbing. It requires skin contact. My trick for avoiding opioids and their consequences. Shame it doesn’t work on the wielder,” the old man mumbled under breath.

Izuku struggled to sit up. “Is that why I haven’t been feeling pain lately?” Was that also why All For One had attached himself so firmly to Izuku? The casual touches were cover for the Quirk… but was that the only Quirk? Why was Izuku in pain an issue? All For One didn’t seem to care if other people suffered, going off the Noumu. Again, it came back to Izuku being worthy of other considerations for some reason.

Come to think it… didn’t All For One just admit to being in pain. Izuku frowned. “Why would you need it?”

“Did All Might tell you about our encounter before Kamino?” Izuku again lost his hand with the ever present IV in it, held floating there, grasped by All For One’s own.


“I left a hole in All Might, his guts strewn out for the world to see. He retaliated while missing most of his internal organs.” Flat, affectless. Izuku’s hand was moving. “And did this to me.”

Tangible dread almost seemed to seep through the air. Moving, inching closer. Did he want to know? He couldn’t decide.

Izuku froze and then contact. Corner of a mouth, lips, cheek bones, then Izuku’s brain paused while his hand continued the journey. There was no nose, no eyes (just the impression of sockets), no eyebrows, no features above where the jaw sat. No ears could be felt. Thick, ropey rows of scary tissue sat in their place. His hand dropped slightly and Izuku feel a tube pressed up directly against All For One’s throat, with far neater scar tissue rimming the edges.

All For One didn’t feel like a human being. As though all of his features had been scathed off. All For One was faceless. Even if Izuku could see, there’d be nothing to see. All For One himself was blind. They were both blind.

“The nightmares from these experiences never quite leave you,” he whispered.

“I-I didn’t…” Izuku stuttered and his hand was dropped back to his side. What could he say? What could anyone say?

“You didn’t know, because he didn’t tell you. He should have told you about me before offering you that Quirk.” All For One’s less calloused hand was resting on Izuku’s arm. If anyone had walked in, they’d have thought Izuku was the one receiving the life altering news, not just hearing about another person. “I was clinically dead for a short period of time. My Quirk suffered for it. He stole something important from me and then killed me in my attempt to take it back.” All Might… stealing? Stealing before the maiming? That didn’t sound at all like All Might, but neither did All Might killing a villain, no matter how evil they were or what they’d done. What happened between these two?

“I don’t know what to say,” Izuku confessed. Was there anything that could be said without an emotional response? There weren’t any outbursts as of yet and now wasn’t feeling like the most ideal learning opportunity. He needed to ask All Might, but was All For One being literal or was he lying?
Too much. Too much.

“You don’t have to say anything. It’s not your fault,” All For One sighed. “None of this is your fault.”

Izuku had the strangest feeling that All For One was talking about more than Izuku’s own clinically dead experience. What was this? Was it why Izuku was here and not buried?

“Go back to sleep if you can, Izuku. I’ll try not to wake you.”

At least there wasn’t a strict expectation that Izuku would sleep… and he had a feeling that All For One wouldn’t be sleeping either.

Izuku closed his eyes and thought of scars.

Kurogiri was more than a little apprehensive. Two detectives had decided to grace him with their presence. One was reading the sporting section of a newspaper and the other had a tray of three coffees with a plate of biscuits, which he slid across the steel bench with pinpoint precision. Why he’d been moved from Tartarus to this experience was foreign. No one spoke to him prior to these two. Whoever they were, they certainly weren’t attempting to maintain police decorum.

“Don’t mind us, had a late night,” the detective with the newspaper groaned. “I’m Detective Tsukauchi, this is Detective Yagi.” Tsukauchi half heartedly shrugged in the direction of his skeletally thin and chronically ill appearing colleague. The colleague in question was drinking from one of the coffees. How oddly informal.

“Why am I here?” Kurogiri asked as levelly as he could. There was no news on Sensei or Tomura or anyone else. Tartarus was an information dead zone. His memories ended at the bar, so that was of no assistance either. Had Sensei intervened himself? If so, why was Kurogiri imprisoned? Clearly difficulties had been suffered somewhere along the lines. Was All Might stronger than imagined?

Yagi sipped from his cup delicately. “Why do you think you’re here?” A trap.

“I’m not going to play these games,” Kurogiri said curtly.

“Sleep deprivation isn’t a game,” Tsukauchi commented from behind the face an airborne base ball player. “Kills thousands of people in Japan every year.” Here Tsukauchi shot a knowing glance between Kurogiri and the oblivious Yagi.

“Work now, quip later, Tsukauchi,” cut through the air from Yagi. “The stats will still be there if you close the page.” Clearly Yagi just wanted to leave. The way he’d eye the door every few seconds… Did he even care about the job he was doing?

“No need to lose your manners, Yagi.” Tsukauchi shook his head and folded the newspaper while Yagi gazed contemplatively into his cup. “Right. You go by Kurogiri, correct?”

Kurogiri nodded in his restraints. He could play along with safe questions he supposed. They didn’t know his name yet, provided it wasn’t a ploy.

“Let’s just stick with that for now.” Tsukauchi was scribbling something on a piece of paper. “There’s too many charges against you to list. Your actions in aiding and abetting the attempted murder of All Might made upstairs a huge fan of you.” Folding his arms, the detective’s face folded into itself. “Suffice to say, being such huge fans, they want to know more about your part in what
happened. All Might’s also very curious as to why attempts on his life were made given the lack of prior connections.”

“I have nothing to say to the police or pro heroes.” Cool. Calm. Collected. Attempt to ignore the savage dunking choc chips into black coffee.

Kurogiri’s furious glare betrayed him.

“Is one of those mine?” Yawning, Tsuakuchi nodded over to the two remaining coffees. With the rings under his eyes, it seemed doubtful that was in a fit state to attend to his employment.

“Nope. If you were on time you’d have one.” Yagi tugged the tray closer to himself. “If you don’t ask, you don’t get one.” Late to work presumably.

“No biscuits?”

“It’s a package deal.”

Tsukauchi rolled his eyes. “I’ll be back in five. Need my pick me up,” he sighed with true agony and left, the reinforced door closing with a snap.

Kurogiri refocused his eyes. Just in time for Yagi to fall into the folding chair next to him.

“Tsukauchi’s too nice to be in this job.” Too well mannered by the sounds of it as well. “I’m gonna level with you. I’m not here to be your friend. I’m here to find out what happened, leave and do something more productive with my life.” Yagi picked up the second cup of coffee. “We already know you were at the USJ. We know from media footage that you dropped Stain back into the middle of Hosu after a handholding session. We know that you delivered the strike team to the camp where the UA kids were. We know you were involved with numerous villain movements well before any of those events happened.” Yagi held up a finger. “What we don’t know, is why you did it.” Yagi shrugged. “If it were up to me, I wouldn’t particularly care as to the why. What happened happened and you should rot in a cell at the absolute minimum.” Another gesture of the boney arm. “But my superiors aren’t me, lucky you.”

“I have no answers for you,” Kurogiri snapped. Typical police officer. All weight, no manners. As much attitude as a pro hero with more bluster than physical prowess. They weren’t getting anything from him. He would never betray Sensei’s trust.

“You know, I still can’t understand why you’d waste your life like this. What were you thinking? A Quirk as rare and useful as yours and your first thought is to go and slaughter some kids?” Yagi pushed and Kurogiri twitched. “Got a Warp Quirk, better go victimise innocent children with it.” That wasn’t it at all. How foolish were these people? He owed Sensei. Personal preference hardly entered into the equation.

“Aw, is that a frown? Kid murder not it?” Yagi smiled thinly. “Attempted kid murder is still on the charge sheet regardless, you know. Shigaraki was definitely into some child murders.” Tomura Shigaraki and Kurogiri were nothing alike. Kurogiri would never be so fickle. Never so disobedient.

As for the children? The children at UA were precursors to pro heroes. Larvae. They knew what they were signing up for when they entered those programs. A new batch of government dogmatics.

Yagi was still speaking. Mouth open, crumbs flying out. One bounced off Kurogiri’s restraints and he recoiled. “So when you teleported into UA to take copies of the schedules, how is it no one saw anything? We know Shigaraki destroyed the gate. Did you slip off and do it then?” Yagi asked through a mouthful of biscuit. “Babysitting is so rough these days. Surprised he didn’t run under a
car while you did that.” What an absolutely abhorrent thing to say about someone. Was this the police’s finest? Disgusting.

“I did no such thing,” Kurogiri snarled. Did this ignorant buffoon think he could warp anywhere he so desired? Kurogiri didn’t even know the floor plan let alone where the staff rosters were held.

“Right, whatever,” Yagi dismissed. “So when you asked someone to get the roster for you, what did you have in mind?”

“I didn’t ask anyone anything,” Kurogiri snapped back.

“Right, right. So when you obtained the location of the camp with ESP?” Yagi drawled.

Kurogiri felt the last of his restraint slip away. Filthy animal in front of him. “What makes you think I know about any of these matters?

“You’re the getaway driver. You can go just about anywhere you like and you gotta know somehow.” Indifferent, probably not even paying attention. “It’s fairly likely you’d be sent in to steal information.”

“You know nothing.” Kurogiri hardly had time to sleep while observing Tomura Shigaraki for Sensei. When was he meant to have time to be stealing schedules? “I go where I go.” Kurogiri turned his head away from more crumbs. “What else are you going to harass me with? Your poor manners? Your buffoonery? Your ignorance?” Snapping across the gap felt so much better than the inane rambling of an idiot.

“What can I say?” Yagi smiled. Teeth wide, bared liked a grimacing skull, the coffee cup set down with a slow rattle. “I’m a fan of all of the above. So how about we go with all of them? Let’s continue, shall we?”

And Kurogiri couldn’t breathe.

“That explains a lot,” Toshinori nodded to Tsukauchi over the teapot back at his apartment. Mr Yagi slipped off at the door like a well worn coat and Toshinori was back, as uncomfortable as ever with some of the screams he’d heard in the recent weeks.

“He seemed closed mouth to me,” Tsukauchi mouthed around a doughnut. Toshinori never would have found that bakery or those doughnuts without this investigation. The investigation that only happened because of his mistake in thinking that All For One was dead. His complacency doomed young Midoriya.

“He answered something I’ve been wondering about for a while.” Since the USJ incident in fact, not that he had the time or resources to investigate it himself.

“How the League knew the camp’s location?” Tsukauchi asked after a biscuit.

“More than that. How did the League know the scheduling for both the USJ and when camp events were running? The League busted in at the exact moment the activities were on and everyone split up, like they knew ahead of time. The kids definitely had no access to any of that information and Kurogiri’s comment confirmed that the information came directly from All For One.” Toshinori waved his fork emphatically. Maybe they could find out All Might’s general teaching schedule with a glimpse at the rosters, but the camp? No one left things that specific just sitting out there in the open and students wouldn’t know where to find it within the masses of paperwork either. Drudgery was a
handy way of hiding paper trails. Only the bravest would venture into those stacks of paper.

“That’s right, if Kurogiri has no access to the source, then by reason of elimination it’s All For One’s source. Kurogiri seems to be Shigaraki’s handler by all estimations. We probably won’t get much from the other League members because All For One was pulling all the strings.” That was unfortunately true. All For One seemed to be keeping his cards close to his chest. “Was All For One ever the sort to deal with kids?” Toshinori grimaced. If All For One hadn’t dealt with a child before and young Midoriya was in the position Bakugou expected, then he was getting that experience now. At Midoriya’s detriment.

“Nope. Shigaraki’s the first I’ve seen this bent out of shape. Dunno why he bothered, so we should add that to the list as well. See if we can cross reference his appearance with any missing person’s reports.” Though if Shigaraki kept pushing his luck and screaming in Toshinori’s ears and into the mics, the department might personally ensure that he wasn’t ever found. “More importantly, our traitor isn’t going to be a student. Not with knowing that scheduling.”

Tsukauchi was tapping his teacup thoughtfully. “And deep dive background checks on UA’s teaching staff aren’t normally done because of your esteemed principal. He usually covers that, but I think we can dig a bit deeper. We’re looking with someone with a connection or a reason to be connected to All For One.”

“Quirks,” Toshinori inserted. “All For One trades Quirks for favours. First item on the agenda would be looking into any late bloomers among the teaching staff.”

It always was Quirks when it came to All For One. He just couldn’t help himself and was about to be greatly disappointed if he was attempting to have young Midoriya hand over One For All. There was no other reason Toshinori could think of as to why All For One would steal a body. And, if young Bakugou was correct, go to extreme lengths to preserve him. Even then, the thought of Midoriya being alive and suffering in All For One’s clutches only heightened the urgency. They had to hurry!

“Quirks, right. Naturally we can’t tell anyone else at UA, because as it stands, you’re the only one who’s not a suspect. We need an excuse to be there investigating without tipping off All For One’s source, whether it’s a teacher or a student.” Tsukauchi settled his cup with a the clink of a spoon. “Got any ideas?”

“I have a couple rattling around. Police investigate crimes, yes? I have an idea, but you might not necessarily like where it’s going.” To be fair, Toshinori didn’t like the idea either, but the people he had in mind weren’t like the League. All he needed was a big enough scandal to draw their attention and they’d bite regardless of the security at the school. If they managed to successfully enter, it’d allow the police an entry point into investigating the school’s security. Not incitement or direct responsibility necessary for anyone.

Fortunately, Tsukauchi seemed to already be bracing himself with another cup of tea. “Alright, let’s hear it. We’re not committing any crimes though or promoting them to attract police attention,” Tsukauchi warned.

“No, I’m thinking more of an official setup with full police knowledge.” Armed to the teeth, lurking inside waiting for the break in.

“A sting operation, huh? That could work. Who do you have in mind?” All Toshinori had to do was sell the idea.

“Have you ever heard of a villain by the name of Gentle?”
Please enjoy.

If you want something less depressing, check out One Shot Wok for your dose of crack.
Prospect

Chapter Summary

Mining for probability.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The doctor wasn’t quite sure if he heard correctly. “I’m sorry, Sensei, but you want me to do what?”

“His eyes, doctor. He needs his sight returned to him,” Sensei repeated. “Surely such a simple task is within your abilities.” Of course it was, but that wasn’t the doctor’s issue with the demand. It wasn’t as simple as just giving it back, like it was for Sensei using his Quirk. Eyes were delicate. A direct link to the brain as Sensei knew. A mistake with those would lead to other, more serious problems.

There was another problem with the boy regaining his sight. Did Sensei even know what he was asking for? The boy had already awoken and panicked once and what were the odds of it happening a second time? The boy would feel pain this time, would have awareness. What would Sensei do to the doctor over the harm of a favoured guest?

Instead, the doctor swallowed, his tongue thick, his saliva ropey. “Sensei… if the boy responds poorly again, he may never recover from it… There are risks.” That Izuku Midoriya might not ever recover if another bad turn were to happen. Even now those recovery prospects faded the longer time went on. As the doctor knew would be the case and had told Sensei on more than one occasion. Sensei had contingencies… contingencies that the doctor wasn’t supposed to know about. Contingencies that seemed fruitless.

“And you think his blindness assists in any future prospects?” Sensei purred and the doctor fought the urge to wince.

“No, but neither will another near death experience.” Blunt. He had to be blunt. Sensei was being unreasonable.

There was a long, terrible silence. They both waited. Sensei broke it first. “How long do you think he will live without any independence?” Not very long, the doctor silently answered. But what Sensei was proposing was so much worse. An order of magnitude worse.

Clearing his throat, he spoke as clearly as he could manage with Sensei’s will bearing down on him. “Just so long as you understand the risks.”

“I understand,” Sensei whispered and the doctor shuddered. Sensei understood… and didn’t care.

Maybe Midoriya himself would be able to see sense and refuse.

Boredom wasn’t a feeling Izuku was expecting to experience while captive. Terror? Yes. Anxiety?
Yes. Uncertainty? Absolutely. But not boredom. Boredom that was eating away at him and compelled him to sleep when it became too much.

There was absolutely nothing All Might related on the radio. Nothing. Like he’d vanished off the face of the Earth. He’d raised it with All For One the previous day and received an unexpected answer. Unexpected because All For One rarely answered anything.

“If you’re looking at me, little Izuku, then I cannot help you. I’m also unaware of what All Might is doing these days. He has not been partaking in any acts of heroics that I’m aware of.” Read: All Might hadn’t arrived to any of All For One’s no doubt ongoing acts of terrorism. “What about UA? He’s still teaching, right?” Izuku wasn’t even going to deny he was desperate. His fidgeting was a dead giveaway. A giveaway to the point where All For One seemed to find excuses to pin down Izuku’s hands whether it was checking a pulse or sticking them back under the sheets.

“He’s still employed at UA, but he took a leave of absence after Kamino. I’ve checked his usual hidey holes and found nothing. It’s bizarre and in that we both agree.” Izuku heard the gentle clinking of All For One’s teaspoon before it settled. “Your guess is as good as mine.”

And that was all Izuku had received. Provided All For One wasn’t lying, as was the possibility, All Might was missing from the public eye. All Might had been there in the aftermath and then he was gone. No call ins, no sightings, no ecstatic people who had been rescued. No Mighty Reports. Nothing about his death, no one in mourning. Plenty of questions though, like Izuku’s, about where he was and what he was doing. The money seemed to be on All Might hunting down All For One and, just this once, Izuku found himself agreeing with the general theories.

Maybe it was more pragmatism. If All For One was busy with Izuku, he was going to have less time to manage and manipulate villains like Shigaraki. The longer Izuku held out, the more time All Might had to find and arrange something to deal with All For One. One For All was fading… and seven months on, Izuku wasn’t sure if those sparks were going to be enough to deal with the calamity that’d been holding his hands minutes ago, but stalling was better then nothing.

Stalling was something Izuku had always been able to do, even without a Quirk. Izuku still wasn’t going to risk tapping into One For All, but he didn’t need to it distract All For One with long theses on Quirk interactions and his opinion on modern heroics. That alone seemed to keep All For One for leaving for too long. All he had to do was keep All For One busy until… until whatever was going to happen, finally happened. Izuku wasn’t going to be around to see whatever it was, but he had to do something.

It was also possible that One For All had finally faded, that the fire had gone out and it was all for nothing, but to just disappear was unlike All Might. He would have announced a formal retirement, not just vanished. So what was he doing that required such secrecy? Izuku couldn’t begin to guess without more sources. Radio just didn’t have the detail that an article or decent video would… if he ever saw again. It wasn’t like he could ask All For One to describe the pictures to him. The mostly blind leading the blind, with mixed results and All For One’s inability to read traditional print offended Izuku more than All For One at this point.

Then, not too long ago, All For One had gently stroked Izuku’s hand (making him jump what felt like a solid foot in the air) and told him that he’d be back later. Then the footsteps. Those weren’t All For One’s footsteps which were drawing closer. Izuku sat up and there was a familiar clearing of the throat.

“Midoriya.”

“Doctor,” Izuku levelly responded and let the silence drag on. He had nothing to say to Tsubasa. Not
so long as Tsubasa refused to discuss his grandson.

“Sensei sent me to investigate the state of your eyesight.” Tsubasa seemed to be straining to get the words out. Izuku refused to let the hope blossom.

“It wasn’t your idea?” Why was All For One calling the shots on medical decisions? Weren’t doctors meant to provide suggestions for treatments? On second thoughts, Tsubasa was also involved in the Noumu. The last thing he was going to care about was doing his job properly. Not when the Hippocratic Oath had already been crumpled up into a ball and tossed into the bin.

“Sensei suggested that you would be happier with your sight.” A sharp breath. “I was against the suggestion.” Not surprising. This guy didn’t seem like the type to agree with anything that would help other people.

“Why?” Was there friction between the supervillain and his underling?

“Due to the nature of the experimental treatment we used, you might not be able to handle light. Your eyes are physically intact, but your brain may not register the input correctly even now. This… is what led to your restraints after you injured yourself.” But… didn’t All For One imply that the doctor was a risk to Izuku? It didn’t sound like he wanted to harm Izuku. Tsubasa’s refusal would leave Izuku dependent on All For One, something which Izuku was beginning to suspect didn’t bother the All For One in the slightest. Tsubasa’s refusal would also remove the risk of this treatment, whatever it was, setting Izuku off again. “If I do make an attempt to examine your vision, I would like your permission first.”

If Izuku could still see he would have given Tsubasa a second or third dumbfounded stare. “Why are you only asking now?”

“You’re in a position to make this decision for yourself.” That hadn’t mattered when All For One stole Izuku’s corpse and rose it from the dead. Tsubasa had presumably been entirely complicit in that behaviour. It also hadn’t mattered when All For One spoon fed Izuku back into semi-acceptable eating habits (the food was nothing like his mum’s though). There was no choice. Not really. It was obey or face the consequences and Izuku hadn’t see the consequences. Not yet.

“You’re trying to subvert his authority,” Izuku murmured and felt the tiniest shift of air. Not that it mattered. Whatever Tsubasa was playing at would just get him killed and replaced.

“No,” Izuku didn’t believe him. “I simply feel that Sensei may be…,” Izuku heard Tsubasa’s levels straining, “… slightly biased when he’s involved in your treatments.”

“Biased,” Izuku repeated, wondering if All For One could hear the conversation. Somehow, Izuku didn’t think All For One would be terribly receptive towards his underling questioning what he felt to be his best judgement. Not with the previous brush offs Izuku had seen directed towards Tsubasa. He wasn’t exactly in high standing.

“Biased,” Tsubasa confirmed.

“I think I agree with his bias, then.” Izuku felt dirty agreeing with All For One, but sight was a fundamental part of existing for Izuku. He was completely without any spatial awareness without it and still wasn’t ready to do much more than hold himself up while standing. Disagreeing here would be like disagreeing with All For One just because he happened to breathe oxygen.

Or was this part of the plan? Have Tsubasa pretend that there was dissent in the ranks to foster goodwill towards Izuku’s captor? Tsubasa was never a good actor and All For One had been
painfully blunt… but there was always the possibility.

“You may not even regain your sight, you know. You might instead claw your eyes out like you did last time,” Tsubasa pushed.

“You drugged me, last time,” Izuku curtly observed. “Who knows how much of that was because of you.”

“He has a point, doctor,” All For One chimed in next to Izuku and Izuku jumped. How long had All For One been there for? Maybe he had heard the comment on bias. “You’ll find my bias is entirely reasonable.” Yeah, he definitely heard the bias comment.

Neither Izuku nor All For One needed any sort of enhanced hearing to hear, with great clarity, Tsubasa’s drawn out sigh.

“Don’t get your hopes up. This might not even work. Let me dim the lights.”

Izuku hadn’t gotten his hopes up in all the time he was awake. And with All For One wrapping his hands around Izuku’s wrists, he was going to keep it that way.

Tomura Shigaraki spat at Yagi the moment the crushing weight lifted. Yagi casually dodged by leaning to the left. “What the fuck is wrong with you?” Tomura hissed, not enough air in lungs to give volume to words. Yagi wasn’t like the others. He was a different beast. A beast Sensei would warn him about if Sensei were here.

Why wasn’t Sensei here?

“A great many things, Shigaraki, but we’re here to talk about you, not me.” Yagi was sipping coffee. Yagi was always sipping coffee. Yagi never seemed to run out of coffee. Yagi only ever left to get coffee. Yagi was a freak. Yagi was the biggest bastard in this police station and none of these pigs were exactly pleasant. At least they weren’t that Tartarus guard…

“I’m not telling you anything,” Tomura snapped. All he had to do was not say anything and the conversation wouldn’t progress.

