Summary

He could never forgive himself.

It was his fault.

He’d planted the idea like a seed he’d never known would grow.

(Or: What if Izuku jumped?)
(OR: The one where Izuku jumps and lives and Katsuki visits him every day and Class 1-A not-so-secretly finds it adorable that their designated angry pomeranian brings flowers to his comatose childhood friend.)

Notes

Due to the triggering nature of the story, I wanted to inform you all that I do not condone self-harm. Nor am I trying to romanticise acts of self-harm, attempts of suicide, or bullying. If you or someone you know is suffering from depression and/or is struggling with suicidal ideations, I urge you to please take this as a sign that: YOU MATTER. Your life is of worth and value and what you are going through is valid and you are not alone no matter how bleak things may seem. I urge you to please seek help. As a person who knows how isolating and debilitating depression can be, I can say for certain that it does get better; with time, effort, and being receptive to help.

Below is the National Suicide Hotline
(1-800-273-8255)

Feel free to send me a message too, if you feel the need to reach out. Sometimes talking with a stranger can offer clarity or comfort. My door is always open to those in need!
The Day That Changed Everything

This was disorientation…

Jarringly, he feels what seem like hands pulling and tugging at his body, forcing him onto unsteady legs; wrenching him away from the boy he was clinging to.

Red and blue flashing lights left him in a dizzying haze.

Every sound was altogether deafening and muffled at once.

Voices, sirens, the sound of screaming. Whose was that, anyway? Why did his throat feel so raw?

Was this what drowning felt like?

That tight constricting feeling in your chest; stealing the breath from you. The rush of your own heartbeat in your ears, the muffled din rushing loudly, surging through your head. Pulsating in nauseating waves.

His equilibrium was off.

He could hear a cacophony of questions being directed at him, but...

Katsuki was drowning in a sea of red.

The sight of Icarus’ descent would forever be burned into his retinas.

The harsh breaths that make it past his lips are nothing short of choked pained gasps and he finds himself fighting against the hands of the EMT’s restraining him; reaching out, desperately searching.

Everything was so wrong.

He was late.

He was too late and everything was red.

He hardly remembers anything that happens next.

He only reacts when the EMT’s run past him with a stretcher, trying to force his way closer. Yet still, he was restrained.

Couldn’t these people understand? They were seriously pissing him off. Couldn’t they see? He had to be near him. He had to know if he was ok. He had to know if his shoddy attempt at CPR even worked.

He’d never been this stricken in his life.

As if the axis of his world was flipped entirely upside down.

And yet, what else could he have expected?

The signs had been there.

However, like everyone else around them, he’d elected to ignore them. Blindsided by a sunny disposition and ceaseless optimism.
When did those slip away?

Panic spikes within him as they move Deku’s broken body, leaving nothing but a smear on the pavement in front of their school’s main entrance.

It had to have been the beginning of the week.

Deku had seemingly been himself up until the beginning of this week. However, Katsuki was so preoccupied with his own trivial matters, boasting about U.A. or getting himself into trouble, that he hadn’t noticed the shift.

Just when had the fight left those viridian eyes?

In the end, it didn’t matter when. His light was snuffed out and he was too late.

Too painfully late to realize… Izuku’s flame had been extinguished.

And now, the pavement… his prone body… everything was coated an angry, brilliant, flaming vermilion and this was one fire that Katsuki couldn’t put out.

He’d fucked up.

Guilt left him trembling as paramedics diligently worked on the broken body beside him in the ambulance. They raced against time to get to the hospital.

Vaguely, he realized shock was setting in.

His body had moved on its own.

He didn’t even remember hearing himself beg to come with them. He didn’t even know why they let him. He could hardly be considered any type of family to Deku.

He’d lost that right long ago.

He’d never get it back.

Anxiety grips him as the paramedics charge up their defibrillators.

Katuski watched; agonizingly, as his once childhood friend flatlined twice on the way to the hospital.

Never before has a heartbeat been so infuriatingly fickle, like the flicker of a candle in the dark on a windy night. The odds stacked against them.

It stunned him to realize that he’d have given anything for just a few moments longer.

As if somehow he could reach out and physically keep Izuku’s heart beating with sheer willpower alone.

Thankfully; for once, time was on their side as they pulled up to the ambulance loading bay of Musutafu Regional Hospital.

Everything that happened after that was a blur, but apparently, it hadn’t passed without some fight on his part.

“Young man!” Katsuki is startled from his rage when a pair of fingers snap together in front of his face. His dazed gaze locks onto that of an elderly woman, a medical assistant it would seem?
“I understand that this is an awful and traumatic experience for you dear, but there are some important questions that we have to ask you and we can’t do that unless you calm down. Can you do that for me?”

Katsuki’s mouth clamps shut in shame, nodding mutely.

“Okay… good,” she continues gently, “now, we need to know the young man’s name.”

“I-izuku, Midoriya Izuku,” Katsuki rasps out, vaguely taking note that he’d been provided with a blanket.

“And how are you related to Midoriya?” she asks next.

“…He’s in my class.”

“I see,” her expression is tight and questioning as she enters the information he was providing onto a tablet, “would you happen to know anything more about him? Who his parents might be? Or any emergency contacts we should be aware of?”

The realization dawns on him like a slap to the face.

“Oh god…” his voice cracks, “Aunty Inko…”

Dread rushes through him at the thought of how devastated she was going to be. Guilt grips him like a vice as unknowing tears stream down his cheeks. The medical assistant hesitates but asks him a few more generalized questions before giving him some space.

What seemed like hours trickle by.

During this time Katsuki was moved into a private waiting room just outside of the OR.

Several different people; medical staff and policeman included, come to question him and take his statement during this time. Having rasped out answers on autopilot, they assure him that his parents have been contacted.

An officer by the name of; Tsukauchi Naomasa, appears later and stays with him, sitting just to his right. Whether out of respect for his space or due to Katuski’s own surly nature, the older man elects to maintain silence. Not bothering him with any more unnecessary questions unless the need arose.

A ways off, familiar voices could be heard and Tsukauchi stands abruptly, walking down the hall before disappearing from sight. As Katsuki’s parents both round the corner, a gasp and pained sob could be heard in their wake.

Katuski’s never heard such a painful sound in his life …and instantly he knew, his parents had brought Aunty with them.

He was caught in a haze of tight embraces, worried expressions, hushed reassurances, and several more prying questions. He was so drained, he could hardly find it in himself to answer them.

And even still, despite everything that has happened thus far, nothing could have prepared him for the sight of Aunty Inko being led down the corridor moments later.

Her crumpled face was distraught and tear-stricken, a wad of tissues clenched tightly in her hand.

Katsuki knew he was a distressing sight; when upon seeing him, seeing his bloodstained uniform and hands, Inko was nearly brought to her knees, if not for Tsukauchi steadying her.
Several more hours passed and it was a waiting game in which time was of the essence.

The next few hours were a mixture of dozing in and out of a fitful sleep, coffee and smoke breaks, barely audible conversations, nail-biting and pacing. There was hardly a word from the surgeons and the hallway’s occupants hardly knew what to make of it.

It was nearing 1 in the morning.

School had let out that day at 3 and Katsuki stayed in detention for about an hour, making it about 4 o’clock by the time he walked out of the main entrance before seeing…

He shudders despite himself.

How long had Deku been up there?

What kind of thoughts were running through his head?

Katsuki tried to keep himself in the present as he chewed his bottom lip.

His parents stand, each of them giving Aunty a tight hug and a few whispered words.

The pair of them make their way over and give him a reassuring squeeze on the shoulder and a kiss to his hair, as they walk out for yet another coffee and smoke break.

It was then that Katsuki found himself alone with Aunty Inko. At this point, it’d been almost 9 hours since Izuku was admitted for surgery.

Although her expression was dismally blank, Katsuki found himself bristling under the older woman’s inspection. “…You should really get yourself washed up, dear. I-it’s not good to let blo-” she cuts herself off, “…to l-let it dry on you like that.”

Katsuki hesitantly glances down at his stained hands and nods numbly. Standing to his feet, he’s about to make his way to the restroom before her voice halts him again.

“I…” her voice is quiet, almost as raspy as his own. “I’m glad…” she says after a moment.

Katsuki’s tired crimson gaze meets her own puffy eyes, eyes so like his, it made Katsuki’s chest clench.

“He wasn’t alone,” she continues. “H-had you not been there, then…” she trails off.

They wouldn’t be here, clinging desperately to some semblance of hope.

It went unsaid, but Katsuki knew that if he hadn’t had detention that day, they would be having a completely different conversation. One that involved funeral arrangements.

“It’s funny, you know…” she huffs humorlessly, her lips trembling slightly, “I never once suspected that this would happen, I never even realized how much pain he’d been in…” Her breath hitches, “for him to see no other way out… to do this… how could I not see it?” she wrenches back a sob, finding her voice again. “D-does that make me a terrible mother?”

As Katsuki finds her watery gaze again, he treads closer, his heart in this throat as he crouches before her, taking her tightly clenched fists into his hands.

His gaze is downcast, staring at their hands, at the contrast of the blood flaking off of his stained fingers.
“This isn’t your fault, Aunty. I…” he gulps harshly, a familiar sting clouding his vision.

His own watery gaze meets hers and he can see recognition in her eyes. “...I-if I had been there for him… if things were like they used to be. If I weren't such an asshole… maybe he wouldn’t have…”

Jumped; is left unsaid, but still, he powers on. “His spark… h-he lost it because of me. And I can never…”

He could never forgive himself.

It was his fault.

He’d planted the idea like a seed he’d never known would grow.

Deku was always stronger than he appeared.

Katsuki had had no cause to believe that he’d taken his awful jeering to heart.

Inko’s lips were pursed tight as she stared down at the boy crumpling at her feet. She could see the deeply seated guilt growing within him. Guilt not much unlike her own. She gives his hands a tight squeeze. Sure, she could be angry. She could place blame, but at the end of the day, this was on her too. If she’d believed in him more or maybe if she hadn’t been so fearful of his dreams, so overprotective...

She knew something was up with Izuku when he’d come home one evening last week and hadn’t touched a bite of his katsudon.

Inko had just assumed he was tired, or that he wasn’t feeling well. She’d had no idea it could have been this… that her little boy would...

“None of that now,” she replies with a strength that blinds Katsuki. He couldn’t fathom how she’d even summoned it. “I guess that just means we’ve got more work to do.”

Katsuki’s own resolve steels at that and he gives her a nod, that was the understatement of the year.

If Izuku survived this, Katsuki would undoubtedly spend the rest of his life making up for his mistakes, there were no two ways about it.

After cleaning himself up, a few more hours pass in which their respective parents end up huddled and cuddled restlessly in the waiting room chairs. His parents giving Inko as much needed support as they could offer.

Katsuki as usual, elected for space, which they gratefully gave him.

Each of them startles as the double doors of the OR swing open, revealing a very haggard looking surgeon and to Katsuki’s immense surprise, a pro-hero. Recovery Girl.

Inko is on her feet in an instant, clenching a tissue tightly in her hand.

After 12 hours of waiting, they were all on pins and needles.

None of them speak for a moment.

After massaging the bridge of his nose, the surgeon speaks up. Eyeing every one of them solemnly. “I want you to know, he is alive.”
Inko sobs into her hands in relief and Katsuki’s mother comes up from behind her and brings her into her arms, steadying her.

Katsuki, on the other hand, wasn’t as relieved, he knew a lingering ‘but’ when he heard one. His fists and jaw clench in anticipation.

“...This surgery wasn’t an easy one... and as you can see,” he gestures to the smaller woman beside him, “we’d even had to enlist the help of Recovery Girl, here. Thankfully, she was on staff here tonight, we couldn’t have done this at all without her help.”

The elderly hero smiles tightly, giving them a nod. “Your boy’s injuries were very grave, I’m afraid. And to be frank, it’s a miracle he even survived. We lost him several times but, graciously… he’s a bit of a fighter, that one,” Recovery Girl relays.

Katsuki feels strong hands grip his shoulders and it was only then that he’d realized he was trembling. He gratefully accepts the grounding contact.

“That being said,” the surgeon continues after Recovery Girl had said her piece, “he isn’t out of the woods yet. Not to be the bearer of bad news, but this could quickly take a turn for the worse in a number of ways. I want you all to know the reality of what we are faced with here, full disclosure.”

Recovery Girl interjects, “the wounds Izuku received were extensive, some of which require more medical jargon to explain than one would care to hear at 4 in the morning,” she adds, trying to lighten the mood a bit, but before long, the serious edge comes back to her voice, “Not including his broken back, arms and leg, as well as any internal bleeding he had, Izuku has sustained head trauma, the severity of which is as of yet determined. This is obviously our main focus and concern,” she finishes with a frown.

“With the help of Recovery Girl, we managed to stop the internal bleeding completely, as well as mend most of his broken bones, shortening his recovery time in what we’d estimate to be about half. In due time and with an extensive amount of physical therapy, we are confident that Izuku would make a full recovery. We currently have no cause for concern that he wouldn’t be able to walk again,” the surgeon informs them.

“However,” Recovery Girl adds, “as it is with all head trauma, it is highly unpredictable and could very well affect him in many different ways. As is, he is still in critical condition. He had extensive swelling as well as a brain bleed that we managed to address, but he will likely need more MRI’s and or CT scans to even see the full extent of the damage and the unfortunate reality is, that there is only so much that my quirk can do without causing his body more harm than good.”

“For now, we have him in a medically induced coma, although at this point the likelihood of him waking up on his own is slim, we did this as a precautionary measure to keep him from inadvertently exacerbating his injuries until we can get a full read on the situation at hand. What he needs now is rest and rehabilitation, once his body has, for the most part, regained some of its stamina, we may be able to try the use of Recovery Girl’s quirk again.”

“I see… okay… I- I understand, a coma… seems like it would certainly be necessary at this point,” Aunty Inko reasons, more with herself than them it would seem.

“Mrs. Midoriya, we don’t want to alarm you, but given the severity of his injuries, we want you to be prepared for any… eventuality.”

Katsuki’s heart sinks as a rage bubbles up his throat to replace it. His fists clench tightly, his anger directed at no one but himself. It was irrational he knew, but anger was by default, his go-to emotion
more often than not.

All of this was just… so unfair.

Sure, Deku survived, but now what?

Does he stay in a coma? For how long? What was the likelihood that he would even wake up? What if he did wake up and he was a fucking vegetable? What if he did wake up and he no longer had any of his cognitive functions? What about nerve damage? Brain bleeds? Amnesia? Cerebral edema? Blindness? Paralysis? He could be fucking deaf now for all they knew…

At what cost was his life spared? There was no way he was just going to walk away from something like this as if it never happened. And on top of that alone, the psychological damage would be just as severe. Sure, say he didn’t remember any of this, that’s great and all, but he’d still thrown himself from a 4 story building. Something like that raises questions.

Katsuki pulls away from his father’s warm hold and storms off down the hall. The older man attempts to call out for him, only to be stopped by his mother. She knew more than most how he worked, she was a hothead herself most of the time. Katsuki appreciated that she respected his need for space.

Stepping out into the cool autumn night, he could barely feel the chill.

His emotions were wound so tightly that he hardly knew what to do with himself. His palms were gripped so tight, they were smoking. It wasn't often that his natural control over his quirk slipped, it felt like he was trapped on a roller coaster hanging upside down.

As he paced back and forth under the starlit night, he catches sight of a tall, wiry, and very lithe blond man, who looked like a stray wind could blow him over. His expression is somber as he walks toward the hospital’s emergency room entrance. They make eye contact and his gaunt face pinches in what seems like concern, but Katsuki promptly avoids his gaze, continuing to pace.

His problems were of no concern to the skinny bastard and he sure as shit didn’t need pity.

He needed much more than pity.

He needed a miracle...
When Time Stands Still

Chapter Summary

To his credit, he tried not to laugh, but it really was too funny to hear Izuku’s mom cuss. It was like finding a unicorn in the wild.

Chapter Notes

ヽ(´▽`)/ WOW YOU GUYS! I just want to say that I am so surprised at how well this story was received. I never expected such a great response. I appreciate each and every one of you who’ve taken the time to read this and leave such amazing and thoughtful comments! And for those who have left bookmarks or kudos, truly, I am thankful!

At times like these, Yagi Toshinori usually had at least a few words of hope or encouragement.

No matter how dire a situation was, there was always a silver lining. After all, he was a hero! The hero! He was a pillar in the community and a global symbol for peace and yet; at that moment, he couldn’t come up with a single thing to say.

What could a person say at a time like this?

Congratulations, you’re not dead! Or, sorry for crushing your spirit?

Guilt was a dreadful thing, as was shame, and at the beginning of this week, he’d thought he’d felt the worst of it.

He was very wrong.

You see, he was in a bit of a jam when one Monday morning he was low on stamina. Villain after villain came out of the woodwork and all he’d been trying to do was run an errand, alas crime waits for no one and especially not for their groceries! He was All Might, after all, the symbol of peace! He had a job to do, and do it, he must!

He was on his way to the general store that morning when he’d come across a wanted criminal attacking a young boy. He’d had just enough time left to make short work of the fiend and be on his way, but that wasn’t entirely how things played out.

The boy in question was a timid, meek, and anxious middle schooler with forest green hair and equally vivid green eyes. He was chop full of youthful optimism despite his recent encounter with near death.

That honestly should have been Toshinori's first red flag.

The boy had more questions than Toshinori had time to answer them and as much as he’d regret
slothing a fan, he really had to go. Time was of the essence and if he didn’t book it soon, his secret would be exposed!

The green haired boy had other plans, however.

Toshinori really did not bank on the kid being such a wild card.

The kid had managed to get the drop on him and clung to him for dear life as Toshinori leapt high into the air. After quite the startling turn of events, Toshinori attempted yet again to get away from the kid as soon as possible. He’d had about 5 minutes or less left and he simply could not afford to dawdle any longer!

The kid began to express to him about how much he’d wanted to be a hero, just like him. He explained how he wanted to smile in the face of adversity and bring hope to others. At any other time, Toshinori would find this endearing, inspiring even…

The young man, went on to relay that he’d been quirkless since birth, and oblivious to Toshinori’s current inner conflict, he’d asked him if it were possible for a quirkless boy like him to become a hero.

As soon as his answer was out of his mouth, he’d regretted it.

He’d answered the boy in a fit of self-absorbed panic and he knew it.

And soon enough, his panic was all for naught.

To his credit, even with his incredulous reaction, the kid did seem honest enough. So Toshinori leveled with him. He went on to tell him things he’d mentioned aloud to only a select few. He’d even told him of his unknown injury and the time limit that had restricted the use of his quirk. He’d then gone on to tell the boy that he could not become a hero and that helping people in other ways was just as respectable. He’d told him to be realistic in regards to his limitations.

At the time he’d simply felt ashamed.

And as he walked away from the kid he’d felt guilty.

As he wandered the rest of the way to the police station to deposit the encapsulated criminal he honestly just… felt like shit.

How could he say that to such a seemingly bright kid?

What kind of hero crushed a child’s dreams and told them to settle for less than what they were aspiring to be? There were plenty of pro’s who had passive quirks and relied on regular strength alone! A good friend of his just so happened to be one of those.

How could he have just walked away from him like that, knowing full well that he himself had been a quirkless child?

In that moment he realized, he would come to regret those words for the rest of his life.

At the time, he’d just hadn’t factored in how much.

He’d talked about his fears and regrets later that evening with the one person he knew would listen, his best friend Tsukauchi. The man did his best to assuage his worries, but they both knew this was something that would stick with Toshinori for a long time, not to mention it was a serious liability.
issue.

After ruminating over it, both men came to the conclusion that the kid wouldn’t say anything. It didn’t seem to fit his character. He’d no doubt had a sense of justice and a great amount of respect for All Might. The odds of him talking about what had transpired were low.

Both men had decided to table the situation for a later date, should the need arise.

It was 4 days later when he’d gotten the call.

A young boy; a middle schooler from Aldera Junior High, matching the description of the kid that Toshinori had encountered 4 days previous, had thrown himself from the roof of the school. Young Midoriya Izuku; only 14 years of age, quirkless and often the target of relentless physical and emotional bullying, had attempted to take his own life.

As Tsukauchi solemnly relayed this information to him, Toshinori felt as if the wind had been knocked out of him and reflexively he found himself clutching his injured abdomen.

With all of the power that One For All granted him, for all he was as the symbol of peace, he’d felt utterly stripped and powerless. Tsukauchi tried his best to placate him, informing him that the boy had survived the fall, but there was no consoling the hero as he withered in self-hatred.

Surviving something like that almost seemed just as cruel as succumbing to his injuries would have been. There was simply no fixing this. Not in a typical sense. And now the poor kid was in surgery, fighting for a life he’d legitimately felt had no merit.

Tears streamed down Toshinori’s face as he hung up with Tsukauchi; who had to take care of the young man that had found Izuku; a boy named Bakugou Katsuki, who had apparently been present when Midoriya jumped.

Not knowing what else to do, he found himself calling the only other person who knew him best, seeking advice for circumstances that were so far out of his depth, they were an ocean; in which he was adrift. It was one of the hardest conversations he’d ever had with Gran Torino, who often times was like a father to him.

It left him feeling raw and exposed.

And the older man had only one piece of advice to impart to him:

*Make this right.*

As he made his way to Musutafu Regional Hospital, Toshinori only wished that he could.

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After some insistence from the nursing staff, Katsuki was made to shower and promptly given a pair of white scrubs to use in place of his school uniform, which had honestly seen better days. During this time Izuku was subjected to a few more tests before they were finally allowed to see him.

Katsuki knew it was going to be bad, hell he’d seen the kid at his worst, but he was still unprepared for the sight they were all met with. Fresh tears flooded from Aunty’s eyes with a renewed vigor as she rushed to her bedridden son.

The sight they were met with was an uncomfortable one.
A tangled mess of wires and tubes and fluids surrounded Izuku’s slight form. His body was a mesh of bandages, coagulated scrapes, and visible yellowing bruises; which was the really astonishing part. It was jarring to see just how well Recovery Girl’s quirk worked.

Deku had been black and blue and red all over. His body had been twisted in ways that only seemed possible in those American ‘Loony Toons’ cartoons they’d watched as kids. At the time Katsuki was scared to even touch him, let alone perform CPR, out of fear of hurting the boy even more, but now?

Now, it seemed more like he’d been in a bad car wreck a week ago and not like he’d been dropped off a building the day prior. It was truly amazing how well he looked now compared to hours ago. And maybe it was because only Katsuki and the doctors really knew the extent of just how bad his injuries were, but Katsuki felt hope bloom throughout himself. Maybe Deku really did have a chance at making a full recovery?

By the time 8 am rolled around, the older Bakugou’s found themselves sleeping in shifts while Inko and Katsuki remained vigilant at Izuku’s side. Between the pair of them, their eyes bloodshot and bodies sore, Katsuki was sure that they were only still awake out of unyielding determination alone.

The private room they were situated in was mostly devoid of any sounds but that of the heart rate (or EKG) monitor and various machines respectively. As Inko was beginning to nod off in her bedside chair, Katsuki couldn’t take his eyes off of Deku’s still form.

His curls were a tangled mess and his face was covered in scrapes. All things considered, he actually looked relatively good. There were no obvious outward deformities to be worried about, just a few superficial things that shouldn't leave any major scarring. It set his singing nerves at ease.

Before long, he too was asleep, his head pillowed next to Izuku’s thigh.

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Katsuki awoke next to the vivid smell of coffee and a light shake of his shoulder. As tired crimson eyes blinked into awareness, he was greeted with the sight of his father’s soft smile. Katsuki groans as he sits up, a stiffness in his shoulders likely being the cause. Blinking around the room, he noticed it was devoid of his and Deku’s mothers.

“Where?” He rasps out, his throat very dry. He rubs the sleep from his sore eyes and yawns deeply.

“I managed to bully them into getting some sleep,” his father kids, “I used the: ‘Is this what Izuku would want’ card and they begrudgingly complied. They are holed up at an inn down the road, neither of them wanted to go home,” his father relays, gingerly waving the coffee cup in front of Katsuki’s face, he accepts it gratefully.

His father really was the best.

In a way, Izuku reminded him of him. They were both well mannered and soft-spoken, both were patient in ways that Katuski couldn’t begin to fathom, the both of them were pretty nerdy too.

Taking a deep pull from the spout of the lid, Katsuki hums in appreciation. “Wha time’s it?” He mumbles, still too tired to form coherent sentences.

“Just after 3:30 in the afternoon,” the older Bakugou replies, taking the seat on the opposite side of Izuku that Aunty had occupied earlier. “I dropped them off at around 2 pm and went home for a change of clothes for everyone. The coffee was kind of an afterthought,” he explains.

Katsuki nods faintly, as though spaced out. He takes another drink to wake himself up.
“I figured I would leave you here, seeing as I didn’t think you’d leave him even if I asked,” his father relays knowingly, a lighthearted edge to his voice.

Katsuki grumbles into his coffee, feeling his face heat up despite himself.

“I also took the liberty of letting the school know you’d be out for a couple of days. They completely understood; although, incidentally, they actually let me know that they’d canceled classes for the following week and that your absence wouldn’t reflect on your attendance. I’m guessing they are having to deal with liability backlash issues. Apparently, the school’s roof access was supposed to have remained locked at all times,” he trails off, taking a sip of his own coffee.

Katsuki nods a handful of times to himself belatedly. “Thank you,” he eventually replies. Despite the caffeine doing its job, he still felt completely drained. He could tell that his father had wanted to ask him a whole slew of questions, but he refrained, Katsuki didn’t know if he was grateful for that or not.

“You said you brought me clothes?” The younger Bakugou queries.

“Yeah, they’re right on the table behind you,” his father gestures.

Leaving Deku in his father’s capable hands, he grabbed his clothes and went to change. Maybe if he got himself more cleaned up he wouldn’t feel nearly as shitty.

He had his doubts, but one could hope.

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The next shift change reinvigorated Katsuki’s ever ready ‘fight response’ as one nurse had the balls enough to tell him that visiting hours were over. As one could imagine, this did not go over well. He was so irate in fact, that Izuku’s primary care physician was called in after hours to ‘talk him down.’

Or rather, Katsuki liked to believe that he’d actually been called in to tell the third shift staff to promptly ‘fuck off’ but, whatever.

In the end, he’d been given the same special permission to stay after hours as Aunty Inko and that was all he cared about.

Around 10 o’clock that evening, Aunty walked into Deku’s room, still looking haggard, but far more rested than she did when he last saw her. “Bakugou Katsuki,” she starts with an edge to her voice.

‘Uh-oh…’ the fine hairs on the back of his neck prickle.

“Why did I receive a phone call from the receptionist saying that you told a nurse to, and I quote: ‘stuff a bedpan up her ass and leave you the fuck alone?’” She chided him.

To his credit, he tried not to laugh, but it really was too funny to hear Izuku’s mom cuss. It was like finding a unicorn in the wild.

“They tried to make me leave, what did you expect me to say?”

Inko’s gaze softens marginally and she nods in understanding. She’d thought about it before, and it was way more apparent as the days went on, but she had a feeling that she and Katsuki were going to be seeing a lot of each other more often. It almost made her nostalgic to think about it. Both of her little boys in the same room again, it was sad that it had to be because of something like this. She’d really wished they could have resolved their differences before all of this, without life or death stakes
being involved.

More often than not, she wondered what drove such a wedge between two boys that were practically adjoined by their diapers? She wondered if she would ever find out. All she wanted more than anything was to see both of them interact again, in a healthy manner. It would make Izuku so happy.

She reaches out and pinches Katsuki’s ear; almost laughing at his unsuspecting hiss, but she remains firm and unyielding. “I expect you to apologize in the morning, for causing them so much trouble, mister! They were just doing their job and part of that job is ensuring that their patients have enough rest. Am I understood?”

Katsuki visibly blanches and nods as she releases him, “yes ma’am,” he agrees quickly. As he rubs the soreness from his ear, Auntie takes her seat on the other side of Izuku’s bed. He wonders if this was why Deku was so damn proper all the time.

‘Geez... she’s scary.’

“Have you eaten?” She asks a few minutes later.

Katsuki takes a moment to consider this and apparently it was a moment too long for his Auntie’s taste because she was already standing to her feet and walking to the door. Her fingers grip the threshold as she lingers, craning her head back toward him, “what would you like to eat?”

Katsuki gives her a shrug. “I honestly haven’t had an appetite, the last thing I had was the coffee Dad brought me around 3.”

She hums in acknowledgment, “I’ll bring you back something light then, watch over him for me?”

Katsuki stills.

It was as if that validation alone was all he needed. Auntie Inko trusted him. She’d trusted him with Izuku’s wellbeing and he’d be damned if he ever screwed that up again.

Never again.

Katsuki gives her a nod and a small smile and before he knew it, she was gone.

His eyes trail back over to Izuku’s intubated form, frowning slightly. All was quiet aside from the machinery at work. Discreetly, he reaches out and takes his hand, being mindful of the I.V. connected to it.

“You have one hell of a mother, Deku,” he murmurs, “hurry up and get better, so you don’t keep her waiting, ‘kay?”

----

Just out of Katsuki’s line of sight, a lithe figure lingers near the doorway, watching the boys briefly with solemn blue eyes.

Chapter End Notes

Also for those interested, I write/proofread to this youtube video:
https://youtu.be/D0wYRMmQ7Bk

My Hero music has a direct line to my soul, I swear. Also, the picture of Katsuki is very fitting for this story.
Where Do We Go From Here?

Chapter Summary

He could tell that they’d scrubbed and scrubbed, but still, Katsuki could see it.

The faintest outline of blood.

Deku’s point of impact.

Chapter Notes

(T≧T) Strap yourselves into the emotional roller coaster, ya'll. Shit gets real.

ALSO: I know I have said it before, but damn guys. I am floored. Speechless even. You all are the best readers an author could ever have. I never expected this much positive feedback. I was very worried that this story might come off as offensive to some, I never imagined that you all would be so receptive and kind. Thank you for all of your positive vibes and support.

(｡・ω・｡) ♥♥♥

Contrary to Katsuki’s opinion, unfortunately, school was apparently still a thing and his parents, Aunty Inko, and even the goddamn hospital staff all insisted he go back. They’d told him that getting back into his ‘normal’ routine would do him some good. It was honestly ridiculous how outnumbered he was. If dropping out and becoming a vagrant who lived off of the land was more appealing than going back to that hellscape, who were they to judge him? Life goals were life goals.

Although, in reality, Katsuki didn’t know what to make of returning to school, but he did know that the thought of it made him ill.

The entire train ride there Katsuki kept trying to think of ways to talk himself out of going, to just turn around and ride the next train back to the hospital, but he didn't have a choice. His mother would likely drag him back by his ear, harping at him the whole way. He’d rather not deal with that.

Soon enough he’d reached his stop and walked the rest of the way to his destination.

His hands trembled as he stepped into the school’s courtyard.

With the intention of avoiding as many people as possible, he’d purposely arrived 10 minutes late. The fewer eyes there were on him, the better his nerves would be.

Making his way down the sidewalk, his chest begins to tighten, his quickening pulse thrumming like a war drum.

He stops dead in his tracks, realizing that what he’d been feeling was dread.
He could tell that they’d *scrubbed* and *scrubbed*, but still, Katsuki could see it.

The faintest outline of blood.

Deku’s point of impact.

He stared at that spot for an undetermined amount of time; as if he could will it away.

As if by doing so he wouldn’t hear the distant echo of Izuku’s bones shattering or the rattled cough that came from deep in his chest as he began to choke on his own-

Katsuki jumps, shaken from his thoughts by the vice principal as she laid a hand on his shoulder. He couldn’t make out any words, he didn’t quite care what she’d said anyway, it was probably something along the lines of ‘*you’re late*’ or ‘*the bell rang 15 minutes ago.*’ However, as he met her eyes, he could see that her expression was one of pinched concern.

Of course…

They all probably knew.

“What?” He croaks out lamely.

“Bakugou, dear, can you tell me what you need? Would you like to go sit? Should I call-”

“No,” he interjects hurriedly, pulling away from her, “I’m fine. I just need to get to class, sorry I’m late.”

She attempts to reach out, only to pull her hand back and let him go.

Shaking off that uncomfortable encounter, Katsuki braced himself for the next one. He could tell that this would only get worse as the day went on.

Sometimes, he hated being right.

As he opened the door to his classroom, their teacher immediately stopped talking mid-lecture. All eyes were on him and he could feel them roaming his body. Akin to centipedes, their gazes were invasive and sent discomfiting chills up his spine, leaving pin pricks all over his arms. He tried to ignore it, but failed.

“The fuck you loser’s looking at? Take a fuckin’ picture,” despite his harsh words, his tone was quiet, subdued. It sounded foreign even to his ears. As he sat down in a sea of superficial stares, he’d never felt more alone. Looking to his right, he couldn’t take his eyes off of the vacant seat across from his. It only seemed to serve as a reminder of where he’d rather be.

If 1st period was uncomfortable, 2nd period was hell.

By 3rd period, his skin itched every time someone stared at him and whispered under their breath.

By lunch, the rumor mill was in full swing.

Whispered words, stares, jeers, giggles, suspicious or pitying glances; as all of these swirled around him like some twisted vortex, he’d wondered; not for the first time that day, if this was just a brief glimpse of what Izuku felt like on a daily basis.

The thought left him feeling sick to his stomach as he went through the lunch line.
Everyone acted as though he couldn’t hear them, that or they knew he could and just didn’t care. The rumors spread like a plague as he heard awful things like; how he and Deku got into a fight on the roof and he fell as a result.

Or that he’d pushed Deku off the roof to see if he’d had a ‘flight’ quirk.

Or that Deku decided to off himself because he’d realized how weak a quirkless nobody like him was.

Or worse yet; that Deku actually died on the way to the hospital because the EMS didn’t see the point in saving him.

Katsuki tried to keep his cool, he really did, but the perpetual anger that always simmered below his skin rolled to a boil.

He took a deep breath… and promptly exploded.

----

Inko knew something was wrong when Katsuki stomped his way into Izuku’s room at 1:15 in the afternoon. His rigid posture and the puffiness of his eyes told her all she needed to know. Giving Izuku’s hand a gentle squeeze, she stands, crossing the room until she approaches the boy in the threshold.

“I’m parched,” she starts casually, not yet questioning why he was there, “come with me to get some coffee.”

It was phrased as a question, but said like an order, and Katsuki was honestly too drained to attempt to deny her.

The pair of them inform the nursing staff that they were leaving for a while and exit the building.

The walk to the coffee shop wasn’t too long, but it was long enough for them to expend a fair amount of energy. Inko knew they’d both needed it. They’ve been cooped up in the hospital for almost two weeks now. This was good for both of them, or at least she kept telling herself that whenever her mind wandered into unsafe territory.

“Aren’t you going to ask?” Katsuki fishes, Inko shakes her head.

“I didn’t want to pry, but I didn’t expect you to be the first one to break the ice either,” she replies.

With a sigh, Katsuki stares down at their feet, he was almost a whole foot taller than her, but they were keeping a pretty even pace.

“Well, there’s no point in delaying the inevitable… I… fucked up today.”

It was a testament of how used to Katsuki she had grown when she didn’t even react to his potty mouth. “In what way?”

The boy at least had the decency to seem abashed.

“I… blew up in the school cafeteria today, both… figuratively and literally. I’m sure it won’t be long until mom finds out…”

“So I’m harboring a fugitive, then?” She teases, there was no point in being mad. She kind of suspected this would happen, although, she had hoped school would have been more of a positive
distraction. They gravely miscalculated on that one.

Katsuki, to his credit, did seem remorseful, but Inko just knew there was a righteous indignation hiding underneath. From the time he could walk, Katsuki in his own weird way, never did anything without there being a reason behind it. He, like her Izuku, was a very bright child. Very analytical and precise, as well as alarmingly perceptive. If he blew up the school cafeteria, there had to have been an underlying reason as to why.

“I will talk to your mom,” she decides, watching as surprise colors the teenager’s face, “but… in return you have to tell me what happened, deal?”

“…Deal,” the perplexed boy replies, with the slightest bit of hesitation.

They reach the cafe and order their respective drinks and when Katsuki attempts to pay for his own, Inko smacks his hand away, with a smile. “My treat,” she says simply and she watches as any argument he’d had dissolves on his tongue.

They tuck themselves into a corner booth and settle in, enjoying the small stretch of silence in which they sip their drinks.

“Ok kiddo, what happened at school today?” Inko asks after a moment longer.

Katsuki’s expression darkens as he fidgets with the plastic rim of his cup.

She’d seen this same expression on him two weeks ago, this didn’t bode well. She steeled herself for whatever he had to say, and she was glad she did, because what he tells her next is both surprising and unsurprising all at once.

“Just a bunch of assholes who didn’t know shit about what the fuck they were talking about,” he grumbles, “they were talking about Deku… as if they knew anything about him. Judging him without knowing the situation. It was cruel and it pissed me off.”

Inko nods, her expression dismal as she peered into her coffee cup. “I was afraid that might have been the case.”

Katsuki fidgets, “I didn’t want to go back,” he confides. “I don’t want to go back either, I’m not ready… when I got to the school’s entrance where… where it happened, I spaced out. I don’t know how long I was standing there… staring at the ground… before the vice principal came and shook me out of it.”

Katsuki begins to bounce his leg nervously, his expression was painfully grim, like the light had been sucked out of his once expressive eyes, Inko finds herself frowning. This whole ordeal had changed him drastically.

“I was there,” he whispers. This draws her attention back to his eyes.

“I saw it happen,” he confirms, an obvious tremor to his voice.

“I was fucking around as usual and landed myself in detention. When school let out, Dek- er, Izuku hurried out of class. I assumed he’d gone home. I had no reason to believe he didn’t. The kid was a magnet for trouble, so it made sense that he’d book it out of there as quickly as possible… I didn’t think for a minute that it was…”

Inko sits in silence, listening with rapt attention, so Katsuki continues.
“I didn’t have time to react. There was no time to call out to him. There was no way to prevent it. In that moment, I completely seized up. All I could do was... watch... and in seconds he’d hit the pavement,” the boy recounts miserably.

Inko’s heart felt like it plummeted into her stomach. Her eyes began to water despite herself.

“It... it was like time ceased to exist at that moment. Like nothing else mattered but making it to his side. Seeing if he was alive, fearing that he wasn’t... because who could survive that?” the stress in his voice spoke volumes. He’d kept this in the entire time. He’d hid all this pain under a carefully constructed mask. Sure she’d seen him cry at times. She’d seen how he interacted with Izuku over the last two weeks. Those longing looks, forlorn glances. The small touches he thought she didn’t know about. That puzzling guilt. But she hadn’t realized the extent of all that he was keeping to himself.

“It was the single most horrible moment of my life...” he attempts to clear his throat with his coffee, “and I’m completely to blame for it...”

“Honey...” Inko slides her hand across the table and lays it across Katsuki’s, who pulls away reflexively, as though burned. His eyes were wide and glistening. He looked like a wild animal, scared and cornered.

“No, Aunty- you don’t get it... this isn’t just some- some guilty conscience bullshit talking! This isn’t me talking out of my ass, wishing shit could be fucking different, it’s the honest to god, literal truth. If you knew...” his voice takes on an almost hysterical edge, “if you really knew what I was like to him. The shit that I said or did to him that day. Or the day before that, and every other day before that one and that one... you would know,” his face crumples.

“You would know what a complete piece of shit I really am... and how much I don’t deserve your kindness. You’d know how fucking toxic-”

“Katsuki,” she tries, “please, don’t say things like that-”

“I TOLD HIM TO DO IT!” He all but sobs, his voice cracking as the unshed tears finally stream down his face.

Inko is stunned.

“W-what do you mean, you told him?”

His head hangs low, avoiding her gaze.

“It's my fault that he jumped, because I was terrible to him... what I said was cruel, but I swear if I thought for a minute he'd actually do it...”

“Katsuki. What did you say to him?” her voice sounded terse even to her own ears.

He straightens himself out. Squaring his shoulders, despite his red-rimmed eyes, he looked at her dead on. Staring at her like a man about to face his final moments. A man staring down a firing squad.

“A week before the incident... in class, we were talking about the hero courses at our respective high schools of choice. He was talking about joining U.A again. Talking about joining the hero course. I don’t know why, but it pissed me off. I threatened him, told him I’d kick his ass if he joined U.A. He had no business getting himself into something he couldn’t handle... or at least that’s what I thought. Looking back... I know I was dead wrong... about all of it. I think in my own way, I was worried.
But it’s no excuse, I had talked out of my ass again…”

Inko glares down at her coffee cup, her hands were so tight around it that her knuckles were white. She had a feeling she knew where this was going…

“I told him, out of spite, or fear, or worry, I don’t know,” his voice got gradually softer as he went on. “It never should have fucking come out of my mouth to begin with… but it did and I can’t fucking change that. And if I could, in a heartbeat I would… hell if I could swap places…”

Her attention is piqued at that, her pulse quickening at that belated comment. She didn't think she could deal with another teenager hurting themselves. Not again. Thankfully, he just seemed to be commiserating.

Acceptance seems to come over him, because the tension in his shoulders, his pinched expression, it all fades to a blankness that seems to overtake him. It was a look of such hopelessness that a teenager should never have to have.

“I told him,” he says quietly, “that if he was so dead set on having a quirk, that he’d probably have better luck in his next life… and to take a swan dive off the roof.”

All is silent, except for the typical background noise of the cafe.

The pair of them are eerily quiet, for a long time. Neither of them having the will to look one another in the eyes.

A flood of emotions came over her.

She was angry.

She wanted to be angry.

She wanted to shout, cry, and shake him.

But taking one look at him, she could immediately see that anything she did was nothing compared to how broken he already looked. He had the eyes of someone who lost more than just a childhood friend. But what he and Izuku had could hardly have been called a friendship anyway, so why? What right did this boy have to become so shattered by this?

She couldn’t wrap her head around it.

This was more than your typical guilt.

More than remorse.

And goddamnit, she wanted to hate him, but she knew in her heart of hearts that she couldn’t.

She was no better.

She did nothing to encourage Izuku in his dreams. She more often than not, told him he didn’t need a quirk anyway. She even went out of her way to not use her own quirk around him. She didn’t want him getting hurt. He was all she’d had.

Hisashi was a prime example of what she didn’t want to be as a parent. An unsupportive deadbeat. After he left them, she had given it her all to prove that they didn’t need him anyway. That she would be enough for Izuku. She would keep him safe. Quirks weren’t everything. If Hisashi didn’t want a son without a quirk, so be it. It was his loss.
She often tried to reinforce that he didn’t need what he didn’t have.

Never once did she consider that this could be just as potentially harmful.

She’d treated Izuku with kid gloves, even when he got older.

And she’d always had this nagging feeling that she’d had a misstep somewhere with him.

Like, maybe she’d said the wrong thing at the wrong time.

Because after a while, Izuku stopped sharing his love for quirks with her.

It came up often, but not near as much.

And he was always so private, scribbling or writing away in his notebooks. Taking notes on quirks. Notes that were detailed and fascinating when she’d gotten him to share them. They were truly impressive, from an analytical perspective.

She would often ask him what he was up to, but he’d shrug her off. Eventually, this became normal. Like a teenager who had a diary, she thought nothing of it. His privacy was his right.

She didn’t question it.

And that’s where she failed. It was never just about quirks. It was about him helping people. She saw that now. He wanted to become a hero, no matter how. For all she knew, he could have wanted to be a doctor. He wanted to save lives, to make people feel safe. And she slighted him, thinking that it was an issue with quirks alone.

She could be angry at Katsuki, but it was moot now, wasn’t it?

Like his mother, Inko’s own best friend, he often said things he didn’t mean. He was hotheaded, brusque, and sarcastic. He wasn’t perfect by a long shot, but he wasn’t a bad kid either.

At the end of the day, like Izuku, he wanted to become a hero. He wanted to join U.A. He wanted to be just like their shared idol, All Might.

It must have been killing him to know that he couldn’t save the one person he’d known his whole life. Even if they weren’t on the best of terms. They were one another’s universal constant.

Could Inko really blame him for this? When she herself felt guilt? When she herself was also wrong? She didn't know. There wasn't a manual for this. It was said that the only way to deal with hell, is by going through. That was all any of them could do now. The deeds were done.

The question now was, where did they go from here?

The truth; or Katsuki’s truth, was out now.

He was far from being Izuku’s only bully. Inko was almost certain that this was a culmination built up over some time. He wouldn’t have sought an out like this lightly, or from one thing that was said out of a million. Hell, that probably wasn’t even the worst thing Katuski’s said to him. That kid had no brain to mouth filter. She’d have to break up their petty squabbles a time or two.

If Izuku was going to jump because of something Katsuki said, he’d have done it that day.

He’d waited a week, according to the blond, and for all his faults, he wasn’t a liar by any means.
Something more must have happened to break Izuku’s spirit.

Something he couldn’t bounce back from.

The question was, what?

“...Aunty,” Katsuki says quietly after a long tense silence.

It was then that Inko had realized that she’d been thinking herself in circles again.

“Aunty…” he says again, as though conjuring up the courage, “I am so sorry... If I had any indication that he’d take my words to heart... any at all... I wanted him to be safe. He was always going on and on about being a hero and he has zero self-preservation skills. I just didn’t think. I didn’t think about how much I was hurting him. I wish I could take it all back, but I can't,” he was starting to ramble, she noticed.

“There are no excuses or reasons in the world that would make what I said acceptable and I understand if you hate me, but I want to make this right. I know I have no right to ask you, but please, let me try,” he urges earnestly. She's only seen him this determined a handful of times. Usually where becoming a hero was concerned.

She scrutinizes every inch of him, his eyes although sad, brimmed with a spark that just needed some kindling. Something settles inside of her. There was only one course of action to be had at a time like this. It’s ultimately what Izuku would have wanted.

"I can't act as though you were the only one who has blame on their shoulders,” she admits, making the teen tense in his seat.

“I think Izuku was affected by more than one circumstance. That being said... I don't know what to say to you. I can't say that I forgive you for what you've done, but I can't forgive myself for allowing this to go on, either,” she levels with him. Katsuki nods in understanding, his expression solemn.

“I am Izuku's only parent. I should have been more vigilant, I should have tried to understand him more rather than just trying to shelter him. He might be quirkless, but he's not helpless. A lot of this blame is on me too and I can't begin to start forgiving myself yet.”

A stagnant silence settles between them. Katsuki's shoulders slump.

“I ...think it would be best, to set our wrongs aside for now. We are both here now and it's clear that you have done nothing but try to keep him safe ever since.”

The teenager perks up at that, eyeing her with an almost comical incredulity. “...Y-you mean?”

She nods in confirmation. “Let's work toward building ourselves back up so when the time comes for Izuku to wake, we can; in turn, build him up. He's going to need all of the support we can give him, nothing else matters than that. And once we’ve come to a place where we can rationally think about this, we can talk about forgiveness. I think that that is the only fair way to deal with this.”

Katsuki nods in agreement.

“I can’t act like you didn't help save his life, I can't forget that you have been at his bedside incessantly since the beginning and I can't ignore that look on your face, because it's the same as mine. Izuku wouldn't want discord to settle between the people he cares for, so for his sake, let's put this behind us and move forward.”
“Yes, of course! I'll do anything,” Katsuki replies in earnest.

Inko eyes him critically, her face one of stone cold sternness. “But, remember this Bakugou Katsuki, your mother might be my best friend and I may love you like you're one of my own, but if you ever hurt Izuku again. I will deal with you myself.”

“You have my word,” he acknowledges; his demeanor that of pure sincerity.

“Good,” she gives his hand a pointed smack, “now finish your damn coffee, we have somewhere to be.”
An Unexpected Turn Of Events

Chapter Summary

“What are you doing, Toshinori?” his friend asks, a tired edge to his voice.

Toshinori fidgets as he holds his phone to his ear. “Nothing nefarious, if that’s what you’re asking.”

Chapter Notes

(o´ω´o) Every single one of you are angels! Thank you so much for continuing to support this story! I am absolutely floored by your encouragement! I hope you enjoy this chapter, because a lot of work and little sleep went into it lol.

After a very pointed and enlightening conversation with his former teacher, Toshinori had a fair idea as to what he would do in terms of ‘making things right.’ Were they a little unorthodox? Maybe. Where they borderline stalker-ish? Certainly so; but, before he went about throwing himself at the feet of Midoriya Izuku’s mother and begging for forgiveness, he had work to do. He also had a few favors to call in.

You see, Toshinori has always been a go-getter. He didn’t believe in half-hearted efforts. He has always been driven when it came to certain points of interest. Some who knew him would even say that when he poured all of his energy into one single thing, he had a tendency to become borderline obsessive. He knew all too well how he fixated on things at times, but what some called unorthodox, he called efficiency. It was just how he worked.

So, he knew it came as no surprise to his best friend when Toshinori called Naomasa in the middle of the night and asked for Midoriya Izuku’s file. The ensuing conversation, however; tipped the scale between work-related ethics; such as confidentiality, and what constituted as privileged information.

Basically, if Naomasa were discovered giving Toshinori a file on a 14-year-old suicide victim, some eyebrows would be raised. But, if detective Tsukauchi were giving All Might said file, as means of helping with an ongoing investigation about the boy’s school, no one would bat more than an eye.

These were necessary loopholes that were often exploited between the two of them since forming their friendship back when Toshinori first became a pro-hero. Was it altogether legal perse? Probably not, but seeing as All Might worked closely with the police as a pro-hero, no one really counted that as such.

Even so, Naomasa had his personal reservations.

“What are you doing, Toshinori?” his friend asks, a tired edge to his voice.

Toshinori fidgets as he holds his phone to his ear. “Nothing nefarious, if that’s what you’re asking.”
Naomasa takes the joke for what it is by responding with a laugh. A long-suffering sigh escapes him next, making Toshinori twitch in anticipation. “Look, I know you feel bad, but everything the kid needs is already being met. I talked with the school, they are taking steps to seal off the roof with a fence and padlock the access door. They are afraid of a legal battle ensuing with Ms. Midoriya. They have even provided help in making several students come forward as either being witnesses to the bullying, or the bullies themselves. I’ve questioned them all, including Bakugou Katsuki, of whom Ms. Midoriya stated that she would not be pressing charges against.”

Toshinori frowns, “but wasn’t he the boy who found Midoriya? I thought they were friends? He’s always in his room, watching him like some kind of guard dog.”

Naomasa shifts, in what sounds like his bed, “they are; however, there is a history there between the two ... in which they weren’t always on the best of terms. After speaking to him, his parents, and Ms. Midoriya directly, they had all agreed that legal action not be taken. The only thing being required of him now would be mandatory counseling and anger management classes. The subject of which is going to be brought up in person sometime within the next week.”

Toshinori stares blankly at his desk, nodding to himself, “I see. That… that’s good. After what the boy witnessed, I’m sure he feels just as terrible as I do.”

“Toshi,” Naomasa stresses, “we’ve been over this. While yes, you did suck at having tact-”

“No, Namoasa,” he interjects, “I might not have been at any ‘legal’ fault, and I know that I didn’t push the kid off of that roof, but I also know that what I said was wrong. That poor boy was already dealing with so much on his plate, it doesn’t matter that I might not be legally entangled, what matters is I failed as a person.”

Naomasa sighs, a moment of silence stretches between them, so Toshinori continues.

“I shouldn’t have been so brash with him. I was a person that he looked up to and I let him down, during a time when he needed a hero. I should have been more supportive. Something like having a secret identity should never have come before helping someone in need. I may have saved the boy from a villain that day, but I failed to save him from himself.”

Naomasa groans, rubbing what sounded like his hand across his face, “look, if it truly makes you feel better, I will give you his file, but Toshi…”

“Yes?”

“Don’t let this consume you. I know you have a soft heart and just how heavily it bleeds for people. Just… don’t let one off-day in the life of ‘All Might’ be one that makes you hang up the cape.”

“Trust me,” Toshinori responds, his voice determined, “I have no intention of hanging up the cape just yet, I may be looking for a successor to One For All, but that doesn’t mean that I will give up on helping others. All Might makes mistakes too, and he’s got to make this one right.”

“The file will be on your desk in the morning,” Naomasa replies dutifully.

“Thank you, my friend,” Toshinori replies, gratefully. Relief flooded through him, alongside that determination.

“Nothing to it, I’m going back to bed now,”

Toshinori responds with a laugh, bidding him goodnight before hanging up.
The next morning, when Toshinori wandered into the office he’d been given on the U.A. campus, he indeed found Midoriya’s file on his desk. Other than the standard general information; he found, as he leafed through the only three pages, that it really wasn’t very much to go on.

This had been information that he had already gathered himself through some simple digging.

Each file basically painted the same picture. Midoriya was a great student, with stellar grades. As far as academics went, the kid was top of his class, shadowed only by young Bakugou, whom Toshinori suspected only had lower marks due to his stunning lack of respect for authority. It would seem that the teenager only truly stayed on task or kept out of trouble when he’d had something to gain from it.
Both students were near equals in all but personality.

As suspected, Midoriya tended to shy away from others. He’d had a habit of rambling or muttering to himself while immersed in his studies, but other than the occasional fist fight with other boys, he was a damn near flawless student.

With little left to go on as far as a paper trail went, Toshinori decided that legwork would be more beneficial at this point. He was no stranger to questioning a witness, he’d been on many a case and had seen Naomasa operate in person many times before. It was with this mindset that Toshinori found himself walking into the office of Aldera Junior High.

He was greeted by a cheery brunette receptionist who was glad to have directed him to the principal’s office.

After being led inside and made to sit down, he was soon greeted by a portly, older, balding man. “Good afternoon, my name is Yagi Toshinori,” the pro-hero holds his hand out respectfully.

The older man eyes him suspiciously before shaking his hand in kind, “I am principal Ichikawa Hyotaru, to what do I owe the pleasure, Mr. Yagi?”

“I’m a faculty member at U.A. High School,” Toshinori explains, “I had a few questions for you, regarding two students who attend here.”

“U.A.?” The man responds in surprise.

“Yes sir,” Toshinori confirms.

“Isn’t it a little early for U.A. to be scouting for potential candidates?”

“Ordinarily, I would say so, but this is a special case,” the pro-hero explains. “In light of the recent tragedy that took place here, U.A. would like to show their support to the two students involved.”

Immediately, Toshinori could tell that the principal wouldn’t be so forthcoming.

The older man seemed to have visibly clammed up.

“I’m not sure who sent you, or what business U.A. could possibly have by showing up here, but I can assure you Mr. Yagi, that myself and the superintendent of this school district have taken steps to ensure that an unfortunate accident, such as the one that took place here two weeks prior, does not happen again,” the man responds tersely. “Our legal team en-”

Toshinori raises his hands in a disarming manner, “Mr. Ichikawa, if you would please,” Toshinori interjects, “I am here on behalf of All Might,” the balding man tenses, “who, I am sure you have heard is going to be teaching at U.A. in the coming semester. I mean no disrespect and am not here to speak about the legalities behind this school’s ongoing investigation. I am merely here as a mediator, to gather whatever information you have on Midoriya Izuku and Bakugou Katsuki, respectively.”

Despite Toshinori’s attempt to mollify the older man, he still seemed less than pleased to be questioned.

“What all would you like to know?” He eventually concedes, probably just to get Toshinori out of what little was left of his hair, more than likely.

“We would like it if I were able to speak to the boys’ respective teachers, counselors, or anyone else
who might know the boys personally, to gather information on their progress. Am I correct in saying that both boys anticipated enrolling into U.A. as applicants for the Hero course?”

“As far as I know, both were aspiring applicants, although, I’m sure, you being from U.A. and all, you’re fully aware that Midoriya Izuku is currently out of commission. Not to mention, the boy was legally quirkless, if applying for the hero course weren’t so obviously moot now, it would have been nigh impossible for him to have gotten accepted, even if the boy didn’t have one foot in the grave.”

In an instant; an anger that could only ever be inspired by a certain someone, sparks to life. Toshinori’s eyes narrow as his fists clenched. He had a pretty low opinion of ‘baldy’ to start with, but what little respect Toshinori had for the man in a professional sense was essentially quashed.

“As for Bakugou Katsuki, that menace was suspended earlier this afternoon, due to yet another incident; in which he used his quirk illegally on school grounds. If not for the legal bind this school is already in, or his questionable mental state, we’d have had grounds for his expulsion.”

Toshinori was honestly sick to his stomach.

All this man cared about was saving his own ass. It didn’t seem like he cared at all for the well-being of his students. All he cared about was making himself and the school look good in the eyes of the law, but clearly, ethics were lacking here. As soon as his business was done here, he would be reporting this to Naomasa straight away.

“Mr. Ichikawa, all due respect,” Toshinori intones condescendingly, “I will have you refrain from speaking out against children in such a- frankly, deplorable manner. If you are so concerned with the legal standing of this school, I highly suggest starting first with your staff. As far as our reasons for scouting these students go, it is of no business of Aldera Junior High’s, whether a quirkless child should be accepted into a hero course or not. As far as we are concerned, both boys are quick studies, have perfect GPA’s, and we as a school feel that they would be great assets.”

The older man gapes like a fish being pulled by a lure. Opening his mouth as if to respond, before promptly shutting it. He looked utterly mortified.

“Now, if you don’t mind.” Toshinori adds curtly, “may I have the names of those teachers?”

----

Toshinori stretches his arms high above his head before wincing. Promptly rubbing his aching abdomen. After a day as stressful as today had been, he wished he had more of a liver to have a drink with. Unfortunately, he didn’t and simply settled for a mug of herbal tea. Courtesy of Chiyo.

Speaking of, he had to speak with her.

Pulling off his blazer, he sets it on the back of his rolling chair. Exiting his office, he makes his way to the infirmary. Seeing as it was only 3:30 now, she should still be inside.

Giving the sliding door a soft knock, he hears her beckon him inside. Opening and closing the door, he steps into the middle of the room, where he spots the older woman stocking her cabinets with fresh supplies for the coming semester.

“Toshinori, what a surprise,” she greets him jovially.

“Good afternoon, Chiyo, how are you?”

“Same ole’ same ole’ as always, I’m surprised to see you here and not lurking around Musutafu
Regional like some kind of ghost,” she teases him knowingly.

His hollow cheeks flush despite himself as he fidgets under her scrutiny. “Can’t get anything past you, now can I?”

“Never could,” she teases.

Chiyo had been teaching, treating students, and working at U.A. in general since before even he was an alumnus here. Of course, they were both a lot younger then. Even at her age, she was a staple in this institution that they could hardly live without.

“What seems to be troubling you, my boy?” Chiyo asks curiously.

Toshinori has the decency to look abashed before answering, “Midoriya Izuku, you were the one who treated him, yes?”

A twinkle appears within her eye, “Indeed I did. I still am, technically speaking. I make routine visits to assess his condition, in fact, I did just that today.”

Toshinori nods, with all he wanted to say, he couldn’t find the right words to say them. Thankfully he didn’t have to.

“Old Torino spoke to me about something very curious recently, you wouldn’t happen to know about that, would you dear?”

“Ahh- yes… that, that I do,” he mumbles his reply.

“So, what really brings you here is a guilty conscience then?” She wagers, skeptically, eyeing him from her perch on a stepstool.

Righteous indignation floods his veins yet again, but this time it’s well-meaning, “No, not a guilty conscience, it’s simple really. I’m doing what is right. And for that, I need a favor.”

The gaze they share is charged as Chiyo cracks a smirk.

“Whatever you need,” she replies.

----

It was nearing 4:30 pm by the time Toshinori walked through the hospital's double doors. Giving a nod to the receptionist, she waves him on. He’d been here enough for them to know him by sight and vice versa. He makes his way to room 403 and peers inside to find that Midoriya was alone.

The boy's slight form still pained him.

He was a hodgepodge of wires and tubes, of which kept him hydrated, fed, and helped him to breathe, as he couldn’t on his own yet. Thankfully, however, the scrapes and bruises that littered his body were less visible, which made sense. Chiyo had mentioned she’d stopped by today for an assessment.

Physically, the boy was well on his way to recovery. Slowly but surely. But until he was no longer intubated or dependent on an IV, they couldn’t do very many scans. Until his body healed a bit more, no one would know the extent of the trauma he had to his brain.

Taking the seat to the left of him, just near the door, Toshinori stared at him quietly.
His viridian hair was a mess of curls and his cheeks were smathered in freckles. He was a pretty adorable kid, he had to admit. Not for the first time since he’d been coming here, had Toshinori wished he could have gotten to know him as he was. He could only infer, or gather what little tidbits he could about him from those around who cared to know him.

Those who did, only had high praise for him.

Toshinori wished more than anything that he had a time machine, to go back and prevent this mess from happening, but would it even solve anything? Probably not. Izuku would still be the boy with too big a heart, too big of dreams, and too little encouragement.

But that wouldn’t be the case for long.

He had set off on this wild goose chase for one reason alone, and that was to do right by him, and do right by him he would.

Down the hall, he could hear footsteps approaching, vicariously familiar voices coming closer.

It was time to face the music.

Time to finally meet young Midoriya's precious people, properly.

As Midoriya Inko and Bakugou Katsuki come to the door, he swallows hard against the tension running through his bones. It felt akin to his first patrol as a pro-hero. He was all nerves and no guile.

Steeling himself, he did what he always did in the face of fear.

He put on a smile.

----

After such a harrowing conversation, the last thing Katsuki expected to see was: this douchebag again.

Surprise settles in over both him and Aunty Inko, so he takes the courtesy of breaking it.

“Hey, Skeletor,” he barks, “who the fuck are you?”
An Opportunity Can Be A Lifeline

Chapter Summary

“All Might, are you fuc-freaking serious?!” The boy’s eyes all but bug out of their sockets.

Ms. Midoriya frowns at the boys ‘almost expletive’ but otherwise doesn’t comment.

Toshinori laughs jovially, scratching his cheek abashedly. “Serious as a heart attack,” he replies with measured humor before sobering up.

Chapter Notes

(ô ̃ ỗ) All of you are wonderful! I don't think I am ever not going to mention that! I do apologize for getting a little off schedule though, I meant to write and post this two days ago, but I honestly did not have the energy to do so.

I work as a dementia aide in a nursing and rehabilitation center and the hours are pretty long, I pretty much worked 5 days straight before getting a day off and then worked 2 more additional days before getting 2 days off after that, so I was pretty much well and truly wiped out lol.

It also sucked even more because one of our residents passed away earlier this week, so it's been a pretty rough last couple of days.

So thank you all for your patience, I should be getting back to my regular updating schedule.

I do hope you all enjoy this chapter, I both wrote and edited it all in the span of a couple hours lol.
Feel free to let me know if you see any errors I might have missed. ♥

Life is a funny thing at times…

It is literally a conglomeration of tiny pieces. Little instances that are simply fleeting moments that make up a million.

It may not seem like much to most in the moment, but that is the catch.

Life boils down to those instances.

Those mere moments that you didn’t think would matter or have much meaning, ultimately become a deciding factor in the wheel of choice.

This is how opportunities arise.
But, it is also a reminder of how quickly everything can change.

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The atmosphere of the room is so thick with tension that it could easily be cut with a knife.

Midoriya Inko seemed to be caught between a reprimand and a question, while Bakugou Katsuki was; as expected, at the ready, guns blazing, no questions necessary.

Toshinori scratches the back of his neck and laughs awkwardly. “Well, that was ...unnecessary, but all things considered, I guess I could see how one could make the connection… I am rather boney...”

Ms. Midoriya seems to come back to herself at that moment because she promptly snatches Bakugou; who bristles like a cat thrown in the bathtub, up by his ear, “oh my goodness! Sir, I am so sorry, please excuse his mouth, his manners are really lacking. They’re something of a ...work in progress, please, ignore him.”

With a growl he tugs himself away, offering a muttered apology; whether for her or him remained to be seen, Bakugou folds his arms over his chest indignantly, silently stewing at the woman’s side. His leer never leaves Toshinori’s slight form once.

It made him feel like prey that was just slightly out of reach of a caged predator.

“No, no... no need for apologies,” Toshinori insists, gesturing with his hands, “I realize this must look pretty weird. Some guy you don’t know turning up at your son’s bedside and all, but rest assured, I mean no harm!”

He offers the woman a spindly hand for her to shake, watching carefully as Bakugou’s gaze narrows even further. The woman responds in kind, shaking his hand with some hesitance.

“Not at all,” she replies.

“Forgive my rudeness, Ms. Midoriya, but my name is Yagi Toshinori, and I am here today to speak with both you and young Bakugou, here,” he gestures to the boy, “if you’ll allow it?”

As soon as Toshinori steps away from young Midoriya’s bedside, allowing Ms. Midoriya to take his place, Bakugou’s hackles seem to smooth out.

“Of course,” the woman replies kindly, “may I ask what this is regarding?”

Once the three of them are settled and seated, Toshinori takes the floor.

“Yes, I am a faculty member from U.A. High School,” he begins, noting the exact moment Bakugou’s eyes widen in surprise. He watches as the kid’s original tension drains out of him, only to be replaced by a tension of another kind.

“U.A.?” Ms. Midoriya replies, confusion clear in her tone.

“Yes ma’am, I am here on behalf of All Might and Principal Nezu, upon Recovery Girl’s recommendation,” if young Bakugou weren’t sheet white before, he was now.

Toshinori found this rather amusing. He had heard all about the chip on the boy’s shoulder.

“Wow…” Ms. Midoriya’s voice wavers, “t-that is quite the lineup.”

“All Might, are you fuc-freaking serious?!” The boy’s eyes all but bug out of their sockets.
Ms. Midoriya frowns at the boys’ ‘almost expletive’ but otherwise doesn’t comment.

Toshinori laughs jovially, scratching his cheek abashedly. “Serious as a heart attack,” he replies with measured humor before sobering up.

“In light of the recent tragedy that took place at the boys’ current school, U.A. felt it was necessary to reach out.”

“I see,” the green haired woman replies, her brows furrowed in question, “not to sound rude, or ungrateful, but why would U.A. feel the need to reach out?”

Toshinori nods in understanding and goes on to explain, “as one of the leading high schools in eastern Japan, we at U.A. felt we had a responsibility as educators to ensure that we raise suicide awareness in the community. To find out that a tragedy such as the one that involved these boys occurred on a school’s property; regardless of business hours, made us realize that overall, a lot of times safety doesn’t just include what we can see at face value. Safety also includes the ability to provide aid in areas such as counseling.”

Midoriya Inko seems physically stunned, she probably never expected a response quite like this. It made Toshinori’s heart ache.

“And not just your typical counseling either,” he continues, “schools, while they do offer grief counseling in certain situations, often don’t address subjects such as what happened with young Midoriya openly. All of us at U.A. are prepared to challenge that,” Toshinori adds, his confidence unwavering.

Ms. Midoriya looks absolutely thrown. Her expression was a mixture of unnamed emotions. “W-what kinds of things will be addressed exactly?”

“Things like depression, bullying, harassment, physical or sexual abuse are often not talked about in school systems, under the opinion that the subject is considered too sensitive to speak about openly. Yet, these are, unfortunately, some of the obstacles that our students often face today. Whether it be at home, or on campus. More often than not, schools will shirk off such things,” he admits solemnly.

“This is generally the case in here-say incidents. As a school that breeds the fine young heroes of today’s modern age, we want to change that outdated system. Just as we offer sex education, we will be starting a new system in the coming school year, where we will offer a mandatory class highlighting the importance of mental health, the discouragement of bullying in the school environment, as well as shedding light on matters of importance that aren’t often talked about,” he relays.

Toshinori chances a glance at young Bakugou, noting that his expression is carefully schooled.

“We feel that treating these matters as some kind of ‘taboo’ only teaches students avoidance and lowers the likelihood that they will seek help. A lot of times, the kids don’t know that they can ask their own teachers or student counselors about touchy subjects, and while some do reach out, they are given pamphlets as a solution. In our opinion, this is a band-aid. Handing a pamphlet out to a student and calling it a day doesn’t solve the problem. We at U.A. feel that if a student is experiencing any type of abuse, they should be able to speak about the matter in confidence, knowing that action will be taken in their defense. We want our student body to feel at ease, knowing that they can ask for and receive help.”

“Wow…” the woman breathes shakily, “that is… a lot to take in.”
“I know,” he admits with an awkward laugh, “it was a lot to take in all in one sitting, I admit. I just feel particularly strongly on the subject matter, I tend to rant and rave with much gusto sometimes.”

After a bout of silence, young Bakugou takes it upon himself to speak up, “this is all well and good for U.A. and what not, kudos to you, but how the hell is this supposed to affect everywhere else? And more importantly, what the fuck does this have to do with me, or Izuku? We’re not some fuckin’ furry ass mascots to be made examples of.”

Toshinori fixes his electric blue gaze on the boy before him, nodding once in acknowledgment.

“I am aware of the horrors you boys have been through as of recent. Make no mistake, young Bakugou, I do not intend to make light of what has happened,” he assures him. “I merely want to make sure that this type of situation can be avoided in the future, if by any means. Which is why, U.A. is partnering up with Shiketsu High School as well. With them in the west and us in the east, as the nation's top hero academy’s, we plan to lead by example. We have hopes that in doing this, other schools around the country will follow suit, and in turn allow this example to shine as far reaching as overseas.”

Bakugou seems to consider this, furtively glancing at Ms. Midoriya before eyeing Toshinori again.

“As for how this pertains to you and young Midoriya directly, the answer is simple. We would like to have you both attend U.A.”

“What?” Both Bakugou and Ms. Midoriya respond in unison, both wearing twin expressions of incredulity.

Toshinori smiles. “Young Bakugou, you of all people shouldn’t be so surprised,” he teases. “the both of you have excellent marks, grades that any junior high school would brag about, I have personally poured through several essays and test results from you both. I have also taken the liberty of interviewing several teachers, as well as the school’s librarian. They all had wonderful things to say about each of you academically.”

“Mind you,” he adds pointedly, “they did also make mention of how often the both of you would fight like cats and dogs. Heavily pointing out the clear lack of camaraderie or teamwork both of you display toward each other.”

Ms. Midoriya spares Bakugou a knowing glance, to which the boy sinks in on himself.

“But, to say the least, I was impressed by everything I found. I also took note that both of you boys had previously applied for U.A. recently as well. This only seemed to solidify my decision to offer you both a scholarship to attend U.A. in the coming school year.”

“I...don’t know what to say.” Bakugou admits quietly, staring holes into his shoes. His entire demeanor is changed. Gone was the boy who was ready to fight him tooth and nail, all that remained before Toshinori now was a shell. It was disheartening to see.

Inko places a comforting hand on the boy’s shoulder, eyeing Toshinori before voicing her concerns.

“I can’t speak for Katsuki, but I can for Izuku...” her gaze hardens. “You have come all this way, expended all this effort... into furthering your cause and into investigating his academic history, so surely... you must know. So before I agree to anything, I need you to tell it to me straight, because I will not have my boy’s heart being broken by this...”

As Toshinori squares his shoulders, his expression sobers yet again. “We are aware, that young Midoriya is quirkless, yes. Does that change our decision? No, it does not.”
Midoriya Inko releases a shuddering breath, her grip on young Bakugou falling lax. The boy, in turn, remains a comforting presence at her side.

“...So, he’ll be accepted into the hero course?” Bakugou asks skeptically, his gaze yet again challenging.

Toshinori sighs, wringing his hands in his lap.

“No,” he starts, watching as Bakugou clenches his fists. Toshinori raises a hand in a placating manner, “not at first. You must understand, that we are basing this all on what is likely to happen should young Midoriya not have any difficulties recovering. As of this coming year, we are not just accepting students into our hero or support courses, but we are also offering a multi-course general studies program. A lot of changes are coming about for U.A. this year. A lot of which we are hoping will be positive steps in the right direction. We are adding a handful of new teachers, including All Might to our faculty, as some of our senior staff have retired. Should; god willing, young Midoriya make a complete recovery, he will have the choice to be enrolled into either our general studies or support programs.”

Ms. Midoriya and Bakugou both seem to be mulling this over.

“Under no false pretenses are we going to assume he’ll be at 100% from the start. We want to give him his best shot at achieving his dreams, yes. But, he needs time to recuperate in ways that would essentially hold him back in the hero course. So our main objective will be rehabilitation. As per requested and heavily suggested by Recovery Girl herself.”

Ms. Midoriya and Bakugou seem to understand; if their twin nods were any indication.

“Also,” Toshinori adds, “we cannot ignore what a talented mind the boy has. I have read his essays on quirk theory and I was beside myself at how in-depth and astute that his findings were. His eye for quirk analysis is,” he cups his chin in his hand as if searching for the right words, “I’d go as far as saying… unparalleled.”

Bakugou blinks at that, watching Ms. Midoriya closely for her reaction.

“For a kid to be able to gauge how a quirk would manifest, or be used in battle, as well as thinking of ways to use them 5 steps ahead, is genius, Ms. Midoriya. Your boy is beyond clever and you should be very proud. He would be a brilliant tactician. I would almost go as far as saying his gift for analysis is a quirk in and of itself, but that goes without saying, I am no quirk doctor.”

Midoriya Inko shifts in her seat, leaning down she digs into a relatively large bag that was set next to the young man’s bedside. Reaching into it, she pulls out what looks like a handful of composition notebooks, each one numbered. One after the other, until there were 13 in total. The 13th, being the one to stand out the most.

As Toshinori eyes the other teenager, he concludes that he was likely the reason as to why the book was so singed. The look on Bakugou Katsuki’s face was indecipherable.

Young Midoriya’s mother pats the books, before lightly running her hand across the top of them gently.

She clears her throat, her eyes suddenly very glassy.

“These are Izuku’s notes,” she says after a while. Looking up, her verdant gaze locks with ocean blue. “It’s as you said…” she continues, her voice soft as she went. “My son may not have a quirk, but he is something special. For years, Mr. Yagi, my Izuku has poured himself into learning all there
is to know about quirks. About heroes in general. His favorite pastime was watching an old fuzzy video of All Might, rescuing civilians from a train wreck. And he would always say, ‘I want to be just like him, mom’, all he wanted to do was help people. To be able to save people with a smile on his face and make them feel safe.”

Toshinori’s chest clenches and he has to physically stop himself from clutching his abdomen reflexively.

Her gaze seemed so far away, her smile forlorn, caught deep in her recollection. “When he found out he was quirkless… he was crushed. I never understood when it happened, but I think it may have been then… but I discouraged him somehow. I think that in that moment, I had misread what he was wanting me to say. And it was after this that he stopped sharing his passion for quirks with me… yes, it… it had to have been then…”

She peers up at him, her expression shifting to one of resolve.

“I made the mistake of discouraging Izuku when he was young. But I refuse to do that now. Mr. Yagi, I’ve read these countless times since Izuku has been in this hospital bed and I just know… I just know in my heart of hearts that he has more to offer. He’s a kind and driven young man, who only ever wanted to help those in need. If you think that U.A. would accept him, regardless of him not having a quirk, I am begging you to please do it. He will wake up soon, and I just know that the state he’ll be in will be a fragile one, but if I could provide to him, this one sliver of hope that his dreams could be attained, I just know he’ll bounce back.”

“May I?” Toshinori asks, his throat suddenly dry, holding his hand out for the book sitting right on top.

Ms. Midoriya nods, before handing it over.

It was the same one from that day.

Leafing through the pages, he lands on one page, in particular, the page he himself had signed.

Peering down at his own handwriting, his resolve is set in stone.

Looking up from his script, his eyes catch a pair of calculating crimson.

Snapping the book shut, he glances at Midoriya Inko again, “it won’t be easy, but I believe he can do it.”

“Then you have my permission.”

----

That evening, Aunty Inko decided that making a quick trip back home for more clothes and a shower would be beneficial. Leaving Katsuki to keep vigil, he made no arguments, but he did have one request.

“Hey, Aunty?” He asks the woman, just as she was about to leave.

“Yes, Katsuki?” She replies curiously.

“Can I take a look at Deku’s notes?”
He could tell that Inko was pretty perplexed just by looking at her. “Have you not seen them before?” She asks.

“No,” Katsuki admits, “like you, I’ve always seen him jotting things down here and there, or doodling, but I never paid any mind to it. I just figured he was being a nerd, I never knew it was some ‘next-level’ Einstein nerdism, though. So now I’m curious.”

Inko almost huffs a laugh, pinching the bridge of her nose in exasperation. “Sure, I don’t see why not. Who knows, maybe this will give you a better understanding of Izuku in the long run.”

She lays the bag down on the table beside him, removing a small handbag, which no doubt housed her wallet and keys.

Katsuki scoffs, throwing her a smirk, “the only thing it will help me to understand is probably just how much of a fanboy he really is, but whatever works.”

“Be nice,” she warns.

“I will be the nicest,” he offers her a faux salute.

“You better, I have your mother on speed dial,” she reminds him.

“Has she been giving you tips on how to haze children? Because I am feeling mildly attacked right now,” he feigns offense.

Inko gives him another long-suffering sigh, before pausing. She turns toward him, giving him a sweet smile.

The hairs on his arms don’t even have time to stand on end before he is ass-over-end on the white tile floor and floundering in surprise.

It was a wholly unnatural feeling being physically removed from his seat by an unseen force, and for a second she’d completely caught him off guard. It was so rare for her to use her quirk that Katsuki often times had forgotten she’d even had one. Last he checked, she could only move small objects. The look on his face must have been priceless.

Controlling her laughter, Aunty Inko wipes a tear from her eye, she lingers in the doorway just long enough to respond with, “your mom may have given me a few tips.”

----

A few minutes after Inko had left, Katsuki found himself curled up and cross-legged in the chair nearest to Izuku’s bedside.

While he did have a genuine interest in reading most of these, one thing, in particular, caught his eye in a very familiar composition notebook.

Whether under oath or pain of death, Katsuki would still never admit to how much of a fanboy he himself really was, but that was beside the point. Only someone like him or Deku, who appreciated the finer things in life, would have caught this particular detail.

To anyone else, it might not have meant much, but to Katsuki, it stuck out like a sore thumb.

Like a vein of gold in a coal mine.

It was a needle, without the haystack.
As he turned to the middle of the unfinished book, bold black ink caught his eye.

And it was there, clear as day and telling as it always was.

The symbol of the symbol of peace.

*All Might’s signature.*

Where the fuck and *when* had Deku gotten this?
Things would be different from now on.
He’d make damn sure of that.
And maybe one day, he could even be considered redeemable.

Phew~ This chapter was so long, I had to split it in two pieces. The second piece is still in the works, but I figured I would drop this part today and the second part tomorrow-ish. I would wait, but I’m on a roll and don’t want to lose steam lol.

Thank you all again, every single one of you! All of your comments, kudos, and bookmarks are the encouragement that keeps this story going. Truly, I feel blessed to have your support!

Katsuki; in a word, was a wreck.

He was constantly on edge and was always jumping at loud noises.

He hardly ate, supplementing food with coffee.

His attendance at school was dropping, as were his grades.

He wouldn’t leave the hospital and if he did, he wouldn’t stay gone for long.

Mitsuki was beginning to notice just how thin her son was looking, or how limp his usual blond spikes appeared.

But the thing she noticed the most was, that Katsuki wasn’t sleeping.

The poor kid was absolutely wracked with nightmares and from what she and Inko had seen, they were pretty bad. Weeks were beginning to turn into months and she feared how much worse he would get if any more time went by.

But still, despite there not being any real change, her son insisted on being by Izuku’s bedside.

“Masaru,” she pipes up one night.

The pair were having a relatively quiet dinner.

Such affairs used to be filled with the sound of, clinking dishes, bickering, or loving jeers shared by
the two resident loudmouths; herself and Katsuki. Tonight was too quiet and Katsuki’s absence was felt like a gaping hole that couldn’t be closed. Things just weren’t the same without their son around.

“Yes, love?” Masaru replies, wiping his mouth with a napkin.

Mitsuki; not unlike their son, had a hard time dealing with feelings. Getting her to talk was like parting the sea; it either took one hell of a storm, or it didn’t happen at all. So for her to speak up now, meant that things must really have been bad.

“I miss Katsuki,” she admits, her brows pinched.

Her husband frowns, laying his hand across hers on the tabletop and gripping it for her comfort.

She lets out a heavy sigh, “it’s been so long since he’s been home. His grades are shit, his attendance is fucked, he hardly eats and he won’t fucking sleep. I’m…afraid for him,” she gestures with her opposite hand.

Masaru nods in understanding, “I know… he needs help,” he admits, “the scary part is that he might not be willing to get it.”

She growls lowly in frustration.

“He’s wasting away in that hospital, ‘Saru …and I know it’s his own sense of guilt that’s doing it. Hell, even Inko gets out more, and she’s Izuku’s mother. I just… can’t sit back anymore. We gave him space. We let him slide, but if he slides anymore… he’s going to end up in a fucking ditch, covered in dirt, six feet deep.”

Her husband offers her a sad smile before replying, “he even gave up that scholarship to U.A., he said he’d: ‘do it on his fucking own’, his words, not mine. I think it might be time to press the issue about therapy. He has mandatory counseling, according to Detective Tsukauchi. Do you know if he’s gone recently?”

She shakes her head in the negative, “no… the little shit’s been ditching that on top of ditching school. Can we really blame him though? Would it be insensitive?”

“No, the time for sensitivity is passed,” Masaru decides. His tone firm, “he needs an intervention, like… yesterday. This will only get worse if we let it continue.”

Mitsuki nods in agreement, “then I guess we already know what we have to do, huh?”

“We do,” he confirms, “but… I have an idea.”

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For once, Mitsuki doesn’t go into the situation with guns blazing.

Taking a few tips from her husband, she decided ‘tact’ would be essential in getting their son help. Her usual methods of shouting or bullying him into doing what she asked; simply put, wouldn’t work here.

Sure their dynamic was dysfunctional at best, but she knew Katsuki loved and respected her.

She also knew that if she came at this from a different angle, Katsuki would have no choice but to listen. It would hopefully show him how serious this really was.

It turned out that Masaru’s idea of an intervention was to enlist the help of Detective Tsukauchi, who
as it turned out, was a really great guy. He wasn’t your typical ‘slap ‘em in cuffs’ kind of cop. Mitsuki respected that. So when her husband gave the man a call, she had no doubt that this was the best way to go about it.

The next day the pair met up with the man, who in turn, introduced them to a woman named; Enatsu Hana, who Detective Tsukauchi assured them, was the best therapist in Musutafu. Together, the four of them take their seats and begin to address the issue at hand.

“Mr. and Mrs. Bakugou, it's a pleasure to meet you,” Enatsu greets them kindly, offering her hand.

“Thank you both for meeting with us today,” Masaru replies gratefully, returning the gesture.

“Of course, of course, it’s our pleasure. Now, Tsukauchi, here, informs me that your son is to be attending mandatory counseling?”

“Yes,” Mitsuki admits, “he had one visit with who he was assigned to and walked out. He hasn’t been back since.”

“I see….” Enatsu replies, sharing a look with Tsukauchi who offers her a shrug and an awkward smile.

“Well, good then,” the woman decides.

The Bakugou’s blink in unison, so the therapist goes on to alleviate them, “that just means that he hasn’t made progress yet. If he were to walk out on a therapist after having say, more than 3 or 4 sessions, there would be some cause for concern. In this case, however, it is perfectly okay for your son to have decided that that therapist wasn’t for him. I work as both a therapist and therapy coordinator and have been doing this for many years. I am usually the one to go to when you are trying to find the perfect fit, so to speak.”

“Oh, that makes me feel a whole lot better, actually. So, it was okay that he walked out then? He won’t get into any trouble? ...I know this was mandatory, so….” Mitsuki asks with measured relief.

“Yes,” Tsukauchi interjects, “we understand that just throwing a kid into therapy doesn’t work half of the time. It might take a few times to find someone who is compatible or, rather, someone who Katsuki is comfortable with speaking to. Rest assured, he’s not in any danger of getting into trouble. We really only ordered that therapy be mandated because it is clear that the boy needs it. Given his track record both in and out of school and due in part to the incident that happened with Midoriya two months ago, we felt that he needed a healthy outlet, I’m sure you agree.”

“Thank goodness,” he breathes, "we do," Masaru replies in relief. Looking in her direction, he addresses Enatsu, “it’s actually really good that you seem to put so much thought into finding a suitable provider.”

“We agree wholeheartedly, Mr. Bakugou. We want to make sure that our clients are comfortable. We know how hard it is to talk about certain topics, especially with a stranger, so with your permission, I would like to speak with Katsuki myself, if at all possible,” Enatsu insists.

“Yes,” both parents reply in unison.

“Please do,” Mitsuki continues, “I have been worried sick about him lately. He needs support and while we’ve been trying to be as supportive about everything as we can, it’s …not enough.”

Enatsu nods in understanding, she could tell it took a lot for the blond to admit that, “I completely understand your concerns Mrs. Bakugou. I want to assure you, that both of you have done a
wonderful job so far, truly. I want to put your minds at ease, that I will do my very best to find a
perfect fit for your son. He might not like it at first, but tough love is essential here.”

“Thank you, so much ma’am, we really appreciate this, and you too, Detective, you have been so
good to us through all of this. We can’t thank you enough,” Masaru assures them.

Tsukauchi smiles at the two of them, “anything to help. Given the situation, the poor kid is going to
need as much of it as he can get.”

Enatsu eyes both parents, giving them a confident smile, “so, where can I find Katsuki?”

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The sky was a cornflower blue, sparsely dotted with fluffy white clouds that were quickly changing
into warm hues.

The sun was sinking lower in the sky.

The tops of the trees sway with the wind as his gaze flits upward.

His eyes dance around from bird to bird as they flew past.

His backpack was a heavy but familiar weight on his shoulder, which aches from being stiff all day.

He takes a few steps forward, watching as the students that remained after school with him trickled
out.

Some loitered around, locked in conversation at the front gate.

He had some time yet before the 5 o’clock train arrived, so he did what he always did and took his
time.

Pulling his cell phone out from his pocket he began to scroll through his social media accounts, as
he loitered in front of the school’s entrance. They were bland as always, filled to the brim with feed
from all the useless extras that deemed it necessary to add him.

At this point he’d heard a gasp from some of the girls standing near the courtyard gate.

Fingers started to point in what looked like his direction, only higher.

Annoyed and confused, Katsuki steps forward, turns around, and looks up, momentarily blinded by
the evening sun’s rays.

He wasn’t quite sure where he was supposed to be looking, but something weird caught his eye.

A silhouette.

The sun beat down harshly as his eyes struggled to make out who the dumbass that decided to hang
out on the roof was.

That silhouette seemed to shift.

Stepping up onto the low concrete wall, a flash of brilliant green catches the light.

Shielding his eyes against the brightness, Katsuki’s pulse begins to race.
There was only silence now.

As the wind played with his own coarse hair, it also played with those curly green locks.

It happened in an instant.

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“DEKU!”

The cry that rips itself from his throat jolts him into consciousness. For several seconds his world spins with confusion, the fogginess from his sleep-rattled state had yet to release him and his eyes desperately flit around the now familiar room.

His other senses start to come back online.

A familiar sound rouses him from his panic, as a bead of sweat trickles down his neck.

Familiar meant safe.

Safe.

It meant...

Deku was safe.

Katsuki releases a shaky breath, releasing his grip on Izuku’s hospital issued blanket, it’s familiar rough texture grounds him as his fingers smooth out the material.

That familiar sound was the heart rate monitor, beeping steadily.

It served as a further reminder, that the boy beside him had a pulse.

Slowly, he began to calm down.

Lifting a shaky hand, he uses it to wipe the sweat from his brow, dragging it down slowly as he went.

He exhales heavily through his nose, staring up at the tiled roof, 56 tiles in total. He’d counted them more times than he cared to admit.

Looking around the room, he realized it was just himself and Izuku.

He found himself feeling grateful.

The last time he’d had a nightmare like this, he’d almost hit Aunty Inko when she’d tried to wake him. It left him feeling so ashamed that he started to sleep in short spurts, only using power naps to get by. He didn’t dream as often, he found.

Tiredly, he stares at Izuku’s prone form.

His color was coming back, his skin no longer held a deathly pallor. Despite this, he was starting to look very thin.

The scrapes and bruises have long since faded and just yesterday, the doctor had removed the tube from his throat. Although he was still placed on oxygen, at least he didn’t have to have a damn
machine breathing for him anymore.

That was progress, at least.

He was starting to look more like himself.

Even the bits of hair that had been shaved back during his first surgeries had begun to grow back.

At the very least, it was able to hide the obvious scar.

Katsuki sighs, sitting up straighter in his seat. On a whim, he reaches out and holds Izuku’s slightly cool hand.

It had been about two months since the younger boy was placed under a medically induced coma and while Katsuki knew this was necessary, he couldn’t wait until they brought him out of it. According to Recovery Girl and Izuku’s doctor, his injuries were almost healed enough to do so. This was supposed to be scheduled for the following week.

The thought made him both relieved and nervous at the same time.

Katsuki was a realist.

He knew that the likelihood of Izuku waking up meant it was time to troubleshoot the real concerns. He knew that this would bring on a whole slew of different issues, but even so…

Just to be able to see him awake, to see his eyes open and know he was there meant everything to him.

More than anything, he just wanted the chance to apologize.

Sure, he’d said a lot of embarrassing things to him in the last few months, a lot of which Katsuki would take to his grave, but it just wasn’t the same.

To be able to make amends with the chance of Izuku being coherent enough to understand, would be the starting point of another chapter in both of their lives. They could begin to move forward. Katsuki was hard-pressed to do so.

Things would be different from now on.

He’d make damn sure of that.

And maybe one day, he could even be considered redeemable.

As his eyes roved over Izuku’s immobile form, he only hoped he would be given the chance.

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Later that day, a knock on the door jamb has Katsuki setting aside one of Izuku’s many notebooks. He’d spent the better part of the last couple weeks reading them on and off. He had to admit, they were impressively detailed and he never knew that the nerd could draw.

Looking up, his crimson eyes narrow, locking onto the strange woman at the door.

“You lost or something?” Katsuki inquires haughtily.

The woman merely smiles in response.
“Not at all, in fact, I’m right where I need to be,” she eventually replies, her tone self-assured, but also… odd.

It was as if hearing her speak made him feel …weird.

“May I come in, Katsuki?”

“Yes…” Katsuki finds himself replying almost forcibly.

What the hell?

The woman strides into the room gracefully, her appearance was decidedly ‘professional,’ seeing as she was wearing a grey pantsuit. She had long brown hair, styled in a side braid that ran down her shoulder, and had bright expressive brown eyes.

Taking a seat, it was then that Katsuki noticed that she was holding a binder in hand, which she set in her lap.

“All right then,” she says after a moment, her gaze locked on him like sniper peering through a scope. “I’m sure you have questions, am I correct in assuming this?”

Despite himself, he finds that his tongue loosens, replying with, “you’re correct.”

She smiles again, but this one seemed more genuine, almost apologetic even.

“All right, Katsuki,” she clears her throat, “can I call you that, Katsuki?”

“No,” he replies, relieved to find that he could refuse.

“All right; Bakugou, then?” She corrects herself.

“Yes,” he replies evenly.

With as many quirks as he’s read about here lately, he just knew that he had to be under the influence of one.

“All right then, Bakugou, I want you to know that what you are feeling right now is correct,” she confirms.

This confirmation seems to set him oddly at ease.

“My name is; Enatsu Hana, and you are currently under the influence of my quirk, which is called ‘True Intention.’”

“True Intention?” He asks, finally of his own volition.

“Yes, ‘True Intention’ allows me a measure of control over any volatile person in a room at any given time. It works in 3 ways. One is to ensure my own protection, the second is to ensure that the person my quirk is directed at remains calm, and the third way this is used is to measure a person’s emotional state. This works mostly by using sound waves. Both received and transmitted, in most cases, simply speaking alone triggers the activation.”

“Why are you telling me this?” Katsuki asks after a moment, his expression one of suspicion.

“Because I would like to establish trust. My quirk can be quite jarring to some at first, but I want to assure you, that I don’t intend you or Midoriya any harm.”
“Assuming I believe this, why are you here?” Katsuki finds himself responding more calmly than he would have normally.

“I am here to ask you a few questions. Though I admit, they will be pretty invasive, but well intended. To be frank, I was sent here at the request of your parents and I am here to assess your mental state.”

“Oh… for the love of…” he huffs, but finds that he can’t do much more than that.

“May I remind you,” she responds firmly, but not unkindly, “although you may not like this, this is a mandated requirement. By law, you are required to go through anger management and therapy sessions, as part of your probation. And to be quite honest honey, with all the raw emotions leaking out of you, despite the use of my quirk, I honestly think you would benefit from it.”

Katsuki stews for a moment, considering this.

Aunty Inko didn’t press charges against him when the suspicion arose during the school’s investigation. In reality, with as serious as bullying was these days, had Izuku died, he could have been charged for it.

His decision was made.

This was the least he could do.

It was a slap on the wrist compared to what could have happened.

“I’m listening,” Katsuki decides.

The woman in front of him smiles in relief and the tension held around him by her quirk seems to fade by a fraction.

“I’m glad to hear it. Your parents, as well as Ms. Midoriya, and the staff here; some of whom I talked to a little bit ago, all seem to be very worried about you. Would you care to share your thoughts on that?”

“Not really… but I guess. I,” he hesitates, “I don’t want to worry them.”

“That is understandable. May I ask, what comes to mind when you think of the word ‘therapy’?” the woman inquires.

Katsuki’s nose wrinkles despite himself, “someone poking their nose into my business.”

“Yes, that is unfortunate, especially with someone as private as yourself. I completely understand. What if I were to tell you that you had a choice?”

“As in?”

“As in, you have the right to choose the therapist who would be working with you. Would that make you more comfortable?”

“I… suppose that couldn’t hurt,” he reluctantly agrees.

“Great, great! Because I am here today to tell you that you can do just that.”

Katsuki considers this, eyeing the woman skeptically.
“Now, I know what you’re thinking. You’re probably thinking that regardless of your choice, you’re still going to wind up with someone that will always over analyze you, or take notes like you’re some lab rat in a cage, am I right?”

“H-how are you doing that?” He asks, thoroughly annoyed and a tad bit freaked out.

“The unfortunate side effect of my quirk is that I am very empathic. I can sense how a person is feeling in such a way that I can almost recreate their thought process. And yes, it is creepy, I know.”

“Well… at least you are aware,” he snarks.

“Painfully so,” she admits.

Katsuki soon found that, in spite of himself, he was actually… kind of impressed by her. He didn't know what to make of that.

“Now, Bakugou, I think we both know that you’re essentially stuck now, so why not cut the crap and real talk, sound fair?”

“Fine,” he relents, “but I suck at striking a conversation, so I guess you can just ask me questions or whatever.”

“Very well, as stated before, these questions are going to be pretty invasive, if ever you feel uncomfortable, feel free to let me know,” she warns him.

“Sure.”

“Great, now, your parents have told me that you haven’t been eating well, is this correct?”

“Yeah, I just…” he shrugs. “I haven’t had the energy.”

Enatsu nods, “what exactly do you mean by not having the energy? Are you feeling lethargic?”

“Yeah.”

“Ok, I understand,” she jots something down on a loose leaf piece of paper. “I see that you are curious, so I will let you know, the notes I am writing down are just for my memory alone. I’m not getting any younger,” she laughs, tapping her pen to the paper, “sometimes my notes are essentially my brain, you’re welcome to read them yourself if it makes you feel better.”

“Nah,” for some reason, he trusted her word.

“Now, explain to me how you have been feeling lethargic,” she reminds him.

He mulls this over before responding, “I haven’t been sleeping well.”

“Mhmm. I see, am I correct in assuming you spend most of your time here in this chair?”

“You assume correct,” he confirms, tiredly.

“You’re doing great so far, Bakugou, I have just a few more questions.”

“Okay,” he shrugs.

“Am I correct in assuming that you aren’t comfortable leaving Midoriya alone, despite the fact that he’s under 24-hour care by the hospital staff?”
“...Yeah.”

“Why is that?” She wonders.

“...I don’t like not being able to see him, or hear it...” he explains vaguely.

“How what, exactly?”

“The monitor,” he gestures to the machine keeping track of Izuku’s pulse. “I watched him die... twice, on the way here. Each time they brought him back, I couldn’t help but constantly watch that green line jump. Each beep that machine makes reminds me he’s here.”

Enatsu’s professional smile slips, giving way to a frown. “I can see why this is so important to you.”

“Glad someone does,” he retorts, sighing dejectedly. Maybe he was being unfair? “I know why they want me to leave. I get that it isn’t healthy to sit here waiting, but I can’t stand the thought...”

“Are you afraid that if you leave, he’ll die?”

Katsuki’s mouth contorts into a grimace. She pretty much voiced his fears aloud and he knew she knew it, “next question.”

“Okay,” she backpedals, “so you are feeling lethargic and haven’t been sleeping well. Are you having any nightmares?”

“...Yeah.”

“How would you rate those, on a scale of 1 to 10?”

“Is there a scale for how many times I almost hit Aunty Inko, or a nurse whenever they’d try to wake me? Cause that’s almost happened a lot, they fucking suck.”

“Okay, I’d say... that sounds like a 10,” she admits with an awkward laugh.

“More like an 11, but who's keeping track?” He shrugs.

“How about school?”

“Nope,” he replies simply.

“Nope?”

“Nope... I don’t want to go back there.”

“Next question?” She asks gently.

“Please,” he confirms.

“What would you say to the idea of taking classes online? I know that Aldera does offer online classes as part of their home-study program, would that be something you are up to? It might require you to do some of your testing in person, but for the most part, you could do your work from the comfort of your home; or here, if there is free wifi. Is that something you might be interested in?”

“I can do that?” He wonders aloud.

“Of course, all that would be required is that your parents would have to go to your school and enroll
“...I’ll do that then,” he decides.

He couldn’t get into U.A. if he didn’t graduate, after all.

“Great!” She nods, “I will gather the details for your parents and let them take over, sound good?”

“Yeah.”

“Good. Now Bakugou, this stays between us, everything we share here is strictly confidential. In fact, I will have to have you sign a release of information, giving your permission to share information with your school or your parents. That being said, I do, however, within my best judgment, retain the right to inform your parents in the event of an immediate emergency. Such as, but not excluded to whether you intend to hurt yourself, or others. Do bear in mind that you are also still a minor, and while we do maintain confidentiality, we are at liberty to speak with your parents to some extent about your progress, do you understand?”

“Makes sense, I guess.”

“Very well, now as I am required to ask, do you or have you had any thoughts of self-harm?”

“I might have wanted to kick my own ass a time or two, but no. I don’t plan on hurting myself, or anyone else,” he replies honestly.

“Very good, thank you so much for speaking with me, this information will be vital in finding you a provider that you can connect with comfortably,” she relays, gathering her papers into her binder. She looks up and offers him a smile.

Katsuki sizes her up for a moment before he decides on something.

“What about you?” he queries.

“I’m sorry?” She responds.

“You’re a therapist, aren’t you? What about you?” He reiterates.

“Are you asking me if I would be your therapist?” Her tone denotes her incredulity.

“The last guy didn’t even get five words in before I walked out. You managed to get a whole damn conversation, plus you proved your worth,” he explains.

Enatsu looks at him, as if sizing him up now. “Am I correct in assuming you’re sure about this?”

“You already know I wouldn’t have asked otherwise,” he responds plainly.

“Very well then,” digging in her binder, she pulls out a card, holding it out to where he can reach it, “4:30, every Thursday. If you’re going to be late, send me a text. And it goes without saying, that if you need anything, also send me a text.”

He takes her business card and pockets it.

“I’ll be there.”
Mind you, I don't particularly like OC's lol.
That being said, Enatsu's only real appearance will be when she is needed.
Let me know what you think!
What Comes After, Tiny Fractures?

Chapter Summary

“Katsuki,” Inko interjects, causing him to clamp his mouth shut.

“Whatever it is, whatever happens, we’ll take it one step at a time. The world wasn’t built in a day, honey.”

No. It very well wasn’t.

But, he sincerely felt like it was shattered in one.

Chapter Notes

Brace yourselves.

During this past week, Katsuki’s life had changed tremendously.

After Enatsu Hana had taken up the responsibility of being his therapist, she made good on her word and had gotten into contact with his parents, explaining the idea of homeschooling to them. To Katsuki’s immense relief, they were very receptive. They went as far as encouraging it, even. That very next day; their decision having been made, they enrolled Katsuki into Aldera’s online program and he was all the better for it.

Seeing as the entire last two months had been highly stressful for him, his new teacher decided to cut him some slack and offer him a few more elective classes to bring his grades back up. While it sucked that he was swamped with school work, he knew he needed to catch up if he were going to graduate with high enough marks.

As far as other academic things went, his application to U.A. was accepted, pending his entrance exam results. Although Mr. Yagi had insisted he take the scholarship, Katsuki was adamant in his refusal; for a handful of reasons, two of which being that: A) he didn’t feel like he deserved it. And B) he wanted to prove to himself, to his family, and to Deku, that he could get into U.A. on his own. Pride might have been one of his more damning qualities, but he was determined to show them that he could become a hero worth his own salt.

Mr. Yagi begrudgingly had to admit that he was very impressed by his ‘can do’ attitude and wished him the best of luck.

To both his and Aunty’s surprise and un-surprise, Mr. Yagi had hung around. Often peeking in and checking on Izuku from time to time. While this did initially raise questions with Katsuki, he eventually wrote it off as the man just being an ‘overly nice’ guy. This however, did not mean that Katsuki wasn’t watching his every move like a hawk.

Call it a gut instinct, but the teenager was sure that there was more to the guy than what met the eye.
Aunty Inko didn’t seem to think so when Katsuki voiced his concerns, but even so, the boy found it weird how oddly interested the man was in Deku. But that was his opinion.

Over the course of the last week, the doctors had been trickling in and out of Deku’s room with higher frequency. Often times they took Deku, bed and all, away for more tests. Katsuki took this as the good sign that they’d been hoping for, because as of 3 days ago, the doctors saw fit to bring Deku out of his medically induced coma.

Generally, an induced coma didn’t last longer than two weeks, one month being the maximum limit, but in this particular case, with as bad off as Izuku was, they deemed it necessary to extend it. Now, however, they all agreed that enough time has passed in which they were confident Izuku’s head trauma was, for the most part, contained.

They no longer feared the inevitability of swelling or further brain bleeds, now all they needed to know was: to what extent would the damage affect him?

No one really knew.

As far as they could see, physically, Izuku was almost fully healed. Mostly due in part to the use of ‘Granny Chiyo’s; as she insisted he called her, quirk. However, despite this, they wouldn’t know much more until they were able to study Izuku’s brain activity more thoroughly and for that, they needed him conscious.

3 days have passed since they removed Izuku from the anesthesia. Now, they were simply playing a waiting game. According to the doctor’s, it generally took about 3 or 4 days for the Propofol to completely leave a person’s system. During this time they monitored Deku closely, watching for any sign of an adverse reaction. So far, they were in the clear.

Round the clock, Katsuki and Inko slept in shifts, not hardly leaving the room for anything that wasn’t of importance. Unless he was under the direct care of his primary physicians, nurses, or Granny Chiyo; one or both of them were present at all times, keeping a constant vigil.

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It was around 4 pm when it happened.

Aunty Inko was curled up on the couch, busying her nervous hands by crocheting a moderately large canary yellow blanket, which honestly looked pretty impressive so far, while Katsuki sat next to Izuku, with his laptop in his lap, studiously working on a school paper.

Yawning to himself, he stretches before going limp, his head draped awkwardly across the back of the chair dramatically.

Aunty Inko looks up at him, sparing him a short laugh and small smile.

“That bad, huh?” She asks.

“The worst…” he laments, rubbing his tired eyes. “It’s one thing to get little sleep without much to do, but another entirely to get little sleep while having a history assignment due.”

“Aaah, to be young and sleep deprived. I honestly can’t say it gets much better,” she teases.

“Great pep talk, Aunty, very inspirational,” he groans, reluctantly sitting up straighter.

“It could be worse, you could be stuck in a dead-end nine-to-five, with bills to pay,” she replies with
a shrug, adjusting the yarn in her lap.

“Speaking of, how are you doing that anyway? You practically live here,” he asks curiously.

“Perks of being a responsible adult, I suppose. In the last, I’d say… 10 years? I haven’t so much as called in once, nor have I ever taken an extended vacation. Add that up with seniority, as well as the fact that I have been working from my laptop and not the office, and there you have it. I have been using my paid sick leave as well as my paid vacation days.”

“Wow,” Katsuki blinks. This woman never ceased to amaze him. “What is it that you even do? I see you typing a lot on that weird typewriter, but not much else.”

“Oh, I’m a Stenographer. Normally I do court reporting, but I also freelance in closed captioning, that’s actually what I have been doing since I’ve been here, as it’s easier for me to get done remotely,” she explains.

“Holy shit… are you for real? That’s actually really fucking cool. I bet you’ve worked on a lot of cases involving villains, haven’t you?”

She laughs good-naturedly, “it’s probably not actually as glamorous as it sounds, but yes, I have worked on a few cases that involved crime or villains. Usually, it’s typical legal disputes or children’s court-related things like that. I basically bounce around to wherever I’m needed.”

“No wonder Deku is the way he is, his mom’s a badass,” he concludes.

Just as Aunty Inko works herself up into a fluster, movement catches Katuski’s eye just to his left. His head whips around so quickly it startles the woman.

“Katsuki?” She asks worriedly. Setting aside her project, she creeps closer as he waves her over silently, his eyes drilling holes into Izuku’s prone form.

“I could swear I saw his hand twitch,” he relays softly, his whole body tense.

Inko gasps, practically crawling into Izuku’s bed with him and gripping his left hand gently.

“Izuku, baby? Can you hear me?” She asks in such a hopeful way, that it makes Katsuki’s chest clench. He keeps his own mouth shut, afraid that if he were to speak, it’d break the spell.

For all he knew, he could have been utterly wrong.

It was unlikely; with how very aware of the younger boy he’d become, but it wasn’t impossible. He was only human.

He sure hoped he wasn’t wrong.

Inko frowns after a few moments pass, in which nothing else happens.

Katsuki finds his own expression shifting to match hers, “maybe… I imagined it?”

As soon as the words left his mouth, a groan drew itself from beyond Izuku’s lips, causing a spike in his pulse.

Frost.

That was what this was, right?
Katsuki could feel it dancing across his bones as both he and Inko share a look.

Steadily, Izuku’s pulse began to pick up ever so slightly. The constant comforting beep of the heart monitor flickering from its monotony like a fanned flame. His breaths became more shallow and all Inko and Katsuki could do was observe in quiet shock.

Aunty Inko smooths her fingers across the back of his held hand, gently, offering as much comfort as she could. “It’s okay baby, it’s okay. Take your time,” she murmured like a mantra.

Katsuki half wondered if she were saying it more to herself than to him.

Katsuki could swear that the minutes that passed felt like hours.

Each one droning on and on like the tired tick of an old timepiece.

He couldn’t move.

Belatedly, he sees Inko reach for Izuku’s call-light button. Signaling the attention of his attending nurse. When the young woman walks into the room, Katsuki vaguely hears Aunty relay the situation to her.

“Yes, of course! I’ll go tell the doctor, right away!” She replies with some excitement. Katsuki guesses that it wasn’t just them that were happy with the news.

Still, something set Katsuki on edge and he couldn’t fathom what.

Again, it was times like these that he really hated his gut feelings…

Reaching out, he takes Izuku’s right hand into his own. Willing this gnawing feeling of unease away. It was probably just the guilt anyway. As much as he was ready for this day, he knew more likely than not that he would have to face the music.

It left him reeling.

But nothing could shake him more than what would happen later.

----

30 minutes had passed since Izuku began to stir and the kid sure-as-shit was taking his sweet time. Katsuki began to pace a hole in the tiled floor, while the doctors assessed Izuku’s vitals.

“Well, it doesn’t look like there is anything to report yet,” his doctor explains, “simply put,” he assures them with a smile, “he’ll come around any time now. His body has undergone a lot of changes, some more drastic than others, but in the past few days especially. It will take him some time to become fully aware. Right now, small movements and noises, such as groans or moans, no matter how pained, are normal. Rest assured, as far as we can tell, he’s doing well so far.”

“Oh, thank goodness,” Aunty breathes.

“If he doesn’t fully wake up by tonight, it’s likely that he will sometime tomorrow morning, assuming all continues to go well. In the meantime, just continue doing what you’ve both been doing. Go about your business, talk, act natural. It’s likely that he’ll respond to whatever stimulus he’s exposed to, so do try and calm your nerves.”

“Oh, thank goodness,” Aunty breathes.

“If he doesn’t fully wake up by tonight, it’s likely that he will sometime tomorrow morning, assuming all continues to go well. In the meantime, just continue doing what you’ve both been doing. Go about your business, talk, act natural. It’s likely that he’ll respond to whatever stimulus he’s exposed to, so do try and calm your nerves.”

“Would talking to him help?” the older woman queries.

“Sure, you could even read to him if you wanted, just… take it slow. Don’t bring up anything that
could be potentially triggering. I’d advise you to avoid topics about what day of the week it is, or the
month, or year. Just take it slow, we need to know where he’s at mentally before we reorient him.”

“Yes, of course, thank you so much,” Inko replies gratefully.

---

An hour passes, in which Katsuki has yet to find an iota of chill.

“Katsuki, honey, you’re going to wear a hole in the floor,” his Aunty chides him, her voice tinged
with worry.

“I…” he pauses, huffing a breath. He takes a moment to breathe in through his nose and exhale
through his mouth, in deep breaths, just as he was instructed to do by his therapist.

“I’m not good at this,” he admits, “I usually have two modes, anger or moderate irritation. I’m not
good at all… this,” he gestures vaguely. ”I haven’t felt this much, this strongly, in a long time. I have
emotions that I don’t even know the name of …and part of me is just waiting,” he explains, trying to
keep his voice even and calm.

“Waiting for what, dear?” Inko asks, her expression measured.

He shrugs dramatically, his arms flopping to his sides as they went. “I don’t know, honestly,” he
replies, shaking his head.

Inko sighs to herself, eyeing Izuku’s sleeping form. “I think I get it, you’re about as harried as I am.”

“Probably more so… you’re…” he gestures to all of her, “his mother. Biologically, fundamentally, or
whatever, in all the ways that it counts, he’s going to take one look at you and just know that things
will be alright. I can’t say the same for myself. He’s…”

“Katsuki,” Inko interjects, causing him to clamp his mouth shut.

“Whatever it is, whatever happens, we’ll take it one step at a time. The world wasn’t built in a day,
honey.”

No. It very well wasn’t.

But, he sincerely felt like it was shattered in one.

How does one go about repairing something like that?

---

For the duration of the evening, both of them remained on edge.

Despite this, they managed to get back to what they were doing that morning, both opting to busy
themselves with the mundane.

Izuku hadn’t so much as twitched in the last couple of hours.

With a promise to Aunty Inko, that Katsuki would wake her up if Izuku showed any other signs, the
woman allowed herself to finally sleep, curled up restlessly on the ensuite sofa. Seeing as the doctor
said that Izuku would likely wake up in the morning, she’d decided that being awake and useful at
that time was better than being stressed and drowsy.
Katsuki however, still had a paper due.

Since being enrolled in his online classes, he’d developed the habit of reading his work aloud. He didn’t know what made him do it, but he liked the idea that Deku might also get something out of it, or at the very least, have some kind of mental stimulation going on.

Tonight found him doing no different.

Diligently as he could, he read aloud softly by Izuku’s bedside.

As he desperately tried not to nod off, he took a swig of his coffee, “Ugh… this shit’s boring and my coffee is cold as hell…”

An idea seems to come to him.

“Do you think… if I concentrated hard enough on maintaining the control over my quirk, that I could somehow reheat the coffee through the mug without making it explode?” he wonders aloud.

“I’ve never tried to ‘not’ make anything explode before. I bet you’d be all over this shit if you were awake, Deku. You’d also probably be over the moon if I let you document me testing this stupid theory,” he adds with some amusement.

“Maybe I should suffer through this cold ass coffee and wait? How ‘bout that, Deku? Maybe I’ll save this little experiment just for you. We could test a bunch of different shit for fun, like we used to. Remember that one time, when we got ahold of a bunch of raw popcorn kernels? Man… that was a fuckin’ shit show if I ever saw one. There was smoke everywhere, Mom was so pissed. But it didn’t even matter that I got grounded, because what little of the popcorn that wasn’t charred actually tasted pretty fucking decent,” he smiles softly against the low glow of the dim room.

“I never said it at the time… and honestly, I’d probably deny it any other time, so you better have your listening ears on Deku, cause I’ll only say it this once… but, seeing you giggle; all covered in soot, as the fire alarms blared in the background, really made my fucking day,” he admits quietly.

“So… hurry and wake the hell up already… I could use your input on my stupid decision-making skills.”

----

All was quiet.

Until it wasn’t.

The jarring sound of the monitor increasingly picking up speed catches and grips Katsuki’s attention.

Ditching his laptop, he grabs Izuku’s hand in a firm but warm hold.

Reaching out, he presses the button for the call-light.

“Deku… Deku… hey… Izu, calm down,” he begins to murmur incoherently, trying to placate the restless boy.

As deep panicked viridian eyes snap open, a gasp rips itself from Katsuki and Izuku both.

That dread from earlier instantly pools in Katsuki’s stomach as anxious crimson met a frightened verdant gaze.
He holds Izuku’s hand tighter.

“Ka-acc…-chan…” the bedridden boy manages to choke.

Izuku begins to tremble, his entire body shaking like a leaf shuddering in a storm.

His eyes begin to lose focus.

Katsuki’s blood runs cold.

Aunty Inko, having tripped over her blanket in her haste, rushes to them.

----

Izuku begins to seize.
When Life Closes A Door, Open A Window

Chapter Summary

What else was there to say after you punched a national icon in the face?

Chapter Notes

Thank you…(ْаЪ` ●) SOOOOO— \ (٠٠) / ─MUCH!!

Every single one of you, seriously, all of you are the best.
I love how insightful, engaging, and thoughtful all of your comments and reviews have been!
Your constant encouragement keeps me motivated and dedicated to giving you the best story possible!
Again, prepare yourselves for feels!

Katsuki was found pacing; yet again, in the hospital’s loading bay by none other than, Mr. Yagi.
He was a ball of shredded nerves; complete with split knuckles, pacing back and forth like a cornered leopard. His thoughts were a maelstrom of conflicting emotions. Swirling around between anger, worry, relief, and confusion. In his momentary lapse, he didn’t even realize that the man had approached him until two spindly, but firm hands gripped his shoulders.

Drawing his attention, the teen was met with; now familiar, electric blue eyes.

“Young Bakugou,” Mr. Yagi addresses him, his expression solemn, eyes dancing with concern.
He must already know, if his pause were any indication.

The man’s gaze trails down to his roughed-up knuckles, to which Katsuki averts his eyes in shame.

“What happened?” the older man asks him.

“The wall and I… had a disagreement,” he rasps, lamely.

The older man’s brow-line pinches in concern, a sad smile forming despite himself, “must’ve been quite the disagreement.”

Katsuki roughly shrugs out of his hold, but otherwise stays put, “yeah well… the asshole deserved it.”

Mr. Yagi purses his lips, analyzing him before replying with, “yes, that may be, but you didn’t.”

An irrational, unholy rage, bubbles from his chest and up his throat, as a snarl overtakes his expression, his hands popping and sizzling in response.
“Yes, I fucking did,” he shoves a hand into the older man’s chest out of frustration.

To his credit, the slight man remains rooted and firm.

“I am sick to death of everyone fuckin’ pussyfooting around it. Acting like I’m not some fucking criminal. This was my fault, no one else’s,” Katsuki insists, hysterically. His eyes begin to water, further fueling his frustration.

“Fucking. Mine,” he all but screeches in protest. “He’s… he’s up there... right now, suffering. And I can’t even do shit about it. I can’t even take it all back. I can’t help him. I can’t fix it. And I’ve been trying and trying for months… and finally, finally when he wakes up… this shit happens.”

Angry tears fall as he paces away from the older man; who thankfully remains stoically silent, but he doesn’t stray far, still caught up in his fuming rage as he tugs at his hair.

He kicks the curb before decided sinking down onto it miserably, gripping his arms and folding around himself, “...fuck,” he breathes quietly.

After a few moments, Mr. Yagi treads closer, sinks down, and sits beside him.

His presence, while initially irritating, was beginning to become something of a balm.

The silence stretches on between them, Katsuki staring at bits of loose gravel, deep in thought.

“Sorry…” he says softly, finally managing to take some calming breaths, “I didn’t mean to blow up on you.”

“I know you didn’t,” Mr. Yagi assures him, “you’re going through a lot right now. I know it all must seem unfair.”

“Ever since I was young, I always wanted to be a hero,” Katsuki whispers, his throat suddenly very raw.

“But I fucked up. I let my ego get to my head. I let that same ego tear us apart. All because...I was the best. I had to be, because one day I’d grow up and be strong. Stronger than All Might. Strong enough so that people like Deku wouldn’t have to worry about not having a quirk, because I would be there. But somehow…” he gestures vaguely with his bloodied hand, “somehow… that motivation twisted.”

Mr. Yagi remains silent as a sentinel at his side, but attentive, so he continues.

“What started off as something innocent, became so much different. I don’t know when my goals became more important than our friendship. I don’t know when I even grew to resent him, but I was wrong. Dead wrong. Heroes… don’t go around bullying their best friend. Heroes don’t berate or belittle people. And while I was becoming so self-absorbed… Deku was there; with no power at all, but still somehow managed to be so… chivalrous and kind. So… painfully fucking helpful and thoughtful of others. He cared more about other people than he did about himself.”

“...I thought it pissed me off, that he had no business trying to be something he wasn’t, but I see now… that I was only pissed off at myself for not having those qualities. Pissed off, because I became something else. Deku was already a hero, one who was kind enough to be my punching bag. If I could treat him like dirt, I had no right to call myself one. That’s why I turned you down,” he admits.

“Because I knew that if I were going to become something other than a snot-nosed bully, I had to
I will earn it. And not just so I can be a hero and save lives, not just so I can earn a title or wealth. I’m doing it… because I want to be someone worthy enough to be called his friend. I want to be the kind of hero that he’d write about in his notebooks.”

“Bakugou, if I may interject,” he clears his throat, “I may not know him personally, but from everything that everyone around him says; the people who know him best, all say what a good person young Midoriya is. I think, that if you continue to work on yourself, he’ll see and respect that. In my opinion, someone like that would never stop seeing you as a friend, friends make mistakes. Heroes, make mistakes.”

“How could you possibly know that?” Katsuki retorts, hugging himself tighter against the cold.

Mr. Yagi sighs. “I would like to share with you, something immensely personal.”

Katsuki perks up at that, eyeing the man with measured suspicion, “is it about your odd interest in Deku, because I think I can speak for all of us in saying that it’s kind of… left field.”

Mr. Yagi laughs at that. “Okay,” he says, “I’ll admit, it does seem odd, but I assure you, after I explain, it will begin to make sense.”

“Okay… what is it then?”

“Heroes can make mistakes too,” Mr. Yagi says again, his eyes downcast.

Katsuki frowns, arching a brow, “and that has to do with your obsession with Deku, how?”

Mr. Yagi bristles at that, his face beet red, “I do not have an obsession with young Midoriya,” he objects, “it’s… something else.”

“By all means, enlighten me,” Katsuki deadpans.

Mr. Yagi clears his throat before continuing, “as I was saying, heroes, aren’t infallible. They are just as human and make just as many mistakes. Often times, they can’t always save someone that they desperately wished they could have saved and they carry this with them, like a cross to bear. You are young, but you are certainly no different. You might feel like the biggest loser, but at the end of the day, you’re trying your best to rectify your mistake. To make amends for your shortcomings, that alone is an admirable quality for a young hero.”

“I get the feeling that you’re skirting around something big,” Katsuki replies bluntly.

Mr. Yagi squares his shoulders, “the truth, young Bakugou, is that I met young Midoriya before the incident took place.”

It’s slow, but purposeful, as Katsuki unfolds himself, sitting up ram-rod straight. He turns his head slowly, eyeing Yagi Toshinori critically. A certain page in a certain composition notebook briefly comes to mind.

He’d never forgot that page.

Could never forget it if he tried.

*All Might* was often a topic of interest, shared between himself and Izuku while growing up, even after they’d drifted apart. If something like meeting All Might had actually occurred, Izuku would be over the moon. Katsuki just knew, that despite their current standings, Izuku no doubt would have shared this with him.
He’d have shown Katsuki the page in his notebook.

Katsuki had no doubt in his mind.

But he didn’t.

Izuku kept it a secret.

But why?

All Might was his hero.

That nerd would shout it from the rooftops, so why hadn’t he?

And just what the hell did Mr. Yagi even mean?

He’d met him before?

Before the incident?

There was no way.

Izuku was all about getting into U.A.

This was also another thing that he was likely to share with Katsuki.

If a U.A. faculty member came to him, looking to scout him, he wouldn’t have kept quiet about it.

Something solid resolves in Katsuki then.

The signature in the notebook, Yagi Toshinori’s sudden appearance, his interest in Izuku, the fleeting looks he sometimes sees. He’d know those anywhere, because they were like his. They were like Aunty Inko’s.

“You said All Might was going to be a teacher this year, at U.A., right?” He asks suddenly, emphasizing the pro-hero’s name.

“I did,” the man replies, suddenly sitting up just as straight.

See, the thing was, Katsuki was no slouch either when it came to identifying patterns or quirks. And after having read through Izuku’s extensive notes, he came to have a better understanding that quirks manifested in a whole slew of different ways.

Take the hero Fat Gum for instance, whose quirk was ‘Fat Absorption.’ Mind you, not even Katsuki knew this until he’d read Izuku’s notes, but a quick google search confirmed this as fact. Fat Gum had the unique ability to use kinetic energy, at the expense of his fat. Thus revealing that the man had not one, but two forms.

This was also true when it came to a few other pro-heroes. While some couldn’t shut their quirks off, some others could. Like Endeavor with his flames, or Mount Lady with her 'Giantification' quirk.

Knowing this, assuming he was correct, and as Katsuki was beginning to find, he often was; was it possible… that All Might could have another form? No one knew anything about the guy. Not where he was from, not where he lived, even his U.A. files were sealed.

Looking at Yagi Toshinori now, the man was pretty unassuming.
How could a guy like him, who didn’t even look like he could take someone in a fight, be a teacher at a school as prestigious as U.A.?

“When did you meet Deku?” Katsuki asks bluntly, his tone no-nonsense.

Yagi Toshinori takes a breath and finally explains himself.

---

The next morning finds Katsuki very quiet.

But what else was there to say after you punched a national icon in the face?

To his credit, the man didn’t protest one bit.

He grumbles to himself.

All of this was a fucking mess.

Katsuki sighs heavily to himself, glancing over at Izuku.

His expression was blank, his eyes closed, moving with slight twitches beneath their lids as he slept.

That was new.

When he was in a coma, Izuku was essentially motionless. This new state of his though, as the doctors explained, would have a degree of facial movement. He’d be able to make sounds or respond to certain questions or demands. He’d be able to open his eyes. He’d be able to smile, laugh, cry, maybe even slightly move. But that was about it.

They had called it: a vegetative, or minimally conscious state. The doctors weren’t sure which one it was yet. They’d said that it would all depend on Izuku and various tests.

They explained that what had happened last night, was indeed a seizure.

They weren’t sure if it made things worse yet, but they knew it had to do with his brain injury.

From what they said, it was likely residual stress, pent-up, from the moment of impact. The last thing Izuku experienced was his fall. During his coma, his mind didn’t have time to compartmentalize or reconcile what had happened to him, so his body reacted in the only way it could.

Katsuki never mentioned this, especially not to Aunty Inko, but Izuku was still conscious by the time he reached him. He’d even tried to speak, but couldn’t around the fluid in his throat. Katsuki literally watched as Izuku slipped away and in his panic, he began to perform CPR right up until EMS pulled him away.

In the haze of everything that happened, Katsuki had forgotten all about this.

And he’d wondered yesterday, why the first thing out of Izuku’s mouth was his name.

Knowing what he knew now, it had made sense.

Izuku called out to him, because he was the last face he saw before he lost consciousness.

Katsuki didn’t want to entertain the thought that this entire time, Izuku had been trapped in a nightmare.
It killed him to think about.

As he eyed the green haired boy, his gaze lingers on his eyes, his freckles, his new sparsely dotted scars, the slope of his nose; Katsuki could only hope, that that wasn’t still the case.

No one knew what level of cognizance Izuku would have.

But Katsuki knew damn well, that he was going to do his best to bring him back.

If it was the last thing he did, he would do it.

----

Later that week, Granny Chiyo and All Might; Katsuki applied mentally, walked into the room together, followed by Izuku’s primary doctor, his attending nurse, and to Katsuki’s surprise; his therapist, Enatsu Hana.

Aunty Inko, like himself, had been essentially silent all week. Only briefly leaving Izuku from time to time at Katsuki’s mother’s insistence.

The woman tenses in her seat at the sight of all those faces. Katsuki’s mother, who’d stayed with them all day, takes her hand.

“Ms. Midoriya,” Izuku’s doctor starts, “we all have a few words we would like to share with you, regarding Izuku’s future care plan.”

“Alright,” Aunty Inko replies, after shooting Mitsuki a look.

The doctor comes forward, crouching down in front of her. “As you know, Izuku is no longer in a coma and what he is experiencing now is quite different.”

“I’m aware,” she replies, worrying her lip, she squeezes Mitsuki’s hand a little tighter.

“After receiving and going over the culmination of test results, all of us here have come to conclude, that Izuku is indeed in a minimally conscious state, but we’re here to tell you that there is hope.”

Aunty Inko clutches her chest in response, her lips forming a wobbly smile, “really? Are you saying that my baby will be okay?”

The doctor shares a look with Granny Chiyo, who nods in response. “We believe, that through the continued use of Recovery Girl’s quirk, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, recreational therapy, and other such neuropsychological services, that Izuku has a good chance of coming out of this, however, in order to do this, we will have to relocate him to another facility, in which he can better receive this kind of care.”

“Another… facility?” Aunty Inko inquires, staring at her lap.

“Yes, as you know, hospitals are merely ‘facilitators.’ We make sure our patients are stable and can function in society, and we send them on their way. An extended stay at a hospital is often unnecessary and costly, but thankfully, outpatient facilities, like the one we’re are going to suggest to you today, can house Izuku during the duration of his recovery,” the doctor explains.

Granny Chiyo comes forward, taking a seat next to Inko on the sofa, addressing her kindly. “We actually run a facility, that is partnered with U.A. as a sort of clinic for heroes or heroes in training who sustain injuries during the course of their studies. A lot of these injuries are generally the same
as those that Izuku, himself, has sustained.”

Inko nods in understanding.

“We have the means of providing such things as occupational and physical therapies, that a hospital like this simply cannot. Our facility also doubles up as a nursing and rehabilitation center. In which, it’s not uncommon for those recovering from injuries like these, to stay for an extended amount of time. We also offer the best mental health services that this side of the country has to offer," she gestures to Enatsu, "seeing as heroes are often encouraged to participate in therapy or grief counseling. We highly believe that Izuku would benefit from all of this.”

“Where is this facility?” Katsuki’s mother asks, stroking Inko's hand with her thumb comfortably.

“It’s about 5 minutes from U.A.’s campus,” Granny Chiyo replies.

“And whose care will Izuku be under?” His mother adds again.

“My own,” Granny Chiyo confirms, “as well as Ms. Enatsu’s, whom you are already acquainted. She will be the one who, upon Izuku’s recovery, helps facilitate integrating him into psychiatric services.”

The room is silent, everyone seeming to want to give Inko some time to digest the news.

“I…” Aunty Inko starts, “I’m grateful, to all of you, really. And I understand that you have worked tirelessly in helping support Izuku, but still, I’m confused. He’s not even a student of yours yet. Why go to all this trouble?” Her brows creased in concern as she eyes everyone in the room.

Katsuki zeros in on All Might’s slight form, standing next to Enatsu. He finds his eyes narrowing, sizing him up, as if daring the man to lie.

The man in question stares right back, his eyes locked on Katsuki’s, unwavering and determined.

He takes a step forward, “speaking on behalf of Principal Nezu, we make it our mission, to grow and cultivate the young minds of today’s future, and you and I both know, Ms. Midoriya, that your son is one of those bright aspiring students. We want to take what happened to him and give it a turn for the better. He’s going to need all hands on deck and people who will fight alongside you in his corner, helping to aid him in his recovery. All of us in this room would like to aid the both of you in that fight. If you’ll allow us?”

Inko glances around the room, peering at every hopeful and determined face, her gaze flits over to Izuku’s sleeping form. Her eyes finally come to rest and lock onto Katsuki’s.

He knows his expression is one of hard resolve.

As Katsuki’s gaze flits briefly to All Might’s, he acknowledges the man in his sincerity.

He looks at Inko once more before giving her an encouraging nod.

“Well then…” Aunty Inko hiccups, leaning into Katsuki’s mother’s shoulder. Tears begin streaming in waves down her cheeks. She laughs a desperately relieved laugh, “let’s do this!”

A chorus of cheers and smiles flood the room.

Katsuki was once again stunned, by just how many people cared for Izuku’s well-being.

Each and every nurse; including those he might have initially disliked, each and every doctor,
Granny Chiyo, Ms. Enatsu, and strangely enough, *All Might* of all people.

As Katsuki looked at the relieved faces of his mother and Aunty Inko, he couldn’t help but feel that relief spread to him too.

Some of them might have made their mistakes.

Some more than others, but not an eye was dry in that room today and Katsuki knew that somehow, things would be *okay*. 
A Fresh Start

Chapter Summary

The realization was a slow, but memorable one.

Katsuki didn’t think he’d forget this moment for as long as he lived.

Chapter Notes

(´▽｀)b
For all of you that have hung in there since chapter 1, this chapter is for you! For those of you just joining us, welcome! You are now past the emotional turmoil all of us have gone through lol.

Also, for those interested, I made a Spotify playlist for this story. It's full of songs I write to and feel correlate!

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/4Ae2XTbEFr0tsl3kYP88Kb

Edit: 9/3/2019

Here is the link to the playlist on YouTube, if yall don't have Spotify.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSGpZncmRU&list=PLlVHjJygJNn53Wf_XnVeJvACyNdVk8xZ

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Despite it being well into November, Katsuki still finds himself drenched in sweat.

The teen wipes some of the sheen from his brow with a gloved hand as he jumps down from the bed of the moving van. For anyone else, this would not be tank top weather, but he ran a little hotter than others.

He was greeted by Aunty Inko, who graciously handed him a glass of lemonade, which he accepts gratefully with a, “thank you.”

“It’s me who should be thanking you, Katsuki, I really appreciate you helping me.”

As Katsuki’s cheeks begin to heat, he finds a random pebble oddly interesting, he pays attention to it.

“It’s nothing, it’s the least I can do.”

“Well, even so, thank you,” she insists. She was dressed in clothes that were warmer than his to be sure, but also much the same. Something loose and comfortable enough to move around in.

“You did most of the lifting with your quirk anyway,” he shrugs, sipping his lemonade.
“Be that as it may, you still lifted a lot of the heavier stuff, which I appreciate,” she reminds, “I couldn’t have done that alone with how out of practice I am,” her smile crinkles her eyes.

“How much more do we have left?” He asks, dodging her praise.

She seems to consider this for a moment, “hmm, well, we got everything from the kitchen and dining room, as well as my bedroom, did you happen to gather everything out of Izuku’s room?”

“Yeah, all of his stuff went in after the larger furniture,” the teen reports.

“Well, I guess other than a few little things here and there, we mostly have everything,” she replies, leaning against the ramp of the truck. Katsuki watches as she stares wistfully up at her and Izuku’s shared apartment. For as long as Katsuki had known them, they’d lived in this exact same apartment. And from what he knew, Inko had lived here even before she’d had Izuku. So, that was well over 14 years of memories spent in one place.

He and Izuku both had shared memories of growing up here.

As he analyzes Aunty Inko’s face, he notes that this must have been a very hard decision for her to make.

“Are you sure about this?” he asks, not for the first time.

Inko nods. “Yeah…” she turns toward him, her eyes screaming of determination, but her wobbly smile betrays her nervousness. Katsuki instantly knows now, where Izuku got that from.

“Yeah I am. I want to be as close to Izuku as I can, but I also know that continuing to sleep on a hospital couch is taking a toll on me. This move will do me and hopefully, Izuku, some good in the long run. Plus, he’ll be 10 minutes from school once he recovers and I’ll be about five minutes from the downtown courthouse, it’s a win/win, really.”

Katsuki’s gaze is far away as he nods a handful of times, digesting her response. He turns to her again, “so, a house, huh?”

“Haha, yeah. It’s going to be quite different from our tiny apartment. But it’s nice. Mr. Yagi went with me and the realtor and helped me in my decision. Seeing as I never owned a home before, he wanted me to be sure which one would suit myself and Izuku’s needs the best, without being ripped off. He’s such a kind man,” she replies with a twinkle in her eye.

“Tch… kind, too kind” he mutters.

“Now Katsuki, be nice,” she chides him, “I honestly don’t know why you’re so suspicious of him.”

“I have my reasons,” he retorts, crossing his arms over his chest. “but the first one is that; no one does anything without their own motivations at play. Isn’t it weird at all to you that he just shows up out of the blue, and tries to seduce us with his stupid motivational speeches and kind words…” he begins to trail off, grumbling as Aunty Inko bursts out into giggles.

“Seduce us…” she snorts, reduced to a full-bellied laughter. “Where do you kids get this stuff?”

“Places. …and stuff,” he retorts, his face beet red out of frustration and embarrassment. “The internet, hell, I don’t know, but still! He does that! That is a thing he does!”

“Maybe you wouldn’t know this, Katsuki, but there are people in this world that do nice things for others without getting anything in return,” she eyes him pointedly. “Look at All Might, he does that
Katsuki bristles at that, throwing his hands up in the air out of frustration, before stalking off toward the apartment building, grumbling as he went.

This just seems to make Inko laugh even harder.

He throws an; “All Might doesn’t know shit!” over his shoulder before he disappears into the building, leaving Inko reduced to giggles and tears.

As Mitsuki and Masaru pull up next to the truck in the lot, having returned with lunch, they are instantly confused as to what had Inko in stitches.

The greenette simply waves them off, all smiles as she wipes the corners of her eyes.

They were almost done here, but there was more yet to do.

With everything packed up and the truck’s bed being sealed, the boys climb up into the truck's cab and both of them give the girls a wave before pulling out onto the road. Inko and Mitsuki pile into their respective vehicles and follow the truck out of the lot.

After about a 30-minute drive, they all pull up into a shady little neighborhood. The atmosphere of which seemed decidedly warm and cozy. Almost cookie-cutter.

The truck then pulls up to a single story, modern Japanese home, that seemed to have a few western touches. It was a warm creme color, surrounded by a wrap-around porch, which already had a few chairs out in front. The area was surrounded by big leafy trees and cherry blossoms.

Katsuki vaguely wondered how Aunty Inko could afford it, but quickly nipped that thought in the bud when he remembered what she did for a living and how much she must have saved over the years. This place was nice. Nice nice. While it did scream 'Midoriya,' in terms of coziness, it also screamed: ‘a national icon helped me pick this out’. Katsuki’s expression moderately sours.

After a few hours, the moving truck was completely emptied.

For as long as the Midoriya’s had lived in that tiny apartment near the bay, they didn’t have much in terms of volume. They lived simply, having only just what they needed to suit their environment, and it showed. This house was at least 3 times as big as that tiny apartment had been.

It was a 3 bedroom, 2 and a half bath home, complete with a full sized kitchen, a dining room, and a generously sized sitting room. It also had a laundry room and several closets for storage space. The entire layout was hardwood flooring, with the exception of the plush beige carpet having been laid out in the sitting room.

Both Inko’s and Izuku’s rooms were massive compared to what they were used to, and both had ensuite bathrooms.

Deku, Katsuki decided, was going to flip his shit.
“Wow,” Katsuki’s mother says after a while. Having opted to take a dinner break, all of them were sitting in the dining room at Inko’s now hilariously tiny kitchen table. “You certainly have a lot to work with here, ‘Koko.’

“Yeaaah,” she replies sheepishly. Scratching the back of her head, her eyes crinkled shut in a smile. When she opens them again, they are decidedly determined. “That will just give me more to do! Kind of like a pet project, it will help take my mind off of negative things, that way I can focus on filling this place with love so that by the time Izuku returns, he can have a place to recharge. Someplace new, without any negative connotations. I want him to feel safe and at home.”

“Well, I think it’s a great idea,” his mother agrees. “You need some you time too, you haven’t had nearly enough time to process everything, or grieve properly.” Her gaze shifts to Katsuki at breakneck speed, “that goes for you too, brat.”

“Pff, me? What for?” Katsuki replies haughtily.

“While it’s fine that both of you spend time with Izuku while he’s in the hospital, it’s better that you both don’t spend every waking moment with him, either. I’m sure he’d agree,” his father supplies.

“Both of you need to take a step back and breathe. We know that Izuku is okay now, and he’s not going anywhere, so try and relax,” his mother continues. “Both of you have been on top of the kid ever since day one, and while that’s admirable, it’s hardly healthy. You both need new routines.”

“Yeah, yeaaah, if it keeps you from harping on me, then fine,” Katsuki replies, definitely not pouting.

“I agree with you.” Inko replies in kind. Her gaze flitting between two pairs of crimson eyes and settling on Masaru’s warm brown. “We won’t be able to help Izuku if we let our own health decline.”

The four of them nod at different intervals.

“I really appreciate you all,” Aunty Inko says suddenly after a moment of silence. “Not just with the move, but... everything. I couldn’t have done any of this... alone.”

Mitsuki smacks her hand on the table with a grin, making the other woman jump. “Enough of that now, ‘KoKo, we love you! You really think we wouldn’t have your back?’”

“I know, but still. Thank you, so much!” Aunty Inko replies with a teary smile.

Begrudgingly, Katsuki finds himself dragged into an awkward four-way hug. Each of them giving the smaller woman a tight encouraging squeeze.

Katsuki had been afraid before.

That he wouldn’t be considered family to them, after everything that’s happened.

To some degree, he still was.

But as they hugged one another awkwardly around a tiny kitchen table, he was beginning to feel that this wasn’t exactly the case.

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The facility that Izuku was transferred to was actually very nice. It definitely had a much less 'stuffy'
vibe about it than the hospital had. It was tailored more toward rehabilitation and it showed.

Each room was laid out differently to suit the needs of its occupants. Those that needed more clinical help than others had more hospital machinery in their rooms, while other rooms merely looked like dorms.

There were two attending RN’s per floor and about two nurse aides per hall.

All in all, it was a much better environment.

Izuku’s room, on the other hand, was pretty bland, but that was fixable. At least the view of the outside was nice. It overlooked the garden below.

While they did keep Izuku on a feeding tube and catheter, he didn’t have much in the way of intravenous machinery in his room. Seeing as he was mostly aware and well enough to breathe on his own now, Granny Chiyo deemed it unnecessary to keep him on oxygen. She also made mention that she didn't think it'd be long before he was able to chew and swallow his own food with help.

Once he was settled into his new environment, Granny Chiyo said that they should start seeing him appear more animate. Over time, they’d hoped he’d be able to do more than stare blankly or gesture with his fingers.

That was still new for Katsuki.

In all his 'almost 15 years' of knowing him, Katsuki had never known Izuku to be quiet. He was a constant ball of energy, nerves, and enthusiasm. He was also constantly muttering to himself. To the point in which it annoyed the shit out of him.

He’d give anything to hear it now.

Maybe in time, he would be able to hear it again.

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After about a week of visiting him multiple times a day, nothing had caught Izuku’s attention.

Each day was filled with Katsuki either talking at him or reading to him. To which Izuku would only blink. Maybe occasionally sigh.

It was honestly a tough crowd.

However, rather than get frustrated with it, Katsuki took his therapist's advice and simply, rolled with it.

This was simply something that every one of them would have to get used to. And while Izuku could and did speak occasionally; as he’d caught Aunty Inko leaving in tears more often than not, telling him how Izuku had said ‘mom’ on more than one occasion, Izuku didn’t often speak to him.

Today, however, caught Katsuki off guard.

A few hours earlier, during a session with Enatsu, the blond had asked her what he could do to get Izuku’s attention. Seeing as talking didn’t do much, reading didn’t do much, and asking Izuku to perform simple tasks only resulted in dead viridian eyes staring into his soul, he was out of ideas.

“You’re being too hasty, Bakugou,” she says simply, “think about this from Izuku’s perspective. Seeing as we know that he knows who both you and his mother are, that alone is a good sign. But,
without being able to tell what it is that he can remember of you, you are probably talking to an Izuku who doesn’t know why you are talking to him.”

“Okay…” Katsuki hesitates, ruminating over this.

“The two of you have a history of more than just being friends as kids. The two of you were often very combative. He probably remembers this. Wouldn’t you be confused as to why your childhood bully just started showing up and acting friendly? Wouldn’t you be suspicious? Granted… this is just speculation. We don’t know what Izuku is feeling from day to day. Or what he remembers. Until he gets better, we won’t have this kind of understanding.”

“So what, should I just… give up?” Katsuki asks with a frown. Frustration clear in his voice.

“No,” Enatsu intones. “That’s not what I’m saying at all. What I mean is… start small. You aren’t doing anything wrong, perse. But you aren’t speaking his language either. Try to understand him. He doesn’t know that you are in therapy. He doesn’t know that you have been by his side this entire time. He doesn’t know how much you care. See my meaning?”

Katsuki’s cheeks heat up at that realization.

He does care.

He cares a whole fucking lot, in fact.

It was a weird feeling.

“So, reading to him, talking to him, that’s all still okay?”

“Definitely, yes, that is perfectly okay. Just… keep the topics simple. Diving in too deep is too much for him to process right now. In this case, less is more.”

“But, Aunt Inko can get him to do so much more than I can,” he replies, frowning.

“Have you tried telling him your intentions?” Enatsu asks him, taping her pen against her blank notepad.

Katsuki considers this, rubbing his chin, “no. I haven’t. I’m not… touchy-feely. Never have been. I’m either all in or all out.”

“Well, that there could be why he isn’t responsive,” she deduces. “Izuku knows his mother. They have a bond. And not one that was based on just pain alone. In her case, she kind of has an advantage that you don’t. However, if you build upon having a relationship with him in the now, as he is, he may be more receptive.”

“So… I just… have to meet him where he’s at?” Katsuki wonders, his brows furrowed.

“Exactly. Meet him there, because that’s the only place you can. Dredging up old childhood memories is good and all, but those memories of you aren’t as fresh in his mind as your time spent at war with one another is. Meet him where he is now, and you’ll likely have an easier time of it.”

“Okay… so, what should I do?”

----

He didn’t know why he chose this out of all his options, he honestly didn’t, but it happened.
He might as well commit to it.

In his opinion, Izuku’s room was bland as fuck. He needed the stimulation, that’s all.

That’s what he told himself when he walked through Izuku’s door at 6 pm with a vase full of what he thinks are called ‘forget me not’s.’

It was stupid and they were hand-picked, but at least he had a vase lying around the house that no one used, so he figured, ‘why the fuck not?’ At least it would bring a bit of color into Izuku’s room.

Right as he walked through the door, Deku ever so slowly looked in his direction.

Katsuki knew that his face was aflame, but he powered through it. Walking clunkily through the room and plopping down next to the green haired boy. The vase slipping slightly in his sweaty, trembly, hands.

The realization was a slow, but memorable one.

Katsuki didn’t think he’d forget this moment for as long as he lived.

He could pinpoint the exact moment cognizance came into Izuku’s eyes because they began to dance and glitter with life.

Katsuki sits up straighter in his chair as Izuku lifts a finger toward himself.

The blood drains from Katsuki’s cheeks in the realization of what he thought Izuku was asking him.

“Y-yes” he finds himself stuttering out. “They’re for you. This… room fucking sucks. So I thought, why the fuck not? I know it’s stupid... but” he starts to ramble.

The small smile that slowly blooms on Izuku’s face leaves him still in his seat, that persistent heat returning to his cheeks.

He watches Izuku’s lips twitch. His mouth open and close, as though trying to find words.

After about a minute or two of them sitting in silence, Izuku finally manages the best word Katsuki’s ever heard in his life.

It’s soft.

It’s quiet.

Just barely there.

But Izuku murmurs the word ‘Pretty’ and Katsuki’s world realigns.

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The next day is yet another shock.

Another word comes.

As well as a frown.

As soon as Katsuki walks through the door, he sees Izuku’s dead gaze flit to his, lighting only momentarily as he points at the tabled vase.
'Dead' he murmurs with a frown.

And Katsuki could cry.

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The floodgates open after that.
Word after word comes.
Slowly, day by day for 7 months.
Right up until he graduates middle school.
Right up until he passes his entrance exam.
And even up to his first day at U.A. and after.
Katsuki makes damn sure that he brings Izuku flowers.
Or potted plants.
Things that he knew for a fact wouldn’t die.
He helps him tend to them.
Waters them.
And he fills Izuku’s world with color.

Chapter End Notes

I'm not crying, you're crying....
Chiyo eyes him critically.

Taking in his appearance, he was sure she could probably tell he’d run all the way back here.

She sighs heavily, leaning back in her seat.

Over the course of the last 7 months, several milestones were crossed.

Izuku was really beginning to show signs of coming out of his MCS.

It was a relief to everyone involved.

With Enatsu Hana’s help, Izuku met daily with a speech therapist, who began working with him on his communication skills. Where words failed him, the speech therapist began teaching him and those around him some simple signs in JSL. It was a work in progress, but it was much better than no progress at all.

Izuku really seemed happy to be getting back into the habit of communicating. As this came more frequently, to the point in which he was deemed mostly fully aware.

Oftentimes, he was found in bed, signing simple things to himself, as if trying to articulate them. To an outsider, this would look silly, but to everyone who knew him, it was a very ‘Izuku’ thing to do. Katsuki would often tease him good-naturedly, calling this his ‘new form of mumbling.’ To which, even Inko had found this distinction amusing.

During this time, Izuku was also pulled off of his feeding tube and was considered to be continent again and as a result, was soon pulled off of his catheter. He still needed help being fed and he still needed help to the restroom, but otherwise, he was really coming back into his own. Especially with
the help of restorative therapy.

During this time, he’d even made a few friends, of which both surprised and came as no surprise to Katsuki at all.

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One day a few months prior to his graduation, Katsuki had walked into his room with a flower pot full of budding azaleas, only to find that Izuku was being entertained by an older woman with snow white hair and soft grey eyes.

She was dressed simply and her feet were adorned with slip-resistant socks, so Katsuki instantly knew that this woman wasn’t a nurse. Her voice was light and motherly as she read softly to the bed-bound boy. Izuku’s viridian eyes locked on her with childlike rapt attention.

It took a moment for the pair of them to notice Katsuki standing in the doorway and as soon as they had, he’d felt like a fly on the wall as their gazes found him. Recognition passes through Izuku’s expression and he’s instantly overcome with a bright smile.

“Kacchan! Kacchan! Come?” Izuku attempts to beckon him over with an unsteady hand.

Katsuki ditches his shoes at the threshold, toeing himself into a waiting pair of hospital slippers. He makes his way over to the greenette and the snowy-haired woman, who seems to smile kindly at him.

“So you’re the one who’s always leaving Izuku such lovely flowers,” she concludes. “I hope you don’t mind, I took the liberty of watering some of them today.”

Katsuki took note of two things. 1) was that she was apparently on a first name basis with Deku. And 2) he'd seemed to be completely at ease with her. This alone spoke volumes because Izuku didn’t normally talk for or in front of strangers. It was decided right then that he'd put aside his suspicions and reserve his judgments until after he'd investigated this some more.

“Caught red-handed,” he replies, as politely as he can muster, “and that’s alright. I was beginning to wonder if maybe the nurses started doing it while I wasn’t here. I’m assuming it’s been you?”

“You assume correct,” she smiles warmly.

“Kacchan, l-lemme see?” Izuku reminds him, tugging lightly on the sleeve of Katsuki’s hoodie.

Katsuki complies and situates himself on the bed next to Deku, taking care not to sit on his atrophied legs. He turns the pot in hand and sits it carefully in Izuku’s lap. The woman watches them quietly, seemingly content to observe their interaction.

“Do you like ‘em? They’re called Azaleas,” he asks the forest haired boy, hinting to the tiny shrub of pink flowers. Trying all the while to will the growing blush from his face. It wasn’t often that he was put on display in front of others. Usually, his time with Izuku was private.

“Az-” he starts, testing the word on his tongue, “Azalea?” he says finally, signing the letters in conjunction with his speech.

“Mhmm,” Katsuki confirms, signing back to him with the correct spelling.

Izuku’s face lights up again as he responds with Katsuki’s favorite word, “pretty.”
“Glad you like ‘em, Deku, so who’s your friend?” He asks, gesturing casually to the woman with his head.

“Rei!” the younger boy replies brightly, signing her name as he did. “Rei, miss Rei.”

“Oh, and how long have you known miss Rei?” He asks the woman more so than Izuku. She seems to understand this, so she responds for him.

“I…” she hesitates at first, “I live here too, I’ve been here for about 10 years. I met Izuku here, recently. I like to walk around the facility sometimes and interact with people, as well as read to children. When I met Izuku’s mother, she’d told me about his condition, so I started coming around more and spending time with him,” she explains.

Katsuki eyes her curiously.

She had said 10 years.

Why would she have been here for so long?

10 years was a long time to be in a nursing and rehabilitation center. He honestly found that a bit surprising and also kind of sad. About a million questions came to mind, but he didn’t dare utter a single one. If Rei wanted to talk about it, she wouldn’t have hesitated. Katsuki decides to let it go.

And let it go he did.

The answers would later come to reveal themselves.