“That’s a shame. I thought I was at least going to get your opinion on All Might,” Yagi shrugged. “You seem to be a fan.”

“What the hell is that meant to mean?” What were they after this time? They wanted something. What did they want? Why was it always fucking All Might?

“Exactly what it sounds like, Shigaraki. What’s your opinion on All Might? You clearly have some problems with him and students. Surely Tsukauchi told you that I’m also a huge fan?” Yagi drawled.

“You and every other NPC,” Tomura snorted. “You all think he’ll come running to the rescue and save everyone, but he can’t. He can’t!” Tomura laughed wildly. Then he caught the expression on Yagi’s face.

Yagi was grinning. His teeth were white. Painfully white. White like Tartarus. “Is that it?”

Tomura frowned. “What the hell. I answered your question.” Was anything ever good enough for these people? Sensei wasn’t this strict.

Yagi snorted, his teacup rattling in its saucer while he held it. Both sounded like death rattles, a skeleton laughing with lungs made of bone. “I’m sorry, Shigaraki. I shouldn’t laugh. I was just
expecting more than that.”

“More? More than him being a fraud?” That’s all All Might was, a fraud to the end. Pretending that he could save everyone. He couldn’t save everyone. Tomura was living proof.

“Shigaraki, no one has a perfect rate. Not Endeavor. Not Hawks. Not Wash. Not the Pussycats. Not All Might. Nobody. Nobody expects them to either. Do you know why?” Tomura might have thought Yagi’s monstrous expression was friendly - if he was an idiot. There was nothing friendly in the glint of his teeth or the twitch of his eyebrows. Anything but friendly.

Tomura glared at Yagi instead.

“Pro heroes are human beings, Shigaraki. How the hell is All Might meant to rush to your rescue when he’s fast asleep on a rostered off day?” Yagi lost all attempts subtlety, leaning back in his chair, while Tomura’s jaw clenched. That… that wasn’t what he meant! “They’re all living beings who needed R&R and days off like everyone else. Despite what the media tells you, All Might doesn’t have the highest rescue rating of all of the pro heroes. Can you guess who does?” Yagi slumped back forwards and beckoned at Tomura.

But… Sensei hadn’t ever said that in the first place. Sensei blamed All Might for pretending that the pro heroes were any different to the so called villains. There was no difference. “The pro heroes are no different to me,” Tomura snidely pointed out. “The only difference is that the government approves of their violence and that’s arbitrary as well.”

“That’s not what you said though. You said he didn’t rescue you. You didn’t say anything about the villains being the same as pro heroes,” Yagi dryly observed. “Yes, there is some crossover between pro heroes and some villains, but when was the last time you’ve saved anyone? Hm?” Yagi jabbed and Tomura came screeching to a stop. Why the hell would he rescue anyone? He didn't owe them anything.

“So you’ll forgive me, but I think All Might’s rescue statistics are rather relevant to this discussion if you think them not rescuing enough people is the problem.”

Yagi made another point, but not the one he wanted to make. If All Might didn’t have the highest rescue rate… then why was he the Symbol of Peace? Why was he so popular? If he didn’t have the highest rate… then who the hell did? If All Might wasn’t even the objective best, then why the hell was everyone putting their faith in All Might as the Symbol of Peace? Why were they following his lead in attacking people? Why listen to him at all? They should be listening to the strongest then.

“I see I’ve thrown you for a loop, Shigaraki.” The detective winked and leaned forward, almost conspiratorially. “Endeavor, antisocial flame man himself, has the highest rescue rate and villain captures of all of the current active pro heroes in Japan.”

Tomura’s mouth moved faster than his brain. “What the fuck? How is that idiot beating All Might?” Endeavor who killed as many people as he captured? How the hell was he beating All Might on the scoreboard.

Yagi shrugged. “He works more hours and his family hates him. He might have more raw hours and raw captures and rescues to him, but he’s not Number One. Do you know why?” Yagi was winking again. Tomura was going to rip that skeleton’s glowing eyes out when had the opportunity.

Tomura mulled on it anyway. If All Might was Number One without the raw data alone, then the pro hero ranking system was operating on more than simple statistics. “They don’t… assign the rankings on captures and rescues alone… do they?” Tomura ground out.
“Correct. It’s also based on reputation.” Reputations? What the hell did reputation have to do with pro heroes pro heroing correctly? Who the idiot that came up with that metric? “If Endeavor didn’t have the personality of a burning cactus, he would in fact be Number One.” Tomura stared at Yagi as he spoke. Endeavor. Number One. What the hell.

Something about Endeavor strutting around in All Might’s place was just downright disturbing. Endeavor with his reputation for hair trigger violence, no different to any villain. Endeavor was one of the furthest images Tomura had from a pro hero. “Why the hell isn’t he Number One then? Why use reputation as a factor? It isn’t measuring their Quirk and how well they use it?” Even then All Might should still be ranked first. He was a freak, just like Yagi.

“Unlike you, Shigaraki, I bothered to finish school and get an education.” Yagi quirked his eyebrows and Tomura spat at him again. Yagi, unsurprisingly, dodged. Without effort. “So, unlike you, I know that the pro hero system was devised from vigilante activities back when Quirks were fresh. Trusted vigilantes, with perfect reputations, were selected to become the first pro heroes when Japan adopted the system from America.” Yagi waggled his finger and Tomura was struck with a sense of familiarity. “But wait, there’s more! America’s pro heroes were basically another wing of the military. They might have answered to the police, but they were more in line with the American National Guard than any cop.”

“What the hell. They were military?” Tomura attempted to sit up in his bonds and only succeeded in falling further into them. Why was it always fucking America with these stupid ideas? “Why the hell would you call an arm of the military “pro heroes”?”

“I dunno. Better than Uncle Sam’s Super Soldier Program. That sets off the public.” A hand was waved and Tomura’s eyes tracked it. “It was pure propaganda. Something to encourage the newly powerful to protect the more widely common powerless. Your Sensei made a lot of friends doing that, then used and abused them.” As if, what would Yagi know about Sensei?

“What the hell does this have to do with Sensei?” Tomura edged out. “I didn’t think I was here for a history lesson.”

“Let me break it to you gently, Shigaraki.” Yagi spoke slowly, but not gently. There it was, the sense of pressure, building, creeping up Tomura’s spine. “Your Sensei’s problem with All Might isn’t that he’s the Symbol of Peace, isn’t that he has some arbitrary public approval and it isn’t that he’s imperfect and can’t save everyone.” Yagi smirked. “Nobody with half a brain in their head seriously expects All Might to singlehandedly save everyone and you aren’t brainless, are you Shigaraki?” Tomura was hearing Yagi, as though it were through a dense fog. He was too slow to answer and Yagi continued. “Your Sensei’s problem with All Might is that your Sensei is over two hundred years old and hates the hero system because it didn’t accept him in the first place. He’s bitter and I get that. I really do. He’s there, he’s popular, he’s got an army of followers, then overnight the pro hero system is implemented and he’s a nobody. It must sting to lose all of that in an instant.”

Tomura couldn’t breathe. Lies. It had to be a lie. It had to be. Sensei didn’t care about being popular. Was Sensei really that old? Was he really one of the first Quirk users? Why hadn’t he told Tomura? Did fucking Kurogiri know how old Sensei was? Did he know that Sensei was a vigilante? Where was Sensei now? Did… did Tomura mean anything to someone that old? Could he ever mean anything to someone that old? Who was Sensei? Yagi had to be lying. Yagi the nobody.


“Here’s what I think. What’s really happening here Shigaraki, is that you’re a pawn,” Yagi explained, leaning back with his coffee. “A victim.” He wasn’t a victim, he wanted to help Sensei!
“Your a pawn in his long haul game to claw back what was taken from him by the new guard. His reputation, his influence, his access to suckers to fuel his Quirk. All Might is the Symbol of the death of that era and you’re just the hapless fool he picked to play the scapegoat what he recovers from the ass kicking All Might gave him six years ago.” He was not a hapless fool. He was not.

“I know it’s a lot to take in. I’ve got the boys in tech working on a projector so I can show you the numbers, if you don’t believe me. But in the end, this raises one very important question, doesn’t it?”

Nononononono. He didn’t want to hear it. He didn’t! Why wouldn’t Yagi stop talking? Tomura needed to think and he couldn’t do that with Yagi talking.

“Why you? In the long game of your Sensei, you’re just a bit player travelling along the board,” Yagi spoke in a low voice, his fingers miming the movement of a chess piece. “That means the entire League of Villains are just pawns.” He was not a pawn. He couldn’t be. Sensei spent too much time with him. “So if you’re just another pawn in your Sensei’s long game of chess, why did he involve you in the first place? What’s the game plan in having someone as inexperienced as you take on All Might and get your arse handed to you? What does he get out of you losing?” With one final incline of his head, Yagi lazily stood.

“You’re lying. Sensei is coming still. He is!” Tomura’s mind was racing. None of this could be true. Sensei cared. He was the only one who cared when everyone else did nothing. Yagi was lying. He was just another liar. Just like All Might.

“He’s had weeks here alone and it’s not like we hid where we were questioning you. In fact, we made sure everyone knew about it. Even told the media. All Might’s been parked here waiting for your Sensei to pop out of a hedge and your Sensei never arrived.” Yagi was a facetious bastard. No cop or hero lover would ever tell the truth.

But how did Tomura respond? He’d called Yagi a liar before and Yagi winked at Tomura, as if they were both in on some private joke. Yagi was a freak. Crazy.

“Well, I’m out of coffee. Have a think about it until Tsukauchi gets here. But, if you need anything, I’m here!” There was a solid thud to Tomura’s shoulder from Yagi’s “friendly” backslap as he sauntered by and left the room, slamming the door behind him. “

He couldn’t think. He couldn’t breathe. The air didn’t have enough oxygen. It had to be a lie. It had to be. But… if it wasn’t a lie… was it because Yagi was right? Is that why Sensei hadn’t come?

No, they were all lying to get him to talk about Sensei. Sensei would come eventually, he just knew it was a trap. He just had to keep his mouth shut until Sensei came. That was it.

“Doc,” Katsuki grunted, dropping himself into the seat. He was fucking out of options. If he went to someone that he didn’t know they’d ask a lot more questions than this bastard. That said, this bastard made his skin crawl, so Monoma better appreciate the dive Katsuki was taking for the team. None of them were down to hunt down an expert and ask pertinent fucking questions on Quirk interactions. Nevermind that one of them might fucking die if it turned out anything was incompatible.
The busy moustache twitched. “Mr Bakugou, it’s been quite some time.” That was putting it fucking mildly. He hadn’t seen this indifferent, goggle eyed bastard since the guy’s grandson went missing three or four years ago. Funny that no one fucking mentioned it to his school friends. Wasn’t that fucking convenient? “How many I be of assistance? Your Quirk was in perfect working order upon my last examination of you. Though that was quite some time ago.”

“School,” Katsuki said shortly. No need to tell him any important. “We’re doing extra credit.” Extra credit Katsuki’s ass. This was more the type of shit that’d go on a resume, but Tsubasa didn’t need to know that.

“And extra credit requires that you see me because…?” Tsubasa trailed off expectantly.

“We’re helping a bunch of patients at some fucking pain clinic. One of the fucking idiots who applied is worried about accidental quirk usage. He was too much of a dick to come himself,” Katsuki added in what he hoped was a helpful tone of voice. Fucked if he knew. “Teachers didn’t say shit,” because Katsuki hadn’t told them, “and you’re the only person I remember who does this sort of stuff.” Katsuki wasn’t lying. Monoma was extremely fucking worried about accidental deaths. Only it had nothing to do with them using their Quirks on him. There were going to be major problems if that fucking moron Monoma killed one of the volunteers while testing the Quirks on their volunteered lab rat Kirishima.

“The teachers never said anything?” Tsubasa repeated with a crease in his forehead. “Surely most Quirks are straightforward enough for them to give an opinion?”

“They’re not typical fucking Quirks. They’ve got no idea what’s gonna happen if they get used on someone. There’s four in particular that this loser who applied wants an opinion on before he’ll suck it up and commit. And if he doesn’t fucking commit that’s more work for us.” That was also true enough. Katsuki wasn’t wasting any of his limited time if it wasn’t helping find Deku. This was one of the few ways they could do it without breaking any laws. Though Katsuki was prepared to take that step if they hit a dead end as well.

Frowning deeply, Tsubasa leaned forwards. “Very well. What are they?”

Katsuki huffed and made a show of pulling out a scrap of paper written in Monoma’s shittiest handwriting. Could be his normal handwriting even. “Suspended Animation, Pain Numbing, Paralysis and Electrical Currents,” Katsuki read off with unsuppressed anger. “What the fuck am I meant to do about that?”

Tsubasa’s face twisted, warped, then settled on something that Katsuki couldn’t pick. “Each Quirk will have its own problems. Pain Numbing will mask any injury you might suffer while working in the clinic. Say, if you were to stab yourself on a needle, you wouldn’t feel it. Depending on the severity of the Quirk’s application, it might take other sensations away as well.”

“We talking only minor pains or broken bone pain?” Katsuki grabbed another scrap of paper to write
on. He had a notebook in his bag, but fuck pulling that out in front of this prick. It was too prepared. This had to be more casual. More indifferent. He didn’t want to be there and, come to think of it, he really fucking didn’t want to be here with this fucking creep.

“Potentially all pain regardless of source if it’s capable of targeting those nerves.” Like removing all sensation an extremely invasive surgery to keep someone alive? Why else would All For One need to numb pain. He seemed fucking indestructible taking on All Might. Couldn’t be for him, and as All Might said, All For One didn’t seem to give two shits about the Noumu. “You should be very careful with that patient. Next, Paralysis.” Tsubasa frowned. “I don’t suppose you have any details on how this one functions?”

“Nope, just that it freezes people,” Katsuki shrugged. There wasn’t anything more specific in the Quirk Registry entry that All Might had pulled from work. It was rare that any of these extra got a chance to see how their Quirks really ticked if they weren’t in heroics or fucking criminals.

“Well, similar to Pain Numbing, Paralysis Quirks can operate in a variety of ways. Some operate on the nerves, some on sighting, some on other more exotic conditions. I believe Stain was in that latter category.” Now wasn’t that interesting? Tsubasa was following media reports on criminals. “They can last from a few minutes, up to a few hours depending on the skill of the user.”

“Steer the fuck away from that one, then.” Katsuki made another note. That sounded perfect for keeping someone still during a surgery… Not that Deku looked intact enough to breathe on his own let alone move. Katsuki blinked rapidly. “Electrical Currents? That shit sounds bad for people’s hearts. Got a guy in class who can use electricity, but when I asked him he said it wasn’t the same as his.” Kaminari had been ambushed by Kirishima, Monoma and himself and looked close to shitting his pants in terror. Katsuki didn’t think he was lying about currents not being the same as his brute force solution.

“Hmm, well, since you’re in the Heroics Course, I’d presume he has a far stronger flavour of this Quirk.” Tsubasa’s face was creased. Creases that were getting deeper the longer Katsuki looked at him. “Electrical Currents implies control or creation of electrical currents. You’re correct in assuming that it could stop or start someone’s hearts, with the effects being more prevalent depending on the specifics of the Quirk. It is the current of a lightning strike that kills people after all, not the voltage. It could also potentially influence other nerve endings,” Tsubasa added.

Katsuki’s brain skidded to a halt on that one. Influence other nerve endings? “How the fuck could it influence other nerve endings?”

“The body is one giant electrical circuit when you think about it. Someone with enough skill could use someone like a puppet provided they manipulated the right areas of the brain.” And make Deku a literal fucking doll and that’s if something worse wasn’t done first. What the fuck was All For One playing at?

“That’s fucked up.”

Tsubasa stiffly nodded. “Quite. And the final one, again, was?”

“Suspended Animation. This one sounds the most screwed up out of the four.” The name alone didn’t say good things about the Quirk.

“Suspended Animation in and of itself infers that the Quirk’s target would be put into a deep hibernation,” the old bastard muttered to himself more than Katsuki. “Cellular degradation and general decay of bodily functions ceases entirely provided it’s a true suspension. Whatever it’s used on will cease to age as well.” Ceases entirely echoed through Katsuki’s head.
“What does that mean?” It means All For One could stick Deku under and use him as a fucking wall ornament if he wanted to, or worse. Or shove him into a tank…

“It means that a person suffering grievous injuries could be stored until it was possible to treat their injuries,” Tsubasa whispered, his hands trembling. “Naturally you wouldn’t do it unless it was an option of last resort.” A fall back, just in case nothing All For One had on hand fucking worked. He could take Deku in and out of the fridge as many times as it took to do whatever the fuck he was doing. And Deku would be there paralysed, unfeeling while that prick took him apart on the table. And with All For One’s age, they might all be long dead of all age, only for Izuku to wake up with All For One for company.

Bakugou felt a fist clench. “That’s a fucked up Quirk. If someone’s that badly off they’d be better off fucking dying peacefully instead of being kept around in that shit state. It’s not fucking living.” Katsuki really hoped that Deku was dead. Deku had to be fucking dead. Or was he? Because if he was alive… Katsuki didn’t know what he fucking wanted, but at least the building had been quick.

Katsuki didn’t want to think about it. Not after seeing the Noumu.

“I agree,” Tsubasa nodded deeply, the creases in his forehead were at maximum reach. “When someone’s in such a state, they are indeed better off passing away peacefully instead of prolonging their suffering or a false hope. Healing Quirks are rare, they may as well be wishing for a divine miracle in keeping someone stored away.” How fucking bad was the Quirk if even this emotionless, spectacle wearing, blond hedge-lip was agreeing?

“Fuck. I’ll let the fucking moron know so he can hide behind Recovery Girl’s skirt when any of them walk past.” They only had five minutes with each Quirk and patients were going to get suspicious if Monoma kept touching them. At least Katsuki didn’t want some random fucking person touching him constantly. Patients had to be the same, right? “Thanks.” Thanking this asshole for anything left a bad taste in his mouth.

“You’re welcome, Bakugou.” Tsubasa was still fucking shaking. It was even worse than before.

Mystery for another day. He had to text the group to let them know what the deal was going to be with these nasty fucking Quirks that Deku would have ripped apart in ten seconds.

“Doc, one other thing. What happened to your grandson? I haven’t heard from him in ages and the old hag was asking.” Katsuki spoke over his shoulder and watched Tsubasa fumble the door handle. Tsubasa who fucking trembled like a leaf in Half and Half’s fire. Tsubasa who had a reputation for being a stony faced prick even when Katsuki was small.

“My grandson… was a victim of circumstance,” Tsubasa whispered and Katsuki felt his own stomach sink. What the fuck happened to the younger Tsubasa? “I don’t suppose you would have heard what happened. After all, the media hardly deigned to cover Stain’s non-pro hero victims. They weren’t of interest to the general public.”

Katsuki’s thoughts came crashing to a halt. “What? When the fuck did this happen? Where is he?” And why weren’t any of the former friends told about it? What the fuck? Why were so many people fucking getting sick or-

The old man almost buckled. “He was killed not long before Stain’s capture. Never stood a chance. Not worthy of media attention or police reporting.” What the fuck? Tsubasa’s fucking dead?

“Was there a fucking funeral? Why the fuck wasn’t I there?” Katsuki turned on his heel and snarled. “Why the fuck wasn’t Deku there?” Not that Deku could even make amends for that now.
“No… His body was taken for examination and never released.” He was fucking shaking. Tsubasa was fucking shaking. He was fucking hiding something. It was so obvious. Why the fuck was his grandson anywhere near a serial killer? What the hell kind of shit was that extra involved in to be targeted by fucking Stain? And why wasn’t Tsubasa giving details? “The police never gave him back to his parents.”

“But why the fuck didn’t they tell anyone?” Katsuki pushed, jutting out his jaw. “They have my fucking number, at least. Why didn’t they fucking say anything?” Why didn’t they say anything when Deku went “missing”? Where the fuck was everyone? “Memorial services are a fucking thing, even without a body.” Because they were still planning one for Deku. Deku who wasn’t ever going back to his family unless Katsuki fucking did something about it.

“I… I don’t know,” the mole struggled out Katsuki fought the urge to take a running leap forwards and strangle the piece of filth.

“Now you fucking do. If you hear anything about it, let me know.” Katsuki was a hair’s breadth away from growling like some sort of feral fucking animal. Too many people he knew who just weren’t fucking there anymore. Too many. “Anyway, I need to tell these losers about those Quirks.” Katsuki turned to finally leave the office and was stopped by Tsubasa clearing his throat.

“Bakugou, one more thing.” Tsubasa’s dark lenses glinted. “I’m sorry for your loss. I saw in the news what happened and… I don’t think Midoriya would be walking away from it under normal circumstances. I told him to give up and…”

Katsuki froze. That’s right. He was Deku’s doctor years back. “He was smiling, you know. Most genuine one he’s had in years. He wouldn’t have fucking done that if he wanted to be told to give up by you or anyone else,” Katsuki spat. *If he wanted to be told to give up by me.* “Thanks.” And slammed the door behind him.

Marching away, Katsuki texted the others, his fingers almost feeling fucking numb from how hard he’d been clenching his fists. Fucking piece of shit assbag of a person.

Deku turned into a doll by All For One, a chain of Quirks to keep him compliant. Deku being kept by All For One. Deku… being made into a real Deku, by the monster that almost killed All Might. Katsuki sped up. Tsubasa, dead like Deku. Everyone dead, because he was too late, because he hadn’t checked…

*Deki,* Katsuki thought fervently, the image of All For One not fading from his mind, *please don’t be fucking dead!*

This was beyond stupid. What did All Might think he was doing? He was nowhere to be found. Criminals were becoming more brazen. The crime rate was on the verge of shooting up. All For One was running rampant and All Might decided to take a holiday now? Was All Might really so off his game after All For One’s public appearance? They needed the Symbol of Peace now. Not when All Might felt it was the time appear. He had a duty as the Symbol of Peace.

What was he even doing that required him to abandon his duty to the people of Japan so readily? Nighteye didn’t have the answer, but Gran Torino almost certainly did. Which was exactly why Nighteye was knocking on his door on a Sunday when should have been doing other things with his time, like organising intel. The door was wrenched open so violently Nighteye almost lost his
“Huh, oh it’s you.” Gran Torino grunted. “I guess you can come in, but I’ve got guests.”

“Well mannered as ever, I see,” Nighteye snipped. Who were these mystery guests of the old man? Even when Nighteye had been at the agency, Gran Torino was a distant and little seen figure. Who could he possibly have over when he was such a recluse? Former co-workers? Gran Torino didn’t appear to be the sociable sort.

“Who the fuck is that?” One of the most raucous voices Nighteye ever had the displeasure of hearing called across the room. Its owner was on the other side of the room, around a repurposed dining table and a whiteboard covered in unintelligible scribbles. All in all, the space had more in common with an explosive strike than a living room.

“This is Nighteye, he used to work with All Might,” Gran Torino answered. Nighteye squinted into a dark corner and was met with the brutish and sneering blond face he’d seen at the Sport Festival. Katsuki Bakugou, no different to his last television appearance. One would have thought being abducted for this abrasive behaviour would have mellowed him, but apparently not. Beside him was a girl, and four boys, heads deep in conversation. As though they hadn’t heard the vulgar shout across the space. One of them was most certainly the Todoroki boy, but the other three he couldn’t recognise. Not from the backs of their heads at least. Not when they weren’t bothering to make eye contact or express any proper greetings.