Todoroki Rei, as he came to find, became something of a staple in their lives. She was a warm and nurturing presence for Izuku, in light of his or Aunty Inko’s absence, she often kept him company. Katsuki decided that this was good for him and likely just as good for her, so he let it be.

Soon coming into the room and finding them together wasn’t so abnormal.

The woman was insanely sweet and oftentimes kept Aunty Inko company. The two of them became fast friends and it was clear to see why. They were a lot alike. This probably attributed to why Izuku was so comfortable with her.

After a while, Rei had even met his own mother, who’d also instantly took to her; and in return, all of them had met two of her four children as well. Fuyumi and Natsuo respectively even took their own turns in coming and visiting with Izuku from time to time.

Katsuki could honestly say he was content with knowing that Izuku was reaching out more to others. As it would only help him in the long run.

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As the months went by and after having passed his U.A. entrance exam with top marks, things seemed to only get better from there.

Having someone around to constantly help stimulate his mind, helped Izuku reconnect with the world around him. He was much more animated. He was speaking better, even though he still preferred to use JSL in conjunction with his words, he was well on his way to making a full recovery.

According to Granny Chiyo, all he would need after a while would be physical and psychological
therapies.

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It quickly became apparent to everyone around, that Izuku didn’t remember the incident. It was hard to tell what he did and didn’t remember, because he had known his mother and Katsuki their entire lives, but they made do. It was also very hard to find out what he did and didn’t know due to his limited communication skills.

He did, however, as Katsuki came to find through experimentation, remember most, if not all, of his basic cognitive skills. He could read, he knew maths, he remembered basic science and history. They’d even gone as far as playing simple trivia games. Academically, everything was still there. His more physical skills, however, were still very much lacking.

Izuku couldn’t hold a pencil to write with. He’d had a hard time holding spoons or lifting his arms and legs. At best, his mobility was limited. But Granny Chiyo assured them that with a strict regimen of physical and occupational therapies, he’d be doing these things again in no time.

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The day Katsuki got his acceptance letter to U.A. he’d had half a mind to toss the damn thing out the window. It wasn’t that he hated All Might, not at all. He was just... 

\[ \text{disappointed.} \]

The man was every bit as great as he’d thought he’d be. His childhood dreams come to life.

But when he thought about how one fated conversation tipped Izuku over the edge, his image of the man distorted and soured.

It was probably unfair of him and probably very hypocritical, but even so. He’d expected better of the man. A snot-nosed teen like him bullying someone is expected. But a living legend telling a depressed teenager that he couldn’t achieve his dreams, that was just disheartening.

What made things worse was the fact that only he knew about it.

When confronted with Yagi Toshinori for the first time since the incident, Izuku didn’t know who the man was. It was almost, unfair, somehow. Unfair in the regard that, even if All Might were to apologize to him, Izuku wouldn’t have had any idea what it was for.

Katsuki could tell that the lack of recognition didn’t sit well with Mr. Yagi. Part of him felt that the man deserved it, but the other more rational part of him; that he was becoming familiar with through his own therapy, felt kind of bad. Only the two of them knew what had actually happened in the days prior to Izuku’s suicide attempt. And there was no real way for the man or Izuku to find closure.

After that, Yagi Toshinori, much to Katsuki’s begrudging respect, still continued to studiously visit him.

He explained to Katsuki, that even though Izuku didn’t remember their encounter, it didn’t give him a free pass. He would do anything and everything in his power to make it up to him. He’d also expressed an interest in getting to know him better, as he hadn’t had the chance before. And with as salty as Katsuki’s been toward him, he began to find that his respect wasn’t quite as begrudging as before.

Maybe it was for the better that Izuku didn’t remember such a horrific moment in his life?
Maybe this was the best chance he’d had at leading a decently normal life?

Although, sometimes even silver linings had their pitfalls.

----

It’d been about a week after his first hellish day of class, when Katsuki stepped off of the elevator, only to be greeted by a CNA who usually worked on Izuku’s hall.

“I wouldn’t walk in there just yet,” she warns him, “he’s with his mother and he’s kind of emotional right now. You can do what you want,” she assures him just as he’s about to protest, “but, just fair warning.”

He acknowledges her warning with a nod and makes his way down the hall.

Katsuki finds himself at odds as he quietly approaches the door, standing just outside of the view of the threshold.

It’s been months since he’d heard the sound of Izuku crying and for the first time ever, he finds himself hating the sound of it.

Soft, shuddering hiccups.

Quietly miserable sniffles.

“M-mom,” he speaks, into what might be a tissue. “Why am I h-here? I wa-want…” he struggles with the words.

Katsuki assumes he starts signing to her instead when he hears Aunty Inko’s reply.

“Oh, baby,” she replies, sounding every bit as choked up as Izuku does, “I know you want to come home and you will. Soon, I promise.”

“Bu-but… w-when?” Izuku asks, blowing his nose into what was now confirmed as a tissue. “I wa-” he pauses, working out the words, “I…” he sounds frustrated now.

“Ss…” he tries again, “School.” He says finally, clear as day.

That was a new word in his repertoire.

“I w-want… to go. Like, like… Kacchan.”

Katsuki’s head thumps softly against the wall outside the door, his shoulders slumping heavily.

He should have known this was coming.

Izuku was always so positive.

So patient with himself and others.

He didn’t know why he was here, but he knew he was hurt and that he was getting better.

He was likely beginning to understand more and more that his predicament was a lot worse than what they had initially been telling him. He was likely beginning to feel trapped here, while Katsuki, and his mother; while Natsuo and Fuyumi, and Mr. Yagi, all had lives outside these walls.
This realization gutted Katsuki.

He decides something then and turns around.

Walking right back toward the elevator.

----

“Granny,” Katsuki barks once he’d reached U.A.’s infirmary.

The old woman wasn’t due back to the outpatient hospital until later that week, as classes had just started.

“Why am I not surprised to see you skulking around after hours?” she teases him, “what can I do for you, Katsuki?”

“When will Deku be able to walk? Your quirk should be able to help him walk, right?” Katsuki all but demands.

Chiyo eyes him critically.

Taking in his appearance, he was sure she could probably tell he’d run all the way back here.

She sighs heavily, leaning back in her seat.

“Dear, if it were that simple, I’d have had him up and at ‘em, already,” she admits.

She watches as he visibly deflates.

Although not one to take defeat so easily, he challenges her again. “At the very least, you can help him with his arms, right?”

“What are you getting at, Katsuki? Has something happened? You know more than most that my quirk, although helpful, isn’t a cure-all,” she replies ruefully.

Katsuki grinds his teeth, glaring holes into the linoleum floor. He was beginning to feel his blood pressure rise with his frustration. “He’s sad,” he says finally.

“Sad?” Chiyo asks suddenly, sitting up straighter, “how so?”

“Not… that kind of sad, not like he’s going to hurt himself, but, he’s frustrated. Wouldn’t you be? Sitting in a bed all day, hardly able to move because your muscle mass has declined? He wants to do shit. He wants to go back to school, like me…”

Chiyo frowns.

“He… wants to go home,” Katsuki utters quietly, his anger finally draining from him.

“You know, as well as I do, that most of his recovery is dependent on him,” she starts, holding up a hand in silence as soon as Katsuki’s head snaps back up with a retort at the ready.

“We can’t rush this much more than we are. Healing broken bones and stopping internal bleeding is one thing, dear. Creating muscle mass is an act only a god can attempt and I am not one. His body was so broken and beaten beyond repair. I know you know this. You were the first of us to see it with your own eyes,” she replies sternly.
Katsuki purses his lips, his gaze calculatingly cool.

“As far as injuries go,” she continues, more gently, “he has none that need attending. I’m afraid that if I try to budge him even more, what little stamina he does have will be wiped out and that it’d only hinder his progress. Take one of your little-potted plants for instance,” she says, gesturing to the small potted succulent still in his hand.

He’d completely forgot he’d even had it.

“If you were to pluck each petal off but one, do you think the others would grow back overnight?”

“...No,” he begrudgingly admits, his brows furrowing.

“Now... I’m not saying I won’t try to help him,” she decides, making Katsuki’s gaze snap back up to meet hers. Surprise coloring those crimson spheres. “But, if this doesn’t work, I will not be forcing his body to heal anymore. Got it?”

“Got it,” he affirms.

“As far as academics are concerned. Once we can get the range of movement in his arms and hands back to normal, or at least functional, we can set about setting him up with online courses, like you had.”

“Really?” His eyes widen.

“Yes, so long as his mother approves this,” the old woman confirms.

“I have no doubt in my mind that she will, that woman is a saint,” he replies genuinely.

Chiyo smiles, heaving a long-suffering sigh as she stands up. “Well... what are you waiting for?”

Katsuki grins victoriously as they exit the room.

The tiny potted succulent nestled safely in his hands.

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Just down the corridor, pausing just outside of the study hall, yet another pair of crimson eyes trail after them curiously.
A Day In The Life Of

Chapter Summary

At that point, Eijiro knew for a fact that there was more to the kid than what met the eye.

He made it his own personal mission to find out exactly what that was.

Chapter Notes

(・ω・) I know I've told you all about a million times, but I'm saying it again, ALL OF YOU ARE THE BEST.

And now the moment we've been waiting for~

All was quiet in the Todoroki house that morning and for once Fuyumi could breathe. With their father away on a PR tour abroad, and Natsuo off to college, Fuyumi was the only one home, of age, to be the house’s caretaker.

In her opinion, it was all the better this way.

It gave her and her youngest sibling a chance to let loose in ways they weren't used to and gave them time to bond. Some days, she wished it were always like this. She hated the fact that her little brother roamed these halls anxiously, quiet as a ghost.

Today, however, this was not the case.

While Shouto wasn’t ever loud by any means, his presence in the home could definitely be felt. Knowing this set her nerves at ease.

Gone was that ever looming and oppressing feeling that oozed off of their father, held like a thundercloud overhead.

The morning brought them nothing but clear skies and sibling camaraderie.

Fuyumi busied herself at the kitchen counter as she packed their mother a lunch, taking care to slip in some extra snacks, something light and sweet for their resident sunshine. Shouto slips by her groggily, reaching into the cabinet above her in search of their hidden cereal stash.

This brings a smile to her face.

Their father didn’t often keep sweets in the house, much less anything as sugary as cereal. So in times like these, Fuyumi; being the ever-dutiful temporary matriarch, splurges on junk food for her and her younger brother to share.

It was their shared and scaredly sworn secret.

"Are you going out?" Shouto asks, his voice slightly raspy from sleep. He pours himself a bowl of
their shared loot and proceeds to root around the refrigerator for their ever coveted milk.

“Yeah, I wanted to surprise mom with a picnic in the garden,” she relays, later adding “and I promised Izuku that I’d bring him some snacks.”

“Izuku? Is that that little kid you’re always talking about?” Shouto asks around a full bite of his cereal. Between the two of them, there were no manners here.

His face didn’t betray any outward emotion, but Fuyumi could tell his interest was piqued.

“Actually, he’s the same age as you are, Shou,” she replies, gauging his reaction.

This eventually gets a response, which is just a blink, but she’d take it.

“Hm,” he replies after a while, shrugging, “I guess it was just the way you always speak about him, that made him sound a lot younger.”

“Hm,” she considers this, “well… I guess it does sound like that, now that I think about it. But no, he’s your age. He’s just… how do I explain it? Imagine something small, or incredibly pure, like… a bunny!”

Her brother arches a brow, “a bunny?”

“Yeah!” She gesticulates, gesturing with her hands, “he’s super sweet and he has a hard time getting his words out, but he has this childlike wonder about him, mom adores him.”

“Oh,” Shouto replies, taking another bite of his cereal.

Fuyumi gives his shoulder a light push, “you should come with me! You can meet him!”

He blinks again, but he hasn’t shot her down yet, so she strengthens her argument.

“Before you say no, consider this! Izuku has been in the hospital for about 10 months, he could use another friend! You don’t even necessarily have to see mom if you don’t want to, I know how you feel, but at least, consider it?”

Shouto seems to be processing this, as his chewing slows considerably.

“I …don’t know,” he says finally, having stopped eating completely.

Fuyumi frowns slightly.

She knew that what had happened between him and their mother was horrible, she didn't deny that. She also knew he knew this wasn’t entirely her fault and that she’d been driven to the brink of her sanity by their abusive father, but even still, the two of them hadn’t spoken since the incident. It made her sad just thinking about it. She’d been trying to encourage Shouto to meet with their mother for years, but he was always so against it.

“Shouto, I know how you feel, but I want you to know, mom loves you. She thinks about you every day. Maybe one day, if you’re feeling up to it, you could come with me to see her? I know it would mean the world to her.”

“…Not today,” he decides after a moment of consideration, “but… maybe someday. Just… give me some more time to think about it.”

“Of course!” She all but exclaims, “take all the time you need, baby bro.”
He gives her a short nod.

After gathering up the basket she’d prepared, she strolls up to him, mussing his hair affectionately, to which he merely wrinkles his nose.

“I’ll send her my love for you, ok?”

“...Sure.”

---

Kirishima Eijiro wasn’t nosy by nature. More often than not, he was keen to just let people do their own thing and go about his own business. He liked to roll with the punches and take each new day with a reinvigorated optimism. As it was the manly thing to do.

But, that didn’t mean he wasn’t curious.

Being in this class for about a month, surrounded by 19 other kids, all with super sweet quirks and varying personality types, he’d begun to ascertain which ones were amicable and which ones weren’t.

Bakugou Katsuki fell into that latter category.

He was cocky, loud, and obscenely rude.

He didn’t care much for authority or rules, he didn’t care to remember anyone’s names, and Eijiro could tell he definitely didn’t like to be taken down a few pegs by their teacher, Mr. Aizawa.

Despite this, something about the guy piqued Eijiro’s curiosity.

While others would probably never believe him, Eijiro knew that there was something about the guy that seemed soft. He didn’t know what that was, but it was there. Just barely there beneath the surface. Hidden underneath all of those hardened edges. And if there was one thing Eijiro knew about hard edges, it was that they could most definitely almost always be smoothed out.

So rather than accepting his brusque attitude and clear deflection of most friendly interactions, Eijiro opted to shower the guy in unrelenting kindness. Any chance Eijiro had, he was constantly trying to engage with him.

It was no easy task, but Kirishima Eijiro was no quitter.

He swore to himself that he would adopt Bakugou into the manly throes of friendship if it killed him. Eijiro made this his goal in life.

After some careful observations, it was clear to see that even with as brash and crude as Bakugou came off, he was also intensely methodical. He was scarily smart and he often thought a situation through at least 5 steps ahead. His eye for impromptu strategy was off the charts. In a word, Bakugou was impressive.

In his weird Bakugou-esque way, he was also very motivational. He often encouraged people by antagonizing them. Pushing them to or past their limits. It was a bit unorthodox as far as team building techniques went, but oddly enough, it was effective. He also seemed to kind of restrain his insults at times. And again, oddly enough, he knew an awful lot about battlefield first-aid.

It seemed like the kid's personality was every bit at odds with itself as it seemed. As though it were in
constant conflict with itself. It was weird, to say the least.

That, however, wasn’t nearly as weird as when, in the midst of insulting the class as a whole, he’d stopped and taken the time to; what seemed like to Eijiro at the time, sign his insults to the class’es resident quiet kid, Koda Koji.

When Kaminari had asked what the heck it was that he was doing, he’d simply responded with: “If I’m going to be an asshole, I better at least be an inclusive one,” before promptly skulking off.

At that point, Eijiro knew for a fact that there was more to the kid than what met the eye.

He made it his own personal mission to find out exactly what that was.

----

As the days trickle by, a month soon passes and Bakugou is every bit as intriguing as he was in the beginning. At this point, if it weren’t for Kaminari, Sero, and Ashido being equally as curious, Eijiro would definitely be feeling like a stalker. Thankfully, he wasn’t the only one who had caught on to the mystery that was Bakugou Katsuki.

On the days that Bakugou wasn’t laying the beat down during training, or causing a ruckus with his surly disposition, he was quiet. Very quiet. Seemingly just content to sit and observe the class with a calculative glare. He was so quiet in fact, that his only other rivals in class for sounds made in a day, were Koda and Todoroki. Even Tokoyami made more noise than them.

Eijiro was beginning to fear for the kid, in a sad way. He usually had an easier time of making friends with people. But Bakugou was, true to form, ever the wild card.

Bakugou didn’t seem receptive to the idea of making friends with anyone and more often than not, he’d shut people out. What was even weirder was his apparent relationship with Recovery Girl and All Might, as he was often seen with the both of them after school hours. That or with that guy who worked in the office, Mr. Yagi. Other than those three, he didn’t often socialize. That is to say, if you were to count hanging around a bunch of adults as ‘socializing.’

Even with all of this weirdness in the world of Bakugou, there was apparently more yet to uncover.

During their first week of the semester, Eijiro could have sworn he’d seen Bakugou leaving the building with Recovery Girl. And while that in itself was odd, what was odder was that he’d been holding a small potted plant.

At first, Eijiro had assumed that maybe he was carrying it for Recovery Girl, as she often walked with her cane.

This, however, was soon debunked.

----

Later that week Eijiro and Kaminari had been fooling around after school hours. The pair in question were meandering through downtown when out of the corner of Kaminari’s eye, familiar spiky blond hair came rounding the corner.

“DUDE,” Kaminari whacks his arm, “Dude, look!” He whispers harshly, drawing Eijiro’s attention.

Looking in the direction the blond was pointing, he’d soon found the object of his curiosity. Bakugou was walking down the sidewalk, headphones in his ears, holding his phone; clearly
scrolling through it, as he held a drink carrier full of different types of coffee in his opposite hand. Depositing his phone into his back pocket, he approaches a quaint and cute, local flower shop.

Not even sparing them a glance or hint of recognition, he walks through the door and disappears inside.

“Dude…” Kaminari whispers again, “did Bakugou of all people, seriously walk into that flower shop looking like some boho hipster?”

Eijiro finds himself blinking out of his temporary stupor, “I think he did.”

Kaminari barks a laugh, “Dude, there is no way. Just no way that that happened, right?”

Despite Kaminari’s good-natured jeering, Eijiro knew the blond was every bit as curious as he was.

“Well,” Eijiro starts, mentally going through his 'Bakugou' checklist, “this isn’t the only time I’ve seen him carrying various plants. Maybe he just likes them?”

“No way!” Kaminari gasps, “you seriously think Bakugou, the angriest, angriest, classroom pomeranian likes plants of all things? That kid doesn’t even like people.”

“Why else would he walk into the flower shop? If you have any ideas, do tell,” the redhead retorts.

“Hmm, honestly? I got nothin,’” Kaminari admits.

Just as the shops bell chimes, both boys hurryly throw themselves into the bushes and continue to survey their surroundings. Twin pairs of curious eyes find their target in question. Of whom, had just exited the building with his coffee carrier in one hand and what looked like a small bonsai in his other.

Eijiro and Kaminari share a look.

Skepticism seems to briefly flit through Kaminari’s golden gaze.

“Wanna follow him?” The blond asks with a feral grin.

“I dunno, man. Isn’t that an invasion of privacy? Stalking someone that doesn’t want to be bothered doesn’t seem all that manly, dude,” Eijiro finds himself replying doubtfully.

Sure, he was curious as all get out, but he did intend to be Bakugou’s friend and friends gave other friends their space. Right?

But still…

As he watched the enigma that was Bakugou Katsuki disappear down the street, he couldn’t help but feel tempted.

“Well, when you put it that way,” Kaminari pouts, “next time?”

“Next time,” Eijiro confirms.

Some things were better left alone for now.

----

Shouto didn’t know what possessed him to come here, but it could very well have been attributed to
Fuyumi’s encouragement and their father's absence.

He never thought he’d be taking these steps, let alone on his own.

But as he approached the outpatient hospital that was home to his mother for the last 10 years, he'd felt himself clamp up.

What was he even doing here?

He had no plan.

None, whatsoever.

He was way out of his comfort zone on this one and not for the first time that day did he blame his sister.

What was he even going to say? ‘Oh, hi mom, remember that thing with the tea kettle that one time, haha, good times, right?’ Wrong.

This was stupid and half-cocked.

He never did things without thinking them through first. That was just how he was. So why now, after all this time did he find the courage to even set foot on this property?

‘Before you say no, consider this! Izuku has been in the hospital for about 10 months, he could use another friend!’

That’s what Fuyumi had said a few weeks ago. She’d also gone on to talk about how their mother had apparently ‘adored’ this Izuku kid. Shouto didn’t know how he felt about that, but he supposed, out of everything else, that this could be a potential starting point. At the least, he could find out about his mother from an outside source.

As Shouto approached the heavy double doors, he rebuked as much doubt from his mind as possible.

Baby steps.

Baby steps.

----

“Kacchan!” Izuku calls out happily, spotting his friend in the door. He was wondering what was taking him so long, usually, he was much more punctual.

“Did I miss it?” The blond asks him as he steps into the threshold.

“Well…” you didn’t miss much,” Izuku signs, in conjunction with his speech. Sometimes using JSL was much faster than finding the words verbally. It still frustrated him to no end that he couldn’t just open his mouth and make words come out.

The doctors and Granny Chiyo had all said that this was likely due to his brain injury. He thanked his lucky stars that his hands could at least do the talking for him.

“How far along did you get?” Kacchan asks him, situating himself on the edge of his bed.

“F-few steps,” he replies verbally.
“A few is better than none, try not to let it bother you. Granny was saying that the fact that you’re already trying to walk this soon was progress in and of itself, you should own that,” Kacchan replies, in a tone that sounds particularly… proud.

That was something that Izuku couldn’t seem to get enough of.

He didn’t know when or why, but Katsuki changed somehow.

He was far more patient with him, far more kind, and he filled their shared silence with words that Izuku could only wish he could speak. Sometimes; not that he’d ever admitted it, but sometimes, he could simply listen to Kacchan talk for hours and never tire of it.

“H-how… was it?” School, I mean,” he finishes in sign.

“Not bad, I guess. Kind of boring. I could tell that Shitty Hair, Sparky, and Pinky were up to no good again. Nosy punks,” he grumbles to himself.

“Kacchan,” Izuku finds himself huffing a laugh.

“What?” He gripes in response.

“How do you ever expect to get along with anyone if you push them away?” Izuku signs.

“Would you like it if a bunch of extras started poking their noses into your business?”

“Well, for one, I wouldn’t be calling them ‘extras’ they are people, and for two, I would at least try to make an effort to be friendly,” the greenette replies in protest, “you should loosen up a little.”

“Why go to all that trouble when I have you?” Katsuki replies, just to be a brat.

Despite this, Izuku finds his cheeks heating up, “yes… you have m-me, but-” he hesitates, “you deserve to have friends you can hang out with outside these walls.”

“Then I guess we’ll have to work harder on getting you back onto your feet then, now won’t we,” he replies simply.

Izuku finds himself warming at that, but his concerns still weigh heavily in his mind.

“Ss-so, what… d-did you… bring me?” He asks, changing that obviously stilted subject.

“Today’s menu is, a blended mocha frappu-whatever. It’s cold and loaded with sugar, just the way you like it. I brought one for your mom, too, but I guess she already left?”

“Yeah,” Izuku confirms, gratefully accepting the coffee.

He was sooooooo glad to be back on a regular diet.

The pureed stuff made him want to puke and that mechanical soft diet wasn’t all that appealing either. Once he was able to eat solid foods again, Katsuki started to spoil him with different and sometimes unusual things. It was pure bliss.

“I also brought you this,” he adds, setting what looked like a tiny tree into his lap. It was adorable.

“C-cute!”
Since Granny Chiyo had last seen him, she’d been paying more attention to his arms and hands. Stating that once he could hold things better, he could begin to hold his own weight on crutches. Or so she said anyway. Something told him that Katsuki had something to do with this sudden interest of hers.

Not that he was complaining. It really did help.

Carefully as he could, he picked up the tiny tree and examined it.

He never really considered himself a plant person, or at least, not before Kacchan started bringing them to him, but he found that he was beginning to develop a rather green thumb. It was probably more due in part to Katsuki’s assistance, but he absolutely loved the idea of caring for something and keeping it alive.

For some reason, seeing things die made him incredibly uncomfortable.

“Do you like it?” Kacchan asks after a while.

Izuku nods slowly, so as not to give himself a head rush, “I l-love it, what’s… i-it’s n-name?”

“It’s a Bonsai plant. They’re supposed to bring ‘good luck’ or some shit like that,” Katsuki replies with a shrug.

Izuku laughs setting the tiny tree back in his lap, replying with his hands, “I certainly could use some ‘shit’ like that.”

“Midoriya Izuku,” Katsuki feigns shock, his crimson eyes widened for show, “you kiss your mother with that mouth?”

“What she doesn’t know, won’t hurt her,” he signs in reply, his eyes crinkling in humor.

“I wonder if your speech therapist knows she’s got a rebel on her hands?”

Izuku laughs, giving him an indifferent shrug, affectionately tracing a hand over the pot of his new Bonsai.

Every day that he made progress was always a good day, but it was times like these that he lived for.
It was then that something stuck out to him, “are you wearing my hoodie?”

“I know not of what you speak,” Izuku signs hastily, clearly avoiding his gaze.

Izuku was in high spirits, content to finally be sitting up in something that wasn’t his bed. He quickly found that his wheelchair was steadily becoming his favorite part of getting himself back into working order. This had been a huge milestone for him, as this meant that he was finally able to start moving more independently.

After Kacchan had left for the afternoon, Izuku was taken into the therapy room for yet another brief physical therapy session. For about 30 minutes; Izuku, with brief intervals of rest, began relearning to walk using the help of handrails.

It was a slow, often painful, and physically taxing process, but Izuku grit his teeth through it and kept on going.

While in physical therapy he slowly began doing things like standing, walking, and stretching with the use of tools such as handrails and tension bands. While sitting in either his bed or his wheelchair, he would work out his arms and hands with the use of tension bands, small 3 pound weights, and hand grippers or stress balls.

He found that even the use of his wheelchair without assistance helped him in rebuilding his muscle mass. As it was steadily becoming easier to maneuver himself around.

These kinds of workouts continued to fuel his determination. It gave him hope that he could begin walking on his own again within the next year.

He tried his best to not give the timeline a second thought, as it would only impede his current
progress and make him regress. He tried his best not to let himself feel or become discouraged.

It was hard, but it was something he’d had to do.

He refused to stay in this hospital any longer than he had to, regardless of how well they treated him.

He wanted to go home.

Plain and simple.

And from what his Mom and Kacchan told him about their new home, he was really excited to see it.

----

Given his current rapport with most of the Todoroki family, Izuku really shouldn’t have been surprised when the youngest had finally made his appearance. What was surprising, however, was how strikingly different he was in comparison to the rest of them.

To be frank, even with as observant as Izuku was, Todoroki Shouto was still an enigma.

After returning from physical therapy and a quick assisted shower, Izuku found himself back in his room, and at his request, situated in his wheelchair, where he could wheel himself around his room and tend to his many plants.

As they’d already been watered for the day, he mostly just busied himself by pruning the ones that needed it, not that many of them did.

Kacchan had a surprisingly green thumb.

That or he’d just relentlessly poured over article after article or book after book on plant care in a rage-filled attempt to learn everything there was to know about how to keep plants alive. That thought alone made Izuku giggle quietly to himself, because that would totally be a thing his surly friend would do.

Just as he was checking on his Periwinkles, an almost timid knock rapped on his door.

Slowly, so as not to hurt himself, Izuku cranes his neck in the direction the sound came from and was greeted with startling heterochromatic eyes and equally bi-colored hair.

Having been described several times by his family, Izuku immediately knew who his mysterious visitor was and gives the boy a bright and welcoming smile.

----

Having taken one look at Midoriya Izuku, Shouto was immediately reminded of the words his sister had used to describe him.

"He's just… how do I explain it? Imagine something small, or incredibly pure, like… a bunny!"

Honestly, Shouto didn’t quite believe her claims when she’d first voiced them, but as he stood in the doorway and eyed this brightly forested boy, surrounded by various plants and holding a pot of tiny purple flowers, he had to admit she was right, and thus lost a bit of his skepticism.

The kid looked like nothing short of a woodland creature. Almost akin to the mythical lore of forest nymphs he’d heard about from books his mother would read to him as a child.
Neither of them spoke for a good long minute.

Both seemingly trying to observe the other.

It was after a moment that Midoriya puts down his pot of tiny purple flowers and wheels himself closer, picking up what looked like a newer model smartphone as he went, stopping just in front of him and typing silently.

After a moment the boy holds the device out to him.

In confusion, Shouto looks down at what appeared to be a new composition for a text message and in the keyboard, he’d written: ‘If you’re comfortable with it, use my phone to text yourself, it may help us out with the speech gaps. Unless you know JSL?’

Shouto takes a moment to peer up at the boy, who was waiting with a patient smile.

Suddenly another thing his sister had said comes to mind and Shouto finds himself feeling foolish for a moment at his own hesitance.

“He’s super sweet and he has a hard time getting his words out.”

“Are you mute?” He asks bluntly, only registering after he’d said it, that that might have been a rude thing to ask. He finds his cheeks heating up despite himself.

Midoriya Izuku merely gives him a short breathy laugh and shakes his head.

This only seemed to further confuse Shouto.

If the kid wasn’t mute, then why couldn’t he just talk?

The boy in question begins gesturing to himself, “…h-had an a-accid-dent. S-speech isn’t s-so good s-sometimes. B-but I can s-sign and t-type.”

Shouto feels his face both heat up and drain of color simultaneously, suddenly feeling like the biggest jerk.

“Oh, wow,” he blinks to himself, “okay… I’m sorry. I guess I don’t actually know that much about you at all, really. Fuyumi never went into great detail as to why you were here, so …sorry if I offended you.”

Midoriya smiles at him yet again, patient as ever. Shouto briefly wondered if the kid had any other mode.

“S’ok. I’m g-good,” Midoriya assures him.

Looking down at the device in his hand, he noticed that the screen went black again and finds his cheeks heating up again as he addresses this, “um… it’s locked again, sorry.”

Midoriya huffs humorously, holding his hand out.

Shouto passes him the device, feeling thoroughly out of his depth and Midoriya doesn’t take too long in unlocking it before passing it back to him.

Shouto makes short work of entering his contact information and passes it back to the boy, who accepts the device gratefully.
Midoriya tinkers with it for a moment and in seconds Shouto’s own phone is vibrating in his pocket.

Opening his recent messages he is greeted with a really cheesy and kind of redundant smiling emoji and a text message he’d never forget even if he tried.

‘Fuyumi was right, you really do have a 'Prince Zuko' vibe about you.’

The short laugh that bubbles out of him actually startles them both, until Midoriya was nothing but a mess of giggles.

After this, the ice is essentially broken between them and Shouto miraculously finds himself noticing exactly what it was about this kid that his family liked.

He really was sweet, but also not afraid to joke around with him, whereas most people shied away from even trying. Shouto really liked that Midoriya didn’t press any personal issues, or pry into his business. Nor did he bring his mother up too often.

Before long, Shouto had honestly forgotten why he’d even come here, but he supposed that as far as first steps went, this wasn’t so bad.

Not by a long shot.

Now, if only he could gather the courage enough to visit his mom next.

----

It was 3:48 in the morning when Izuku startles awake suddenly, his viridian eyes snapping open, wide and alarmed against the dimly lit room. Clutching his t-shirt as tightly as he could will himself to, he briefly checks his surroundings through blurred vision.

Faintly cooling sweat trickles down the back of his neck as he tries to steady his shallow breathing. Blinking rapidly in an attempt to clear the tears from his eyes, he gives up and rubs them. After a moment he wiggles in an attempt to sit upright in his bed.

With the use of his arms, he is able to situate his torso. Not for the first time does he find himself thankful for his physical therapist. He hadn’t been able to do this up until a few weeks ago, and he was almost strong enough now to maneuver himself into his wheelchair on his own.

With what little adrenaline he’d had left, he attempts just that, swinging his atrophied legs over the side of the bed and scooting himself closer to the edge. Using the strength in his arms and the armrests of his wheelchair to steady himself, he sets his socked feet on the cool tile floor and holds himself up in a standing position. Wobbling ever so slightly.

As he started to come down from his adrenaline high, he tried to make fast work of pivoting himself inch by inch until his hands no longer gripped his wheelchair, but instead gripped his bed. He lets gravity help him the rest of the way as he plops unceremoniously into the seat of his wheelchair and heaves a victorious breath.

This was the first time he’d done this alone and he knew he was sure to get an earful from the nurses stationed on his floor, but he couldn’t just sit there in his bed. Not with how restless and unsettled he currently felt.

He needed to move around and put himself as far away from that feeling as possible.

Feeling the nights chill creep in around him, he makes to reach for his blanket to wrap around
himself, only to think better of it and wheels himself over to a sitting chair, where Kacchan had left one of his hoodies draped over the back of it.

As he pulled the garment around himself in search of warmth, he vaguely considered how weird this might appear to anyone who noticed, but he couldn’t find it in himself to care.

It was almost 4 am, he was freezing, and stressed. If Kacchan’s sweater gave him a bit more comfort than a plain old hospital blanket, then sue him.

Taking care not to wear himself out too much, he wheels himself over to his bedside table, finding his new phone attached to its charger. Removing it, he opens up to his recent messages and begins to type.

Thinking better of waking his mother, who had work in the morning, he settled on texting the one person he knew would be the more likely of the two to be awake.

```
SOS :(  
Sorry it's so early.
sleep is for the weak
what's up, Deku?
Can't sleep. I had a weird dream.
weird how?
Weird like, I was floating. Only not. And when I woke up I felt incredibly uncomfortable.
...floating?
```
Yeah, it was the weirdest dream.

At first I was floating and then it seemed like gravity came crashing down all at once.

Then I woke up.

what else can you remember from that dream?

Um... just that, pretty much.

Oh wait! Actually, it might be nothing, but I remember clouds. Kinda stupid huh? Not exactly nightmare material.
no

it's not stupid if it bothers you, dummy

are you ok?

Yeah, but the nurses might be mad at me. ^^

what'd you do?

I may or may not be sitting in my wheelchair right now.

by yourself?

Perhaps... Cx

Goddamnit Deku
In my defense, I was really careful!

And honestly the idea of sitting in bed uselessly really bothered me!

I didn't fall, so that's a plus! Right? That's progress!

still doesn't mean it wasn't fuckin' stupid. what would you have done if you did fall, dumbass?

>:D Army crawl!

... D:
i am judging you so hard right now
but i will admit, that IS progress

Soon I'll be wheeling circles around you!

... dork, try not to wreck in the hallways ok?

i don't want to be implicated in your idiotic shenanigans

Idiotic or ingenious? It's all a matter of perspective!

you've taken one too many blows to your head

D: RUDE
I am signing so many expletives at you right now.

i've taught you well

but seriously, Deku, you should bring that up to Granny

Bring what up? My dream or the wheelchair thing? Cause I don't want to tick her off!

she will find out either way, but i was meaning your dream

You really think so?

yeah

Okay, I will tell her.
good

Oh geeze! It's already well after 4. I should let you get back to sleep or Mr. Aizawa might kill you.

tch...

i guess

are you ok enough to go back to bed?

Yeah, I think so.

ok, good

Just one teensy problem...
what?

I might be stuck in my wheelchair now. Cx Whoops!

oh for fucks sake...

are you shitting me?

... Nope.

you're on your own on this one kid

good luck

Okay, that's fair. :)
The next morning finds Katsuki leaving his house 30 minutes earlier than normal, with a singular purpose in mind.

By arriving in downtown 30 minutes earlier than his usual schedule, he was able to make his way to the outpatient hospital with just enough time to see Izuku before heading to the school that was 5 minutes away.

After their conversation last night, Katsuki couldn’t help but feel on edge. Izuku may have let him go back to sleep after 4, but all he’d done for the rest of the night was lay awake and stew.

He knew that it was just a matter of time before Izuku started remembering or questioning things, and while everyone around him was in agreement that they should wait until after his physical recovery to inform him, Katsuki was of the opinion that they wouldn't even have that long.
Not if Izuku kept having dreams like these.

Katsuki found that he was extremely worried.

Not because of guilt or the fear that Izuku might hate or resent him, but because he could only imagine what horrors his broken mind might conjure up.

If Izuku were to remember everything, Katsuki was fully prepared to accept whatever happened next, come what may. It was inevitable. But, if he were to suffer for it and regress, there was no telling what he’d do. That was what worried him most of all.

His singular fear out of all of this, was that Izuku would remember and then shut down altogether.

If he remembered the emotions he’d experienced before being pushed over the metaphorical and literal edge, who was to say he wouldn’t have a second attempt.

Nothing terrified Katsuki more than that thought.

He wanted Izuku to grow past this and make a full recovery, not dwell and sink into a depression so deep he could find no way out.

He had to know if he was alright.

To put his own mind at ease, he needed to see Izuku with his own eyes.

----

“Oh, good morning Bakugou! It’s been a while since we’ve seen you here so early,” an attending RN greets him. She was at her med cart, passing morning medications to anyone that required them.

He vaguely recalled that her name was; Hashira Ino, or something like that. It made no difference to him, really, but Izuku insisted he be polite to the staff here, so he was giving it his best, but he really was shit at remembering people’s names.

“Yeah, it’s been a while,” he agrees, “is Deku awake?”

She grimaces a bit before giving him a rueful smile.

Uh-oh…

Someone was busted.

“Oh he’s awake alright, but if you could. Please talk to him for us about using his call button if he wants to get up. His physical therapist doesn’t want him moving on his own quite yet, but he’s a bit stubborn.”

Katsuki merely shrugs, “look, lady, I’ll give it another shot, I already called him an idiot last night, but when Deku wants something badly enough, there is no force or quirk on this earth that’ll stop him. Just sayin.”

“I kind of feared you’d say that,” she gives him a long-suffering sigh, “but if anyone could sway him, it’d probably be you.”

“I’ll give it a try, but no promises,” he concedes, walking the rest of the way down the hall.

Once he reaches his destination, he doesn't even bother knocking and walks right in, catching Deku
mid-bite, he doesn’t stop until he’s slung an arm around Izuku’s shoulder, catching him in a playful headlock, to which the kid sputters like a rabbit with its foot caught in a beartrap.

“You harp on me for givin’ your nurse's trouble, but then you go and do it yourself, troublemaker? I’m kinda getting mixed signals here,” Katsuki gripes at him, “the hell were you thinking last night, huh?”

Deku simply gives him a non-committal shrug and a not so apologetic smile.

With a barely frustrated growl, Katsuki lets him go, but not before mussing his bed head up even further.

Gone were the days in which he’d treat the kid like glass, but he still exercised extreme restraint regardless.

He knew Deku appreciated this.

“What are you doing up so early?” Izuku signs to him after another bite of his breakfast.

“Some nerd woke me up last night while he was out joyriding,” Katsuki teases him in response.

“Sorry about that! I genuinely couldn’t sleep,” he replies, setting his fork aside.

“I know you couldn’t,” he assures him, “which is why I dropped in, I’m just here to make sure your nurses didn’t hog tie you to your bed.”

This draws a laugh from him, in which Katsuki finds himself grinning in response.

It was then that something stuck out to him, “are you wearing my hoodie?”

“I know not of what you speak,” Izuku signs hastily, clearly avoiding his gaze.

“You lying little shit,” Katsuki barks back with little heat, “guess we’ll have to add theft alongside wheelchair drag racing, what’s next Deku, where do you draw the line?”

He didn’t know why, and he’d never, ever, ever admit it out loud, but seeing Deku in his hoodie did weird things to his stomach that he’d rather not acknowledge.

“I make my own line,” Izuku sasses him back, grinning like the turd he really is. Fucking hell… this kid would be the death of him.

Since when did this brat even get so sassy? Or was it always there and he just never noticed it.

“That’s exactly what a delinquent would say, for shame, I wonder what our dearly beloved All Might would say to such reckless behavior.”

The next look Izuku gives him is akin to 10 kicked puppies in a Sarah McLachlan commercial and he just barely contains his laugh.

“I have seen the light,” was his solemn non-verbal reply.

“There may be hope for you yet,” Katsuki replies equally as solemn, “but seriously, you’re giving that back.”

“No way, finders keepers,” Izuku protests.
“You’re practically drowning in it,” Katsuki deadpans.

“When’s comfy,” Deku argues feebly.

“I know, that’s why I got it, ya punk,” he argues in return.

He found their banter to be… rather entertaining. Was this what arguing without anger was like?

“But, Kaachaaaaan, ‘m cold,” Deku pouts before reaffirming his argument with damning evidence, “and it’s so much better than those itchy hospital blankets.”

“Well, shit. You got me there,” he relents. Not even he was going to deny how shitty those blankets were.

Looking at the time, he sighs belatedly, “Guess it’s time to go show some chumps who the next number 1 pro-hero is gonna be.”

Izuku lights up at that, “what’ll you be doing today?”

“Somethin’ about training with All Might, not sure what he’s going to have us doing, to be honest, but I’ll tell you all about it after I kick ass and take names.”

Izuku gives him an encouraging nod, “G-good l-luck, Kacchan.”

Katsuki’s only response was a grin and a fistbump, to which Deku responded in kind.

----

If an All Might comforter somehow found its way into Izuku’s room the next day, it would remain a modern mystery.

And if a certain oversized hoodie kept getting left behind, well, that was just plain forgetfulness at work.

Katsuki clearly had more important things to remember.

Chapter End Notes

SO. MUCH. CODE.
/dead
(/>o☆)/

ALSO!
I wanted to wish everyone a blessed and safe Halloween/Samhain~
I hope you all have fun out there!
Chapter Summary

“You’re right, it is none of your business,” Bakugou all but barks, before pumping the breaks, “but if he mentioned something like that… he clearly trusts you.”

“Oh?” Shouto’s eyes widen minusculely, but it was enough for the blond to take notice.

Chapter Notes

✖‿✖

;;; Sorry in advance for the whirlwind of emotions!

(You all continue to be the best readers ever! ♥)

Yagi Toshinori wasn’t a simpleton by any means, but JSL was hard.

It wasn’t exactly just the memorization that was a pain in his neck, but the positioning of his hands. Some words felt more unnatural than others and more often than not he’d found himself spelling the words out. A lot. Much to the immense amusement of one Midoriya Izuku.

As he sat here, situated on the edge of the young boy’s bed, several JSL related books spread out between them, he couldn’t help but smile at young Midoriya’s delighted giggles.

He was quickly coming to find that he’d sooner put up with any minor or major inconvenience, if it meant that he’d put a smile on the boy’s face.

And honestly, if he had to learn what was essentially a third language as a means to communicate with him, he’d do it in a heartbeat, it was hardly a hardship at all.

Not if it meant that he could spend some more time getting to know the boy better.

Over the course of the last 8 months, young Midoriya had met milestone after milestone with amazing strides.

The kid honestly never ceased to impress him.

Toshinori was finally beginning to see what the others were talking about, in terms of Midoriya’s personality and unyielding determination. The boy honestly reminded him a lot of himself at times, and if that wasn’t scary enough, their moral compasses were also nigh identical.

“N-no, l-like this,” Midoriya breathes through a laugh, helping the blond reposition his hands.

“Like this?” Toshinori queries, his clumsy hands forming the sign they were practicing.

“Much b-better. You're doing r-really w-well!” Midoriya replies with much encouragement.
Toshinori finds himself smiling brighter.

“Only because I have such a great teacher,” the older man praises him.

“O-oh, y-you think so?” The boy flusters, his cheeks as pink as his petunias, “w-well, in t-that case. I s-should be th-thanking you, cause you teach me a-a lot too.”

“I think you’re giving me more credit than I’m due if I’m being honest,” the older man laughs, scratching the back of his head awkwardly.

“N-not at all,” Midoriya insists.

Toshinori takes some time to consider this, “you’re definitely speaking a lot better these days, kiddo. Those are your own efforts and they are paying off greatly.”

A familiar determination that still haunts Toshinori to this day reignites in young Midoriya's vivid green eyes.

It was the same earnest look he'd been given on that rooftop about a year ago and it shocks him then, because it has been that long.

Young Midoriya was 15 now and he'd missed almost an entire year of his life.

The thought of it left Toshinori aching.

“T-that's bec-cause, I want to g-go back to s-school,” Midoriya expresses to him.

He's mentioned this before, but there was something different about this time. Midoriya seemed self-assured and almost confident in a way he'd never seen before, even back before his fall.

“I w-want to g-get out of t-this b-bed a-and…” he takes a moment to breathe and gather his words.

Talking became harder for him to do the more emotional he became.

The boy had explained it as; him not being able to sort out the words as they came to him at rapid speed. He’d had to filter each one and make sense of them before using them verbally. Often tripping over each one as he went. This, as told by several doctors and Chiyo herself, was an unfortunate side effect and a direct result of his brain trauma.

There was a chance that even with speech therapy, this might never be fully corrected.

Despite this, Toshinori's chest clenches at how hard Midoriya was pushing himself.

To make sure that this wasn't the case.

“I w-want t-to walk and t-talk better. I…” he speaks slower, attempting to better enunciate his words, “I want to go h-home… a-and, I want to go to U-u. A.”

Young Midoriya’s lips tremble and Toshinori could instantly tell he was overcome with emotion.

He was trying his hardest to make himself talk with more than just his hands.

Toshinori takes one of his trembling appendages and gives it a gentle, but firm squeeze.
“I c-can’t do that, i-if I d-don’t try my h-hardest. P-pushing myself is t-the only t-thing I can d-do. I h-have to go b-beyond,” he says with a strained smile.

Toshinori smiles sadly, squeezing his hand tighter in encouragement, finishing U.A.’s well-known moto for him, “plus ultra.”

Midoriya nods twice, his smile becoming more watery.

“I think it’s time then, that we start getting you back into working order,” Toshinori decides.

“How do you mean?” The young boy asks, his earnest eyes glittering curiously.

“I will talk to your mother. I’m sure she’ll be like-minded, but still, I’ll run it by her. I think it’s time we enrolled you back in school,” he relays.

“Really?!” Midoriya shouts and almost bounces out of his bed in sheer excitement.

The sight was heartrending and moving all at once, as though he’d handed this kid the world.

He supposed in some ways, he was doing just that.

“Yes,” he confirms, suddenly blinded by the boys beaming smile, “it won’t be a physical undertaking. I doubt Chiyo would agree to that, seeing as you’re still recovering, but I will broach the subject of putting you through online courses, so you can finish out the remainder of your middle school credits. After that, if Chiyo deems you ready, if your mother agrees and once you’ve passed, we’ll integrate you into a seat in U.A.’s gen-ed studies.”

“I-I… w-wow…” he breathes, in an almost disbelief, "oh my… g-god, I am f-freaking o-out!” Midoriya replies with excitement, visibly vibrating in his seat.

Toshinori laughs, his electric blue eyes crinkling with his ever-growing affection.

This kid was really too much for his heart to handle.

As he sobers, he eyes Midoriya sternly, making the boy tense in his seat.

Midoriya twists and wrings his bed covers in his hands nervously.

“This won’t be easy. You’ll have a lot to cram into that big brain of yours in a short amount of time. Think you can handle it?” Toshinori asks him, just to be sure. He knew the boy knew his own limitations, but he wanted to leave no room for possible doubt.

“A-anything! W-whatever it takes, I-I’ll do it!” Midoriya insists.

“Even if that means you’ll be a semester behind your peers? You very well could be playing ‘catch up’ for a long time.”

“I w-want this… m-more than anyth-thing I-I’ve ever wanted. I…” Midoriya’s face crumples a bit more under his emotions, tears begin to gather in the corners of his forest-like eyes.

“I want th-this e-even more… t-than being a h-hero,” the boy admits softly.

Toshinori is stunned.

In the last 8 months since young Midoriya had begun coming back around, not once did he hear the boy mention this subject again.
To know that Midoriya’s priorities had shifted so much, left the man visibly struck.

Midoriya’s gaze drops to his own lap, once again wringing his blankets nervously.

“T-that u-used to b-be my o-only focus,” he admits quietly.

“But l-looking a-around me, s-s…” he takes a calming breath, “s-seeing so many h-heroes here. R-recovering, t-too. G-gives me h-hope. M-more than anyth-thing… I j-just want to be able t-to live m-my life.”

As the tears begin to cascade down Midoriya’s freckled cheeks, Toshinori’s own fall in kind.

“I k-know the l-likelih-hood… of me b-becoming one n-now is… s-slim,” he laughs a sad resigned breathy laugh.

Toshinori absolutely breaks.

“But more than t-that… i-if… I c-can j-just leave h-here, and… lead a n-normal life. I-I’d be happy… w-with just t-that.”

Against his own reservations, Toshinori gathers the boy in his arms, holding him as close as he can, as comfortably as he could manage.

“You will. Do you understand me? You will, because I know you can. I know it, because I have never seen anyone more determined,” Toshinori insists.

A small strained sob reverberates against his chest as the boy clings to him tightly.

“I believe in you, young Midoriya. You will leave this place and go home. You will go to school and you'll learn so many new things, that you won’t know what to do with yourself,” Toshinori assures him, “and once you’ve done all that, once your body is yours again… you will become a hero. Because I know you can.”

Desperate choked cries tear themselves from the bundle of tremors in his arms and the older man does his best to hold Midoriya together.

Toshinori didn’t know how much time had passed as he held onto the boy as he cried himself out.

His sobs subsiding as Toshinori’s button-up shirt began to dry.

It must’ve been a while, seeing as a nurse had come to check on them.

But as he held this sleeping boy in his arms, all Toshinori knew was…

If it was the last thing he did, Toshinori would make sure this kid had a future.

----

Over the course of the next week, Izuku had had it pretty rough.

But he’d expected no less and welcomed this ‘good stress’ as an old friend.

Between attending both physical and speech therapies, Izuku also had online classes, which his mother wholeheartedly agreed to.

With some help from Kacchan, who had taken these same courses himself, Izuku was set up with his
account and was already about 6 days into his studies.

While the classes themselves weren’t hard, Izuku found that he was definitely a more visual learner.

So learning on his own from a mainly ‘book or online application’ based regimen of assignments, was in short, pretty boring.

It took a lot of the fun out of learning through practical exercises or visual demonstrations.

Thankfully, however, his teacher; whom also happened to have been Kacchan’s teacher, was grateful to be as helpful as he could. He took the time to make videos of his lectures, complete with visual demonstrations, and sent them to Izuku for him to utilize.

This helped him greatly and made the courses feel less robotic.

In being understanding of Izuku’s limitations and current situation, his teacher offered him as much help as he could possibly need, whenever he should need it, and encouraged Izuku to email him if he was ever struggling with a subject.

This, along with the help of Kaachan and Todoroki, made things a heck of a lot easier.

Whenever Kacchan was busy; which was rare, Todoroki was always there to text him or tutor him via video chat. He’d even come in person a handful of times to help him out.

Knowing that he’d had such a wonderful unit of friends and family in his life, this left Izuku with a warmth that he was sure would only continue to grow.

----

One day after school, Todoroki made yet another personal appearance, which was nice as his presence was always a welcome one.

Kacchan, much to Izuku’s encouragement and support, had had therapy that afternoon, so he wasn’t due to make an appearance for a little while, yet.

Having explained this to his heterochromatic friend, Izuku insisted he stay, expressing a desire for them to finally meet.

Izuku could tell that there was some initial hesitancy on Todoroki’s part, but eventually, the boy concedes. Merely stating that whoever was a friend of his, couldn’t be so bad.
I can't believe you agreed to this, I am so excited!

Well, any friend of yours must be a good one, seeing as I can't imagine you'd keep an asshole around.

Weeeeeeell.

This doesn't bode well.

Hahaha, funny you should mention that...

Kacchan is... kind of an acquired taste.
There will be no tasting of anything on my part. thank you.

≧∇≦ I can't even deal with you lol!

...

He may come off as prickly at first, but I promise that he's a good guy.

He's come a long way in this last year, especially since I've known him.

Fine. All judgments will be reserved for after the initial meeting.
This thoroughly warmed and excited Izuku immensely.

From what he could remember of his childhood, he’d only had Kacchan, and sometimes that was more for the worst than it was for the better. He couldn’t recall ever having any ‘actual’ friends.

No one who’d stuck around anyway, most of the ‘friends’ he made took off without a moment's
notice upon finding out that he was quirkless.

This hadn’t been the case with Todoroki, who’d accepted him with grace and ease.

So for his two ‘first’ friends to finally meet, Izuku could hardly contain himself.

In the meantime, while they had to wait, both boys seemed content to simply sit in one another’s company doing their own respective homework.

----

A little bit later, Izuku didn’t know whether he’d regretted this introduction or not.

It was still highly up for debate.

----

It really shouldn’t have come as a surprise to Katsuki.

It honestly shouldn’t have.

It was simply a matter of time before yet another Todoroki turned up on their metaphoric doorstep.

He just never suspected it would be him.

Was his reaction a bit irrational?

Sure.

Would he ever admit that?

Never.

He just didn’t want the lobotomized fuckwits in his classroom to know his business.

Was that so wrong?

According to Izuku… it was maybe a little wrong.

----

The initial introduction went a little like this:

“The fuck?! IcyHot? Who the fuck gave you the right to come here?!”

“Oh hell…” Todoroki eyes Katsuki hard, before setting his sights on Izuku, “Bakugou Katsuki? This fice is Kacchan, are you for real?”

“U-um,” is basically all Izuku could manage to get in at that moment.

Because all hell broke loose.

“The fuck did you just say?! I might be an asshole, but I’m not a fucking dolt, you goddamn Ice Prick. I’m not an angry dog and don’t you fuckin’ call me Kacchan!”

This went on for a while.
Until something worse occurred.

Worse being the unexpected *wrath* of Midoriya Izuku.

---

Izuku promptly chastised the both of them for their behavior; both loudly and thoroughly verbally, as well as gesticulating wildly through sign.

It was so jarring in fact that a nurse came rushing in and threatened to throw the both of them out.

To say the least, this was the *last* thing either of them wanted.

So stubbornly, they were both sitting quietly and rigidly still.

Silently stewing and glaring at one another until Izuku’s ire became too much to bear.

They then proceeded to make nice.

It wasn’t perfect, but they did *try* and set aside their differences.

After a while, it was clear that Izuku appreciated this.

---

After a few hours of shared Izuku-time, both boys decide to bid the mentally and physically exhausted boy goodnight.

And with two solemn promises from both of them; promising not to kill one another; both of them opted to walk together to the train station, at Izuku’s express insistence.

Both decided it was simply better to listen than it was to protest.

---

“You’re so much different around him,” Shouto finds himself saying after a while, “I honestly didn’t expect that.”

It’d be a while before the 8 o’clock train made its way along the tracks, might as well spend it satiating his curiosity.

“Tch… yeah well,” Bakugou starts after a moment of silence, “I’ve known the kid basically since we were in diapers. It comes with the territory. What about you? You’re not exactly *spokesman* of the year either, no one can seem to get a damn word outta you in class. Why would you of all people choose to speak with Deku?”

“I…” Shouto stares at his hands, folded neatly in his lap, ruminating over this, “I’m not so sure myself. He’s… certainly different. I guess you could say that I just feel like I can be *myself* when I’m around him, in a way that I can’t with anyone else. If that makes sense?”

“It does,” Bakugou begrudgingly admits.

“Midoriya mentioned something odd to me in passing… and I realize it’s none of my business, but were you not always friends? I know you’ve known each other a long time, but, I don’t know… he just seemed wistful. It left me wondering.”
“You’re right, it is none of your business,” Bakugou all but barks, before pumping the breaks, “but if he mentioned something like that… he clearly trusts you.”

“Oh?” Shouto’s eyes widen minusculely, but it was enough for the blond to take notice.

“We didn’t have the best relationship. I was… kind of a prick to him,” he relays after a moment.

“So… you were your normal self then?” Shouto replies, to be a shithead.

“Fuck off, Half n’ half bastard!” Bakugou rages.

“You’re not denying it,” Shouto concludes.

“I was… a shittier person before, if you could believe it,” Bakugou confirms.

“I can,” Shouto replies bluntly.

This makes the blond boy bristle to the point where Shouto half expected steam to start spewing from his facial orifices.

“Look, you complete waste of two quirks, you fuckin’ asked okay?! Be lucky I’m even giving you the time of day, not even Shitty Hair can get a response out of me!”

“Fine, please continue, as I am genuinely curious,” Shouto deadpans.

Bakugou all but growls in response. Still silently fuming.

“Before the incident, I was actually pretty damn awful to him,” Bakugou admits.

“I… bullied him a lot, and as a result, everyone around him bullied him too. He was always known as the ‘useless quirkless kid.’ He pretty much had no friends, which is why I’m even telling you this shit, because he obviously considers you one, for whatever fucking reason… I really don’t know.”

Shouto merely shrugs, honestly not knowing that answer himself.

“I am warning you right now, Freezerburn, that if you ever intend on hurting him, I won’t hesitate to fuck you up, you got that? Izuku’s been through enough shit for him to get hurt now,” the blond threatens him fiercely.

Shouto remains silent, taking all of this in.

He knew Midoriya was in an accident of some sort, but didn’t know the nature of it.

He was beginning to get this weird sneaking suspicion that it wasn’t an accident at all.

“You… seem to carry a lot of regret. Is this because you were mean to him, or is it because of something more?”

Bakugou stands abruptly and begins pacing.

Shouto does not place any stock is assuming that this is a good sign.

“Look, if you plan on sticking around, I’ll tell you, but under no circumstances are you to tell Izuku, are we fucking clear? This could hurt him and it’s the last thing any of us wants.”

Looking at Bakugou now, with how clearly stressed out he appeared, Shouto felt like he was about
to open Pandora's box.

“Crystal clear, Midoriya is my friend, I have no intention of leaving anytime soon, or hurting him, you have my word.”

Bakugou exhales sharply through his nose, he paces a bit more until finally reclaiming his seat on the bench next to him.

The train was due to arrive in 10 minutes.

“What really happened to Midoriya? It wasn’t just an accident, was it?” Shouto presses quietly. His own tone, he found, had a measure of its own distress.

“It wasn’t an accident,” Bakugou confirms, “we haven’t told him yet, because we’re afraid of how he’ll react and he doesn’t remember a thing about it. ...at least, not consciously.”

Shouto begins to feel oddly cold. More so than usual.

After a moment of silence stretches between them, Bakugou opens his smartphone and begins to pull up a webpage.

After a moment he passes the device to Shouto, who blinks at him curiously.

Bakugou gestures to the device, but otherwise remains silent.

What Shouto finds next, shakes him to his core.
Of all the things he’d suspected, this was the one he’d feared the most. It was also the one that made the most sense.

It wasn’t often that Shouto became emotional, but if there was ever a moment, it was now.

It was sad, so sad. To know that someone who was becoming a good friend, or rather, his only
friend, had been hurting so much, that he’d resorted to something as extreme as this.

Another thing that shocked Shouto was…

How much he could relate.

They might have grown up in completely different circumstances and environments, but Shouto was no stranger to having thoughts like these himself. Especially where his father was concerned. However, rather than take it out on himself, Shouto chose to shut people out and made it his own personal mission to prove to his abusive prick of a father, that he didn’t need him.

That he could make his own way in life, without his power.

While Shouto could relate to that feeling of hopelessness, that was where their similarities ended.

He didn’t know what it was like to be quirkless or bullied by his peers.

But he did know what it was like to be beaten down and used for his unfortunate dual powers.

In that regard, both Midoriya and himself were similar, but also starkly different.

But at the end of the day, he felt that he could understand his friend even more.

“I… never would have suspected this, not with how…” Shouto trails off.

“Not with how chipper, or insanely motivated he is?” Bakugou finishes his trail of thought, “yeah… I didn’t suspect it myself. And I was there. How fucked up is that? I was supposed to be someone he could count on and I fucked it all up. By being such an asshole. Imagine being one of the reasons he jumped…”

Shouto’s eyes definitely widen now.

As he looked at Bakugou and analyzed him, he couldn’t fit the pieces together.

Not after today.

The Bakugou Katsuki he knew at school was a dick, yes, but he was also oddly… not one at the same time. Was he hard to like? Certainly so. But did he garner a certain amount of respect? In ways, he could. He was no one’s knight in shining armor. Not by a long shot.

But after seeing him interact with Midoriya today.

After hearing so many stories from Midoriya himself about his friend Kacchan, who brought him plants to make him happy, and helped him learn JSL by learning it with him, and helped him walk, or texted him when he had nightmares. After hearing stories about that person, who had apparently been at Midoriya's bedside since day one, relentlessly watching over him after the incident.

Shouto couldn’t fathom it.

It was as if the Bakugou he knew and the one who was Midoriya’s friend were two different people.

And to know that he’d been worse?

That he had had a part in instigating one of the most pivotal moments in Midoriya’s life?

Shouto didn’t know how to feel about that.
Even without this knowledge…

Even if Izuku didn’t remember attempting to take his own life.

Bakugou was incredibly and undeniably shitty to him.

For all intents and purposes, Midoriya would be well within his rights to hate him.

So why not?

How could he forgive him so easily?

What made a person become so… selfless?

Why was it so hard for Shouto himself to move on from the things and people that had wronged him?

What was the difference?

“Look,” Bakugou starts, as Shouto’s bi-colored gaze meets his crimson glare, “I know what you’re probably thinking… why should someone as good as Deku, even give me the time of day? To be honest, I don’t even know the answer myself. He’s always been that way. Stupidly selfless, utterly forgiving. I know I don’t deserve it, but the difference between me now and me then, is that I’m actually trying to do my best to deserve it. Because I know I fucking don’t. So… whatever judgments you have, you can shove ‘em up your ass. I’m not going anywhere.”

Shouto merely gapes at him.

“I would go to the ends of the earth, heaven, hell, or whatever the fuck there is that exists if it meant I could do right by him. And I’m going to do it no matter what, you got that??”

“I get it,” Shouto admits, “I can’t say I like it, but I get it. I don’t even know how, but… I can respect that.”

“Good. Because if you’re gonna be hanging around, we might as well get fuckin’ used to each other, but if you tell a single soul in our classroom, what you were told, or what you saw here. I will personally take the biggest shit on your lawn and light it on fire. Am I clear?”

Ugh... must he always be so vulgar?

Shouto couldn’t understand how someone as innocent as Midoriya Izuku got stuck with a brute like Bakugou Katsuki as a best friend, but he guessed he could stick around and find out.

Someone had to keep Midoriya sane, after all.

Chapter End Notes

HERE IS A CUTE YOUTUBE VIDEO OF HAPPY PUPPIES TO SAVE YOU FROM YOUR EMOTIONS.

https://youtu.be/gvfDAcKzCco
Ashido and Sero burst into a fit of laughter.

“First of all, rude. Second of all, shut up and let me tell you already,” Denki gripes.

“Right, yes, of course, proceed,” Ashido acquiesces, tacking on a quick, “with the details of your fake hangout.”

Hello my lovelies, sorry it took a bit longer to update this time around. I recently had all four of my wisdom teeth pulled at one time. So I was, to say the least... very high on the medications they gave me lol.
It still hurts like a bitch, but I am powering through~ xD

If you find any errors in this chapter, that I might have missed, please let me know!
Again, I was pretty stoned while writing this lmao.

Thank you so much for your continued encouragement~
All of you are the best readers in the world!

“Guys! Guys! … and Girl, dude, just hear me out, okay!?” Denki whispers loudly into their circle.

“What?” Sero replies around a mouthful of rice.

“Have you all noticed that the intensity of Bakubro’s glares have gotten particularly toasty this last week?” Denki informs them with a feral grin.

Kirishima frowns a bit, considering this, “you do have a point. I wonder what pissed him off?”

“Isn’t he always pissed off in one way or another? I think you blockheads are just reaching at this point,” Ashido comments blandly.

She’d apparently only had a taste for ‘fresh’ gossip.

Lucky for her, Denki had it ripe from the vine.

“Yes, he does have a general disdain for pretty much everything and everyone always, but! But, my dear bros and broette, his sights are set on someone, in particular, this time!”

Ashido’s bored gaze instantly becomes more invested, “okay, spill, who is it?”

All of them hover in closer together at their lunch table.
Denki sniggers to himself like a cat who caught the canary, putting a hand to the side of his mouth conspiratorially, “It’s Todoroki!” He again, whispers loudly.

“For real,” Sero responds with suspended disbelief, “the guy doesn’t even talk, how could he have pissed Bakugou off?”

“Oh ye of little faith,” Denki laments, feigning a sigh with the back of his palm against his forehead. He had a tiny flair for the dramatics.

He was sure Aoyama would approve.

His feral grin returns full force, “I happen to have a credible source!”

“What?!” Ashido exclaims, “what are you waiting for, spill the beans Kami!”

Kirishima looks decidedly skeptical, “and just who is this supposed ‘source’ dude? I thought we agreed that spying on him was off the table?”

“More like you agreed that it was off the table,” Denki reminds.

Sero all but spits out his cola, “wait you guys spied on him?”

Kirishima at least has the decency to look abashed, “well, not… technically? It was more of a happenstance!”

Ashido gives his arm a pointed whack, before hissing lightly and shaking out the pain, “Dude! I thought we were in ‘Operation BakuSquad’ together! What gives?!”

“We just happened to be out and around and saw him, ok?” Kirishima feebly attempts to deflect any more questions from their pink alien-esque friend.

Ashido pouts in her seat, so Denki decides to drop a lure into the water.

“Yeah, we only saw him walking into a flower shop, no big deal,” he shrugs casually.

“A freaking flower shop!? When was this?! Are you kidding me?” She whacks Kirishima’s arm yet again, in protest, “details guys! Why’re you holding out on me?”

“He even walked out with a small tree,” Denki relays belatedly, analyzing his fingernails nonchalantly.

“DUDE,” Kirishima protests, “you’re such a dick!”

“I’m only cluing our dear friends in on some juicy Baku-Gossip,” he replies innocently.

“Yeah, well you don’t have to be an unmanly douche about it, you’ve been spending too much time around that prick, Mineta,” Kirishima gripes sourly.

Denki frowns.

“Well, if you guys would rather not know, I guess I’ll keep it to myself.”

“Whaaa, Kiri come on! At least let him tell us!” Ashido pleads, giving the redhead a particularly strong dose of puppy eyes.

Kirishima pouts, “Fine, but after this, we drop it, ok? It’s not cool to go digging in his business.”
Sero sighs to himself resigning himself to the idiocy of his friends, “who was your source?”

Denki finds himself grinning mischievously, “Jiro!”

“I call bullshit,” Kirishima retorts with a disappointed frown.

“Jiro?” Ashido questions, equally just as skeptical, “there’s no way she’d get involved in anything so petty. Heck, she roasts you, like daily.”

“No, I’m serious, guys!” Denki protests, “for real, like no joke! I was hanging out with her when it happened!”

“Hanging out?” Sero responds, doubtfully.

Geez, some friends these guys were.

“Yes, hanging out, that is a thing friends do!” Denki retorts, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Sounds fake, but okay,” Ashido laughs, leaning back in her seat.

“Now who are the ones being dicks,” Denki pouts, gesturing to them wildly.

“Hey man, we’re just calling it like we see it, Jiro is honestly too good for a pervert like you to casually hang out with,” Sero concludes with a laugh.

“Hey! That’s so rude!” The blond protests, “I am totally ‘hangout’ worthy material.”

“Whatver you say, bolts-for-brains,” Ashido grins, patting Denki on the head.

“Okay haters, you’ll eat those words. Why not ask her yourself?” Denki crosses his arms over his chest once more, confidently.

“Fine, I will! But first, tell us what she told you, so we can compare notes,” the pink-toned girl retorts. Taking a confident stance of her own.

“Yeah, man, what’d she say?” Kirishima presses.

“Okay, so last week, Jiro and I were paired up for an assignment,” Denki begins to explain.

“Pff, that’s mandatory, not a hangout,” Kirishima laughs, “Mr. Aizawa might as well have shackled her to you.”

Ashido and Sero burst into a fit of laughter.

“First of all, rude. Second of all, shut up and let me tell you already,” Denki gripes.

“Right, yes, of course, proceed,” Ashido acquiesces, tacking on a quick, “with the details of your fake hangout.”

“Anyway,” Denki huffs, “we were in the middle of working on our assignment when Jiro overheard Bakubro grumbling. And you know how her hearing is, it’s basically supersonic!”

“We are aware,” Sero replies with dubiety.

“Anyway, I could tell she became distracted by whatever he grumbled, because then she rubbernecked, looking directly at Todoroki. When I asked her what was up, she’d said that
something must have crawled up Bakugou’s ass and died, because he was really salty.”

“He’s always salty, that proves literally nothing, man,” Kirishima replies doubtfully.

“Did you happen to ask her what Bakugou grumbled? Cause… this is losing my interest fast,” Sero shrugs.

“Yes, I asked! So anyway, I asked her what he’d said that made him sound saltier than usual and she goes, ‘Oh he said something about Todoroki being a shitty half ‘n half bastard’ and then she shrugged and went back to work,” Denki replies with finality, a confident grin in place.

“Dude, he always calls him ‘half and half’ or something equally rude,” Kirishima counters.

“Oh come on guys!” Denki whines, “Clearly you had to have noticed all of those sour glares, those things could melt tungsten!”

“Kind of surprised you know what tungsten even is, but okay, say we believe you, why him?” Sero teases.

Denki takes a deep breath.

And promptly gives them a full body shrug.

“Dunno?”

Ashido slams her head down onto the lunch table in exasperation, “are you for real, right now? Ughhhhh.”

“Heh, told ya he was full of it,” Kirishima grins.

“But guuys, I don’t know why he’s pissy, I just know that he is!”

“Can we just give this a rest already? My lunch is getting cold,” Sero gripes.

“Hey, fuckwits,” Denki and everyone at their table jump in surprise, cold chills running up each of their spines.

“Whisper a little fucking louder, why don’tcha, I don’t think the entire cafeteria heard you clearly!” Bakugou snaps before skulking out of the cafeteria haughtily.

“Well, not gonna say I told ya so, but… I told ya so,” Kirishima says quickly, before jumping up and jogging after their hot-headed work in progress.

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As soon as Katsuki was out of the cafeteria, he immediately heads down the hall intent on heading to the campus garden.

He supposed that after having dealt with plants over the past few months, he much preferred them to people. As he found a kind of solace in being in a place that had many of them. They also served as a reminder; of a certain forest haired boy, who in some way, always seemed to be on his mind.

At that thought, he slows his pace and shoots him a text.
is murder justified if a person or group of people are really irritating, cause...

Oh boy, what happened?

bunch'a nosy assholes, that's what

I'm guessing this has to do with that group of friends that keep following you around?

they can't seem to take a fucking hint
“Bakugou! Hey, Bakugou, wait up!” Comes one such familiar, yet irritating voice.

Katsuki finds himself sighing before grumbling to himself.

Just fucking great.
Looks like Deku would be no help.

Goddamnit.

Katsuki, against his better judgment, finds himself stopping. Turning on his heel, he pivots and begins glaring pointedly in the redhead’s direction.

After a moment the other boy was a few feet in front of him, his chest heaving ever so slightly.
Did the dumbass run after him, or what?

“The fuck do you want, Shitty Hair?”

Katsuki’s leer zero’s in on him as Shitty Hair touches his spikes as though feeling self-conscious.

“Hey, man,” the redhead replies after a moment, “I just wanted to apologise for the others. They can be a pretty excitable bunch,” he replies with an awkward laugh, rubbing the back of his neck.

“And you are discluded from this how?” Katsuki drawls testily.

“Oh, well… I guess no matter how you slice it, I was also pretty ‘involved’ in that mess, but I did not encourage it, I swear,” he makes a show of crossing his heart, “I keep telling them to stop bugging you…”

“Mhm,” Katsuki mutters, in clear disbelief.

“I’m really sorry, dude,” Shitty Hair tries again, apologetically, ”on behalf of all of us, we really haven’t been going about this in the right way.”

“Going about what exactly? Because if your goal was to annoy the ever living shit out of me, you’ve thoroughly succeeded. Don’t think I haven’t noticed you shit heads creeping around or keeping tabs on me,” Katsuki barks in response.

“Honestly,” Shitty Hair, starts, both arms flopping loosely at his at his sides, “we were just curious is all, we think you’re a pretty cool dude and we’d be down to hang out with you, if you wanted? We’ve been trying to come up with ways to ask, but… they always kind of backfired.”

Katsuki considers this. Quietly observing the other boy, who looked decidedly nervous.

He knew he was intimidating, but shit… did the kid really have to shake like an awkward teacup chihuahua?

“Is that what you’ve been doing this entire time? Huh… could’a fooled me,” Katsuki retorts, folding his arms across his chest tersely, leaning against the hallway wall.

It’s at this point that he feels Deku blowing up his phone and pulls it out, holding out a finger to Shitty Hair.

He was a dick, but he wasn’t a rude one.

At least, not all the time.

He huffs at the continual messages, being sent one by one.
“Count your lucky fuckin’ stars, Shitty Hair… cause it’s by the grace and persistence of another that I am even fucking considering this horseshit.”

The other boy’s eyes widen before his entire body perks up in excitement, “wait, really?”

“Did I stutter?” Katsuki frowns in resignation.

“Sweet!” He fist-pumps the air like a dork, “uh... lunch is pretty much over, but how about we talk more after class?” Shitty Hair asks.
“Whatever, just as long as you make it quick. I got somewhere to be,” Katsuki concedes, his hands flopping at his sides in defeat.

“Great!” Kiri-whatever-his-name-was grins.

“But! Tell all of your annoying friends,” Katsuki interjects, before the kid gets too ahead of himself, “your days of following me around and poking your noses into my business are over, got it? If I want to fuckin’ run things by you, I will, on my terms, got it?”

“Yeah,” Shitty Hair affirms, looking at him sincerely, “you got it, dude!”

Deku better fucking know what he was making him get himself into.

----

Just as they begin their trek back toward class, pandemonium unleashes.

A shrill bell-like alarm sounds, causing Shitty Hair to jump and stare at Katsuki in wide-eyed confusion.

“Dude, what the hell is that?” He attempts to call out over the din.

Before Katsuki could even formulate a response, an answer came from above, via intercom.

“**WARNING, LEVEL 3 SECURITY BREACH. ALL STUDENTS PLEASE EVACUATE THE BUILDING IN AN ORDERLY FASHION.**”

Both boys only have a moment to eye one another in confusion before all hell broke loose.

In an instant, the halls are flooded with panicked students, cutting the both of them off in their haste to escape.

Each and every one of them, screaming and pushing and shoving.

Katsuki’s breath catches in his throat as he’s surrounded by hundreds of writhing bodies, each one more panicked than the last.

There were 3 things Katsuki hated most and in order those were: people grabbing/touching/pushing him, loud noises, and screaming. In a matter of seconds, a dread he hadn’t felt in a long time surges through him.

“**WARNING, LEVEL 3 SECURITY BREACH. ALL STUDENTS PLEASE EVACUATE THE BUILDING IN AN ORDERLY FASHION.**”

Anxiety hits him like a wall of waves as he finds his body beginning to react violently.