“Nighteye, these are some students from UA I’m helping with an extra credit project. So they don’t kill anyone when they get to the hospital,” Gran Torino nodded. “That loud one is Bakugou, then there’s Monoma, Yaoyorozu, Todoroki, Ida and Kirishima.” None of the heads turned to meet his eyes.

“Greetings, UA students. My apologies for interrupting your studies.”

All of the children greeted him back, still without looking, apart from Bakugou who grunted and they returned to whatever discussion they were having prior to his arrival. That was… rather subdued. Normally children were excited to see someone who had worked with All Might, but then again, a former sidekick wasn’t impressive when compared to the Symbol of Peace himself teaching them.

Then again, UA’s best and brightest were in that bunch. Bakugou and Todoroki, first and second respectively. The Yaoyorozu girl from a family of incredible wealth and esteem. Ida, his family famous for producing quality heroes. Then Monoma… Nighteye wasn’t sure who Monoma was… further investigation would be required to see why a nobody was brushing shoulders with UA’s upper crust.

“Let’s be quick. What do you want?” Gran Torino shuffled them to the opposite corner of the students. Gran Torino’s eyes were unusually red. Some sort of strain perhaps? With the old man’s Quirk the way it was he would have been better off wearing goggles to prevent the dust particles from irritating his eyes.

“All Might,” Nighteye said simply. “Where is he? He hasn’t been appearing in the media and he’s not responding to my calls.” Nor anyone else’s calls. Even Endeavor couldn’t access All Might to begin a debrief. No pro hero could find him and his secretary was having a leave of absence. After Kamino, All Might had vanished and so had Toshinori Yagi.

It was a chilling reminder of what the world would have been like if All For One had been successful in his murder attempt.
Gran Torino shrugged and murmured in an undertone. “Hell if I know. Toshi’s been busy. Dunno with what. He called and asked me to babysit the kids who were working on some extra credit medical subject.”

All Might was hardly a beacon of medical knowledge, but Gran Torino wasn’t one either. Why were they even involved? “Neither of you are medical specialists. Isn’t this Recovery Girl’s area?” What was All Might wasting his time on when All For One was freely running through the countryside? They had far larger problems to worry about.

The old man in yellow snorted. “Bakugou, get over here a minute.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” Bakugou snapped back, leaping to his feet and stalking over to them. “You fucking burnt the taiyaki.” What disrespect. This was the leading member of the class? How disgraceful. Speaking of the class, none of them were even so much as glancing over at the kerfuffle. Was this a common occurrence for them? Bakugou’s poor, unfortunate classmates, having to deal with this uncultured individual. What would the public think of think of him? Would the media be ripe of disputes between Endeavor and Bakugou?

“I never burn the taiyaki!” Gran Torino roared back.

“You wanna fucking go me?! I’ll fucking kill you!” Bakugou screamed an inch from Gran Torino’s face, sparks flying from his hands. This boy was unstable. Was it even safe to leave him here? No wonder the League of Villains had been so interested. He seemed to be their perfect candidate from his attitude alone.

“Excuse me,” Nighteye cut in. “I believe Gran Torino wanted to make this quick.” And so did Nighteye if this was the quality of Gran Torino’s guests.

“Yeah, I did. Bakugou, what’s All Might doing?” Gran Torino barked and Bakugou glared back, instantly deflating.

“Fucked if I know. He didn’t make any formal fucking statements I know about, but rumours are he’s doing some sort of fucking additional training. He organised the extra credit as well, but I haven’t seen him around the school.” Bakugou kicked out a foot. “Can I fucking go now? I have work to do.”

Was that it? Was that all the boy could say with that filthy, unrefined mouth of his? “You could at least pretend to have some decorum. Your manner of wording things is vulgar and unbecoming a future pro hero. You’re going to scare members of the public.” Not that Nighteye could see Bakugou ever making it into anywhere near close to All Might’s league where the public would even know about him. The last thing they needed was another Endeavor running around, frightening the public or heavens forbid, the two speak to each other.

“And you could pretend to not be a dick, but here we are,” Bakugou fired back and Nighteye’s jaw dropped. Where had that come from?

“Excuse me?” This brat! Who did he think he was? They didn’t even know each other. Where was this hostility even coming from? Nighteye had given him a statement of fact, no more, no less. Bakugou was unfit to be a pro hero.

“You heard what I said.” Bakugou wasn’t budging an inch and Nighteye’s focus trained down to the one, insignificant speck of dust in front of him. “We all know why All Might dropped you like a hot sack of pelican shit, and it wasn’t because of your fucking pro hero skills. Imagine him coming into the office every morning to hear your whining bullshit about how you could do his job so much
better.” Nighteye felt his face go red. “Like you’re anything fucking special. Can you even take a shit without using your Quirk?”

“You don’t know anything,” Nighteye hissed. This brat didn’t even know about All Might’s real Quirk let alone about the threat of All For One. He was another entitled brat who thought he knew everything about All Might, but no one knew as much about All Might as Nighteye did. No one. And it was no doubt this same attitude, this same refusal to use sense that got Bakugou kidnapped by the League of Villains.

“And you think you do, shit for brains? If Deku was here he’d shit down your throat, you ignorant fuck. Maybe you can just call All Might and as-,” Bakugou’s rough face gleefully contorted, “-oh wait, you can’t!”

Deku… the hero name of Izuku Midoriya. All Might’s successor. All Might’s missing successor. The boy infected with All Might’s madness who had probably perished saving this waste of space. The boy who couldn’t hold a candle to Mirio Togata. Nighteye’s student would never have been left defenceless by mere rubble. “But he’s not here is he? He’s still missing after he saved you.” It was cruel, but by accounts the two weren’t on speaking terms to begin with.

Bakugou’s hands exploded and Nighteye leapt backwards.

“That was out of line.” He wasn’t speaking to Bakugou, where one of Gran Torino’s hands were resting on the boy’s shoulder. There was no smile on Gran Torino’s face. His lips were peeling back, his teeth exposed. “Leave.” What did Gran Torino have to do with the missing boy?

“Real-”

“Now!” Torino shouted. “I don’t know what your problem is Nighteye, but you’re not dealing with it here. Get out.” Nighteye pushed his glasses up and glared at both of them. He hadn’t done anything wrong… but that clearly wasn’t what the rest of the room was thinking.

Bakugou nodded. “You heard him. Fuck off and keep your fucking mouth shut about Deku. You think All Might’s gonna tolerate you talking shit about his students?” Nighteye froze. Every single one of the students in the back corner were staring at him, their faces twisted. The Todoroki boy had erupted into flames. The blond Monoma was holding him back. Seconds passed, now Ida had latched onto Todoroki and Nighteye felt his chance for information evaporate.

“I’ll be going then.” Stepping around them, Nighteye bolted out the front door, followed by a roomful of narrowed eyes.

“You know what? I’ll forgive the taiyaki,” Nighteye heard through the door, “but how the fuck did you let All Might end up with that asshole?”

“He never asked me,” Gran Torino growled, “but he’ll be hearing about it this time.”

Nighteye swallowed. What had he even said?…

Midoriya. It was something to do with Midoriya.

Chapter End Notes

Here you go, I hope you enjoyed. Updates are going to be a bit skewed with health
problems.
Remorse

Chapter Summary

Too little, too late.

Or is it?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Toshinori almost felt his tea go down the wrong way. Almost. “Nighteye implied what?”

“He took a fucking shit on Deku, that’s what he did,” Bakugou snarled, flinging himself and his plate of biscuits down on the table. “Said that he was missing and shit, acting like he fucking knew everything.”

Toshinori let loose the most satisfying sigh he’d done in ages. Not something Mr Yagi could do while staring down the opposition. It was so nice to have a day off. “Are you sure there wasn’t a misunderstanding?”

Young Bakugou shook his head. “It was his fucking tone of voice that gave it away. The contempt, like Deku was a fucking bug or some shit. Like what he did didn’t fucking matter.” Bakugou’s hands were sparking alarmingly. That in and of itself wasn’t unusual. Young Bakugou trembling violently most certainly was unusual.

Now that Toshinori thought about it, he was only really at UA on Nighteye’s recommendation. Nighteye… who already had a student in mind. Mirio Togata, a committed boy, not overly bright in his studies and someone who had a great deal of trouble with his Quirk until recently. Togata who was meant to be the ideal successor that Nighteye had in mind. And that was exactly what Toshinori told young Bakugou after bracing himself.

“THAT MOTHERFUCKER!” Bakugou screamed, an explosion shooting from his hand and vaporising Toshinori’s quaint teacup. “IS THAT WHAT HE WAS FUCKING TALKING ABOUT!? THAT PRICK!” Bakugou slammed his hands down on the table in front of Toshinori, panting heavily. Toshinori watched the teacup go with a pang of sadness. It was his first cup of the day. “Who the fuck is even thinking of shit like that about a fucking dead kid?” Toshinori clambered to his feet and rested a hand on young Bakugou’s shoulder.

Who indeed would use a dead child to advance their own goal? Toshinori had been willing to overlook Nighteye’s more… argumentative behaviour, but this was too far. When it came down to it, Nighteye had no say in who Toshinori would choose to be his successor. For him to be acting as though his input meant anything raised hackles that, before, only All For One had ever brushed. Brushed because of the sheer disrespect. Nighteye had no right to demean young Midoriya who gave everything to help others. Nighteye had no right to demean anyone, and that included poor Togata who wouldn’t have the faintest idea of why Nighteye had suddenly focused on him.

Toshinori would be having words with Nedzu about Togata’s internship with Nighteye. This behaviour was unacceptable and Nighteye had done it in front of UA students and young Midoriya’s
friends no less. Nighteye was unfit to be interning with any of UA’s students.

“Nighteye has always had his… quirks,” Toshinori instead offered lamely, clenching a fist. That really wasn’t good enough as an answer, but his apartment could only handle so many explosions before his colleagues at the police turned up. And if both him and Bakugou were dwelling on Nighteye, then the apartment might not have a lot left by the end of it after Bakugou had his way.

“Is his Quirk being a giant fucking dick?”

Toshinori smothered a smile. Not in front of the students! “No, but he always had his opinions on what should be done with One For All, regardless of what I thought.”

“So he’s a giant fucking dick with a Quirk then,” Bakugou snarled and Toshinori coughed with the discreteness of All For One’s city buster.

“I have to admit, he was incredibly rude and what he said is in immense poor taste to both young Midoriya and his family. I also never asked for nor wanted his opinion on One For All. His main job with intelligence gathering with some filing,” Toshinori explained. “I just about had to tell him because he wouldn’t leave me alone otherwise.” He was also such a shut in that All For One never wasted his time targeting him, much to Toshinori’s relief. A bonus if there was ever one.

“Yeah, I guess you couldn’t fucking not tell him something when he was so desperate to shove his his head up your arse,” Bakugou grunted, pulled away from Toshinori and hurled himself into the chair.

Toshinori smiled thinly, making his way back to his own seat. “He was a huge fanboy.”

“Now he’s just an entitled dickhead, huge fanboy or not. Shitting on a fucking dead person because his fucking student didn’t get a Quirk when he already had one. Fuck off,” Bakugou growled. “Deku didn’t even have a fucking Quirk to begin with and it didn’t stop him from doing shit,” Bakugou struggled out, as if the sentence had been caught in his throat. It made Toshinori’s throat catch too. “Why the fuck would his favourite need two?” Why indeed…

“With One For All comes All For One and the feud. Nighteye endangered his student by grooming him to take my place. Engaging All For One is an informed choice and I, regretfully, was under the impression that All For One was dead and so failed to tell young Midoriya of the external risks.” And subsequently had gotten young Midoriya killed. If only he could take it all back and tell him. At least with Togata, Toshinori could attempt to correct whatever damage Nighteye’s manipulation of the young student had done before it got him severely injured or killed. Nighteye was out to prove a point that Togata might not survive.

“Deku would have fucking jumped on being taught by you even without your Quirk,” Bakugou said so quietly Toshinori almost missed it. Toshinori didn’t doubt it.

“If it wasn’t for him trying to save you, I never would have considered for him that Quirk you know…” Toshinori sighed. “He asked me before if he could become a pro hero and I said no.” What a mistake that had been. Who knows what would’ve happened after Toshinori crushed his hopes and dreams? Nothing good. Nothing ever good came of such harshness to a child.

“How the fuck did you even know who he was?”

“The villain who attacked you had in fact attacked young Midoriya first. I rescued him from certain death.” Toshinori, sank further into his seat than he thought was possible. More like delayed the poor boy’s death. How was he going to tell Inko Midoriya about what happened to her son? It ultimately
fell to him… but nothing he rehearsed sounded nearly good enough for a woman who was now almost catatonic.

“Fuck, so he…” Bakugou was clearly struggling.

“Yes, he knew exactly what was going to happen if he got too close and he did it anyway,” Toshinori sighed more deeply than he ever had before.

“I fucking told him to jump off a building that morning you know, so he could get a Quirk in the next life,” Bakugou said suddenly and Toshinori froze and his eyes flicked upwards. “But I guess a fucking villain attack was just as good in the end, wasn’t it?” Young Bakugou’s face was so heavily pinched that it filled Toshinori with dread about what was coming next.

“Why, young Bakugou? Why would you say such an awful thing to someone?” Toshinori could guess why after meeting boy’s mother. What sort of parent blamed their child for being kidnapped by a number of adults?

“He never had a fucking Quirk,” Bakugou bit out. “All my parents fucking did was Quirk this, Quirk fucking that. All Might’s got a great Quirk! And you know what? The were full of fucking shit,” Bakugou spat so viciously Toshinori saw the spittle fly. “What Deku wanted to do had nothing to fucking do with a Quirk. He wanted to help people and all that really needs is some fucking problem solving.”

“He has already proved that in more combat orientated areas, hasn’t? He made it all the way to Todoroki before he had to use One For All in any great capacity.” Bakugou wasn’t wrong. Any Quirkless person competent with a sniper rifle would make short work of Toshinori even with One For All. They were all in the end quite human, as young Midoriya had proven.

“I was at home and I fucking walked in on the hag saying to my old man that if Deku had better control he could have punched the building away,” Bakugou hissed into his crossed arms. “We had a fight about it, I called her useless and said if she started talking shit again I was going to blow her arms off and see how well she did.”

That was… a tad graphic, even by young Bakugou’s standards. “Isn’t that bit harsh?” Also criminal, but Toshinori was going to give him a pass. He wouldn’t have been much better in the same circumstances, not after already living through it.

“Fuck no. I spent over a fucking decade treating him like shit because of that bullshit. Fifteen fucking years.” Thumping the table again, Bakugou stared. “And you know what I found out checking out those Quirks? That Quirks don’t mean fucking shit. Like Deku used to say, there’s too many to count, but that doesn’t mean shit if you’ve got the wrong matchup or they can take you out another way. Who can counter a fucking nuke being set off?”

Just about no one, Toshinori silently answered. He’d looked before to try and counter All For One’s more destructive tendencies to no avail. One day… maybe.

“I spent all those years treating him and those kids I grew up with like shit… and you know what I found out?” Toshinori hand was hidden under the table with Aizawa’s contacts drawn up while young Bakugou fumed. “Stain murdered Tsubasa, one of the kids who used to hang out with us in elementary school. Neither of us even got an invite to the fucking funeral.”

Midway through the motion, Toshinori’s finger halted. “What? When did this happen and how did you find out?” Stain had murdered a child? Why wasn’t this in the newspapers? Stain’s reputation would’ve been flushed down the proverbial toilet, never to be seen or heard from again.
“His grandfather told me when I saw him. Gave me his fucking condolences for Deku. Should have been clearer telling him to shove them up his arse. Guy was always a condescending prick.”

“Unbelievable…..” What were the odds? Apart from being extremely small.

“Deku does all that fucking work, with me out to get him, with Tsubasa out to get him, everyone out to get him…then he goes and fucking dies, saving me. So what was the fucking point? If Quirks have nothing do with fucking anything, why did I-I, why the fuck did I treat him like shit because of it? Why the fuck did I think he was lying and hiding shit from me? What the fuck was wrong with me?” Bakugou was scrubbing at his face, but Toshinori had already seen the tears.

“You’re a child, young Bakugou and you are what your parents and the people around make you,” Toshinori explained gently. “If your parents tell you one thing and the rest of society agrees with it, then logically what else are you meant to think?”

“I shouldn’t have been a brainless fucking idiot and I should have told them to fuck off,” Bakugou tried to snap through heaving sobs. “Fucking Deku didn’t need people telling him what to fucking do.”

“No,” Toshinori sighed, “he just broke the law and got away with it whenever he felt like.” Until it caught up with him. Young Midoriya wasn’t the sort to stridently follow the law if he thought an injustice was taking place.

“I wouldn’t fucking be here if he hadn’t, so why fuck do people only talk about Quirks? They don’t even fucking see them the way Deku did. They don’t know shit.” No one really saw Quirks the way young Midoriya did… well, that was a lie. There was one other person who had that in common with him.

Grimacing in spite of himself, Toshinori answered. “The only person I’ve seen treat Quirks with as much attention as young Midoriya is All For One. I used to wonder what would happen if the two ever met.”

“Deku would give him shit for his combinations,” Bakugou said with the most certainty Toshinori had heard during the boy’s visit. “Either that or fucking start asking about them midway through them trying to kill each other like they were having tea or some shit.”

“Yes, I can see that happening.” It said a lot about both All For One and young Midoriya that Toshinori could imagine both of those situations with some clarity. Something that was never going to happen with a small child’s corpse instead of a quiet boy who loved what he did.

“So what the fuck do I do now? Everything’s fucking bullshit.”

His entire world ripped out from under him, just like so many others who had lost someone and so young too. “All you can do is carry on, young Bakugou. Now that you know it was never true, you can improve upon how you treat people and help others.” And prevent another Izuku Midoriya from ever happening, to stop another pointless death.

“It’s not gonna bring back Deku.”

“It never does, but we do what we can.”

Toshinori pretended to ignore Bakugou’s quiet sobs and leapt for a distraction. Ah! “So, young Bakugou, how the goes pain clinic.”

Then Bakugou exploded a second time. “Listen to this shit and tell me what you think…”
Izuku couldn’t speak. If All Might’s wounds had been jaw dropping, All For One’s were in another category entirely. The man shouldn’t have been alive. The texture had been one thing, but even with the fine detail obscured by sunglasses, Izuku could see the ropey scar tissue that had replaced almost every dominant feature on the man’s face. All For One was a literal faceless man. Izuku stared. Not quite as much as he’d stared at his gown which had T-shirt stamped across it in bold lettering, but stared none the less.

All Might was down a stomach, his lungs damaged… all from that central penetrating wound. All For One though had sustained serious damage to his skull, breathing through the gaping hole in his throat… With this context, Izuku could only draw comparisons to an animal attack more than any fight between heroes and villains. As if if two polar bears had savaged each other over territory.

All For One patted Izuku on the shoulder and Izuku jumped. Izuku hadn’t seen him move. “I’m glad I warned you before you got some semblance of sight back.” That was nice of him. Or manipulative. Either way, warning wasn’t ever going to cure the reality.

“What… what did you two do to each other?” Izuku whispered, feeling ill. There was no way they both weren’t going for the kill. All Might wouldn’t have made it without Recovery Girl. All For One wouldn’t have made it without his Quirks. Both husks of what they used to be in their primes. So much violence for what? What caused this? What convinced All Might that All For One had to be deader than dead with those injuries? Izuku had a sneaking suspicion but plenty of other criminals hadn’t been so badly brutalised by All Might.

“Admittedly, it probably was somewhat excessive, in hindsight.” Now Izuku could see All For One shrug. The slightest creasing of the suit around his shoulders, how closely he was nestled to Izuku’s person and him likely being there for months overseeing his unconscious body. Izuku almost wished he didn’t have his sight back. “Too little, too late now.”

“Why? Why do it in the first place?” Izuku breathed out. “What’s the point?” Was it worth living like this after the fact?

“I can’t speak for All Might, but for me it was definitely worth it,” All For One nodded. What was worth dying or nearly dying for someone who was so old?

“What was so important that you almost killed yourself doing it?”

“Was saving your classmates really worth your life?” All For One instead asked, his chin resting on folded fingers.

“Yes,” Izuku answered without hesitation and saw All For One’s immediate frown.

“I would see your point more if Bakugou wasn’t involved in that rescue,” All For One slipped in and Izuku was left wondering what his problem with Kacchan was in the first place. Surely the televised Sports Festival hadn’t left that much of a bad impression? “Oh well, but you can understand the sort of area that would compel such risk taking.” Something time sensitive.

Then it clicked. “You were protecting something?” Izuku squinted at All For One who leaned back away from the light, cloaking what was little of his face in shadow. “Something worth more than you?” Izuku asked, more of himself than All For One. What was worth more than their own person to someone with a deliberately acquired longevity Quirk?

“Whatever gives you that impression?” All For One smoothly asked and Izuku resisted the urge to
fidget. He wasn’t the one who had to give answers here.

“Your age,” Izuku said after a moment of thought. “You’ve outlived people before. That means the only things that matter are ones that you can’t outlive.” All For One didn’t strike Izuku as a terribly material person either. Not with the barebones quality of the room and everything else. His suit was fine in quality, but how much of that was to avoid it chafing on scar tissue? It was something… something like a person. Was it a person All For One was protecting?

“Is there anything about me that you can’t use as ammunition?” All For One leaned back into the light. A deflection. Izuku wasn’t getting any continuity from that topic.

Izuku shook his head and All For One smirked.

“Though that does raise a question…” Izuku braced himself. “Why is that you put your friends ahead of yourself when you threw them out the way? You knew what was coming and made no attempt to save yourself, from your lack of defensive wounds.” Izuku blinked. That was a really strange change in topic, even for All For One.

“Oh, that’s easy,” Izuku absentmindedly stated. “I didn’t have time and I forgot.”

“You forgot that you had a Quirk?” Not quite disbelief, but offended sounding nonetheless.

“My Quirk needs concentration to use it properly and I don’t have as much practice with it as I’d like.” And now never would. “It was so fast… I think I was just as likely to kill myself with it as the building was to fall on me.” Wincing, Izuku remembered All Might’s story about the previous wielder of One For All. Kill himself or never use his hands again.

“Your parents are preparing for your funeral because you All Might was so slow in giving you that Quirk that you forgot about it in a moment of panic.” All For One restated and Izuku shrugged. Izuku really doubted that his dad was going to be involved. Izuku’s funeral wouldn’t be missing out on too much with both Izuku himself and Hisashi missing from it.

“It’s not like even both of my parents would be at my funeral.” Izuku swallowed in a nervous laugh. Not that Izuku was sure if there’d been one or a service yet. He’d only flicked through the opening pages of All For One’s scrapbook and so far it was painting a picture of mass casualties. In those numbers, Izuku was just a very small part of a more tragic statistic. A statistic that hadn’t got much of a mention, to his relief.

In the meantime, there was silence. Complete dead air, as if All For One had held his breath.

“Why,” All For One slowly enunciated, “would you even think such a terrible thing let alone say it?” Why not? This was Hisashi they were talking about, someone Izuku hadn’t even spoken to before, let alone met.

“Because it’s true.” And Izuku didn’t have a shred of doubt behind that thought either. “I bet you there isn’t a single mention of dad anywhere in the news, that he wasn’t publicly seen with mum and he didn’t make any statements to the media. That scrapbook won’t have a single mention of him.” After shifting his weight, Izuku continued. “If he wasn’t there after Muscular almost killed me, he’s definitely not going to be around for an empty casket.” Even calling the missing man dad felt wrong. Izuku didn’t have a father. Not for a very very long time.