Frustration and anger fill him with each shove he receives causing his palms to sizzle and spark, “ALL OF YOU IDIOTS GET THE HELL OFF OF ME!” He shouts into the sea of screams.

“Bakugou!” Kiri-what’s-his-name calls out against the maelstrom of bodies, reaching his hands out high above him.

Katsuki finds himself being forced in his direction like a magnet, for once grateful for his distraction.

At this point, the blond idiot with the lightning bolt in his hair manages to join up with them.
The three of them continue to try and stave off the hoard, only to end up smashed together and forced into the plexiglass windows.

“Everyone! Stop freaking out!” Shitty Hair yells out in a desperate attempt at calming the moving mass that was their student body.

“Kirishima! Kaminari!” An unknown voice calls out from the crowd.

This was seriously fucking pathetic!

They were heroes in training, dammit!

Why in the hell was everyone reacting this way?

This could have been a fucking drill for all they knew.

With each passing second, Katsuki found that his nerves were becoming more and more amped up.

Something needed to happen soon.

Any second now, he was going to blow.

Suddenly; as though his prayers had been answered, out of nowhere, the nerdy asshole with the glasses was floating high up above everyone else. Using the engines in his legs to propel himself through the air.

In seconds the guy was taking control of the situation.

“LISTEN UP EVERYTHING IS OKAY! IT’S JUST THE MEDIA OUTSIDE! THERE’S ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT! EVERYTHING’S FINE, WE ARE U.A. STUDENTS, WE NEED TO REMAIN CALM AND PROVE THAT WE ARE THE BEST OF THE BEST!”

And soon the ensuing panic ceased.

Much to Katsuki’s own relief.

He might’ve even gained a bit more respect for Shitty Glasses.

Not that he’d ever mention it.

----

When it was later revealed that it was the Media who had breached their supposedly impenetrable asylum, Katsuki had half a mind to punch All Might in the face, again.

He knew it wasn’t ‘technically’ the man’s fault, but just knowing that he was partially to blame for that riot earlier, really pissed Katsuki and his frayed nerves off.

Seriously…

What a fucking circus.

Those insufferable Media bogarts had no fucking souls.

Breaking into a secure school, just to drag a statement out of a pro-hero who happened to work
there?

Had they no fucking shame?

Thankfully, Mr. Aizawa, Present Mic, and the police handled the situation.

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2:00 PM

I just saw the news! D:

I can't believe the media actually broke into U.A.! They are in a ton of trouble.

D

Are you okay?

yeah, i'm good. don't worry.

it was mostly just irritating. everyone pretty much freaked out and flooded the halls.

i'll tell you more later, ok?