No response, just a deepening frown from his captor.

“That’s why taking One For All never bothered me.” Izuku shrugged. Even after All For One was flagged as being a problem, even after the injuries, Izuku had no regrets. “All Might warned me that
it can blow people apart just using it… but even if it did, I don’t think the world would stop spinning for anyone. Life goes on.” Especially not his father, wherever he was and whatever he was doing. Izuku hadn’t ever had any contact with him. Even All For One raising parents instead of parent felt odd. Odd because he used a plural. But the plural was the natural assumption, so Izuku couldn’t find a fault in the reasoning at present. All For One expected both of his parents to be there in some capacity. He was wrong.

“Because it’s only you?” All For One whispered.

“It’s only me,” Izuku confirmed. Izuku wasn’t anything special. He knew that and so did everyone else. He met All Might by chance and he was only in this position because of that chance. “Nobody else knows about my Quirk or anything else. I don’t have anyone to tell.” Kacchan and Izuku weren’t exactly friends these days… and probably never would be with Izuku in this position. The rest of 1-A… Izuku just didn’t know them that well. Not nearly enough to tell them about One For All, or his problems with the Quirk. Not well enough to place All Might at risk. All Might whose ability to use One For All was dwindling. All Might who was going to be exposed to All For One again.

“What about your mother?” Izuku’s mother was also out of the question. Telling her things had been a habit previously… but the longer Izuku went without telling her how his day was going the easier it became to not say anything at all. All it did was make her worry. Everything made her worry, but Izuku in particular made her worry. Worry she didn’t deserve. She wouldn’t have to worry anymore. No one would.

“I didn’t think it’d make her feel any better… She can’t change anything, and I couldn’t either.” Izuku couldn’t change his mother’s lack of support or her unwillingness to talk about the issue and she wasn’t willing to change it. Because of Izuku’s father? He didn’t know. “It’s just stress she didn’t need.” Not when it was inevitable. All Might and had been a thread Izuku had clung to for years. Since the beginning and now Izuku had broken it. One For All was technically in All For One’s hands… and Izuku wasn’t going to waste the hopes of anyone else after Kamino. All Might didn’t have enough left in him for a round two.

All For One flinched. “And that’s how you justify not telling her anything… that she can’t do anything to help you…” Izuku assumed the old man had forgotten the inflection for a question.

“Well,” Izuku paused awkwardly, “I don’t know if it’s because she can’t or -” Izuku swallowed nervously “-won’t. Mum wasn’t ever really happy with me wanting to be a pro hero. She never said it outright… and she never tried to help me either. So I decided to just not worry her about it.”

“She never knew how Bakugou treated you.” Another non-question. Izuku felt an involuntary twitch. How did All For One know about Kacchan’s behaviour? That wasn’t something he could glean from one event.

“No,” Izuku confirmed, watching All For One carefully. Then added to himself, “come to think of it, I never told her that I almost died on the way back from school either. I don’t think she ever would have let me anywhere near UA if she knew about that,” Izuku winced, still feeling the slime in his throat.

“When was this?”

Izuku stared at him through his darkened lenses. “Why do you care?”

“I did my homework on you, Izuku Midoriya. And nowhere in anything I could find mentioned an attempt on your life prior to UA.” Ah, All For One was annoyed at missing intel. That made more
sense.

“When I was fourteen, walking home from school. Remember the Sludge Villain that All Might saved Bakugou from?”

“Who doesn’t?” All For One’s cruel grin gave Izuku the feeling that All For One was fond of that story for completely inverted reasons compared to everyone else.

“Yeah, he came after me first. I think he would have been extremely disappointed with his selection,” Izuku idly added, wondering what sort of the horror the villain would have experienced just to snatch the body of a weak, squishy, Quirkless teenager. “That’s how I met All Might the first time.”

If All For One had eyes, Izuku was sure the fiend would’ve been staring, dumbfounded. “And they never even told your mother.”

“We… sort of never told anyone?” After All Might had offered One For All, the idea slipped his mind entirely. The less people who knew he was connected to All Might before UA the better. “No one ever said anything about it. I think I got a vague mention when I distracted him from suffocating Kacchan.” And a huge amount of scoldings from the pros there… who were doing everything but save Kacchan.

“You wouldn’t have anyway, would you.” Another creepy non-question. It made Izuku’s skin crawl.

“Why do you keep doing that?”

“Doing what, little Izuku?” He knew.

“The non-questions,” Izuku clarified, watching All For One stretch and crack the knuckles of his huge hands.

“I’m quite frankly in a state of disbelief that you almost died and, by all accounts, no one said a word to you about it.”

Izuku blinked. “Well, it’s not any different to any of the other injuries I had… The world doesn’t stop turning just because one person isn’t in it.” Not when the one person was the cause of all of the other person’s stress in life. Inko Midoriya would be a happier person if her son was anyone but Izuku. All Might… All Might was different, but saving Izuku wasn’t a fight he could win. Not anymore. Life wasn’t fair enough to let that happen.

“I have to disagree with your assessment that the world kept on spinning without you in it.” Izuku didn’t trust All For One’s deceptively level tone for a second. Not with the way the old man’s fists were clenching as he spoke. “The moment I felt the burn of your broken bones, the crushing and snapping of your hands and feet, the glass slicing through your skin… The dust in your eyes and lungs… The world stopped spinning at the exact moment I felt you disappear from Search.” All For One had to be exaggerating… but Izuku was still here and Shigaraki wasn’t.

Izuku couldn’t breathe. He was being reeled in by the same tentacles that tripped All Might. Too close. Much too close. The healing wound on his back pulled at the dressing as he was tugged over,

“If your death was so inconsequential to me, Izuku Midoriya, you wouldn’t be here in the first place.” Izuku heard All For One’s deep voice louder than ever through the man’s own ribcage, pinned as he was against him in a one armed hug that came just short of crushing him. “I’m not interested in your Quirk,” All For One murmured in Izuku’s ear. Izuku’s mind spun. All For One
had to be lying. He’d spent years trying to kill All Might. Why would he suddenly stop caring about One For All’s wielders? “If I was, I wouldn’t have pulled you from the rubble.” Unless it was to do something worse, that possibility was always present.

“I don’t believe you. I’m nothing special without One For All.” Too close, too tight. Too warm.

“Yes, which is why in the short time you’ve been awake I’ve had more ideas for Quirk combinations now than in the last century combined,” the fiend sardonically dripped.

Izuku swallowed. “It’s not that special…” Not to everyone, but then again, they thought Izuku’s speculations were a gross invasion of privacy. They weren’t like All For One who was positively giddy over Izuku’s observations. Giddy to the point of telling Tsubasa about them. Scary. Izuku still wasn’t sure how he slept with All For One in the same room.

“That’s not the only thing though.” All For One seemed to pause for a moment. While he did Izuku felt years slide away from his own lifespan and shatter on the floor. “Every time that Quirk passes on I make a comparison to my brother. I can’t help it,” All For One’s shoulders dropped and Izuku felt another another decade pass him by, his chest hurting. “It’s like an extended game of whispers and every wielder is that little bit different. Only a little.” If the story was told in the oral tradition, as it seemingly was, Izuku could understand the comparison. Who was told what this time around?

“And?”

“You’re absolutely nothing like him,” All For One said simply and Izuku froze. “The longer his life went on, the less he would engage with me. He had no tolerance for me or my ideas. What we wanted was fundamentally different.” A shrug. “His successors were much the same.”

“What did he want?” What could All For One’s brother want that made them so opposed to one another? Why was he so different to Izuku?

“He wanted me to be a slave.” Izuku’s brain skidded to a halt. That didn’t sound right, not from what All Might had told Izuku. “I saw no reason as to why Quirks couldn’t be used for personal reason or gain. Within reason, of course, I was at the forefront of putting down society’s violent undesirables long before pro heroes were in the picture after all. I rather more fear that my acts inspired the trend.” That sounded dangerously close to a vigilante… vigilantes who were the foundation of pro heroes. “But no, that wasn’t good enough for my dear, little brother, because I wanted something in return. A Quirk, a favour here and there… sometimes it was small, other times something more, but it wasn’t good enough for him.” That couldn’t be right… Pro heroes were paid for their time and that was accepted. All For One’s brother, from that description, sounded more like Stain.

“What did he want then?” Was he like Stain?

“My brother would have been largely thrilled with the pro hero system, Izuku. The idea of us being subject to the government’s whims, crushed with overwhelming force for daring to be as we are for our own interests would have suited his desires well. In his world, people only acted for the collective and never themselves.” Not entirely like Stain then, who even objected to payment. Still, expecting people to forgo all personality when there were extremist groups around hating on other types of Quirk user really should have told All For One’s brother that there was no chance of everyone agreeing to that. Hero or not, most people weren’t going to wholeheartedly defend people who actively hated them.

As for following the law, the rules were the rules for a reason… but that didn’t mean that exceptions shouldn’t be made. The Yaoyorozu family alone were basically an unlimited supply of renewable resources. Ida wouldn’t be alive if Izuku hadn’t broken the rules and nor would Kacchan. Izuku
couldn’t imagine All For One’s brother being such a stickler if he was as committed to justice as All
For One said he was. But all he had was All For One’s word for it and nothing else. Everyone else
was long gone. “Why do you think I’m different?” Izuku didn’t want to hold his breath, but All For
One’s flood of information was making thinking without hyperventilating extremely difficult.

“Answer a question first and I’ll tell you why you’re so different.”

Where was the harm? Izuku could always refuse if it was something damaging.

“Do you have any problem with me using my Quirk on people if they agree to it? If it was a form of
bartering?” All For One’s voice developed and edge and Izuku knew exactly why.

“He really didn’t like you giving and taking Quirks for favours, did he?” Izuku whispered.

“He thought that I didn’t have pure enough intentions to be offering the service.” A service All For
One still provided to this day. Wolfram was one of those end results. Wolfram who chose to take the
Quirk. Wolfram who was going to take down All Might both for profit and to repay the favour.
Wolfram who, in the end, chose to agree with that deal.

“That’s not his decision though. They’re adults, they could have said no. They chose to do a deal
with you.” These people had the ability to choose different paths, since All For One was specifying
that they had consented. If they chose to indebt themselves to someone as dangerous as All For One,
then they were no different to people taking a risk with their local drug dealer. Quirks being involved
didn’t make the exchange itself any different. Even Kacchan, for all his impulsive behaviour,
would’ve run a mile or ten if All For One offered him a Quirk for a favour.

Parents still spoke of things to their children, about strangers with offers that were too good to be
true. Izuku less so than others, he didn’t have any worthwhile genetics worth stealing. Kacchan,
Todoroki, Yaoyorozu and just about the rest of 1-A were worth kidnapping if only for genetic stock
in human trafficking. For this reason, All For One would have a rough time with a friendly greeting
let alone making deals with people.

Nothing though, prepared Izuku for All For One running his free hand through Izuku’s long woollen
locks in response. All For One was undaunted by the flinch.

“And that is why you’re different.” If Izuku wasn’t mistaken, that was relief he was hearing, an
exhalation loaded into the words. “You respect the differences of others, you compromise. You don’t
follow the rules, little Izuku. You don’t care if you have a licence or not. You’ll always do what you
think is best, regardless of the government, regardless of society. You came to Kamino to save
Bakugou even though you could have been imprisoned, you eradicated Stain’s threat without
hesitation or stumbling, you fought back against Muscular and Wolfram without a single lick of
thought for any rules.” Izuku shook. He wasn’t saying what Izuku thought he was saying, was he?
“I’m not going to begrudge you for using the system, Izuku, when I have oh so much evidence that
you see the law as more of a guideline than a hard, impassable line like my brother did. You make
compromises just like I do.”

All For One was saying what Izuku thought he was saying. It wasn’t that important, was it?

“And, you don’t know it or understand it, but that makes you one of a kind in my very long lifespan.
Unique in every sense of the word. There are many people like Tomura in the world. There’s only
one you.”

An exaggeration if Izuku had ever heard one. It was such a small thing and All For One was drawn
to it? There were other people around, willing to break the rules. Todoroki didn’t have any problems
with it and nor did Kirishima… But then again, even Uraraka thought Izuku’s Hero Journals were odd. Izuku was sure his whole class did and then there was All For One, who Izuku was almost sure to be at a midnight release if Izuku ever bothered to publish them. It still didn’t explain everything.

“That still doesn’t explain why…” Izuku pointed at All For One’s one armed grip. It didn’t explain All For One’s clinginess, or the supposed care or concern or anything about All For One’s long standing interest. The reasoning was too weak to be the whole story. All For One was at least a century over the human use by date, but that wasn’t helping Izuku either without a similarly aged reference point.

“Because you looked like you needed one, little Izuku. To be told that it’ll be alright.”

In that exact moment, Izuku was struck by a sensation, like déjà vu that’d gone terribly wrong and veered off its assigned rails. Izuku tried to hold onto it and only then with some strain did everything connect. Last time he was in this situation, there was no supervillain captor to pat him on the back and reaffirm that he was special in spite of his flaws, only his sobbing mother and her apologies.

Izuku felt part of his world implode.

Katsuki didn’t have the words to emote the shit they were doing. All of 1-A and 1-B were piled between sixty odd patients who’d volunteered for the students to practice basic medical tasks. Ponytail was chatting up Pain Numbing, Monoma was holding hands with Suspended Animation while she wept over her husbands recent death, Kirishima was spasming every time Electric Currents touched him and Katsuki flexed a numbed arm after touching Paralysis.

At least he tried to. Katsuki’s arm had fucking disappeared into the ether. He had a shoulder joint and that was it, all control was fucking gone. It hung there limply, like a noodle.

“Fuck man, you got no control over this?” Katsuki shook his shoulder and his arm flopped around limply.

Paralysis shook his head, his long bedraggled hair almost whipping Katsuki in the face. “No, if there is a way to turn it off I’ve never found it. I can only make it go further along the body.”

Flicking his arm, Katsuki felt the twinge of pain. “Guess that fucking explains why you’re here for pain management. This shit doesn’t work on that all.”

“Very inconvenient, it’s why I wear gloves,” the huge man grunted. Shame Shigaraki was too much of a dumb fuck to wear gloves. Even Round Face slept with mittens on to stop that shit playing up. Why the fuck Shigaraki never used anything to only cover one finger was out of Katsuki’s grasp. Eh, he was terminally stupid anyway.

Come to think of it, who gives a fuck? He had to see what else a Paralysis Quirk could do while taking this guy’s blood pressure. Hopefully everyone else wasn’t going to fuck up their part of the plan.

Speaking of the plan, that was Kirishima’s phone ringing. It was go time and Monoma better have his shit together for this one. Katsuki hadn’t gone to all the effort of blowing up that bathroom just for them not to use it.

Neito was so glad he hadn’t botched his part of the plan. Yet. That didn’t mean he wasn’t running
out of time, crammed into an empty disabled bathroom with an Out Of Order sign precariously hanging off the front of it. The cleaners weren’t scheduled until the next hour and hopefully it would stay that way. Them being early would be a disaster.

Hitoshi Shinsou was glaring holes through the back of his head while Neito tended to Kirishima who may or may not have been out cold. He definitely wasn’t breathing. Neito had been left with the more confidential testing of the Suspended Animation Quirk and Bakugou was not going to be happy. Nor was Shinsou who probably thought he’d been inadvertently drafted into a crime by Uraraka’s teary askance for help. Neito hadn’t seen her cry before… and he really didn’t want to see it again.

“Are you going to tell me why I had to mimic the voice of Kirishima’s mother?” Shinsou stated so bluntly that Neito could only wince at the lack of finesse. “And why is he so still?” A fidget with his mouthpiece.

“A Suspended Animation Quirk. You were his getaway excuse,” Neito called over his shoulder as he manned the borrow stethoscope. No heart beat either and no breaths. No pulse. Monoma pricked Kirishima’s finger with a lancet and no blood appeared either. Kirishima was clinically dead at the moment even if he didn’t look it. That was very very bad. Neito touched Kirishima and he resumed breathing, as if nothing ever happened. His finger gleamed red.

“We good, Monoma?” Kirishima asked breezily, no different than before. Neito had the sense to forewarn Kirishima if he couldn’t be reverted. In which case, they were all screwed anyway.

“We’re good. Midoriya probably isn’t,” Neito frowned. “The lady whose Quirk I borrowed has a house full of preserved insects. All of them are still technically living, but are under the influence of her Quirk.”

“How exactly is that a problem? Why is Midoriya not good?” Shinsou was glancing between them and Neito resisted the urge to say something unpleasant. Midoriya had some respect for Shinsou and maybe after a proper introduction, Neito would too.

Instead, he took a deep breath. “All Might has asked us to investigate a number of Quirk types that were recently stolen. He suspects that All For One, the villain who flattened Kamino, is holding him captive. We can’t tell anyone outside in case it gets back to said villain in question.”

“Suspended Animation is one of the Quirks then,” Shinsou nodded with wide eyes. Ah, there was the panic. No one else had seemed that concerned… apart from Mineta, but Mineta was the sort who seemed to grasp exactly what sort of outcome usually awaited people like Midoriya. Permanent disability was one of the nicer outcomes. Mineta cried over the rest.

“Yes, along with Pain Numbing, Paralysis and Electrical Currents. They’re not the exact same specific Quirks he took, but normally Quirks with the same typings have similar characteristics. We’re trying to work out exactly what All For One would be doing with these Quirks.” Monoma gestured grandly around their temporary and filthy base of operations. Leaving sooner would be better than later. “The problem with Suspended Animation is that this flavour of the Quirk has held insects in suspension for well over sixty years.”

“Oh shit,” Kirishima whispered and Neito winced.

“Why is that an issue?” Shinsou asked Kirishima.

“All For One’s like over a hundred, maybe even two or three hundred. He’s got a longevity Quirk and a bunch of others which means he and Midoriya can just outlive everyone if Midoriya’s in
suspension,” Kirishima explained around his finger, which had been unceremoniously jammed into his mouth.

“The other bad thing is that if what All For One obtained is in any way similar to this Quirk, then Midoriya being clinically dead might not matter. He freezes him until he can find a suitable healing Quirk.” Then Midoriya wakes up three hundred years old with only that psychopath for company. Bakugou was going to kill someone when he heard about what these Quirks did. Electrical Currents wasn’t any better. “Normally those properties don’t matter because the Quirk will fade with lifespan of the wielder. It’s not the case for All For One. He’ll keep on going well after the rest of us are dead.”

“Then unfreezes him as if nothing ever happened…” Shinsou fell into a crouch. “The news said Midoriya was missing.”

“That’s technically the truth. He’s missing, but we know who has him and we think we know why,” Neito nodded. “With your mimicry gear we can skirt some of our scheduling arrangements to do further investigations.”

“When I agreed to to help it was mainly curiosity… but this…” Shinsou waved a hand. “I’m not even in the Heroics course.”

“Who cares?” Kirishima groaned from the bathroom wall. “Rumours are you’ll be in there sometime soon.”

“Only if I pass the exam,” Shinsou shook his head. “I figured you all might be… upset if Eraserhead gives me Midoriya’s place in 1-A,” Shinsou almost cautiously broached and Neito had enough dignity not to snort. “Bakugou in particular seems to be sensitive.”

“Everyone is sensitive about the issue, but who knows if Midoriya’s even going to be in a position to rejoin the class? Months with a mass murderer isn’t going to help his grades.” Neito had been told about the Noumu. Shinsou didn’t deserve that much horror in what was their first proper meeting. Uraraka had set this up, after all. He would have to be eased into their plan.

“You’re not worried about my Quirk?”

Brainwashing… Why ever would Neito or anyone else be worried about that? It just meant that Shinsou needed a hand with any schemes, much like Neito himself.

“Nah, Monoma’s in the same boat. We’re cool.” Kirishima got to it before Neito could, which was a relief. “We should get the signal any time now…”

Neito waited.

“YOU MOTHERFUCKER!” Bakugou’s dulcet tones echoed through the walls.

There it was.

“Cleaner’s coming, time to go.”

“You are extremely strange people.”

“You get used to it.”

Chapter End Notes
My medication is screwing with my vision yet again, but here we go.
Izuku Midoriya was no Tomura Shigaraki. The doctor watched the odd pairing hobble down the hallway, one slow step between each sharp barb between them. Midoriya was hanging onto his IV pole for dear life while Sensei had an arm wrapped around him on the other side. Midoriya was distinctly favouring the IV pole.

“I still don’t know,” Midoriya said between gasps of air, “what possessed you to take on All Might in his own field.” It was all the doctor could do to carry on and not allow his jaw to crash to the floor. “I don’t know what you were trying to prove, but it didn’t work,” the boy gasped.

The doctor made a stringent attempt to appear busy and distracted as they passed him without a glance.

“Isn’t it obvious?” Sensei answered while Midoriya took another step.

“No, because you should have worked it out when you lost the first time,” Midoriya wheezed and the doctor felt his heart notably stall.

Sensei chuckled. “My harshest critic.”

Midoriya was shaking his head. “You stopped to taunt him the first time, didn’t you?” Midoriya was asking between breaths. The doctor felt the air grow denser.

“What gave you that impression?” The doctor would have mistaken it for offence if Sensei’s voice didn’t wobble as he spoke.

“All of Kamino,” Midoriya sighed. “You’re meant to brag after you win, you know.” Matter of fact and tired, it didn’t sound like something new. An old argument they’d had before, perhaps?

“But I did win.”

“He beat you so badly he thought he killed you for six years.”

“That’s his mistake then.”

“You’re the one who wanted one last dig and gave him that opening,” Midoriya tiredly fired back. How did Midoriya even know what happened? It was never made public anywhere. Sensei certainly never discussed it. Not with any of them.

“Why do we always have this discussion?” Sensei sighed theatrically.

“You never answer simple ques-” Midoriya wheezed and fell straight into Sensei’s waiting arms. If
that had been Shigaraki, Sensei no doubt would have been a second too late catching him.

“Time for a break, I think.” Nor would there have been any breaks with Shigaraki.

“Just a short one,” Midoriya was insisting, struggling in Sensei’s leisurely grip. Together, they both sank into seats at the midway point in the edge of the doctor’s eye.

“What’s your problem with All Might anyway?” Midoriya was still partially slouched against Sensei, grimacing the whole time.

“I thought that was obvious,” Sensei drawled, an arm pinning Midoriya to him. Midoriya glared back at Sensei.

“How is he any different to anyone else who’s tried to kill you?” Midoriya paused for a moment. “Apart from him temporarily succeeding,” was then added, almost as an afterthought. “You seemed to have a problem with him even before that happened.”

“How would you know about that?” That was an excellent question. How did Midoriya know anything about this? He was nine when Sensei was maimed by All Might.

“All Might’s debut… it was you, wasn’t it? You were the reason he had to rescue all those people. You blew up the buildings so he was distracted and you could escape,” Midoriya was nodding and the doctor felt time stand still. “It happened more than once. An unknown villain attack, lots of damage and time consuming rescues… but they never named you.” All of a sudden, it was very very cold in the hallway. “It’s a pattern.” And Midoriya was quite skilled at spotting patterns, wasn’t he? How interesting. How observant.

“You seem certain it was me.” Sensei’s lack of invitation did little to deter Midoriya. Little Quirkless Midoriya who never seemed particularly bothered or surprised by anything Sensei did, unless it involved physical contact. Then the boy flinched and the doctor had his theories of course, and Sensei wasn’t particularly overjoyed with any of those conclusions. In fact, Sensei was quite temperamental about those conclusions.

“All Might was bleeding from the head in his debut,” Midoriya pointed out. “That almost never happened… unless it was with the unknown villain.” He seemed to hesitate for a moment than continued. “It was just like Kamino.”

Sensei paused. Then he laughed. “You’re identifying me based on my wounding patterns now?”

“It was you, then,” Midoriya bobbed his head in triumph and Sensei’s hand ran through it. Midoriya shuddered. Shigaraki had never seemed bothered by contact, but Midoriya clearly wasn’t the same.

“Yes, it was me. Little point in attempting to hide when I’ve already been caught,” Sensei confirmed.

“So why…” Midoriya twitched his head.

“Why him over the others?” After a moment of consideration, Sensei continued. “How does anyone tolerate a living lie? All Might’s little Symbol of Peace stunt was only ever going to last as long as he did. He lived a lie long after his use by date as well.” The old problem. All Might wasn’t a long term solution to societal discord, as Sensei had pointed out numerous times. The moment his time passed, the crime rate would skyrocket. A temporary solution at best. A poor solution at best.

Midoriya blinked, then after a few seconds inclined his head. “Aren’t you the same, though?” The doctor almost choked on his own tongue and saw Sensei’s hand turn Midoriya’s head to look at him. What Sensei was trying to find, the doctor didn’t know.
“You think that I’m living a lie?” Sensei asked. Cautious.

Midoriya nodded. “You never sound happy about what you do,” the boy said simply. “You maimed All Might… but you don’t sound happy talking about it. Angry, vindictive, but not happy.” Midoriya was taking his time, face set into a frown. “Which… makes sense, I think, because All Might liked every part of his job… unless you or paperwork came up.” The boy knew All Might that well? How closely had he been planted? Presumably that’s what he was, to match his green colour. It would be within Sensei’s type of humour. “He wasn’t happy about having to deal with you.”

Sensei exhaled sharply. “If you weren’t told about me, then why did he entrust you with his backstory?” Why was the backstory of All Might even significant? He was a thorn with a grudge, nothing more. So why was this an important point in the conversation?

“To help people,” Midoriya enunciated, as if he was speaking to a child. As if Midoriya was the one with over a century of life experience, not Sensei. “The whole world doesn’t revolve around you.” Then, so quietly the doctor almost missed it in a clutter of paper. “You’re as bad as Kacchan.”

“Did you just compare me to Katsuki Bakugou?” Sensei recoiled as if Midoriya had burned him. The doctor would have cracked a smile if it wasn’t certain death.

“Stop behaving like him then,” came zipping straight back. “Not everything is about you.”

“First a comparison to All Might, now one to Bakugou. You wound me, Izuku.” The doctor couldn’t risk a glance to see Sensei’s body language, but something about the tone of his voice made the doctor’s hair stand up on the back of his neck.

“You don’t like what you do and you don’t like Kacchan who Shigaraki was after.” Midoriya took a deep breath. “So why do you keep doing it if you don’t want to be here?” That was another excellent question. Midoriya was full of excellent questions. Questions which he shouldn’t have been able to ask in the first place.

“You act as though I have a choice in the matter.” The doctor saw a bead of water splatter on the page in front of him and cringed. Fortunately, neither of the pair with their supernatural hearing turned an eye to him.

“What’s stopping you?” Midoriya was pushing and Sensei was frowning.

“All Might.” Sensei waved a hand dismissively.

“That’s not all of it.” Midoriya was wriggling away as best as he could, but Sensei still had him trapped. “Even when All Might thought you were dead you didn’t try to leave. You made the Noumu instead, why?” The doctor attempted not to bristle at his lack of noted involvement. The children were not a single person effort by any means. “You could have bowed out, your name isn’t known.” The doctor held his breath.

“But the memories of me didn’t fade from him or his associates. They spent years hunting for me long after my supposed death,” Sensei hissed. “So much time lost.” Things would have proceeded much smoother with Sensei’s involvement at an earlier point in time, but Sensei had never taken that initiative. No matter how many times it was raised he’d always refused, hunting for a solution to his injuries from the shadows. “I never had an option.” Then why hadn’t Sensei simply said that in the first place?

“That’s not true. You had the option… but something made you choose against it.” The doctor was sure he and Midoriya both had the exact same expression of dawning realisation. “This is about what
you’re guarding, isn’t it?” Fumbling, the doctor attempted not to drop the beakers he was marking at the trolley. Sensei was guarding something… That was news to him.

“You seem awfully fixated on that idea.” Not an encouraging response.

“Because I’m right… I just need more for confirmation,” the boy insisted and the doctor had to stop himself from staring at a child who was provoking Sensei without a single drop of fear behind it. No conception of his impending demise. “Then again, it might be too late.” Midoriya was whispering to himself.

“Oh? Why would going back be too late now?” Sensei dragged Midoriya closer. “You’ve changed your mind?”

“Does…” Midoriya swallowed. “Does whatever you’re guarding… know… what you’ve done?” Midoriya whispered and the doctor skidded to the halt in the middle of putting a bottle away. The real question was a question of complicity. Was there another person of interest that Sensei hadn’t told anyone about?

“No,” All For One said softly and the doctor almost dropped the bottle. Who? Who was it? Why didn’t they know? Who was Sensei hiding?

Midoriya groaned. “You know how they’re going to react, don’t you?”

“Much the same way you did,” Sensei flippantly replied and Midoriya bristled like a hedgehog. Sensei was hiding someone… and they most likely didn’t even know it.

“I don’t think you understand how people feel about what you’ve done,” Midoriya said slowly. “If you did that to one person, then you’re capable of doing that to them. You’re a threat, especially with your history.” A history Midoriya was somehow familiar with.

“I wasn’t,” Sensei murmured, “not back then. I never chose to be the the villain in this story.”

“Oh!” Midoriya perked up, beaming. “That’s why you never sound happy about what you do.”

The doctor sympathised with Sensei’s long suffering sigh, he really did. “Can I say anything to you without you reading into it?”

“No.” Midoriya was shameless. And fearless. “Who took it away from you?” Midoriya had inserted an arm between Sensei and himself and was doing his best to crowbar the older man’s arm off him. Not to much avail, but him trying it in the first place was unsettling.

“People like All Might did,” Sensei muttered.

“That doesn’t answer my full question.” If Midoriya survived this encounter, the doctor wasn’t sure how he was going to treat the boy after the fact.

“You can’t help yourself, can you?” Sensei rested a hand on Midoriya’s head and the doctor felt time slow again. This was it…

Midoriya winced. “No… I don’t think I made friends at school because of it.”

Sensei’s hand sank into the boy’s hair, disappearing into green curls. “You deserve so much better,” he sighed. And the window was gone. Sensei was lingering longer than he should have, nestled as he was against Midoriya.
Midoriya didn’t reply. He seemed to have been distracted staring at his hand with the drip into it, as if the prospect of what was happening had broken some part of his brain.

“But I suppose we should at least make it back the back we came.”

And it started again, as if their break hadn’t happened.

“Air pressure… why didn’t you add a fire Quirk to it and make it a flamethrower? He isn’t immune to fire, you know.”

“What is it with you and setting things on fire? You know precisely why I can’t.”

“What does it have to do with me? You set Kamino on fire, remember? And you already picked a fight with All Might so why not…” Then the two trailed off up around the corner.

Only then did the doctor allow himself to slump onto the trolley and mop at his sweating brow. Midoriya should be dead. Anyone else would be dead. The brazenness, the sheer disrespect. Whatever link Midoriya had to Sensei wasn’t what the same as what Sensei had with Shigaraki. Midoriya was being rewarded for his snide observations, even if he didn’t realise it. A child with no grasp of physical contact, who didn’t realise what it meant.

No, Izuku Midoriya was no Tomura Shigaraki. Never had Shigaraki been so cutthroat towards his Sensei. Never had Shigaraki been treated as though he were in any way equal. Midoriya wasn’t a mere pawn. With the way Sensei had reshuffled the board to preserve Midoriya, there were the markings of a king or queen that Sensei was moving away from obliteration. The question remained though… why had Sensei left such an important piece on the other side?

Unless, perhaps, Midoriya was no piece at all, but another hand at the board.

Kurogiri didn’t have enough dread left in him for Yagi’s visits. There wasn’t enough energy left for that man. Not with the constant restraints and the gruel he was fed according to Tartarus prison warden standards. What felt like months of drilling had ruined the smell of coffee for him for an indefinite period. Then, as though his thoughts had summoned him, the door bounced off the wall with a clang as Yagi marched in, a tray of nine coffees held on a tray. Nine. Kurogiri held back a whimper.

Most notably was his lack of a partner in crime. Tsukauchi who seemed to be as pained by Yagi’s antics as Kurogiri himself. That didn’t stop Yagi from slamming shut the door and dropping into his normal seat between Kurogiri and the door.

“No Tsukauchi today?” Kurogiri coldly asked. Tsukauchi who at least behaved like a standard detective and not Yagi, who crawled out of a CIA black site to ply his trades elsewhere. If it wasn’t for his accent, Kurogiri would have pegged Yagi for a tried and true American.

“He’s caught in traffic, something about a seven car pileup,” Yagi waved a hand. “He’ll be with us shortly.”

Provided there was any traffic and Tsukauchi wasn’t already here somewhere. “I doubt that.”

“You would say that, being a warper,” Yagi snorted. “Have you ever seen the expressways?” Yagi let out a low whistle. “I sometimes wonder if the designer for the Tokyo Expressway was someone
working for your boss, because that right there—” Yagi waved a biscuit “—is the work of a real sadist. Be thankful you’ve never had to drive in it.” Only… Kurogiri had driven in it, what felt like a lifetime ago.

Kurogiri rolled his eyes. “Sensei would never demean himself to those levels.”

“You wanna bet?” Yagi gestured. “I think him going after Izuku Midoriya was a pretty low and petty thing for him to demean himself with.”

Kurogiri’s breath froze in his lungs. Izuku Midoriya… What did Izuku Midoriya have to do with anything? Kurogiri had been instructed to keep Tomura Shigaraki away from the UA student. Why would Sensei be directly involved? He had only wanted information on the student. There were no signs of anything untoward.

Instead, he took deep breaths. “I’m unaware of what you could be referring to.”

“Midoriya’s murder,” Yagi said so bluntly and so darkly that a crushing weight ripped the air from Kurogiri’s lungs.

“What?” Kurogiri wheezed with no air to draw in. Instead there was just pain.

“Your Sensei dropped a skyscraper on him,” Yagi drawled from around a cup of coffee. “Fifteen year old that never hurt a fly. And your Sensei killed him.” Kurogiri couldn’t… get… air… “Just standing there minding his own business and a building comes flying at him. Sounds petty to me.”

“Why?” Kurogiri gasped. It didn’t make sense. Sensei hadn’t indicated he wanted the boy’s death. He was curious, not hostile.

“You tell me, Kurogiri. You work for him. Why would he want a teenager dead? Did Midoriya sneeze in his cereal?” Yagi was leaning forwards, watching Kurogiri struggle with total indifference. “I’m only here because of Midoriya. His case landed on my table, so tell me Kurogiri - why did All For One want him dead?”

To answer, or not to answer? Unlike previous times, there was no release. Yagi’s face hadn’t lost it’s edge, there was no Tsukauchi to hold him back and Kurogiri… couldn’t… breathe! Tsukauchi must have been stuck in traffic. Why was he letting this happen? Where were the others? Why weren’t they helping?

Tick tock. Too long without air. No one was coming. No one would come, if Sensei hadn’t already. Sensei who was so ill, so much lost from what he once was. Surely it wasn’t that important? Wasn’t when the boy was already dead?

“Fine,” Kurogiri hissed with what was left and the weight lifted. And the pressure was gone, he slumped into his restraints inhaling as deeply as he dared. Yagi allowed him to just breathe for a few moments.

“You have to understand Kurogiri, that I’m not here because I want to ride your ass,” Yagi explained. “We’re here because a mother doesn’t understand where her son went and why he’s never coming home again.” Flexing his fingers, there was an underlying menace to Yagi that sent chills down Kurogiri’s spine and lungs. “So what happened?” Yagi pushed forwards an untouched cup of coffee and Kurogiri eyed it.

A peace offering? Was it really as simple as giving away what he knew of the boy? Something that was, all things considered, not that much. Nothing vital to Sensei’s operations, more like a curiosity. A dead curiosity.
Nodding slowly, Kurogiri spoke. “He was curious about Izuku Midoriya.”

“Only curious?” Yagi asked, lifting the cup to Kurogiri’s mouth for a sip. It was warm… and didn’t taste like gruel. There were probably four sugars in it. Yagi had a sweet tooth. How unlike the person drinking it. “What do you mean?”

“He said that the boy developed a Quirk,” Kurogiri explained after another searing mouthful. “Children… don’t typically develop Quirks without outside influence.”

“Not without your Sensei’s help, you mean,” Yagi was nodding, his features set. All Might knew who Sensei was, it made sense that knowledge of his Quirk would have been passed to the police. The secret was out.

“I-I don’t know,” Kurogiri shuddered, half expecting the crushing sensation, but it never appeared. “He wanted everything that could be found on the boy. School records, friends, movements, any known involvement in operations, information on his Quirk’s registration. He watched UA’s Sports Festival to see for himself….” Sensei, in hindsight, was almost obsessive in regards to Izuku Midoriya. “He wanted to know why the boy’s Quirk kept damaging him.”

There was something deeply unsettling about the feral expression on Yagi’s face. The way his lips peeled back to expose teeth in a feral snarl of an expression. Something that prompted Kurogiri to keep going. “He never wanted anything about Izuku Midoriya’s parents though.” Kurogiri tacked on, almost in desperation. “There were no indications that…” That Sensei was going to drop a building on a child, but Kurogiri had the impression that saying such a thing to Yagi would be unwise.

“And you expect me to think he had wholesome reasons for wanting this information?” Yagi bit out. “The kid is dead.”

Kurogiri helplessly shrugged. “I-I was told to keep an eye on Tomura Shigaraki’s interest in Izuku Midoriya and…” It was make or break to give away this tidbit of information. “To keep Tomura Shigaraki away from the boy.”

Yagi settled back in his chair, his frown deepening. “So, what? He was trying to shield the kid?”

“I was told not to discuss anything I learned about the boy with Tomura Shigaraki,” Kurogiri confessed. Was Sensei shielding Izuku Midoriya? He didn’t know. No one really knew the inner thoughts of Sensei apart from Sensei himself.

“Then why is he dead? Turns out Shigaraki wasn’t the main threat to Midoriya after all.” No… no he wasn’t. Why indeed. Sensei had never displayed ill will of any sort towards Izuku Midoriya. An information hoarding obsession yes, but not hostility. It was secretive to say the least.

“I think… it may have been accident,” Kurogiri whispered. “There were never any plans or signs that he was targeting the boy. Nothing.” Absolutely nothing that Kurogiri could divine from Sensei’s limited response. Sensei hadn’t gone out of his way to not allow Tomura Shigaraki to execute his plans near Izuku Midoriya, but the latter seemed to be able to take care of himself to some extent.

“But he knew about him as far back as the USJ incident, didn’t he?” Yagi prodded. Yagi, straight faced, narrowed eyes… It made Kurogiri’s skin crawl.

Kurogiri nodded, feeling lost. “He recognised him.”

“Did he now?” Yagi’s eye’s widened just a miniscule. “How would he even know about such a plain kid?”
Kurogiri shrugged. “I don’t know anything else.” At least not about Izuku Midoriya. The mystery who held Sensei’s attention.

“Not my problem,” Yagi grunted, “I’m only here for Midoriya’s matter. Whatever else you’ve done is someone else’s problem. You scratch my back and I’m out of your misty hair.”

Kurogiri had to stop himself from crying with relief. Anything to get rid of Yagi. Anything.

Momo didn’t want to say it. 1-A was full of bright students and even the least studious student could see the writing on the wall. No one really wanted to say it, but even Ida agreed that there was only one sane conclusion to come to with this information.

Izuku Midoriya was still alive. Being alive didn’t mean he was technically living though, not in the common meaning sense of the word. What condition he was in was beyond what they had for exact speculation, but as a collective they could hazard a guess. It wasn’t a guess any of them wanted to spend a prolonged period dwelling on, but it was a guess nonetheless. A guess Bakugou was taking particularly poorly.

Pain Numbing was obvious, it would have stripped alarming sensations from Midoriya. sensations that would have made him aware that something was wrong with his state of being. And, if there was no pain medications being given, Midoriya would have no reason to believe than any major problems were still in effect if he woke up after… after what happened. He would be totally oblivious to his pain receptors screaming at him. Shock was also a substantial reason for death, but if pain could be staved off then so could part of the injury. Namely the ensuing panic from the patient’s realisation that they had the injury. With the severity of Midoriya’s injuries, such a Quirk was almost a requirement if All For One wanted him to survive the initial impact. An impact Momo predicted.

Paralysis went hand in hand with Pain Numbing. Midoriya could be subdued and operated on without any ability to resist and no conception of any alterations made to him in surgery. It was a logical and perhaps necessary choice if All For One was avoiding the risks associated with conventional anaesthetics. If Midoriya was already close to clinically dead, then it was another factor that could be mitigated with suitable Quirk usage. It was also a restraint itself, given the destructiveness of Midoriya’s Quirk. Midoriya helpless, unable to move, subdued by the stolen Quirk of a monster… Momo shook herself from the imagery.

Electrical Currents was an unusual choice at first glance, but control of nerves gave All For One control of a person. Nerves themselves were chemical receptors with currents passing through them. With enough time it was possible to puppeteer people and All For One had nothing but time, if Bakugou wasn’t fibbing about the villain’s age. Midoriya would have no understanding that he was still injured and no ability to resist his strings being pulled. Between Pain Numbing, Paralysis and Electrical Currents, it would be simple for All For One to restrain Midoriya without use of chemical restraints. He would be aware of everything, though how much would be muddied by brain damage was a guess at best.

Suspended Animation by far was the most concerning. Kirishima and Monoma had both reported back that all biological functions halted and went into hibernation from the type of Quirk they had tested. If what All For One had taken was in any way similar, they might be waiting decades before so much as a clue as to Midoriya’s whereabouts surfaced. Or, they might have all passed away with old age before a whisper of him was heard. Even if All For One wasn’t limited by time, Midoriya was now in that same category if that Quirk was in operation. Both of them untouched by time or decay. Midoriya trapped, completely unaware of the outside world until he was needed for whatever depraved ideas lurked in All For One’s mind.
Midoriya, who was like that because she let them use her tracker. Bakugou at least been retrieved whole, while not necessarily happy. There was no guarantee that even if Midoriya was retrieved that he wasn’t going to be reduced to the same state as All For One’s other victims, the Noumu. Shells to be wielded against his enemies. Entities with only the vaguest comparisons to a normal human. Midoriya wouldn’t be Midoriya anymore, but they couldn’t just leave him. He didn’t deserve that, no one did.

None of them could come up with a better reason for why someone like Midoriya had been taken. Midoriya who was a shy, but enthusiastic boy when it came to Quirks and his studies. Midoriya whose Quirk was capable of destroying mountains. A Quirk created by All For One. A Quirk that would surely be appealing to someone who weaponised people as puppets and who would no doubt want it back in some capacity.

Bakugou, unsurprisingly, had taken their conclusions the worst out of all of them. Bakugou’s only, nearly incoherent, response had been “I called him a puppet” then he fled from the room. Who could blame him? Uraraka was pale and shaking, the cruel irony of Bakugou’s nickname eating into her as much as it did him.

It wasn’t something Momo wanted to dwell on, but they all dwelled on it. There wasn’t any sleep and even with school resuming, Momo was almost certain that their results were being scaled to account for what happened. That they all hadn’t been expelled had been a shock to everyone, but the teachers too had no words for what happened. It was just something that happened…and left a Midoriya sized hole in the year group. The teachers still called his name on the role, whether it was out of habit or because he hadn’t been officially declared dead wasn’t something they were brave enough to ask about.

For all of that though, Momo still had other things to worry about. An old problem and a recently materialised problem, the latter which had breached her mansion’s security and leapt through a nearby open window.

“Sorry.” A soot covered Todoroki was panting, face down on the carpet, cooling himself off with his own ice, not at all bothered by the newly generated spear pointing at his throat when he lifted his head. “The old man was right behind me, I didn’t have time for the intercom.”

Momo set her spear down and helped the charred Todoroki off the ground. “Endeavor is really set on finding you, isn’t he?” Todoroki’s position wasn’t an enviable one. Word had spread about the less than warm relationship between father and son, to the point where Todoroki was couch surfing from house to house in an attempt to avoid him. Not that any one period lasted when his father was hunting him as though he were a hardened criminal.

“He worked out I was at Midoriya’s house from the press.” Todoroki gasped. “I bailed so he wouldn’t go after her.” That in and of itself came back to the first issue - how to take care of Inko Midoriya when the woman was so frayed after her son’s disappearance. If Todoroki wasn’t able to do it, then someone else would have to be found to help and Momo’s list was frightfully short after Bakugou’s latest round of revelations. It was, naturally, an ongoing problem that had to be overcome in a more tactful manner.

“Are you sure none of your siblings can help you?” Momo asked, leading Todoroki to a plush armchair which he fell into.

“No, only Touya’s really moved out and no one’s heard from him for years.” Todoroki shook his head. “Not that we blame him. The old man did a number on him and he was gone before mum was hospitalised,” he finished lamely. That ruled out Todoroki hiding out with another estranged family member.
“How many of our classmates have offered to help?” All of them agreeing was probable, but Bakugou wasn’t able to with the hostile nature of his home conditions. He was quite blunt in his assertions that nobody who stayed over at his house would be sleeping well in it, if they slept at all. His mother was apparently quite noisy and nosey.

“How many of our classmates have offered to help?”

“Just about all of them, but that means the old man will be clued in and send his agency on patrol around those houses. They might be pros, but they don’t know what’s been happening behind the scenes.” Todoroki sunk into the seat, an expression of bliss on his face.

Momo had an idea. “You can stay here. We have plenty of room, but I need your help with something.” Momo resisted the urge to wring her hands.

Todoroki blinked. “Can’t be worse than my old man.”

Momo nodded enthusiastically. “Can you think of anyone able to take care of Midoriya’s mother?”

“What about Bakugou?” Todoroki said so abruptly that Momo skipped a step.

“Bakugou?” Momo repeated. Bakugou did know Inko Midoriya well from his youth. That wasn’t her main concern about Bakugou being shortlisted.

“He said his parents are being a pain, just like mine,” Todoroki sighed. “They can’t kick up a fuss the same way my old man can, either. Bakugou Senior might be a designer, but he hasn’t got an agency to stalk his son with.” When Todoroki put it like that…

“Is Bakugou…” Momo frowned and tried to word it correctly. “Is Bakugou going to be able to handle being in Midoriya’s house? He’s been the most upset by what happened.” An understatement. Bakugou was beyond consoling.

“He seems okay when he visits with Monoma and Kirishima. Ripped through the cleaning like it wasn’t there and he can cook if he wears gloves,” Todoroki shrugged. “I was expecting to have to call the fire brigade, but he handled dinner without incident.”

“He can run the household?” Momo confirmed. If Inko Midoriya couldn’t take care of herself, then a little more experience was going to be needed.