D

Okay!
```

2:02 PM
Katsuki pockets his phone as Mr. Aizawa walks into the room.

“Okay everyone, settle down!” Mr. Aizawa drones, taking control of their still frazzled classroom. “The unfortunate side to being a pro-hero is that these things happen, security breaches aren’t all that abnormal. That, however, doesn’t mean that this school won’t ensure your safety, put those fears of yours to bed. We have work to discuss.”

It was weird not seeing Mr. Aizawa in his trademark yellow sleeping bag after lunch.

It just went to show that even if security breaches were ‘common’ as he said, the faculty weren’t exactly expecting it, thus forcing some of the staff to remain on guard.

Katsuki didn’t know what to make of this.

“Now,” Mr. Aizawa continues, “tomorrow’s training is going to be a little different. All of you will be assigned to three instructors. Myself, All Might, and another faculty member will all be keeping tabs on you.”

“Sir! What kind of training is this?” Tape Arms calls out over the sound of curious murmurs.

“We will be working on Rescue Training,” Mr. Aizawa answers, “you’ll be dealing with natural disasters, shipwrecks, stuff like that. Things that each would-be pro needs experience in.”

“Disasters, huh? Sounds like we’re in for a big work out,” the Pikachu reject comments.

“Totally!” The alien weirdo exclaims.

Katsuki shares a brief look with IcyHot, who only shrugs minutely.

Even after their talk, Todoroki Shouto was still a man of little words.

Not that Katsuki was complaining.

The less he had to deal with the guy, the better.

“Real hero stuff!” Kiri-whatever says with excitement, “this is what separates the real men from the boys, I’m shaking with excitement!”

Katsuki rolls his eyes.

“Hang on guys, I’m not finished yet,” Mr. Aizawa reminds them, “this training is going to be taking place at an off-campus facility, what you wear here is strictly up to you. I know you’re all excited about costumes, but keep in mind that what you wear could inhibit your movements.”

Katsuki finally finds himself grinning.

Hell. Fucking. Yes.

This training was definitely going to give him ample time to practice with his gauntlets.

“This training takes place tomorrow, so remember to get here bright and early. We’ll be taking a bus to get there, that is all, class dismissed,” Mr. Aizawa adds belatedly.

There was no way in hell that he’d be late for this.
Deku’s viridian eyes glitter and gleam with about as much excitement as Katsuki’s own crimson do.

“R-real, a-actual, hero t-training! T-that is SO cool!”

“I know! I can’t wait to blow shit up!” Katsuki replies with equal excitement.

“W-whoa, h-hey, now…” he gestures placatingly with his hands, “d-don’t forg-get the object-tive, Kacchan,” This is a rescue exercise, after all, try focusing your efforts on less ‘explodey’ things,” he finishes in sign.

“But, I’m all about ‘explodey’ things, that’s kind of my entire quirk, ya know?” Katsuki grumbles a small pout definitely not forming.

“Y-yes, but!” Izuku gestures to Katsuki’s head. “T-that, w-will come in h-handy.” If you time your explosions just right, I bet you could use them to clear debris or make an escape route. I know you’re smart, so use that head of yours too!” He replies, switching to sign.

Katsuki considers this for a moment.

He was brash.

He lashed out a lot.

He acted on impulse.

He knew his faults.

However, if there was anything the last 10 months in therapy taught him, it was that using his head and rationalizing things actually did have benefits.

His quirk was destructive, he knew this.

It was probably better suited to a villain, but that was never going to happen.

So maybe Deku had a point?

The kid did basically know everything there was to know about quirks and Kastuki was about 100% sure, he’d cataloged much more about his quirk than anyone else’s.

“What did you have in mind?” Katsuki asks after a moment more of consideration.

How a kid in a wheelchair could move so fast would forever astound him.

Izuku, pretty much out of nowhere, conjures up one of his new composition notebooks and opens it up to a specific page.

“G-glad you asked,” Izuku replies with a grin of his own.
Chapter Summary

Even his hands were trembling at this point.

Fuck.

This was bad.

He had to fix this fast.

Chapter Notes

Sorry, it's been a moment since I've updated. It's been a rather hard week.
2 of some of my favorite residents passed away earlier this week, at the Nursing and Rehabilitation Center I work at.
Ms. Sheneka was barely hanging on and Ms. Mildred went suddenly, despite having no prior health conditions. I miss them both dearly, I usually used my writing to vent, but this chapter was extremely difficult for me to write. I hope to honor them both by providing the best aide to my surviving residents as possible.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

With Izuku now able to wheel himself around more freely, both boys decided to meet in the garden that morning to go over some of their game plan.

For once, it was pretty refreshing to have someone to really talk-shop with.

In all the years Katsuki had spent avoiding everything involving quirks where Izuku was concerned, he’d never once stopped to consider how insightful he could be. The realization that all their shared years had pretty much gone to waste was disheartening, but at least the forested boy was still happy and willing to help him.

That was honestly much more than he could ever have expected or asked for.

It was honestly still surprising to Katsuki how far they had come in such a short amount of time.

In the past, both boys couldn’t even be in the same room by themselves for longer than 5 minutes without fighting.

Now they were meeting in a hospital garden at 6 am just to talk about potential battle and rescue strategies.

It was strange how inseparable they’d become.

Strange, but also oddly cherished.
The only thing Katsuki regretted now, was all the time they’d lost, in which they’d could have spent together, just like this.

But there was no room for regrets now, not when they had a second chance.

After having spent most of his time in a hospital gown, it was strange to see Izuku in regular clothes, but as the younger boy wheeled himself down the ramp and into the courtyard, Katsuki decided that this was a much better look for him.

It was visual proof that he was getting better every day.

“You look warm,” Katsuki teases him as Izuku rolls to a stop in front of him.

The boy, who was donned in a pair of dark-wash jeans, red winter boots, and Katsuki’s hoodie, merely sticks his tongue out in defiance.

“You’ll have to pry this thing from my cold dead hands,” Izuku signs to him, grinning all the while.

Katsuki really didn’t care for the kid’s newfound ‘gallows humor,’ so he flips him off, “that sign universal enough for ya?”

“I dunno, c-can I get a t-translation?” Izuku retorts, both verbally and in sign.

“You’re insufferable, how are we even friends?” Katsuki chides him, trying and failing at withholding a grin.

“G-good question,” Izuku laughs, shrugging in response.

“Let’s just get this over with brainiac. I need to pick that jumbo-sized walnut of yours.”

“I w-will have you k-know, that I have a p-perfectly n-normal sized w-walnut, thank you,” Izuku protests.

“Whatever makes you feel better,” Katsuki counters with a smirk.

He comes up from behind him and takes hold of the wheelchair’s handles.

With a push, they were off, walking and rolling along the pavement to the gate of the hospital garden.

“How long do w-we have?” Izuku queries after a moment.

Despite the cold, he seemed to be enjoying the scenery as they walked by; as it was only recently that he was able to come out here without any risks involved.

That alone was further proof that Izuku was getting better and the thought warmed something inside of Katsuki. It fanned that flame of hope that’d reignited 8 months ago.

Once they made it to the gate, Katsuki holds it open, allowing Izuku to roll himself inside.

“’Bout 30 minutes. Mr. Aizawa wants us there in time to catch the bus, because the place we’re going is off campus,” the blond explains, taking a seat on the edge of a bench, where Izuku can roll up beside him.

Which he does.
They settle in almost shoulder to shoulder, like two birds sharing a roost.

Izuku nods slowly, “y-you’re so lucky, r-rescue training, not o-only w-with E-eraser Head, but All M-might, too. That’s… I-like a dream come true. W-what are they like?”

Katsuki contemplates this for a moment.

He knew All Might personally and not just as his teacher, but as himself, the man behind the facade, Yagi Toshinori.

At times, they clashed and Katsuki didn’t have that high of an opinion of him, but that was more from a personal standpoint and his own opinion at play. Mr. Yagi was actually quite the same, but also wholly different while at school.

Katsuki could tell that teaching was definitely something he was new at. However, it was in these moments that Katsuki could admit that he was everything he’d ever imagined All Might being like, as a child.

In short, he was really fucking cool.

He hated to admit it, but it was the truth.

All Might was definitely everything he lived up to.

The man was larger than life.

“All Might is every bit as awesome as we thought he was and maybe more,” Katsuki admits, looking into Izuku’s shiny-eyed gaze, “but, he kinda sucks as a teacher at times. You can totally tell he’s new to it, with the way he fumbles around or pushes us to do insane shit. He even carries a book around with him in his back pocket, called ‘Teaching For Dummies,’ but he’s legit. And he tries hard.”

“W-wow, t-that is am-a—” Amazing!” Izuku gesticulates wildly, Katsuki could tell that he was excited seeing as he lost total control of his words. He looked just like he did when they were kids, bright-eyed and excitable. The blond was honestly glad to be seeing this side of him again.

Katsuki shrugs, “I guess, but if you want to know which of the two is really amazing, it’s Mr. Aizawa. Hands down.”

“No kidding? What is Eraser Head like in person? He’s the only hero I haven’t been able to keep very many tabs on, he’s really cool, but he’s super elusive too, he usually works under deep cover so the fact that he’s teaching at U.A. is incredible!” He signs rapidly, which Katsuki knew was akin to his old mumbling, the kid just keeps going and going, faster than Katsuki could keep up with, so he reaches out and smacks his hands.

“W-wha?” Izuku blinks.

“I couldn’t keep up with a damn word you were saying, chill out motormouth,” Katsuki gripes.

“O-oh, s-sorry, Kacchan,” he laughs awkwardly, giving him an apologetic smile.

“Mr. Aizawa doesn’t really tell us much about himself, not from a personal standpoint. He’s kind of a dick at times, he’s really lazy and takes naps during class, and he constantly looks like he’s got a hangover from hell, but he’s admittedly a pretty great fucking teacher. He really takes into consideration our weaknesses and strengths and teaches us how to manage them both. Even though he doesn’t seem like it at first, Mr. Aizawa definitely knows what he’s doing.”
“W-wow, that all s-sounds am-mazing…” Izuku stares at his lap, his smile almost turns rueful, “I wish I c-could go with you and s-see you all i-in a-action,” he admits.

Katsuki frowns.

“If it’s any consolation, I’d sooner trade you in for any of the other rejects I got lumped w-wit-h,” he gets cut off by a sudden jab from a knobby elbow, “hey! What was that for!?”

“Being a dick,” Izuku huffs, “y-you really ought to be n-nicer to your t-teammates.”

“That’s the thing,” Katsuki retorts, “I don’t consider them teammates, let alone friends. They’re just people I’m forced to interact with.”

Izuku falls silent.

His expression sobers.

Growing into something that really doesn’t sit well with Katsuki.

“...It’s e-exactly that a-atti-tude, that made it so h-hard for us to be friends,” Izuku says quietly.

It felt as though a sheet of ice, much cooler than the December air, cascaded on top of him.

Izuku never brought up their past.

Not once.

He never even made mention of their fights.

Or of Katsuki’s own mistreatment of him.

He never breathed a word of it.

Katsuki knew it was there.

It didn’t just go away.

It was always underlying.

Lying in wait like Spring, to peak out of the snow.

“I-Izuku, it’s not like that, it’s different with us,” Katsuki stammers; implores.

“How?” Izuku replies simply.

His expression still just as unreadable as it was before.

This was so much worse than if he were mad at him.

His silence.

His calmness.

It sat like something eerie in Katsuki’s bones.

“It… just is,” Katsuki attempts to explain.
“It never u-used t-to be,” Izuku replies again, this time seemingly frustrated with himself, as he signs along, “if anything… w-we were w-w…. We…” *We were worse*” he breathes, calming himself.

Even his hands were trembling at this point.

Fuck.

This was bad.

He had to fix this fast.

Izuku heaves a sigh and Katsuki instantly knows he feels defeated by himself.

He switches to sign completely.

“*Look. Maybe I’m being unfair. You’ve made a crap ton of effort to better yourself, so I don’t want to throw that in your face. But we weren’t so different before. At one point, I was no better to you than they are to you now,*” he pauses.

Katsuki swallows around the lump in his throat.

It wasn’t a lie.

They were *way* worse.

“...I j-just… w-worry about you, Katsuki,” Izuku frowns.

Katsuki’s crimson eyes widen at that.

Izuku never called him by his first name.

Not since they were very young.

“W-we may be c-close n-now… but I’m not t-there. I… I c-can’t have y-your back. Y-your c-cl…” he huffs in frustration.

*Your classmates, for better or worse, are your team. If you hope to become any type of hero, you have to learn to work with them and treat them like people. Because at the end of the day, whether you are rescuing or saving people, you have to be able to work together. Communication is key when it comes to emergency situations.*” He finishes in sign.

Izuku rolls around closer to him, lining them up knee to knee and reaches out, socking him lightly on the arm, which catches Katsuki off guard.

“You’re b-better th-than that,” he says with finality.

Katsuki sits there for a moment, reeling at everything that just transpired.

Taking a moment to let everything sink in, he takes note of how confident Izuku has become in some ways.

The kid who was at one point, so twitchy around him, that he’d go out of his way to avoid eye contact, just scolded him, punched him in the arm, and told him he was better than that.

Was he *really* though?
“I’m sorry…” Katsuki says after a while.

“It’s okay,” Izuku affirms.

“Not… about them. I mean, I will work with them, but… I meant-”

“I know,” Izuku confirms as he rests a hand on his shoulder, “I-i… I know w-what you meant.”

Katsuki is quiet for a moment, eyeing Izuku in a way he never had before.

Under a new light.

“I’ll f-forgive you… for b-being a douche, if you l-let me keep your s-sweater,” Izuku both signs and verbalizes, that painfully optimistic grin back in place.

Katsuki sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“I have half a mind to roll you into the damn pond,” he retorts, his threat teasing.

“Y-you w-wouldn’t dare,” Izuku challenges with a grin.

Katsuki, quick as a cat, jumps to his feet and grabs the armrests of Izuku’s wheelchair and gives him a firm push backward.

“K-KACCHAN,” Izuku pretty much squeals, clinging to his arms, “N-NO No! I y-yield!”

Both of them simply stare at one another as Katsuki looms over him.

They are nearly forehead to forehead when they crack and dissolve into laughter.

“Th-this is N-NOT h-how you go about… r-rescue training,” Izuku manages to get out between his laughs.

“Well shit… you better start explaining, ‘cause I’ve only got 5 minutes,” Katsuki grins.

They were far from perfect.

But for now, this was the best they could be.

----

Katsuki was almost reluctant to leave Izuku after their little spat.

If he could call it that?

He honestly didn’t know what that was.

It wasn’t a fight, that much was for sure.

But it was uncomfortable.

They may have resolved things without fists for the first time ever, but it still didn’t sit right with him.

It didn’t feel ‘finished.’ The blond didn’t think it ever would, really.

Not with all the things he had to tell him. A simple ‘sorry’ wasn’t going to fix or take back the things he’d done.
He knew Izuku knew that too, but the kid was far too forgiving for his own good.

A million stolen hoodies could never resolve their issues.

Katsuki brooded over this quietly on the bus, trying to ignore the background noise and conversations around him.

That is, until Shitty Hair decided to open his damn mouth.

He’d decided to sit in the window seat next to Ears, seeing as she was the least likely to annoy him, but alas, the annoyances came rolling in anyway.

Apparently, they’d been talking about their quirks and got on the subject of who was most likely to have pro-quirks.

“Well, if anyone in our class have pro-quirks, it’s definitely Todoroki and Bakugou!” Shitty Hair says with enthusiasm.

This piques Katsuki’s attention, as he draws his chin from its perch against his fist.

Although, nothing grabs his attention more than when Frogger responds with: “Sure, but Bakugou’s always angry, so he’ll never be that popular.”

Katsuki bristles at that and like a dormant volcano, that age-old fight response of his rears its ugly head again as he springs up in his seat, effective startling Ears, who didn’t seem to have been paying attention.

“What’d you say? I’LL KICK YOUR ASS!” He seethes.

“You see?” Frogger replies to the Sugar kid next to her.

“Ya’know, we basically just met you, like two months ago, but it’s kinda telling that we know your personality is basically flaming crap mixed with garbage,” the Pikachu reject decides to chime in.

This effectively makes Katsuki lose his shit.

“Grrr… YOU’RE GOING TO REGRET THE DAY YOU APPLIED TO THIS SCHOOL, YOU LOSER! I’LL KILL YOU!”

“Whoa man, chill!” Shitty Hair tries to placate him.

“Enough! We as a class need to encourage each other!” Glasses replies sternly.

“YEAH? I’M GONNA ENCOURAGE THIS DUMBASS TO EXPLODE!” Katsuki rages.

“What’d you say? Brave dude,” the yellow douchebag continues to antagonize him.

“FUCK YOU, SPARKY,” Katsuki barks in return.

“That’s enough, both of you apologize!” Glasses interjects.

“Sure! If he goes first!” Sparky snarks.

“LIKE HELL I WILL!” Came Katsuki’s outraged retort.

“HEY, HEY, Stop messing around,” Mr. Aizawa interjects, effectively shutting all of them up,
“we’re here.”

A chorus of apologies chimes all around, as Katsuki flops back into his seat grumbling all the while.

Once the bus slows, it begins to pull down a long paved drive. As it breaks past a barrier of trees, a giant glass dome could be seen.

Katsuki instantly chills out as excitement begins to flood through him and everyone else on the bus except for IcyHot, who was incredibly enough, still fucking sleeping after all that horse shit.

That kid could nap.

Once the bus was parked, Glasses begins blowing his damn whistle again, telling them to form a line as they entered the building.

What they were met with inside, Katsuki was certain Izuku would have had a heart attack over.

With each and every new pro-hero that they met, Katsuki was certain, that each one was more incredible than the last.

Thirteen was no exception.

He initially didn’t know much about them, but after reading up on Thirteen in Deku’s notes, it was clear that some excitement was due.

When it came to rescue missions, Thirteen was the go-to hero. Their quirk was essentially perfect for the task. That quirk was called ‘Black Hole.’

All around them, excitement abounded, and for good reason.

In equal measure, Thirteen themself, was just as excited, as they invited Class 1-A inside.

The dome was just as impressive on the inside as it was from the outside, and Shitty Hair, once again, voices this.

“Holy crap! It looks like some kind of amusement park!” He gushes with excitement.

“And here you have it kids!” Thirteen continues, the same level of enthusiasm clear in their voice, “A shipwreck! A Landslide! A Fire! A Windstorm! And just about anything else you can think of! I created this facility to prepare you for different types of disasters! I call it the Unforeseen Simulation Joint, or USJ!”

“Say what now?” Sparky replies for all of them.

“Isn’t that like Universal Studios Japan?” Pink Cheeks whispers to Pinky, who shrugs.

Despite the stupid acronym, excited murmurs float around as Mr. Aizawa approaches Thirteen, asking them where All Might was.

Out of all of them, only Katsuki clues into this and tries to listen in.

All Might should have been here already, so if he wasn’t, there must have been a reason for it.
He vaguely hears Thirteen’s reply and instantly it made more sense.

He didn’t know much about Mr. Yagi’s quirk, but he did know that there was a certain limit that prohibited him from using it too much, which was why and how Izuku even found out about it. Not that he remembers this, but Mr. Yagi explained this to Katsuki in depth when they had their confrontation.

Whatever.

If the Skeleton wasn’t here, it didn’t really make much of a difference so long as they accomplished what they came here to do.

Or at least, that’s what he’d thought until it happened.

----

It was decided that they would continue on with the lesson without All Might, so Thirteen once again took the floor.

“Alright, kids! Listen carefully! I’m sure you’re aware that I have a powerful quirk, it’s called ‘Black Hole.’”

Katsuki had to admit, even after reading up on most of the heroes Izuku documented, it was still incredibly cool to be able to compare those notes to real life information given to them from the source.

Not for the first time today, did Katsuki wish he could have been here.

This literally would have made his entire week or more.

He listens carefully to what they have to say next.

“I can use it to suck up anything and turn it into dust,” Thirteen confirms.

Pink Cheeks literally looked like she was going to vibrate out of her skin, or float away when she replies with, “you’ve used that quirk to save tons of people from disasters before, haven’t you?”

“That’s true,” Thirteen confirms yet again, “but, my quirk could easily be used to kill.”

Not even Katsuki was prepared for that admission.

Confused murmurs come from many of the class.

“Some of you also have powers that can be potentially dangerous,” Thirteen admits.

Looking back on it, Katsuki always knew that. Even someone as cool as All Might, or Eraser Head; if they’d taken different paths in life, if they’d become Villains instead of Heroes, all of them would be living in a completely different world. One likely full of chaos and pain.

Hell, even Katsuki’s admitted to himself before that his quirk was definitely more suited to a villain.

That life would be so easy for someone like him.

But, it just depended on the person and how they used it.

Looking back, especially where Izuku was concerned, Katsuki had to admit, he didn’t use his own
quirk very carefully. It was honestly his best tool that he’d used to intimidate someone. He threw his quirk around a lot when he was younger, hell… he’d done it even as recent as up to a year ago.

He was sure to have left burns all over the kids he’d pummelled.

Deku included.

He swallows past the guilty lump in his throat.

Breathing in through his nose slowly, holding it, and releasing it as he grounds himself.

He listens carefully to what Thirteen had to say.

“In our superhuman society, all quirks are certified and stringently regulated. So we often overlook how unsafe they can actually be, please don’t forget that if you lose focus or make the wrong move, your powers can be deadly. Even if you’re trying to do something virtuous like rescue someone.”

The truth in that statement was undeniable.

Katsuki takes the time to briefly glance at the sobered faces of his classmates. All of them seemed to have been taking this to heart as well.

He tunes back into Thirteen.

“Thanks to Mr. Aizawa’s fitness tests, you all have a solid idea of your quirks potential. And thanks to All Might’s combat training, you’ve likely experienced how dangerous your powers can be when used against other people. Carry those lessons over to this class, because today you are going to learn how to use those quirks to save peoples lives! You won’t be using these quirks to attack enemies or each other, only to help. After all, that is what being a hero is all about! Ensuring the safety of others. That’s all I have to say, thank you so much for listening!” They finish with a flourished bow.

As Katsuki digests this, the rest of his class, or those who were excitable, cheered.

“Right,” Mr. Aizawa starts, “now that that’s over-”

No sooner had the words come out his mouth, did the lights overhead all simultaneously short circuit and blow out.

“Huh? What the heck…” Shitty Hair murmurs beside him.

The fine hairs on the back of Katsuki’s neck prickle.

In the center of the training field, an ominous purple swirling vortex takes its place over the fountain, effectively stopping its flow.

Katsuki’s eyes widen as the mass spreads out violently, growing larger, forming what looked like glowing yellowish-chartreuse eyes and black tendrils of smoke.

The sudden influx of negative energy causes Mr. Aizawa to flinch and turn quickly.

They all watch in confusion and horror as what appeared to be hands, reach through the swirling mass.

“STAY TOGETHER AND DON’T MOVE,” he barks at them, making them all jump.

“THIRTEEN, PROTECT THE STUDENTS.”
“W-whoa, what is that thing?!” Shitty Hair addresses to no one in particular.

He eyes Katsuki in confusion, “has the training started already? I thought we were rescuing people?”

“Stay back!” Mr. Aizawa reiterates urgently, “this is real. Those are Villains.”

As Katsuki braced himself for a fight he couldn't help but scoff at the irony.

He seriously hated his shit luck.

----

Within moments, they were descended upon.

Chapter End Notes

I hate to rehash, but such is the life of getting back on board with canon lol.
Chapter Summary

Was this guy fucking serious?

He was acting like a petulant child that got told he wasn’t allowed to play at the park anymore.

Were they really going to throw away their plans on a whim?

Chapter Notes

(ʃ*好似\*isks*) Phew~ You guys. This chapter was a blast to write, but very, very long. I think it’s the longest chapter I’ve written for this story so far. It got so long, in fact, that I decided to break it in half. So, there is going to be a part 3 in the works for this, that will essentially bring forth the climax and resolution of the USJ arc.

Thank you so much for your thoughtful comments and your patience with the pace of the plot. I know that some of you are dying for Izuku to finally jump into the story as the main player and I promise you, he will! I just have a few things left to do in order to make that happen!

I really hope you all enjoy this chapter, let me know what your thoughts are!

“Kill the symbol of peace,” a raw, gritty voice intones, “All Might.”

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“It’s a pleasure to meet you, we are the League Of Villains. I know it’s impolite, but we decided to invite ourselves into this haven of justice to say ‘hello.’ And besides, isn’t this a fitting place for All Might, the symbol of peace, to take his last breath? I believe he was supposed to be here today and yet I see no sign of him. There must have been some kind of change in plans that we could not have foreseen. ...Ah well, in the end, I guess it doesn’t matter, I still have a role to play.”

As the swirling vortex of black and venomous purple tendrils appears in front of them, the creature relays to them its purpose, this League’s objective. Shifting and twisting as they went, each tentacle-like misty dark appendage lashes out.

Katsuki finds himself instinctively jolting into action, along with none other than Shitty Hair. Side by side, they attack together, as if they’d done this a million times.

Shitty Hair lashes out with a heavy cutting blow and Katsuki lights the fucker up.

A massive explosion rocks the platform on which they stand, quickly shrouding everything in thick tangles of dark smoke.
“Did ya think we were just gonna stand around and let you tear this place to shreds?” Shitty Hair boasts with confidence befitting a hero.

It leaves Katsuki mildly impressed.

A deep chilling laugh stills them both as the dark entity filters through the smoke, it’s own smoky wisps curling and writhing. “You live up to your school’s reputation, but you should be more careful, children,” it mocks them condescendingly, “otherwise someone might get hurt.”

“Kids! You need to get back, right now!” Thirteen calls out, their tone wracked with worry.

“I shall scatter you across this facility, to meet my comrades and your deaths!”

Before Thirteen or any of them have time to react, a dark dome-like shroud encases everything in which, dozens of swirling bruise-colored holes open everywhere. The darkness of which was akin to ink. The entities smoky appendages lash out swift as whips and pull each and every one of them through a waiting hole.

A cacophony of gasps and screams rips from every one of their classmates.

Katsuki experiences what feels like time itself and reality bend and shift, choking the air from his lungs, he only has time to briefly hear Shitty Hair’s strained gasp before his world becomes so black his vision whites out.

----

When Katsuki comes to, he feels both nauseous and disoriented, he also felt the heat of what seemed like flames lick at him from somewhere nearby. Taking stock of his body, he realizes with relief that he was uninjured during whatever the hell that was.

Sitting up, he scoots himself backward and away from the nearby flaming rubble.

He didn’t even really have to look to figure out which zone he’d apparently been transported to.

He was clearly in some kind of ruins.

Everything as far as he could see was either totally destroyed or in various states of collapse. Each building looked more precarious than the last and tiny fires littered the grounds. They were clearly still within the USJ.

Taking a look around to gather his wits about him, he notices Shitty Hair laying on his side roughly 15 feet from him, clearly unconscious.

Katsuki scrambles to his feet and closes the distance between them, keeping an eye out for any enemies that may be nearby.

Katsuki circles the redhead, observing him carefully, he notes that he didn’t appear to have any outward injuries. He drops to his knees and immediately checks his pulse just in case.

Finding that his pulse was thrumming normally, he exhales a breath he didn’t realize he was holding.

People seriously had to stop doing this to him.

He was going to get grey hairs by the time he was 20.

“Shitty Hair, wake up,” Katsuki gripes, attempting to rouse the other boy by giving his shoulder a
nudge. Apparently, the kid could sleep like a fucking rock too, wasn’t that convenient?

“Kirishima! Wake the fuck up you useless lump, we’re kinda in the middle of a literal fucking terrorist attack!”

The boy in question groans, rolling onto his back and lying still for a moment.

Katsuki gives him a minute to collect himself and keeps watch for any movement around them.

There was none so far, but that didn’t mean they were alone.

“Dude…” Shitty Hair groans, blinking his crimson eyes open, “what the actual hell was that? Where are we even?” It would appear that Katsuki wasn’t the only one affected by whatever the fuck that was.

“We ended up in some post-apocalyptic ruins zone, I’m guessing it’s got something to do with that ‘Demon’ asshole’s quirk. Teleportation or warping or some shit,” Katsuki explains. He reaches out and offers a gloved hand to the other boy who still seemed dazed.

“That is… both awesome and terrifying… what even…” Shitty Hair reaches out and grabs his proffered hand and pulls himself up.

“It’s fucking annoying is what it is. It’ll make getting close to that fucker pretty hard to do. If they can teleport wherever the hell they want, that’s probably how they got here, to begin with. I knew something was fishy when the media just ‘suddenly’ broke into the most secure school campus in Eastern Japan. Those motherfuckers probably instigated that; if not had taken advantage of it.”

“You have a point. Even Todoroki said something like that, too. These guys couldn’t’ve known we’d even be here. It’s not like it was publicly broadcasted,” the redhead ponders with a frown.

“Tch… this pisses me off,” Katsuki mutters as he turns on his heel and stalks off, kicking at a piece of rubble in frustration.

“Yo man! Wait up, what’s the plan?” Kirishima calls out from behind him, jogging to catch up to him. It was clear that he’d never been in any real emergency situation before, because the kid seemed uncertain, his voice wavering ever so slightly.

“The plan is to take out every motherfucker we see in this vicinity and find our way back to Mr. Aizawa, that’s what the plan is,” Katsuki retorts haughtily.

“But dude… we tried that earlier and it royally backfired. Why don’t we sit tight and wait for help?” Kirishima asks with concern.

Katsuki rounds on him, stopping dead in his tracks. He fixes him with a calculated glare.

“If they went to the trouble of breaking into our school not once, but twice, in two different locations, what makes you think that they don’t have the means of jamming our coms or cellphone reception? We are utterly fucked. We don’t have help coming. And if we do, they are a 40-minute drive from here. By the time they arrive, half of our class could be dead.”

Kirishima flinches.

It was an ugly reality, but it was the truth and Katsuki wasn’t going to spare him from it.

Suddenly, something dawns on him; his mind screeches to a halt, having yet again been drawn back
to his and Izuku’s earlier conversation.

“Your classmates, for better or worse, are your team. If you hope to become any type of hero, you have to learn to work with them and treat them like people. Because at the end of the day, whether you are rescuing or saving people, you have to be able to work together. Communication is key when it comes to emergency situations.”

‘...communication, huh?’

Katsuki attempts to dial it back a bit, attempting to explain the stakes of their situation without quashing morale.

“You said it yourself earlier on the bus. Not all of us have tactical quirks. Those of us that do are the only hope we have of getting out of here in one piece. Much as it pisses me off to admit, we have to round up as many of us that have battle-ready quirks as we can. The only way we can do that is by fighting our way through whatever they have laid out for us. They came here with the intent to kill all of us. We can’t allow that to happen.”

A fire seems to ignite within the redhead, because a determined grin replaces any doubt he’d had.

“I knew I wasn’t wrong about you, man. Let’s do this! We can kick some ass and save some lives!”

---

Shouto seriously hated being right.

After fighting through his disorientation and coming face to face with multiple villains, he was beginning to become tired of their shit. All he wanted to do was get some proper training in, wrap it up, and then nap the rest of the way back to campus. Was that so much to ask?

Apparently, it was, as he was about to be ambushed, yet again.

Stamping his right foot down, he instantly coats several more villains in sheets of immovable ice.

The heterochromatic boy takes his time making his way down the slope of the hill, his own sheets of ice not bothering him in the least.

He takes a breath, to find that his core temperature was dropping; as frost hovered in suspension around him, he focuses on regulating this.

“So, I was correct, the plan was to scatter us and kill us...” he huffs in frustration, watching as the villains attempt to writhe in their icy prisons, “you call yourselves villains? You were woefully unprepared, in fact... it looks to me as though you’ve had no training. You haven’t the slightest idea of how to use your quirks.”


Shouto remains thoroughly unimpressed.

“T-this power…”

“He f-f-froze us t-the ins-stant w-we warped h-here!”

“Th-hats no kid! H-he’s a monster!”
Their teeth chatter as they continue to struggle against their binds.

This just makes Shouto reinforce their confinements pointedly, eyeing each of them coldly.

‘How do they plan to kill All Might, with a sad group like this? At first, I thought they’d gathered an elite group of criminals who could simply overpower him, but that’s clearly not the case. This can’t be their master plan. At best this group only consists of low-level thugs, just pawns.’

Shouto stops in his tracks as two men attempt to attack him from both sides.

In an instant, they both meet the same fate as their accomplices.

‘If I’m correct, from what I can tell, there are maybe only 5 truly dangerous people here at most. If that’s the case, we need more information.’

“Listen up. I’ll only say this once. The longer you stay frozen, the quicker your cells will die and as a result, your bodies will succumb to frostbite and hypothermia. Luckily for you, I want to be a hero and I’d rather avoid any unnecessary cruelty.”

Shouto approaches one of the men he’d just captured, his right hand swirling menacingly with the energy of cool air and frost.

“That being said, I can only guarantee your safety if you tell me how you plan to kill All Might.”

The man before him, physically trembles.

“That is the only way you’ll survive.”

As more ice crystallizes around the man, he sputters in a panic.

He watches as several others succumb to their shivers, their lips turning a telling shade of blue.

“F-Fine! I-I’ll t-tell y-you!”

“Very well, start talking,” Shouto demands firmly.

---

Eventually, Eijiro and Bakugou’s sneaking around would be all for naught.

They kept close, creeping in and out of buildings to avoid as many villains as possible so as to not over exert themselves.

These villains sure didn’t seem like the brightest, but they knew how to exploit a quirks weakness and that was by overuse.

Together, they came to the decision to fight only when absolutely necessary.

Eijiro didn’t think Bakugou was the type to be so forward thinking, but true to form, the guy never ceased to amaze and surprise him.

He knew a lot more about emergency situations than he’d initially let on, and that tactical ability of his kept him thinking ahead by at least 5 steps.

The only downfall was the unpredictability of some of the villains they’d went up against.
Sure, they were taken care of quickly and efficiently, but that didn’t mean that surprise attacks weren’t a pain in the neck.

These guys just didn’t know when to quit.

In the midst of trying to gain a strategic advantage, they were ambushed in a partially dilapidated building.

This was one such instance where they simply had to fight, no matter what.

Back to back, both of them moved together seamlessly, taking out as many of their attackers as possible.

“SAY GOODBYE!” Bakugou bellows as he smashes two assailants into a nearby wall with explosive force. It was crazy how much control the kid had over his quirk.

Eijiro doubted he would ever not be impressed.

As he makes quick work of his own problematic villain, both of them huddle in close, surveying their surroundings.

Both of them breathe in and out heavily.

This was seriously exhausting.

Eijiro couldn’t think of a time in which he’d ever used his quirk this much.

“I think that’s the last of these guys... bunch’a weaklings...” Bakugou huffs, trying to catch his breath.

“No kidding... at least we’re almost outta this dump, the sooner we can find our classmates, the better,” Eijiro replies, stretching the soreness out of his left arm.

Bakugou merely nods and scowls as he treads closer to a blown out window, standing just out of sight of potential crosshairs, he peers down at the ground floor.

“It looks like we’re not the only ones fighting, we might not be in as worse shape as we thought,” the blond supplies, hinting to the broken window.

Eijiro creeps in close and takes a look.

All over the USJ as far as the eye could see, smoke was billowing and the distant sounds of various fights could be heard over the quiet of the ruins zone.

“We might not have to protect them after all,” Eijiro concludes.

Bakugou nods curtly, “I still say we gather whoever we can to fight, but we have to go after that Warp bastard.”

“Huh?! Our physical attacks didn’t even scratch that guy. C’mon, don’t be an idiot man,” Eijiro implores.

“Shut up!” Bakugou shouts, rounding on him, his teeth clenched tightly.

It was clear that he was at war with himself, struggling between his calm facade and boiling frustration.
“We need to take him down, because he’s their way in and out! If we can stop that motherfucker, then none of these bastards will get away with what they’ve done! We’ll just have to figure it out!”

Out of nowhere, Bakugou lashes out with his left hand, firing a small explosion at what seemed like nothing, until a very chameleon-like person appeared from out of the shroud of smoke and slumped to the floor unconscious.

“HOLY CRAP!” Eijiro just knew his eyes had to be blown as wide as saucers, “that reaction time was insane, dude! How-”

“Never mind that… if all the villains are small fry’s like these guys were then our classmates can handle ‘em.”

Eijiro takes a moment to consider this.

“I... think I get what you’re saying…”

A sharp-tooth grin overtakes him as he flexes, activating his quirk.

“I think what you’re saying, is that you believe in our classmates, and that’s thinkin’ like a man, Bakugou!”

“Take it however you want, Shitty Hair... let’s just get the hell out of here and find that douchebag.”

As Mr. Yagi sat in the chair next to him, he seemed particularly nervous today. The man usually radiated a vibrant, positive energy. But today he just seemed so... cloudy.

Izuku frowns.

“S-something wrong?” He asks both verbally and in sign.

“Well…” the older man starts, ”not technically? I mean, no news is good news, as they say, right?”

Izuku considers this, rubbing his chin absently, “D-depends. What’s the c-context?”

“Well, this morning, I was supposed to have met up with the group going out for field training,” he explains.

“Kacchan’s group?” Izuku inquires with a small smile.

“Yeah,” Mr. Yagi replies tightly, “but I ended up getting held up by prior engagements. Then I got wrapped up in the midst of a lecture from Principal Nezu and he said that I shouldn’t trouble myself with it, so I decided to come here, but… something just seems… off.”

“H-how s-so?” Izuku’s brows furrow.

“Well, I haven’t heard from Mr. Aizawa or Thirteen in a good long while,” Mr. Yagi relays, ”I’ve tried calling and texting them, but I’ve not received any response.”

“H-have you tried c-contacting All M-might?” Izuku asks curiously.

For some reason, this question gets a peculiar reaction out of the frail-looking man.

“Yeah,” Mr. Yagi replies lamely, “I haven’t heard from him either.”
Izuku knew that Mr. Yagi acted as a representative for All Might, but despite knowing this, that answer sounded *odd* to his ears. Almost nervous, even.

Izuku decides not to comment on it and instead focuses on the main concern.

It was true that Izuku hadn’t heard from Katsuki in quite awhile.

There wasn’t even a response to his ‘goodluck’ text, which usually the blond was generally very diligent in his responses. Even if they were something as simple as a ‘poop’ emoji.

Izuku had written it off as him just being busy.

Which, *was* the more likely reason.

However, Izuku was never one to rely on what was ‘likely.’

He followed his gut. Always.

“C-come to t-think of it… I h-haven’t heard from Kacchan i-in a c-couple hours.”

Mr. Yagi tenses at this.

He knew that Mr. Yagi knew just how diligent Katsuki was when it came to replying to him.

“When was the last time you heard from him?”

“Ar-round 8. T-they’d just arrived at the t-training grounds.”

Mr. Yagi worries his bottom lip, clearly contemplating this.

“S-sir,” Izuku pipes up, "If I k-know anything from e-experience, follow your gut. I-If s-something feels w-wrong, it’s worth i-inv-vestigating."

Mr. Yagi’s gaze locks with his.

Steady viridian against stormy ocean blues, Mr. Yagi nods, his mind clearly having been made up.

“I apologize for cutting our visit short, young Midoriya, but I think you’re right. I knew I should have just gone.”

Izuku shakes his head, “N-no need, this is w-way more important. I’ll l-let you know if I h-hear a-anything from Kacchan.”

“Thank you, my boy,” Mr. Yagi replies with a worried smile as he musses Izuku’s curls affectionately.

As Izuku waves him off, he couldn’t help but feel his own anxiety steadily build.

He really *hoped* nothing was wrong.

----

As they make their way out of the ruins zone, they finally stumble into a familiar face.

“Oh, hell yeah!” Kirishima all but shouts as IcyHot makes his way out of what appeared to be the
'landslide zone,' gliding effortlessly on what appeared to be a manifestation of his own ice.

“Todoroki!” the redhead calls out, waving a hand high over his head.

As far as firepower went, Katsuki supposed he couldn’t complain, the kid was basically a powerhouse with a shit ton of potential.

Upon seeing them, Todoroki stops using his quirk and jogs over to them.

“Man, am I glad to see you!” Kirishima says with relief.

“Since the two of you are in one piece, I’m assuming you defeated your share of the riff-raff?” IcyHot notes monotonously.

Seriously… this kid bugged him.

He always talked like he was an obnoxiously well-groomed robot.

Katsuki deigns not to comment, allowing Kirishima to handle all social interactions.

“Hell yeah, we tore up everyone that was in the ruins zone!” The redhead replies with excitement. “What about you?”

“Every enemy in the landslide zone has been detained. I even managed to gather some intel,” Todoroki explains.

Katsuki arches a brow at that, “you mean to tell me you of all people, tortured those sad sack’s for information?”

“What you call torture, I call strategic advantage,” Half n’ Half replies with a shrug, his expression carefully blank.

“Huh… well…” Kirishima replies, seemingly having trouble digesting that bit of information. “In that case, what did you find out?”

“The thugs basically relayed information we’d already known. They are most certainly here to kill All Might and they don’t care who is in their way. They aren’t opposed to killing us in order to see that their goals are realized. They also did admit, however, to breaking into the school yesterday during the media scare.” he informs them.

“Whoa… no kidding. That’s exactly what Bakugou said,” Shitty Hair replies, gesturing to Katsuki.

“That’s not all, apparently, they’d infiltrated and had stolen one of our syllabuses detailing where we’d be and who’d be there. And apparently, this attack was even more premeditated than that. From my understanding, they’d constructed some kind of bioengineered weapon as a means to destroy All Might,” the heterochromatic boy relays.

That definitely catches Katsuki’s attention.

“What kind of bioengineered weapon?” He asks with measured dread pooling in his gut.

This just went from them being moderately fucked, to them being royally fucked in two seconds.

“I’m not sure,” the bi-colored boy admits, “I doubt even they knew as much, seeing as no one else came forward with information. I’ve gathered that out of what was likely 70+ villains, only about 5 of them are worth worrying about.”
“Are you kidding me?!” Kirishima shouts in exasperation, “only 5?”

Todoroki merely nods, holding one hand out, counting down one finger at a time, “the man with the severed hands all over his body, the warp quirk guy, the person jamming our communications, the giant brain guy, and someone in the shadows. It’s very likely that the person who orchestrated all of this isn’t even here in this facility.”

“Look, while it’s all in good fun to just stand around jaw-jacking, we seriously need to find and help Mr. Aizawa. He’s likely still in the middle of the courtyard. We can discuss semantics after we roast these bastards,” Katsuki gripes, crossing his arms over his chest.

“We need a plan, bro,” Kirishima counters.

Katsuki eyes Todoroki, who in turn merely shrugs.

“While I agree, it’s best to survey the situation first before formulating a plan. I agree with Bakugou, we need to find Mr. Aizawa and from there we can decide on how best to help with this situation. Last I saw, he was locked in battle with at least 30 or 40 assailants.”

“Oh geeze… that’s too much even for him,” Kirishima admits.

“Considering there is a limit to how effective quirks are after a while, yes, I’d say that he’s indeed in deep shit,” Todoroki agrees.

Katsuki finds himself snorting despite himself.

“If we’re all in agreement, let’s get the fuck on with it, already. We don’t have time to waste,” Katsuki urges them on.

Together, the three of them carefully make their way to the center of the USJ.

What they would find there, would ultimately chill them to the bone.

----

Katsuki didn’t think he would ever forget the sound of bones shattering ever again.

The sound would forever haunt his very darkest of dreams.

The three of them still, watching in abject horror as the vilest beings this League of Villains had to offer, laid waste to their training grounds, thoroughly saturating it in Mr. Aizawa’s pained screams and blood.

An anger he hasn’t felt in a long time bubbles and boils to the surface and just as Katsuki is about to jolt into action, he finds himself fastened and rooted to the spot by both Todoroki and Kirishima.

Crystals upon crystals of ice form and trap his ankles, preventing him from moving a muscle, while Kirishima’s hands tremble as they grip his left shoulder and gauntlet.

It’s due in part to sheer shock alone that Katsuki doesn’t haul off and blast himself loose.

His wild eyes search theirs for answers as to why the fuck they weren’t acting.

“Dude, no, you can’t go over there, that thing will kill you,” Kirishima hisses as quietly as he could from their hiding spot.
Yet another spike of anger courses through him just as Katsuki is about to object. Just as he’s about to argue that they were already **killing** their fucking teacher! What more could they fucking wait for?

“Think this through,” Todoroki murmurs, quickly adding, “what would Midoriya do in a situation like this?”

In an instant, all the fight drains from his body, as he watches helplessly as this ‘creature’ designed to kill All Might, breaks both of Mr. Aizawa’s arms like they were twigs beneath its feet.

Katsuki can feel Kirishima’s confused gaze on him as Todoroki continues to reason with him.

“You’ve read his books, you know his theories like the back of your hand, what would **he** do in a situation like this?”

“Analyze…” he breathes, “he would assess the situation… find a solution, look for any signs of weakness,” he admits.

“Then that is what we do,” Todoroki decides, loosening his quirks hold.

“But that’s not enough!” He continues to protest, “by the time we figure shit out, he’ll be dead, we have no time for that right now!”

“Look, I dunno what you guys are even talking about, but one thing is clear, if we go down there, the odds of us becoming targets are 200%” Kirishima argues.

Movement near the fountain halts their argument.

“You can erase people’s powers, that’s irritating, but it’s nothing impressive…” The man with the severed hand’s taunts.

All three boys stay still, taking care to listen closely.

“But when faced with this much raw power, you might as well be a... quirkless child,” the freak continues condescendingly, his tone full of mirth and glee.

This was no ordinary run of the mill ‘bad guy’ this guy was the **real** deal.

The three of them were staring at pure unequivocal evil.

Katsuki grits his teeth at his irritatingly cavalier comment.

From their position, they can clearly see Mr. Aizawa try and erase one of their quirks, only for that ‘Nomu’ monster to literally smash his face into the ground with little effort.

Just as quickly as this happens, the warp demon manifests next to the guy with the severed hands.

“Tomura Shigaraki,” it’s deep resonating voice greets the crazed man.

“Ah, Kurogiri,” he replies in kind, “did you manage to kill Thirteen?”

All three teens glance at one another in alarm.

“The rescue hero is out of commission, but my apologies, there were students I wasn’t able to dispense and one of them got outside of the facility.”

The grey-haired man’s reaction was slow at first, but quickly gained an alarming momentum as the
guy literally began scratching and picking incessantly at his own skin, as if trying to flay it from his body.

It was immensely disturbing to watch.

This guy was in the midst of a full mental breakdown.

“Kurogiri” the man; Tomura, it would seem, trembles angrily. “you fool.”

The man continues to scratch and scratch and pick at his skin.

“If you weren’t our warp gate, I’d tear apart every last atom in your body,” the man threatens.

In an instant his hands still.

“There’s no way we can win if dozens of pros show up to stop us,” the grey-haired man almost laments, “it’s game over, back to the title screen, and I was so looking forward to finishing this today,” he visibly deflates, “damnit, let’s go home.”

Was this guy fucking serious?

He was acting like a petulant child that got told he wasn’t allowed to play at the park anymore.

Were they really going to throw away their plans on a whim?

Just because there was a chink in their chain?

This didn’t make any sense.

What sense did it make for them to come here and cause this much destruction, all for them to what? Just leave?

Didn’t they want to kill All Might?

Wasn’t that their entire purpose for being here?

“Oh,” Tomura comments belatedly, “but before we leave…”

His vermilion eyes take on an even more crazed gleam, causing the three of them to flinch.

“Let’s make sure the Symbol of Peace is broken… let’s… wreck his pride!”

In a split second the man changes direction, closing the distance between him and his newest targets.

Which were none other than Frogger and Balls for Brains, who’d apparently been hiding in the nearby water.

“Let’s make this hurt!”

Everything was in motion.

Everything was slow.

Yet, fast at the same time, as all three of them geared up to react.

In a fraction of a second…
Everything paused.

The grey-haired villain was literally a hand away from crushing Frogger’s face, when suddenly he pauses.

“Eh…” the man sighs in frustration, “you really are so cool, Eraser Head.”

With barely a nod, the Nomu once again smashes their teachers face into the ground, twisting and turning his head for good measure.

Katsuki felt absolutely ill with rage.

Neither Kirishima nor Todoroki could keep ahold of him as Katsuki blasts himself into the fray, propelling himself high into the air.

Releasing everything he’d stored up throughout their battles, Katsuki propels himself closely and swiftly until he reaches his mark and pulls the pin on his grenade gauntlet.

“NOW DIEEEEE!” He screams himself hoarse.

The ensuing explosion rocks the very ground around them searing and scorching everything in its epicenter.

Ash, dust, and debris fill and swell through the air as layers of thick smoke twists and climbs about them.

Katsuki’s breaths come out labored as the remnants of his grenade shell snap off of his wrist and clatter to the ground before him.

He’d never stored up that much sweat inside of his gauntlets before, so it didn’t come as a surprise that his own arm had gotten caught up in the blast.

He grits his teeth against a hiss of pain.

His entire forearm was covered in burns and swelling blisters.

He absently holds his arm closer to himself, steadying his breathing as he waits for the smoke to clear.

Only for dread to flood every inch of him.

The creature…

That… ‘Nomu' thing, was stood before him, it’s sinister presence towering above him, against the ash and dust.

Without a single. fucking. scratch.

Katsuki’s eyes widen as he stares up at this hulking figure, it was absolutely grotesque.

Its maw was like that of a bird, but with jagged elongated teeth.

Its pupils were so constricted that it was a wonder how the thing could even see.

And what was worse…
Every single inch of its head was nothing but a giant oozing cluster of pink brain-matter.

Just what the hell was this thing?

it wasn't human.

“Hey… you’re pretty powerful, aren’t you?” Tomura’s sinister voice comes from behind the Nomu, almost gleefully. “That blast of yours? It probably could have killed me. Interesting… very interesting. It’s not every day that a ‘hero’ comes swooping in out of nowhere yelling ‘die.’ I must say… I’m at a loss for how painfully and delightfully ironic this is. I’ve gotta say kid… I like you. I might like you a lot. What would a kid like you say to a little change in profession?”

“I’d sooner tell you to go blow your own fucking head off,” Katsuki barks in response.

Tomura Shigaraki’s laughter chills him, but he remains firm.

He might have taken steps to improve himself.

He might have spent countless hours in therapy, trying to learn to control his anger.

But he had no fucking problem telling this guy off.

He was the lowest of the low.

A person who killed without any regard for human life.

A person he never wanted to have any association with.

“Oh my…” Tomura’s vermillion eyes crinkle in delight, “you are an absolute riot. A true delight. I’m honestly having trouble here, debating whether or not I should kill you. It would honestly be such a waste. Oh well… if you throw your lot in with the heroes, you’re of no use to me. So sad,” he replies with a shrug.

“Nomu,” he says sharply, his tone suddenly stone cold sober. There was no trace of humor left to be had, “kill him,” he commands.

----

A succession of things happened at that moment.

And one of those things had been that he would not go down without a fight.

Despite his pain, he sets off rapid-fire blasts, propelling himself backward and into the water with Frogger and Multi-balls.

In the next instant, ice engulfs the Nomu, freezing it without reservation.

And in the next, a giant dark shadow of a hand reaches into the fray, grabbing the three of them and removing them safely.

Out of the shadows of the still billowing smoke, steps none other than Birdman and Koda Koji, carefully holding Mr. Aizawa’s broken form in the safety of their arms.

----

As Izuku wheels himself back to his room from physical therapy, his phone starts vibrating like crazy
within the confines of his pocket.

With curious concern, he fishes around for the device in his pocket and unlocks his lock screen.

Panic surges through him at what he finds.

SOS

USJ under attack

can't tell if you are getting this but i think our communications have been cut off

coms are down. can't call out, sending this in the off chance it goes through

if it does call the police

call Mr. Yagi too

tell him they are after All Might
As quickly as he can, he forwards both messages from Todoroki and Kacchan to Mr. Yagi and their respective mothers. He also sends the messages to his own mother in the off chance that none of them see it in time.
You have to get there as quickly as possible!

It's way worse than we thought!

Please hurry!
Aunty! We have a problem!

What is it kiddo, are you okay?

Kacchan is in trouble, I'll send forward his message to you!

I got it.

I'm on my way.

Take me with you!

Please?

Be there in 5, kiddo.
Climax! Attack On USJ (Part 3)

Chapter Summary

And for just that moment, Katsuki felt like he was 4 years old again.

Watching grainy videos, alongside Deku.

Videos of All Might, the Symbol of Peace, saving people and beating up bad guys.

Chapter Notes

حرف، ( • ̀•́ •̀•́ )حرف Okay, I lied. This is the longest chapter I have written for this story yet. At 31 pages, this chapter is almost 10,000 words alone. I am dead. x'D

I cannot tell you how much this chapter has been revised or how much work has gone into making it the best it can be.

I truly hope you all enjoy this exciting conclusion to the USJ arc! Please let me know what your thoughts are!
(And please let me know if you find any errors I might've missed lol, my eyes are burning. xDD)

Also, brace yourselves.

With worry propelling him forward as quickly as his engines would let him, Tenya tried his best to make peace with his choice.

To make the decision to leave his class and his injured teacher in the crosshairs of a vile villain who held no remorse; in order to find help, went against his every instinct. It took his everything not to turn around and run right back to help them. He felt like a coward, but he knew that this was just as equally important.

He needed to get to U.A. as quickly as his legs could carry him.

He was the only one capable of doing this.

It’s what Tensei would do.

And that was exactly what he shall do too.

Thankfully, who he would happen upon, would ultimately change the course of this entire situation.

----
When Toshinori received young Midoriya’s text messages it literally felt like what little was left of his internal organs were binding and constricting around his heart. For the first time in a long time, Toshinori had felt fear. Not apprehension, not guilt, fear.

He knew for a fact that his colleagues were highly capable heroes.

He’d had no doubt that the both of them would try to contain and control the situation as quickly and as effectively as possible. Although, the mere fact that it was students who were attempting to make contact with outside help, made it quite clear how bad the situation was. It was likely that both of his colleagues were locked in battle.

As Toshinori approached the USJ, he opted to park way down at the foot of the hill. It was at least a 10-minute drive up to the training dome and it was that much longer on foot, but he knew going by foot would give him a greater advantage.

He knew his students were trapped inside, but that didn’t mean there weren’t villains stationed outside watching the perimeter.

If Toshinori pulled up in his car, it’d have only given away his position and would take away any element of surprise he had.

After reading young Bakugou and Todoroki’s messages, it was clear that the villains came here expecting All Might to be present. After finding out that he wasn’t actually there, Toshinori knew that this heinous act was out of nothing but pure retaliation.

These villains wanted to make this personal.

Toshinori could only imagine how frightened the children must be.

Given the amount of exertion he’d spent today in his hero work, he’d say that he’d had about 15 minutes at least to work with, in his muscle form. He had to make as much use of it as he possibly could. This fight would have to be finished as quickly as possible, otherwise, he’d be of no help to anyone.

Parking off to the side of the road, he decided to hide his vehicle as close to the trees as possible, in an attempt to obscure it in the shroud of the canopy.

Soon enough, he was off and running.

Only to find himself jumping back in surprise, as what looked like a white projectile launched right for him.

----

Tenya couldn’t believe his eyes as he almost collided with All Might of all people.

Their luck couldn’t get any better or worse than this!

“Sir!” Tenya nearly stammers, attempting to slow himself and his racing heart down, “we have a problem!”

With All Might’s attention thoroughly captured, he explains to him, the villainy at work here.

----

“Young Iida,” Toshinori replies, placating his anxious student as he lays a hand on his shoulder,
“thank you, it took a great amount of courage for you to be able to leave your classmates and teachers in such a state in order to reach help. I couldn’t be more proud of you.”

“Sir… I… thank you, sir,” he bows.

The poor kid looked like an emotional wreck as he warred with his conflicting emotions.

“However; given the state of things, I have one more job for you. I need you to stay here and intercept U.A. and the authorities, can you do that?”

Dutiful as always, young Iida nods, standing rigidly straight, “yes sir! I can do that.”

“Very good,” Toshinori replies, “now I need you to listen carefully, I want you to relay everything you know to the police when they arrive. I’ve already made contact with them, but you have much more information than I could give. Explain to them what you explained to me and I will go and put a stop to these villains.”

“But, All Might, sir, their aim is to kill you, shouldn’t you be waiting for the authorities, too?” young Iida implores.

“Rest assured, my boy, you have nothing left to worry about. I will make short work of these fiends and they will regret the day they decided to attack my students as they rot in a prison cell,” he gives the boy an encouraging thumbs up.

“Very well then, I’ll stay and give them my statement,” the boy agrees, worriedly.

----

Toshinori’s eyes narrow as he approaches the USJ facility.

Now knowing the extent of the damage this *League of Villains* had caused, Toshinori’s previous fear quickly turns to that of anger.

Toshinori wasn’t normally one to anger so easily.

There was only *one* person who could inspire within him this much emotion, but he was thought to be long dead.

This *League* simply did not know the extent of the ire they’d just unleashed upon themselves.

For harming his students.

For harming his colleagues and friends.

*Justice* would be served today.

----

“Nomu,” he says sharply, *his tone suddenly stone cold sober. There was no trace of humor left to be had, “kill him,” he commands.

----

Just as the hulking beast was about to take a swipe at him, Katsuki switches yet again to the offensive, firing a large close range explosion right into the creature’s eyes.
If he couldn’t hurt it physically, he could at the very least blind it.

This was effective only long enough for him to propel himself backward and into the water, putting at least a little distance between them. He stands in front of his classmates, on full alert, waiting for any backlash.

Before the dust could even settle, Todoroki glides in, throwing a literal shield of ice up around the three of them and quickly encases the Nomu in what appeared to be a small glacier.

The kid was apparently leaving nothing to chance.

Simultaneously, a dark shadowy hand appears to wrap itself around him, Frogger, and Balls for Brains, pulling them out of the water and across the courtyard to safety, where Todoroki and Kirishima join them.

“Tokoyami!” Shitty Hair calls out in relief.

Tokoyami addresses them with a nod, before laying Mr. Aizawa down with his other shadowy appendage.

Upon seeing this, once on solid ground, Katsuki breaks away from them and much to all of their surprise, the blond begins assessing their teacher’s condition.

With just a glance, the blond knew it was bad.

For just a fraction of a second, Katsuki finds himself zoning out, recalling some bits of an earlier conversation.

“Just remain calm. You might not like to believe it Kacchan, but you run off of pure adrenaline and emotion. If it’s an emotion you’re uncomfortable with, this triggers a stress response in which you lash out in frustration. In situations that require rescue efforts, some people respond better to those who remain calm and those who can give simple instructions. Give this a try and I’m sure you’ll surprise people. You can be surprisingly level headed at times, I know it, because I’ve seen it.”

’He’d said it was such confidence...’

Deku went to the trouble of giving him a 5 minute rundown on all things rescue and relief related, the least he could do was fucking use it.

He takes a steadying breath and begins barking orders verbally and in JSL.

“IcyHot, make as thick of a shield as you can and dome it around us.”

Todoroki eyes him curiously for a hair of a second, but gives him a curt nod, quickly creating a barrier between them and the League, while leaving just enough of a space to keep watch from.

“Shitty hair, Frog, and Pervert, keep watch and hold the line!”

Each of them startles, but do as their told.

“Edgar Allen Poe, IcyHot, and Koda, get your asses over here, I have a plan,” Katsuki beckons them over as he begins to check Aizawa’s pulse.

The three in question tread closer, each of them frowning as they actually take the time to finally see
what kind of shape their teacher is in.

“How bad is it?” Todoroki tentatively asks.

“Pretty fucking bad, he’s alive, but from what I can tell, he’s clearly got orbital fractures, a broken nose, and we know for a fact his arms are broken, and that’s only the things we can see,” Katsuki admits.

He wasn’t a doctor, but he knew broken bones when he saw them.

He turns, addressing all six of them, “who here brought supplies?”

“Supplies? What for?” The pervert lisps, clearly confused.

Katsuki sighs heavily, “medical supplies dipshit, this was supposed to be a fucking rescue exercise, now who brought what?”

The purple menace merely shrugs, useful as ever.

How that kid got into their class, he would never know.

“I have some bacitracin, cotton swabs, and bits of gauze in my water-proof pack,” Frog-girl replies.

“Good enough, bring that shit over here,” Katsuki mutters, pulling some bandages out of his own pockets. They were a bit wet, but it was better than nothing. At the very least he could clean up some of the blood surrounding Mr. Aizawa's eyes.

They had to work fast, it wouldn’t be long before the League retaliated.

“What is this plan of yours?” Tokoyami asks after a moment, clearly curious.

“Me, you, Shitty Hair and IcyHot are going to keep these assholes busy until help arrives,” he replies addressing him, before turning to Koda and Frog-girl, “both of you, are going to carry Mr. Aizawa to safety. Get him as far away from here as possible and as carefully as you can. We’ll wrap him up as best as we can and you get the fuck out of here. Koda, you’re bigger and broader, carry him. Frog, I know you can kick ass, watch his back, and if you have to, throw the pervert at someone, I don’t care, just do what you have to to make it outside.”

All of them nod, clearly in agreement.

As quickly as Kastuki can; with help from Frog, they clean and wrap up as much of Mr. Aizawa as they can. It was clear that adrenaline alone was the only thing keeping them moving this quickly.

“Guys, we have movement out there,” Kirishima calls out to them nervously, “the guy with the hands looks pissed.”

As soon as this was said, the Nomu bursts free from his icy prison and is immediately ordered to attack them.

“This is as much as I can do, I don’t want to hurt him any more than he already is, we’ll just have to wait for help to arrive, he’s not bleeding out, so that’s a fucking plus. Take him and go,” Katsuki instructs Koda and Frog both verbally and in sign.

Both of them nod as Tokoyami helps them gather Mr. Aizawa up as carefully as he can, settling him carefully against Koda’s back.
Using Mr. Aizawa’s capture tool as a sling, Tokoyami quickly uses it to fasten it around both him and Koda for a bit of extra support.

Shockwaves reverberate around them as the Nomu beats upon the outside of their icy fortress.

“As soon as it breaks through, use the confusion to escape toward the landslide and ruins zones, those areas are clear, you can double back toward the main entrance from there,” Todoroki informs them quickly and quietly, to which Katsuki translates for Koda.

Frog nods, but seems to hesitate, “Bakugou…Todoroki, all of you need to be careful with that guy.”

“That’s kind of the point of all of this, Frogger,” Katsuki deadpans, gesturing to the ice dome.

“My name is Tsu, and no, that’s not what I mean, it’s that guy’s quirk, the one with the hands,” she insists.

“What about it?” Todoroki asks quickly, watching tensely as cracks begin to web and spread out across their barrier.

“Anything he touches disintegrates, do not let him touch you,” she intones with seriousness.

Katsuki’s stomach feels like it drops from his throat at the implications of what a quirk like that could do.

With how closely it’d come to her own face, he knew for certain how serious she was.

They each give her an affirming nod.

Just as their protection crumbles around them, Katsuki, IcyHot, Poe, and Shitty Hair gather in defensively.

Tsu and Koda take this as their chance and make a run for it with Mr. Aizawa.

“Whatever you do, don’t let them catch you!” Katsuki barks as all four of them jump into action.

----

As soon as their barrier was reduced to rubble, Tomura Shigaraki and the Nomu close in, but nothing is more surprising as when that warp demon Kurogiri manifests right in front of Koda and Tsu’s escape route without warning.

“You know what pisses me off?” Tomura rasps coldly as he and the Nomu close in.

Kurogiri takes his time in closing the distance, merely opening several warp gates, effectively cutting off any potential escape route.

It was untelling where those warps would even lead, and as a result, Tsu, Koda, and the Pervert back up defensively, huddling in close to Katsuki and the others.

“Punk ass kids, who think they’re so smart,” he continues, “one day you’ll learn that playing hero will get you absolutely nowhere. It’s the world’s greatest lie,” he cackles.

This guy was clearly unhinged.

“The saddest part of all of this is how thoroughly entertaining you all are, especially you, Blondy.”
Katsuki sneers in response, eliciting a cruel partially obscured grin from the grey-haired villain.

“I am going to absolutely enjoy smearing you kids across the pavement, but Blondy, since you seem like the 'man with the plan,' I have something different in mind for you,” the villain condescends, “I’m going to make you watch as I kill them and after my good work is done, I’m going to dismantle you, piece by fucking piece, until your screams are nothing but mantra and by the time you are nothing but a bleeding torso, I’ll leave you for All Might to find.”

Each student gathers in nervously, as tightly as possible without hurting their teacher.

“I wonder…” the villain ponders for show, “would he mourn you?”

“Don't let him antagonize you, we continue to fight! Even if that means we go down fighting,” Tokoyami assures them.

“Make them hurt,” Tomura sneers.

As quick as a bullet train, the Nomu springs into action, its giant hands ready to strike, only to collide with the force that was Tokoyami’s Dark Shadow.

The bird-esque boy grits his teeth against the heavy force he'd caught, just barely holding the monster at bay.

“IcyHot!” Katsuki calls out, to which the boy gives him a firm nod, creating yet another ice barrier around Mr. Aizawa, Koda and Tsu.

“Heeeeey! What about me?!” Balls for Brains wails, flailing around in a panic.

“Fight like a fucking man, dude!” Kirishima chides him.

Katsuki rubbernecks, staring at the redhead briefly in surprise.

“What you think you’re the only one in class with a foul mouth?” The sharp-toothed kid replies humorously.

“Whatever, you red-haired loser, just back me up, we have a fucking demon to take care of,” Katsuki scoffs.

As Tokoyami fights to keep the Nomu at bay, Katsuki and Kirishima race forward and engage Kurogiri; this time taking care to avoid his warp gates, leaving Todoroki to go toe to toe with Tomura.

----

“Well, well, if it isn't the privileged son of Endeavour,” the grey-haired villain taunts as he stalks forward.

This causes Shouto to falter ever so slightly.

“Quite the surprise, considering I expected your blond attack dog to come at me first.”

While his father was the number two hero, he diligently kept Shouto and the rest of their family out of the media, for what he called 'personal reasons.'

If this guy knew who he was, he obviously did his homework.
All of their names were on the stolen syllabus, they must’ve taken the time to research them.

“It’s an honor, but aren't you looking a little *frosty*? Is it just me, or are you reaching your quirk’s physical limit?”

He’d *definitely* done his homework.

The bi-colored boy's eyes narrow.

Shouto would never admit to it, much less to a villain, but this overwhelming use of his quirk was really beginning to take its toll. Frost clung tightly to his right side, despite him trying his best to regulate it, and it only crept closer and closer to the point in which he could tell it was visibly showing against his exposed skin.

“I *wonder*, how *long* will you be able to keep this up?” the villain asks, feigning innocent curiosity.

This makes Shouto's blood boil.

“Say, maybe you should invest in some kind of heating module? You know, considering you continue to *handicap* yourself,” Tomura taunts him again before lunging at him.

Shouto skids out of his reach as a hand just nearly grazes his face.

With the flick of his wrist, he traps the villain's feet, allowing a hard thick shell of ice to creep up his legs and torso stopping just at his neck.

Shouto tries his best not to pant from the exertion.

“Hah, typical,” Tomura scoffs, “I bet you use this little trick of yours all the time, don’t you? It’s a shame really, you being a one trick pony and all. And here I thought you’d had so much *potential*? Guess dear old *daddy* really cracked the egg on that one, didn’t he?”

Before Shouto’s very eyes, he watches as his ice literally begins to melt and pool at Tomura’s feet.

“Confused?” The villain laughs as he frees his hands.

Shouto grits his teeth as the villain’s partially obscured vermilion eyes narrow.

“As soon as I get out of this ice bath, you’d *best* have something better for me, or this is going to get *old* real fast.”

----

Tokoyami continues in his struggle against the tank that was Nomu, grappling with him as best he can.

“Let me rip him apart!” Dark Shadow complains.

“N-no! Stand your ground, if we slip up even once and let him go, the others are dead!” Tokoyami rebuffs firmly.

“*Fine*, but you’re no fun,” the entity laments, never releasing it’s grip, despite the pair of them being pushed back.

As they struggle to contain the monster, they resolve themselves to having to hold on for as long as possible.
As Katsuki and Shitty Hair dodge warp gate after warp gate, they begin to feel their efforts wear thin.

They couldn’t keep this up for much longer.

The reality of their situation only grew more and more grim as time went by.

Katsuki had one grenade gauntlet left.

If he could manage to somehow find that warp bastards physical body, he’d be able to disable him, but that grew harder and harder to do as time went on.

They were up against adults, who’d likely had ample time to perfect their quirks and limit their own recoil. The reality was that he and his classmates were still just teenagers, fresh out of middle school and in their second month of high school. Despite their group being heavily talented, their physical limitations were way more pronounced.

IcyHot looked like he was two more ice blasts from freezing to death, Tokoyami was caught in an unwinnable wrestling match, and he and Shitty Hair were up against an annoying asshole with way too many tricks up his sleeve.

They had to come up with something quick.

All of their lives; including those they were protecting, were at stake.

Just as they were tiring.

Just as all hope seemed lost.

A ray of light appears.

An angry ray, that burned with the fires of a thousand suns.

Katsuki couldn’t recall; in all his 15 years of life, if he’d ever seen All Might so pissed off.

But as he bursts through the double doors of the USJ, there was never a more welcome sight.

A chorus of relieved cheers rang out around them.

Assuring Katsuki that the rest of their classmates were safe.

He takes a steadying breath.

Their communications must’ve been restored somehow.

His texts, at some point, must have finally gone through…

“HAVE NO FEAR, STUDENTS… BECAUSE I AM HERE,” All Might reassures them in his trademark manner as he literally rips off his tie.

Katsuki facepalms.
He couldn’t even comprehend how he’d missed it as a kid, but Mr. Yagi was an absolute fucking 
nerd.

Yet still, as he watched his childhood hero descend down the stairs, he couldn’t help the grin that 
overtook him.

He might be a nerd, but he was still as cool as ever.

----

“After all this waiting, the heroic piece of trash finally shows up,” Tomura Shigaraki rasps with what 
sounded like a twisted grin.

Katsuki watches as Mr. Yagi blips out of view, literally moving so fast his eyes couldn’t track him 
until he’d appeared right in front of them.

His sudden appearance makes Kurogiri retreat, manifesting right next to Tomura Shigaraki, who in 
turn seemed all too pleased with himself.

“Where is Aizawa?” Mr. Yagi addresses them.

With as much energy as he can muster, IcyHot drops the barrier of ice shrouding Tsu and Koda, 
revealing their gravely injured teacher.

Mr. Yagi’s teeth literally grind at the sight.

“Everybody back to the main entrance, and take Aizawa with you,” their teacher orders them, “he 
doesn’t have much time.”

“Yes, sir!” Tsu complies with a croak, helping Koda to his feet, they make a beeline for the main 
entrance with Mr. Aizawa.

This seems to seriously displease Shigaraki and he visibly begins to shake once again, clearly 
experiencing some kind of manic episode.

Katsuki tenses.

It was then that he realized their predicament.

Eyeing Mr. Yagi carefully, he realizes that while they were saved, this whole situation could quickly 
spiral out of control again.

After all, there was a reason Mr. Yagi wasn’t here, to begin with.

He too was at his own physical limit.

The teenager didn’t know how much time their teacher had left in that form, but he knew for a fact it 
wasn’t long.

“Hey, All Might,” Katsuki calls out to him, his eyes shifting briefly to the retreating backs of his 
remaining classmates, “I’m sure you know… we’re all at our physical limits,” he emphasizes to get 
his attention, “these guys are in a class all of their own, that brain guy alone isn’t phased by any 
physical attacks and the douchebag with the hands can literally disintegrate anything he touches.”

“Young Bakugou, you needn’t worry,” the hero assures him, “I’ve got this.”
As their gazes meet, Mr. Yagi gives him an encouraging thumbs up.

Even with all his confidence, Katsuki had his lingering doubts.

After everything they’d been through and witnessed, he couldn’t not have them.

As they began to make their way back to the main entrance, Katsuki couldn’t shake the feeling that something very bad was about to take place.

He should’ve known to follow his gut.

---

The ensuing battle rang out throughout the facility as All Might went toe to toe with the monster that was Nomu, who had been specifically created just to fight and kill the symbol of peace.

Upon further thought, with as strong as the creature clearly was, it made sense that that was why Katsuki and everyone else had little effect on it.

With Tsu, Koda, and Mr. Aizawa a safe distance away, Katsuki couldn’t help but linger.

“Dude, you okay?” Kirishima asks from beside him.

“’M fine…” he deflects distractedly.

“Clearly not,” Todoroki points out.

“Says the literal walking popsicle, why don’t you stuff that pot and kettle bullshit up your ass!” Katsuki retorts.

Todoroki merely arches a brow, clearly displeased with his response as he tries to stave off his shivers.

“C’mon man, you’re hurt, we all are, we should really be making our way back to the entrance like All Might said,” Kirishima attempts to reason with him.

Katsuki pauses and stops walking entirely as one particular ‘smash’ literally shakes the ground.

He turns, watching as the battle continues to rage on.

Never in his life had he had any doubt that All Might, the symbol of peace, his all-time favorite childhood hero, could win in a fight.

But that was before he knew him.

Sure, he was still every bit as badass as he was known to be.

Katsuki had learned to begrudgingly admit that.

But he was still human.

A very sickly human.

With an injury that literally would have dropped anyone else.

And he’d also had a very real time limit.
One that he’d, no doubt, already reached today.

“He doesn’t know what he’s up against. That Nomu was literally created to kill him. Are you all so complacent to think that that couldn’t happen? Cause I’m not. Look what the fuck it did to Aizawa. And what Kurogiri did to Thirteen, we might not have seen that, but you know it’s got to be bad,” Katsuki argues.

Kirishima and Todoroki purse their lips, eyeing one another briefly.

“What are you suggesting,” Tokoyami voices for them.

“He needs back up. I’m not saying all of us have to jump back in there, that’d be stupid, but we should at least hang around and see if he needs us,” the blond reasons.

“Fine, but we stay out of his way,” Todoroki decides, “we don’t want to make any of this even harder by becoming hostages.”

Katsuki nods reluctantly and with that, the four of them watch the ensuing battle.

----

As All Might literally tries to drive Nomu into the ground, something Katsuki’s been dreading happens.

Kurogiri; ever the underhanded shit-stain he is, creates two warp gates through which the Nomu passes and comes out on the other end in time to lash out and drive its claws right into All Might’s previously injured side.

As blood begins to seep through his white button up, Katsuki knew.

They were all too aware of his weak spot and effectively exploited it.

“Good work Kurogiri,” Tomura responds gleefully, “we’ve got him right where we want him.”

Struggling against the claws digging harshly into his abdomen, Mr. Yagi continues to fight on, “If this is the best you could come up with, then you picked the wrong place to attack, you should just give up now!”

This apparently doesn’t sit well with Tomura as he once again begins to pick at his skin compulsively.

“Kurogiri” he snaps sharply.

The warp demon responds in kind as the Nomu begins dragging All Might into one of his warp gates.

“Normally I wouldn’t want blood and viscera flooding the insides of my warp gates, but I’ll make an exception for a hero as great as you,” the warp demon taunts, “Since you’re too fast to see with the human eye, Nomu had to restrain you, but once he’s pulled you halfway through, I’ll squeeze the gate shut!”

This definitely seems to please Tomura as his hands still and fall to his sides.

“I’m going to enjoy tearing you to pieces!” Kurogiri intones coldly.

----
One glance at Todoroki was all the warning they’d had.

There was just no way in hell Katsuki was going to sit back and let this happen.

Quick as a bullet, with what little energy he had left, the blond propels himself back into action.

Taking advantage of warp demon’s inattention, he manages to find purchase against the metal plate protecting what ‘should’ be his neck and blasts Kurogiri straight into the ground, finally effectively stunning him.

“Guess I found your body that time, didn’t I? You smokey bastard!”

Never one to be too far behind, Todoroki once again, swoops in and freezes the Nomu in place, allowing for All Might to gain the advantage and pull himself free.

“The symbol of peace will not be defeated by delinquents like you,” Todoroki informs them, his expression one of cold resolve, despite his obvious discomfort.

“Kurogiri,” Tomura chastises, once again visibly shaking, “how could you let this brat get the best of you!?”

“Heh, you got careless you dumb villain! It wasn’t hard to figure you out. Only certain parts of you turn into that smoking warp gate. You use that mist to hide your actual body, as a kind of distraction, thinking that made you safe. That’s why every time we’d tried to take a swing at you, we’d miss. But if you didn’t have a body you wouldn’t be wearing this neck armor right? You’re clearly not immune to physical attacks if they’re well aimed!” Katsuki retorts haughtily.

As Kurogiri begins to seethe and struggle, Katsuki sets off another string of small explosions as a warning, allowing him to tighten his hold on the villain.

“DON’T MOVE,” The blond barks, “you try anything funny and I’ll blow your ass up so bad they’ll be piecing you back together for weeks!”

“Well, now doesn’t that sound heroic,” Tomura Shigaraki retorts, sounding almost as amused as he did pissed, “kids these days really are amazing. You all had every chance to escape with your lives and yet you throw yourselves back into the fray and capture two of my best men. You make the League of Villains look like a bunch of amateurs, we can’t have that... NOMU!”

Breaking free from Todoroki’s ice; the creature, much to everyone’s horror, lets out a loud shrill shriek and begins pulling itself out of Kurogiri’s warp gate minus an arm and a leg.

As it manages to pull itself upright, it’s highly contracted eyes zero in on them immediately.

“How is that thing still moving?” Kirishima balks, his face pinched in morbid curiosity, “It’s missing an arm and leg, that is insane!”

“Everyone, get back!” Their teacher calls out.

Even though Mr. Yagi was urging them to escape, none of them could find the will to move as each of them watched in horror as the creature known as Nomu, literally grew back its own missing appendages.

“What is this? I thought you said it’s quirk was shock absorption?!” All Might calls out to Tomura, applying pressure to his injured abdomen.
“I never said that was his *only* quirk,” the villain replies with satisfaction, “he also has super regeneration. Nomu has been modified to take you on, even at 100% of your power, he’s basically a highly efficient punching bag that hits back.”

Just what the hell was this thing?

Katsuki knew it wasn’t human, but apparently, it had multiple quirks too?

As if that were even possible?

After giving this further thought, it made sense, seeing as none of his explosions had any effect on the creature.

All of his and his classmates attacks probably felt like nothing but tickles to the thing, as if that weren’t scary enough, it was able to grow back its limbs?

“Looks like we’ll need to free our method of escape,” the villain shrugs, “*kill the brat, Nomu.*”

----

Taking advantage of their shock, the Nomu barrels forward at an alarming speed, heading right for him.

With barely any time to brace himself, Katsuki feels something strange, like an almost floaty feeling before he hits the ground hard and rolls to a stop next to his three shocked classmates.

Impact tremors shake the very facility around them as dust kicks up all around where he’d just been crouching.

“Whoa, dude! How did you dodge him?!” Kirishima exclaims with equal amounts of shock and worry.

As Katsuki gathers his wits about him, he shakes his head, “it wasn’t me…”

“Huh, then how?” The redhead blinks, turning his head in the direction Todoroki points.

“Isn’t it obvious?” The bi-colored boy replies, looking as dumbfounded as the rest of them.

In the midst of the smoke was none other than All Might, who’d apparently been pushed back with the sheer amount of force that the Nomu had struck him with.

If their teacher hadn’t reached him in time, he’d have been nothing but a stain in the dirt.

Coughs begin to wrack Mr. Yagi’s muscled form as the older man clears some of the blood from his mouth.

Katsuki clenches his fists guiltily.

‘*All Might…’*

“So…” Tomura ponders thoughtfully, “you protected the child, huh?” the villain’s exposed vermilion eye takes on an even more crazed gleam.

Catching his breath All Might replies angrily, “these are *kids* and you didn’t hold back?!”

“He didn’t leave me much choice, he was threatening our comrade and besides these kids are no
"angels," the villain argues. “The blond one, in particular, tried killing me earlier with a maxed out explosion, tell me, what kind of hero does that? You think you can get away with being as violent as you want if you say it's for the sake of others, well you know what All Might?” Tomura gestures wildly.

“That pisses me off. Why do people get to decide that some violent acts are heroic and others are villainous?! Casting judgment as to what’s good or what’s evil. You think you’re the symbol of peace?” He laughs humorlessly, “you’re nothing but a government-sponsored instrument of violence. And violence always breeds more violence. I’ll make sure the world understands that once you're dead!”

“You’re nothing but a lunatic,” Mr. Yagi counters, “criminals like you, you always try to make your actions sound noble. But admit it! You’re only doing this because you like it, isn’t that right?!”

A crazed laugh fills the air as a pair of partially obscured vermilion eyes narrow. “He’s got me all figured out…” the villain admits cruelly.

“We’ve got them outnumbered,” Todoroki says suddenly, his heterochromatic eyes filled with determination.

“And Bakugou found Kurogiri’s weakness,” Tokoyami agrees.

“These dudes may be tough, but we can take them down now, with All Might’s help,” Kirishima affirms, hardening his arms in preparation for a fight, “let’s do this!”

“DON’T ATTACK,” All Might orders them.

Katsuki eyes him carefully.

“Get out of here!” He urges them yet again.

“You’d have been in trouble earlier if we didn’t show up to help,” Todoroki argues.

“I thank you for your assistance,” All Might says hastily, “but this is different. Just sit back and watch a pro at work!”

Katsuki’s jaw clenches in frustration.

Mr. Yagi was being an idiot.

He couldn’t possibly have much time left in that form.

“Don’t be stupid!” the blond calls out, hot-headedly, “you’re injured and bleeding!”

The only response he receives is yet another thumbs up.

“Nomu, Kurogiri, kill him, I’ll handle the children,” Shigaraki orders, “let’s clear this level and go home.”

All Might stands his ground as the three begin to charge.

“Head’s up guys! Looks like we're fighting after all!” Kirishima says quickly, bracing himself.

At that moment, Katsuki feels a shift in the atmosphere.

Something different ignites within their teacher.
Something he’s never felt or seen from the man.

And for just that moment, Katsuki felt like he was 4 years old again.

Watching grainy videos, alongside Deku.

Videos of All Might, the Symbol of Peace, saving people and beating up bad guys.

In that moment…

Just as his teacher collides with the monster that is Nomu…

Just as they are all swept off of their feet and thrown at least 30 feet back.

Katsuki was reminded of exactly who Mr. Yagi was.

----

The fight was like nothing he’d ever seen.

It was both terrifying and exhilarating to behold.

Watching as his childhood hero, went above and beyond his limits, to put a stop to the villains that terrified their class and who’d laid waste to their training field, Katsuki staggers back in awe.

“Weren’t you listening?! One of his quirks is shock absorption!” The villain reminds him angrily, as he too, tries to stand to his feet.

“Yeah? What about it?!” All Might retorts, continuing to fight on.

Their hits were targeted and powerful.

Each one sending out blast after blast of kinetic energy.

“No! I can’t get near them!” Kurogiri shouts in frustration as his misty body was thrown back by the sheer force of their fighting blows.

“He said your quirk was shock absorption, *not* nullification! Which means there’s a limit to how much you can take, right?!” Mr. Yagi retorts observantly.

Each hit that rebounds off of the Nomu’s body ripples as the hero continues to wail on him without reservation.

Nomu somehow manages to land a hard hit of his own to Mr. Yagi’s weakened ribcage.

Katsuki winces despite himself at the sight.

This doesn’t seem to stop their teacher.

Shockwave after shockwave rocks the courtyard as he struggles to keep his balance, only for him to land on his knees next to Kirishima, who seemed equally enraptured.

All Might was a literal force of nature as he began pushing the Nomu back, kicking up debris as they went.

“So you were designed to take me on, huh, big guy?! If you can withstand my attacks at one hundred percent of my power, then I guess I’ll have to go beyond that and force you to surrender!”
Finally, their battle seemed like it was coming to a head.

Tomura growls with frustration as his plans crumbled around him.

“A real hero, will always find a way for justice to be served!” Mr. Yagi bellows as he throws the airborne Nomu straight into the ground, creating fractures and fissures upon impact.

But still, All Might does not let up.

As the creature attempts to stand, Mr. Yagi lands heavily in front of him, stalking forward with confidence.

“Now for a lesson! You may have heard these words before, but I’ll show you what they really mean!”

He pulls his arm in tightly, poised for one final blow.

“GO BEYOND! PLUS ULTRA AAAA!”

And with that final striking blow, the Nomu was sent flying into the air, crashing right through the reinforced dome window and out of the USJ.

----

As the dust began to settle and as All Might fought to catch his breath, the apparent leader of the League of Villains quakes with rage.

“That was like the finishing move in a video game!” The redhead gushes, “he beat the shock absorption right out of him! I’ve never seen such brute strength!”

“Imagine… having power like that,” Katsuki admits, “he must’ve been punching that monster so fast he couldn’t regenerate.”

“He really is the best…” Todoroki admits quietly.

“That’s how you get to be a pro,” Katsuki agrees, his eyes still wide as saucers.

Tokoyami nods quietly in agreement, clearly in just as much shock.

All Might had managed to defeat, the seemingly undefeatable.

“All really have gotten weaker,” All Might admits with his trademark grin, “Back in my heyday, 5 hits would’ve been enough to knock that guy out, but today it took more than 300 mighty blows!”

This only serves to further incite and piss Shigaraki off even more, as the guy literally looked like he was going to vibrate out of his skin.

“You’ve been bested villains! Surrender, we all want to get this over with quickly!” Mr. Yagi states firmly.

And like that, Katsuki’s shock instantly fades, suddenly reminded yet again, of Mr. Yagi’s predicament.

To anyone else, it simply looked like the dust settling around him, but Katsuki knew the tell-tale steam that indicated his teacher was out of time.
He’d seen it enough times over the last few months to know.

“No. Nonono! He beat me! He isn’t any weaker at all! And look what he did to my Nomu! He cheated,” the grey-haired villain seethes like an angry child.

In a fit, he begins to once again pick at his skin.

“What’s wrong? Not going to attack me? Didn’t you say you were going to clear this level earlier?!?” All Might antagonizes them, “well come and get me, if you dare!”

What the hell was he doing?

The guy was out of time, surely he wasn’t stupid enough to incite another fight?

Katsuki tenses next to Kirishima, watching with bated breath.

No.

That couldn’t be it.

He knew he was out of time, so… that meant he had to be bluffing.

Was he trying to buy time?

On a whim, Katsuki pulls his phone out of his pocket.

Noting that while it was waterproof, cracks still splintered across the screen.

He guessed it must’ve cracked during one of their fights.

‘Oh well…’

He just needed it to work long enough to confirm something anyway.

Opening his lock screen he finds that his phone only had 6% left of its battery life.

He quickly opens his messages.

Sighing in relief, he sees that his texts had definitely gone through.

This likely meant that the cops and more pros were on the way.

All Might wouldn’t have come alone like this without a plan.

Help was coming, they’d just had to stall long enough for them to arrive.

“If only Nomu was here,” Tomura hisses in frustration, scratching at his neck, leaving red streaking welts behind, “he’d rush you right now and pound you into the ground without a second thought!”

“What? Are you too good to get your own hands dirty?! All you’ve done all day is whine and sick your pet monster on a group of kids, some villain you are!” Katsuki shouts, drawing their attention.

“Kurogiri… that kid makes me sick, do something about it!”

The black mass that was their warp gate hesitates.

“Yeah, it’s just a matter of time before more pros show up and lock all of you guy’s up!” Kirishima
joins in, clearly having caught on.

“You cannot win here!” All Might reiterates, “surrender now!”

“Tomura Shigaraki, it is with great reluctance that I advise you, stand down. We can do this another day,” Kurogiri attempts to reason.

Just as the grey-haired villain was about to make a retort, gunshots ring out all around them.

Some make direct contact with Tomura Shigaraki, dropping the villain to his knees.

All of them swing around in time to find that the rest of U.A.’s staff had indeed arrived.

“Spread out and protect the students!” Principal Nezu calls out.

“Goddamnit!” Tomura cries out, bleeding from various bullet wounds, “This isn’t over, you hear me! You and these fucking brats are dead! DEAD!”

Just as more shots are fired, both Kurogiri and Tomura disappear from sight.

----

As the dust settled; not counting Tomura Shigaraki and Kurogiri, 84 villains were apprehended and arrested, including the Nomu, who’d later be found in the surrounding forest, incapacitated.

With each of their teachers here, scouring the facility; as Todoroki would point out, the rest of their school must not have been involved in the attack.

After it was confirmed that the area was secure, each of the students who weren’t seriously injured were gathered outside of the facility’s main entrance.

Several EMS vehicles and police cars surrounded the area.

Taping off the crime scene, the authorities managed to control the media and take statements from each of the students involved.

This alone gave the four of them peace of mind.

After the day’s events, Katsuki, Kirishima, Todoroki and Tokoyami all hovered close.

Not straying too far unless asked.

Each of them probably still felt on edge.

Katsuki knew for a fact that he himself did.

Soon, they were wheeling Thirteen and Mr. Aizawa out of the facility on stretchers.

Jumping to his feet, Katsuki pulls away from the EMT that was wrapping his arms and runs over to Mr. Aizawa’s prone form.

“Will he be okay?” He asks the paramedic urgently.

“For now, he’s stable, but we’ll have to get him to the hospital in order to understand the extent of the damage, I’m sorry, that’s all I can say,” the paramedic explains.

Katsuki nods vaguely, watching as they loaded the dark-haired man into the back of the ambulance.
He jolts suddenly when he feels a warm hand settle on his shoulder, as he twists around he finds none other than Kirishima, grinning at him nervously.

“C’mon dude, you’re hurt, you’ve got to let them wrap you up. Mr. Aizawa will be fine,” the redhead encourages him.

Shaking him off, Katsuki gives him a curt nod.

“Whatever…” he gripes quietly.

He was feeling too raw to try and argue.

As he makes his way back over to the awaiting EMT, a familiar voice leaves him bristling.

As he rubbernecks, he finds none other than his mother, not but 40 feet away, arguing with a police officer.

“What... on earth?” Kirishima wonders aloud, clearly confused as to what shook him up so badly.

“I already told you, goddamnit! My child is over there and I’ll be damned if you’re going to keep him from me!”

“Ma’am, please calm down. I understand your concern,” the officer tries again.

“Concern?! My Concern?! You haven’t even seen my concern! Let. Me. Through,” she barks angrily.

Katsuki pinches the bridge of his nose.

He felt a massive migraine coming on.

Of course, Deku would tell her.

The redhead’s eyes widen upon further inspection.

“No way!” He shouts, turning quickly as he eyes Katsuki brightly, “dude, is that your mom?! So that’s where you get it from! It all makes so much sense now!”

Katsuki elbow jabs the loser in the stomach before he stomps off, listening to the asshole’s ensuing laughter.

As he approaches his still violent and seething mother, he hears yet another familiar voice.

One that gives him pause.

“A-aunty p-please!” Izuku attempts to calm the raging beast that was his mother, “y-you’re just going t-to g-get y-yourself arr-arrested!”

The poor kid was so flustered he could barely talk.

For a frightening fraction of a second, his mother calms and rounds on the forest-haired boy.

“Izu, honey, let me handle this, okay?” She says with a warm smile that literally makes the kid’s nerves wither and fray.

Katsuki would know that nervous wobbly smile anywhere.
When the two of them finally lock eyes, both of them still.

Steady crimson eyes meet a green so bright, yet so dense and dark, they were like a vast forest, unexplored.

A strange sense of urgency seems to overtake them both.

It would seem that in that moment, not even Izuku would abide the law.

The kid literally ducks under the caution tape in the middle of his mother’s rampage and bolts right for him, much to the surprise and chagrin of the officer who’d been holding them back.

Tossing aside a pair of crutches Katsuki hadn’t even realized he’d been using, Izuku stumbles the rest of the way over to him, literally crashing him into the tightest hug his recovering arms could muster.

Katsuki knew for a fact; that regardless of having the wind knocked out of him, he’d likely still have been left just as breathless.

And as those unruly loose green curls tuck tightly under his chin; as unsteady hands cling tightly to his back, he knew for a fact that he’d gladly suffocate.

As Katsuki winds his injured arms carefully around Izuku’s waist, he finds that for the first time that day, he could actually finally calm down and breathe.

Nothing else seemed to matter.

Not a thing could break this sense of safety.

And Katsuki could finally admit to himself that it felt like home.

They stood like this for a while as the rest of the world seemed to dissolve around them.

As they finally pull apart, Izuku’s watery eyes search his.

What they were looking for, he didn’t know, but apparently, he finds it as he raises an unsteady hand and settles it across Katsuki’s bruised cheek.

“Are you okay?” he signs hesitantly, one-handedly.

“I am now,” he signs back.

He didn’t know how long they stood there, but it must’ve been well past Izuku’s limit, as his legs began to give out from beneath him.

Katsuki takes care to steady him as best as he could.

“Where’s your wheelchair?” he asks after a moment.

“You were literally attacked by villains and you’re worried about my wheelchair?” Izuku huffs in what seemed like an amalgamation of disbelief and amusement.

Katsuki simply shrugs.
Izuku rolls his eyes, before looking down and off to the side at his fallen crutches, his freckled cheeks a tad bit flushed, “I wanted to surprise you, plus… getting a wheelchair through that media circus would have been like trying to part the sea. Nigh impossible, but it is in the car,” he admits.

“Tch…” he chides, suddenly reminded of how he’d gotten there, “of course you’d bring the hag here, what part of this plan made you think that that was a good idea?”

Izuku gives his upper arm a pointed whack, careful not to hit any of his more obvious injuries, “Uh, the part where she’s your mother? I’ll have you know, she is very worried about you! I couldn’t get her to go the speed limit even if I tried, she made that 40-minute drive into at least a 20-minute one! It was terrifying,” he laughs, gesturing wildly.

“She’s probably more terrifying than those villains were, my classmates are gonna be scarred for life…” Katsuki mutters in response.

“Well, we already deal with you, I think we’ll live!” A bright voice comes from alongside them.

Just as Katsuki was about to work himself up into a rant, Izuku puts a hand in front of his mouth effectively cutting him off, addressing the redhead who’d apparently been kind enough to grab his crutches and bring them over to him.

“Hi, there!” the redhead waves nervously before shyly scratching at the back of his spiky hair.

“H-hi,” Izuku replies verbally and unconsciously in sign, gratefully accepting his crutches, “t-thank y-you,” he says quietly, feeling a bit shy himself.