“I think he can, Kirishima and Monoma will back me up on it.” Todoroki paused. “The hard part will be convincing him, but I think he’ll appreciate having a break from his folks.”

That was… almost too easy. Momo knew the Bakugou family were relatively well off, certainly better off than Inko Midoriya, but there was a shadow to Todoroki’s face when he spoke of them that mirrored the one he wore when discussing his father. It wasn’t a pleasant or happy expression. It was cold.

“Right, that’s sorted then.” Momo hesitated a smile. One tiny piece of stress alleviated, for the moment. “I’ll let my parents know you’re staying.”

Todoroki made a noise of appreciation and Momo made her way to where her mother was sitting. They weren’t going to say no, they were always thrilled to have guests over. It wouldn’t bother them that Todoroki was a boy when they heard why he was staying… and gave him a room at the opposite end of the house to Momo. “Mother! I have a guest, he might need to stay here for a little while because his family is having difficulties.”

Momo tried not to think about the huge crate of dolls she’d hidden in one of the many walk in wardrobes in the mansion. Her parents were stressed enough without one of them making that
discovery. That was a problem for after Inko Midoriya was capable of taking care of herself again.

Naomasa leapt three feet into the air when All Might’s front door slammed open and slammed shut. Bakugou beside him merely grunted. Maybe that was normal for him. As normal as it was for All Might to recruit a high school student to conduct some questionable investigations that he wasn’t willing to entrust to the police.

Toshinori Yagi came stomping in, a folder clenched in a bone white hand. “We have a very large problem.” Yagi, as was today’s guise, sounded like he was about to shatter into a million pieces. Yagi who was All Might, Yagi who was distraught. Yagi who tossed the stuffed folder onto the table with a dense thud and hurled himself into a seat. Strangely enough… there were five seats at the table. Was Yagi expecting other guests?

“What the fuck did Misty say?” Bakugou was already at the kettle, hefting it to the sink.

“All For One somehow knew young Midoriya before he was a UA student,” Yagi whispered, his head in his hands. “How could that even happen?”

Naomasa heard a clang of Bakugou dropping the kettle.

“What the fuck.” Bakugou was staring at Yagi. “How the fucking hell would he know Deku before UA?” Bakugou lifted the kettle again and set it back in its plate.

Naomasa blinked slowly. “How?” Midoriya didn’t even have a known link with All Might prior to UA did he? Naomasa would have heard beforehand if that was the case.

“That’s what we need to find out. Kurogiri said that he recognised young Midoriya from the USJ attack.” Yagi was trembling and collapsed even further into the seat opposite Naomasa. “And once he did recognise him, he tore through every single information source he had to profile Midoriya. School records, current and past, movements, names of friends and associates, teachers, his Quirk, everything. He wanted his life story, by all indications.”

It was never a pleasant feeling to realise that the mass murderer you were after was also a stalker. Nobody pulled that much information on someone without some serious underlying problems or obsession. Naomasa had witnessed the usual forms of adults stalking each other, but for an adult to fixate on a child… For All For One to be fixated on a kid, even before the kid was seen in public, had some sickening connotations. Had he stolen the boy’s Quirk? Naomasa almost wished he had, because was the nicest explanation he was currently willing to think about while he being served tea by the boy’s childhood friend.

“That’s not all,” Yagi was trembling. “He sent someone after the formal name of young Midoriya’s Quirk…”

Naomasa felt a slow boil in his stomach. It wasn’t just any random person who had access to those records… “It was a UA teacher who told All For One, wasn’t it?” Just like they’d suspected beforehand, but having it just about confirmed by someone as close to the head of the operation as Kurogiri was disturbing. Kurogiri had no idea just how much information he gave away, if Yagi had followed the plan and Tsukauchi was indefinitely “caught in traffic”.

Bakugou answered first. “Deku never said shit about the name of his Quirk to us, not even me. Said it was an enhancer type and left it at that. Had to be a fucking teacher when none of us know what it’s called. He didn’t like talking about it, which was fucking weird from him.”
Yagi was nodding vigorously. “It’s a very short list of teachers who would have access to that information. And there’s only two names that come to mind who would have any reason to know what it was.” Two names they’d discussed on prior occasions. Well, in reality it was only one name. The first name raised was laughable.

“It’s not fucking Eraserhead. He’s too busy taking a fucking nap to sneak out and deal with villains after working two full time jobs.” Arms crossed and unmovable, Naomasa didn’t think it’d be wise to attempt to convince the unstable teenager otherwise. Not that there was a need to either.

“Correct. He has many alibis covering him.” Yagi folded his arms on the table. “We really only have one suspect who was in a position to perform the trifecta of leaks. Step one: they obtained a teacher schedule that told them that I would be present at the USJ for exercises.”

“Only a schedule, do you think?” Naomasa raised. “They didn’t have more?” It didn’t seem like it from the poor quality of All For One’s cannon fodder. Cheap and tacky, there to boost numbers and act as a distraction. They had no knowledge of what they were up against.

“Nope, they didn’t know shit about what Quirks we had either. They dumped Froggy into a fucking water area. Look at how well that went.” Bakugou jerked his head and grinned without humour. “Eraserhead could have told those chucklefucks that All Might was late as well, but they had no fucking idea why he wasn’t there. Whoever it was that took it also needed a distraction to peep a look at the schedule too. Remember the fuckwit Shigaraki breaking down the front door?”

Bakugou had a... delicate way with words, but all were valid points and Naomasa nodded approvingly. Eraserhead knew the Quirks of 1-A and had access to the teaching schedule by default. The students in 1-A likewise knew the Quirks of their cohort from the day one testing, which ruled them out. Eraserhead also wouldn’t have needed Shigaraki to decay the front door and infest the campus grounds with journalists to acquire that information. Automatically, suspicion had then defaulted to 1-B’s class and teacher.

“All good points, young Bakugou. Step two: they notified All For One about young Midoriya’s profile. Though from what Kurogiri disclosed, it wasn’t enough. All For One wanted more.” Yagi’s frown would have made a passing villain faint from the intensity. “The teacher who gave him that information had no direct contact with Midoriya that we know of. All information was indirect or secondhand. This didn’t exactly please All For One.”

“All For One a fucking stalker… Is that new or what?” Bakugou was aggressively stirring his tea. Everything about Bakugou was aggressive, Naomasa had discovered, but it was coloured with frustration more than any real malice. An inability to handle what was happening around him, but that went for just about everyone involved with this case whether they showed it or not. Why it had to happen to someone so young made Naomasa grimace.

“It’s news to me. All For One’s usual habit was to find them, pop out of a nearby bin, obliterate them and disappear again.” Yagi was shaking again. “He never… never kept people. Just killed them.” A fact that was making All For One’s fixation on Midoriya all the more concerning. What made Midoriya so different than even his corpse was worth more than his front organisation?

With the way Bakugou’s face scrunched up, he was drawing the same conclusions as the rest of them. “That prick wasn’t violent with Deku either, held him pretty gently.”

“All For One’s a mystery, but him expressing anything close to care or interest alone is a red flag.” Flipping the folder open, Yagi stopped on Bakugou’s statement of the day Midoriya died. “If Midoriya is by some miracle alive, it’s because All For One wants him for something.”
“Something more important than fucking Shigaraki.”

“Something that had him sacrifice his main warper,” Naomasa added.

“It’s not going to be anything good.” Yagi’s face was twitching. None of them wanted to think about it. “Moving on to step three: the camp. Only two teachers and senior admin were aware of it’s location,” Yagi sighed and Naomasa knew what was coming before Bakugou had even thought about opening his mouth. “That’s without mentioning that our suspect was very interested in the Quirks and Quirk names of 1-A even after the public showing at the Sports Festival. Eraserhead didn’t find it odd at the time, but he certainly did after the fact when he remembered there was obligatory staff attendance at the Sports Festival for supervision purposes.” Flipping through, Yagi opened the folder to another page with a diagram of a stadium. “What purpose was there in asking about 1-A’s Quirks when they were already public?”

“It was that fucking asshole from 1-B, Vlad King, wasn’t it?” Bakugou’s teaspoon was visibly bending. Naomasa didn’t even bother feigning surprise. “Vlad King was sweating like a fucking pig at that press conference and it wasn’t even his student who got taken,” Bakugou added. “I was watching you know. Eraserhead’s calm as a cucumber and King’s shitting bricks for some reason. Guess we know why, now, that fucking prick.” Bakugou hands were fizzing and Yagi patted him on the shoulder, immediately extinguishing them.

“Yes, young Bakugou, Vlad King, the homeroom teacher of 1-B is our main suspect. He had access to the schedules, had limited access to information pertaining to young Midoriya and had the camp location…” Yagi cracked a smile that Naomasa was more used to seeing at the police station when Yagi was in character. “Given what’s happened as a result of your kidnaping, young Bakugou, Kurogiri at least seemed certain that those involved in the lead up to Midoriya’s death would be experiencing All For One’s displeasure.”

“That fucking important, huh?” Bakugou was slouching in his seat. “King killed a fucking student, right? When are we arresting the prick?”

“We need to do it carefully, or he’ll bail on us and we’ll lose our opportunity to find out what exactly he was telling All For One,” Naomasa reminded the student. “If we can intercept his communications, it’s going to be more valuable than straight up arresting him. Our usual interrogation tactics won’t work when King knows All Might’s real appearance.” And what a technique it was, even if it did have some dangerous similarities to CIA interrogation techniques.

“Fine, but the prick shouldn’t have it easy in the mean time,” Bakugou was grumbling. Not that King seemed to be having a good time of it. All For One was alive and well… and King’s incomplete information had resulted in the death of a subject of interest. King was walking on eggshells for the foreseeable future and that was without the involvement of All Might or the police.

“Speaking of the arrest, I received permission to go ahead with the aforementioned plan.” Yagi stood and disappeared to his front door. Three sets of feet echoed back. A tiny woman and a grey haired man in subdued dress stood awkwardly behind Yagi. “Everyone, this is Danjuro Tobita and Manami Aiba, better known as Gentle Criminal and his offsider La Brava. They’re minor internet celebrities in addition to being criminals.” Yagi shrugged in a what can you do type motion, his game face firmly back in place.

“No fucking shit,” Bakugou whispered. “Guess it’s gonna take a criminal to catch a criminal.” They were known, but no too known.

“Indeed it is young man, we were approached by All Might to assist the police with some community service,” Tobita waved grandly. He skipped in with his offsider and they both took seats to Yagi’s
right. “My friend and I have been offered amnesty by the police if we provide this assistance.”

Aiba nodded, her head downturned. “I... I heard about the boy who went missing saving his friends. Helping seems like the right thing to do and Gentle agrees.”

“Yes, it’s a tragic case. The League of Villains has caused insurmountable amounts of damage.” Tobita was eyeing the kettle as he spoke. “Not to mention when All Might appears on your front door step, you’re hardly in a position to tell him no.” Yagi coughed and Naomasa struggled with not rolling his eyes. All Might hadn’t appeared in months... unless it was to threaten two criminals into helping find his student. At this point, Naomasa really shouldn’t have been surprised. Not after how he left Shigaraki, Kurogiri and other members of the League of Villains.

“Even other villains don’t give a shit about the League, huh?” Bakugou seemed taken aback, but he would when Gentle Criminal wasn’t your average villain. There’d been enough digging to realise that after being kicked out of his Heroics school that he’d gone about assisting the public good in a very different manner to what was legally allowed. His Quirk usage was also nowhere near as pathetic as the school had claimed as well. Naomasa would have to add an investigation of their conduct to his list as well.

“Not when they’re murdering children on the regular, no.” Tobita gazed over his clasped hands. “We of course are delighted to help you remedy this situation, with whatever assistance we can offer. I’m aware of the most basic of the details, All Might and Mr Yagi filled us in most thoroughly.” Tobita’s uncomfortable smile had Naomasa wondering exactly what the context of the briefing was beyond a front doorstep, but it was probably best not to think about it.

“Great,” Bakugou was sneering. “Vlad King is responsible for the death of Deku. Any ideas for where you come in?”

Tobita gave a winning smile and turned to Yagi who had reverted to his usual, skulking public persona. “Ah, how was it that you put it, Mr Yagi? I believe words to the effect of King’s ass is grass and we’re gonna mow it? Yes, I do believe we can help with that. All we have to do is lure him out.”

Yagi’s answering grin would’ve spooked Naomasa if he couldn’t see All Might written all over it.

Chapter End Notes

More migraines and another chapter.
Chapter Summary

If your eyes are closed, are you sleeping?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Yaoyorozu had been right, it was too easy. Like, no amount of resistance easy. There was no haranguing, no real negotiations, not much of anything. Nothing that Eijirou had seen at least. Only the problem wasn’t with Bakugou. Bakugou leapt at the opportunity to be away from his parents, to the surprise of almost everyone.

“Getting away from the old bag? Sign me the fuck up.” More enthusiastic than they were expecting, but hey, whatever works? Mrs Midoriya needed help around the house and Bakugou needed a reason not to be in his house so it worked well for everyone.

And that was the end of it as far as they were concerned. At least until Bakugou arrived at school almost breathing fire. His hands were spewing so many sparklers that even Ida was reconsidering a warning. That was with the fire alarms poised to go off at any minute. If Bakugou could get it together before any teachers arrived, he’d be good.

“That old fucking hag,” Bakugou snarled, chair legs groaning. Eijirou winced in sympathy for them.

“What’s up, Bakugou?” Nothing good, obviously, but that didn’t mean he shouldn’t ask.

“She said no,” Bakugou hissed and Eijirou did a double take. “And the wimp just sat there and agreed with her.”

“What? Why?” From what Eijirou had seen of Bakugou’s parents, he figured they’d be glad to be rid of him for a while. Bakugou was always glad to be as far away from his family as humanly possible. So it wasn’t mutual?

“Because,” Bakugou ground out, “they think I’ll upset Deku’s mother.”

Eijirou stopped, then threw his back and roared with laughter. “They-they think you’ll upset Mrs Midoriya?” He couldn’t help it, it was spilling out of him while Bakugou was turning an incandescent red. His hands were popping to match it. That was just crazy. What did Bakugou’s parents think the guy did every afternoon? Kick puppies? Eijirou wondered what they’d say if they saw Bakugou in an apron bustling about Mrs Midoriya’s kitchen with tubs of meals ready to be microwaved.

“The fuck are you laughing at, huh?” Bakugou snapped and Eijirou waved him away.

“Nah, it’s not that man. Do they not know you’ve been visiting her with us for weeks now?” Another snigger escaped him and Eijirou clamped down on his teeth. Bakugou was upset for a real reason. He shouldn’t be laughing at it, even if how wrong they were was funny it a sad way.

“Oh, they fucking know alright, but they think I’m a burden,” Bakugou emphasised so snidely that
Eijirou lost it a second time. “Think I’ll be kidnapped from there even though they’re both weaklings themselves. Like they could fucking stop anyone.”

“But you’ve been cooking for her more days than not,” Eijirou shook his head, grinning broadly. Bakugou cooked more than the rest of them did. And did the laundry. And did the utility bills. And cleaned. And… did almost everything, really and that was when Todoroki was still hiding out.

“Convince them about that,” Bakugou shot back. “Nothing I say fucking matters in that house. Never has and after fucking Shit Fingers, it never will. They think I’m a bag of fucking dirt.”

“Maybe some wriggle roo-?”

“-None,” Bakugou cut in. “They don’t want to fucking hear it. Doesn’t matter how reasonable am, no matter how much I keep my fucking temper, neither want to fucking listen. Fucking useless. Why the fuck did they even have a kid?” Yeah, that wasn’t something anyone really wanted to think about, but Bakugou’s parents did seem like the sort who’d have a kid just for the hell of it. There were a lot of people around who thought that being married meant them having kids… even if it wasn’t the right thing to do for the kid.

Bakugou grunted one last time and that was it really. Arrangements were made between Ida, Yaoyorozu and Mrs Midoriya and days later they were good to go. Eijirou was at the rear with Bakugou and a squirrelly Mrs Midoriya whose eyes were darting at the landscaping either side of the path to the front door. Ida and Yaoyorozu were marching at the head of the pack and Ida firmly pressed the doorbell. Eijirou wasn’t sure if Mrs Midoriya was always just that pale or if she was going to faint. Best to be on the lookout for the latter.

They approached the front door and Bakugou assumed the brace position in the corner of Eijirou’s eye. The door exploded open. “KATS- oh, Katsuki’s friends,” Bakugou’s female body double grunted. “How can I help you?” If it wasn’t for Mrs Bakugou’s feminine characteristics, Eijirou would have mistaken her for Bakugou’s older brother. His far more coarse older brother. Bakugou was at least getting the hang of his indoor voice.

“We’re here to discuss your son helping out Mrs Midoriya while the police conduct their investigations around her son’s disappearance,” Yaoyorozu coolly explained. “We heard that you had some concerns about him being a burden on Mrs Midoriya and came to allay them for you.” And also see what Bakugou was dealing with. The longer it went on and the more complaints Bakugou had about his family, it was getting clearer that something was up in that house. Todoroki was the first to suggest they go check out the place for anything incriminating. His words as well. Incriminating. Like they were going to walk in on a murder.

“Are you going to come in?” Mrs Bakugou snapped and Eijirou saw her son’s eye twitch.

“No, that’ll be quite alright, Mrs Bakugou, we don’t want to impede upon your hospitality,” Ida smoothly intercepted. Maybe it was just Eijirou, but Ida didn’t seem too thrilled with Mrs Bakugou’s hospitality when she first got to the door. Ida’s expression was the same as the owner of a dog who splattered mud throughout the house. “We just want you to know that as a representative of the class, your son has the class’ full support in his continued assistance of Mrs Midoriya.” Mrs Midoriya head jerked in response. Whether it was in approval or not, Eijirou couldn’t tell. Her eyes were firmly ground facing, as if just the effort of staring straight ahead was too much for her. After what Eijirou had seen, that might really be the case. She didn’t really speak much these days.

“Assistance? Katsuki?” Mrs Bakugou snorted. “What’s he been doing? Chasing the neighbourhood cats away?”
In response to that, there was dead silence. Almost like the aftermath of a concussion grenade. If Eijirou listened closely enough, he could hear Bakugou gnashing his teeth.

“My apologies, Mrs Bakugou, but what does any of that have to do with your son’s ongoing assistance of Mrs Midoriya?” Ida sounded as lost as Eijirou would have felt… if he hadn’t just remembered Todoroki’s dire warnings. Come to think of it, he was half expecting the guy to leap out of a bush with an unemotional “I told you so”. Something bad was up in this house.

“I doubt he’s been doing much, has he?” Eijirou, as today’s impromptu weatherman, was forecasting a large explosion. “He sure as hell doesn’t do anything around here. Lounges around doing who knows what, moping. When he’s out he’s hours late coming back and won’t say why. Are you really trying to tell me he’s been taking care of Mrs Midoriya?”

“Yes, he has been,” Yaoyorozu’s tone of voice hadn’t changed, but her expression had. “He’s been instrumental in organising the rosters of who visits, since Mrs Midoriya support network is elsewhere occupied.” Non-existent more like it. Mr and Mrs Midoriya didn’t have any other relatives apart from their son. Mrs Midoriya also didn’t really have any friends that they could find and her husband was uncontactable. The woman was a total loner in a way that would make even Bakugou’s aspirations pale and reconsider their life choices.

“It’s a bit too late for that after him being a weakling made her son go missing, isn’t it?”

*SLAP!*

There was sound and a new colour. Impact of flesh on flesh and a blur of dark green. Before Eijirou or anyone else could move, there was Inko Midoriya. Open hand raised. The other fist clenched. Every part of her tensed, trembling with *something*. As if she’d teleported across that handful of steps instead of stalked forward like some angry predatory.

Mitsuki Bakugou was flat on her rear on her own front step, her eyes unfocused before narrowing into what might have been fury.

There was an explosion alright, just not the one Eijirou had been expecting.

“I… I won’t stand here and listen to you speak so poorly of your own son,” Inko Midoriya hissed. Her hand was still raised, her eyes shadowed. “Your son and his friends were the ones who helped me the most since Izuku disappeared. Not the neighbours, not UA’s teachers, not you and not anyone else. *Them*. Your son is welcome to stay with me whether you like it or not.” Her hand was arching backwards, as if for another pass.

Bakugou’s body double staggered back to her feet, a glowing red handprint visible on her face. Without another word, she scampered back inside and slammed the door shut behind her. Inko Midoriya’s hand dropped and she turned on her heel.

“Mrs Bakugou! Mrs Midoriya!” Ida called to no avail. One was already gone and the other was in the process of being gone. Inko Midoriya marched back the way they came, while the rest of their party stared after her.

“Holy shit,” Bakugou’s hanging jaw hurriedly slammed shut. “Why the fuck she didn’t do that years ago, I’ll never fucking know.”

Wait, what? “Why would Midoriya’s mother be slapping your mother years ago?” He was so lost. What just happened? He dimly registered Yaoyorozu and Ida sprinting after Mrs Midoriya and yelling at her to wait. It had an oddly dreamy quality to it, like what just happened wasn’t quite real.
“The old hag used to give Deku shit over the dumbest fucking stuff. Mrs Midoriya didn’t do shit and the old hag used to walk all over him…” Bakugou trailed off, leaving Eijirou with the sneaking suspicion that there was more to Bakugou’s behaviour than he was ever going to tell them about. Not willingly at least.

“Right…” Not really. Telling off someone else’s kid was pretty rude, come to think of it and Midoriya was a quiet kid. Why would Mrs Bakugou even be speaking to him? Not like he could ask her now after Mrs Midoriya’s flat hand to the face. A little bit awkward.

Meanwhile, the blond behind him sighed. It wasn’t the most irritated noise Eijirou had heard, but it was up there, right along with the noise he made when Nighteye’s name was mentioned. “Fuck this shit, I’m out. The old hag lost this round.”

“What does that mean?” Was Bakugou really going to determine this based on a single blow? They hadn’t even really spoken to Mrs Bakugou yet.

“She lost. Mrs Midoriya left her flat on her arse. It’s her rules and she lost.” Bakugou had to be kidding. What screwed up family made decisions over who won brawls? “I’m getting my shit and we can get the fuck out of here.” Okay, maybe he wasn’t kidding.

“This is so not cool, man. She just took out your mum.” It was a brutal hit too. Eijirou’s face hardened when he saw it land. And that instant handprint. Yeesh. A handprint for the ages. That’s how long her neighbours would be talking about it anyway.

“And? Sling shit, get hit. If she wants to play a stupid game, she can get a stupid fucking prize. Why the fuck would you say that to someone’s whose son is dead? Fucking moron.” Without so much as a glance back, Bakugou wrenched open his front door and stomped inside. “Hey losers! I’m fucking going away for a bit, don’t sell my shit!” Bakugou screamed into the building.

Eijirou paused and thought about it for a moment. Then shrugged. Yeah, Bakugou had a point there. Talking smack about a dead and or missing kid to their mother was guaranteed to get someone hurt. And this time it wasn’t even Bakugou doing the hurting.

There was… someone crying? In the shadows and the murkiness, Izuku couldn’t see or even really feel the source through the sound. Even then, the dark was misty… as if it wasn’t darkness at all, but some sort of imitation. He could hear it if not locate it, wracking sobs that echoed through the space. Izuku felt the air around him flex in synchronisation with the wails. Wails that never seemed to end, only fluctuating up and down as if whoever was crying wasn’t even stopping to breathe. Howls that weighed his chest down. It was one of the most mournful and depressing sounds Izuku could ever remember hearing and he’d seen a lot of post-disaster interviews with families.