It was then that he'd noticed that all around them; other than the emergency service workers, curious eyes were trained on them.

Including a pair of wide familiar heterochromatic eyes not far from him.

“Todoroki!” Izuku calls out suddenly and much to Katsuki’s annoyance, he pulls away and begins to hobble over to the confused kid quickly, enveloping him in a tight hug as well.

Katsuki crosses his arms over his chest with a huff as he follows behind, making sure Izuku didn’t fall along the way.

Kirishima watches this with a delightfully curious grin.

“Midoriya, what on earth are you doing here?” The bi-colored boy asks in disbelief.

“I got your message and I couldn’t just sit by! Oh my god, you’re freezing, are you hurt, are you okay? What happened? Can’t you regulate your own heat? Holy crap, you’re covered in cuts and bruises, have you seen an emt yet? What’d they say?” Izuku goes off on a JSL tangent.

“Uh, translation?” the boy asks Katsuki desperately, his voice full of unease.

Apparently, the kid didn’t get hugged that often.

He literally looked like a deer in the headlights.

“He said you were cold as a fucking popsicle and should seek medical attention,” he replies with a disgruntled shrug.

Todoroki eyes Izuku skeptically.
The forested boy just smiles, shrugs, and shakes his head.

Seeming to accept his fate, the bi-colored boy gives Izuku’s back a reassuring pat, “I’ll be fine, I just overexerted myself, I just need rest. You... can let me go now. Bakugou looks like he’s going to blow a gasket.”

“S-sorry,” Izuku says with a nervous smile.

“GET BENT ICYHOT,” Katsuki fumes before bristling.

He could feel her before he could see her.

“Bakugou Louise Katsuki! Get your ass over here and let EMS take care of you!” His mother shouts, finally having bullied the police officer into letting her through.

The poor man never stood a chance.

And neither did he for that matter, as he was dragged off, kicking and screaming.

Todoroki simply resigns himself, once again to his fate, and helps Izuku walk over to join them.

----

“Wow… what an energetic family, I can definitely see who he takes after!” The redhead from earlier laughs.

“N-no kidding,” Izuku agrees, trying and failing to contain his stammering, “h-he u-used to be m-much w-worse.”

The pair watch in contented amusement as Katsuki literally struggles against his mother and the emt.

Izuku shakes his head.

“So, not gonna lie dude, I’m really curious now. I heard Todoroki and Bakugou mention a ‘Midoriya’ earlier, is that you?”

The bi-colored boy merely watches them drowsily from his seat next to Izuku. Trying and failing to keep his head upright.

Izuku nods earnestly, his face clearly flushed, “t-they m-mentioned me?”

“Yeah! I gotta say, it instantly chilled Bakugou out. I’ve never seen anything like it. This situation could’ve gotten a lot worse, but Todoroki said something to him about you and he totally 180’d. He took control of the situation like a pro,” the redhead relays.

“Oh… u-um, I…”

“He was being a hotheaded idiot again, I just asked him what you’d do in the situation,” Todoroki relays tiredly.

“R-really?” The forested boy asks in surprise.

“Yeah!” The redhead replies as both he and Todoroki nod.

“W-wow, I- I never s-suspected I’d h-have that kind of e-effect on him,” Izuku knew he was full on blushing now, there were no two ways about it.
He probably looked like a mess.

“Hmm… more than you’d think,” the heterochromatic boy replies, deadpan as always, before his eyes finally slip closed.

As his head slumped over onto his shoulder, Izuku didn't have the heart to move him.

“Oh!” the redhead exclaims suddenly, Izuku perks up, eyeing him nervously.

Suddenly the redheaded boy is extremely close, thoroughly invading his space, as though examining every square inch of him.

“U-uhm… w-what-” Izuku stammers.

“I think I get it now!” He continues with excitement, “you’re the soft spot!”

“I-I’m the… c-come a-again?”

“Back the fuck up Shitty Hair, what the fuck do you think you’re doing?!” Katsuki barks as he stalks over to them. Pulling Izuku up like he weighed nothing, he tucks him firmly into his side.

Izuku literally felt dizzy with embarrassment and a little concerned for Todoroki who slumped onto the concrete, amazingly, still asleep.

With the knowledge that Kacchan had taken his advice.

Knowing that he’d inadvertently calmed him down.

As he was literally glued to the hotheaded boy’s side, as he argued with what was clearly a new friend, Izuku couldn’t help but feel warm and happy.

He was so relieved his friends and their classmates were safe.

----

In the distance, in a bastion hidden not far from the U.A. facility, vermilion eyes narrow to slits.
Moving Forward

Chapter Summary

“Why did you start bringing me flowers?” Izuku asks suddenly.

This was the last question he’d expected.

He expected much, much worse.

Chapter Notes

Feelings and fluff.

You have been warned.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

After the events that took place at the USJ, each student was thoroughly evaluated by Granny Chiyo and sent home with a referral for counseling; should they choose to pursue it. During this time, U.A. closed its doors for two days in light of a thorough campus-wide investigation, which was held by none other than Detective Tsukauchi.

Katsuki took this for the break that it was and decided to spend his two days of freedom with Izuku, considering his mother was being extremely hyper-vigilant.

“MOM! Seriously, for the last time, I am fine! I don’t need any ointment, my arms are fine. I don’t need any additional counseling, I can text Enatsu. What I need is a goddamn break,” Katsuki sighs heavily, as he attempts to get through the front door.

His mother frowns, clearly displeased with his general reluctance.

She might’ve been aloof and generally as ornery as him more often than not, but at her core, she was a worrywart. A very aggressively caring worrywart, with a penchant for smothering him.

In retrospect, he supposed he could see why. He was a bit of a worrywart himself, but he seriously needed some air.

“Text me. Every hour. If you need a ride, let me know,” she relents firmly.

“I’ll text you every 2 hours. I’m taking the train, I’ll be fine,” he counters.

The both of them stood there glaring at one another with an evenly matched ferocity. Neither of them were willing to back down.

Masaru let this go on for exactly one minute before throwing his hands up and declaring an
intervention.

“Oh for Pete’s sake! Text her every hour and a half, here’s some money for a cab if you need it,” his father usurps them, shoving money into Katsuki’s jacket pocket.

“Fine,” Katsuki agrees begrudgingly.

He never could argue with his Dad and neither could his Mom, he was their kryptonite.

“Fine,” his mother replied grouchily. Crossing her arms against her chest, she steps away from the threshold and lets Katsuki go.

“YOU BETTER BE BACK BEFORE DARK OR YOUR ASS IS GRASS!” His mother calls out as he makes his way toward their front gate.

“What she *means* to say is, I love you, be safe!” His dad translates.

Katsuki snorts despite himself, finally making his way out onto the sidewalk, “you don’t gotta tell me, Dad! I speak *Hag*."

His mother barely has time to fume before she’s dragged back into the house.

----
i'm coming over

Thanks for the warning!
careful, i think dick fever is spreading, you might've caught it.

I had to have caught it from somewhere. I wonder. :P

what have i done to you? you used to be such a sweet child

roaming around like some fruity faun in the meadow
Was that a gay joke? How original. (စိုး )

been a while since i used one, call me nostalgic.

There are things I could call you, but none are nostalgic, that's for sure. x'D

you wound me. deep in my soulless core, a tiny baby kacchan is weeping

Crap, you have one of those?! >:D
I'm guessing your mom let you off house arrest?

dad swooped in like a white knight

Lucky break!

When will you be here? I've got an MRI scheduled for today. D:

I'm almost to the station, so about 20 minutes?

What time do you have to go?
9:49 AM

It's at 10:30. I'm not looking forward to it. :( 

i'll go with you

You're the best. :D Although, they might make you stay in the waiting room? I think they only allow one person inside because of the radiation.

i know, i remember. i've been to a few of these with you before.

9:51 AM

You have?
getting on the train. and sure i have, been with you since day one.

You know... every day you surprise me more and more.

how so?

You're just incredibly sweet. Y'know, deep down... under that gruff, blasty, personality.

must be all the nitroglycerin...

OMG! YOU'RE SUCH A DORK!

9:53 AM
Says the kid with an All Might shrine in his room.

D
Wait, I have an All Might shrine???

...you don't remember?

Of course not, I have a new room, I literally have no idea 'what' is in there lol!

D
...well, the shrine still exists

Wait... did you decorate my room for me?

9:56 AM
When Katsuki finally arrived, Izuku and Aunty Inko were waiting in the facility parking lot.

“Hello, Katsuki,” Aunty smiles, greeting him with a warm hug, “it’s been a while since I’ve seen
you, I’m glad you’re okay after that scare yesterday.”

“Eh, it was bound to have happened one way or another. I am in the hero course for a reason, after all,” he shrugs.

“Even so!” she argues. Apparently, both of their mothers were going to be aggressively caring today. “You’re still just a kid. No one expects something like that during routine training.”

“I promise, I’m fine. Just like I told Mom, I just need a break,” he attempts to placate her.

He should’ve known he wouldn’t get off scot-free, their mothers were best friends who told each other everything. Hell, his mother probably already knew he was going with them.

“Alright, I’ll let it go, but at least talk to someone about it, if you need to, okay? Promise me?” She concedes, her brows creased with concern.

Seriously, these Midoriya’s…

Both of them wore their hearts on their sleeves.

Speaking of, Izuku was oddly silent, seemingly content to just watch them interact.

He helps Aunt Inko transfer him from his wheelchair to his crutches and then into the back seat of the car.

All the while, Katsuki could tell that the forested boy was silently abuzz with nerves.

The blond teen sinks into the back seat with him as Inko folds his wheelchair and puts it in the trunk.

“You okay?” He asks after a moment, analyzing the details of his face, right down to the very last freckle.

“Y-yeah,” he says finally, “s-sorry, just a l-little n-n... nervous.”

Katsuki’s lips purse into a not-quite frown.

Izuku has had many an MRI before, during his coma, his vegetative state, and even after he’s come out of it. While they weren’t the most ‘fun’ thing in the world, they weren’t the ‘worst’ either.

He was beginning to wonder what the actual underlying issue was.

He decided to cut straight past the red-tape and just ask.

“What’s so different about this time?”

Izuku turns his head, eyeing him nervously.

He was acting a little weird.

And he was a little more sassy than usual this morning.

Which, other than for sarcastic humor, was quickly becoming a kind of mask for him.

“C-can I-I… t-tell you after?”

He sounded so meek now.
Compared to earlier, this raised even more concern.

“Anything you need,” he agrees.

“T-thank you,” he breathes, wringing the fabric of their shared hoodie in his hands.

Katsuki decides to throw caution to the wind and simply takes one of his trembly hands into his own, giving it a reassuring squeeze.

They stay that way all the way to the clinic.

If Aunt Inko took notice of this, she didn’t mention a word.

---

Once they arrived and were taken into the back, it became increasingly clear why Izuku was so nervous.

As Izuku’s primary care physician walked into the room, the 3 of them greeted him fondly.

Dr. Russell was a Japanese-American born Navy doctor, who after his tour, decided to stay in Japan and practice medicine. He’d been a citizen here for about 20 years and he was honestly one of the best doctors Katsuki had the privilege of knowing.

He came highly recommended by Granny Chiyo and Mr. Yagi and it was clear to see why.

“Well! We have a full house today, don’t we! Bakugou, it’s good to see you,” the man greets him, offering his hand.

Katsuki gives it a polite shake.

After everything this man did for Izuku, he was damn well worth the respect.

“Hello, Ms. Midoriya, it’s a pleasure,” he says kindly, also offering her his hand, which she shakes as well.

“How are we doing Izuku, I can tell you’re not exactly thrilled to see me,” he says with a laugh.

“J-just a bit n-nervous i-is all,” he admits.

“Understandably so, Recovery Girl tells me you’ve been getting headaches and nosebleeds?” He asks as he reads his chart.

Katsuki’s eyes widen.

When he looks at Aunty Inko, it’s clear that this was news to her as well.

“How long has this been going on?” The doctor asks kindly.

“J-just a week o-or t-two. I-it doesn’t h-happen of-often… but i-it was e-enough times t-to m-make me want t-to check it o-out,” Izuku explains, almost guiltily.

He eyes both Inko and Katsuki, “I d-didn’t w-want t-t-” he switches to sign, “I didn’t want to worry you, so I asked Granny to keep it between us unless she thought it was a concern. When we talked about it, she decided to have me checked out, so she set up the appointment.”
“Honey…” Inko starts, her lips forming that tell-tale wobbly expression, “I understand that you didn’t want to worry us, but this is big. You know you can tell us when you’re not feeling well, right?”

She looks so downright sad, that Izuku stares down at his lap.

Katsuki didn’t know what to say.

He was kind of pissed… but it was an odd sort of pissed. More… worry than anything. Frustration maybe? Fucking hell… who even knew at this point?

Whatever it was, it clarified one of his fears, shedding a dreaded light onto it like none other.

Izuku was still willing to suffer in silence.

That alone was scary.

They told each other everything these days.

But to know that Izuku was keeping something like this to himself, absolutely floored him.

And just like that, something else occurred to him.

Izuku’s blatant and very obvious depression.

No one knew how much he remembered.

But not knowing was hardly any reason to believe that something like that could just ‘poof’ and disappear.

Izuku was bullied…

For years.

Not just by him, either...

And not just for being quirkless.

But for a multitude of reasons.

He must’ve remembered at least some of that.

All of them were so concerned about his physical health, that none of them even stopped to think about his mental health. They’d all simply decided to shelf that particular topic until after Izuku was physically better. Which, looking back on it… was negligent.

Depression didn’t just decide to get up and leave. It was a legitimate illness. It came and went as it pleased. Not caring if it were convenient.

Thinking about it now, Katsuki was less mad at Izuku for keeping his pain to himself and more mad at himself for not noticing.

People with mental health issues kept their ails to themselves out of the fear of burdening others. Whether they wanted to or not. This was just a fact. What was considered to be a small inconvenience to others, was like a mountain to those with depression or anxiety.
Very seldom, did people with these issues, reach out.

Whether out of fear itself, or fear of rejection, of being called a hypochondriac, or maybe even because they didn’t think their concerns or problems were valid enough.

Hell, Katsuki himself, could attest to that.

He hated talking about his feelings or his nightmares.

He hated living with what was clearly PTSD, but it was something he had to deal with every day.

Even if the day was a good one, things like these liked to lie in wait.

Thinking about it now, that was what was so different.

Izuku was acting weird because he was literally an amalgamation of his current and former selves trying to reconcile with one another.

The Izuku he knew now was a far cry from how he was before.

He was confident, sassy, steadfast, and determined to move forward.

Whereas before, he was timid, quiet, still sarcastic but less likely to voice his dislikes, and overburdened by his nerves.

“Deku, we’ll still talk later, okay?” He informs him.

He didn’t want Izuku to think he was upset with him, even if he was initially.

They needed to clear the air and they couldn’t be tensed up to do that.

As Dr. Russell gave Izuku a generalized check-up, they waited for the radiology technician to come by and take him back into the lab.

----

“Katsuki, would you be a dear and go with Izuku this time? I need to make a few calls,” Aunty Inko says, just as Izuku was called back.

He eyes her almost as curiously as Izuku, but doesn’t comment, “sure,” he agrees easily.

Taking a hold of Izuku’s wheelchair, he gives him a push and they follow the technician down the hall.

“D-do you t-think she’s m-mad?” Izuku asks nervously.

“Your Mom? No, she’s the last person that would be mad.” Katsuki replies, trying his best to keep himself from acting out emotionally.

That never ended well.

“...A-are y-you?” He asks quietly.

“Honest answer?” He replies with a shuddered sigh.

“P-please?”
“I was… but, I get it. I get why you’d keep it to yourself,” Katsuki confirms, reassuringly.

Izuku’s expression seems to shift at that.

His demeanor changes from being a bundle of nerves to something in between relief and curiosity.

As they reached the lab, the technician explains the process to Izuku and provides him with a gown, which Katsuki helped tie for him.

Helping Izuku transfer from his wheelchair and onto the sliding table of the machine, he gives him an encouraging nod.

“You’ll be okay, it’s probably nothing. The only thing 'abnormal' in there is probably how huge that walnut is,” he teases him.

Izuku huffs a laugh, rolling his eyes as he lays down on the cool table.

After being directed on where he can sit, Katsuki leaves Izuku’s side as told and keeps watch as the technician begins the process.

“Just try and keep calm, Midoriya, you’re doing great! You’ll have to keep as still as you can, it’ll be a little loud, but you can close your eyes if you want. Sometimes that helps people forget that they’re inside of an enclosed space,” the technician reassures him.

After about 30 minutes, Izuku is finally released from his loud confines.

Meeting one more time with Dr. Russell, they are told that it’d be about a day for the results to come back and that they’d give them a call when they did, after which, they were sent on their way.

----

Later that day, found the boys once again in the hospital garden.

Despite it being well into December and chilly, both boys decided that it would be a good idea to bundle up and get a blanket and lay it in the grass.

Sprawled out on top of All Might’s face, both of them were silent as they stared up at the overcast sky.

The weather reports had called for snow today and Izuku wanted to see it.

Rolling onto his side, Katsuki props his head up with his elbow, watching the boy in question with equal measures of concern and curiosity.

“Kacchan?” He says after a while.

“Hm?” he hums distractedly.

Izuku’s endless viridian eyes reflected the smokey clouds above, giving them an ethereal misty glow.

Watching the deep puffy clouds roll by through his eyes was almost completely entrancing.

“I-is… t-this real?” Izuku queries oddly.

Katsuki watches as Izuku watches him back.
As if gauging his reaction.

“Can I get a bit of context, or are you gonna leave me hanging?” He attempts to riposte, trying to alleviate the discomfort a loaded question like that could hold.

Izuku blinks, shaking his head as though clearing his thoughts, “I-it’s stupid… n-nevermind.”

This causes the blond to frown.

Katsuki sighs and reaches out, grabbing one of Izuku’s freckled cheeks and turning his head so that he faces him.

“Quit doing that shit,” he orders without heat.

Izuku scowls indignantly, which was honestly more humorous than it should’ve been.

He looked like an angry Shiba Inu.

“We’ve been over this, your glares are highly ineffective with those freckles,” Katsuki gestures at him vaguely, which makes Izuku crack the faintest of smiles.

“I’m not sure if you called me cute or not, there’s this strange disconnect there,” Izuku signs petulantly.

“Jury’s out on that one,” he replies with a smirk, which makes Izuku hide his face beneath his hands in an attempt to quell a laugh.

“You’re ridiculous,” he signs after a moment.

“And you’re being evasive,” Katsuki deadpans.

Izuku sighs and rolls onto his side, mirroring Katsuki.

As deep viridian met molten crimson, they simply watch one another carefully.

After a while, the forested boy raises a hand.

He hesitates, as though trying to find the words, his hand poised in midair.

Katsuki gives him as much time as he needs, despite his own impatience.

“Sometimes,” he signs slowly, “I don’t feel like any of this is real.”

Katsuki tries to swallow around the growing lump in his throat.

“Sometimes, I feel like… I’m lost in some… fantastic dream. That none of this is real, or that… maybe I died and this is some kind of afterlife.” Izuku signs carefully, avoiding Katsuki’s gaze.

“Sometimes I wonder if I ever even woke up. Because it feels like I’m dreaming this. Like this is some… fever dream and not reality,” he explains.

"Izu-" he attempts, but cuts himself off, watching those dexterous fingers move with a growing grace as they spilled the younger boys secrets.

If there was one thing he’d never been able to tell, it was what Izuku was thinking.
But… then I remember why it couldn’t be a dream. And reality comes crashing back down on me. If this were a dream or some kind of afterlife, I’d be able to talk. I wouldn’t be struggling so hard to do basic things that everyone else could do. Things that I never knew I’d taken for granted.”

Izuku’s eyes begin to shine with tears he was trying so hard to hold back, his hands begin to tremble under the strain.

Katsuki wanted nothing more than to give him what he wanted.

Wanted nothing more than to just reach out and make him better, but he knew that wasn't possible.

"You're doing so much better than you think, don't sell yourself short," he attempts to encourage him.

Because it was true.

This whole situation was already so much better than it could have been.

Despite the struggles, Izuku was making strides in retaking his life.

Part of him wanted to shake him and make the kid see that.

“Why did you start bringing me flowers?” Izuku asks suddenly.

This was the last question he’d expected.

He expected much, much worse.

“Honestly? ...I really don’t know,” he admits, much to Izuku’s confusion.

He holds up a hand in pause, “actually… that came out wrong. I know why I did it, but I don’t know why I chose that out of literally every other option.”

Izuku laughs at that, tears spilling down his cheeks as his eyes crinkle, “there were... more options?”

“It’s me we’re talking about. I have plans A through Z figured out long in advance,” Katsuki jokes indignantly.

Izuku both laughs and sniffles at the same time, at that, rubbing his palms against his eyes, puffy viridian eyes lock with steadfast crimson, “Regardless, of what you chose… why? Why me? Why now?”

He reaches between them and grasps one of Izuku’s cool hands.

“You… did all that to get me to talk to you?” he signs carefully, watching Katsuki’s expression like a hawk.
“I watched you die, twice, Izuku. If there’s anything I know, it’s that this is no dream. You’re really here. It’s a second chance,” he reassures him, giving his hand a small squeeze.

"I thought to myself, if I was going to do this right, I had to start by applying effort. You deserve as much. I… was terrible to you. I was a shit friend to begin with, but it only got worse and I literally put you through hell. I never regretted the things I’d said to you more than when I almost lost my chance to apologize. A thousand flowers could never make that right, but it brought you back," he finishes sincerely.

“You’re not wrong…” he signs languidly with one hand.

"What about?" He asks curiously.

Izuku pulls his hand back, so as to better explain.

“I don’t know why, but when I started coming to, I didn't feel like trying. At all. I… I honestly just wanted to sleep and let time pass me by. Mom was trying so hard, I remember that now… all those first memories are so fuzzy. I just wanted to give up.”

Katsuki’s chest literally felt like it was going to burst into flames as Izuku confirmed his previous suspicions.

…but then you came walking in the door,” he continues, a small smile playing at his lips, "looking like you were going to combust if anyone saw you carrying that vase of flowers and I dunno. I feel like… I woke up. Like you woke me up and everything started to make sense again. Is that weird?" He asks with glassy eyes.

Katsuki was shit with emotions.

He couldn’t name them and didn’t care to.

But for once he wished he’d had a name for this one.

Because holy hell… it was something else…

“No… that's not weird. I want you to tell me things. No matter how bad they get. No matter how fucked up, or depressing, or… I dunno weird. Tell me those weird things, or good things. You... god, Izuku. You scared the shit out of your Mom today. We had no idea this was going on with you. In order to help you, we have to know, okay? Don’t just… bottle shit up. I won’t get mad, okay? And… if I do, I dunno you can punch me, but I promise I’ll try to understand before losing my shit, okay? If something like this is happening, we have to know. It could very well be nothing, but at the same time… what if it’s another brain bleed?"

“Kacchan, you're rambling,” Izuku interjects with some amusement.

“You know what… you're a goddamn hypocrite,” Katsuki replies haughtily.

At some point or another, they’d somehow gravitated closer, because Izuku rests his forehead against his chest, “I’m s-sorry I w-worried you,” he says eventually.

“I never said I was worried," Katsuki retorts, petulantly.

“You d-didn’t h-have to,” Izuku murmurs quietly, “I p-prom-mise.”

“Hm?”
“I… I p-promise to t-tell you,” Izuku agrees.

“You damn well better,” Katsuki breathes in relief.

Izuku simply nods against his chest.

As time goes by, the blond’s bandaged arm eventually slings across Izuku’s shoulder, pulling him closer.

As they begin to nod off, Katsuki vaguely wonders if maybe he took after his mother a lot more than he thought.

Did this count as aggressively caring for someone?

When they later awoke to the first flurries of the season falling all around them, it was anyone’s guess.

Chapter End Notes

And everyone exclaimed at once:
JUST FUCKING KISSSSSSSSsss

ヾ(・︶・)ノ'
(soonnotyetbutsoon)
The Progress We've Made

Chapter Summary

Eijiro didn’t even know if Bakugou knew he was coming today, but he could only hope he survived the ordeal if he were to find out.

Midoriya seemed confident that everything would be okay, but that didn’t quell his initial apprehension.

Chapter Notes

¡¡¡( •̀ ᴗ •́ )¡¡¡

I gotta say, guys...
This chapter is honestly my favorite.
I am sitting here gushing over it, gesturing wildly at my computer screen, at 2 am on work night, because I am so proud of it lmao.

I am such a dork.

I hope you all love it as much as me!
Gods... I need sleep...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Eijiro almost felt like he was breaking some sacred rule by coming here, but after having met Midoriya Izuku for the first time, he literally couldn’t resist the opportunity to get to know him and by extension; Bakugou, better.

So he’d offered him his social media information as a means to do this, not really expecting much.

Surprisingly, Midoriya took him up on his offer.

Since the incident about a week ago, they texted one another often.

Finally, when he’d gotten to the point where his questions seemed like they’d take hours long to convey, Midoriya offered to hang out with him.

Bakugou was always so cagey about where he went and what he did and really, it wasn’t any of his business, so he tried to respect that.

But now that he’d been given a literal invitation from who he’d begun to consider a ‘mutual friend,’ he felt himself literally buzz with excitement! He was being given insider access to his friend’s life and it felt like it literally bore its weight in gold!

Eijiro didn’t even know if Bakugou knew he was coming today, but he could only hope he survived the ordeal if he were to find out.
Midoriya seemed confident that everything would be okay, but that didn’t quell his initial apprehension.

As he approached the outpatient hospital where his newest friend resided, he couldn’t help but feel his curiosity grow.

“So this is U.A.’s rehabilitation center, huh?’

It was a lot more quaint and homey than he expected it to be.

Walking into the facility, he began to look around curiously.

“K-Kiris-shima!” A timid voice called out.

The redhead smiled brightly, finding the forest-haired boy sitting in the lobby, in a wheelchair.

“Hey man! Good to see you again!” He calls out as he approaches him.

Midoriya smiles back, seemingly just as excited.

Upon further inspection, he noticed a notebook and pen in his lap, in which the green-haired boy quickly jotted something down. After a moment, Midoriya eyes him and hands him the notebook.

Eijiro takes it and gives it a look.

‘I hope you don’t mind me writing my responses, I figured it might be less silly than texting one another in the same room. I do that with Todoroki and we just end up feeling really dumb.’

“Oh! Yeah, no, sure thing! This will work just fine!” he replies genuinely, handing the notebook back to him.

‘Great!’ he jots down quickly, smiling all the while.

Together, they head up to the floor Midoriya resided on and Eijiro followed him patiently as the boy wheeled himself to his room.

There weren’t very many things that he knew about Midoriya, other than that he was Bakugou’s childhood friend and that recently, he and Todoroki had somehow met and had become fast friends. Which honestly explained Bakugou’s odd hostility toward him. The dude was clearly jealous.

From the things he could infer on his own about the kid, he was clearly very sweet, he was sassy as hell, and he was more than likely deaf.

So Eijiro was really looking forward to getting to know the green-haired boy.

Upon entering what was sure to be his room, Eijiro was absolutely floored.

He was sure his mouth had hung wide open in awe as he looked around.

He didn’t know what he’d been expecting.

He guessed he expected it to look more like a hospital room.

And while it did in some ways, in others, it looked just like a tiny garden exploded all over the room. Plants and flowers of all kinds sat on the large bay window sill, or on metal spiral plant stands on the
floor. Some hung from wire baskets or were sat regally in a pretty glass vase on his bedside table. 

Other than electronics and various 'All Might' paraphernalia, plants encompassed the whole room. 

It was extremely wild, but also very welcoming. 

Instantly, Eijiro knew exactly what Bakugou had been doing in that flower shop. 

Hell, a lot of the plants he’d seen the guy carrying around after campus hours were sat in this very room, including the tiny Bonsai tree he and Kaminari saw him buy not too long ago. 

“Holy cow…” he utters after a minute.

Midoriya simply laughs a breathy kind of laugh. 

‘I get that reaction a lot.’ He admits, tapping his pen against the page in an attempt to get his attention.

“Dude… it all makes so much sense now,” Eijiro replies, staring wide-eyed at Midoriya. 

‘What does?’ he replies, his big expressive eyes full of curiosity.

Eijiro reaches out for a chair, before blinking and asking, “er, do you care if I?”

“N-no, g-go ahead,” the other boy replies verbally.

Eijiro takes a seat, still in absolute awe of all the plants strewn around the room.

Midoriya taps his pen against the pad of paper again, right near his previous question to remind him.

“Oh… uh… just Bakugou, I guess. I’ve seen him around school or after school hours so many times with plants. I always kind of wondered what he did with them, but…” he gestures to the room, “I guess I know now, huh?” he laughs kindly.

This brings a brighter smile to Midoriya’s face; if that were even possible.

He straightens himself upright in his wheelchair, in an attempt to get comfortable, before taking his time to respond.

‘Yeah, Kacchan got these for me.’ He explains simply.

“Kacchan?” Eijiro queries curiously.

Midoriya nods, quickly jotting down, ‘Katsuki’

Well shit, that was cute.

They really must’ve been close.

“Huh. I bet he just loves that name, doesn’t he?” he laughs lightly.

Midoriya shrugs, smiling widely.

“How come there are so many?” He gestures to the plants again, “you haven’t been here long, have you?” He seriously couldn’t contain his curiosity.

Midoriya seems to consider his answer as he chews his bottom lip.
He holds up a finger, indicating for him to hold on for a moment and began writing something down.

Hm, must’ve been a loaded question?

Eijiro sat quietly, still observing him and the room as he patiently waited for Midoriya’s response.

It comes in the form of a timid tap to his knee.

Taking the notepad, he’s absolutely stunned by what he sees.

‘A little over a year ago, I had an accident that left me with a brain injury. In order to save my life, I was put in a medically induced coma. After they brought me out of it, I was in what they’d called a ‘vegetative state.’ They didn’t know if I’d ever come out of it.

_During this time, Kacchan and my mom came to visit me every day._

_But nothing they did ever really got through to me. I’d respond here and there, but it wasn’t enough to declare me ‘fully’ conscious._

_But one day, Kacchan came in with a vase of flowers. Which, oddly enough, I remember this as clear as I’m seeing you now._

_And I dunno. It kind of snapped me out of it._

_After this, Kacchan brought me flowers and plants every day in an attempt to communicate with me and I dunno. I just got better._

_While it was still hard for me to communicate and do things for myself with the disuse of my arms and legs, Kacchan learned JSL with me so we could talk. It’s because of his help that I’ve made as much progress as I have._’

Eijiro stared at the notepad in his hands.

He stared and stared, reading each and every word about a zillion times.

Each time, those words held the same weight.

He honestly felt so choked up that tears began to well in his eyes.

In an attempt to gather himself, he begins to rub at his clearly runny nose.

A warm hand settles on his forearm and as he looks up, he finds Midoriya’s concerned expression.

“Oh!” he sniffs, rubbing his eyes quickly, “no man, it’s nothing! I’m okay… just. Wow. That was… a lot to process.”

Midoriya continues to eye him worriedly.

“Yeah, yeah, no man, I’m fine! Promise… I…” something settles in him then.

Looking at Midoriya closely, he couldn’t tell.

He’d never would have even guessed he’d been through so much.

Honestly, he’d just assumed he was deaf and happened to have broken his legs or something.

There was honestly no wonder at all, why Bakugou was so affected by him. There was no question
why he was so obviously fiercely protective. Or why simply hearing his name could bring him out of a full-on rage.

Looking at him now, Eijiro found that he had way more questions than he’d had answers.

But most of which felt too private to ask.

“Dude, I’m so glad you’re okay!” he finally manages, wholly sincerely.

As a wobbly smile crinkled Midoriya’s eyes, he knew one thing for certain…

He would undoubtedly do anything to keep this kid and Bakugou safe.

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Izuku was honestly really enjoying getting to know Kirishima.

The guy was really sweet and seemed to have a lot of heart.

He honestly didn’t know why Katsuki was so reluctant to make friends with him.

He was kind-hearted, he’d had a great sense of humor, and he was apparently very fond of Crimson Riot, of whom they’d both gushed over for a good hour.

He was all about being ‘manly’ too, which Izuku found to be pretty adorable.

Katsuki could be such a sourpuss sometimes, but Izuku was willing to bet his limited edition All Might comic #1, that Kirishima was growing on him. There was simply no way he wasn’t.

Although, that didn’t stop him from trying his best to act as reluctant as possible.

Because he was a giant brat.

As soon as Katsuki walked through the door, he’d tossed his hands up in the air and made a beeline for the hall, muttering an “Oh for fuck’s sake!”

Izuku tried his best not to laugh, giving Kirishima a placating wave, before calling out to his disgruntled best friend.

“Kacchan!” He hollers pointedly.

Hearing a resigned huff just outside the threshold, he knew his friend hadn’t gone far.

He walked back through the door, looking as surly and longsuffering as possible, complete with the cutest pout he could muster.

Not that Izuku would ever tell him that.

“You have got to stop bringing in strays,” the blond gripes.

“He’s had his shots, behave.” Izuku signs back petulantly.

This actually startles a chuckle out of him, which Izuku takes as an instant win.

“Somehow, I feel like I’ve become the butt of a joke,” Kirishima laughs awkwardly.

Izuku shrugs and writes down his reply.
'I let him know you’ve had your shots. I think he’s going to let me keep you.'

This actually startles a laugh out of Kirishima as well, which leaves Izuku feeling amazingly warm inside.

"Hey now, I never agreed to any of that shit," Katsuki mutters, looking at the notebook as he loomed over Kirishima’s shoulder.

“Oh c’mon man, it’s not like I have fleas, you let him keep Todoroki!” Kirishima argues, goodnaturedly.

“IcyHot doesn’t feel inclined to follow me around like a lost puppy, unlike someone,” the blond grumbles, crossing his arms over his chest.

“And here I thought we’d had a moment, kicking ass and taking names,” Kirishima pouts.

‘Well, I’ve decided. Look how loyal he is! We’re keeping him!’ Izuku writes quickly, grinning all the while.

Katsuki simply rolls his eyes, trying not to smirk and royally failing, while Kirishima fist pumps the air.

“Fine,” Katsuki relents begrudgingly, “but if he stays, the rest of the idiots he hangs out with are getting neutered.”

“Done!” Kirishima replies without hesitation, making Izuku laugh.

Since Mr. Aizawa was still in the hospital, the boys had relayed that Midnight, Present Mic, and All Might were taking up the slack and subbing his classes.

‘So, what’d you all do in class today?’ Izuku asks them curiously, bouncing excitedly in his wheelchair.

‘Dude, we totally got to choose Hero names today!’ Kirishima replies energetically.

Katsuki merely slumps over on Izuku’s bed and covers his head with a pillow.

The forested boy eyes him curiously.

‘I take it, it didn’t go so well for him?’ He inquires, passing his notebook to the grinning redhead.

“Not a chance!” He laughs.

A long-suffering groan manifests itself from under Izuku’s pillow.

‘Oh boy… what name did you end up choosing?’ Izuku replies, holding up the notebook as he began poking Katsuki’s side with his pen.

Kirishima watches in amusement as their explosive friend merely bats him away like an angry cat.

“I… went with Red Riot…” he replies shyly.

Izuku manages to save his pen from being tossed across the room and hastily scribbles, ‘REALLY??!’
“Yeah,” Kirishima confirms, scratching the back of his head nervously.

‘Dude, that is so cool!’ Izuku gushes.

“You think so?” The redhead asks with some hesitance.

‘Heck yeah! That’s like, an homage to Crimson Riot, right?’

“Yeah, definitely!” Kirishima replies with gaining enthusiasm.

Izuku turns in his wheelchair, prying his pillow off of Katsuki’s face, signing to him excitedly.

With a groan, Katsuki snatches the pillow back and proceeds to smother himself again.

“O-oh c-ome on!” Izuku gripes, “t-tell me!”

“Nope,” Katsuki deflects.

“W-why not?” Izuku pouts.

Kirishima is in stitches at this point.

“I’m guessing you asked him what he chose?” The redhead asks, wiping a tear from the corner of his eye.

Izuku nods emphatically as Katsuki springs up in the bed with a death threat in his eyes.

“You tell him and I’ll beat you to death with this pillow, Shitty Hair!”

Izuku promptly shakes his head no.

“Oh hell no! Do not listen to him,” Katsuki attempts to threaten him again.

“Oh geez… you’ve both got me in a bind here,” Kirishima laughs nervously.

‘Please?’ Izuku writes pitifully, working those big green eyes of his.

Kirishima begins to chew his bottom lip as his eyes flit to the image of death sitting in Izuku’s bed.

“You’re only protection is in this room and visiting hours are over at 8 o’clock,” the blond promises.

This startles a laugh out of Izuku, who attempts to wrestle the pillow from the brat in his bed, only for said brat to hold it high above his head.

Kirishima honestly didn’t know what to do with himself at this point.

Both of them had such compelling arguments.

“Okay, how about this? What if we play Charades and let him guess?” The redhead wagers.

“How do you take your pillows, cotton or feather stuffed?” Katsuki replies with a glare.

“Kacchan!” Izuku retorts, giving him a pointed smack on his thigh, which the blond elects to ignore, before signing, “quit threatening him with bodily harm and tell me what your goddamn hero name is!”

Katsuki seems to consider this for a moment.
His eyes flitting to the left with a scowl.

“I… don’t have one,” he mutters unintelligibly.

“Huh?” Izuku blinks.

Kirishima, having apparently understood him, bursts into laughter, much to the confusion of the forested boy.

“He…” the redhead tries to breathe, “he said he didn’t have one.”

This only seems to further confuse Izuku.

‘Care to elaborate?’ He writes out hastily and shows him before Katsuki could make good on his threats.

This only seems to make the redhead laugh even harder.

As Izuku’s pillow gets chucked right into the redheads face, the greenette couldn’t help but wonder how this visit became such a shitshow.

“I don’t have a goddamn hero name!” Katsuki roars.

“Why not?” Izuku signs, clearly unphased by his raging friend.

Like ice-melt to the snow, the rage ebbs from the blond, leaving a pout in its wake.

“I just don’t…?”

“…And that is because of what now?” Izuku gestures wildly.

“What I came up with didn’t make the cut,” he huffs.

“Come on, tell me what you came up with, please?” Izuku signs, once again using the full effect of those big greens of his.

Katsuki grumbles, pulling a piece of paper out of his backpack.

“Dude, you kept that!?” The redhead calls out in amusement from where he’d apparently landed on the floor.

“What the fuck else was I supposed to do with it?! I have to figure this shit out and turn it back in to Midnight by tomorrow!” He rages once again as he hands the paper to Izuku.

The greenette in question takes the paper carefully, turning it over in his hands to read it.

Looking down at the paper, Izuku sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose.

The blond in his bed bristles nervously.

No matter how many times he read it, it was still the same.

And what made it even funnier, was the fact that he’s clearly edited it from ‘King’ to ‘Lord.’

Izuku purses his lips as tightly as he can to keep from laughing.
“Lord Explosion Murder? Are you for real, right now?”

“FUCK OFF DEKU!” The blond rants, throwing his All Might comforter at him in retribution.

Seeing as it was getting late, Kirishima decided to bow out and head home, but had promised to come back and visit him again.

With a wave and well wishes, Izuku bids him goodbye.

Wheeling himself over to his bed, he finds that it’s still occupied by the still very irate ‘Lord Explosion Murder.’

He was never going to let that die.

Ever.

Pulling himself up out of his wheelchair, he steadies himself with the side of his bed, which in turn piqued Katsuki’s attention.

“Y-you don’t have t-to move,” he reassures him.

Izuku simply pulls himself up into his bed beside Katsuki, who scoots over enough to make some room.

Once settled, he nestles himself into Katsuki’s side.

This seems to make whatever residual irritation the blond had left visibly dissolve as he makes himself more comfortable.

“Of all the names to come up with, why in the world would you choose something that would make little kids cry?” Izuku signs to him, an amused smile playing at his lips.

“Tch…” Katsuki scoffs, turning onto his side so he could see him better, “hell if I know? It just sounded cool.”

Izuku arches a brow.

“Shut up,” the blond grumbles.

“I didn’t say anything,” the greenette retorts with a grin.

“You didn’t have to. I can feel the snark oozing off of you,” Katsuki replies with a pout.

“Well, I can’t fault you for choosing something ‘original’ at least,” Izuku relents.

This causes the blond to snort despite himself, “For real, some of the kids in my class just flat out chose their own names. IcyHot was one of them.”

Izuku rolls his eyes, he had a feeling that if he smiled any harder, his cheeks would fall off.

“Oh, he did. Hero ‘Shouto’ to the fucking rescue,” Katsuki jeers.
“I’m sorry, I don’t think ‘King Explosion Murder’ has the right to judge,” Izuku snarks back.

“Um, excuse me, but it’s ‘Lord’ Explosion Murder, get it right,” the blond ripostes.

“You ‘do’ know a Lord is lesser than a King, right?” The forested boy replies sassily.

“You know what, I think I’ve had about enough of your sass today, get bent,” Katsuki replies, sticking his tongue out at him as he flips him off.

“Why didn’t you make friends with Kirishima, sooner? He’s so sweet,” Izuku replies, switching subjects.

Katsuki grows quiet, causing Izuku to eye him curiously.

“I dunno…” he says quietly, “I guess it just didn’t occur to me to even try and make friends.”

“How come?” Izuku asks carefully.

Katsuki’s eyes lock with his. A whole slew of different emotions filtered through them at once, before settling on concern.

He’d talked about this once before with Enatsu.

The subject had left him feeling raw for days, but he came to understand his reasoning behind it.

As reluctant as he was to talk about it now, he also kind of felt that he owed Izuku at least that much of an explanation.

His expression settles on resignation.

“Other than you, which… hardly counts. I’ve never had any actual friends before,” he admits, “and after how I treated you, who was my friend, I guess I never really wanted to try once I got to U.A. It… never really felt right. I’m not exactly a people person. In… the way that I mean that I’m not sure how to act around them. I guess I just felt like I didn’t deserve to make friends.”

Izuku watches him carefully, reading the sincerity in his expression, his eyes, and in his voice.

“You know what I think?” Izuku signs to him slowly.

“Hm,” Katsuki grunts dejectedly.

“I think… that it’s better late than never,” Izuku replies.

“What do you mean?” The blond asks nervously.

“Breathe.” Izuku says simply, as he reaches out and gives both of Katsuki’s shoulders a reassuring squeeze.

“You’re… way more cryptic than usual, care to explain?”

Izuku shakes his head with a smile before pulling his hands away in order to reply.

“No one is beyond redemption, Kacchan, including you.” Izuku signs pointedly.

Katsuki’s eyes widen at that.
“I forgave you a long time ago, and you’re still so hard on yourself, which, I get. Everyone is their own worst enemy. But you deserve to have friends. Just because you messed up in the past, doesn’t mean you aren’t allowed to have a future. Our relationships with people help us grow. Don’t you think you’ve done a lot of growing?”

Katsuki’s sharp inhalation of air has Izuku leaning closer into his side.

“After everything I’ve done, why do you make it sound so easy? There are things that I’ve done that you probably don’t even remember…” the blond responds tightly around the growing lump in his throat.

“Kacchan, I m-might n-not be able t-to s-speak well, but I’m n-not blind. I’ve s-seen how far you’ve c-come, w-what makes y-you th-thing I c-could ign-nore what I see w-with my own eyes?”

Katsuki honestly didn’t know how to respond to that.

“I w-want you to be h-happy. T-to find the v-value in f-forming f-friendships, I th-think i-it’s good for you. W-we are so m-much better today, t-than we w-were b-before. D-don’t you t-think so?”

Katsuki would never admit it and he was sure that Izuku would never call him out on it either, but stubborn silent tears were threatening to fall with every blink.

Katsuki gives him a firm nod, not trusting himself to speak.

“What happened in the past, whether I remember it or not, is just that. In the past. I’m willing to move past that if you are. I don’t care about what happened back then, what I care about now, is getting out of this hospital room and joining you at U.A. I want to be by your side, so I can see what kind of hero ‘Lord,’ who is lesser than a King, ‘Explosion Murder,’ becomes.”

Katsuki snorts despite himself, shaking his head as he felt the traitorous tell-tale signs of tears stream down his cheeks.

“That name is so stupid…” he admits through that awful, also traitorous lump in his throat.

“Not gonna lie, I’ve basically been thinking up hero names for us since with were in diapers,” Izuku signs excitedly.

“Why am I not surprised?” he replies, rubbing his cheeks with his right hand, still not daring to look Izuku in the eye.

“U-uh… c-cause it’s me?” Izuku responds in a manner of fact.

“Okay, what’d you manage to come up with, oh wise nerd of olde?” He retorts, giving the forested boy his undivided attention.

“Well, I decided on Deku,” Izuku signs deliberately, with emphasis.

This gives Katsuki pause, “wait, why?”

“Because, back before our fallout, when you couldn't pronounce 'Izuku' right, Deku was more affectionate than anything. It was only after things started to change that you told me that it meant I was 'useless.' I wanted to prove to you that even a useless Deku could be a hero.”

Katsuki frowns at that.
Now that he thought about it, he *did* remember that.

He really was a shit friend, to take something affectionate, and turn it into something cruel.

“Well, it’s got a ring to it,” Katsuki eventually agrees, “but you’re *far* from useless. I’ve never seen you more determined.”

Izuku smiles at that.

“I picked one out for you too, are in interested in hearing it?” he signs with renewed excitement.

Katsuki sighs to himself, “it can’t be worse than what I already came up with.”

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When Katsuki arrived in class the next morning, he walked right up to Midnight and handed her the piece of paper from the day before.

“Well now,” she began with a smirk that could be heard in her voice.

“Are you sure this is what you want?” She eyes him skeptically, "this could very well follow you throughout your entire career..."

“I’ve never been more sure of anything in my life,” Katsuki admits, his eyes burning with determination.

“I love it!” his teacher exclaims, teeming with excitement.

“Now, go take your seat, *Ground Zero.*"

A hero name never felt so *right.*

Chapter End Notes

I tweaked the timeline a little bit, because I reeeeally wanted this to happen first!
Let me know what you all think! :D
Chapter Summary

“So, Mom…” he starts, fixing the older woman with a deadpan stare of his own, “don’t think I didn’t notice the little traps you and Aunty Mitsu set, I’d expect that from her, but you letting her do it takes the cake.”

Chapter Notes

HELLO MY DARLINGS~

I apologize for being so late in updating! Along with the stress of the holiday season, I not only have begun my CNA classes, but I also had a massive water leak that flooded my kitchen, ON YULE, no less, I was not pleased.

To say the least I have been busy as a bee!

Thank you all, those of you who’ve left kudos, bookmarks, comments, and those who have read and reread this story a thousand times. I truly appreciate you all! This story wouldn't be half of what it is, without your continued support! I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season, and I wish you all wealth, health, and a fabulous new year!

My gift to you is this extra long chapter~

As the month of December drew nearer to a close, Izuku studiously busied himself with wrapping up what was left of the last of his Middle School credits. This was made all the easier with the constant encouragement and occasional tutoring from Katsuki, Todoroki, and even Kirishima. With their help, Izuku was well on his way to becoming a U.A. student.

He had hopes that he’d finish by the end of December and be enrolled at U.A. by January.

He may still have to play ‘catch-up’ once enrolled, seeing as he'll have been half a semester behind, but at the very least, he’d be in the right spot.

Mr. Yagi seemed to have complete faith in his ability to advance with the rest of his peers in no time at all; and that alone was relieving. Knowing that his friends and Mr. Yagi held him in such high regard, made him feel warm in ways he’d only dreamed of experiencing.

It made all of his efforts feel all the more worth it.

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It’d been a day more than what was expected, but they’d finally received a call about the results of his MRI and Dr. Russell wanted to speak with him in person.
Together, he and his mother were sat in the lobby of his primary care physician’s office.

As they waited for the man to finally make an appearance Izuku busied himself with bouncing one of his legs anxiously, whilst wringing the ends Katsuki’s baggy sweater sleeves in his shaky hands.

The boy in question had wanted to be there today, but with some convincing, Izuku was able to coerce him into attending his classes, reassuring him that he’d be ‘just fine’ and that his mother would be with him.

Despite knowing that school was more important, the forested boy found that it was a bit lonely and more nerve-wracking without Katsuki and his ever-present steadfast nature; but as a soothing hand settled itself across his knee, he was grateful for the calming presence his mother could provide.

“Sorry” he murmurs, willing his appendages to stop trembling.

“Don’t apologize,” his mother reassures him, giving him an encouraging smile, “it’s normal to feel nervous. This visit is an important one.”

“I know…” Izuku replies with a frown, “b-but… I r-really didn’t w-want to worry y-you, or m-make you lose a day o-of w-work.”

Reaching out suddenly, his mother surprises him by taking both of his cheeks into her hands, making him face her.

Their matching viridian gazes lock and Izuku gulps nervously despite himself.

“You are my kid, Izuku. There is no place in the world that I would rather be than here. This is important, and yes, it is concerning, but no matter what happens, you’re not going to face this alone, do you understand?”

With a small wobbly smile, Izuku tentatively nods, “y-you’re the best, Mom.”

Gathering him into a warm side hug; Izuku nestles his head onto her shoulder, and that is how they stay until a nurse calls him to the back to check his vitals.

As she stands, his mother offers him her hand and he pulls himself up, together they take it slow as they both walk to the back, his mother guiding him all the way.

After being poked, prodded, and weighed, they found themselves in an examination room, where they were yet again made to wait.

His nerves were beginning to fray once more.

Uneasy thoughts and what-if’s ran rampant in his mind and he could only hope that whatever was wrong with him wasn’t so bad.

“It’ll be okay, honey. You wait and see. We’ve got this, right?” His mother graciously attempts to encourage him, smiling that strong wobbly smile of hers, in spite of her own nerves.

It was times like these that Izuku realized just how brave his mother was; just how strong, and he couldn’t help but appreciate her even more.

“W-we’ve got this,” he gives her a small nod from his seat on the examination table.

A small knock has them perking up, staring tentative holes into the door as Dr. Russell finally walks into the room with an apologetic smile.
“Good morning! Sorry for the wait,” the older man greets them kindly.

“T-that’s a-alright,” Izuku stammers nervously.

The doctor is quiet for a moment as he reads over his chart, but finally looks up at them with a smile.

“I see you’ve been making excellent progress, Izuku, how does that feel?”

“U-uh… g-great, I-I’ve been m-more m-mobile lately,” he admits.

“That’s wonderful to hear. I’m sure that you’re wondering why I called you in rather than just relaying the results to your mother over the phone, correct?”

“Y-yes s-sir,” Izuku nods stiffly.

The doctor analyzes him for a moment, before jotting something down.

“Mhm,” he mutters after a moment, much to the confusion of both Midoriya’s.

“Izuku, I’ll be frank, your results came back negative,” the doctor explains, allowing Izuku to finally take a calming breath.

“However, despite not seeing any bleeds or potential masses that we need to concern ourselves with, myself and Recovery Girl, came to the conclusion that all of these symptoms are stress-related.”

“Stress-related?” his mother asks for him.

“Yes,” the doctor confirms, “allow me to explain. There are two types of stress. Stress in which it is bad for the body and stress in which it is good for the body. However, no matter how fine a line can be drawn between the two, stress at the end of the day is still stress,” he relays, addressing Izuku’s mother.

“Izuku has made leaps and bounds in regards to his recovery. He’s gone from having limited mobility, to being able to walk with minimal help in the span of two months. While this is good, it’s still a little bit fast.”

Izuku nods to himself vaguely, taking in what the doctor was saying.

“To be honest,” the doctor continues, addressing Izuku, “someone in your position, with the injuries you’ve sustained, shouldn’t be able to move near as much as you do in such a limited amount of time. And to put this into perspective, before the manifestation of quirks It’d have been physically impossible and may have taken several years. However, given the state of things and how quirks work in regards to healthcare, your recovery time was essentially cut in a little more than half and this was made possible. However, this does not mean that you don’t still have physical limitations.”

Izuku and his mother nod in understanding.

When explained in layman's terms, it made this entire ordeal seem all the more serious.

“You’ve done very well in physical therapy. They’ve set up certain times of the day in which you can safely be physically active. They’ve set up a strict exercising regimen with your physical limitations in mind, to give you the optimal amount of care possible. They, however, have expressed that you’ve been exceeding these limitations. Ordinarily, that would be a good thing, however in this case…”

“I-it i-isn’t,” Izuku frowns.
“Now, it’s not to say it ‘isn’t’ good to want to be self-sufficient. That’s not at all what we mean, however, you are starting to show signs that you’ve been pushing yourself too hard. Under stress, our bodies have a funny way of showing us what is okay and what is too much and in this case, that is manifesting itself as headaches and nosebleeds, likely from overexertion. Tell me, how active are you after you get out of PT? Do you allow your body some time to adjust and rest?”

“D-define r-rest?” The young boy winces.

“Izuku...” his mother groans longsufferingly.

Dr. Russell merely smiles, chuckling to himself lightly, “as I thought.”

“I haven’t done much, just some standing, or walking, to see how I do without my wheelchair. I stay in my room, promise!” Izuku signs hastily to his mother. Which, Dr. Russell, apparently understands.

“Ordinarily, those things wouldn’t be an issue, rest assured, there is nothing wrong with putting in a little extra effort,” the doctor attempts to placate them, “although, we are now seeing the adverse results of these extra activities, right?”

“R-right,” Izuku nods miserably.

“You have to balance activity with rest, otherwise you could end up with a blood clot or something equally unpleasant,” Dr. Russell warns him.

Izuku and his mother bristle at that, leaving the young boy feeling defeated.

“Now that the bad news is out of the way, I wanted to discuss some other things as well.”

Izuku nods dejectedly.

“We all know how much you want to go home, am I correct in assuming that this is why you’ve been pushing yourself so hard?”

“Y-yes sir,” Izuku replies sadly, switching to sign, “it’s… just so frustrating… not being able to move around freely. I wanted to be able to do better, so I could finally go home. I’m almost done with my online courses and I really wanted to get in U.A. so I could finally start feeling normal again. I don’t feel like myself. I’ve always been independent and it’s so discouraging to have to wait. This… isn’t a life I envisioned for myself.”

His mother looked like she was close to tears, as she sat there with both hands clenching in her lap.

He didn’t want to lie.

He was tired of holding this in.

Dr. Russell seems to understand this as he nods, “I see what you’re saying, Izuku. Which is why I am discharging you.”

“H-huh?!”

Both his and his mother’s eyes widen at that.

Dr. Russell smiles kindly, his crows feet crinkling at the corners of his eyes.
“You’ve been working hard in an attempt to get home, and honestly, the results are there. There is no use keeping you in the facility if you are going to push yourself to the point in which it hurts you, just to reach your goal. As a solution, we are discharging you, so that you can finally go home. I’ve already taken the liberty of speaking with Recovery Girl, and your physical and speech therapists, we’ve all come to the agreement that you are no longer at risk and can be discharged. However, there are some stipulations that you need to be made aware of.”

“A-anything!” Izuku exclaims excitedly.

“You will still need to meet with your physical and speech therapists three times a week at the U.A. facility. You will also need to follow a strict exercise regimen and stick to it to the letter. This includes periods of rest. No more cutting corners. If they require that you rest, you rest. You’ll also be given a psychological evaluation, as you’ve shown signs of depression and anxiety and those need to be addressed properly,” Dr. Russell finishes in a no-nonsense tone.

Izuku worries his bottom lip at that but otherwise nods in agreement.

Therapy wasn’t so bad… it wouldn’t be much different than what he was already subjected to, right? If Kacchan could do it, so could he.

There was just one tiny problem.

He didn’t even know where to begin with his laundry list of issues.

He could only hope he’d end up with someone as understanding as Ms. Enatsu.

“When will he be discharged?” His mother asks curiously.

“For now, I recommend trying a home visit. To see how he does in a new setting. I’d take him home for the holidays, and if all goes well, by January we will give you the okay to sign him out permanently, does that sound reasonable to you?”

Izuku didn’t think he’s ever seen that big of a smile on his mother’s face before.

It was really nice.

The idea of finally being able to go home quelled that ever-present longing in his soul and with how enthusiastic his mother’s reply had been, he knew that he wasn’t the only one who’d been wanting this for so long.

For the first time in a little over a year, he’d finally be going home.

----

Seeing as they had the rest of the day to themselves without any prior engagements, Inko decided that going Christmas shopping would be a fun little reprieve and a great opportunity to spend some much needed time together.

They had a lot to celebrate, after all.

Driving into downtown Musutafu, they decided that it’d be a fun idea to park the car somewhere and walk along the boulevarde.

Thankfully there wasn’t too much snow on the ground and they could easily take Izuku’s wheelchair without too much trouble, seeing as they’d be on their feet for an extended amount of time.
Inko smiled gently as she paced herself next to her son as he wheeled himself along the sidewalk leisurely.

Both of them paid no mind to the bustle of people rushing around them.

There was no need for haste.

The streets were lined with decorations of all kinds; from the brightly lit street lamps and trees; to the dazzling decked out boutiques.

Izuku’s face was alight with that awestruck wonder he’d always had since he was a very young child.

It left her chest aching in such a wonderful way.

This was all she wanted.

For him to be here, alive and safe, and happy, it was all she could ever have hoped for.

She knew one day, the inevitable would happen and Izuku would either remember on his own, or he’d be told about what really happened to him, but she couldn’t help but find herself hoping he’d never find out.

Her deepest wish as a mother was to keep him happy and smiling, just like this. But realistically, she knew it had to be done. She just hoped that when the time came, her boy would be okay. And that he wouldn’t spiral too deeply into a depression. On the other hand, she was sure that therapy would do him some good and that the subject would be broached in a controlled and gentle manner.

As sure as the lights shone in those mystified eyes of his, Inko knew she would do everything in her power to make sure that he never got that low ever again.

Come what may, they were in this together.

For better or worse.

----

After about an hour of shopping, both of them decided to get out of the cold and warm up in a cozy little cafe over some hot cocoa.

Ever since he was little, Inko and Izuku would always curl up under the blankets during cold weather and watch Christmas movies while drinking hot cocoa. It was their favorite way to bond and it stuck even after all these years.

Looking at her Izuku now, she noticed how quickly his cheeks were losing their adorable child-like chub. Or how even despite his injuries; how tall he was becoming. He was definitely shaping into a handsome young man, and that too caused her heart to rend.

Her little boy was growing up.

Part of her thought it was unfair, that he’d spent a little over a year in recovery. The situation alone caused an immense amount of growth in him.

She was just thankful that they still had times like these, in which the vestiges of his youthful optimism shined through. It was nice to know that his struggles hadn’t completely destroyed that aspect about him.
At his core, he was still that sweet little boy who had so much heart and was quick to cry.

“You okay, Mom?” Izuku waves to get her attention before signing.

In a space this loud and busy, there was no use in him attempting to talk.

“Of course, I was just thinking about how much you’ve grown up. It makes me feel a bit dated,” she replies with a laugh.

Izuku’s expression brightens at that.

He never really was one to be embarrassed about things like this.

“I wouldn’t worry about feeling old, being vintage is cool these days!” He replies sweetly.

“Vintage, huh? Is that what you kids are calling it?” She kids.

Izuku simply shrugs, “I’ve also heard the term ‘old-school’ being used a lot, too.”

“The things you kids come up with,” Inko replies with a lighthearted laugh.

“It’s safer to blame the internet,” Izuku signs with a wide grin.

“Well then, it must be true, Katsuki told me something similar a few months ago,” she relays.

This had Izuku smiling even wider; if that were possible.

This got her thinking.

Inko liked to think she was pretty sharp.

Working for years in a courthouse, you tend to pick up on some things. She wasn’t nearly as analytical as her boys were, for sure, but she knew them both well enough to know that their ‘friendship’ was steadily tip-toeing into something much different.

She noticed the change in Katsuki immediately, as his was the most obviously drastic.

In those rare instances that she’d caught him, she knew almost for a fact, that that boy looked at Izuku like he’d hung the moon.

With her suspicions, she’d even go as far as saying that this obvious crush of his was already well in the works even prior to Izuku’s fall and he’d just never realized or admitted it. It’d definitely have explained the ferocity in which he’d protected Izuku every waking moment since then.

Izuku, however, was always way too easy for her to read in that regard.

The kid was private, and hid things well; yes, but when he liked something or someone, he was all too obvious about it.

She knew very well that Izuku had had a crush on Katsuki when they were younger.

But after years of rebuffed affections and when their relationship eventually turned sour, this left a sadness behind in him, that Inko was fiercely protective of.

She had an inkling that Izuku never really ‘got over’ that crush, despite him gaining a few crushes on other girls and boys in passing over the years.
When Izuku was 12, it came as no surprise to her, when he'd come out to her as bi. She’d always had her suspicions, and that was perfectly okay, she’d given him space and time in which to come to terms with it and discover it for himself. Although, when it came time for him to finally come out, he didn’t so much as come out, so much as it were more of an innocently curious question that'd spiraled into an abyss of nervousness, confusion, and sputtering. It was honestly a botched mess of a conversation, but it was the first private thing he’d told her in a long time.

He’d never outright told her who he’d been interested in, but she knew. At the time, she definitely didn’t like it and she definitely didn’t like how Katsuki mistreated Izuku. Back then if Izuku were to express an interest in him, which was unlikely due to their fall out, she’d likely have outright discouraged it.

But after all this time and effort on both of their parts to create something healthy between them, she'd found that she didn’t have the same reservations.

Both boys had gone through a tremendous amount of growth.

What they had now, was actually stable.

Although despite this, even a blind person would be able to tell that they were dancing around each other and the subject.

She wasn’t usually one to go fishing for information, but curiosity killed the cat.

“Speaking of Katsuki, do you know what you’re getting him for Christmas?” Inko inquires innocently.

“O-oh... u-um,” Izuku blushes at that, vaguely verbalizing, “I actually started on his and Todoroki’s presents a little while back,” he deflects easily.

Inko smiles knowingly, but otherwise lets it go.

“Oh, are you making something?” She asks.

Izuku nods, still attempting and failing at willing the blush from his face, he takes a generous sip of his cocoa before replying.

“Yes, once I got the range of motion back in my hands, I started knitting like crazy. I made both of them a scarf, I’m just about finished, but it’s taking me a little longer because I wanted to make Kirishima one, too. I think I’ll be finished before Christmas at least.”

Inko couldn't contain her smile at that.

When Izuku was very young, around 3 or 4, Inko had been making him a quilt.

Ever the curious little thing that he was, Izuku would always watch her like a hawk. When he’d gotten a little older Inko began fostering that curiosity and began teaching him how to knit and crochet.

Soon enough, that quilt became a shared project between the two of them and each year they’d add a little bit more to it.

It became their own little tradition.
It was so nice to know that he was able to maneuver knitting needles again.

“That’s so sweet of you, I bet they’ll love it,” she replies sincerely.

“I hope so… I’m still not as good as you at it, especially being so out of practice. But I’ve had a lot of time on my hands and restorative therapy thought it would be a good way to build up my dexterity again, so they kind of jumped at the fact that I knew how to knit,” he replies with an embarrassed laugh.

“I agree, that’s a fantastic way to build up the strength in your hands, I’m sure your scarves look wonderful,” she replies, giving him an encouraging smile.

“Thanks, Mom,” Izuku replies with a smile of his own.

After a while, they finished their cocoa and braved the elements once again in search of more gifts and street activities.

The pair of them even went as far as watching people skate around the ice rink in the city center.

All in all, it was a great day.

----

Later that evening, a tentative knock came from Izuku’s door.

The boy in question startles, all but tossing his latest project into his knitting bag.

This draws an amused laugh from his visitor.

“It’s okay, it’s just me,” Ms. Rei reassures him with a smile.

“Miss Rei!” Izuku perks up, as the older woman lets herself inside and settles herself at the end of his bed.

“How many times do I have to tell you to just call me Rei?” She asks with amusement.

“A-at l-least one more t-time,” Izuku replies with a grin.

That was usually his standard response and he was always rewarded with a deadpan stare that just barely concealed a smile and an eye roll that was greatly reminiscent of her son’s.

At times like these, he honestly wished Todoroki would gather up the courage to finally speak with her, but alas, Izuku knew well not to press the issue. He knew that if their roles were reversed, he’d likely feel the same way.

Even still, it saddened him and he knew it saddened Ms. Rei, too. She knew that the two of them were friends and that Shouto often visited him.

She insisted that she was okay with it and that she was just grateful her son had such a good friend, but Izuku knew better.

Rei really missed him.

He really wished that there was something more he could do for them, but he knew too well that only time healed wounds.
“So I heard the big news,” she says after a moment, offering him a soft smile.

“Y-yeah, Mom told y-you, huh?” Izuku replies with a wide smile.

“She did,” she confirms, "although, I have to confess, while I am extremely happy for you, it’s not going to be the same around here without you,” she smiles sadly.

“Oh, Miss Rei, d-don’t worry!” Izuku hastily replies, scooting closer and wrapping her in a warm hug, “I p-promise, I… I’ll c-come visit y-you! I’m g-going to be a-a-round m-more than you’d t-think.”

She gives him a tight squeeze in return.

“I know you will, I guess I just got spoiled having you around. This place will definitely feel a lot less bright without you and your garden to lighten it up.”

Izuku smiles sadly, leaning his head on her shoulder.

“A-about that… I… I-i’ve b-been thinking l-lately…” Izuku trails off.

“What about?” She asks quietly, soaking in their side hug like a sponge.

“I d-don’t have a… a q-quirk,” he starts, making her perk up instantly. He knew she already knew this, but he never really talked about it and he supposed it was left-field, “a-and I k-know I’m not of m-much use right n-now, b-but… I t-think… o-once I’ve h-healed up, I want t-to v-volunteer here, m-maybe I c-can b-build up enough e-experience to get an i-internship.”

Sitting up, Ms. Rei looks at him with wide stormy-grey eyes, “Izuku… that’s wonderful. Honestly… I think that would be a great idea, but honey… don’t think that just because you don’t have a quirk that you are any less than perfect as you are. If this is something you want to do, I’ll support you no matter what, but is it really something you want to do?”

“I-i’ve been w-wondering that m-myself. I… I’ve been t-thinking l-lately and I-I’m s-starting to t-think that you d-don’t n-necess-sarily have to b-be a h-hero, to help p-people… t-that d-doesn’t mean I d-don’t want to t-try, b-but… it’s p-probably good to h-have a plan B,” he admits, staring down at his lap.

Ms. Rei sits up straighter at that, eyeing Izuku as though she were picking him apart.

Shouto did that too, when he didn’t know what to make of him.

“A great power, does not a hero make, Izuku. Remember that. Even heroes can be just as wrong as villains. In my opinion… you’re already more than halfway there, kiddo. You’re kind, smart as a whip, and you have a moral code a mile wide, but more than that… you’re completely and utterly selfless. If I know anything about heroes, and I do… I know that a lot of them can be extremely self-absorbed and selfish, you are already far greater than them.”

Izuku’s viridian eyes swim with unshed tears as he gapes at her.

Her own stormy gaze was so resolute, there wasn’t a single hint of doubt in her expression.

Izuku smiles a watery smile and leans back onto her shoulder.

“Y-you’re g-gonna see m-me s-so o-often that y-you’ll be s-sick of me,” he kids.

“That’s impossible,” she replies, smiling into his verdant curls.
He was definitely going to miss having her around too.

----

Izuku honestly didn’t even know why he was so nervous. He was just going home. That wasn’t hard to do, right? This was only a place he’d never been to before.

No big deal.

He supposed, even with all the excitement he’d initially had about finally getting to see their new house, it just didn’t feel the same. He’d spent 14 years of his life in their tiny shared apartment, part of him was mentally envisioning that setting when the idea of ‘going home’ came to mind. He supposed it was only natural. Maybe he was just being stupid…

He was definitely overthinking this.

Just because his mother bought a new proper home, didn’t mean that he didn’t have a place there, right?

“Quit being so fidgety, it’s not gonna bite you,” Katsuki chides him from his seat beside him.

He’d expressed his concerns to him the night before, so Katsuki knew exactly what had him on edge.

“I know that, but… I can’t help it,” Izuku signs dejectedly.

As Katsuki reaches out toward him, Izuku half expected him to grab and hold his hands, instead the asshole smacked his hands pointedly and grinned, just like he did whenever Izuku ‘talked too much.’

“R-really?” Izuku pouts unimpressed.

“Once you walk through the goddamn door you will be absolutely floored at just how ‘Midoriya-esque it is in there. Seriously it’s enough to even make the bravest of men hurl. The place literally oozes rainbows and sunshine and your fucking room is a comic-book nerd’s orgasm, okay? Seriously, chill out.”

“Bakugou Katsuki!” Izuku’s mother balks from the driver seat.

“I’m not sure which part offended you more, but you can’t deny that I’m right, Aunty,” Katsuki retorts.

Izuku pinches the bridge of his nose longsufferingly.

This kid seriously had a strange way of cheering people up, but Izuku had to admit, it was helping.

“Would you lay off already. I just ‘admire' All Might, okay,” Izuku signs with a huff.

“That’s an insane amount of ‘admiration’ you’ve got there. It even puts me to shame, seriously, I’m
embarrassed for you, what if the guy ever walked into your room and saw that shit?

This startles a laugh out of him, “I’d likely die, not even gonna lie,” Izuku replies with a chuckle.

“Well, luckily for you, being the awesome person that I am, who has actual taste, I may or may not have decorated your room tastefully.”

“What’s the point of denying it at this point, you clearly raided my vast collection and probably spent hours in there geeking out,” Izuku teases him.

“It took him three days to get your room unpacked. I offered to help, but he refused,” Inko interjects teasingly.

“T-three days…” Izuku replies incredulously as Katsuki turned an interesting shade of pink.

“I’ll have you know it only took that long because your child has an unhealthy amount of All Might paraphernalia. I was literally beside myself with shock, it took me two days and a therapy session to get over it,” Katsuki replies haughtily.

“The pot says what to the kettle?” Izuku teases him.

“Get bent, Deku,” Katsuki pouts.

----

For Izuku, this might very well have been the best moment of his life.

He finally got to come home, for the first time in forever…

But for Katsuki, this was utter and total hell.

As he stood back, watching his mother grin her evilest of shit-eating grins, he knew.

He fucking knew she’d put Aunty Inko up to this.

It was just too fucking coincidental.

Too perfect.

Regardless of if she knew it or not, regardless of the obvious peer pressure at work, Katsuki knew that Aunty Inko had to know the reason behind this assault, and for that, she was equally just as guilty.

Every single room was a trap.

Every single threshold was like a goddamn landmine waiting to be stepped on.

“Merry Christmas, boys!” Katsuki’s mother calls out, all too cheerfully.

There was mistletoe literally fucking everywhere.

“Fuck my life…” he mutters to himself.

----

Other than the obvious and rather disconcerting mistletoe prank that Aunty Mitsu clearly
orchestrated, Izuku was absolutely blown away by their new home. It was almost enough to completely make him ignore and forget about the offending plants.

In the end, Katsuki was right.

There wasn’t much to be scared about at all.

Despite the obvious changes in layout and how huge the place was, it still felt like home.

His mother had clearly gone out and bought a lot of new stuff to fill the space, or make certain parts of the house feel less empty, but otherwise, she’d kept everything of theirs from their original home as is.

He vaguely wondered if she’d done this on purpose to make him feel more comfortable. It made sense.

As Katsuki and his mother bickered back and forth about who even knew what, Izuku and his mother took a tour of their new home.

She seemed a little shy; nervous even, which was really funny considering how he’d felt earlier.

He supposed that was why she didn’t comment too much on his nervousness.

They really were too much alike.

Their kitchen and dining areas were huge and very homey. As was the sitting room. Wanting to save his own room for last, Izuku urged his mother on as she showed him the rest of the house, including the front and back yards.

Out of everything he’d seen so far, nothing impressed him more than the wrap around deck.

The sides of the house even had a screened in areas that would be perfect for his plants in the spring. It left him feeling even more excited.

“M-mom… this p-place is am-mazing, h-how did you even f-find it?” Izuku wonders aloud.

“Mr. Yagi recommended a realtor to me and came with me to the appointment. It took a few tries to find something suitable, but I think this definitely fits the bill, don’t you agree?”

“I do,” he replies sincerely.

He knew how much his mother wanted to save up for their dream home, one in which they didn’t have to worry about rent or rely on someone else to fix things. This was a long time coming. He couldn’t help but feel happy for her, despite this being his home too.

He supposed he still couldn’t get over that weird feeling that felt like he was both at home and a guest here. The whole thing was a weird juxtaposition that he hoped would fade over time.

“I wanted you to have a good space to come back to,” she admits, “I know things weren’t always easy in the past, and I feel like I’d slighted you somehow, but I want you to know that no matter what you do, I support you, and no matter where you go, you’ll always have a home to come back to.”

"T-thank you, Mom," Izuku replies softly, suddenly feeling choked up.

It was less obvious for sure, but Izuku could tell that even his own mother had done her fair share of
She seemed more self-assured, and she’d been very attentive as of late. Heck, she even seemed like she’d lost a little bit of weight. She looked good. She looked happy, even. It was nice.

They stood there for a little while, just leaning against the wooden railing of their wrap around deck, admiring the snow as it fell, coating the yard in fluffy white tufts, the house was so cozy and so tastefully decorated. Inside and out, it looked like something out of a holiday magazine. It was absolutely blissful.

That is, until Izuku was suddenly reminded.

“So, Mom…” he starts, fixing the older woman with a deadpan stare of his own, “don’t think I didn’t notice the little traps you and Aunty Mitsu set, I’d expect that from her, but you letting her do it takes the cake.”

His mother bristles at that, thoroughly flustered, she was so busted.

He knew she knew she couldn’t lie to save her life.

“I... don’t know what you mean, Izu…” she attempts to shrug nonchalantly, “everything is entirely festive in there, don’t you think?”

She was so bad at this.

Izuku deadpans thoroughly unimpressed, “yes, very festive, a little ‘too’ festive,” he gesticulates pointedly.

“Well uh, let's get back inside! That ham’s not gonna carve itself!” She replies hurriedly before scurrying off in a flurry.

Izuku vaguely wondered; as he stood there against the railing without his crutches or wheelchair, at what point during her haste was his mother going to realize she’d totally forgotten him out there.

He simply sighs and has a seat in one of the rocking chairs.

Might as well break up that still raging fight and text a certain blond bomb an SOS.

----

After having been rescued from being marooned on the deck by his definitely guilty mother; who’d apologized profusely, the rest of the day went quite smoothly.

Dinner was a loud, but amicable affair, and it warmed all the dark corners of doubt in Izuku’s mind. Thankfully there weren’t any awkward dinner conversations, or situations other than what was dubbed 'the mistletoe mayhem' of which, both boys had decided to vehemently ignore. It became something of a game to see just how long they would avoid standing under any and all thresholds for the duration of the holiday. It was pretty funny to say the least, as both boys ducked around one another.

At the end of the day, Izuku couldn’t recall ever having such a wonderful dinner.

Sure, there were times in which he and his mother came over to the Bakugou’s for dinner back when he and Katsuki were younger and at one another’s throats, but it’d always seemed too stilted and forced. As he looked around the dinner table now, his gaze settles on his best friend and for a minute, he simply observes him.
He was so different and yet very much the same.

He was still foul-mouthed, loud, quick to irritate, and generally had the personality of a curmudgeonly old man, but there was something more there. Something that was hidden away such a long time ago.

Katsuki’s respect and loyalty could not be bought, but once earned, the boy was fiercely protective, thoughtful, and even downright sweet at times. It was definitely a sight to behold, watching him grow into the person he was now. Never in a million years, would Izuku have thought he’d have that kind of effect on him. It still puzzled him today.

As his crimson eyed gaze locked on his own, Izuku couldn’t find it in himself to care. Whatever the reason, he had an actual relationship with Katsuki now, and he wouldn’t trade it for the world.

----

Shortly after dinner, both boys decided to break away from the adults and finally explore Izuku’s room.

The forest haired boy was absolutely teeming with excitement at the thought of finally seeing what Katsuki had done with it, and honestly, it did not disappoint.

Leaning heavily on his crutches, Izuku starred in slack-jawed wonderment.

Honestly, he was impressed by Katsuki’s knack for home decorating and vaguely wondered if he was always like that or if it were something new. It’d been years since he’d been in the older boy’s room, so it was anyone’s guess.

Tasteful wasn’t even the right word to use at this point.

Impressive; was much more fitting.

Essentially everything was the same.

He had all of his personal belongings and it didn’t look like anything was missing.

Everything was simply put together in a much less childish way.

Rather than hanging posters up by thumbtacks, they were hung in large black frames.

His bed was larger, but his bedding was the same.

All of his All Might figurines and comics were strategically and neatly placed on two new generously large bookcases, that his mother had no doubt bought him to fill the space.

But the things that really tied the room together were the plants.

Just like his room back at the rehabilitation center, Izuku’s room was covered in plants. Some of which, he suspected were fake as they were kept out of direct view of the windows, but even so. They filled his room with color and character and it was honestly seamless.

His mother had said it’d taken Katsuki 3 days to do this.

It honestly showed, but there was no doubt in his mind that the blond totally geeked out. Not with how his comics were apparently alphabetized, or with how certain figurines went with certain others.
Izuku could swoon at the sheer perfection of it all.

“Well, what do you think?” Katsuki asks him after a while.

Craning his neck in the other boy’s direction, Izuku gives him his best winning smile, “H-honestly… I’ve n-never s-seen a-anything more p-perfect in my life.”

The grin this earns him definitely cemented the fact that Katsuki was quite proud of his handiwork, “damn right, you haven’t.”

It was an amazing feeling, finally having a sense of self in his new home.

But somehow, it wasn’t just the room making him feel that way.

----

As soon as the boys were finished, gifts were passed around.

Laughs were shared.

Memories were made.

Their hearts and cheeks were as warm as the fire dancing in the fireplace.

Izuku honestly didn’t think the night was going to get any better, until him and Katsuki exchanged their final gifts.

The forested boy took his time carefully unwrapping this last gift.

It was smaller than the rest, but it felt sturdy in his hands.

Once Izuku laid his eyes on it, it held a hell of a lot more weight.

It was a beautifully crafted leather bound sketchbook and Izuku couldn’t take his eyes off of it.

He could tell this was making Katsuki nervous, as the boy kept fidgeting.

“K-kacchan…” Izuku murmurs after a while, as he runs his hand over the supple leather cover.

“It’s for your notes,” the blond explains nervously, “you’re always writing in shitty composition books… and I kind of ruined your last one, which… was equally shitty.”

The both of them eye one another carefully.

“I figured… if you were going to keep records on quirks, you should do it in something nice.”

Izuku didn’t know what he was expecting, but that absolutely floors him.

“I… I don’t k-know what to s-say…” Izuku replies, at a loss.

“You don’t have to say anything,” the blond insists, attempting and failing to feign indifference, “just promise me that you won’t quit, okay? ...You’re stupidly talented, I never realized how detailed those notes of yours were until I saw them. They’re… impressive.”

Izuku felt faint.

Was this even real?
“Y-you… you r-read them, w-when?”

Katsuki hesitates for a moment before answering, “when you were in a coma. You’re Mom actually brought them to the hospital. We both took turns reading them, and honestly… I kid you not. Even Mr. Yagi was impressed.”

“M-Mr. Y-yagi saw them t-too?” Izuku asks in surprise.

Katsuki nods, “he was really impressed with your papers on quirk theory and strategy, it’s why he gave you that scholarship.”

“I… I k-knew he r-read my papers, b-but I n-never t-thought he’d r-read my notes, too,” Izuku replies, still tracing his fingers across the soft leather material.

Katsuki watches him pensively.

“I- I have to adm-mit… m-my g-gift doesn’t e-even hold a c-candle to t-this,” Izuku replies with a watery laugh.

Katsuki all but sighs in relief, “how about I be the judge of that?”

“T-that’s what I’m a-afraid of,” Izuku replies with mirth.

The blond rolls his eyes, but takes his turn in unwrapping his proffered gift.

Izuku chews his bottom lip nervously as Katsuki opens the box containing an intricately knit scarf that ombred from a deep dark blood-red, into a rosen shade, and finally converted into a deep fiery orange, complete with a black knitted bomb pattern.

“Woah… did you make this?” The blond asks as his crimson gaze locks with his.

Izuku nods shyly.

It’d honestly taken him forever.

A lot longer than he cared to admit, given the state of his clumsy hands.

But as his dexterity improved, the easier it became to finish it and start on projects for his other friends as well.

But even then, their’s weren’t nearly as detailed.

“I-I’ve k-knew how to kn-knit since I was y-younger, t-therapy th-thought it’d be a g-good w-way to im-improve my m-motor s-skills,” he explains nervously.

Rather than reply, the blond merely wraps the soft, detailed fabric around his neck with finality and scoots closer to him on the couch.

Together they busy themselves by watching the dying firelight.

“The bomb is pretty damn cool,” he adds after a while.

Izuku didn’t think he’d ever smiled so wide in his life.

-----
As the night came to an end, their parents would eventually find them curled up on the couch, quietly dozing, hand in hand.

The mistletoe minefield might have been a prank, but no one could deny the obvious affection the boys had for one another.

And it was only sure to grow.

They were, after all, one another’s universal constant.
Beginning Again

Chapter Summary

Apparently, he had a fan.

A huge fan, in fact.

It was pretty amusing, considering.

“H-Holy crap! Y-y...” the kid breathes as he flails in his wheelchair, “y-you’re you! E-eraser head!”

Chapter Notes

Hello my darlings~

Apologies for the wait! Things have gotten pretty busy for me lately what with work, school, and doing typical mom stuff. Now that the holidays are over, (thank gods...) I hope to get back into a more solid update schedule soon, so bear with me until then!

This chapter is a bit shorter compared to the other ones, but it's chop full of surprises and things we've all been waiting for! Whatever you think isn't covered in this chapter, will be explained and elaborated upon in the next one! This is mostly due to the change in point of view. ;D

Thank you so much, to all of you! Seriously! Those who have left kudos, bookmarks, and lovely comments, I appreciate each and every one of you! I hope you all have a wonderful day or night, depending on your time zone!

There is impact.

And you see not white, but grey.

An anomaly.

An amalgamation of two realities.

You are torn between pain and release.

The last threads of your life refuse to let you go.

They cling and constrict, pull and grow taught.

There is a ringing in your ears, like the bells that toll.

The sound travels on the wind that was once at your face.
Pressure and heat fill your lungs.

You are aware of this when it happens.

The world you were prepared to leave behind and its colors explode around you like dying stars.

Your eyes meet crimson.

You are on fire.

----

Izuku sits up in bed groggily, as he rubs the sleep from his sore tired eyes.

This was the 8th dream he’s had in the span of 2 months.

Each one felt more confusing than the last.

It was reoccurring, almost as though his mind and body were trying to tell himself something but he didn’t have enough pieces to finish the puzzle.

He didn’t think he ever would, but his body still insisted on giving him clues.

In a word; it was exhausting.

He’d suspected it for a while now.

Despite their vague responses, he wasn’t daft.

He knew, in his heart of hearts, that his accident couldn’t have just been an accident.

The feelings he got from these dreams alone indicated something more.

For the life of him, he couldn’t remember what happened. He didn’t think he ever would, nor did he think he ever wanted to, but he could remember the feelings.

His memory may have been patchy, but he knew those feelings all too intimately.

Those feelings kept him up at night.

Those feelings left him raw and mentally tired.

If what he suspected; in conjunction with those feelings, had actually happened, it’d explain a lot.

He didn’t think he wanted the details.

That was one box he’d never willingly open.

He knew all too well, where feeling things like that lead, and he didn’t trust himself enough to explore them.

As he blinks the sleep from his eyes, he looks around his new room, his sights settling on a framed photo.

It was taken a few days ago.

Its mere presence brings a small smile to his face.
It was the only photo he had of him and Katsuki that wasn’t forced.

It was a photo of them and their family all squished together and piled all around him, squeezing him into a giant group hug.

As he stared at that photo he felt himself ease.

The feelings his dreams inspired didn't matter.

This was his life now.

Whatever may have happened before, he didn’t know or care to know.

That part of himself was dead now.

He wanted to lay it to rest.

What he had now, was worth living for.

What he had now, he could call home.

As he nestles himself back into his bed-covers and eases himself down for the remainder of the night, he slowly falls back to sleep.

Those smiling faces burned in the back of his retinas.

The memory of that warm embrace.

He knew that no matter what happened, he would hold onto that feeling.

A new sense of home.

A sense of happiness.

A hope.

----

But just because he chose not to let his past haunt his future, didn’t mean that it wouldn’t scratch or bang at the door on the edge of his mind. As he sat at the kitchen nook, groggily eating cereal, he knew it was going to be easier said than done, moving forward.

“Are you okay, dear?” His mother asks him worriedly as she buzzed around the kitchen getting ready for work.

“Mmn…” he groans unintelligibly.

His mother pauses mid-step and eyes him, scrutinizing him, no doubt.

“I'll be a-Alright,” he mutters tiredly, “j-just g-getting used to not h-having a h-hospital a-ambiance to fall asleep to.”

His mother smiles ruefully and comes around the counter, standing on the tips of her toes she presses a kiss to his head.
“Alright, honey, as long as you’re sure. I want you to be comfortable here, you’d tell me if you weren’t, right?” She asks hopefully, her brows still pinched in concern.

“Of course,” Izuku agrees with a tired smile, “b-but I promise I’m already f-feeling r-right at home.

“I’m so glad to hear that,” she admits, her eyes shining like his do, no doubt with unshed tears.

Both he and his mother wore their hearts on their sleeves.

There was no denying that they were both criers.

Izuku smiles down at her from his perch on the barstool.

“Are you going to be alright being by yourself today?” she asks him with uncertainty.

“**I’ll be okay, Mr. Yagi is coming by to take me to physical therapy and Kacchan is going to meet us over there after therapy,**” he signs, so as not to keep her too long, “**I promise to keep my wheelchair or crutches close and I won’t do anything reckless,**” he reassures her, knowing well that’s what she’d ask next.

This makes her smile more naturally.

“Alright, alright,” she concedes, "I won’t keep mother-henning you, sometimes I forget how much you’ve grown up. You just be careful, okay? And if you need something, give me a text and I’ll get back to you as soon as I can!”

“W-will do,” he gives her a salute.

Reaching out, she gives him a soft caress, her thumb lightly brushing over his freckled and scarred cheek, “I love you kiddo,” she assures him, to which he signs his reply in kind.

"Don’t burn let Katsuki burn the house down, okay?” She adds as an afterthought.

Izuku erupts into a hybrid of a laugh and sigh, “t-that w-was one time!”

With a final smile, she grabs her purse and heads for the door.

----

“You’re pretty quiet this morning,” Mr. Yagi notes, as he drives him to the rehabilitation center he’d once called home. “Rough night?” The older man asks gently.

Izuku nods, there wasn’t any point in hiding it.

Plus, he’d promised everyone that he’d try and be more open about how he was feeling.

Mr. Yagi was definitely a person he could confide in, despite the man himself being a mystery.

According to his Mom and Kacchan, the man suddenly appeared one day with an interest in helping him out. He worked as a member of U.A.’s faculty, but Izuku didn’t know exactly what he did there.

When asked, Kacchan would huff and change the subject. He didn’t particularly care for the man, or so his mother said. Apparently, Katsuki thought that Mr. Yagi was too nosy, or opportunistic. She’d told him all about Katsuki’s reservations and chalked it up to him just being protective.

It made sense.
Izuku, however, didn’t have such reservations and his curiosity was insatiable, so he questioned other sources. According to Kirishima and Todoroki, Mr. Yagi mostly spent his time in the teacher’s lounge or his office, as All Might’s assistant.

Izuku wasn’t a detective by any means, but he knew for a fact there was something more to that. Call it a tingle in the back of his mind, maybe?

But whenever All Might was brought up, Mr. Yagi would almost become discomfited or closed off and the man would often change the subject. This would make sense if he were trying to maintain the hero’s privacy, but how much privacy could a hero really have if he became a teacher at a well known and prestigious school? U.A. was known for being in the public eye.

As was All Might, although much wasn’t altogether known about him either, other than that he’d attended U.A. in the past.

It was confounding.

But even so, Izuku never pressed the issue. Mr. Yagi never gave him any real reason to.

The man was genuine, thoughtful, and he’d moved mountains for him. If anything, the man deserved his gratitude.

“Yeah, j-just some t-trouble adj-justing… it’s w-weird. Being away f-from the h-hospital,” while this was indeed the case, his dreams; well… nightmares more like, were becoming more frequent.

It was becoming hard to sleep.

“I could imagine,” Mr. Yagi replies, “you’ve been there a long time. How are you liking your newfound freedom?”

Izuku’s responding smile was genuine, he found.

Despite how tired he felt, it was good to be home.

“I-it’s been great. I...I’ve m-missed Mom. A-and I r-really like the new place. T-there’s a ton of s-space for all m-my plants.”

Mr. Yagi gives him a bright smile, “That’s wonderful. I’m glad that you’re enjoying being home. You’ve worked so hard to get there, after all. It’s almost bittersweet, I bet.”

“Yeah, but st-still… I-I’ve got a ways to g-go yet,” Izuku admits.

Mr. Yagi eyes him as he waits for the light to change at the intersection.

“That may be, but you’re making leaps and bounds that I’ve never seen before. I couldn’t be more proud,” the older man reassures him.

Izuku gives him the best smile he could muster, “t-thank you… f-for all the help. I... I know y-you’ve l-looked after me a-and m-my Mom. Kacchan, a-and his family t-too. I c-can’t thank you e-enough. It’s n-nice… k-knowing they were t-taken care of.”

Mr. Yagi’s cheeks seem to redden at that. He stares down at his lap, a small smile playing at his own lips, before the light turns green and he accelerates. “You’re welcome, kiddo. It’s the least I could
do.”

This response added yet another piece to Izuku’s puzzle that he couldn’t exactly fit.

The rest of the drive Izuku is quiet as he ponders over just what the man had meant by that.

----

If there was anything Shota hated more, it was being doted on.

And over the last couple weeks, Hizashi has done nothing but that.

It wasn’t that he was ungrateful for his help. That wasn’t the case at all. He was loathed to admit it out loud, but he loved the blond’s company. They’d been friends since their U.A. days and more than that for the last couple of years.

But the thing about Hizashi was, that he had a surplus of uncontained exuberant energy.

Normally it wouldn’t have necessarily been a bad thing, he already knew his boyfriend was loud, impulsive, energetic, excitable and caring to a fault. But after about 4 weeks of non-stop care, Shota was glad to be getting back onto his feet.

While he was grateful for the distraction the blond could provide him with, he was more bound and determined than ever to get back into action and resume his role as his student's homeroom teacher.

In a way, despite all of his efforts, he felt like he’d failed them.

What was supposed to have been a routine training exercise, turned into one of the most deadly and dangerous experiences in his pro-hero career.

He’d never expected a group of villains to attack a school facility in broad daylight. There was simply no warning or indication at all. And despite their best efforts, he and Thirteen were both overpowered, leaving their own safety jeopardized and in the hands of the very students they were meant to teach and protect.

Even still, despite feeling like he’d let his class down, he was immensely grateful that none of them were gravely injured and in turn was so proud that they had worked together to keep one another safe until help arrived.

Class 1-A was really something else.

He had a good group of extraordinary kids and he couldn’t be more proud of how they were shaping out to be.

Especially his classroom troublemaker, Bakugou Katsuki.

When Hizashi had told him about how he’d taken control of the situation and orchestrated a strategy to keep them alive, he’d been absolutely floored. And even more so when he found out that he and Asui Tsuyu, had treated his wounds while taking cover mid-battle.

He never pegged that Bakugou would be the type who’d be level headed under circumstances like that. Let alone have the ability to perform first aid in a battle.

If there was one thing that was for certain, it was that he’d be watching that boy a lot more closely.

----
As part of the requirements for getting him back on his feet, he had to make routine visits with his physiotherapist and Recovery Girl, or ‘Granny Chiyo’, as she preferred him to call her. It was still weird that after all years he’d spent out of U.A. as a pro-hero and adult, that she still treated him and Hizashi as her students despite them being teachers there themselves. As far as he knew, she’d even given All Might the same treatment and he was a student there long before his and Hizashi’s time there. Everything had a funny way of coming full circle.

“Good morning, Shota,” the old woman greets him kindly.

He greets her with a nod.

“Oh my, still bandaged to the nines, I see,” she tsked as she whisked her way around him.

“Hizashi insists on wrapping me up like a mummy,” he laments.

This makes the old woman laugh and wipe the corner of her eye.

“Well, I did give him pretty specific instructions not to let you become susceptible to infection. It would seem he’d gotten pretty enthusiastic,” she replies with mirth.

Shota sighs longsufferingly.

“Well then,” she claps her age-worn hands together, “let's see the extent of the damage, shall we?”

With a nod, he allows the older woman to unbandage him, letting her take a look at his injuries. Initially, he’d had two broken arms, several broken ribs, and a broken eye socket.

To say the least, he’d been in pretty bad shape.

Thankfully, due to her quirk, Granny Chiyo was able to help him recover at a much quicker rate. This, however, didn’t help much in regards to his own quirk.

Due to the orbital fractures he’d received, his ability to manifest his quirk took quite the hit as well. He wasn’t able to use it in the same way he was before, and for shorter periods of time. His doctors and Granny Chiyo weren’t sure if this would be permanent or not, which sucked. But in his opinion, he was just grateful to be alive and to not have sustained any brain damage.

That Nomu really packed a punch.

“Well, in terms of scarring, we’ve pretty much done all we can do, I'm afraid. But in terms of mobility, I’d say you’re well on your way to a full recovery.”

Shota nods, “I suspected as much.”

“Not to worry, dear, we’ll have you up and running in no time. In fact, so long as you don’t over do it, I’ll allow you to go back to U.A. on light duty. But, only if you continue to come here for routine check-ups and physical therapy. Does that sound good to you?”

“Do I still have to walk around like a mummy?” Shota asks with a tired frown.
“Heavens no. Your arms are healed enough to forego anymore of that type of treatment.”

“Thank god,” he sighs in relief.

He didn’t think he could handle another day of walking around like the living dead.

Finally freed from his restraints, at Granny Chiyo’s insistence, he heads to the therapy room for another assessment.

----

After being hospitalized that first week, Shota had stubbornly insisted on going home, despite Granny Chiyo and Hizashi’s reservations.

With strict orders, he was put on bed rest, under the conditions that he allow Hizashi to help him dress his wounds and to not overtax himself.

Over the course of the next 3 weeks, he’d routinely visited his physiotherapist to help improve the range of motion in his arms.

During this time he’d, for a lack of a better word, been depressed.

He wasn't the type to get weepy, but he was really kicking himself for allowing himself to be put in such a position. He was really down and out, despite Hizashi’s gracious attempts at making him feel better and his constant encouragements.

He still felt like he’d failed.

And to say the least it put in him a funk like no other.

That is, until a certain green haired boy caught his attention.

He’d seen the kid come to the therapy room every day for the last 3 weeks and he'd slowly piqued his curiosity.

From what he could gather through inference, the kid had apparently been there for a long time and he’d apparently survived some sort of accident that left him with lasting damage.

He didn’t know much about the kid, but there was something about him watching him fight so hard to relearn how to walk on his own, that was oddly inspiring. Watching the kid progress made him want to try harder in his own physical therapy.

Especially after hearing that the kid had finally built up enough strength to finally go home.

It left him feeling bittersweet.

As he walked through the door to the therapy room, he noted that today was no exception.

Studiously as always, the kid was hard at work. Using rails to balance himself as he walked, for the most part, freely.

Shota guessed he wasn't the only one who still had to come here, despite getting the green light.

What did surprise him, however, was finding All Might there with him.

This in turn, apparently surprised his colleague as well, if his startled expression was anything to go
There was a story behind this, he just knew it.

---

Apparently, he had a fan.

A huge fan, in fact.

It was pretty amusing, considering.

During the duration of his sessions, Shota had always been wrapped up from head to toe, so it was understandable that he wouldn’t easily be recognizable.

“H-Holy crap! Y-y...” the kid breathes as he flails in his wheelchair, “y-you’re you! E-eraser head!”

After a very vague and brief excuse, ‘Mr. Yagi’ thought it’d be a great idea to introduce him to Midoriya properly.

A likely distraction, but whatever.

He wasn’t going to pry into the man’s business, no matter how odd and curious it was.

Midoriya all but bows in his seat, leaving Shota thoroughly at a loss.

Although it was amusing, he didn’t often acquire ‘fans’ as his work was mostly private police details. It was always kind of weird to know he had an actual fanbase.

‘Mr. Yagi’ laughs at his discomfort.

“Young Midoriya here is a huge fan of yours, as you can tell. I’m honestly surprised you two hadn’t formally met, yet,” All Might explains.

“Well, not many people want to talk with someone who looked like they crawled out of a tomb, so I get it,” he shrugs.

“I still can’t believe that was you! This whole time I was working alongside Eraser Head! I wonder if Kacchan knew you were here!” The kid flails some more, throwing up all sorts of questionable hand gestures.

Shota arches a brow as he watches the kid continue to freak out in his seat.

“Uh, sorry,” All Might pipes up, looking at least a little abashed as he rubs the back of his neck, “he’s kind of in the middle of a fanboy rant, but for the most part, he’s just confused as to how he didn’t figure out that it was you this whole time.”

“You speak whatever... that is?” he blinks.

All Might laughs, shaking his head, “Barely, I’m still learning, but young Midoriya here is a pretty good teacher himself, so I can, for the most part, understand what he’s saying. When he’s slow about it at least.”

“S-sorry! I c-can g-get ah-head of myself w-when I’m e-excited,” the kid chimes in sheepishly.
“He has a harder time getting his words out when he’s excited, flustered, or upset,” his colleague explains.

Shota watches the blond man as he watches Midoriya’s hands.

“He says that it’s an honor to meet you in person and that he’s heard nothing but good things about you from his friends,” All Might explains.

Okay.

There was definitely a story behind this.

Shota didn’t think his curiosity could be contained that this point.

Normally he could mind his business, but this was seriously piquing his interest.

From what he could infer on his own, Midoriya apparently didn’t know about All Might’s true form. That much was clear from his colleague’s earlier reaction. But somehow, they knew one another. Enough so that All Might had gone out of his way to learn enough JSL, to be able to translate for him or speak with him.

It made him wonder.

Just who was this kid?

“Good things, huh?” He replies after some thought.

Midoriya nods, smiling so brightly his big green eyes seem to gleam.

“He has some friends in your class,” All Might explains, “and he wanted to thank you for protecting them ... despite how badly you got hurt.”

The blonds expression sobers as he eyes Shota.

Things really did come full circle after all.

This entire time that he was beating himself up for failing his class; this kid, who obviously looked up to him, and who’d inadvertently inspired him, was holding onto gratitude. For him protecting the very students; his friends, that he’d felt he’d failed.

Shota watches All Might’s expression carefully, noting a hint of something, as he translates for Midoriya yet again.

“He says,” the older man pauses for a moment, “that… if he’s given the opportunity to become a hero, he hopes he could be half as brave as you.”

That got him.

Shota didn’t know why, but the sincerity on the kids face, in his eyes and very being, made all of this feel all the more worth it.

It served as a reminder of why they did this. Why pro heroes did the things that they did.

Because they protected lives, sometimes at the cost of their own.

Seeing the sincerity, the relief, and even the determination in the young boy's eyes, made Shota feel
so much better.

“Midoriya, was it?” Shota asks, despite already knowing.

“Y-yes sir,” the kid responds firmly.

Shota gives him an encouraging smirk, “I hope to see you at U.A.”

“Y-yes sir!”

Yeah...

there was definitely a story behind this.

But good books were *worth* the wait.

----

As Shota walks down the hall the next morning, toward his first class of the day, he’s both surprised and unsurprised by what he finds.

Which happens to be; Bakugou Katsuki, walking next to the wheelchair of none other than Midoriya Izuku, as they made their way down the corridor to the Gen Ed classrooms.

The both of them beaming at one another all the while, like nothing in the world could stop them.

And they were right to.

Because nothing likely could.

As Shota watched them, everything suddenly made a *lot* more sense.

And if he knew one thing for certain...

It was that those kids were going places.
In Bloom

Chapter Summary

Despite still wanting to become a hero, his one true love was quirks and how they ticked.

Katsuki had mentioned that Mr. Yagi knew about this, which was probably why he made the suggestion, but holy crap.

This was like a dream come true.

Chapter Notes

Hello, my lovelies! Apologies for this very long overdue chapter!

Along with being swamped with work, school, and parenting, my depression and anxiety decided to rear their ugly heads. To say the least, my mood, appetite, and desire to do anything other than basic things to survive, utterly tanked. It took a lot of therapy and lots of tlc to bring me out of my funk. Having four of my favorite residents pass away on top of all this also didn't exactly help with this either.

But I finally got to a place where I'm better. Still not 100%, but way more functional than I was.

I honestly couldn't have done it without all of you! SERIOUSLY. Some of you went out of your way to reach out to me on tumblr, or to re-comment, just to check up on me, and I truly, truly appreciate that.

There are still so many comments that I have yet to reply to because I became so overwhelmed... this past month and a half? Geez... I hope it wasn't that long, but I think it was. x'D I'm a hot mess.

Anyway, I wanted to let you all know that I appreciate all of your kind words and encouragement, and for just being all around wonderful people! Again, I do apologize for this being so late.

I pretty much scrapped what I originally had for this chapter, rewrote and revised a lot of it, because writing a happy chapter when you're sad is like... pulling teeth. x'D

The bare bones of this chapter are still here, but I feel like this flows so much better.

Also! Another thing, I wanted you all to be aware of, I have gotten some hate and disappointed comments on this story as well, all of which were directed at the same thing, and honestly, there were so few in the grand scheme of things, but I wanted to address it properly because it kept coming up.

I made a goof. Lol. Without realizing I made a goof, which is a feat for me, because I am usually meticulous when it comes to my writing.
But I do want to point out that this goof was either ignored or totally missed by most if not all of you, other than those select few who decided to point it out.

I have been writing this story, since the beginning, following the schedule of the western school systems. Most schools start in late August/ early September here and the semesters finish in late May/ early June.

It honestly didn't even occur to me that Japan would have had a different system.

To go back and revise everything, so that this all takes place in the Spring would mean basically gutting the story and starting from scraps. Which I honestly debated doing, because of course, I got all anxious about my screw up.

But the more I thought about it, the more I was like... wait. Nope. Not happening. I'd have to basically change a lot of key plot points and it'd basically cause more trouble than it was worth and we'd likely end up with a completely different story.

So I decided to stick to my guns. I am going to continue on with this story as per usual. Bare in mind. This is an AU. I only decided to go the canon route to add more meat to the plot. The Sports Festival will still happen. I'm not so sure about 8 precepts, because of Izu's quirklessness, but Kamino Ward will also still be a thing.

Canon events will still happen. Even if they are into their second years. Fear Not.

I hope that clears up any confusion. I apologize if that ruins the story for you. Some have told me as such. But if this does not bother you, I am going to end this long authors note here and let you all get to the next chapter!

Thank you all for your continued and much-appreciated support! ♥♥♥

I hope you enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes
It's not even been a day and you're already trying to get me in trouble?

For real?

xD

you could just not respond

Where's the fun in that?

you make me so proud
Aizawa is not amused

Gee, I wonder why that is?

dunno

i'm fabulous

👍(ोωो人)

you're so full of shit

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Text Message
Izuku smiles down at his phone from his spot near the front of the classroom. His summery green eyes glint with mirth as the light from the screen goes dark when he locks it, he slips the device back into his pocket.

Even through their typical banter, Izuku could tell that Katsuki was still a little antsy over having been split up for the time being, which was admittedly very endearing.

This was just one of the new and many ways he showed he cared, one of which Izuku was steadily becoming more familiar with. Not that there was anything here that the blond needed to be
concerned about, but there simply wasn’t a day in which they wouldn’t spend texting one another back and forth, even if it was something random like poop emojis, or the trading of memes or shitposts.

Even after discovering that they thankfully at least had two classes together; which were English and Science respectively, Izuku had a feeling that nothing would change much in terms of their habits and that they would only grow closer for it.

As expected, being in the same building didn’t change this dynamic of theirs in the slightest, which brought yet another smile to the forested boy’s face.

He’d been at U.A. for a little over an hour and a half and so much has already happened.

It was surreal.

Like something out of his wildest of dreams.

With time to spare, Izuku had managed to finally graduate Junior High.

What with as little sleep as he’d been getting lately, he’d decided to use that time to complete all of his remaining credits, giving him a comfortable amount of cushion in which to finally formally apply to the high school of his dreams.

In a fit of pride, his mother had even gone as far as to throw him a small party to celebrate and had even managed to sneakily invite his friends. It was a little embarrassing, but it made him feel so much lighter.

Nothing; however, made him more emotional than when he’d tried on his new school uniform for the first time.

He’d lost count of how many times he’d fumbled with his tie and he still didn’t know if he’d had it on right.

Even more embarrassing still, was how many photos his Mom took of him that morning.

It went a little something like: “Oh, my baby!” She’d cried for the 4th time that morning, gathering him into a big hug, “I am SO proud of you! You look so handsome in your new uniform! I have to show Mitsu! Smile big for me, okay!”

To say the least, Katsuki had to practically extract him, wheelchair and all, from his mother's loving vice grip that morning.

There’d been laughter, tears, and well wishes.

It was all a little crazy.

However, despite it all, nothing made him feel more self-assured than when Katsuki finally took his time to get a good look at him.

As those crimson eyes roved over every square inch of him, likely visually dissecting him down to his very last freckle, the blond paused long enough in his appraisal to reach out and deftly adjust his tie. Once he was finished he’d stood back taking yet another look and had given Izuku an approving nod.

That in and of itself was a win.
It was just the boost of confidence he needed to propel him through the beginning of his first day.

That is... until they got to school.

It was funny really, in the last almost year and a half that Izuku had lived 5 minutes away from U.A.’s main gates, he never imagined how intimidating the building could be.

It was so short of a distance, that he could see it from his room in the rehabilitation center.

For months since he’d became mobile, he’d wanted nothing more than but to see it in person.

He knew the building must’ve been huge, seeing as it looked big from his bedroom window, but finally being up close was wholly different. Finally seeing it in person, Izuku realized that he greatly underestimated the sheer vastness of the campus.

His scarred hands trembled in his lap as he and Katsuki paused at the entrance.

The blond was oddly quiet this morning, as if he just felt content enough to simply silently observe him, which was fine, because Izuku honestly had no words to give him.

Of all the things in the world that he could have come up with, for all his calculations, all his thoughts, nothing could compare to the emotions that ran rampant within him at that moment.

“I-I’m here,” he mumbled to himself after a while, “I’m a-actually here.”

Katsuki stared down at him, quietly eyeing him before something in his expression settled, “damn right you are, you ready to take this place by storm?”

Izuku would have answered.

Likely with something fueled by nervous determination!

But unfortunately, it was at that moment that he was accosted by the last person he’d ever expected to see that morning, which honestly shouldn’t have been that surprising in retrospect, but truthfully? No one ever really expects the number one, most beloved, and Izuku’s personal favorite pro-hero of all time to randomly freakin’ jump out at you from basically freaking nowhere, exclaiming his well-known catchphrase.

Panic spikes within him.

Oh, crap was this really happening?!

All Might really was larger than life.

And he was talking! To him!

Or was he greeting?

Izuku honestly didn’t know.

All he could do was stare, slack-jawed and flustered beyond belief.

Like… holy cow, he was huge!

Just like Kacchan had said.
And he was chop full of inspirational cheers and he was extremely booming of voice and just… overwhelming, really.

Like… wow? Why was he suddenly feeling so uneasy?

Maybe dizzy even?

Izuku literally couldn’t talk very well on a good day, but this was just unfair.

He felt like a literal mess.

Even more so than he was when he’d met Eraser Head.

Seriously, you’d think he’d be used to this by now, after having run into quite a few famous pro-heroes.

He could almost vaguely register the thinly veiled annoyance rolling off of his best friend in waves.

It would have been so much more noticeable if Izuku wasn’t having a literal heart attack and clinging to his wheelchair for dear life.

----

Honestly, that entire part of the morning was more or less an embarrassing blur and the only parts of it he could remember were Kacchan’s very obvious annoyance, All Might somehow knowing JSL??? And being ushered in to meet his homeroom teacher, freakin’ Present Mic!

Which ironically, that meeting was far more tame than meeting All Might was, which was really funny considering Present Mic’s quirk.

For a guy that was all about kicking up the excitement, he was really calming and sweet!

It was a little-known fact, even going as far as escaping Izuku’s radar, but Present Mic was actually fluent in JSL and American sign language. Apparently, he was also partially deaf as a direct result of his quirk, which made a lot of sense when Izuku thought about it.

Seeing as Izuku’s circumstances aligned with his own, for convenience, he was placed in Present Mic’s homeroom class as a means to help him acclimate better.

Honestly, it was a perfect match.

With Present Mic’s vivacious enthusiasm and fresh take on teaching, Izuku already felt right at home. He also felt way less anxious.

He didn’t feel like the odd man out and he certainly didn’t have trouble understanding anything, because Present Mic was all too eager to fill their communication gaps with sign.

It was sincerely the most fun he’d ever had in a classroom and every one of his classmates were amicable. It was certainly very different than what he was used to. No one seemed bothered by the fact that he was in a wheelchair, or that he couldn’t talk very well.

They hadn’t even asked him about whether he had a quirk, but the forest-haired boy was almost certain that that too would be a non-issue. A lot of Gen Ed students either had passive quirks or rarer still, no quirks at all.

For once, Izuku could see himself enjoying school for more than just academics.
1st and 2nd periods were just as interesting.

Ms. Midnight was a real firecracker and a little bit too enthusiastic about nude still-lifes, but she definitely had an artistic eye and she definitely knew what she was talking about when it came to Art History. She’d spent most of the 1st period cooing over how cute he was, it was kind of awkward, but not so bad he supposed.

2nd period was History, with Mr. Snipe.

And oh man…

That was awesome.

Like Eraser Head, not much was known about Snipe, due to his affiliation with the police, but he was very intelligent. He knew a ton about History and seemingly had an affinity for Westerns. His main strengths historically speaking were geared toward modern and postmodern warfare and munitions. He was a force to be reckoned with.

By the time 3rd period rolled around Izuku was in full bloom.

It was just after Cementoss had introduced him, that he was told to situate himself at the chairless desk next to a girl named Uraraka. She was a pretty girl with caramel brown hair, which was styled into a medium length bob, and warm chocolate eyes. As she cheerfully waved him over, Izuku couldn’t help but find himself blushing.

It wasn’t often that he talked to girls other than his nurses, his Mom, or Aunty Mitsu. To be honest, he didn’t quite know what to say to one, let alone have a girl give him such a kind smile. Most of the girls at his old school were rude or ignored him completely.

So caught up in this train of thought, he barely registered when his wheelchair managed to snag on someone’s backpack strap and send him jerking forward.

Welp.

This was it.

Life was nice while it lasted.

How embarrassing.

It’d be a shame to go out in such a silly way.

Hopefully, his loved ones would leave that out of his epitaph.

A sudden feeling of weightlessness overtook him then. As if someone had hit the pause button on the gravity around him.

The suspension left him feeling a little bit unsettled.

“Oh my god!” The brunette calls out, “that was a really close call! I am SO sorry about that, I didn’t even think to move my bag! I hope you don’t mind that I used my quirk on you, but I really didn’t want you to get hurt because of something so silly!”
Izuku was aware of two things in that moment.

One: was that this girl’s quirk was amazing, if not unsettling… for reasons. And Two: she was seriously shaken by this.

“U-um i-it’s ok. C-can y-you…?” Izuku gestures helplessly still stuck mid-fall.

“Oh!” She gasps again, looking thoroughly embarrassed. Her arms and hands flailed about her as if she weren’t sure of what to do.

At this point, Mr. Cementoss comes over and helps him back into his seat as the girl releases him from her quirk’s grip.

After assuring them both that he was more than okay, their teacher returns to the front of the class once Izuku is safe and secure behind his desk.

The girl is quiet for a long time after that, seemingly chewing her lip nervously.

Feeling bad and not wanting to start off on the wrong foot, Izuku jots down a quick note and secretly passes it to her, who seems to perk up in surprise.

‘Really, it’s okay! I was distracted, it wasn’t your fault, honest.’

She peers up at him long enough to give him a wobbly smile and a nod, before quickly jotting down her response and floating it back to him, which left him grinning widely.

That was seriously cool.

Her quirk was a lot like his Mom’s, which honestly made it feel a whole lot less unnerving.

‘I’m just glad you’re not hurt! I know Mr. Cementoss introduced me, but I’m Uraraka Ochaco! I hope after that little fiasco we can still be friends!’

Friends.

It still felt foreign to Izuku, but entirely warming to know that he had people in his life now that were consistent. People that enjoyed being in his company, with or without a quirk. Or to know that some were willing to work on themselves and changed their lives to be better to him. It was all so new. So welcome.

To know that he had such good friends and that he would only make more; was such a new and refreshing feeling.

He was sure that his megawatt smile left him absolutely glowing.

‘No harm done, seriously! Your quirk is amazing, I’m sure that without your help, I’d have landed in a pretty embarrassing heap on the floor. My mom has a similar quirk, it’s telekinesis based, does yours work the same way? I hope that’s not too personal to ask! And of course, I would love to be friends!’

For the rest of the period, the pair of them traded notes back and forth, in between helping one another out with their current literature assignment.

During this time he finds out that Uraraka’s quirk is called ‘Zero Gravity’ and that she could literally float anything she touches, regardless of how heavy it is. Which was kind of different from how his mother’s quirk worked. She had a limit on how heavy the items she floated could be. She could also
only really float things to herself, although with recent practice she was beginning to learn to float things away from her too. Such as keys or a television remote.

Izuku also learned that Uraraka’s favorite color was pink, that she really liked stargazing, and that she really enjoyed Japanese cuisine and Mochi, in particular.

He also came to find that she was a student in the hero course and that she was coincidentally part of Class 1-A.

“That’s so cool! I knew your quirk was amazing, but knowing that you’re also in the hero course makes total sense! My best friend is actually in class 1-A, as well, along with two of my other good friends.’ Izuku jots down quickly. The period was just about over and Uraraka had agreed to show him where the heroics department was.

“Your best friend? Who is that?” she asks him with a smile just as the bell rings.

“Well, I call him Kacchan, but you might know him as Bakugou Katsuki?” He replied hastily.

Suddenly Uraraka eyes him like he had a second head.

Izuku was used to getting this reaction now and honestly, he could see why. Even after all his hard work, Katsuki still came off as a dick. Izuku found it endearing now, but others would probably disagree vehemently.

“So wait,” she says, walking alongside him during their passing period as she leads him in the direction of where the heroics department resides, “I thought you looked familiar, I should have guessed! You’re the boy that was there that day! After the attack on the USJ. You’re Bakugou’s friend?”

Izuku nods emphatically. ‘Sure am’ he writes back to her on his notepad.

“Huh. Honestly, if I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes that day, I’d never have believed it… he’s so… intense.”

Izuku could tell she was trying to be as polite about it as possible, which makes him laugh.

‘Imagine getting him and Todoroki together in the same room, one on one,’ he replies with a wide grin.

“Oh my god, that’s even worse!” she laughs.

‘Let’s just say, they learned real quick not to fight around me,’ Izuku replies ominously.

Her laughter was a lot like what bubbles would probably sound like; light and airy.

She was just so good natured and lovely to be around. It honestly was a nice change of pace compared to all the macho testosterone he was used to with his boys. Not that he didn’t thoroughly enjoy hanging out with Kacchan, Kirishima, or Todoroki.

Speaking of.

A spikey head of ash blond hair found its way down the hall heading right for him. And for once in their academic careers, Izuku wasn’t even a little bit apprehensive about it. Without really thinking about it, he propelled himself a little more quickly down the hall, leaving a smiling brunette to trail after him.
“Kacchan!”

The boy in question goes through a range of weird and confusing expressions before giving up and settling on a small, barely there, smile.

It was honestly hilarious to see.

Izuku could tell that Katsuki was used to behaving differently, probably 100% grumpily, at school than he did with him in private, he simply couldn’t deny how warm it made him feel to know that he was the fiery blond’s only exception.

“Hey nerd,” he greets him with a subtle, yet gentle smile.

“H-hey!” Izuku replies, more than likely beaming.

It was at this point that Katsuki noticed Uraraka loitering beside him.

“Round face,” he acknowledges her.

Izuku sighs.

That was probably as nice as he was going to get, to be truthful.

Apparently, this was something Uraraka was used to, because she didn’t even bat an eye.

“...Thank you,” Katsuki utters after a stilted silent moment, which honestly surprises her and Izuku both.

Thankfully the blond elaborates, “Deku told me what you did for him. So, thanks, I guess.”

Ah! Right.

He had told him about that, hadn’t he.

This garners a curious smile from the brunette as she crosses her arms over her chest as if sizing him up, after a moment she responds.

“You’re welcome,” she replies with pleasant surprise. Eyeing Izuku and giving him a smile, she pats his shoulder, “it was nice meeting you, Midoriya, but I should get going, I’m sure Iida is waiting for me. Maybe if you’re not busy you can join us sometime!” She says happily.

“S-s… s-sure,” he manages to get out as he waves her off.

A moment of silence stretches between them as they watch the bubbly girl depart.

“Leave it to you to attract part of the nerd squad. Makes too much damn sense to even be annoyed by it,” Katsuki teases him.

“I can’t h-help what I a-am,” Izuku quips back.

“Damn right, you can’t,” the blond grins wickedly, “ready to brave the hoard of hero hopefuls?”

“I’ve n-never been f-fond of s-school c-cafeteria’s...” he replies, making a face.

Cafeterias usually meant he’d end up with either food in his hair or a split lip.

“Well you’re in luck, they split lunch by periods, so it’s less crowded. I’d suggest we book it and
hang in the garden, but I know that as soon as Shitty Hair sees you, it’s over. So I figured we might as well cut our losses now.”

Izuku laughs at that, knowing full well how exuberant their red-headed friend was.

“I just h-hope it’s n-not t-too o-overflowing,” this whole day has been one hell of an experience so far. One of which, he felt like he was bumbling through.

“It’s up to you, nerd. We can brave the masses, or skip out. Whatever works. Shitty Hair will understand if you want space. Hell, I used to kick it in the teachers lounge with Mr. Yagi just to get them out of my damn hair. Got to the point where the old man would start bringing me tea.”

“T-that sounds n-nice, actually,” the forested boy admits.

Katsuki nods in understanding, “then that’s what we’ll do. No need to fry your circuits all in one day. It’s been fuckin’ forever since you’ve been in school.”

“No k-kidding,” he replies with an awkward laugh.

And that was what they did.

Spending their lunch period, drinking tea with Mr. Yagi was a lot more relaxing than sitting in a loud and crowded cafeteria would have been.

But that did give him time to think and reconcile a little bit, about all that has happened so far that morning.

He was almost sure of it, but he could swear in the midst of his freak out and confusion, *All Might* had signed to him. He didn’t know why, but that stuck out as the weirdest thing he’s experienced all day.

Maybe it was just him, maybe he imagined it?

It wasn’t the JSL so much as it was the *person*.

Not that All Might didn’t already know several languages, but It just felt *odd*.

Off, or out of place.

Familiar even, which was way weirder.

Every time he thought he should ask Mr. Yagi about it, the more it felt kind of nerve-wracking.

He decided then to table that subject for later as well.

Especially since Kacchan kept trading odd looks with the older man.

These days, his mental evidence locker was feeling quite *full*.

---

After lunch, everything seems to smooth out.

For 4th period he shared English with Kacchan, which was really cool because Present Mic didn’t know that Kacchan also knew JSL, so in a fit of enthusiasm Present Mic opted to have the three of them give the rest of the class an impromptu JSL lesson, which was really fun. Present Mic, also
having promised to teach them both a little bit of ASL as well; for extracurriculars, left them both pretty excited. They were already learning English, learning ASL wouldn’t be that much different.

Next was Science with Power Loader, in which Kacchan was apparently one of his top students, mostly where chemistry was concerned. Kacchan said it was just because he enjoyed ‘blowing shit up,’ that he even took an interest in learning how to do that with different chemicals.

While Izuku knew there was some truth to this, he also just simply knew that his explosive friend was a science nerd all around. He’d always had an interest in catching and observing insects, or analyzing and comparing different rocks in his ‘top secret’ collection. He’d never admit it out loud, but the weather and the elements and volcanoes also totally caught his interest. Always have. Kacchan was nothing if not a thinker, not much unlike Izuku himself. Science was definitely his area of expertise.

His next period was Maths, with Mr. Ectoplasm. And if that wasn’t cool enough, he shared this class with both Todoroki and Kirishima, both of whom were also excited in their own ways to share a class with him. Kirishima was mostly just excited to have two brainiac’s he could study with. Either way, Izuku was more than happy to have them both.

Now mind you, he thoroughly enjoyed every single class he’s taken up until this point, but 7th period seriously took the cake.

This was a class that was entirely new to U.A. this year and one that Mr. Yagi and Principal Nezu strongly recommended for him.

Izuku was over the moon.

This was where he would shine!

Quirk Theory with none other than the famed Rescue Hero, Thirteen!

While initially, the idea of getting into the heroics department was his one true goal and all that motivated him throughout middle school, he never suspected that a class like this would even be a reality. All his life he’d taken notes on quirks and studied them endlessly. He could probably formulate multiple strategies in his sleep.

Despite still wanting to become a hero, his one true love was quirks and how they ticked.

Katsuki had mentioned that Mr. Yagi knew about this, which was probably why he made the suggestion, but holy crap.

This was like a dream come true.

And learning from Thirteen was even more amazing.

They literally wrote the book on search and rescue tactics. If there were ever a hero that relied more on strategy, it was them. Because in order to accurately provide relief in the midst of a disaster, one had to know how quirks could be used in multiple ways.

Izuku just knew that this was where he’d make his mark.

If he couldn’t be a hero just yet, if at all, he could definitely do this.
By the time the last bell rang, Izuku was literally floating.

He was all but vibrating in his seat as he zoomed down the halls excitedly toward the heroics department, nearly bowling over a navy-haired boy with glasses in the process, which landed him a longwinded lecture on hall safety.

Needless to say, he was thoroughly chastised and informed by the time Kacchan came to his rescue.

“The fuck are you doing, Shitty Glasses?” Katsuki gripes as he walks through the threshold with his backpack slung haphazardly over one shoulder.

“Upholding my duty as class president and making sure the halls are kept safe from delinquents,” the boy responds tersely.

Katsuki literally looked almost as amused as he did annoyed, which was a feat.

“The fuck did you do, Deku?” He ignores the navy-haired class president.

‘I may or may not have been racing down the hall in my excitement and almost ran into him,’ he signs embarrassedly, not at all trusting himself to speak.

At this point, the class president seemed to blanch, probably assuming he was chastising a deaf kid.

“O-oh my…I didn’t even realize—” the boy began only to get cut off by Izuku's haughty blond companion.

“He’s not deaf, stupid, he can hear you just fine,” Katsuki barks, making the navy-haired kid blanch and sputter, yet again.

Izuku is literally red at this point, ‘Kacchan, be nice! And tell him I’m sorry, I’m honestly too embarrassed to talk right now,’ he gesticulates wildly.

“Tch… whatever. I told you your wheelchair drag racing would get you in trouble,” the blonds teases him with a smirk.

‘Kacchan, please!?’ The forest-haired boy implores.

With a long-suffering sigh, the blond begrudgingly complies, “the nerd says he’s sorry for almost making you roadkill,” he huffs waving the navy-haired kid off as he sets his sights back on Izuku, “can we go now?”

“Ah, ah, ah, Bakubro,” Kirishima calls out as he slings an arm over the blond's shoulder, “not just yet! Some of us were looking forward to meeting Midoriya all day, but you’ve been stingy and kept him all to yourself. Which is so unfair.”

“Deku’s kind of out-of-order, right now, if you hadn't noticed,” Katsuki gripes, attempting to detach himself from the clingy redhead.

Izuku seems to flush even further, if that were possible.

“Awwwe, Kiri, he’s even more precious than you described! He’s like a little Greenman! I could only imagine him surrounded by plants and flowers like you described!” A pink haired; and well, pink-skinned girl suddenly coos as she slips by them and slinks down to pinch one of Izuku’s freckled cheeks.
Izuku is almost too immersed in checking out her wickedly cool eyes to be embarrassed.

“Who knew Bakugou of all people would have a cute secret boyfriend, seriously, you’ve been holding out on us man,” another kid says as he huddles into the hall next to Kirishima. This boy was blond as well, with a black bolt dyed into the side of his hair.

At this point, Izuku is sure he’s dead.

Yep.

Super sure.

He had to be.

Cause if he wasn’t already, he knows he will be if his heart doesn’t keep leaping out of his throat.

He barely registers Katsuki’s raging at this point when he hears the pink-haired girl tease him again with a, “It’s not so secret if he literally embraces the kid in front of at least a hundred people! Seriously that was so sweet!” she coos again, giving Izuku's shoulder a slight squeeze.

“THAT'S IT YOU’RE ALL DEAD, GET YOUR FUCKIN' PAWS OFF HIM YA SHITTY ALIEN!”

Ah yes, the sweet sound of impending doom.

By this time, most of class 1-A is huddled around them, either trying to get out of the doorway or just hanging around for amusement, Izuku didn’t know which one.

That is, until his White Knight came through the door, striding past everyone, taking hold of Izuku’s wheelchair handles and promptly pushes him down the hall without a word.

It was only then, as Izuku attempted to gather himself that he vaguely heard Mr. Aizawa’s own annoyed griping of: “class was dismissed ten minutes ago, go away.”

----

“T-thanks for that,” Izuku says finally.

He and Shouto were loitering at the front of the campus, waiting to see if Kacchan would show.

Izuku seriously hoped he didn’t get detention for the hell he no doubt unleashed in that hallway.

He winced just thinking about it.

“You seemed distressed, I didn’t like it,” the bi-colored boy replied simply.

That was one of the things Izuku loved about him. He was short and to the point. He never did anything without rhyme or reasons.

“I… d-dunno if that was d-dis-s-stressed m-more than it was e-embarr-rassed,” he admits, “I k-know K-Kiri meant well.”

“If he meant well or not, it made you uncomfortable,” he replies; again, simple as can be.

Izuku smiles at that.
“Y-you’re a sweeth-heart,” he replies, watching curiously as Shouto’s own face lights up a bit. The boy stays quiet.

“...It’s b-been so long s-since I’ve been a-around th-this m-many people, I e-even freaked out o-over All M-might this m-morning,” he continues after a moment.

“That’s not unlike you at all,” Shouto replies with a small teasing smirk of his own.

This startles a laugh out of him.

“T-todoroki! Y-you of all p-people, p-picking on me?!?

His heterochromatic friend merely shrugs.

“I am w-wounded,” Izuku pouts, jokingly, “y-you’re as c-cold as the S-soba you eat!”

This, however, does get a laugh out of his normally stoic friend.

After both boys settle into a companionable silence, Shouto pipes up curiously, “how did All Might of all people make you uncomfortable?”

Izuku is quiet for a moment.

He debates on whether or not he should mention this out loud.

If there were ever a person he could be totally one-hundred percent honest with, it was Shouto. As of recent, they’ve swapped some pretty emotionally intimate stories. Some things were just easier to talk about with him than they were with Kacchan. Mostly because Izuku didn’t want him to feel guilty. Not with how far they’ve come.

So as far as confidants went, Shouto never gave him a reason to mistrust him. Not even once has he ever doubted his sincerity.

So he opens up.

“T-this m-might sound crazy, b-but... I... I f-feel like I’ve m-met him... b-before. B-but it’s h-hazy... b-because it f-feels r-recent, and... not. A-at the same t-time. Is that weird?”

Shouto seems quiet for a moment, as though contemplating something very deeply.

“Before the accident, you mean?” He treads lightly.

“Y-yes... and no. B-both? I... I’m not sure,” Izuku confides quietly.

Izuku huffs a laugh to himself, “S-sorry, I k-know this must s-sound silly. Knowing All M-might? In m-my f-fanboy dreams m-maybe.”

Shouto eyes him curiously, his expression carefully constructed.

“I have never known you to be wrong, Midoriya,” his friend answers him firmly. There was no hesitancy or doubt in his tone. It was just simple and to the point.

And shit... did that scare him.

Because it felt right.
At this point, both boys hear a grumbling coming from the front entrance.

Katsuki, still fuming, followed by an apologetic Kirishima, still in the midst of what was likely a heartfelt and manly apology.

Izuku smiles as they approach, despite his conflicting emotions.

“Just… keep that in mind,” Shouto quietly assures him from his perch on the low hanging wall next to him.

“T-thank you, Todoroki.”

The boy simply nods.

“BAKUBRO, I SAID I WAS SORRY~” Kirishima laments, his eyes fully working the kicked puppy look.

“I said fuck off, Shitty Hair,” the explosive blond grumbles.

“We were just teasing!” The redhead pouts, “Midoriya knows that, right Mido?!” Kirishima switches tactics and unleashes the full force of his puppy eyes on him.

Izuku rolls his eyes, causing Shouto to snort next to him.

“Half n’ half!” Katsuki barks, his lips pursed thinly as he stands in front of them. His arms crossed tightly over his chest.

Izuku eyes the blond with amusement.

“You… are significantly less shitty than Shitty Hair,” Katsuki gripes.

Izuku’s lips tremble, attempting to check his laughter.

“I… don’t know what to say. What an honor,” the bi-colored boy snarks back, reducing Izuku to stitches.

Kirishima literally looks like laying down and dying would be a mercy at this point and it makes the greenette laugh even harder until there is nothing left of him but silent wheezes.

----

Together, the four boys walk and roll to Izuku’s house before bidding him a good night; Katsuki loosely promising not to kill the other two on the way to the train station and that he’d text him later.

As Izuku waves his friends off and makes his way up the side ramp and into his home, he feels…

good.

Sure a lot had happened on his first day, a lot of which he knew he’d have to think about, but for the most part, he couldn’t complain. Attending U.A. was just like everything he’d hoped it’d be and more. It was full of up and coming heroes to be, each born with amazing quirks, trained and led by those who came before them.

Izuku knew within himself that this was where he was meant to be.

And rowdy as they were, Izuku knew Katsuki had some good, well-meaning friends. He also knew that they would likely be just as welcoming with him as he’d been with Kirishima. He also had
Uraraka, who was sweet as can be, and who’d invited him to eat lunch with her and her friend Iida. It was such a strange and new feeling, being accepted so easily, despite his more obvious handicaps.

U.A. was honestly such a positive place.

A force for good.

And as Izuku laid down that night, he finally found sleep, and all of his dreams that night held hope.

----

It was around 1 in the morning and Katsuki couldn’t sleep.

There was so much that went on at school the day before, he could barely keep up with the emotional roller coaster of stupidity he’d climbed aboard.

But even so, Izuku had seemed so happy, yet... so reserved.

And Katsuki could pinpoint the exact moment the green-haired boy’s mood had changed as he read back through his texts that morning.
9:34 AM

hey old man! the hell was that?!

have you ever heard of the fucking word subtlety?

at this point, fucking Deku is going to figure you out and if he does i'm not fucking lying to him

you hear me?

Loud and clear, Young Bakugou. I'll admit, that wasn't exactly the reaction I was going for. Subtlety isn't exactly my strong suit, but after he reacted so well with Aizawa, I figured he'd like to meet, well... me?

9:37 AM
he HAS met you. the scrawny ass skeleton REAL you. you don't have to fucking impress him, ok. that's stupid.

all this shit is doing is making things overly complicated. knowing Deku he probably already has an idea what's up. it won't take him long to figure out your secret, AGAIN.

besides... you ever stop to think that maybe All Might is a trigger for him. i've never seen him completely shut down like that before. and trust me i've seen his next level nerdism shit, that ain't it.

Oh my... you have a point.
His crimson eyes strain against the burning sensation of deep exhaustion. Rubbing them tiredly, he sets his alarm for school and locks the screen, finding bliss in his darkened room.

As he lay there in the darkened silence, he knew what he had to do.
Izuku wasn't dumb by any means.

If he came to him with the questions Katsuki knew he was inevitably going to ask, he wouldn't lie.

And if the truth that comes out hurts him?

He'd be there, to pick up every piece of him and hold him together.

Because while Shitty Pikachu didn't exactly have it right, he didn't have it wrong either...

He'd be there for Izuku this time around, no matter what.

Chapter End Notes

I know I talked your ears (eyes?) off earlier, but I just wanted to thank you all again for your continued support and to invite you to the Discord I made for this story.

I made this with the intention of posting it with the next chapter, as a means for you all to make friends, or ask me questions if you felt like it!

Many of you might not know, but I can also be reached on Tumblr and pretty much everywhere else, as Stringlish. I am also happy to hear from you all, and will gladly answer your questions! ♥

This is the discord link. I set it to never expire. Hopefully, I'll see some of you there sometime!

https://discord.gg/geDC2r3
Be Kind To Yourself

Chapter Summary

Pulling his eyes away from the burn marks and brown stains, he finds his mother’s worried expression. “Yeah… yeah, I… I g-guess I j-just don’t…” he trails off.

“You don’t remember that notebook, do you?” She asks carefully, trying and failing at keeping the dread from her voice.

Chapter Notes

Hello lovelies~ I've been feeling much more pro-active! Much more like myself. I want to thank you all for your support and encouragement. You all had very nice things to say and I truly appreciate your patience and well-wishes. It means the world to me.

Earlier this week, I got to meet a bunch of you via the Discord chat. I'm so happy to have had the pleasure of meeting you all properly!

For those who didn't catch the link, I'll add it again. Feel free to come and join us, we're a welcoming bunch! ♥

https://discord.gg/geDC2r3

Also,

Brace yourselves.

It starts as a simmer.

Just a tingling in the back of his mind. He likes to think he does a good job of ignoring it. Because why wouldn't he? Life has literally never been better for him. Like, ever. What reason would he have to feel frustrated? If anything, he feels blessed.

He lets it go.

But the more sleepless nights he has, the more this feeling grows.

But it’s just a simmer.

Nothing more.

But it certainly isn’t less, either.

He should have known.
In fact, he blatantly ignored it...

But simmers eventually *do* roll to a boil.

----

It was now March and in the last two months, he could honestly say he’s never felt more *free*.

He’d started school in January and was already basically caught up on all that he needed to get caught up on; due in part to his sleepless nights, which were a blessing and a curse.

During this time he’d also spent a lot of time just enjoying the *moment*.

Little moments in which he makes new friends, little moments in which he and Katsuki stow away in the campus garden during lunch or sit with Mr. Yagi in his office and drink tea. Little moments in which he gets to know his teachers and how he’s already learned so much from them. Thirteen and Present Mic, especially.

Quirk Theory was unlike anything he’d ever been taught in a regular school setting and in short, he enjoyed it, immensely. Not to toot his own horn, but he thrived here and there was a reason he was top of his class.

Present Mic also made good on his promise of teaching him and Kacchan ASL. Which, in turn, led to many more group JSL/ASL sessions taught amongst the class.

It was at this point that he learned that no two people signed alike.

He knew everyone had their own ways of signing, culturally and regionally. He also knew that JSL signers had their own speech patterns and that they often gave people their own special name signs, or developed their own slang, but he never really noticed that the way people sign is basically akin to having their own accent. Apparently, this is naturally developed depending on their environment, from who a signer is taught, and by who they conversate with most often.

It was at this point that that tingling itch in the back of his mind, told him to watch Mr. Yagi very closely.

Mind you, it was possible that Mr. Yagi had taught what he learned to All Might.

They did seemingly work closely.

That was the working theory he had.

But realistically, no two people signed alike.

Not even him and Katsuki and they had both learned together. They each had their own ‘inflection.’ Their own little tells that made them unique. And Katsuki’s JSL was usually a lot more vulgar. Izuku having learned most of his curse words from him, much to the distaste of his speech therapist. But that was neither here nor there.

Izuku, however, had taught Mr. Yagi himself, this much was fact. But even still, they didn’t sign alike. They had their own inflections as well. That and Mr. Yagi had many tells and was a lot less comfortable using JSL than he was with spoken words.

So this, in turn, made Izuku watch All Might all the more closely.

His working theory was quickly reduced to nothing short of a hypothesis at best.
Even so, he didn’t let this anomaly affect their relationship.

But it did breed its questions.

----

With his Quirk Theory class being his main focus, he found himself wanting to share more with his teacher. Thirteen was brilliant and Izuku wanted to show them exactly what he was made of. Which led to him asking his mother one night, where his notebooks were.

“Oh!” His mother’s cheeks flame, “honey, I’m so sorry, I thought I’d given those back to you. I guess with the move and all that’s happened, it was the last thing that was on my mind,” she smiles sheepishly from her position in front of the stove.

Tonight was Katsudon night and Izuku was completely jazzed about it.

“That’s okay, Mom. I was just wanting to show Thirteen, tomorrow. I’d like to see if they have any insight or advice on how to further my research,” Izuku signs back to her with a smile of his own.

His mother's shared viridian eyes shine as her expression only grows softer. “That makes me so happy, Izu,” she admits, “you’re doing so well in school, I’m so glad that you finally get to share your passion with the world.”

Izuku tries to steady his own wobbly expression as he begins to feel choked up.

He’d waited so long to hear those words expressed so freely.

It wasn’t that his mother was unsupportive in the past, because she was. And she’d done her very best to raise him all on her own, without even a shred of help. But there were times in which she simply hadn’t quite understood him.

He knew now that she was only trying to shield him from a cruel and uncaring world.

She’d felt that it was her duty to protect him and make him feel included by hiding her own quirk away. Reassuring him that he didn’t need a quirk, anyway. That she’d love him just the same. But to him, it only felt like she was excluding a part of herself from him, out of some misplaced sense of guilt or obligation. It hurt him deeply to know he was the reason she restrained herself.

She never told him in so many words, but Izuku knew for a fact that his father left because of him. Because he didn’t have a strong quirk; because he couldn’t carry the torch and bring honor to their family name.

His parents’ union might not have been a quirk marriage, but it was handled just the same. This was actually more common than most would think. If one parent didn’t find that their offspring met their standards as far as quirks went, they’d up and leave. To say the least, there were a lot of orphaned children. His mother was determined that he wouldn’t be one of them.

But in keeping him safe, his mother had lost out on years of her own personal growth.

She’d been given a gift and she’d hidden it away, afraid of making him feel bad, but the truth was, he’d always loved quirks. Whether he had one himself or not.

He was so glad when they’d finally talked about all of this.
It was all the mending they'd needed, just to be able to share themselves with one another.

Whenever his mother would show herself to him, even with simple things like floating a dish to him, or turning off the kitchen lights while they were seated on the couch. It was little things she did now, that made the biggest difference.

Now he could share his passion with her, by taking notes on her quirk, and in turn, learning together what she could and couldn’t do with it. Together, they could have fun with it and bond in ways they’d never used to before.

Hearing his mother say things like this, really showed him how much growing she had done herself.

Izuku was so grateful that she was sharing the pieces of herself that she’d hidden away for so long.

She was beginning to appreciate her gift.

She finally wasn’t holding herself back.

----

After dinner, they’d settled onto the couch together, laughing and going through some of his first notebooks. They were way more cheesy than his newer ones were, but for what it was worth, he’d had a lot of insight for being so young when he'd written them.

He made a mental note to revise and review those earlier notebooks more thoroughly at a later date.

Especially considering his first one was mostly based on All Might and Katsuki.

His best friend had come a long way with what he could do with his quirk throughout the years.

And as funny as popping popcorn or almost accidentally setting the kitchen on fire may have been, there were a lot more practical and tactical things that he could do now. Most of which he could record freely now, without the fear of having his face blasted off.

Which gave him a great idea!

He shoots his best friend a text.
Quirk notebook collab?

uh, fuck yeah. do you even need to ask?

:D Great! I really want to start filling the pages of that notebook you got me! And who better to fill it up with, than you.

sacDFDVGFA

UH?

cAREFUL mIDO, YOU MIGHT GIVE HIM A BIG HEAD!

Kirishima?!?

OMG R.I.P
Izuku grimaces as he sets his phone aside.

“Something wrong, dear?” His mother queries from beside him, pausing mid-page-turn, her brow pinched in concern.

“Oh nothing, just Kacchan and Kirishima, up to no good,” he replies one-handed, with a laugh.

His mother sighs and rolls her eyes good-naturedly, “what else is new.”
Izuku smiles brightly, **“I’m just glad he pulled his head out of his ass long enough to make another friend!”**

“Midoriya Izuku, you watch your language!” His mother chides him, snatching him up quick as a snake and giving his ear a pinch.

Izuku hisses and rubs his ear with a pout before signing a hasty apology; his mother muttering to herself about blond-haired bad influences.

----

The rest of their night continues on in contentment as they both take turns filing through Izuku’s notes. The both of them coming up with ideas on what key points or which notes in particular, that he should share with his teacher.

“What about this one, honey? It’s your newest one, it’s a little rough though,” His mother suggests with a light laugh, handing him a notebook that looked altogether pretty worse for wear.

As he takes it from her proffered hand, he blinks.

“13?” Izuku murmurs to himself, his confusion clear in his tone.

His mother’s browline pinches in concern.

“Honey?” She queries tentatively.

This was the same brand of notebooks as all of his others.

His handwriting was undoubtedly on the cover page.

And just by looking at the scorched markings and singed edges, he had no doubt as to what might have happened to it, but…

For the life of him, he couldn’t remember this notebook.

“M-mom? Did I ...w-write this?” His voice is soft, almost a whisper.

“You did,” she hesitantly confirms, almost as if she feels a tiny sliver of doubt, “that is your handwriting, isn’t it Izu?”

“I…” he blinks back his confusion.

Pulling his eyes away from the burn marks and brown stains, he finds his mother’s worried expression. “Yeah… yeah, I… I g-guess I j-just don’t…” he trails off.

“You don’t remember that notebook, do you?” She asks carefully, trying and failing at keeping the dread from her voice.

He watches as his mother smoothes her hand across his thigh comfortingly. Her expression schooling into something resigned, but also listless.

“No,” he admits, a restlessness, akin to a hive of bees sparks to life within his veins.

Hesitantly, as though reaching into the maw of a sleeping bear, Izuku opens the notebook.

Peering inside he is decidedly, **relieved**.
But only momentarily.

It looked completely normal.

Nothing out of the ordinary.

But the notes were foreign to him.

Sure, it was nothing he didn’t already know or deduce for himself, but he didn’t remember taking
notes on Mt. Lady or Kamui Woods. Let alone this fight that had apparently happened. He couldn’t
remember the day that was apparently dated in the upper right corner.

The notes were concise.

He clearly wrote them.

But even so, his mind was just blank.

“Does anything in there jog your memory at all?” His mother asks him quietly, after a moment of
letting him process the pages he’d read.

“No, not a t-thing,” he admits.

It felt like an out of body experience.

Like looking into what his life had been like, through a dusty window.

What was worse, was there wasn’t even an emotion linked to these pages.

He felt nothing.

Like a stranger with eerily similar handwriting had written this for him and left it for him to find.

There were things he just couldn’t remember.

Granny Chiyo and his doctors, after some time and various tests, estimated that he’d lost at least a
year or two of his memories.

Losing one year made sense.

He was in the hospital for a long time.

But he couldn’t remember hardly any of the end of 7th grade or the beginning of 8th.

Academically, he knew he’d retained what he’d learned.

Reflexively, it was there, like riding a bike.

But everything else was a blur of emotions.

Most of which surfaced in dreams.

At this point, he hated sleeping.

He could never find a real moments rest; more often than not, he’d wake from night terrors.

His mother was silent, observing him helplessly.
He hated making her worry more than anything.

“It’s okay… I… I k-know you’re w-worried. I-it’s a little f-freaky looking at my h-handwriting and n-not knowing where it c-came from, but…” his hand finds hers and he gives it as reassuring of a squeeze as he could.

His Mom bites her bottom lip, trying to hold back the flood of emotions he could clearly see flashing through her features.

“I just… hate this for you, baby,” she chokes out, her voice thick with emotion, “if I could… I would make it better, but…”

“It’s o-okay. I… I p-promise, Mom. E-everything’s already so m-much b-better,” he replies shakily.

At this point she reaches over and embraces him fully.

His brows furrow as he buries himself into her hold.

As frustrated with himself as he was, he tries to let it all go.

This was just the way things were now.

He had to accept it in order to move on.

And if his dreams were any indication, he knew he’d rather not pull on those threads.

He nuzzles into his mother's warm embrace, hopefully holding her together as tightly as she was holding him.

----

That night, as he laid awake at 2:30 am, he felt numb.

Crumpled around his knees, he held himself together, his fatigued verdant gaze burning a hole into the cover page of notebook 13 of his ‘Hero Analysis: For The Future.’

He still didn’t have the gall to open it again.

He half wondered how it even survived whatever ordeal it’s been through.

It was frayed and wrinkled enough to suggest it fell victim to at least two elements.

He debated texting Katsuki and asking him, but decided against it.

He knew without a doubt that the blond would tell him, but Izuku didn’t want to trouble him with any late night guilt.

They were doing so well.

It was so nice to know that if he wanted, he could just message him at any given hour and know for a fact it wouldn’t upset him. He could tell Katsuki anything. He could rely on him to keep him grounded and to hold him up if he needed it.

So… why was this so hard?

Why was his life both so… simultaneously perfect and frustrating?
These gaps…

These dreams…

They were exhausting.

And yet, most days, his life was like nothing he'd ever expected.

It was like a dream come true. He had his best friend back, after years of hostility. He was attending the school of his dreams, being taught by some of Japan's most renowned heroes. Hell, he was friends with so many bright and aspiring young potentials. The future of their world looked so bright.

He was out of that hospital bed, in his new home, with his mother who loved him and understood him better than she had in years. He could walk now, with crutches. He’d retired his wheelchair as of a month ago. And his speech, although, not entirely improving much, was becoming less of a barrier.

Everyone was so accepting of him, that they were willing to learn an entire different language to be able to talk with him.

Granted, only Kacchan and Koda could hold a full conversation with him, but even Todoroki, Kirishima and Uraraka were keen on learning. It was slow going, but they did their best and it was so nice for them to even put in the effort to try.

So why?

In the midst of all this good… why did he feel so broken?

Looking at his clock, he noted that is was already 3:15.

With a sigh, he unfolds himself and settles more into his bed, kicking the offending notebook off of the edge.

Maybe he’d wait a little bit on asking Thirteen for their opinion.

----

Antidepressants.

That was the verdict.

He supposed he should have seen this coming.

He’d never taken medication before, as far as he knew, but now he was being prescribed an antidepressant and a sleep aid.

His therapist was a very kind old woman, whose name was Kawakami Umio. She was a good friend and colleague of Ms. Enatsu's and came highly recommended for him, and for good reason.

Aside from being a naturally gentle person, her presence was also very calming.

Her quirk was called ‘Placid Waters’ and she could secrete a calm oceanic-like mist, that was very aromatic and calming to those who she used it on. Her quirk was not unlike that of Ms. Midnight’s quirk, just without the drawback of putting people to sleep.

After his initial apprehension about opening up to a stranger, he found that it was really easy to talk with her. Which, might’ve seemed like cheating, but Izuku had reason to believe she hadn’t needed
to use her quirk much. She was just a naturally attuned and sweet old woman, whose goal was to help kids with their ailments, like him.

She’d known a little bit about him, due to Ms. Enatsu’s referral, so for the most part, they had settled on getting his sleeping conditions under control and to begin unraveling his repressed feelings. The goal in mind was to try and recreate his memories based on the footnotes those feelings left behind.

They’d gone over everything from his sleeplessness, to his nightmares, and even his reluctance to ask for help. He’d told her about the helplessness he felt for such a long time at not being able to care for himself, or his frustrations about not being able to speak normally. He touched base on his confusion and his suspicions that he wasn’t getting the full story about what happened to him.

Yet, on the other hand, he also spoke of all the good. Of how he got to reconnect with Kacchan in a healthy manner, and how he and his Mom began to bond in ways they never had. He spoke highly of Mr. Yagi, and how his teachers, including Mr. Aizawa, made him feel so welcome.

He spoke of his friends and how accepting they were. Or of how amicable his classmates were. He spoke of Thirteen, and how he was doing very well in their Quirk Theory class. And of how Present Mic took him and Kacchan under his wing and was working with them on their sign language.

There were just as many ups as he felt there were downs.

And Mrs. Kawakami just smiled through it all.

“That seems to me, dear, that you have a wonderful group of people who, are human and flawed, but who love you and who are willing to support you,” she comments, sipping her tea at the kotatsu in her office. She seemed like nothing if not a traditional woman.

He'd politely declined his own tea.

“I do,” he replies, taking his time to write neatly for her.

His friends could decipher his hasty scrawl, but he didn't want to have to make a kindly old woman strain her eyes just to understand him.

“I want you to remember something Izuku. Because if nothing, this is the one piece of advice I like to impart with every person I meet,” she begins, sagely.

Izuku eyes the old woman curiously, so she continues.

“Be kind to yourself,” she says simply.

To which, Izuku just blinks.

Gratefully, she elaborates, “understand that people heal at different rates. Some have physical pains. Some have internal, mental pains that go unseen. Both of which are very different, but also very similar. The hurt of the body, versus the hurt of the mind, can at times be one and the same. Two sides of a coin. Depression can sometimes manifest as what might feel like a physical pain. And like all wounds, this takes time and effort to heal,” she explains.

Izuku nods belatedly, lost in thought, absorbing her words.

“The mind is tricky,” she continues, tapping her temple, “when it can’t handle the pain, it compartmentalizes certain things. Some of which, can likely never be recovered, and yet, the mind still remembers its triggers. The mind will instantly try and defend itself,” she explains.
“In your case, my boy, you have odds that are greatly stacked against you,” she relays with a frown, “you have both physical and mental ailments preventing you from accessing these memories and helping you understand what’s making you feel this way. So I urge you, be kind to yourself. Your frustration is understandable, so let yourself feel it. Your hurts are valid, let yourself feel them too. Unfortunately, like joy, even pain must be experienced, acknowledged, and worked through. Allow yourself to feel, but then move past it. Do not lock it away. Acknowledge that it’s there and take a step aside. Greet it like a ship in the night and move forward. There is much you’ve yet to uncover, but we will work through it, hm?”

With tears clouding his vision, Izuku murmurs a soft, “y-yes ma’am.”

“Your friends and family, they too will help you. Let them in. They are your precious persons, allow yourself a bit of vulnerability and honesty with them. They sound like they worry about you. Let’s give them peace of mind as well, hm?”

‘Can we maybe... wait on that a bit? I don’t want to worry them. I feel like that’s all I do these days,’ he scrawls out nervously.

The old woman scrutinizes the page before replying.

“In being kind to yourself, do things that make yourself feel comfortable and secure. If you don’t feel comfortable letting them in yet, we’ll work on this too, hm?”

“Y-yes, ma’am,” he replies, taking a steadying breath.

“Ma’am...” she chortles to herself, “so proper. Your mother is a good woman, but please, we’re here now, might as well get comfortable, hm? Call me Granny Umi.”

“U-uh, y-yes m- ...er Granny U-umi.”

“Such a nervous young man,” she replies with mirth, “we’ll have you feeling better in no time. But I will be frank, you have depression, Izuku. And likely anxiety, too. The severity of which is high, on both accounts. We’ll get you calmed down in no time, hm? We’ll prescribe you with something you can sleep with too. We’ll start with an antidepressant and sleep aid. I’ll send the referral out for you to meet with a psychiatrist; they will make the final call, but sincerely, I believe that this is what you’ll need. In a month, if these don’t work for you, or if you have any lingering side effects, we’ll consult the psychiatrist again, hm? Sound good?”

“Y-yes, Granny U-umi,” Izuku agrees nervously.

2 days and a visit with his new psychiatrist later, he was prescribed with an antidepressant and a sleep aid, as promised.

He only hoped that this would work.

His nerves were shot enough as it was.

----

Walking around his room was easy. Very seldom did he need his crutches in there as he paced placidly, watering can in hand. He loved being able to stand on his own two feet again.

To feel the plush carpet between his toes as he watered his plants.

Moments like these felt like a peace he’d never known.
Introduced to him by the most unlikely of candidates.

Which is what made it so special.

Katsuki reawakened him.

Like pouring water on a dying root, only for it to guzzle it down and sprout and bloom.

As the rays of the dying sun filtered gently through his bedroom windows; they too, sweetly nurtured the little lives he’d tended to.

Katsuki was a lot like that too.

So bright and blazing, a star in all its glory.

Maybe that’s how it’s always been?

Izuku was like a dying plant, desperately reaching out to the rays of the sun.

All he needed was a little water.

Just a little bit of something to give him that spark.

It was fitting, really, how it all worked out.

Even still, his best friend continued to shower him in gifts this way.

With the coming of Spring, the snow finally having thawed as Winter’s clutches lost their hold, both boys took to tilling a spot in Izuku’s backyard, with the intention of planting something new to both of them. It’d be interesting to see how it worked out, but they were curious to see if they could grow fruits and vegetables. Maybe even a few herbs and spices; the latter of which was a personal request, by said blond.

Because he definitely wanted to: ‘try Jalapeno’s, Deku, what else would we grow them for?’

Izuku was tickled by that, to say the least.

He’d gladly brave the Jalapenos if it made the crimson-eyed boy happy.

So lost in his musings as he paced around his room, his foot caught on something that was definitely out of place.

‘Hero Analysis: For The Future.’ No. 13.’

That’s right.

He’d kicked it off the bed the other night.

With a grimace, he sets his watering can on his end table and reaches down to pick up the offending notebook.

It was silly, really.

Him being so nervous to pick up what was essentially his brain on paper.
This should have been a normal occurrence for him.

But he was simply unnerved.

It was like reading a stranger’s last words.

Plopping down on his bed, he decides to take a leap of faith. Granny Umi had said that he should face things head on, acknowledge them, and move on, right? Like ships in the night.

Like… ships. Yep.

Except… this ship felt like it’d sunk in the Atlantic, leaving hundreds in lifeboats and thousands more for dead in the water.

This felt like a bad idea.

But at the same time, he was always a creature of a curious nature.

Opening the notebook, he was met with some of the same pages.

Kamui Woods, Mt. Lady, Death Arms, and a few more of the new up and coming pro-heroes.

Honestly, he already knew they were amazing. He’d even met Kamui Woods once, while he was touring the rehabilitation center. He was there to visit children and volunteer to help sick or injured heroes.

He was honestly a really nice man.

Objectively, there was nothing conspicuous about any of these notes.

Maybe if he thought about it differently, it’d help him get past the fact that he lost all recollection of this?

Yeah… maybe, instead of seeing it as he’d lost all memory of this in a tragic accident, maybe he’d… just got blackout drunk and decided to go hero hunting? It could happen! It was highly unlikely, but it sounded more fun than brain trauma did.

Izuku snorts to himself, rolling his eyes at the thought.

He vaguely wondered what Kacchan would think of that stupid train of thought.

As he ponders this, he absently flips through the pages.

It seemed that he didn’t get to fill very much of this up.

Not in his usual manner.

Everything in here seemed… well, clipped.

Very to the point. More analytical, less enthusiasm.

Everything was pretty much… robotic. It was unsettling.

What could possibly make him feel this way?

How could he get so low, that he’d seemingly lost all enthusiasm for what he loved and enjoyed doing?
Another page flip and something huge caught his eye.

It startled him so much he yelped and tossed the notebook, only for it to land right-side up.

“W-what the fuck…” he whispers to himself in disbelief.

From down the hall, he could hear his mother’s concerned call.

“I… I’m a-alright, Mom!” He called back to her.

He was alright, right?

Wrong.

This was very much not alright.

The next morning, rather than heading to his homeroom class, he made a beeline for Mr. Yagi’s office, much to Katsuki and Todoroki’s confusion.

He felt bad.

Cutting them off like that.

He was never short or curt with either of them.

But he was a man on a mission.

And he was walking as fast as his crutches could carry him.

Making his way through the door, he didn’t bother to knock, catching the lithe man off guard.

Izuku’s lips were pursed in a thin line as the door swung shut behind him.

His expression; unreadable.

He felt entirely disassociated from his body.

His hand felt like it’d burn as he tossed his burden onto Mr. Yagi’s desk.

‘Hero Analysis: For the Future. No. 13’

“We need to talk.”
Boy Was I Wrong

Chapter Summary

“Young Bakugou!” Mr. Yagi exclaims, worriedly.

“I’ve heard all I needed to hear,” Katsuki retorts haughtily before walking out, the door slamming shut behind him.

Chapter Notes

Hello loves!

Once again, I’d like to thank you all for your continued support and encouragement! It means the world to me! ♥

I also wanted to let you all know, that this chapter was broken in half. Whatever isn't explained here, will be touched upon in the next chapter, seeing as this one was becoming way too long. It just didn't read right to me the first time around. I feel like it'll flow much easier this way.

Keep your tissues handy.

This was disorientation...

Murky beryl waves pound and pulse rhythmically against the coast as he peers out into the brine.

The sting of seafoam settling in; makes a home inside his lungs. The crispness of which, was akin to that of the therapeutically sterile smell, often associated with a hospital.

He’d lost track of how long he’d been here, sitting in the dampened sand.

Not that it really mattered.

He’d already been through several spring downpours.

There was something about the rush of the sea breeze against his skin... or the image the thunderheads cast when the sun finally breached them.

Something about the danger and tranquility of sitting in absolute stillness through a Pacific storm.

Was this what drowning felt like?

This was all he could think to do.

It was all he could do to keep his head above water.

To keep from being swallowed by a fickle sea, just another star in its reflection.
The feel of the cool saturated granules between his toes; his crutches scattered haphazardly behind him.

This was all that was keeping him grounded.

He needed this rush.

To drown out the tumultuous thoughts raging inside him, stirring like maelstrom beneath his buzzing skin.

Izuku’s eyes; like deep pine, close as he inhales deeply.

The ocean spray; like a balm, kisses each freckle gently as the wind whips through his curls.

He furls tightly around his knees.

He lets himself feel this…

----

Midoriya Izuku had been an energetic, but anxious young man when he’d first met him.

He’d been 14 years old at the time and had just survived a villain attack.

A situation like that would be harrowing enough for an adult to deal with, let alone a kid, but despite this, the boy had heart.

He was inquisitive and enthusiastic.

A boy so full a curiosity, so full of questions, that he’d dared to take a risk.

That’s what it had been, after all…

A risk.

You see, Midoriya Izuku was existing in his own misery; and outwardly, you’d never be able to tell. He was in so much pain, he’d hid it behind a smile and risked his very own livelihood just to reach out to someone.

Not just anyone, either.

But his hero.

The symbol of peace, the vision of hope and of all that was just.

Toshinori had been that hero.

He’d saved the kid's life that day, but in doing so, he’d done something much more cruel. For, it wasn’t just the sludge monster that the young man had needed to be saved from. It was a much more deadly creature, one that went unseen.

The hero that the boy was so desperate in reaching out to, had crushed the boy’s last bit of hope with apathy and self-centeredness.

The boy who bared all that he was, played every last card he could possibly deal, held on tightly to this last shred of light he’d had in his eyes. He’d given it to Toshinori freely, in the hopes that he
could give him some encouragement.

He’d risked his everything… for just a shred of validation.

All Might had never failed anyone so thoroughly than he did that day.

Izuku’s blood may not have been on his hands, but it may well have been.

Flashing forward to a year later, the Midoriya he knew now, was a far cry from that boy.

He was 15 years old and he’d held his head high.

He was resilient.

Strong willed.

And far more confident than he’d been.

Yet… he was still such a sweet and emotional boy.

He was soft and caring, with a quick wit.

He was scarily smart, steadfast, and always willing to go the distance.

He was everything his loved ones said he was and more and Toshinori was so grateful to have gotten the chance to know him. And tried using every day they spent together as an effort to make it up to him.

But none of that would ever erase the events that took place that fateful day.

Toshinori was sure that there was no amount of redemption conceivable that would ever put right, what he’d done.

So with this in mind, he resigns himself under the verdigris fire of young Midoriya’s scrutiny, and has a seat at his desk.

----

All was silent around them.

All that needed to be said laid in the frayed pages between them.

Midoriya takes a seat and folds his arms across his chest silently, his features still carefully composed. It was such a Bakugou-esque move, that Toshinori briefly wondered how much the boy was rubbing off on him, or if that was something that was already there.

It was anyone's guess.

Knowing he wouldn’t be the one to break the thick layer of ice that was heavily constructed between them, Toshinori would have to wrest himself into the task, as it was likely he’d end up withering under the boy’s intensity before long.

He may as well rip off the band-aid.

Staring down at the battered notebook laying on his desk, he exhales a breath he hadn’t known he’d held.
“You’ve figured it out,” he confirms.

There was no sense in denying it.

“I knew where to look,” Izuku replies, signing pointedly.

“I have to ask, what gave it away?” He knew Midoriya was extremely perceptive, so he was genuinely curious as to how he made his conclusion.

“It wasn’t easy. Anyone else likely would have missed it,” he admits, before holding up a hand, giving his fingers a wiggle in what Toshinori was fairly certain was just a gesture and not a sign, “It was your hands. No two people sign the exact same way. Not you, not me… but you and All Might, however…” the boy elaborates.

Toshinori nods in understanding as an awkward silence settles between them.

He hadn’t even considered that. Who would have thought he’d have been outing by something like that?

“I suppose... this was not what you were expecting, was it, my boy?” He gestures to himself as he hesitates to ask.

Midoriya is quiet; his mood, entirely unclear.

It was a bit more than unnerving.

“It’s not that surprising, actually. It explains a lot,” he replies flippantly.

“O-oh…” before Toshinori can fully respond, he’s cut off.

“But what I am having trouble understanding here is, what a pro-hero, like All Might, would want to do with a quirkless kid like me?” He replies deftly, each sign formed deliberately, pointedly. No room for error.

Toshinori opens his mouth to speak, but again is cut off.

“No,” the boy interjects both verbally and through sign.

There was a note of sternness to his voice.

“Let me s-speak.”

Toshinori pales, effectively stunned into silence, he gives the boy a nod.

The boy reaches out between them and touches the notebook cautiously, as though it would bite him if he weren’t careful. Mindful as can be, he opens the book to the middle.

He turns to those telltale pages.

“I… have no r-recc-collection of this n-notebook, and… y-yet, in here… is y-your s-signature,” he says softly.

Toshinori can’t help but begin to fidget in his seat nervously.

“Meeting A-All Might… you’d think… t-that that would be... s-something I’d r-remember,” Midoriya continues, a note of listlessness filtering into his tone.
Toshinori is quiet as the boy analyzes him.

No doubt, picking every inch of him apart.

He should have heeded young Bakugou’s warning.

This conversation was already off to a rough start.

“I r-remember… a f-feeling. That day… when you g-greeted me… at t-the gate. I remember f-feeling like I h-had m-met you, b-but didn’t k-know why. I… th-thought I was cr-crazy. T-that m-maybe I was being r-ridiculous. So… I t-told To-Todo…. ” he huffs in frustration before signing ‘Todoroki Shouto’s’ name sign.

“He told me… that he rarely ever found that I was wrong. Which, sounds presumptuous… but coming from him, I knew he was right. Shouto’s never steered me wrong.”

“He… is indeed, a good friend,” Toshinori confirms cautiously, quietly.

“Why…” he says suddenly, an air of frustration in his tone, “why n-not just t-tell me? I… I’ve w-wondered this… f-for hours last night,” Midoriya’s expression pinches then, finally giving Toshinori a small inkling of what he was feeling.

“Midoriy-”

“WAIT,” he interjects again, more emotion leaking into his voice.

Toshinori’s heart damn near rends.

“T-the more I sat there… t-thinking a-about it. The more I r-realized, I m-must not h-have k-known you l-long. O-otherwise… Mom… Kacchan… t-they w-would have said s-something. Hell… M-mom didn’t even k-know. S-she didn’t even r-realize y-your s-signature was i-inside, s-so I g-got to thinking… m-maybe it was a c-chance m-meeting.” he breathes for a moment, before switching back to JSL.

“But then I remembered… Kacchan had told me that he’d read my notebooks. He’d also told me you had too. Which means that he’d had to have known about the signature and the only reason I can think of… as to why he’d never told me, is likely because someone had told him not to. Someone with something to hide. The only person I could even think of that being… is you.”

“Midoriya…” Toshinori breathes, he had to tread carefully here. His identity wasn’t nearly as important as young Izuku’s mental state.

Toshinori watches him carefully as he continues to sign.

“I kept trying to think of why Kacchan didn’t like you. Why Mom said he didn’t trust you. Or why he started acting like ‘All Might’ was an obstacle for him to overcome and not an idol we’d wanted to be like since we were kids.”

Toshinori frowns.

He knew all too well what Bakugou Katsuki thought of him.

It would seem that it was only recently, that the boy was beginning to come around. But after their own version of this exact conversation went down, it took them both a long time to work through the animosity.
If their conversation was any indication as to how this would go, there wasn’t much hope for this one either.

“And then I remembered that they’d mentioned that you’d appeared out of nowhere, after the accident. Talking about how you wanted to help in any way you could… I’m assuming that not even Kacchan knew who you were at that point, because when I’d asked him, he did seem genuinely confused,” he explains.

Panic and resignation began to fill up in the older man’s chest.

“So… now I have to ask, Mr. Yagi… when was it that we met?”

Looking at the teenager directly, Toshinori felt as though he were staring into twin jade fires. Twin raging infernos that refused to be extinguished. They threatened to burn up everything around them, in search of answers.

Going forward, everything depended on how he handled this. He was never the greatest when it came to things like this. Not like Nana was.

“Young Midoriya… I know what you must be feeling right now… is frustrating.”

“That i-is an u-nderstatement,” the boy replies tersely.

Toshinori’s brows pinch together.

There was just no keeping a lid on this.

And it wasn’t that he was afraid for himself, or for his part in it.

He knew he’d done wrong and he could own and admit that, but… in doing so...

He’d have to explain everything to the boy.

He’d have to tell him exactly what had happened.

And he didn’t have the heart to break him.

Not again.

But… it would seem that he didn’t exactly have a choice, did he?

The truth would come out either way.

Midoriya was as ‘no-nonsense’ as he’d ever seen him.

The boy was just stubborn enough to search for answers wherever and no matter how he could get them.

The blond sits up a little straighter; his exacerbated wound aching as he stretched, he folds his hand on his desk before him.

“Young Midoriya… I want you to know, I have no intention of keeping anything from you any longer. It was never my intention to cause you such… distress, but… if we get into the finer details of this subject… you will undoubtedly find something you’ll likely regret hearing,” he confesses. Attempting to break it to him as factually as possible. He owed the boy that.
“Knowing anything is better than knowing nothing at all,” the young man insists.

“You... may not agree with that later…” The older blond warns him.

All this seems to do is reignite the boy’s righteous indignation.

“Imagine what that’s like,” he begins to sign emphatically, “you wake up in a hospital. You have no idea how you got there. You can’t move, can’t speak. You feel so tired, that you don’t even want to try. And everyone around you tells you it’ll be alright, and they all encourage you to fight. But you know everyone you love has been skirting around you. Hiding things from you. Afraid of something you have no knowledge of. Tell me... how would that make you feel? I’ve tried ignoring it... because everything has been great. There is literally nothing for me to complain about and yet... I feel lost. It's a feeling that I have literally no explanation for...”

Angry tears begin to cascade down the young boy’s cheeks.

Toshinori cups a hand to his mouth, attempting to reign in his own emotions.

He couldn’t fathom it.

Feeling that way, day in and day out.

...It must’ve been exhausting.

He was sure that most days, it’d have been easy to ignore. Midoriya was kept busy. He was in constant motion and when he wasn’t, he was being entertained by his loved ones and encouraged to keep going.

He never really had time to grieve for himself.

“You are the only one who can give me the answers I need,” the forested boy implores, his glassy green eyes, burning with determination.

Toshinori nods to himself a handful of times.

Resignation floods through him once again.

“We met… the day of your accident...”

He tells the boy all he needs to know.

---

Katsuki’s skin was literally crawling with each passing period.

He’d sent text after text and all he’d received was radio silence.

He scarcely followed what any of his teachers were saying.

He barely recalled their lessons.

The only thing that kept him in his seat, was knowing he’d see Izuku once 3rd period let out.

Until then, he anxiously bounced his leg beneath his desk and tried to focus on what little he could of the lesson before him.
As soon as the bell rang, he bolts out of his seat and nearly barrels through the door.

He doubted that even Shitty Glasses could top the speed of which carried him down the halls.

As soon as he saw a familiar head of brunette hair, he skids to a stop, likely startling the shit out of her.

“Round Face, where is Deku?” He asks her hurriedly.

Startled though she seemed, her rebound time was exceptional.

Worry pinches her brows, her big chocolate eyes filling with concern.

“I was actually going to ask you that at lunch… he never made it to class,” she informs him.

Dread immediately floods through his veins like liquid fire.

“I thought for sure you’d know, but seeing as you’re here… now I’m definitely worried, I was sure I saw you both come in this morning…” she trails off.

“We did,” he admits, “look… I need to go, but if you hear or see anything…”

He knew Round Face knew he had a hard time asking people for things, his specialty wasn’t exactly in his social etiquette.

Thankfully, she meets him halfway and nods emphatically, “I’ll find a way to let you know, right away,” she assures him.

He had no reason not to trust her.

When Katsuki barges through his door, he could swear the old man was about ready to keel over in a panic.

He wasn’t even seated, all he was doing was pacing the floor, typing rapidly on his cell phone.

This did not spark any confidence in the younger blond as he slammed an impatient hand down on his desk.

“Hey, would you chill the fuck out, old man?!!”

Mr. Yagi stops for just long enough to stare at the young man.

His features were whiter than they were when he’d first laid eyes on that Nomu creature.

The older man's gaze lingers on something, his eyes taking on a faraway sheen.

It was at this point, that Katsuki had realized what he was staring at.

Following his gaze downward, he sees exactly what had the older man spooked.

His hand was strained on the desk, right next to the offending object.

Katsuki could swear that every last drop of blood in his veins simultaneously froze at once.
A panic he hasn’t felt in a long time sparks to life within him.

His gaze snaps up to meet stormy oceanic blue eyes and an expression filled with dread.

“How long ago was he here?” He almost whispers.

“I tried to stop him,” the older man explains, panicked.

“Do better!” Katsuki snaps.

“He wouldn’t listen to me,” he tries again.

“Neither would I!” The younger blond snaps again.

“I kept him close, as I got on the phone with his therapist. I reassured him that she could help. But by the time I reached her, he was gone.”

“How could you have possibly lost a kid with crutches in a school this big?!” Katsuki was nothing if not irrate.

“He slipped away during a passing period,” the older man explains, tiredly.

Katsuki was at his wit's end.

“Does Aunt Inko know?” The boy asks as he begins to pace.

“Mrs. Kamikawa elected to inform her,” Mr. Yagi relays.

“What happened?” He attempts to reign himself in, gritting his teeth all the while.

“Exactly what you think happened… he knows, young Bakugou,” the older man’s tone was listless and full of regret.

Katsuki turns on his heel and leers down at the older man, who’d finally reclaimed the seat behind his desk.

“How much does he know?” He replies, his tone clipped.

“Everything…” his teacher sighs, replying with a frown.

Katsuki bristles yet again, sparked into pacing before stopping and glaring down at his shoes.

“I told you… no… I warned you not to let him find out on his own,” the younger boy all but seethes.

Angry tears begin to cascade down his cheeks, he rubs at them fiercely.

He turns on his heel yet again and makes his way toward the door.

“Young Bakugou!” Mr. Yagi exclaims, worriedly.

“I’ve heard all I needed to hear,” Katsuki retorts haughtily before walking out, the door slamming shut behind him.

----

Aunty Inko was *inconsolable.*
His own mother wasn’t much better, she was a nervous wreck trying to hold her best friend together. Icy Hot, Shitty Hair, and Round Face were all on high alert and were told to message him if they’d heard anything.

And… Katsuki was a literal mess.

Izuku had been missing for nearly 4 hours.

That was a lot of time for a person that was emotionally unstable to be left to their own devices.

Shit could not have gone more sideways if it tried.

He knew…

He just knew they should have told him sooner.

In a controlled environment, where he wouldn’t be able to hurt himself.

But, out of a rare display of respect, Katsuki bit his tongue. He’d kept quiet and let the adults handle the situation.

It’d be discussed in therapy, they’d said.

Yeah? In therapy? On whose time?

Izuku wasn’t an idiot.

It was only a matter of time before he started seeking answers on his own.

Katsuki bit his lip as he clutched tightly to the handrail of the train, his brows knit together tightly as people milled and bustled around him.

He should have been the one to do it.

He should have stuck with his gut and bit the bullet.

Every time he ignored his gut feelings, something like this happened.

He should have known better.

He attempts to text Izuku again.

Still no response.

---

7:10 AM

hey, what’s going on?
As Katsuki rides the train toward home, he wracks his brain.

When they were kids, if Izuku ever felt scared or alone, he’d always confide in him.

And then their relationship shifted.

Izuku stopped going to him whenever he’d felt scared, because Katsuki was often the reason he’d felt that way.

So really… he had no idea where Izuku would go.
Sure, they had their regular haunts that they would go to, but none of them really seemed like a place Izuku would go.

He’d called the rehabilitation center, asking to speak to Rei, but she’d seen hide nor hair of the forest-haired boy.

He’d checked the campus and hospital gardens, all to no avail.

He'd even called Aunty Inko, to make sure Izuku wasn’t at home.

But…

Then that got him thinking.

Home.

Musutafu was huge.

Dagobah was just a small part of that, but that’s where the both of them grew up.

Whenever Izuku was upset in recent months, he’d always sought out something familiar.

Because there was a lot in his life lately, that wasn’t familiar.

So to say he’d latched onto Katsuki, wasn’t much of a stretch.

And Katsuki was all too willing to let him.

If he was cold, he’d steal his hoodie, if he was scared, he’d confide in him. If he was nervous, or uncomfortable, he’d reach for his hand. They were never too far apart.

Katsuki orbited around the kid like the earth did the sun.

As much as he didn’t know before, he’d made up for, this past year.

He knew the kid's hopes.

His dreams.

He knew that the idea of having his own garden at home made him extremely excited.

He knew Deku.

As much as any one person could know someone else.

The tiny little quirks that made him, him.

What annoyed him.

What made him laugh.

What made him cry.

What subjects caught his interest to the point in which he’d go on a mumbling tangent.

He knew everything, down to what he wanted to do first when he was finally able to walk again.
And like a lighthouse lit a dark shore, Katsuki knew where he was.
Dagobah beach wasn’t exactly the cleanest place in the world these days. As years of pollution and illegal dumping reduced this once beautiful place to ruins. It was a sad sight, in all honesty. To see that people were so lazy or just straight up destructive, really pissed him off.

He made a mental note to try and restore this place one day.

It’d be a bitch to do, but… someone had to.

The initial boardwalk was a wasteland of dumped trash and broken furniture and appliances, either dumped here intentionally or brought ashore by the oceans currents. It was the unfortunate reality of living in a place where Tsunamis ravaged prefectures.

But further down the coastline, there was a small, almost untouched cove. A part of the beachfront where the Pacific currents weren’t as strong.

They’d found this place together when they were 4.

Back then Dagobah Municipal Beach was much less… dingy.

But even so, this cove was a haven, as most of the Pacific currents ravaged the main part of the beach.

He’d promised Izuku, that once he was able to stand and walk on his own, they’d come here for his birthday.

Watching as the other boy lit up in excitement, made that promise of his even more solid. Deku always had loved the beach. It was only fitting that the first activity he'd wanted to do was take a swim.

As he trudged through about a mile of sand, he could only hope that the missing boy was actually here.

For spring, the temperature wasn’t all too bad.

But everything down at the waterfront was always so much cooler.

The weather was also pretty normal for spring. Downpours earlier on in the season weren’t uncommon.

And judging by the charged atmosphere and the smell of rain amongst the ocean salt, he’d say there have likely been a few showers since earlier this morning.

He could only hope Izuku had the smarts to take shelter, even with as unlikely as it was.

As he makes his way down the slope of the rocky cove, he was even more worried.

The tides were high here and the rocks were slick.

Izuku still wasn’t that steady on his feet yet, even with crutches.

One misstep and he’d fall straight down onto the barrier that was this rocky cove.

Katsuki tried his best to keep these frustratingly dangerous scenarios off his mind.

Thankfully…
His worries were all for naught.

Down on the beach, all alone and curled around himself, was a familiar head of forest-green hair. Sure, he was clearly soaked to the bone and a little worse for wear, but he was definitely alive and as well as anyone could hope for, given the situation.

For the first time since this morning, Katsuki found himself breathing a little easier.

Approaching as quietly as he could so as not to startle him, he settles down onto the cold rain dampened sand, right next to the waterlogged boy.

Izuku’s usual messy curls were drenched and smathered across his head in a haphazard manner. His face was buried tightly into his knees.

As time went by, Katsuki summoned every shred of patience in his body, to keep himself from saying something stupid. Tact was definitely required here and if Izuku needed time to think, he’d give him that.

But he’d be lying if he said he wasn’t worried about the kid’s health. God only knew how long he’d been out here. And while it wasn’t freezing, it wasn’t warm either. And Katsuki wasn’t the one who was soaked either.

After some time, Izuku seems to unfurl from himself and blinks up at him hazily.

His normally crystalline emerald eyes were bloodshot and puffy and he just looked so very tired.

As carefully as he could, Katsuki reaches an arm around the smaller boy and pulls him close.

Deku didn’t put up even a little bit of a fight as he tucked himself into Katsuki’s warmth.

His breaths were shallow and wracked with sniffles.

It broke his heart to hear the other boy’s quiet sobs.

He clings to him a little bit tighter.

He didn’t know how long they’d sat there for, but it was definitely long enough for his ass to go numb from the cold of the saturated sand.

“I… I’m s-sorry, K-kacchan,” the sullen boy whispers after some time.

He certainly must've been cold enough for his teeth to chatter, because it wasn’t often that Deku had trouble saying his name.

He pulls off his blazer and settles it around Izuku’s shoulders.

It sure as shit wasn’t any warmer for him as it had been for Katsuki, but it was at least a little better than what he was wearing.

“You’re not the one that needs to apologize,” Katsuki objects, there was no way he'd let Izuku feel guilt for this.

“N-no… I...I d-do. I...I’m s-so s-sorry…” came his watery reply and he was once again, wracked with sobs.
Katsuki all but pulls him into his lap at that point and takes a firm hold of Izuku’s face.

His dusky green eyes continue to water even after being startled. His tears roll freely over Katsuki’s thumbs.

A firm, but solemn crimson gaze finds his, flitting to and fro as he searched his features.

“Don’t apologize for this. I’m the one who needs to apologize. I can’t even formulate into words, how awful it felt. Knowing that I was half the reason that you made that choice. There aren’t any words to express that kind of guilt. But I’ll never stop trying. You hear me? You’re here now, and I’ll never stop trying to make it up to you. Every day.”

Izuku’s lips quiver and wobble as even more tears fall, he nods a handful of times.

“Every day you’re here, is… a second chance. I hope you haven’t reconsidered that,” Katsuki admits; the fear he’d been holding back, covered carefully under frustration, finally leaking through.

Izuku vehemently shakes his head, as a whimper of a sob escapes him. Lunging forward, he nestles himself into Katsuki’s chest and clings to him.

Katsuki wraps him up tightly within his hold, as if he’d slip away like the oceanic vapor shrouding the cove.

For what seems like hours, they sit here. Katsuki rocking him back and forth, whispering reassurances into his ear, peppering small, shy, but comforting kisses into his salt-kissed hair.

For the longest time, even thereafter, Katsuki vaguely wondered if he was comforting Izuku, or the both of them.

That was still up for debate.
To Tell You The Truth

Chapter Summary

He knew it was bad.

It had to have been, but this?

This was his worst nightmare.

*He* contributed to this.

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning’s for this chapter, include: talk of past incidences of self-harm, scars, and talk of past suicide attempts.

I just wanted to forewarn you all, that this chapter could be potentially triggering for some, but as always, I'm kind to our boys.

I also wanted to readdress that I *do not* condone suicidal ideations or the use of unhealthy coping skills. Nor do I wish to glorify these in any way. If you or someone you know is suffering from suicidal ideations, I *do* urge you and hope that you will seek help. You are a human being that is worthy of life, love, and comfort.

Below is the national suicide hotline that can be used to reach unbiased professional help.

1-800-273-8255

Should you not feel comfortable reaching out to a professional, you are welcome to join our discord.

https://discord.gg/geDC2r3

Some hours later, as a particularly nasty storm began brewing, Katsuki finally put his foot down and hauled both himself and Izuku out of the sand.

With a protest at the ready, Katsuki effectively cut the younger boy off with a completely no-nonsense expression.

“*We’ve been out here long enough, you* especially. I’m getting you to someplace warm and safe, you have no choice,” he ripostes firmly.

Izuku frowns, but resigns himself to being manhandled out of the cove.
As Katsuki hesitantly looks back at the storm hanging darkly overhead, he knew they likely weren’t going to be able to beat the rain, but at the very least if they moved further inland, they’d be safer.

But that was no easy task.

The younger boy was wracked with shivers and he was already unsteady on a good day.

“How the fuck you even got down here on your own is a testament to how fucking stubborn you are,” Katsuki grumbles as he helps Izuku up the rocky path.

Izuku shrugs silently, trying to control his chattering teeth.

Yeah, the kid was definitely freezing.

Goddamnit.

They didn’t have time to dawdle or they’d have a completely different problem on their hands.

“That’s it… I’m calling a cab, we’ll take cover near the dock. It might be surrounded by shitty trash, but it’s better than fucking nothing,” Katsuki grumbles again, worry clearly laced throughout his tone.

Izuku offers him a small patient smile despite this.

He really was too good for him.

Against his better judgment, he hunches down and gestures for Izuku to come closer. Gathering him in close from behind, he hoists the smaller boy up; hooking his legs firmly within his arms and carries him, crutches and all on his back.

Feeling the younger boy shiver against him; dampened and cold soaked skin, reignites his sense of urgency.

----

The cab ride was spent in silence as Izuku laid tiredly against his shoulder and soon both boys were tucked safely away inside Katsuki’s home.

The blond couldn’t remember the last time that Izuku had set foot in this house. Outside of forced dinners, or visits between their parents, it had to have been at least 10 years.

The longer he lingered on that thought, the more unsettling it seemed.

He’d let that much time get away from them.

He vaguely wondered; as he set Izuku up with a warm bath, how different things would have been if the circumstances between them had never soured.

It was a silly and moot point to think of now, but still… he wondered.

----

Keeping within earshot, Katsuki finally had a moment to inform everyone about Izuku’s status.

Relieved texts seemed to flood his inbox instantaneously; he elected to ignore them for now, in lieu of calling Aunt Inko.
The phone didn’t even have time to ring twice before it was answered.

A million and one questions could be heard in the hitch of her breath alone.

The urgency of it gripped at his heart tightly.

But equally so, he had a million and one things to say, but none would ever suffice.

“He’s safe,” he decides to settle upon.

That was the only thing that mattered anyway.

He could tell Aunty Inko was trying her damnedest not to shout into his ear, as she muffled a particularly relieved sob.

“Thank you,” she whispers after a moment, “thank you so much, Katsuki.”

“We’re at home right now,” he manages to awkwardly dodge her praise, “I found him on Dagobah beach, he’s… a little worse for wear, but he’s safe. He’s warming up right now.”

“He was out there… alone in that weather?” The worry in her tone was incredibly evident.

He was sure Inko was just as much of a human tear factory as Izuku was, but Katsuki honestly wondered how much more the woman could take before she dried up her reserves.

“Listen… Aunty…” he hesitates for a moment, “I don’t think it’s a good idea to move him tonight. He hasn’t talked much. At all. Outside of apologizing about a hundred times. He’s… pretty messed up.”

He hears a rustling through the receiver, which was likely Inko bracing herself. Probably readying herself to race over to his house at any moment.

He wouldn’t blame her one bit.

“No, I understand, it’s okay,” she replies, and much to his surprise she still sounded relieved, “I’m just glad to know he’s safe. He’ll be that much safer with you.”

Awe seems to fill him, alongside the ever-present anxiety he’s been trying to avoid all day.

Once again, she was entrusting him with the well being of her son.

“I… don’t know about that…” he whispers, feeling a bit more than slightly out of his depth.

“You both have a lot to talk about, things that you should both get off of your chests. I think you should do that,” she reassures him.

“But… what if I make things worse?” It wasn’t often that he felt this vulnerable, but somehow he always managed to show it around her.

“After all the work you’ve put into making things better? Don’t sell yourself short. He’ll listen to you, just like I said he would earlier,” she affirms.

Her tone was so resolute.

So assured.
He could only hope that he’d be able to muster up the same confidence.

---

Katsuki wasn’t exactly the most adept at dealing with potential hypothermia, but he figured a warm bath, warm clothes, and a shit ton of blankets were in order.