“So you’re the ninth. You can hear it too, can’t you?” A voice whispered and Izuku would have leapt a foot in the air… if not for the fact that he had no legs, was down an arm and was missing almost everything else. He had eyes, but no way to turn to the new source of sound.

Izuku blinked once, hoping it would be understood as a yes. Provided he could even be seen.

“We wanted to show you something else, but this noise is more concerning.” We? Izuku wondered. Was it a dream? “We don’t know where it’s coming from.”

Izuku blinked three times. If the owner of the voice existed in this space, then why it couldn’t recognise the source was worrying. Worrying because Izuku was stuck with them listening to
something… someone’s never ending misery. A misery he couldn’t even begin to wonder about how to fix. The heavy sensation in his chest was only growing and the keening was sending spikes of pain through his non-existent head.

“You don’t know either, do you?” The voice asked.

Izuku blinked once.

“These feelings are alien. If they’re not from you and it’s not from us, then where are they from?” It carried on. “We have no recollection of anything this intense. No memories of such rawness. This is new.”

Izuku would have been thrilled to speculate aloud, but that clearly wasn’t possible. Izuku wasn’t even sure he was speaking to someone who could understand him and blinked three more times.

“Oh, my apologies, you can’t see me.” From the corner of his eye, a hunched figure slouched into view and Izuku was struck by deja vu. This was one of the silhouette’s from the Sports Festival! Izuku must be inside One For All again! But why? There hadn’t been anything to cause it. Was it him waking up? “We don’t have much longer… This noise is a distraction. Next time, I’ll show you more for sure… but in the meantime, beware your captor!”

Izuku blinked and he awoke with a swirl of colour. Awoke with both arms pinned to his bed. Guess that explained the warning.

“Izuku?” All For One murmured from a point far too close to Izuku’s face.

“Erm…” Izuku mumbled unintelligibly. Well, until he looked down noticed that his arms were glowing and yelped in a way Kacchan would have laughed at.

“I’m going to assume this isn’t deliberate?” All For One taut voice sounded from just outside Izuku’s field of view.

Izuku frantically shook his head, feeling something crawling under the surface of his skin. It hurt. Then it didn’t. His limbs seized and he was pinned by more than just All For One’s arms (a Paralysis Quirk?), then both One For All and All For One’s Quirk faded. None of that stopped Izuku’s mouth from immediately dropping open in horror.

“Now, that, little Izuku, is frightening.” All For One’s stilted tone was one of the few times Izuku could perfectly relate to whatever it was All For One was feeling. Somewhere between horror and a complete lack of understanding that was so normal it only compounded Izuku’s sense of offness. The reaction was too relatable. Too absolutely average.

“I don’t know what just happened,” Izuku almost squeaked. What was that in his arm? Why was it so dark?

“I was under the impression that my brother’s Quirk was a mere enhancement that stockpiled energy…” All For One was back in view and the depth of his frown was something to behold. “Now I’m starting to wonder otherwise.”

Izuku shrugged, because what else could he do? All Might didn’t know about this either.

“Did anything happen while you were asleep?” All For One asked after a small pause while his frown escalated to new heights of displeasure. While not being directed at him, Izuku had a sneaking suspicion as to the real target.
Izuku was going to have to tell him something, he wasn’t a good enough liar to make something entirely different up… Well, there was only one important and different part to the dream. Clearing his throat, Izuku’s felt his face twist. “I had a weird dream.”

All For One made a go on gesture with his hand. “Of course it was a dream.” With that level of bitterness, Izuku could only assume there was no small amount of experience to that comment.

“Someone was wailing,” Izuku began, shuddering. Where had that even come from? One For All said it wasn’t responsible. If it wasn’t the Quirk then what was it? “It was-it was more screaming almost and it…it didn’t stop. It just kept going and getting worse. I couldn’t see who it was, because it was dark.” Going silent, Izuku only caught a glimpse of All For One’s fingers flexing.

“And why did this cause you so much distress, specifically?” It was a perfectly level and entirely insensitive question. “I don’t think it was your distress, you were entirely silent when the effect crept into the real world.” Or it was All For One asking about that. Both worked.

“I couldn’t help them. I tried to reach out to find them and I couldn’t move,” Izuku cringed. Then he’d woken up pinned too. Couldn’t move, couldn’t reach. “I couldn’t do anything.”

“And that’s what caused you so much distress,” All For One quietly concluded.

Izuku nodded.

“This is always something that’s bothered you, isn’t it?” The old man asked, his mouth still curled downwards. “What came first, the concern or All Might?”

Izuku blinked. Was All For One asking what Izuku thought he was asking? “All Might wasn’t first. I’ve… I’ve always been like this.” For as far back and for as long as Izuku could remember, there was that lump of warmth in his chest that grew with every person he helped. “But All Might’s different to the other pro heroes.” Extremely different. Different enough to be worthy of the title of the best.

“I keep hearing that and I will never understand what makes him so different to his other predecessor’s that made their attempts on my life.” Such was All For One’s frosty tone that Izuku almost felt a chill breeze roll through the room. Clearly having a long lifespan wasn’t all that with so many people dedicated towards his eradication.

“It’s—it’s not that,” Izuku frantically shook his head. “All Might isn’t obligated to do most of what he does. None of the pro heroes are. The law requires them to act only in cases where villains are involved.” No, pro heroes in reality were only about who got to use what Quirk. Only their own personal morals had them go above and beyond their duty to stop those illegally using Quirks. Kacchan’s lack of a rescue by anyone apart from All Might was proof of that. Saving a building while Kacchan suffocated… while no one tried to help. They might be pros, but they weren’t very good heroes.

After the fiend had leant back into his seat, Izuku was again given the carry on gesture. “All Might goes beyond what he’s legally required to do. That’s… that’s not really common with pro heroes. He helps people with cats up trees, kids who fall into deep water, people who are born with unfortunate Quirks… and he does it without being paid for it.” All For One almost seemed to be holding his breath with the stilted rise and fall of his chest. “Lots of pro heroes are only there for the fame and money, but All Might stumbled into it by being a genuine hero and not just a pro hero. He joined to help people and that’s… that’s really rare,” Izuku concluded, feeling an inch tall.

Contrary to Izuku’s expectations, All For One shifted to rest his head on one hand. “So you admire
All Might not for his legal status, but his defying of its strict limitations?” That was an insidious way to put it, but it wasn’t technically wrong. All Might definitely went against commonly accepted conventions for pro heroes.

“I guess you can put it like that.” Since he was a supervillain. “I’ve always admired the people who were the precursors to the pro heroes, before they introduced the system. They were the only ones willing to act when no one else was.” Izuku’s bounce was brief and painful, the skin on his back pulling on the dressing. “But, there’s not a lot of records around about them anymore. It was so long ago and they’ve sealed away most of them into archives I can’t access.” Far far away where they were echoes in history. Understandable when the government was going out of its way to deter vigilantism. It was one thing to talk about the immediate precursors who helped form the system, another to promote the ones who continued without government sponsorship. It might give people ideas… People like Izuku.

All For One was frozen, like a statue in a museum. He was old enough to be in one after all. “The precursors?”

“Yeah,” Izuku confirmed, “I guess… it would have been when you were much younger, right?”

“Yes, it was,” All For One whispered. “After all, I was one of them if you’re speaking of that time period.”

With the grace of train derailment, Izuku’s brain exploded into action and all sensible reason was hurled away. “You were what?” Izuku wasn’t sure who was more surprised by the revelation; Izuku for the discovery or All For One because of Izuku’s militant interest in the original heroes. But it made sense!

“A vigilante is what they would call me by today’s meaning,” All For One almost seemed to tentatively confirm. “Naturally, I wasn’t picked to be part of their little government enforcement squad.”

“I knew it!” Izuku bounced into the air, completely undaunted by the surge of pain that shot across his back and through his chest. “It makes sense! You don’t like pro heroes or villains because you’re originally neither!” It was only a piece in the puzzle though. It didn’t do anything to explain All For One’s current state or his sponsorship of the Noumu.

Only to find himself yanked from the air and forced downwards. “Izuku, I realise you’re excited, but please don’t tear your wounds open.”

Whoops. “Okay! But I’m right, right?” That was the important detail here. All For One hadn’t started his career as a full blown villain. It made sense!

If All For One still had eyes Izuku was positive he would have been rolling them. “They’re the same thing, Izuku. One group gets a pat on the head by the government and the other doesn’t. There’s no functional difference between them.”

“Yes, there is,” Izuku shot back. “How many people have you helped recently without asking for anything?” Izuku was going to bet his money on a healthy dose of none.

“You,” All For One leisurely returned. “One can still be an experienced member of the criminal underworld and still have the capacity for the occasional good deed.”

“But that was after you killed me,” Izuku returned fire.

“Why does this always come back to me killing you?” All For One sighed, as if Izuku pointing it out
had caused him great personal harm.

Izuku charged straight past it. “And if that criminal only does one occasional good deed after murdering people for two hundred years, then it’s not enough to balance out what happened before.” Izuku shook his head, feeling his heart skip a beat. “You have to at least be consistent.”

“I wasn’t killing people for two centuries.” Now he sounded downright offended.

“Then what were you doing?” Both knew where this was going.

“I was reallocating the Quirks of the unworthy. What else would I have been doing?” All For One extended his hands in a grand gesture that Izuku, that left All For One silhouetted as nothing more than a black shadow. Izuku would have taken a moment to marvel at the image if he wasn’t on the offence.

“What about all the people your followers killed for you?” It was a wild, wild stab in the dark. The tattered edge of a feeling, but it felt right. Right in a way it shouldn’t have because Izuku had no idea where the idea even would have come from. Yes, All For One led the masses, but would he really have enjoyed the loss of control over a group that was interpreting body language instead of following explicit orders? Izuku’s gut feeling told him it was a yes, while his brain screamed no.

All For One’s arms dropped. “How could you possibly know about that?” Not threatening. Dumbfounded. Off-kilter? That was perfectly fine when Izuku was feeling the same way.

“I have… absolutely no idea,” Izuku admitted. “But, I’m right, right?” That was the important part.

“Yes, but that’s ancient history. How could you possibly know about it?” All For One was leaning forwards, that same frown had returned. “We’ve come full circle, haven’t we, little one?”

Izuku shrugged. “The original owner never wrote a manual for it.” Though now, All For One seemed to have enough encouragement to get around to it. So what if he was over a hundred years late? It was only the difference between Izuku’s arms torn off or not. Izuku resisted the urge to laugh nervously at what would’ve happened without the Paralysis Quirk.

All For One groaned. “Don’t remind me. Please. I lose enough sleep over that Quirk every night.”

“Are… are you going to write a manual?” Izuku might have been pushing his luck here, but it was worth asking. One For All was a… a really weird Quirk. So was All For One’s for that matter. Two peas in a pod.

“No,” All For One answered definitively. “But you can write while I dictate.”

Izuku shrugged. It was something he could work with.

If Enji Todoroki had to spare another minute staring at this blasted empty room, he was going to shove a fiery fist through the glass. The police had called him in to witness an interrogation. They wanted him as a sort of expert on one of the captured members of the League of Villains. Why they were wasting his time with this menial tripe while his youngest was off doing god knows what was beyond understanding. All For One was still on the loose as well while All Might dithered and also did god knows what off in some secluded location. Was Enji the only person doing his job these days? Was it too much to ask for that everyone else be prepared for the psychopath who was still roaming the streets?
Enji did not jump. He was merely startled. Startled by the suit wearing, emaciated skeleton that slid into the room with a full tray of coffee and biscuits. The door clicked shut ominously behind him.

“My apologies. Did I startle you?” It didn’t sound like much of an apology.

“Who are you?” Enji grunted.

“I’m Detective Yagi, partner to Detective Tsukauchi.” Yagi made no attempt to bow or shake hands. “To allay your concerns, you’re here today to help us with identifying one of the more mysterious members of the League.” Was that it? Really?

“Surely there’s other more qualified people around for an identification,” Enji growled at the rude stick of a man. People who had time to waste doing petty things like identifying criminals.

“No, unfortunately not in this case, Endeavor. Intel determined that you were the best and most reliable option for identifying this particular villain.”

Enji rolled his eyes. “So what do you want me to do?” Apart from waste everyone’s time.

“Watch. My colleague—” Yagi rapped sharply on the door “—will accompany you in any observations you make.” A cat headed man in a standard police uniform holding his own tray, entered and bowed. On it sat a teapot, two cups and…. a shot glass? Professionals standards doing their usual quality of work.

“Right, I’ll be off. Good luck.” Why did Enji need any luck? Yagi, still holding his tray, exited without another word.

“Is he always like that?” Enji demanded from the officer next to him.

The cat headed man nodded. “You should have seen his orientation day. People are still complaining about it.” That left Enji with more than a handful of reservations about this detective he hadn’t heard of before, but there was something familiar about the name Yagi… He couldn’t quite put his finger on it.

There was a quiet click and Enji watched through the glass as a dark haired man was wheeled in, straightjacketed to his wheelchair. His face was purpled and stitched together with patches of horrific scars. How he hadn’t died yet from necrosis was a medical miracle that was never going to be investigated. There was something familiar about this one as well. Just like Yagi it rung a bell.

For a moment, he seemed to struggle then went limp with a huff of air. The officer who brought him in left without a word.

A minute passed and the door flew open again.

“Good morning, Dabi!” Yagi was entirely too cheerful for what had to be five o’clock in the morning. “How was your sleep?”

“I didn’t,” Dabi growled and Enji felt that same rush of familiarity. It was two words and it held a feeling to it. Maybe a memory? Was this someone he’d arrested a long time ago once before? It didn’t seem like this Dabi was old enough for that to be the case. What kind of name was Dabi? Cremation of all things. An alias clearly, but not one from someone blessed with Mensa level intelligence. “You were here, what, three hours ago?”
“Was I?” Yagi shrugged, placing the tray on the table and dragging over a fold up camping chair. “Must have been the paperwork. Time flies when you’re approaching deadlines.”

“Don’t you weaklings work from 9-5 like every other office worker?” That might have been an insult… but Yagi chuckled.

“I wish. I could do with a white collar salary package. Been itching for a new car.”

“Shut up. We both know what you’re here for,” Dabi spat back. Now that was much more familiar. The cat headed man next to him was staring between them.

“Do we? I’m still not sure what I’m here for, Dabi. Not until you tell me just how involved you were with the League. After all, there’s a huge difference between what you’re going to be asked.” Yagi’s hands were steepled regally. It would have left more of an impact if he wasn’t fixated on his coffee instead of his prisoner. Yagi was provoking the prisoner. That much was clear.

“I’m not telling you anything,” Dabi smirked. “What’s a weakling like you going to do about it, huh? You can’t touch me.”

“Oh you’re quite correct, Dabi.” Yagi’s approximation of a winning smile sent chills down Enji’s spine. “I can’t touch you. But there are other ways of extracting information.”

“Like what, you skele-” And Dabi gasped, his mouth sagging, he was changing colour. It was like Yagi had wrapped a giant, clawed hand around Dabi’s ribs and crushed them. Spittle flew from his lips and he rocked back and forth in his restraints.

Enji rose to intervene and found himself caught by the same sensation of malice, dread, death. He could only stare at them. Enji stared and stared some more at Dabi’s writing features, sinking back into his chair. In his mind, the scarring cleared, the hair lightened and he was struck by the familiar of features he’d spent all too long glaring at in years gone by. Features that had been absent from the family when the boy disappeared from UA without a trace. Abandoned his education and fled. The police never found him… Enji’s stomach writhed even more when he thought about his youngest’s ongoing disappearance.

“Touya?” Enji whispered through the weight, his eldest thrashing wildly in his restraints. His wounds were open and bleeding, his eyes rolling and mad. More animal than human. And that was his son…the family embarrassment, screaming for his life while Yagi advanced. Such an ungodly, hideous noise. It needed to stop. Enji wanted it to stop. What was Yagi doing? What was hurting him? Why wasn’t he stopping?

“Sorry buddy,” the cat headed man offered him a suspiciously amber liquid in a shot glass and an untouched cup of tea, “but we didn’t know how else to tell you.” He tipped the shot glass into the tea and pushed over the whole saucer. “He’s been trying to play games for the last few weeks so we pulled out the big guns.” This was the big guns? This was torture!

Enji was again already halfway to his feet when the cat man tugged him back into his seat. There was no resistance, only a tumble of words. “Where’s Tsukauchi? Why are you letting this happen to my-my…” Was that really even his son? It was a pale shadow at best. Ruined and wrecked by what? A villain? What happened to Touya? Why?

“Tsukauchi’s at the other end of the door, waiting to be the good cop. I’m Sansa, by the way,” the cat headed man beamed. Beamed while his son screamed. “It’s nothing permanent and it’s not a Quirk. Yagi’s just a scary sonuvabitch.” What even was that? An aura of malaise he’d only felt twice before. Felt from that bastard All For One at Kamino and that lunatic Stain. Who the hell was this
guy and why was there such a large chip on his shoulder?

“Can he even breathe while that’s happening?” Enji demanded pushing aside the cup of tea only to be gently be rebuffed again. Sansa was insistent.

“You’re not really in a position to be making demands, Endeavor,” answered the cat man coolly. “He ended up this way somehow and with how early into life he went missing, all eyes aren’t on some League of Villains type operation.” Endeavor, for all his flames, felt very very cold. They couldn’t seriously be suggesting that he was responsible for Touya’s evident breakdown.

“They’re on you and your wife, who’s now in a mental hospital. They’re also on your youngest son who’s been Houdini’ing his way around every pro hero and cop whose set eyes on him.” Sansa’s human hands were clasped on the tiny table between them. “Now what are we meant to think when the eldest is about to be committed to an asylum for the criminally insane, your daughter is now running most of the household and your two youngest want nothing to do with you?”

“This is idiocy. How dare you excuse me of anything when that’s happening in the next room?” Enji felt his flames spark up a notch. How dare this grunt make accusations about anything. While Yagi was waterboarding someone’s son in the next room over.

“Don’t look at me, Endeavor, I’m just telling you what everyone else is thinking.” Sansa stirred his own tea with a gentle clink. All the while the screams were still sounding through the glass. “And that everyone is going to include the media as soon as this goes public.”

Enji felt himself pale.

“Consider this a friendly warning. All Might wanted us to let you know.” Sansa slapped him on the back in a manner that was anything but friendly.

Enji downed the laced tea without a second thought, All Might be damned.

They were the oddest pairing the doctor had ever set eyes on and would remain that way for the foreseeable future. There was the boy curled up against Sensei’s side on the plush couch, with Sensei’s hand carefully wrapped around the boy’s own. The IV was hovering nearby, with just enough give to allow Midoriya to move without tearing it clean out with a more urgent gesturing of his hands. In front on them was a generously sized television streaming a live villain attack. Sensei was altogether too non-plussed by Midoriya’s proximity and the blanket that had been draped over both of them. Sensei who wouldn’t give Shigaraki the time of day, let alone engage in something so mundane with him.

“I can’t believe he didn’t just hit him with the saucepan,” Izuku Midoriya remarked to his viewing companion who was, to no one’s surprise, listening more than watching.

“How is that more effective than using his Quirk?” Sensei’s chin was leaning on his other hand.

“Have you seen what saucepans do to a normal person?” Midoriya sounded appalled. The doctor was also appalled, but for entirely different reasons. How did Midoriya know about saucepan impacts? Was there some unknown depths of expertise that Sensei was tapping?

Sensei seemed to be lost in thought for a moment. “Hmm…”

“That’s a hotel. That’s a culinary quality saucepan,” Midoriya seemed to remind Sensei. Sensei who was… inclining a head in consideration. “There’s no way he’s going to match the force with that sort
of weak air pressure.” Indeed, the pro hero appeared to be shooting blasts of air at a relatively humanoid villain who was dodging them with practised ease. Not that he could hold a candle to Sensei with those pathetic little puffs of air.

“True. The thickness of the base is going to be troublesome for anyone without adequate resistance to blunt force impact,” All For One admitted. “Unless he has muscle built up from dealing with the inertia of his Speed Quirk.”

“He could have just brained him with it and saved everyone the time and effort,” Midoriya was continuing, a hand twitching in animation. “His skull has no muscle to build from gravitational forces pulling against it. That’d be a really strange mutation in addition to his Quirk.”

“Also very true. If there’s no adaptations then his skull should be relatively ripe for the blow.” Even while Sensei was likely wincing at the thought of blows to the head with any sort of blunt object.

Then, as though a prophecy had been made, the doctor watched the pro hero Air Shot seize ahold of the aforementioned saucepan and crack it across the villain’s head. The saucepan and villain alike seemed to vibrate violently for a moment, then the latter fell to the ground. The pleasant ringing noise the saucepan made lingered for a moment longer than the collapse of the villain.

“See? Much more efficient,” Midoriya bobbed his head. “It just wasn’t a good match up.” The doctor was almost sure that for Midoriya there were other rules to the average person for poor Quirk matching. In case of emergency, slam the problem as hard as you can across the face with a blunt object and hope for the best.

“Why weren’t you in charge of stockpile efficiency years ago?” Sensei sighed and the doctor swallowed air rapidly. “So much time could have been saved and used better elsewhere.” There was a longing note in there that made the doctor’s skin crawl.

“You couldn’t afford me,” Midoriya solemnly declared and the doctor almost dropped his beaker. Not that he could let that happen, it'd delay prep of their medications. “My rates are higher than what you paid Shigaraki’s cannon fodder.”

“Personally, Izuku, I think the greater problem here is that you would have encouraged me to engage All Might with a frying pan regardless of your pay,” Sensei noted, as if he was discussing the previous morning’s political polling.

“I think you would’ve had a better chance of killing him with the frying pan than what really happened,” Midoriya quietly sighed. “You just had to stop to taunt him before he was even dead.” There it was again, that niggling how. How did Midoriya know so much when Sensei refused to even discuss it with the doctor who treated those wounds?

“Izuku, there is no point in soundly vanquishing a hated nemesis if you can’t have the last say while doing do,” Sensei almost seemed to chide. There was a note of amusement in his voice that had the doctor raising his eyebrows.

“And now he’s still alive,” Midoriya continued. “You just couldn’t let it go…” Let what go? What was Midoriya talking about? What did he know that they didn’t?

“You’re in no position to be lecturing me after your attempt to kill Tomura.” Sensei’s voice was anything but retaliatory. In fact, he sounded closer to dissolving into laughter.

It brought Midoriya up short for only a split second. “He attacked us first! What else was I meant to do?” Indignation. Pure indignation that he was being called out for attempted murder. What
happened to this child in the intervening years? What made him like this?

“Not attempt to leave him a fine smear on his surroundings?” Sensei patiently explained.

“I didn’t have a lot of options and I wasn’t going to sit there and let him attack Asui.” Midoriya’s heels were firmly sunk into the ground. There wasn’t going to be any budging of them. But a near death over an assault?

“You attempted to aerate Tomura and the better part of the USJ. If the Noumu hadn’t taken the impact, Tomura would have ceased to exist, as would most of the building.” How powerful were Midoriya’s blows to cause that much damage? Even All Might’s Quirk didn’t seem to carry the same risk of impending death as Midoriya. Midoriya who was, from Sensei’s own words, faster than All Might to resort to lethal force. A deadly combination.

Midoriya shrugged. Just shrugged. “He attacked us first.”

“And Stain? You punctured his lungs.”

“He’s a serial killer. There was absolutely nothing stopping him from coming after us when he was done with Native.” Stain? Why on Earth was Midoriya involved with the Stain incident?

“You buried Muscular into the side of a mountain.” That one the doctor knew about. Muscular’s Quirk was the only thing that saved him from certain death. Not that death wouldn’t have been preferably after… after what? His attack on one of Sensei’s affiliates? Either way, death would have been a huge favour to the man.

“He tried to kill a kid!” The doctor was seeing a pattern.

“What about Wolfram’s face that you almost tore off?” Midoriya did what? On second thoughts, was there a pattern?

“He tried to kill me and All Might agreed with that!”

“I’m sure he did,” Sensei grumbled so snidely that the doctor had to hold back a snort of his own. “None of this stopped you from also tearing poor Tomura apart for asking you simple questions.”

“He tried to kill me there too!” What, when did that happen?

“What about Todoroki?”

“He wasn’t using his Quirk correctly!” Midoriya fired back. “If he didn’t use all of it, Stain would have killed him. And if it wasn’t Stain it would have been someone else.” The doctor wasn’t even sure what to call this incident. It wasn’t quite an argument, more like an aggressive session of fact clarification. Though how much of it was Sensei baiting the boy and how much of it was the boy using it as an excuse to criticise Sensei was beyond him. How much history was there between these two?

“I think the point you’re missing Izuku, is that your list of attempts to maim and or kill people is higher than mine in recent years,” Sensei said in an almost soothing manner. “It happens, I know, but these excuses are beneath you.”

Midoriya sputtered even more indignantly, if it was at all possible. “Excuses? Aren’t you the one who allowed the attack on Kacchan just to get Ragdoll’s Quirk?”

“That wasn’t the only reason,” Sensei expertly deflected. The doctor had to side with Midoriya on
this one. That camp attack was a rather transparent make for Search. The doctor still wasn’t sure what Search was even being used for at the moment, but Sensei was desperate to have it. Bakugou was a footnote on that expedition.

“But it was the main one, right?” Midoriya was pushing now. “Have you ever considered that maybe your kleptomania might be a problem? I bet you knew full well that Kacchan wasn’t going to agree to any of your deals.” That was another point of Midoriya. Sensei definitely knew that Bakugou wasn’t going to be taking orders from an… individual like Shigaraki. In fact, the doctor wholeheartedly sympathised with Bakugou in this instance. Shigaraki had done nothing to prove his worth, but only lost assets to petulant behaviours. At least Midoriya, for all of his recalcitrant attitude, was a shrewd observer of the world and people around him. Perhaps too shrewd.

“Kleptomania? I do not steal everything not nailed down,” Sensei refuted, as if that particular idea was more offensive to him than the implication that Bakugou was there to be tortured alone. In the doctor’s very frank opinion, Midoriya had scored another point there, because being accused of kleptomania and the associated lack of control was a more insulting to Sensei than acts of grievous bodily harm. In fact, when it came to personal wrongs, Sensei was quite partial to extreme bodily harm. But how did Midoriya know about that? The doctor had spent years under Sensei and Midoriya had never been seen in those orbits.

“Is that why you’re window shopping right now?” Midoriya was… exasperated, not angry and Sensei was silent. Ever so quiet. “I understand. I’m not saying that your Quirk is a bad thing, but you really need to work out what’s you and what’s the Quirk.”

“It’s unusual for someone to make that distinction,” Sensei murmured into Midoriya’s hair. Midoriya who was frantically scrabbling to escape, even with Sensei still holding onto him. Midoriya better not rip his IV out, those were so irritating to replace on people with more bone and skin than flesh.

“I wish you’d make the distinction between self defence and attempted murder,” Midoriya managed to cough out before he was reeled back in.

“Keep dreaming, Izuku.”

The doctor wasn’t entirely sure if Midoriya was the one who was dreaming. Not when the doctor felt like he’d stepped into a surrealist painting where the boundaries of reality were constantly shifting without him even being aware of it.

Chapter End Notes

And now we pick up the pace.
Chapter Summary

Some things are both better and worse than death.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

All For One wasn’t very happy person, as Izuku had come to discover in his days trapped with the centennial. Not just in the sense of joy or amusement, either. As hard as Izuku searched, it was almost like he was speaking to a partial chunk of a person and not a whole one. Reactions were disjointed, stilted, sporadic. His temperament, if it could be called that, was mercurial and volatile for all the man tried to hide it behind snide comments. There was no consistency in what should have been a consistent human being. Some behaviours were too normal, like how he drank his tea. Others were far more extreme, like his bitterness towards All Might, who by all accounts, wasn’t really any different to previous One For All holders. All For One was a shattered, broken person and that didn’t just apply to his physical injuries, because nothing he did seemed to make him truly happy. Though the physical injuries were an accurate representation of what had to be floating around the man’s head.

Nine generations of One For All. If each generation lasted twenty years on average, All For One was close to two hundred years old even at a conservative guess. Far older than probably anyone else on the planet. Humans weren’t originally meant to live past fifty, but with modern technology they crept into roughly a century of age before Quirks hit. Now, after Quirks, there was someone much older and, as far as Izuku could tell, human biology hadn’t been able to keep up. All For One seemed to be trapped in his own fictional set of expectations even though time was always marching on… But that didn’t make sense either or Izuku would have cheerfully been left under the building as part of his dispute with All Might. Unless that was part of the contradictions?

Countless conflicting actions. From malice to doting, indifference to outrage, emotional to emotionless, All For One rubber banded from one state to another. Izuku was sure some of it was being exaggerated, but then again there was just as much that couldn’t have been faked. How much weighed on either end Izuku couldn’t say, but more and more wasn’t adding up. Izuku could feel the pressure from the contradictions grow. All For One wasn’t here to distract him from the train of thought this time and acid swirled unpleasantly in his stomach.

All For One was on first name terms with Shigaraki. But he still left him and his entire organisation to be taken down by All Might in favour of Izuku. Without any regret whatsoever.

All For One trusted Tsubasa enough with the details of his Quirk. But he still wouldn’t allow him near Izuku for any great period of time. Tsubasa who was in charge of the Noumu.

All For One weaponised countless people to create the Noumu. But here was Izuku, so far with his mind (mostly) intact.

All For One sluiced through One For All wielders… because of the feud with his brother? But here was Izuku, still alive, in spite of having the same Quirk.
All For One wiped out a city, murdering countless people. But here was Izuku, the only person rescued from it.

Too much time to dwell, too much time to think, Izuku’s old habit was swallowing him. All For One made absolutely no sense in any logical or emotional capacity. He couldn’t be interested in One For All, not when he’d spent years killing the previous wielders. He couldn’t be interested in Izuku himself because Izuku was a nobody. He could be plotting some revenge against All Might, but how effective was that going to be when All Might had more than enough time to get over Izuku’s death at Kamino? All For One was clingy, but all that did was make Izuku feel vaguely ill in a way he couldn’t define. Nothing about All For One made any sense. Nothing. Izuku couldn’t even entirely blame his age for it either, not when the rest of All For One’s appearance didn’t suggest age related deterioration.

It could have been trauma perhaps, but that only made the thoughts swirl faster through his head. What trauma could possibly stick to someone like All For One who viewed human experimentation as a perfectly viable avenue for menacing the public? That was another gap and Izuku felt his head pulse.

Izuku wasn’t quite sure at what point the magnitude of the revelation hit him. Maybe it was in All For One’s sense of humour. Maybe it was the all too casual manner when they spoke, as if All For One was a visiting volunteer at some exclusive hospital. Maybe it was the probing, personal questions that made less sense the more Izuku thought about them. Maybe it was the time Izuku, half asleep, caught the fiend taking his time tucking Izuku back into the sheets. Maybe it was everything and his brain had finally recovered from the shock of dying. At this point, Izuku didn’t know. He was a passenger along for the ride by the time it hit him.

Izuku’s brain came to a logical solution. Izuku felt his lungs seize before anything else, then the chest pains compounded onto his aching, furiously pumping heart and Izuku felt his hands disappear into somewhere without nervous control. Izuku lay there paralysed. Staring. Waiting for the end to come. All in all, Izuku reflected distantly, as if his body currently wasn’t in meltdown, it was up there with one of his more severe breakdowns. Not quite as high as his mother crushing his hopes and dreams, but it was there with the best of them. Though if the chest pain kept up, it might even beat it.

Then Izuku froze in true paralysis, a warm hand wrapped around his wrist.

“Izuku, what happened?” All For One had appeared almost out of thin air, as he always did. Search’s work Izuku would guess, but from where Izuku had been seen he really couldn’t guess. Never too far out of reach. That didn’t make any sense either. Izuku’s heart sped up as if to spite All For One.

Izuku couldn’t begin to respond, even after freed from All For One’s death grip. There was too much. It was crushing him.

“Izuku?” All For One was more urgent this time. All that did was make Izuku’s heart spasm in a way that made Izuku want to throw up. “Izuku, breathe.”

Izuku couldn’t. Or didn’t want to. There was a difference in there somewhere, not one that he cared enough to think about. His head was too full of other ideas that didn’t make any sense that were far more important than breathing slowly or breathing it all. Everyone else already thought he was dead. Dying a second time wasn’t going to be much of a problem for anyone.

Izuku remained where he was, still, staring and well beyond the point of a conversation.

Then Izuku seized again, but this time it wasn’t him. It didn’t do anything to ease Izuku’s memory of
the racing heart, numb limbs or aching lungs was still there, even if they were masked under layers of Quirks. They were still there even while All For One tried to hide them, but Izuku’s brain wasn’t fooled. No movement and feeling didn’t mean the sensations themselves had ceased to be present.

“Calm down.” There was that urgency again. That unexplained, ever present urgency. One of the contradictions.

From a distance, Izuku felt himself ask a single question. “Why?” Why was he alive? Why did All For One know him? Why wasn’t he dead? Why was All For One the way he was when Izuku should have been dead? Why? Why? Why?

“Why?” All For One echoed. Maybe it was in surprise, Izuku couldn’t tell. “Why not?” Why not stop chasing All Might? Why not retire? Why not leave Izuku to die? Why not do anything else?

“This doesn’t make any sense,” Izuku voiced yet again, as he had countless times prior.

“Why does it matter?” It mattered, because it was All For One, who never did anything for free. What was he going to hold over Izuku for “saving” him?

Izuku was struck, as if by lightning, because it did make sense. Only in one respect, but it painted enough of a picture that Izuku’s heart resumed beating. “Because you want something,” Izuku realised, feeling his heart slow, “and I don’t want to give it to you.”

The old man’s breath caught. “Even if that something is staying alive?” That couldn’t be it. It was never that straightforward.

“No, it’s not,” All For One refuted with cutting edge. “It’s the furthest idea from the truth.”

He didn’t have the right to tell Izuku that; who did he think he was after he killed Izuku in the first place? Izuku clenched his fists, feeling his nails slice into his hands. Not that there was much flesh left on them, but still enough to bleed. So Izuku looked down and All For One was forgotten.

There were punctures in his hand. And Izuku really meant were, because before his eyes they were closing up. As if he was… regenerating. Regenerating just like the first Noumu.

“What,” Izuku said slowly and hollowly, “did you do to me?” How? When? Why?

For the first time since Izuku had woken up, All For One was at a true loss for words. Pulling away, giving Izuku much needed breathing space, then it was gone as he lunged forwards, scooping Izuku up into his arms.

“Perhaps showing you will help,” All For One finally said after what had to be minutes of delay.
Izuku didn’t resist being carried, his IV being tugged along with them and his head still stuck on Regeneration. Regeneration that wasn’t strong enough to power through the wound on his back. Regeneration that couldn’t handle the pain.

All For One walked. This time a longer route, down a corridor Izuku hadn’t seen before, to a bathroom Izuku hadn’t seen before. It had a floor length mirror and Izuku stared, his pale, scarred face reflecting back in all its glory. Scars Izuku couldn’t feel even though they were clearly present.

“What… did… you do?” Izuku whispered reaching up to the wounds he couldn’t feel.

“Many, many things, Izuku. None of which you will approve of.” Stilted. Toneless.

“Why… why didn’t the other wound heal? How?” How was Izuku still functional with another Quirk crammed into his head?

“I never gave you a Quirk,” All For One explained, gesturing to Izuku’s shoulders which had similar scars after the fabric was pulled away. “There’s a Quirk enhancing drug called-

“-Trigger,” Izuku finished with mounting horror. Trigger was illegal in Japan. Trigger wasn’t illegal in China or America. Trigger that made people aggressive and lose their sense of reason. Trigger that could cause permanent deformities. Trigger… that was most likely being used in the Noumu. Trigger that was being used on him.

“Of course you know about it,” All For One murmured under his breath but well within Izuku’s earshot. “What you don’t know is that Trigger does more than enhance Quirks.”

“What did you do?” Izuku repeated, feeling that same tension from before mounting again.

“We made a… discovery,” All For One whispered from above. “During our field tests with Quirks and Trigger we discovered that an injection or transfusion of blood from one Quirk holder to another would temporarily grant the Quirk.” Level and almost soothing, All For One carried on while the wounds in Izuku’s hand were continuing to inch their way shut before Izuku’s eyes.

Why did it have to be the people who conducted human experiments? Why couldn’t it be anyone else who intervened?

“It was an accident,” All For One almost seemed to confess. “An entirely incidental discovery. One of our testers injected herself with blood and Trigger from one of our subjects. She, in turn, temporarily developed the Quirk of the subject without me ever touching him or her.” Shrugging, the old man continued. “There was some strain of a foreign Quirk placed upon her body, but she never developed the associated cognitive problems… In all practicality, it’s nearly a useless discovery…”

“Unless you wanted to give someone a Quirk without the side effects of your Quirk…” Izuku breathed, trembling. All For One was too close. Too close. Too close for someone who’d experimented on him. Too close.

“More specifically, to give an involuntary Quirk that functions regardless of the consciousness of the holder,” All For One gently added, not so much hesitating as stepping carefully with every word. “Even with your heart restarted, the rest of your organs were in a state of failure… so we elected to… improvise…”

Izuku’s jaw sagged open. “You didn’t…” Of course All For One did. He wasn’t going to let a minor thing like patient consent get in the way of him doing whatever he wanted. Not when the patient was too dead to give consent.
“I did,” All For One flatly stated. The lack of an apology was refreshing, as if part of the mask had finally been peeled away. “The doctor restarted your heart and gave you a cocktail of Trigger and suitable donor Quirks to promote healing.”

Far too sterile and lacking in detail for Izuku’s liking. Instead, Izuku licked his very dry lips while hanging in All For One’s arms above the floor. “Which Quirks, exactly and which donors?”

“No, numerous Regeneration Quirks, all stacked, but even then we had to be careful. If they were too fast it wouldn’t allow for any surgical corrections in the ongoing healing process.” Delicate, but short. As if he didn’t want to dwell on the idea of healing occurring too fast… But All For One could be speaking from his own personal experience. Why wouldn’t a Regeneration Quirk heal someone back to their base state automatically? Was there some other criteria that had to be met.

That rose another question. “Who were the donors?” Whose life did All For One ruin to keep Izuku alive? What multiple lives had been ruined?

Silence. A frown. An uncomfortable shift. Only then did Izuku have his answer.

“I’m the donor,” All For One whispered and Izuku furiously craned his head to focus his unblinking eyes on his arch nemesis. Craned his head while the world swayed around him. “We had no way of knowing if you’d be able to handle that many simultaneously operating Quirks even with Trigger as a buffer. I held the combination from the nameless people I took them from and allowed genetic material to be taken to be added to the Trigger. Even then, the Trigger amount interacted poorly with your healing brain and you clawed at your eyes out in a fit of aggression.” Why give his own blood? Why prioritise that when no one else Izuku knew of warranted personal attention?

This was too much. Far too much. Too invasive. Izuku had already died young once because of All For One. If it happened a second time it was definitely going to be his fault then as well. This was beyond mere stress. It was beyond his brain’s currently expanded holding capacity. All For One was directly responsible for this - for all of it! “You…” Izuku stated. Then he stopped. What could even be said here? “You’re completely insane,” Izuku instead finished, feeling desperately dissatisfied. “Where do I even start?” Where could he start while a cocktail of Trigger and All For One’s own Quirk healed his hands before his eyes?

“At the beginning?” All For One suggested and Izuku lashed out before he could think, landing a fist into All For One’s unresisting shoulder. All For One who didn’t even flinch.

“You don’t get to say that,” Izuku snapped at him. “Why wasn’t there a rejection from the blood?” All For One’s blood. His murderer’s blood. Izuku wanted to gag on his own tongue. Why was Izuku still alive while these two men stitched Izuku back together, piece by piece? How was he still here?

“Reactions typically require an immune system to react with.” Oh nonononono. It was a shopping list. A shopping list of horrors that All For One was ticking off, one by one, like he was having teeth pulled. Could someone even suppress that sort of reaction? Conventional medicine definitely couldn’t do that. Conventional medicine couldn’t transfer Quirks either. What were these people doing?

“Why?” This was causing Izuku more pain than his panic attack. Why couldn’t All For One be a normal criminal with normal motives?

“If it makes you feel any better, the good doctor’s public career has evaporated due to your care needs.” That was meant to be reassuring, but Izuku wasn’t going to reward his captor with any sort of positive response. Even if Tsubasa deserved to be removed from contact with other human beings.
Izuku took a very deep breath. “Is there any part of my biology you haven’t violated?” His voice was quivering, but that didn’t matter. Even Kacchan wouldn’t handle this type of news gracefully. Was there anything All For One and Tsubasa hadn’t done?

“The most important one,” All For One nodded, his lips quirking slightly upwards. “We did our best to preserve your brain.” Preserved a brain in a wreck of a stitched together body that didn’t function without a wish and a prayer. Why did that sound so familiar?

“After you dosed it with a boatload of drugs,” Izuku faintly corrected. This was too much. But drugs had their own problems. Well known problems that applied to all drugs. “Don’t… drugs eventually wear off if you keep using them?”

“Yes, Izuku. Eventually you will become immune to Trigger,” All For One spoke so softly Izuku was straining to hear him. “Right now the Quirks maintain your heart, but none of the vital organs beyond the liver are designed to regenerate, nor am I willing to risk giving you the true Quirks to test their effects on you…” What was it that made Izuku too important to damage at a cognitive level? “Either way… the outcome would be much the same, even if I personally think the latter would be worse.”

Then… then Izuku’s heart would keep deteriorating. Trigger would wear off, the Quirks would fade… and… and…

“I’m dying.” It was simple. All For One had only bought Izuku time, not saved him. The fussing, the constant attention, the constant dissuasion to use One For All… the constant lookout for when Izuku’s fragile organs finally failed him. The jigsaw puzzle was clearer. Why further stress an already stressed and damaged heart? Not that All For One could have known about Izuku’s established disposition. Maybe Izuku didn’t worry like his mother did, but he didn’t need to when things like this were happening on a daily basis.

“Yes, Izuku, and for that I’m sorry.” The worst part was that he sounded it as well. Remorseless monsters, Izuku could understand, could get over, but this was too wrapped in emotion to be anything but some kind of remorse? Regret? It came back down to those missing nuggets of information that Izuku needed to understand, to plan, to work out why All For One was such a mystery. It was more painful than his years of hunting down the online scraps he could find on All Might’s Quirk. At least he eventually got an answer from All Might.

“I don’t know why you’re bothering.” This was too much effort for ninety nine percent of doctors, let alone Tsubasa who was styling mad scientist more than anyone else Izuku could recollect in recent villain history. Even Recovery Girl wouldn’t have tried her luck with a corpse.

“As it is, my circumstances are much the same as yours. What cures you will cure me.” Izuku would be perfectly happy if neither of them were cured and All For One’s career was permanently laid to rest before he ruined anyone else’s life. From what Izuku had been told though, Izuku would fade long before All For One who could hang on that little bit longer due to his arsenal.

“Self-interest, then?” Always a safe bet.

“There’s only one of you, Izuku. There won’t be another you.” Okay, maybe not an entirely safe bet. What did that even mean? There would always be more people like Izuku. There was nothing special about Izuku in particular and All For One was fanciful if he thought otherwise.

“You keep saying that…” They were moving again, down another unfamiliar hall, through another doorway.
“Because it’s true.” No, it wasn’t.

“You’re going to outlive me anyway.” And All For One was going to outlive just about everyone with his self inflicted Longevity Quirk(s). His minions, his experiments, his brother, the rest of his family already. He had already or would outlive everyone. It was a wonder why he bothered at all with trying to micromanage a society where everything he knew would one day die with or without All Might’s interference. He could wait for all of his problems to fade away.

“All the more reason to make sure you last to old age,” All For One replied without missing a beat.

“That’s not something I want to hear after what you just told me.” At least All For One wouldn’t be able to sustain any plan to permanently keep Izuku with him. Trigger would eventually wear off and there was nothing All For One could do to stop that. In light of the circumstances, Izuku was going to soak up the relief he could from the very knowledge that he wouldn’t have to live with it forever. It was a matter of time. All he had to do was wait.

“Would you prefer more details on the specifics of the surgery, then?” That was definitely meant to be sarcastic, but the joke was on All For One.

“Can I read the notes?” What other drugs was he being given?

“You don’t want to.” On second thoughts, Izuku could live without knowing what percentage of All For One was tethering him to life.

Ultimately, Izuku found himself relocated to yet another room, perched on a couch, pinned to All For One’s side while the latter disparagingly flicked through the news channels on a television. Izuku was expecting to be dumped back into his usual room while All For One slunk off to dodge more questions. This was different. Was it an apology in whatever archaic language All For One spoke? Or rather, an attempt to remove the strain from Izuku’s ailing heart with whatever trash that could be found to distract him?

There was numbness. Nothing but numbness. Izuku wondered how long it’d take before the reality of this revelation truly hit him, like the others had earlier.

“Absolutely worthless,” All For One scathing directed to one news reporter who was stumbling through their report.

But Izuku saw something through the rapid bites of sound and colour. A familiar flicker of yellow.

“Wait, go back three!”

And All For One did. Izuku held his breath.

It settled on a plain man in a navy suit. But that wasn’t what caught Izuku’s eye. It was the blond standing off to the man’s right. There was no colourful suits, no smile of reassurance, no gestures. All Might was a shadow lurking behind the others in similar uniformed suits, his hands tucked neatly behind his back.

“This is new,” All For One commented. If he had an eyebrow to lift, Izuku was sure he would have seen it shoot upwards. “He isn’t smiling. Since when has All Might been posing as a police officer?”

Izuku helplessly shrugged, transfixed.

“I will now turn this over to Detective Yagi, the lead investigator in the disappearance of Izuku Midoriya,” the man speaking finished.
“Thank you, sir,” All Might’s skeletal voice carried through the microphone all the way to Izuku and All For One. “As previously outlined, we have reason to believe that Izuku Midoriya is still alive.”

To the contrary, “Detective Yagi” might not have been smiling, but nonetheless gave the impression of a grinning, saltwater crocodile lying in wait for the first foot to step on it. The first mistake, the first hint of a clue that gave them away. And it would be for nothing if All For One was telling the truth about the drip that kept Izuku alive.

“And, to think you said no one cared,” All For One tutted.

Izuku couldn’t even bring himself to respond. His heart felt like it was about to give out.

Chapter End Notes

Here we are on the downhill slope.

End Notes

Just a fun idea...

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