Once Izuku was clean, clothed, and wrapped up in a literal fucking cocoon of blankets, Katsuki was much less irritable and much less anxious.

But still no less worried.

Izuku was still unnervingly silent.

And his gaze was so far away… as if locked in a daydream haze.

Katsuki tried to make his peace with it, but really, it just left him feeling uncomfortable.

He could only imagine what was running through the other boy’s mind.

It was… troubling.

Pulling the verdant-haired boy against himself, the other boy came quietly, nestling himself against the blond’s side. His fluffy curls tucked into the crook of his neck.

This was all Katsuki could think to do.

Physical comfort was better than pushing him into an uncomfortable conversation when he wasn’t ready.

Not yet, anyway.

And if they both drifted off after a while, finally succumbing to the comfort and warmth they found in each other, so be it.

They more than deserved the much-needed rest.

---

It was around 3 o’clock when both boys stirred to the sound of jingling keys.

Katsuki’s Dad had just come home from the office.

On autopilot, the man deposited his keys into the bowl sitting on the side table near the door and deposited his briefcase onto the floor next to it, kicking off his shoes and toeing into his waiting slippers.

Finally taking a glance into the living room, he lets out a tired sigh.

His warm brown eyes widen upon further inspection, noticing both boys on the couch piled in a mound of blankets, but then sighs in relief.

Katsuki had always been grateful for his dad, but never more than at that moment.

He was gentle with his questions, and equally non-invasive while treading around them, he was more than apt to give them their space.
It went unspoken that Izuku was going to crash there for the night, but it was definitely set in stone when a silent hour passed and Katsuki’s father brought them both some generously sized bowls of miso soup for dinner.

In all the excitement of the day, food was the last thing on either of their minds.

But it wasn’t unwelcome, as both their stomachs roused and decided then to make their hunger apparent.

“Y-your D-dad’s the best,” Izuku murmurs after a while, from his side of the pile, a small smile playing at his lips as he took a thoughtful spoonful.

For bringing a smile to his face, Katsuki couldn’t agree more.

----

It was likely that Aunt Inko told his mother what the plan was, because, by the time she too came home, she pretty much did the same as his father had done.

She didn’t linger long, her questions were generalized and non-invasive; which was pretty low-key for her, and after making sure they were okay, she bid them goodnight. Allowing herself to be steered up the stairs by his father’s waiting hands.

All that was left in the dim living room were the soft murmurs of the television in the background, that both boys hadn’t acknowledged in hours.

Outside of direct questions, Izuku still hadn’t broken his streak of silence.

He sat, curled in the pile of blankets on the couch, much as he had been on the beach. Quiet and wrapped around himself. As if he were trying to hold as many pieces of himself together as he could.

It absolutely broke Katsuki to see him like this.

Even if he couldn’t vocalize as well, their times together were never ‘silent,’ most of the time they were filled with wild gestures, jeering, or laughter as deft hands said all they’d needed to convey.

But there hadn’t even been a single sign between them since stepping foot inside the house.

Izuku’s bloodshot mossy eyes were dry, but lost. Listlessly leering into the coffee table.

Frustration was starting to swell within the blond, but not at him.

Izuku could never be blamed for this. No, the frustration was at himself, for going against his gut for so long.

What was once an elephant sitting quietly in the room, was now a raging silent stampede and Katsuki had no idea as to how to fix it.

He hated feeling helpless.

He knew that if Enatsu were here, she’d tell him to give Izuku time.

But they’d given this situation way too much time already and that hadn’t worked out at all.

Now was the time for action, or at the very least, reassurance.
If Izuku stewed any longer on this, it would likely do more harm than good.

When it came to feelings, Katsuki was well and truly out of his comfort zone. He was emotionally constipated and never had a very good bedside manner. Only recently was he even able to conjure up some semblance of empathy. Most of which he’d directed toward the forested boy himself.

But… Aunty Inko seemed to think he could do this.

So, he had to at least try.

But, what spoke for a person, when words couldn’t?

He’d come to the conclusion that the answer was flowers.

But, what happened when even that was past its prime?

With a thought, Katsuki twists himself around on the couch, facing the forest-haired boy. His movement capturing his attention.

The boy unfurls himself like a blossom as their eyes lock.

With not even a word between them, all Katsuki had to do was offer his hands and the younger boy acquiesced by twisting himself around to mirror him, scooting closer.

Actions.

Touch.

That would have to do.

Taking one of Izuku’s hands in a reassuring manner, he gives it a squeeze and his lifts the other one to cup the boys face. Smoothing his thumb across the constellation of freckles painted like watercolor across his cheeks.

“Talk to me,” he starts simply, “yell at me, hell… punch me, or cry, but don’t keep it inside. You always do that shit. But bottling it up isn’t going to help anymore. I know there are things you want to know, things I’ve been denied to the permission to tell you, but fuck that. We’re here now, I’ll tell you whatever you need.”

Izuku’s expression finally breaks free from its sculptured stillness, pinching in confusion and pain, but the only thing that comes from his lips is a shuddered sigh.

“Come on, Izuku. Talk to me,” Katsuki urges again, “I promise I won’t get pissed, or talk out of turn. I’ll wait to hear everything you have to say.”

Pulling his hand away, Izuku wraps his arms around himself, his expression cloudy, but thoughtful. His brow pinched in consternation.

“I…” he manages after a period of silence, his voice raspy from disuse and his earlier sobbing.

“It’s okay…” he attempts to soothe him.

“I… can’t r-remember it,” Izuku finally admits, softly.

Katsuki nods patiently, giving his knee a comforting squeeze.
“I’ve b-been w-wracking my b-brain all day. Trying to r-remember something,” he continues with effort.

“Honestly,” Katsuki interjects, his own gaze far away, a frown firmly marring his features, “it’s probably better if you don’t remember it…” he trails off softly.

Izuku squirms uncomfortably in his seat, reaching out and grabbing Katsuki’s hand again, holding it tightly.

“Y-you were there… w-weren’t you,” he asks carefully.

“Front and center,” Katsuki replies with a shaky sigh of his own. He stares down at their linked hands in his lap.

“Kacchan…” Izuku whispers and it sounds like mourning.

“Don’t apologize,” Katsuki reiterates, “you’re not at fault.”

He needed him to know that.

Izuku purses his lips, a look of listlessness overtaking his features.

“So… it’s true then… I… I did it?” The boy asks with discomfort, a glassy sheen to his eyes, “I jumped?”

“It… was more like…” he gestures flippantly, his right hand flopping into his lap, “more like letting go,” he whispers, "I could swear… your body language screamed of relief... and that… that was probably the worst part,” Katsuki admits, scrubbing an itch from his face, only to find that it was the traitorous moisture that was the culprit.

Silent tears began streaming down Izuku’s own cheeks at that. Katsuki takes care to smooth his thumb over Izuku’s scarred right hand.

“I’ve… always d-dealt with i-issues… of s-self harm,” the forested boy confides, quietly.

Katsuki’s eyes dart up to meet his pinched expression.

In a rare spurt of boldness, Izuku hikes up his left shirt sleeve, rolling it onto his shoulder blade. He lifts his arm and turns it ever so slightly, offering up the exposed skin of his underarm.

They were faint and pale, likely some years old, but much much too close to the brachial artery than Kastuki was comfortable with.

He was honestly surprised the doctors hadn’t mentioned these.

Or... if they did, it wasn’t to him.

He was honestly surprised he hadn’t noticed them himself.

But then again, Izuku, even with a hospital gown on, was always fully clothed. In fact, it wasn’t often he wore short sleeves, at least not without a hoodie or something over his arms.

Pulling the blanket from his lap, Izuku readjusted himself and began rolling up the leg of the ball shorts Katsuki had given him to wear.

Instant dread began pooling in his gut again, as Izuku exposed several more, thicker scars.
These were more pink and raised than those on his underarm.

“*Fucking hell, Izu...*” he whispers to himself, his free hand braced across his mouth in a silent gasp.

Shame clouds the younger boy’s features as he readjusted the clothing he’d been supplied with.

“I... I’ve n-never s-showed anyone before,” he admits, pulling the blankets back into his lap, “it... was s-something of a r-relief, s-something I could c-control. I... don’t k-know why it began... j-just that it h-helped when it did. A-after some time, I d-decided to stop, it got... t-to be too m-much.”

Katsuki had a sinking feeling that he’d seen exactly which cut was *too* much.

It was the thickest of the bunch and just shy of the femoral artery.

“A-after that... I d-decided to try h-harder. T-to be more d-determined to r-reach my goal... n-no matter what, b-but... I g-guess that wasn’t enough,” he confesses.

Katsuki could only imagine how fragile his mental state had to have been, for him to stop his self-harm, and then to switch gears and take the literal and metaphoric plunge.

“I... n-never t-thought... I... I w-wanted to try... so I d-don’t know w-why... why I w-would... but... knowing w-what I k-know now. I-it makes sense,” he finishes, biting his bottom lip.

Katsuki was at a loss.

He knew it was bad.

It had to have been, but *this*?

This was his worst nightmare.

*He* contributed to this.

A hatred so deeply set in himself began boiling over.

He was so angry at himself for allowing this to happen.

For being so damn cruel.

“Kacchan,” Izuku gives hand a squeeze, trying to rouse his attention.

He guessed he must’ve been lost in thought for some time.

“*Kacchan*... I n-need you to k-know, I d-don’t b-blame you for this,” the younger boy insists, his irritated eyes full of earnest.

“You... you *should*,” he whispers after some time, “I... I did this. I was the one that made you feel so badly about yourself that you resorted to this,” he gestures wildly at his left bicep, he was becoming more and more restless, more loud and overwrought with each word that spilled past his lips.

“You w-weren’t the razor in m-my hand,” Izuku retorts, “y-you didn’t p-push me off of that r-roof.”

“I MAY FUCKIN’ WELL HAVE BEEN, I TOLD YOU TO DO IT,” He exclaims, tears streaming in rivulets down his face.
“Kacchan,” Izuku ripostes firmly, taking his turn to gather the blonds face in his shaky hands, his gaze firm and unyielding, “it’s true… y-you’ve s-said and done a l-lot of h-horrible things, b-but no one c-could ever m-make me do s-something I w-wasn’t already dead s-set on doing.”

Katsuki’s lips begin to quiver as he tries to purse them.

Their gazes were locked in a heated battle of self-justification.

“I don’t r-remember much. N-not of the in-incident, n-not even very m-much of the y-year. But that’s m-moot now. It’s n-not coming back. B-but what i-is here… i-is us. R-right now. I-in the p-present. It’s… l-like you s-said. A s-second c-chance.”

“But, Deku, that doesn’t change anything!” He insists.

“But it does. I a-already t-told you. I’d be b-blind… n-not to see w-with my own eyes… how f-far you’ve come. Y-you’re not the only o-one. Y-you c-certainly w-weren’t the last. T-to p-pick on, or b-beat the s-shit out the… u-useless, quirkless, b-bisexual kid. Though m-most just teased me and c-called me the ‘gay’ kid a-anyway. Y-you we-weren’t the only one to t-tear my s-spirits down. T-there were o-others, s-sometimes e-even teachers…”

Katsuki swallows hard against the lump in his throat that only seemed to grow tighter by the minute.

“I f-forgive you, Kacchan, I know y-you know I do;” Izuku reassures him softly, brushing his thumbs through the still flowing tears.

“I’m… so s-sorry, Deku... I,” he hiccups, despite himself.

Both of them were on the verge of collapse at this point, only being held together by a thread and prayer.

“I k-know you are…” Izuku insists, “a-and I’m sorry y-you had to see that. I… I don’t k-know what m-mindset I h-had… w-when it happened… b-but it m-must’ve been p-pretty bad, f-for me to have done that s-so p-publically. T-there was a r-reason why I k-kept th-that stuff to myself.”

Leaning forward, Katsuki feels the energy drain from himself and rests his forehead against Izuku’s shoulder. He nestles himself closer into the crook of his neck, feeling their pulses meet against his temple, as Izuku threads his fingers comfortingly through his coarse hair.

“You don’t though, do you?” He asks with some measure of curiosity.

Izuku purses his lips again and clutches his left bicep, his brows pinched into a semi-permanent furrow.
He shakes his head.

“I-it’s c-complicated. I… think I’m m-more h-hurt, by the f-fact that he hid t-this for so long. H-hiding under the w-weight of that guilt. I get it… but… w-with you, I c-can look at you and k-know. I k-know how m-much this has been h-hurting you. B-but with him… h-he’s always had this c-confusing look of g-guilt. O-one that I c-could never pinpoint the o-origin of. O-or he’d s-say c-certain things... that l-left me w-wondering what he'd m-meant. It was… f-frustrating.”

“I know the feeling. Having him drop in out of nowhere, trying to fix things without giving us a reason why,” his brows furrow in annoyance, “I knew he was hiding something from the jump, but it pissed me off not knowing what that was. And… when he finally told me, I… may have punched him in the face,” Katsuki finishes cooly.

“Pfft,” Izuku huffs, his shoulders rattling in silent laughter, “you’re telling me… you punched All Might in the face?”

“You bet your fuckin’ ass I did!” He replies haughtily, just thinking about it got his blood boiling all over again.

Izuku gives him a fleeting quiet smile, his eyes lighting with it, like a lightning flash through a deep forest.

“My hero,” he replies, a teasing lilt to his voice.

Katsuki finds himself flushing despite himself. He knew Izuku was kidding, but it made something within him stir at the thought of being the ‘hero’ that defended his honor.

“It was nothin’... the guy has a seriously punchable face,” he grumbles.

“I m-mean it, Katsuki…” Izuku insists, reaching out again and laying his hand against his arm. Their eyes lock again, and there was something in the younger boy’s gaze, or maybe it was the way that he’d said his name, that gave him pause.

“You m-might not see it t-this way… b-but… you s-saved my life. I… m-may not r-remember it, b-but that f-feels right,” he intones, reaching his scarred right hand up to clutch his chest, “I k-know it. Y-you were there for me. R-right when I n-needed you… it… c-couldn’t have been easy. A-and, I’m s-sorry for the d-distress it must have c-caused you. B-but, you have my t-thanks.”

That treacherous lump from before threatened to choke him as he reached out for Izuku’s hand.

“I… couldn’t let you go. Not like that. I… honestly don’t even know how I held my shit together enough to even keep you breathing, but. Well. It was fucking difficult. But if I had to go back, I would always do it.”

The way Izuku was looking at him now, did weird things to his stomach.

Looking at him with such gratitude. Such warmth. He wasn’t sure how he could do it. How he could look at him like he was a person to be cherished or loved.

Katsuki didn’t think he was ever going to deserve it.

But he was damn well going to try to earn it.

And once he felt like he was deserving enough, he was going to claim that kid as his own.
“Y-you…” he clears his throat, “you should probably get some rest, Deku. It’s been a long ass day.”

His nerves were well and truly shot.

Izuku nods tiredly.

“You want to take my bed?”

“Nn.. not alone,” he hums in protest, shaking his head as he rubbed his tired eyes, “I’d r-rather st-stay on the couch w-with you.”

“The couch is great and all, but I’d rather be in bed if we’re gonna attempt to get any decent amount of sleep,” he argues without heat.

“T-then let's go,” the younger boy acquiesces.

Gathering the will to extract himself from the couch, Kastuki stands to his feet, pushing aside the mound of blankets and offering a steady hand to the forested boy who was still seated.

Taking his hand, Izuku pulls himself up and lets himself be guided up the stairs, slowly but surely, so as not to stumble.

With all the walking he’d done today, his leg muscles strained with the effort.

Gratefully he’d accepted the blond’s load-bearing shoulder.

Once situated in his room, both boys climb into Katsuki’s decently sized bed, each of them barely summoning the effort to remember to shut off the light and pull up the covers.

It was unspoken as Izuku settled himself across Katsuki’s waiting chest, clinging to him like a sleepy koala.

The blond had just enough strength left in his bedraggled body to wrap his arms around the slight form against him, both boys drifting off in a murmur of silent breathing.

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When they’d awoken the next day in a tangle of limbs and drool, both boys, unfortunately, had a fever.

Achy and exhausted, it was a unanimous decision.

They could seriously use the day off anyway.

Chapter End Notes

I just wanted to rave about these two darling sketches from the previous chapter, by the wonderful Chiwwi, on our discord channel. I adore them~ Thanks again, Chi! <3
Welcome To The Fold

Chapter Summary

With that in mind, gathering the pile of notebooks into their arms, Thirteen all but sprinted down the hall in their excitement.

They needed to tell Aizawa about this right away.

Chapter Notes

Weekly reminder that you all are the best readers a gal could ever ask for!
A lot of things have been going on for me as of late, some good, some bad, little bit of in between
But all of you have been so supportive and I truly appreciate it. Especially all the friends I've come to make on our discord. Thank you all so much! You all are something truly special!

This week, ya'll are in for a treat. This chapter is a lot longer than those I usually put out and it covers of LOT of what ya'll have been wanting to see, so I hope you all enjoy it! So grab your tissues, popcorn, or whatever, and settle in!

“Toshinori, if there was a reason as to why you called, can we just get on with it? You’ve done nothing but mutter to yourself for five minutes,” his mentor and father-figure gripes.

“Uh… y-yes sir, I apologize,” the younger man stutters nervously.

See, the thing was...

All his life he’d been surrounded by grand pillars.

His master and the previous owner of his great power; One For All, had literally been larger than life. She was a strong woman who’d valued both human life and justice and believed that one day, peace could be achieved.

Although she was little known, Nana Shimura was a true hero, one who saved lives with a smile on her face.

Nana and her trusted friend, Sorahiko, also known as pro-hero ‘Gran Torino’, both did well to foster Toshinori’s purpose and help him to achieve his dream of becoming the ‘Symbol of Peace.’ The hero who would bring safety and security to those in need. The one who, like his teacher before him, would save the entire world, with a smile on his face.

They taught him how to utilize the power he’d been given for this very purpose. They bequeathed to him: knowledge, strength, and valuable life lessons. They helped shape him into the man he was
today. The man who’d defeated the dreaded ‘All For One’ and restored balance to the world.

So, why was it, that with all his teachings; with all the knowledge and wise words he’d obtained and followed to the ‘letter,’ that he’d failed so thoroughly?

He felt so ashamed that he’d failed a young boy, who was no different from himself.

A dreamer, a quirkless boy, like himself; who wanted to take on the world and do as he’d done before him. A boy who wanted to save the world and make people feel safe, with a smile on his face.

Toshinori felt like a sham.

Like a shadow of a man, who’d somehow become disillusioned by the world he’d sought to protect.

He was a far cry from his own dreams, a cheap imitation of his former self.

In failing Izuku, he’d felt like he’d somehow failed himself. Like he’d let down that bright and aspiring young man he himself used to be. The one that Nana had been so proud of. The boy she’d willingly passed her secret power onto.

He was ashamed of what he’d become.

Just another jaded hero.

How could he tell the man who’d taught him so much, who’d continued to train and rear him after his late master’s passing, who’d saved his life and given him so much; that he’d failed so completely?

Toshinori swallows thickly around the lump in his throat.

“Toshi?” Gran Torino, calls to him more gently. As if sensing how sensitive the subject was going to be, “what’s wrong, kid?”

“I…” he hesitates.

He needed to get a grip.

He had to get this off of his chest.

He needed advice.

He had to fix this and he didn’t know how.

At moments like this, more than anything, he’d wished she were here.

“I've made things worse… and I don’t know how to fix it,” he admits quietly.

As his mentor exhales a sigh to himself, the sound of shifting can be heard through the phone gripped tightly in Toshinori’s hand.

“This is about that boy, isn’t it?” The elder hero asks after a long moment of silence.

“Yes, sir,” Toshinori confirms, chewing his bottom lip as he sits nervously behind his desk, tapping at it absently with his index finger.

“What happened? I thought things were going well between you two?” The older man queries, a sound of rustling could be heard in the background. And a microwave?
“It was,” Toshinori admits, a listless smile tugging at his lips, “he was and is doing so well. He’s finally out of the hospital, and for the most part, on his feet, and enrolled in school. The boy is making such fantastic leaps and bounds, unlike anything I’ve ever seen in someone his age. He’s really something. He’s always so positive and resilient, he puts one foot forward, and he’s thriving—”

“You sound just like her,” Sorahiko interjects with a hearty laugh.

“C-come again?” Toshinori stutters to a halt. His heart throbbing plaintively in his throat.

“Nana, ya big doof,” his elder continues, with yet another hearty laugh, as if it were obvious.

“I don’t understand…” Toshinori divulges, his brows pinched in confusion.

“God, you can be so thick sometimes, kid,” the older man gripes before reiterating, “I’m just sayin’, it sounds to me like you care a lot about this kid. From the way you rant, rave, and gush about him. It reminds me of how Nana used to do the same over you. Granted, this kid sounds a lot less crazy than you were,” he admits with a chuckle.

Toshinori is silent for a moment after that.

Sure, he cared a lot about young Midoriya.

He came to care and fret and feel so proud of him. He came to learn so much about the boy, to learn so much from the boy as well, that it couldn’t be considered anything else.

Yeah, he cared a lot.

Enough to encourage a silent fear to grow as well.

The fear of hurting him, the fear of letting him down, or losing him, which was the most surprising part.

“Just what is this boy to you, Toshi?” Sorahiko inquires after a pregnant pause, “he’s obviously not just some kid. Not with all this effort you’ve expended into ensuring he had a future to come back to. No, not at all. Unless... this is all guilt, is that it, Toshi? Do you feel like you owe the kid some debt?”

Toshinori purses his lips at that.

He knew what his teacher was doing, playing the devil’s advocate. He was trying and succeeding in getting a rise out of him. Like this was another lesson.

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“Who is this kid to you?” He asks again, more firmly.

“He’s more than just some kid,” he admits and it scares him.

A wave of righteous anger fills him then; or rather, frustration, “he’s not just someone I feel guilty over for not saving, either. Not anymore, at least,” he confirms.

“Okay, good, good, so what then?” The older man presses again, “why can’t you let this kid go? What makes you feel so worked up about hurting him, if not for guilt alone? From all that you’ve done for him, shouldn’t that absolve you anyway? Why do you stay?”

Sometimes, his teacher really had a talent for pissing him off.

“It’s not like that, okay? He’s more than just a weight on my guilty conscience. He’s... a great kid. He’s come so far. He’s grown so much in the time that I’ve known him. He makes me want to do
better, be better. But I can’t help but feel like every time I take a few steps forward, I stumble and take ten steps back. It makes me uncomfortable, feeling like I’ve ruined him. I don’t know what to say to make things better. I… I feel like I keep failing him.”

“Sounds to me, like you’ve definitely come to care about him,” Sorahiko replies, kindly. A touch of something in his voice, “so I’ll ask you again, who is this boy to you? A student? A friend? ...A successor?”

This gives Toshinori pause. Yet again, he is stunned into silence.

He really didn’t know the answer to that question.

“I… don’t really know,” he confesses, “but what I do know is… I want to help him. In any way, I can. I want to see him grow and thrive. I… I want to help him achieve his dreams. I don’t know what that makes me. I don’t know who that makes him to me, but I just want to be there for him and make things right.”

“Mhm, sounds about right, you’ve always been an awkward duck when it comes to emotions. Good or bad. So, what are you gonna do about it, kid? What works when words don’t?” His teacher asks him with finality.

“Actions,” Toshinori replies confidently, “actions speak louder than words.”

That’s one lesson Nana taught him, that he always fully believed in. No matter what.

“Then, there you go, kiddo,” Sorahiko agrees.

Toshinori feels his lips begin to tremble at that.

“Show the kid just how much he means to you, show him, that despite you being human, and an idiot, that you can make things right. But remember, don’t force it, either. He’ll definitely come to you when the time is right. Make it count,” he warns him firmly.

“How?” Toshinori starts, “how is it, that both of you always knew what to say? Why is it… that I could never understand how to do that?”

“It’s… probably partially due to your upbringing, kid. You’ve always wanted to do good. To do grand things, and be of service to the people. You wanted to give them a hero when they needed one, yes. But you’ve never really been available, emotionally. You’ve always looked for a family in those you surround yourself with, but never really learned how to open yourself up. In fact, the only ones I’ve seen you so open with are myself, Nana, Naomasa, Dave, and his little girl. You’ve got the spirit, Toshi. It’s there, begging to be let out. So why not let the kid in, and see what you get?”

“I…” he clears his throat, “okay… I’ll try.”

“No. Do or do not. There is no try,” his teacher retorts sternly, “you either will and it’ll work or it won’t, or you won’t and you’ll never know. Trying is half-assed at best. Trying is what you’ve been doing and it hasn’t worked.”

“Y-yes, sir!” Toshinori agrees nervously.

He had to this.

He had to.
Izuku more than deserved it.

---

Young Midoriya and young Bakugou have been out of school for two days.

Toshinori didn’t know how to feel about that at all.

On one hand, he knew they needed time, young Midoriya especially. But on the other, he wanted; no, needed to speak with one or both of them again. But alas, Toshinori knew better than to overstep any boundaries. He’d already more than overstepped as it was.

With this in mind, he went about his business.

His daily routine consisted of teaching, sitting in his office grading, planning the next heroics class, mingling with the students, and attending any staff meetings as needed.

So imagine his complete surprise and utter distress, when after school hours, none other than Midoriya Inko, was escorted into his office by a receptionist.

Midoriya Inko wasn’t a lithe woman, but in the last year or so that he knew her, she’d definitely lost a lot of weight. She looked really nice in what was likely her work attire; which consisted of a light grey pencil skirt, a white ruffled button up top, complete with a professional light grey blazer and black flats.

She looked every bit like she belonged in a courtroom and that was probably what was most intimidating.

He always knew the day would come, in which he would have to sit down with her and talk about what happened that day, but he never imagined she’d come to him.

“Ms. Midoriya,” he greets her kindly, despite his nerves, “have a seat.”

Her body language was completely indecipherable and he was once again reminded of how alike she and her son were, as he’d had that exact expression just days before.

That feeling of his heart sitting in his throat was quickly becoming a common occurrence.

“Hello there, Mr. Yagi. I was just on my way from dropping some of Izuku’s notes by Thirteen’s office. I hope you don’t mind the intrusion, but there are a few things we need to discuss, regarding Izuku,” she expresses. Her face still carefully blank despite her disarming words.

Toshinori swallows thickly around the knot in his throat, “yes ma’am, of course.”

“I wanted to thank you,” she says after a moment.

Toshinori’s eyes widen considerably. Of all the things he was gearing himself up to expect, it was not that, “I’m sorry?”

Midoriya Inko’s brows pinch, finally revealing some of what she was feeling at the moment. Most of which was apparent concern. “Izuku explained to me what happened.”

“He did?” His lips purse in concern of his own.

“He can be stubborn. And… scarily smart. I feared he’d figure all of this out long before his therapist had a chance to work with him on it, but I never suspected this kind of outcome,” she confides.
“I feared as much, myself. Even young Bakugou had his own suspicions that this would happen,” he admits, tension still rigid within his shoulders.

“You did right... by calling the therapist, I mean,” Inko explains, “I know you may have meant well, in speaking with Izuku, but I’m glad that you at least tried to contact her and make her aware of the situation. Granted, it all royally backfired, but Izuku is safe and that’s all that matters. I also know that you told Katsuki, as well.”

“I did,” he confirms, still feeling a distinct inkling of unease.

“I’m glad you did, he was the one who found him,” the forest-haired woman relays.

Some of the tension eases from his shoulders at that.

Young Midoriya was safe and sound and he’d accepted young Bakugou’s help.

He breathed a sigh of relief, falling into his own seat behind his desk, “that’s wonderful. I was so worried when young Midoriya left. I didn’t know what else to do,” he confesses.

“To be completely honest with you, Mr. Yagi, I don’t think that any of us would have been able to approach this without some kind of negative backlash. I think that in the end, it had to have come from him. He’s known Izuku since they were infants. And he’s been a source of both pain and encouragement for him. All his life, he’s looked up to Katsuki in a way that he hasn’t even looked up to you.”

Toshinori nods in understanding, before pausing briefly, shock settling into his veins.

His cobalt eyes flit up quickly to meet a familiar forest-green. What she’d said, just now dawning on him.

Midoriya Inko meets his gaze with a knowing intensity.

“Once the details were uncovered, some things that were easily ignored before, became glaringly clear. Izuku didn’t remember his encounter with you, but you did leave a piece of evidence behind that became all the more obvious the more I thought about it,” she relays. Her expression was once again blank, but not unkind. Not angry. Almost thoughtful, calculating even.

“Izuku seemed very panicked when I came into his room the night before his talk with you. He’d asked me if he’d ever mentioned meeting All Might. And silly me, I honestly hadn’t put it together. Even after having read his notes a dozen times. Then it occurred to me. Your sudden appearance and interest in helping Izuku, Katsuki’s apparent distrust of you, his hesitancy to allow me to accept help from you. I thought about this a lot that night,” she continues.

“Ms. Midoriya, I-” he tries.

She raises a hand, giving him pause.

“I’m not angry. At least, not now. Not after having spoken to Izuku myself and coming to know his feelings on the matter... I know that being a pro-hero means having to withhold information. Having to keep secrets. I know that you being who you are, you must have to bear this burden a lot. It keeps you safe, but... it must also be quite lonely.”

Toshinori’s eyes flit to his desk, that feeling of shame returning.

“I don’t know what you said to him that day. He wouldn’t tell me,” she admits, “but I do know that it
had to have been pretty upsetting. And I know that for you to come to us, in our time of need and offer us so much help, that you yourself must have felt horrible about it,” she continues, understanding coalescing in her tone.

“I am so sorry, ma’am… I-” Toshinori was sure he was visibly vibrating out of his skin at this point.

“I think you’ve more than tried to make up for it,” she rebuffs him, “I’m not happy that any of this happened. If I could go back, and change what I had done myself, I would. All of us have guilt in this. Me, you, and Katsuki… but the one thing I’ve come to learn is that, at that point of time, I think that any kind of push would have set Izuku over the edge. He was so volatile. I only wish I’d realized it sooner,” she admits, her own guilt shining through.

Tears began to gather in the corners of her eyes and his in kind. Mr. Yagi reaches over and hands her a box of tissues, which she accepts gratefully.

“There was no real way to know, Ms. Midoriya, not really. I didn’t know him well enough at the time, but he hid his pain well. Behind that winning smile of his. I know that I hadn’t realized it…” he replies, just as guiltily.

“It’s funny…” she says after a moment, “to think that all this time, All Might himself, was helping us through all this.”

“To be completely honest, Ms. Midoriya, I haven’t much felt like myself in a while,” he confesses.

She eyes him carefully, “you could have walked away. Never even batted an eye. You’d done your part, in saving him from that slime villain. I remember seeing a news bulletin of his escape. How he was hiding from the police using the bodies of people he’d killed. That could have been my Izuku,” she all but sobs into her tissue, “you might not have recognized his pain, but after his fall, you could have left well enough alone. But you didn’t. You came straight to his bedside and offered more help than we could have hoped for. It may just have been out of guilt, but even so… you offered us hope.”

“Hope, huh?” He chuckles humorlessly before eyeing her tiredly, “I don’t think I’ll ever forgive myself for being so negligent that day. For shattering his hopes, as I had. He’d asked me that day, if he could still become a hero, even if he were quirkless. I regret every minute of ever telling him he couldn’t. Of telling him to settle for less than he aspired to be. That wasn’t my call to make,” he confesses, staring miserably at his lap, “but I assure you Ms. Midoriya, I will not stop trying to make it up to him. I’ve never been more proud to call him a U.A. student. I think he’ll do great things. Quirkless or not.”

“On that, Mr. Yagi,” she replies through her own tears, “we agree. And while it’s not up to me, to offer you forgiveness, I think that if you give him time, he will.”

----

Thirteen was beside themselves.

Upon meeting Midoriya Izuku for the first time, they knew that the kid had major potential, but this? This was unreal!

After having read through most of Midoriya’s notebooks that his mother had kindly brought to them, Thirteen was about to vibrate out of their skin. They simply could not believe that most of these notebooks were written by the boy at such a tender young age. And for the analyses to be so precise? That was simply unheard of.

It was apparent that Midoriya had the mind of a brilliant tactician.
With that in mind, gathering the pile of notebooks into their arms, Thirteen all but sprinted down the hall in their excitement.

They needed to tell Aizawa about this right away.

---

Each and every time Shota had the pleasure of seeing Thirteen outside of their uniform, it was like watching a Nova being brought into existence. Their appearance was so wholly unique, that it was always both startling and awe-inspiring to happen upon them in… the flesh?

Their eyes were shock white, with a shine akin to a brightly burning star, and their body; while there were no defined male or female features, was trim, lithe, and the color of the night sky. Thirteen was like the walking embodiment of Vincent van Gogh’s ‘Starry Night’ painting.

Their skin and long tresses were black as space and freckle-like stars brightly dotted every inch of their face, arms, and he was damn near positive they didn’t stop there, but that was where his curiosity ended. They were certainly a sight to behold.

“Oh,” he drawls tiredly, “and just what have you got there?”

Thirteen pretty much teems with excitement at this point, causing the stoic hero to perk up in his seat.

“You know of Midoriya Izuku, right?” They ask suddenly.

“They exclaim excitedly, their shock white eyes crinkling into crescents.

To say the least, his interest was piqued.

He knew they knew it would be.

Thirteen often liked to tease him and say he had the curiosity of a cat.

They weren’t wrong.

“Oh,” he drawls tiredly, “and just what have you got there?”

Thirteen pretty much teems with excitement at this point, causing the stoic hero to perk up in his seat.

“‘You know of Midoriya Izuku, right?’ They ask suddenly.

“I do,” he agrees, now paying full attention to his galatic friend.

“Well, he is currently the top student in my Quirk Theory class,” they remind.

“I’m aware,” Shota concedes, waiting for them to get to their point.

“I think, he has the potential for more than that,” the space hero reveals confidently, “you may need to consider opening a new seat in the near future.”
“What are you getting at, exactly?” Shota asks, his curiosity getting the better of him.

“In my hands, are 12 notebooks, handwritten by Midoriya throughout the years. The contents of which, could be mildly alarming, if they weren’t so brilliant!” They relay excitedly, “within these pages are some of the most in-depth accounts and records of quirks I have ever seen to date.”

His tired eyes widen at that, “no kidding?”

“Shota,” Thirteen replies seriously, “there are things in here about some pro-heroes that have never made it to the media, that’s how in-depth they are. And that includes things about us as well!”

Shota offers his hand in askance and the over-eager hero complies, passing the notebooks carefully to the now much more-awake man.

“What makes you so sure I’ll open a seat? We’re already well into the semester,” Shota replies with faux petulance, mirth clearly filtering into his dark gaze.

“Read those and find out,” the space hero replies ominously, a knowing smile curling their lips.

After some time goes by, in which both teachers sit around comfortably, simply filling the silence with the turning of crinkled pages, Shota can’t help but mutter an impressed, “I’ll be damned,” under his breath.

Thirteen’s responding smile was a lot more coy from then on.

Opening a seat, huh?

That might not be such a bad idea.

----

It felt like years since they’d been here, but despite still feeling a bit ‘raw,’ Izuku knew that getting back to school and continuing on with their regular routine would be beneficial for them both. So in lieu of normalcy, both boys resigned themselves to pulling their butts out of bed and getting back into the swing of things.

After their talk, and their much-needed bedrest, not much between both boys had changed.

At least, not visibly.

Somehow, it seemed like there was this minute shift in their dynamic.

Not a bad one, no. Far from it, but it was a shift no less.

It was as if their centers of gravity seemed to grow shorter. Staying ever within reach, the pair seemed to orbit around one another just a hair closer than they had before.

What were once casual touches, seemed much more profound.

There was also something more affectionate about their hushed late-night conversations, curled up together and bedridden.

It could just have been that they were both merely sick and feeling vulnerable due to the emotions that ran high over the course of the last 3 days, but somehow, to both boys, it felt like so much more than that.
Things that could have been explained away in the past, didn’t really seem to matter anymore. They no longer needed excuses for keeping close.

They were just comfortable being within the other’s reach, that was all.

If Katsuki wanted to reach out a steadying hand, he could have made excuses and said it was to help, but he’d partially be lying. Or if Izuku happened to use his shoulder as his personal pillow, it could have been explained as him simply being tired, but that would also be a lie.

It was to the point where both boys started to stop finding the excuses as for why they should, and started focusing more on why they could.

They hadn’t slept side by side through the night since they were kids, and yet when Izuku had finally gone home, this left them both feeling oddly exposed without the other.

It wouldn’t seem like such a difference for anyone that knew them, but to them, it was incredibly evident that something shifted. It was something new. Something shared and it was definitely something they weren’t likely to stop any time soon.

----

Wandering into the school, hand in hand wasn’t really out of the ordinary for them. Not since Izuku stopped using his wheelchair. But it became more noticeable to them that Katsuki would rather offer the forest-haired boy a steadying hand, than make him hobble along with his crutches.

What really made the difference, as Kaminari was so kind to point out, was the fact that Katsuki did this every passing period. Even going as far as to walk the other boy to and from every class.

Under any normal circumstances, Izuku probably would have insisted that he didn’t have to do it, but honestly, even a blind person could totally tell he was eating it up.

They both seemed to be lost in private affection.

“I think it’s romantic,” Mina sighs contentedly as she dips a french fry into her ketchup.

“I’m not saying it’s not,” Kaminari defends, “in fact it makes Mr. McBlasty seem like he has actual human emotions and not just concentrated hot gas.”

Eijiro snorts derisively, rolling his eyes as he takes a bite of his burger. “Whatever it is,” he says between bites, “I’m just glad Mido’s okay. He really freaked us out the other day.”

“Yeah, what was that about, anyway? He just kind of up and disappeared. Bakugou, too,” Sero comments.

Eijiro purses his lips, staring down at the table in deep thought, “I’m not so sure myself, to be honest. I know some things, but not enough to make a guess,” he admits.

“Hm,” the black-haired boy hums, “well in any case, at least they’re both okay.”

“Speaking of,” Kaminari comments, “there they are,” he points out before calling out to them from across the room.

Both boys make their way across the room, Izuku offering up a small smile as they take a seat among their friends.

“Well, hello there, precious,” Mina coos as she gives the greenette a gentle side-hug.
Katsuki’s ensuing frown seems to make his friends grin like Cheshire cats.

“Aww, is Blasty jealous? There’s plenty of love for you too, buddy!” The pink-haired girl teases him, offering him a hug as well.

“Get the hell off me, woman,” the blond groans, much to Izuku’s apparent amusement.

“I don’t want to hear it from you, Nerd. It was your shitty idea to come here and get accosted by these rejects,” Katsuki gripes at the forest-haired boy.

“I didn’t say anything,” the younger boy smiles innocently as he signs his response.

Eijiro seemed all too amused by this as well as he awkwardly signed a "hello" to his forest-haired friend.

The other boy responds in kind, an even brighter smile firmly in place, “y—you’re d-doing much b-better,” his friend replies with encouragement.

“I dunno about that, man,” Eijiro replies shyly, “I still feel like my hands are completely out of sync.”

“You’ll get there,” Izuku replies through sign, a placid smile easing out his tired features.

These last couple of days really must have been brutal for him.

It troubled Eijiro, knowing that his friend was hurting, but not knowing why or how to help. But he knew well enough by now not to pry.

“Are you feeling better?” he signs, yet again awkwardly fumbling with his hands, but clearly, the message was received, because even Bakubro began tuning in. Watching their exchange like a hawk.

“Much, thank you, I’m sorry to have worried you,” Izuku replies slowly and sincerely for him.

“Awww,” Mina whines after a silent moment, “that’s so cool you guys! I wish I could talk to our ball of sunshine in sign language!”

It would seem their table was full of spectators.

“It’s a lot tougher than it looks, at least for me,” Eijiro replies nervously.

“Tch, that’s because your last brain cell is hidden under that ridiculous hair of yours,” Katsuki retorts, with just the hint of a teasing edge to his tone.

Even so, Izuku gives his arm a harmless whack, “B-be nice,” he chides him. That small placid smile still firmly in place. He sets his sights on their pink-hued friend, “I...I c-could t-teach you. U-um, i-if you w-want?”

Even after getting to know them better, Eijiro could tell that Izuku was still not entirely comfortable speaking aloud to anyone other than Katsuki, himself, and Todoroki. He even had a hard time getting his words out around Ochaco, and she was a literal bubble in the flesh.

"Really?!!" The pink-haired girl replies excitedly.

"Mhm," the greenette agrees with a kind smile.

Eijiro didn’t know if he should count himself lucky, but it was definitely flattering, knowing that his
friend was comfortable around him.

In the midst of their conversation; if one could call it that, what with Bakubro’s constant griping and Kaminari’s constant poking at the bear, none of them realized their teacher’s approach until he was already there.

Each of them perks up and zips their lips at the display of his ‘teacherly’ aura. All of them, with the exception Katsuki, eyed one another nervously.

“Shouldn’t you be in your sleeping bag, old man? Lunch ain’t over yet,” the bravest, or stupidest of them, gripes.

Leave it to the blond-bomb to break the ice in such a Bakugou-esque fashion.

The kid literally gave no fucks.

This ironically draws a smirk from their teacher, which was honestly even scarier.

“A pop-quiz you say? On how quirks shaped the modern-age? Good idea, kid, I’ll direct your classmates on who to thank for that,” the older man retorts, condescendingly.

This causes a round of groans to chorus from their table.

Izuku’s brows seem to pinch together sympathetically. An awkward smile overtaking his placid one.

“Actually, I’m here for Midoriya,” Mr. Aizawa informs them ominously.

This causes every one of them to bristle at that, curious eyes flitting to their bored-looking teacher.

“M-me, s-sir?” The forested boy panics.

“Yup,” he replies, monotonously.

That clearly did nothing to assuage the forested boy’s nerves.

“What the fuck for?” Katsuki retorts defensively, clearly not understanding the older man’s angle.

None of them did, really.

“Well, if you brats must know, I’m inviting him to our class for the next couple of days. Thirteen and I are going to be working on another collaborative class soon, and seeing as Midoriya seems to know a thing or two about quirk theory, I’m inviting him to attend some of our classes as a consultant.”

At that point, the kid literally seems to short-circuit.

Midoriya.exe has stopped working. Please restart.

“H-holy shit!” He all but shouts, much to their amusement and surprise.

A round of intense muttering follows suit.

Aizawa literally looked like he was about to laugh, which had each of his students staring at him like he’d grown a second head.

“I take it, that you’ll attend?” Mr. Aizawa asks to confirm.

“Y-yeah, n-no, y-yes, o-of c-course? I-I t-think?? Sir. H-holy… c-cows in fuc-” his muttering gets
cut off mid-stream by Katsuki’s hand.

“He’ll be there,” the blond confirms for him.

“Good to know, we’ll see you in class, Midoriya,” their normally stoic teacher replies, with some amusement before taking his leave.

“You good there, Nerd?” Katsuki asks carefully, removing his hand from the shell-shocked boy’s mouth.

“N-never better!” Came his flustered reply.

A smirk that Eijiro’s never seen before overtakes their blond friend.

This was going to be interesting.

----

It felt a little weird to be walking Izuku to his own classroom for their last period, but in a way, it was also fitting. Throughout the years, they were pretty much always in every class together. While those times weren’t amicable in the least, it was nice to be getting back to their roots like this, in a positive and healthy manner.

The excitement literally radiated off of the younger boy and Katsuki would be lying if he said it wasn’t contagious. Neither of them had any idea of how this was going to go, but if there was one thing the blond was sure of, it’s that this was going to be interesting.

After all those years spent at odds with each other, Katsuki never really got to see Izuku shine. Sure, he was always smart, and answered questions when called upon in class, but he never really went out of his way to let the other kids or their teachers see what he was capable of. Katsuki guessed that that was to be expected. No matter what Izuku may or may not have said, he'd still been considered the class pariah.

Katsuki was just glad that this wasn’t the case here at U.A. Everyone here was so accepting and the people here were so diverse. Katsuki knew that other quirkless kids attended here as well, and knew that that fact alone made the forested boy feel all the better. But this was different. Unlike Aldera Junior High, U.A. was all about fostering a student’s true potential, quirkless or not.

He was about to be given the opportunity to see something he’d never been privy to before.

He was about to see what it was like to witness Izuku in his element and it made him swell with pride.

Upon entering the classroom, Katsuki debated on whether to hover or not, but his decision was made for him when Aizawa told him to take his seat. With a grumble, Katsuki left Izuku standing nervously at the front of the class.

Sure, Izuku knew some of the extras in this class, but that still didn’t mean he was comfortable with vocalizing around them. Katsuki only hoped that Mr. Aizawa didn’t pressure him into talking.

Thankfully, those fears were assuaged.

“Alright, listen up!” Their teacher starts, commanding the attention of the room, “we have a few important things to discuss today and after that, you’ll pretty much have a free period.”
A chorus of whoops and excitement trilled around the room.

“Okay, okay, I get it, you’re excited, but pay attention. I’ll only say this once,” their teacher redirects them.

Curious eyes all lock on the two of them standing at the front of the class.

“This here is Midoriya Izuku,” their teacher introduces, allowing time for Izuku to give a shy wave.

"He’s a gen-ed student that is going to be collaborating with our class,” Mr. Aizawa explains, "I’m sure most of you know of him already, seeing as the kid is pretty much attached at the hip to Bakugou,” he teases, causing Katsuki to grumble and cross his arms over his chest.

“Aweee, Bakubrooo,” Kaminari teases from across the room.

Before the blond could go off on him, Mr. Aizawa interjects, “That’s enough, now. Quit horsing around. Midoriya here, is going to be with us off and on for the next few weeks as a quirk consultant, so treat him well and get to know him. Also, keep in mind that he is not deaf, or mute, he can hear you just fine, and even though I shouldn't have to, I'll warn you anyway, don’t be rude. Give him time to form responses.”

Yet another chorus of agreements and welcoming gestures chime throughout the classroom.

If Aizawa had his respect before, he definitely had even more of it now.

“Alright, Midoriya, take a seat between Bakugou and Shinsou,” he points, “over there, the kid with the purple hair,” Mr. Aizawa directs him.

Purple Panda lazily raises his hand in a silent greeting, to which Izuku offers him a shy smile, taking his seat between them.

“Okay, now that introductions are out of the way, onto our next topic of discussion,” Mr. Aizawa reminds.

Izuku’s eyes flit to the right and meet Katsuki’s steady crimson gaze. They share a reassuring glance as they both tune back into what Mr. Aizawa was relaying to them.

“I’m sure some of you have heard the rumors by now,” their teacher addresses them, “and I want you to know that they are indeed true, we are going to be hosting our annual Sports Festival.”

“No way!” The Grapist calls out from the back of the classroom, “are you trying to get us killed?! Those dude’s shredded your face!”

Each of his classmates shared half-hearted and doubtful expressions.

"Mineta, I'll have you know that talking to our teacher that way is highly disrespectful!” Shitty Glasses interjects, his arms flailing in box-like movements.
“Isn’t that a bit harsh to say? It’s not like U.A. planned for that attack to happen,” Kaminari gripes.

“EXACTLY,” Balls for Brains exclaims, “which means it could happen again!”

“Enough, both of you,” Mr. Aizawa interjects with measured annoyance, “I can assure that this will be perfectly safe. Not only do we have the protection of our security team, but we’ll also be enlisting the help of various pro-heroes from several different agencies to help guard and chaperone the event.”

“Yeah!” Kirishima, agrees with excitement, “not only that but did you see what All Might did to those guys?! He wiped the floor with that Nomu thing! We’ll be plenty safe with him here!”

Excited murmurs and a few heated debates began buzzing around the room.

“Settle down, seriously…” Aizawa huffs, “Regardless of all of that, I can assure you all that this event will be safe, so if there are no more USJ related concerns, you may all carry on for the rest of your free period. I, however, am taking a nap. Try not to set anything on fire, we want to make Midoriya feel welcome here, not afraid for his life.”

Izuku huffs a laugh from beside him, his forested gaze flitting to meet his, “I take it there is some merit to that warning?” He signs like the little shit he is.

Katsuki shrugs, “I have a temper.”

It was at this point that they were surrounded by their mutual friends and the curious faces of the other class 1-A students.

If Izuku’s beaming smile were any indication, he was going to fit right in with them.

Katsuki had no doubt.

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Smoke curled in slowly moving tendrils within the dim and stuffy room, as he flicks the ash from his dying cigarette into the nearly full glass tray. Settled on the bartop before him, the grey-haired man rifled through several candid photographs, taken from various locations. He sneers at their smiling faces. Each one he tosses away scatters haphazardly around him. His searing vermilion gaze glows, catching the only light filtering lazily from above the open bar.

His companion was quiet, as he placidly dried the glass between his seemingly incorporeal hands.

It’d been several weeks since that debacle at the USJ.

Several pain-filled weeks during which Tomura painstakingly healed his bullet wounds. With none other than shoddy self-treatment and illegally obtained painkillers.

That whole mess pissed him off immensely whenever he thought about it, only adding fuel to his fiery hatred.

All Might and that punk-ass kid.

Thwarting their plans and alerting the whole of U.A. to their activity.

It burned him up.

He leered daggers down at the photographs he was still sorting through. His hatred growing with
each and every one he laid his eyes on.

“How is it coming with Giran and the new recruits?” He grumbles, flicking the ashes of his still burning cigarette onto the candid’s before him, uncaring of the scorches they left behind.

“They’re scheduled to arrive soon. I assume you’ve heard the news?” Kurogiri’s deceptively charming voice inquires.

“Oh, I’ve heard it alright. U.A. and those cocky-ass pro-hero wannabes, thinking that they’re so much better than us. Rising above fucking adversity. Makes me sick,” he all but spits, scratching deep gouges into his throat, “they think we’re a joke. A shoddy institution that they have no reason to fear.”

“And what will you do about it, Tomura Shigaraki?” Came his companion’s curious reply.

“I will give them a reason to fear us. We will lay the groundwork, to overthrow the shitty ass kingdom of security they’ve built. We will rock them to their very core. And when we do, they’ll no longer know what the meaning of security ever was. All they will know is pain. And All Might… All Might will be the last to go. We’ll make him and that punk-ass brat watch as everything they love, crumbles and decays before them. And after that? Well…” he pauses, just long enough to stub his cigarette out onto the photograph of a boy with forest-green hair, twisting ash and smoke into his smiling face.

“Wouldn’t want to spoil a good surprise, now would I?” He replies with a crooked grin.
Chapter Summary

It was like he was a hollow shell of his former self and it was deeply concerning to the forested boy.

Izuku knew all too well, the signs of depression and anxiety.

Shouto was presenting himself to be more and more like a textbook case.

Chapter Notes

Hello, my loves! I apologize for this chapter being a little more late than usual. I had a lot going on in my personal life, yet again. Which ended up throwing me some curve balls and more added stress than I expected. Thankfully, I didn't spiral into a depressive mess, so I count that as a win lol. Things are beginning to look up again and that's all that really matters.

There are some interesting developments in this chapter, which is basically a precursor to the Sports Fest! Which I am sure we're all very excited for. I know I am! SO I hope you all enjoy that!

I hope all you wonderful mother's out there, who may read this, have had a wonderful Mother's Day!

Consider this a belated gift~

Without further adieu, please enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Elbows tucked.”

Infectious laughter could be heard, bubbling throughout the backyard.

“No, tighter. There. Okay, that’s better,” the firm voice instructs.

“R-right,” came the amused reply.

“Hands up. Chin tucked, eyes on your opponent. Keep that face guarded.”

“K-kacchan,” the forested boy before him laughs from his seat on the lawn chair, his shoulders shaking with mirth, “w-what’s the p-point of t-this?”

“Self defense, thought that was obvious, Nerd,” the blond huffs, before getting into position again, “when you go to throw a punch, step into it. It adds more power, but when you go for a jab, retract as quickly as you threw it, keep your face guarded at all times, leave no openings. If you leave your arm extended for too long, it leaves you open to attacks.”
Izuku smiles at him endearingly, “Kacchan, w-while I a-app-preciate the gesture, w-were s-supposed to be training y-you, n-not me.”

Katsuki frowns, before stepping forward and wrapping Izuku into a loose headlock.

“Oh yeah? And what are you gonna do if someone decides to pound that pretty mug of yours into the pavement, huh?” The older boy quips, twisting a noogie into his already haphazard curls.

“Awe, you t-think I’m pretty?” The boy smiles brightly despite still being trapped within the irritated blond’s hold.

“Izuku,” he groans pointedly, his face suddenly much more flushed.

He lets out a mixture of a laugh and a sigh, “I dunno,” he shrugs, “w-whack ‘em w-with my cane?”

This makes Katsuki frown again before releasing him and dropping into a seated position in the grass.

“You’re not always gonna have that thing, ya know? And that’s a pretty shitty way to defend yourself anyway,” Katsuki argues, “one day, you’re gonna be steady on your feet and you’ll be unarmed and might find yourself in a position in which you’ll have to fight.”

Izuku’s gaze softens as he stares down at the crimson-eyed boy in the grass. He watches with interest as the sun refracts off of the light sheen coating his exposed chest. The sweet smell of nitroglycerin lightly filling the air. They’d been out here for hours, practicing different tactical techniques for Katsuki’s quirk, using his analysis for input.

Well, that was before the blond took an express interest in turning the tables and ‘training’ him instead.

“I’ll be fine,” Izuku reassures him, “t-that's w-why I have you, Mr. L-Lord E-explosion Murder,” he
finishes with a shit-eating grin.

Katsuki flops backward into the grass in frustration, vaguely looking like he wanted to set the verdant blades on fire.

“You’re such an asshole,” the blond mutters into the arm he’d slung over his face, “would it kill you to take this seriously?”

“The pot says what now?” Izuku kids in kind.

Removing his arm, Katsuki sits up again. His face contorting in about a hundred different ways before finally settling on a mixture of concern and annoyance. His bottom lip rolls between his teeth as he fights himself on what he wants to say next.

Izuku knew that face well.

Katsuki was exploring some deeply concerning thoughts and was currently trying to find a way to voice them without sounding like a complete douchebag.

Therapy really was doing wonders for the kid.

Once again, this thought brings a gentle smile to Izuku’s face.

“What?” He murmurs gently in an attempt to encourage the blond to speak.

“...Is it so bad of me to want you to be safe?” He finally grumbles.

And it gives Izuku pause, as he’s never heard the blond say anything of the sort; so directly before.

It’d been about a week since his physical therapist deemed it safe for him to walk with a cane unassisted, thereby rescinding the order for his crutches, but even so, Izuku still felt a little clumsy on his feet. Carefully as he could, he stands and lowers himself with ease onto the grass next to his companion. Said blond watches him curiously the entire time.

“I’m p-plenty safe,” he says finally, sitting down in the grass beside him, “I’ve got the n-next n-number one p-pro-hero in my corner.”

Izuku watches in contentment as an unmistakable grin spreads across his cocky friend’s features.

He knew that’d get him.

“You’ve got that right, at least,” he retorts with confidence. But even so, Izuku could still see the conflicting presence of unerring worry in his expression.

“Y-you s-seem to forget, Kacchan,” Izuku reminds him, “I-I’ve b-been in my f-fair share of f-fights, too, ya know?”

Katsuki frowns again, but thankfully not out of guilt.

They were slowly but surely tip-toeing out of those waters.

“I distinctly remember you getting your ass handed to you on more than one occasion, kid,” he remarks.

It was true. He might not have been a boxer like Katsuki, or had a flashy quirk to throw around, but
Izuku always managed to land at least one or two good hits in before others deemed it necessary to
cheat. He’d often went up against groups of people as well. Not exactly a fair fight.

But that knowledge alone did nothing to assuage that niggling fear in the back of Katsuki’s mind.

If people like the League of Villains existed, the world was a much more vulnerable place. He got to
see first hand what it was like to go head to head with people like them. People so uncaring of the
destruction they wrought or of the innocents they killed along the way. Most of his classmates,
himself included, were lucky to have walked away with minor injuries that day. And that was with
the added protection quirks could provide.

Izuku didn’t have that luxury.

They both knew this.

As the forest-haired boy peered into those conflicted crimson eyes, he knew, that as silly as this was,
he’d do almost anything to make him feel better about whatever his mind was currently conjuring up.

“W-what e-else have you g-got to s-show me?” He asks shyly.

Izuku watches intently as that wicked grin slips back into place and goes along easily as Katsuki
pulls him back onto his feet, helping him position his arms again.

“Okay, so, next thing is, when you go to strike someone, use your open palm. Those are the
strongest bones in your hand and unlike your knuckles, they’re the least likely to break,” he explains,
giving him a visual demonstration.

It might seem silly or kind of moot to him, but Izuku was willing to do anything to give his friend
some peace of mind.

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Working with Class 1-A was like a dream come true. Not only did he have the opportunity to make
new friends, but he was also able to further his research. In the duration of the week, he’d already
learned so much about them.

Politely as he could, he asked them not to explain anything about their quirks to him. He felt like the
best way to go about this was to be completely in the dark. He wanted the opportunity to challenge
himself and the prospect of showing his teachers what he could do was too good to pass up. He
wanted to show them that he could formulate analyses without any prior knowledge, gathering intel
through his own observations.

It was definitely challenging, but all of his new friends seemed amicable enough to oblige.

Shinsou, especially.

That kid was a surefire mystery. He was quiet and reserved. He seemed to eye everyone in the
classroom with an almost unnerving intensity. Izuku in particular.

And Izuku only knew he was watching him because he too, was watching Shinsou in equal
measure.

He was certainly not someone he’d want to challenge in a game of poker, that was for sure.
Shinsou studied him almost as sharply as he, in turn, studied Shinsou.

After a week, Izuku still had next to nothing on him. Which was perplexing enough without the added handicap he imposed on himself. It was at this point that Izuku had taken to gathering any information that he could, going as far as studying his every interaction with the rest of their classmates.

Not that this gave anything away, either.

The kid didn’t socialize much, if at all. And when he did, it was mainly to rile Kacchan up. Izuku wagered that this was likely a pass-time of his. That Cheshire grin of his was a clear indication.

This made the forested boy even more determined to figure him out.

Even if this was a friendly challenge, his credibility was on the line, after all.

----

Midoriya Izuku was a hard kid to figure out.

While this was a friendly challenge or just a method of seeing what he could do; Hitoshi, despite being asked to act naturally like everyone else, wanted to give Midoriya a challenge of his own.

He wanted to make this kid work for it and by doing so, in turn, learn more about him as well.

He had no idea what kind of quirk the guy had, nor did he have any clear idea on how to communicate with him, but he still managed to pique his curiosity.

Oh boy, did he ever.

Just knowing that Mr. Aizawa had vetted him and brought him into the class as a consultant was impressive enough, but for the kid to practically handicap himself? Willingly? He was an enigma. One that Hitoshi was very interested in figuring out.

In a way, they were quite alike.

Both were quiet.

Both had unknown quirks that the other couldn’t quite figure out.

And both of them were perceptive and clever as fuck.

Despite not knowing anything about one another, they were in turn, learning everything as well.

A lot could be said with silence. A lot could be observed from body language alone. This was how they would come to find out more about one another. Through sheer stubborn perseverance and through unerring curiosity.

One thing was certain, the whole ordeal kept things interesting.

Several times, Hitoshi had tried to drop subtle hints as to what his quirk might be, but each time was harder than the last, because he simply could not get Midoriya to talk to him verbally.

Hitoshi had an inkling that the kid could talk if he wanted, but rather opted out of it for some reason or another.
Another thing that frustrated and interested him, was his apparent usage of sign language and other methods of communication.

Hitoshi could literally not understand a damn thing he was saying, let alone try and ensnare him in his mind trap.

Midoriya was simply…

*Untouchable.*

It was as interesting for him as it was unnerving. Because he had a sneaking suspicion that Midoriya; through some extra added effort, would be able to completely figure him out in no time.

It was almost unfair.

Not only that, but what he couldn’t deduce now, he’d likely be able to figure out during the sports festival, which was simply unavoidable.

But nevertheless, he was weirdly enough, finding a fast friend in the quiet kid.

Despite being a mystery, he couldn’t find it in himself to dislike the guy. He seemed so bright and optimistic.

He didn’t quite know how to feel about that yet.

----

Throughout the week, Izuku was fairly confident that he’d managed to figure out most, if not all, of his friend’s quirks and their varying capabilities. Which he was rather proud of, considering when he’d presented his findings to said friends, they were all equally impressed.

He’d taken the time throughout these last two weeks to sit with them individually and get to know them, as well as watch them closely while training physically.

The only one he still wasn’t privvy on was the ever-elusive, Shinsou Hitoshi.

It was almost as if the amethyst-eyed boy was playing quirkless.

Izuku knew he had a quirk, that much was for sure. Katsuki had confirmed as much, without giving away any details. At Izuku’s express insistence, of course. But even so, he’d only ever seen Shinsou use physical techniques and displays of different martial arts styles, as proven from his spars with Ojiro.

He also used a capture tool, not much unlike Mr. Aizawa’s.

Izuku, by that time, deduced that: A) he had a passive quirk, one that he was uncomfortable using. B) It was incredibly powerful, and likely a mental type of quirk, otherwise he’d be throwing it around in more physical displays. And C) he was likely trained by Aizawa himself, seeing as they both fought very similarly.

Although he’d yet to figure out his quirk in its entirety, when he’d shown the violet-haired boy is findings, he’d gotten a particularly shit-eating smirk.

“Not bad, kid. But you’re still way off base,” was his reply.

At this point, Izuku stuck with it being a ‘passive quirk,’ but scratched ‘mental quirk’ off the list of
possibilities.

“M-maybe it’s a-auditory?” He murmurs to himself, sitting next to Shouto, who gave nothing away.

Todoroki Shouto himself was yet another mystery.

He’d gotten to know his friend very well over the course of his recovery.

But even still, despite knowing that he’d had the rare ability of having two quirks, he’d never once seen him use his fire.

Outside of practical things, like regulating his temperature whenever his ice quirk became problematic, or rewarming a cup of cold coffee; much to Kastuki’s annoyance, or his particularly toasty side-hugs during the winter months, Izuku had yet to even see a spark.

He had a vague idea as to why.

They’d confided in one another enough to at least know the gist, but even still, it saddened Izuku to know that his friend hated his father enough to renounce a part of himself because of it.

It just didn’t seem fair.

He was literally fighting with one hand tied behind his back on purpose.

Kind of like what Izuku’s own mother had done to herself, by hiding her quirk all those years.

It saddened him greatly.

Which brought Izuku to his current predicament.

Despite spending so much time with the other kids in Class 1-A, Izuku couldn’t help but notice how shut-off his friend had become in these last two weeks.

The heterochromatic boy rarely walked him home anymore, rarely piped up during a conversation between him, Uraraka, and Iida, and he also rarely reacted whenever Kacchan would try to get a rise out of him.

It was like he was a hollow shell of his former self and it was deeply concerning to the forested boy.

Izuku knew all too well, the signs of depression and anxiety.

Shouto was presenting himself to be more and more like a textbook case.

This was made even more abundantly clear with the refusal of his offer to hang out at their favorite restaurant, a place they frequented often whenever Katsuki had therapy after school.

Shouto never refused cold soba.

Something was definitely wrong, but...

Concerned as he may be, any time Izuku tried to encourage him, or let him know he was there to support him, he was simply brushed off.

The forest-haired boy was finding that it was harder and harder to approach the situation without inadvertently upsetting his friend.
Izuku eyes his friend carefully, gearing himself up for what he was about to ask. He knew it was likely stupid, maybe even insensitive, but he had to know where Shouto’s head was at. If he had an idea of what likely caused this shift in his mood, then maybe he could begin working on a solution.

Throughout these last two weeks, he’d made an effort to study all of his new friends, yes. But! He’d also made even more of an effort to study the quirks of his friends, seeing as he never really had the opportunity to see them use their quirks in action.

He’d worked with Iida on his super-speed and how he could troubleshoot the issues with his engines overheating. He’d worked with Uraraka learning about all the different types of things she could float before she’d become nauseous. Kirishima was especially fun to work with, because he could work with both him and Katsuki on this, both of them figuring out ways to improve his durability. Shouto was no exception.

Izuku, with some reluctance on Shouto’s part, had managed to gain a little more insight about his ice quirk. Learning all the different things he could do with it, which consisted of: ranged attacks as well as close combat and defensive techniques. The bi-colored boy had a clear grip on what he could and couldn’t do with it, so there’d been little room for improvement of that quirk on its own.

It seemed that as long as Izuku didn’t mention his other quirk, Shouto was relatively receptive, but still much more reserved than he’d normally be under any other circumstance.

It was almost as if the Sports Festival itself were a source of turmoil for him, when anyone else would see it as an opportunity to challenge themselves or get scouted.

He had to know for sure. Something was wrong with his friend and if poking his nose where it didn’t belong gave him some insight, it was a calculated risk he’d have to take. That’s what a hero would do, right?

It was nearing the end of class.

It was now or never.

The Sports Festival was tomorrow and this would be his only opportunity to gain some insight as to what was bothering his friend and maybe pull him out of his funk long enough for him to go into this challenge stress-free.

He could only hope.

“Hey, Todoroki? I really enjoyed getting to know more about your quirk these last couple weeks. But I can’t help but feel like you’re holding back, ya know? Could you maybe shed some light on how you would use your fire to benefit you in a fight? Maybe I could help you figure out a way to better utilize it for more than heat regulation.” He writes it out slowly, taking his time to word it carefully.

He could be blunt while also being tactful at least.

He passes the notebook to his bi-colored friend, swallowing nervously around the growing lump in his throat. Talking about the ‘F’ word was a no-no. He knew this, but he had to know where this sudden reclusive behavior stemmed from.

Reactions were always primal when it came to certain stimuli, but this… this was the most knee-jerk reaction he’d ever seen.

Izuku could see his own breath in the chilled air around him.
Not only did his friend flinch, but a thin layer of frost quickly shot out. Forming swirling ornate patterns across his friend’s desk and the notebook held in his right hand.

All was shock quiet for a moment in the classroom.

He could tell that Shouto hadn’t meant to react that way, by the way his eyes widened in fear.

Frustrated, the heterochromatic boy stands abruptly. If looks could kill, Izuku surely would have been a hunk of ice in an instant, “how could you even…” he starts shakily, “I \textit{never} use that bastard’s quirk in battle, nor will I \textit{ever},” he snaps suddenly, before turning tail and walking out of the room, leaving the desk and notebook as is, not even daring to defrost them.

When the bell rings just a moment later, Izuku frowns, only to be greeted by a fierce crimson gaze.

That \textit{definitely} answered his question.

----

“H-he w-wouldn’t ever h-hurt me,” Izuku retorts for the umpteenth time.

After having explained the situation to Mr. Aizawa, Izuku all but begged him not to give his friend a reprimand. Unauthorized quirk usage in class was also a huge no-no, but after having explained the situation, Mr. Aizawa decided to relent and let him slide just this once.

Katsuki, however, didn’t agree with that in the slightest.

“Then what the hell would you call that, \textit{huh}?! You were sitting right there, Deku, he could have \textit{hit} you.”

“He w-wouldn’t have,” Izuku defends; switching to sign, he continues, \textit{“you use your quirk all the time when you’re pissed off, what makes this so different?”}

Izuku \textit{knew} what made this different.

What made this ‘different,’ was that Katsuki was hypersensitive to anything that could even \textit{remotely} hurt him. Since the incident, Katsuki has been hypervigilant over him ever since. Izuku couldn’t blame him, but this was \textit{Shouto} they were talking about. Shouto who curled up like a cat to nap in the oddest of places. Shouto with his witty, yet sarcastic humor. Shouto who was kind enough to visit a stranger in the hospital and befriend him because his sister thought he was nice. He was a gentle person, buried under a mountain of pain.

Izuku would defend that kid with his dying breath. As he would with any of his friends.

“That’s not fair,” Katsuki retorts haughtily, still trying to find reasons to go and blow his distressed friend’s face off.

\textit{“Life’s not fair,”} he argues, \textit{“you’re pissed enough right now to go and use your quirk ‘unauthorized,’ how is that not the same?”}

Izuku watches as Katsuki wages war with himself, his anger, whether justified or not, was still \textit{anger}.

Tentatively, the forested boy approaches him, watching as the blond visibly relaxes, Izuku raises a hand to his cheek.
“He’s our f-friend, h-he’d n-never hurt me,” he explains again, this time softer.

“Your friend,” Katsuki retorts, crossing his arms over his chest, but otherwise begrudgingly leans into his touch.

Izuku snorts to himself in amusement.

“Even so,” he reiterates, “I… p-pissed him o-off. I f-feel bad ab-bout it.”

Katsuki purses his lips before deflating, allowing his pent up anger to simmer out of him slowly.

“You do have a talent for pissing people off,” he laments, albeit jokingly, “if he so much as blinks at you the wrong way again, I am punching that asshole right in the face,” the blond grumbles.

“T-there’s n-no need for that,” Izuku replies nervously, smiling that wobbly smile of his.

“I’ll be the judge of that,” the blond argues.

“P-please, for me? H-he’s going t-through en-nough already,” the forested boy reasons, his brows furrowing in concern of his own.

“Augh,” he groans long-sufferingly, “fine, but only because you asked me not to.”

“T-thank you…” Izuku breathes a sigh of relief before removing his hand and leaning his forehead against Katsuki’s shoulder.

Another grumble is all he receives as a warm arm loosely encircles him.

“I m-messed up,” Izuku admits, nestling further into the crook of Katsuki’s neck.

“That… was more than a mess up. That seemed calculated? What were you trying to do?” The blond asks curiously.

“He’s d-dep-pressed. And a-anxious. I wanted to k-know why. I h-had my s-suspicions, they were c-confirmed,” Izuku admits miserably.

Just because he’d done it intentionally, didn’t mean he didn’t feel bad about it. But it’d definitely answered his question. Now, he just needed a bit more insight. He had a feeling he knew just where to find it.

Which lead them to where they were currently stationed.

Lifting his head, Izuku disentangles himself from the, still-but-less-so, irate blond.

“I n-need answers,” he continues.

“Tch… typical, of course, you do,” Katsuki replies with a roll of his eyes, “let me guess, you’re gonna talk with her about it?”

“M-mom’s k-know best, right?” Izuku replies with a nervous smile.

“I don’t know if that applies to hags, though,” Katsuki kids.

“Y-you go on a-ahead, I n-need to do this a-alone,” the forested boy informs him.

“You okay to get home on your own?” As always, crimson eyes lock on his, laced with concern.
Who knew Kacchan would have turned into such a worrywart?

This thought makes Izuku smile.

“I’ll m-make sure to t-text Mom,” he assures him, “s-she’ll d-drive me home.”

“Fine,” Katsuki relents with a pout, “but let me know when you get home, can’t have my coach tapping out on me before the festival even starts.”

Overcome with affection, Izuku grins widely and before either of them could even comprehend it, the forest-haired boy reaches up on the tips of his toes and places a chaste kiss on Katsuki’s cheek.

They linger in blissful stillness, just long enough for Izuku’s brain to come back online for all of two seconds, before promptly short-circuiting, yet again from embarrassment.

He didn’t even give Katsuki time to formulate a response before the forested boy scampered off toward the Rehabilitation facility, as fast a kid with a cane could carry himself, anyway.

‘Fuck! Shit... that is a whole other can of worms I'm gonna have to deal with now,’ he frantically thought to himself as he entered the building, cheeks flaming all the way.

Never knowing that a certain ash blond bomb also short-circuited in the parking lot behind him.
By the time he reached the front desk, Izuku barely had his shit together, but thankfully he was greeted with kind smiles and warm welcomes from all of the staff he’d gotten to know during his stay there.

It was just enough of a distraction to address the color palette of his freckled cheeks, but not near enough to divide his attention from the reason why he was there in the first place.

With very little fanfare, he was given a visitor’s pass and was allowed to see himself to Ms. Rei’s room.

He felt his nerves ease a bit as he approached the threshold, but he still felt no less guilty.

He gives her door a light knock before making his way inside.

She was still as lovely and motherly looking as always, it pained him that she even had to be here at all.

“Izuku!” She gasps with excitement before rushing over and embracing him warmly.

“H-hello there, Ms. Rei,” he greets her in kind. He was suddenly really glad he was much more steady on his feet.

“Oh my goodness! Look at you!” she exclaims, taking his cheeks into her hands, “you’re standing all on your own! And you’ve gotten so tall! It hasn’t been that long has it?” She asks as she begins to fret over him, pulling him further into the room, she offers him a seat, which he accepts gratefully.

“Y-yeah, a lot has h-happened r-recently. O-once I was e-enrolled in U.A. I w-worked h-harder on getting out of m-my w-wheelchair. T-they started me on c-crutches at f-first… the c-cane is a n-new d-development,” he relays.
“Oh, honey, that is wonderful! I’m so happy for you. But I’ve also been very worried too! Katsuki and your mother both called not too long ago, asking me if you were here. They said you’d gone missing!” She explains, worry clearly evident in her voice.

Izuku looks down at his lap guiltily.

“Y-yeah, I’m really s-sorry about that. I j-just had a l-lot to w-work out, m-mentally.”

“How so?” She asks carefully.

“I… I f-found out recently, a-about w-what really h-happened to me,” he admits, finally looking up long enough to catch her concerned grey gaze.

“Oh, I see…” she says after a silent moment, a sadness seeping into her expression.

“You knew?” He asks curiously. He’d come to accept that most people knew of the incident before him. He wouldn't be surprised if she’d known as well.

“I… wouldn’t say that exactly. It was a confidentiality thing, I didn’t want to pry by asking your mother. But… I had my suspicions. That and… I happened to see the news coverage from that day. When you came here, I had no idea that that was who you were, but… it made more sense as time went on.”

Izuku nods a handful of times.

Somehow, knowing that the incident made it to the media didn’t surprise him nearly as much as it should. Aldera Junior High was already seen in a bad light due to its various cover-ups or scandals involving misconduct and student safety issues. Izuku was honestly surprised that the building was still standing at this point.

“...Are you okay? Now, I mean?” She asks him tentatively.

With a nod, he gives her a winning smile.

“I’ve been t-taking it o-one day at a t-time. T-therapy helps. K-Knowing I have s-such w-wonderful p-people in my life, it… helps,” he admits.

“That’s good to hear. I was so worried. I just didn’t want anything bad to happen to you, because not only would it sadden me, but… it would likely have really upset Shouto, as well,” she confides, “from what Fuyumi had told me, he’d been pretty worried as well.”

“He’s a-actually w-why I’m here,” Izuku confesses. His nerves from earlier flaring right back up.

“Shouto is?” She asks hesitantly, leaning forward in her seat.

“I… u-upset him… earlier in class,” he confides, “h-he’s been a-acting so c-closed off. E-ever since the a-anounce-cement of the S-Sports F-festival. I w-was worried, so I p-poked my nose w-where it didn’t belong.”

Rei eyes him carefully, before her lips purse into a tight line and a sigh escapes from her nose.

“The Sports Festival, huh? That time of year already?” She asks ruefully, looking out her bedroom window toward U.A.’s campus.

“Y-yes, and he’s… been a-acting very w-weird. H-he won’t talk, he w-won’t hang out w-with me and our f-friends, he even r-refused cold s-soba,” Izuku relays miserably.
Rei sets her gaze on him once more, her brows pinched in silent concern.

“That boy has never refused soba a day in his life…” she commiserates.

“I… I know, w-which is w-why… I w-wanted to ask you,” he eyes her intensely, “I… I know it’s a… a t-touchy s-subject for you. B-but in o-order to help Shouto… I… I n-need to know.”

Rei stares back at him, just as intensely. A deep sorrow overtakes her features, much deeper than any he’s ever seen and for a second, Izuku felt as though he’d misstepped again. Upsetting yet another member of the Todoroki family.

That was before a certain resolve settled within her, however, shaking Izuku out of his nerves.

He gulps around the lump in his throat.

“I… have many regrets, Izuku,” the older woman admits, “I fear… in telling you this, it may change your opinion of me, but… I have to do this,” she implores, her vivid grey eyes taking on an earnest almost silver hue, “I would do anything for Shouto… and if by telling you this, it allows you to help my boy? I’ll do it in a heartbeat…”

Izuku lays his hand across hers in a show of comfort.

Rei had been there for him since as far back as he could remember. She was kind, sweet, loving, and an all-around genuine person.

He knew that there was something personal in their past that was a source of great pain for all of them.

He could only hope, that by helping Shouto, he could, in turn, help him and Rei mend their relationship as well.

“No matter w-what it is, my o-opinion of you will n-never change,” he assures her, sheer honesty and determination etched into his very being.

She heaves a sigh of relief as tears spring to her eyes and speaks her truth.

Chapter End Notes

A few more things I would like to add before you go!

Some of you have asked me in the past and I didn't have one then, but I now have a twitter account, dedicated to this story, in which I'll post chapter update reminders (because ao3 is painfully slow at it) and little tidbits on!

https://twitter.com/StringlishOnAo3

Feel free to check that out!

ALSO! The wonderful Nyame here on ao3 and our Discord server, has graciously surprised me with a TV Tropes page!!!

I was honestly beside myself when I gave it a read, it was absolutely wonderful and
completely in-depth! It was so flattering! All of you should check it out if you haven't yet! I am still so very excited about it!

https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/FanFic/InASkyOfAMillionStars

(Edit)
I would also love to thank Char, from our discord fam, for this wonderful art! I absolutely adore it! If you'd like to show them some support, their tumblr is: charmehs.tumblr.com
The Family Disease

Chapter Summary

Izuku knew demons when he saw them.
He had them.
Rei had them.
Shouto had them.

Chapter Notes

Hello loves!

Boy, have I been busy. x'D I've had it kind of rough for what seemed like this entire last month. Let's hope June is full of good juju's and gay juju's, because heeeeyyyy pride month!

Anyway, I wanted to inform you about this chapter. There are trigger warnings everywhere. ALLLLLELLL THE TRIGGER WARNINGS. I kid you not.

If you aren't a fan of domestic, spousal, child, or implied sexual abuses, turn back now.

I detest these things myself and this chapter was very hard to write, for those of you that know me, you know why.

This chapter is Todoroki family-centric. If you are not comfortable reading this portion of the story, I do not blame you, skip to the end. I have them sectioned off as always, and just follow up with Izuku.

This chapter is not centric to the Sports Fest plot.

That will be next chapter.

Anyhow, for those I haven't scared off, grab some tissues and a baseball bat, cause we're goin' to war.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

She was a princess, spun in silver thread.
She was sterling and grace; frost, like diamonds, glitter around her.
The firstborn of the Kazuyuki family and heiress apparent.
A pearl with cinereal eyes.
Of course, she’d be sold.

---

Members of the Kazuyuki family weren’t born.

They were simply *cultivated*.

Their very lives, their reason for being, was etched out from the start, like a sculptor shaving ice.

The very purpose behind this was to keep their sacred family quirk strong.

Pure as freshly fallen snow.

All of that, however, changed when avarice was simply too tempting to divest.

---

At the tender age of 16, Kazuyuki Rei was sold to the Todoroki family, in the form of betrothal to their eldest son Enji.

The boy was the strongest among them yet. A mass of untapped raw potential. The Todoroki family appealed to the Kazuyuki’s and promised them riches beyond what they’d already amassed, once Enji took his rightful spot as the number one pro-hero.

They argued that the coupling of their families would bring forth an unlimited wealth of power, unlike anything anyone has ever seen.

While some were against it, the majority vote eventually won out.

A union like no other, one of ice and fire, was inevitable.

By the age of 18, without much choice on Rei’s part, they were married.

Her birthright never felt more like a burden.

---

It wasn’t that she disliked Enji.

They’d had two years to get to know one another well enough, but it was more than that.

She was worried.

Enji’s obsession with power, his already very short temper, and his more than toxic rivalry with the up and coming pro-hero, *All Might*, fed something within him. Something that ran deep. Something; that to Rei, felt like dread.

While Enji wasn’t the most amicable with people, he did *try* and see eye to eye with her in the beginning. Even if he did fumble around like an awkward duckling falling over his feet. Rei appreciated the sentiment.

When it came to their marriage, the both of them were in agreement that while it wasn’t ideal, they’d make the most of it.

While Rei would never call what they had between them ‘love’, but she would go as far as to say
they’d developed a ‘fondness’ for one another.

But even fondness had its limitations.

----

Once the hero *Endeavour* broke free from his U.A. confines, he was bound and determined to reach his goal. Which was defeating All Might and taking his spot as number one.

But Rei knew this was an impossible feat, not that she’d ever voice it aloud.

All Might was a pillar of justice.

He brought hope to others and asked for nothing in return.

In her heart of hearts, she knew Enji could never *be* that.

For all his warmth, he was cold-hearted. He was too self-centered. Too brash. He was so consumed in this petty imagined competition, that he would never truly see what it meant to be a hero. To him, saving civilians was another stepping stone to defeating All Might. No more, no less.

Whereas, to All Might, saving people was his priority. To him, people weren’t pawns. To him, life was precious. Every life had merit and meaning. The man was charismatic, he inspired people, he would be the *light* that ignited a new generation.

Enji would never be that.

They were polar opposites.

And she knew the day would come, in which Enji would realize his dream was unattainable.

----

Rei was 20 when Touya and Fuyumi were born.

While she couldn’t say the same for Enji, she’d become completely *enraptured*.

She’d never known more joy.

While her own mother wasn’t callous, she wasn’t the most affectionate either. All her life, Rei had wanted a stronger relationship with her. A relationship like the ones she’d see in her peer's families. A relationship like those in fiction or that appeared on television.

Sadly, this would never be in the cards for her. While her mother did show care, she also remained disconnected and impersonal.

Rei knew then, that she’d give her children everything. Every piece of her. She’d be present in their lives. Provide them with love and comfort and everything she never had. Her precious babies were her fresh start.

It didn’t matter that the circumstances of their birth were less than ideal.

When she peered down at a pair of twin cherubic faces, or when she heard their sweet soft coos, or even when her little loves were wracked with tears and irritable, she’d give them her all. Because if there was one dream she was allowed in this world, it was to be the best mother she could possibly be.
Her children were her life.

---

A year after the twins were born, Rei’s initial fears were finally realized.

The hero Endeavor would attain and remain in the number two spot.

While All Might, the now internationally ranked number one pro-hero, became widely recognized as the world’s light. A pillar of hope. The symbol of peace.

The night the rankings were released, Rei holed herself up in the nursery for the night, trying hard to ignore the smell of ash coming from the courtyard of their home.

---

As the years passed, Enji’s disappointment and frustration became more and more prominent.

He was entirely consumed by his resentment for All Might. His need for power was always more focal than his family, but this was quickly becoming a lust that was all-encompassing. It was driving him to madness.

Enji had always been brash and quick to anger, but more often than not he was always pissed off at something.

Especially if the children were too loud, or if they played in his presence, or if they didn’t eat what he’d told them to.

Their household was quickly becoming just as stringent as their own family homes had once been.

“They are just kids, Enji,” she tries one night to appeal to his frail sense of reason, “they aren’t robots to be programmed. They’re going to want to expel some energy and play, or want affection. The occasional sweets wouldn’t kill them either, I thought we agreed that our kids would be different from how we were raised?”

For a moment, however fleeting, he seems to ruminate over this.

It was enough to hold her breath over, fully expecting to receive his ire.

“Fine…” he grudgingly agrees, much to her astonishment, "but only during times when it’s appropriate.”

Rei offers him a small pursed smile.

It was better than nothing she supposed.

But still… it unsettled her.

---

At the tender age of 4, Fuyumi was the first the manifest her quirk.

Rei, just having finished drying the dishes, was roused from her musings by the sound of giggling.

Cute, pitched, joy-filled laughs pulled her toward the living room.
She loved those sounds more than anything.

Quietly as she could, she peered into the living room, leaning closer to the threshold as she watched the spectacle that was her little Touya and her lovely Fuyumi, gleefully twirling around under a cloud of falling snow.

A soft laugh escapes her and instantly, her children scamper over.

“Mama! Mama! Yumi has a quirk!” Touya exclaims, his sheer excitement manifesting in his intense azure eyes.

Scooping the both of them into her arms she settles the pair of them against each of her hips.

“Is that so?” She replies, smiling coyly.

“Mommy isn’t it cool?! I can make snow!” Fuyumi declares with just as much excitement.

It wasn’t quite ice, but it was pretty close.

Rei supposed that this was a direct result of mixing her’s and Enji’s quirks.

Fuyumi’s quirk must not have been cold enough for ice to form completely, but even so, it was extremely impressive.

-----

Later that afternoon, when Enji came home from a patrol, he was instantly pelted in the face by an errant snowball, only to find his family, playing knee deep in snow on the living room floor.

Rei could tell by the look on his face that he was having a hard time deciding if he were mad or simply confused.

In a fit of bravery, Rei herself, packed some snow into her hands and casually threw it at Enji’s chest with an anxious smile.

The sheer look of astonishment on the man’s face was enough to send her into a fit of giggles.

“Daddy! Daddy! I have a quirk!” Fuyumi exclaims, popping out from her hiding place, a random mound on their snow-filled floor.

A rare grin decided to make an appearance across his features, thoroughly surprising Rei.

“But did you really have to do this in the house?” He chides.

Rei simply shrugs.

-----

It was later that night that surprised her most.

Her husband wasn’t the romantic type, but his demeanor had been so radically hateful these last few years that it was rare for him to ever appear soft. They spoke in hushed tones that night, of how proud they were of Fuyumi and the mechanics of her quirk.

“Now all we need is for Touya to manifest his quirk,” he says with some excitement.
She hadn’t heard such a renewed vigor in his voice in such a long time. It left her feeling mildly alarmed.

A new fear was beginning to bloom within her.

But she couldn’t quite put her finger on as to what it was yet.

In time, she would learn.

----

“Dad,” his tiny voice cracks with pain, “i-it hurts. Is it supposed to hurt?”

Touya was 5 when his quirk began to manifest.

It was rather late for a child, but there were some cases in which children didn’t manifest until as late as the age of 6. Anything later than that was simply unheard of.

Dread began to spread within her as Enji became more and more engrossed with Touya.

He was never the most present father, but after Fuyumi’s quirk had manifested, he’d become more than adamant.

He was attentive, yes. But it concerned Rei, because he was so insistent that Touya would be the one with a fire-based quirk. He’d treated the subject as he did with most things, to the point of obsession.

When Touya’s quirk finally did manifest, however, it wasn’t at all fun and games like Fuyumi’s had been.

Blue flames, unlike anything she’d ever seen engulfed her little boy, searing his skin to the point in which he’d blacked out from his pained screams.

Rei, in a panic, ended up rushing her baby boy to the hospital with first degree burns.

After which, Enji’s obsession only seemed to increase.

He insisted that all Touya needed was just a little more direction. That he needed more focus and the appropriate training. He insisted that he would be the one to train and prepare him. To mould him into becoming the most powerful fire wielder there ever was.

An heir fit to overthrow the throne that All Might sat upon.

He worked their son tirelessly.

“P-please… can we stop?”

“No!” Enji insists despite his son’s protests, “we’re close to a breakthrough! Can’t you see that, son? A little pain, for a much greater reward.”

The more these ‘training sessions’ went on, the less Rei was willing to sit back and allow them to continue.

----

One night, she’d told him as such.
“You have got to stop this,” she insists, “training him isn’t helping. Can’t you see how much pain he’s in?! I took him to the hospital again yesterday, for second-degree burns, Enji. That’s not normal!”

Normally her husband’s ire was something she was constantly unnerved by, but when it came to fighting for her children, her demeanor became as frigid as the ice flowing through her veins.

“We just haven’t hit a breakthrough yet! I can feel it, Rei! He’s got the potential! Blue flames? Right off the bat? That never happens! He could surpass me! He could surpass All Might! Don’t you want that for him?!” He retorts, his deep azure eyes taking on a crazed glint.

A fear seeps deep within her bones.

A fear that Enji couldn’t or wouldn’t see it.

He’d keep going and going and going until Touya was burnt to cinders.

“No!” She shouts in response, “not at this cost! Never at the expense of his pain! Could you please stop thinking about your petty rivalry for two seconds and actually see what this is doing to our son?!”

He’d never laid his hands on her before.

Until that night...

And that night, after he’d stormed out of their bedroom and slammed the front door, she’d clung to her tumescent stomach; to her unborn. As a dark bruise began blooming across her cheek; an even greater fear was born within her.

Enji wouldn’t stop.

----

4 months later, after Enji had all but given up on Touya ever mastering his fire, Natsuo was born.

And like a switch had gone off, Enji’s demeanor changed, yet again.

Rei had a sinking feeling that this was because their 3rd child was likely his only chance at having one of their children take up his legacy.

After essentially writing Fuyumi off and giving up on Touya entirely, Enji seemed to have shifted gears and made Natsuo his primary objective, outside of continuing to repetitively challenge All Might for the number one spot.

“Mama?” Touya asks her one night, both of her baby boys were nestled in her lap, while sweet little Fuyumi napped against her side.

“Yes, baby?” She murmurs softly, running her fingers through his flaming silken hair.

“Do… you think I’m weak?” He asks her, his brows pinched in consternation.

Out of all their children, Touya was the only one to favor Enji as far as appearances went. He had the same deep azure eyes and flaming crimson hair. But he was so vastly different. He was soft-spoken, sweet to a fault, and the bravest big-brother she’d ever known.

She was so very proud of him, that it broke her upon hearing this.
“Baby, no. I would never think you were weak. Not ever,” she reassures him, pressing him more firmly to her chest.

Stubborn tears began to well within his eyes, but they never fall.

Rei’s heart begins to twist in knots.

“But… I wanna protect you! And Yumi… and Natsu,” he insists, “…but, I can’t. Because my flames don’t work. A-am I really defective?”

“D-defective? Where on earth-” anger wells up within her, but not at him.

“Dad… he… um. He said that. After our training session. He told me that there was nothing left for him to teach a... defective product,” he relays solemnly, his tears finally falling onto Natsuo’s swaddling blanket.

“Touya, look at me, honey,” Rei keeps her voice calm and even as she caresses his lightly scarred cheek, “you are not defective. Do you hear me? One day… you’ll do great things. I believe in that.”

“Y-you do?” Her son squeaks miserably.

“I do,” she replies firmly.

----

It wasn’t often that she came before her family’s elders, except but to introduce her newborns. Although, seeing as they’d already met the bundle swaddled against her back, she’d come to them with much more pressing matters.

“I’d like a divorce,” she says firmly, despite her nerves.

“No,” came her grandfather’s reply, his tone clipped and terse, “absolutely not.”

“No?” She replies, her voice breathy and choked, “do you have any idea how miserable life is becoming with him?! He’s so obsessed with power that he was even willing to sacrifice the well being of his own child!”

“You’ll do well to understand, girl. They own you. You are nothing more than a trophy. A product paid for in full by the Todoroki family, do you really think they’d allow you to leave? Do you really think they’d allow you to take your children and destroy the empire we’ve worked tirelessly to build? Foolish girl. What you ask for is absurd!” The older man snaps, making Rei flinch.

She decides to try things from a different angle.

“They haven’t even made good on their promises!” She argues, “do you really believe a man like that could ever become the number one hero?! He’ll never gain the favor of the people! He’ll never be anything like All Might!”

The reply came in the form of snarl, but not from her shell shocked grandfather, whom she’d never once rebelled against before.

“You, will remove yourself from our presence at once,” her great uncle speaks up, “this is not up for debate! You were paid for in full, we cannot and will not unbind what has been bound. There will be no divorce for you!”

Panic surges through her, leaving behind a sense of helplessness, “you’re really willing to throw
away our lives… for money that isn’t even guaranteed?”

Her throat felt raw, as though it were stuffed full of cotton.

“Listen here, you insolent wretch. You have only brought misery upon yourself. You have yet to even bear an heir suitable enough to take over the Todoroki legacy and yet you come to us, speaking of their shortcomings? You make me laugh!” Her great uncle spits cruelly, “There will be no divorce. You are no longer Kazuyuki property. All you are required to do now is prove your worth and bear as many children as it takes until they have an heir suitable enough to properly seal our agreement. Am I clear?!”

Crystal clear.

Rei swallows against the lump in her throat, anger burning in her cinereous eyes, and storms out with what dignity she had left.

There would be no help here.

They weren’t even family anyway.

----

Rei knew the day that Natsuo manifested the ability to telekinetically move and manifest ice, that this wouldn’t be the last child to suffer Enji’s intolerable wrath.

She whispered her praise like prayers into the silken silver locks of his hair and she spoke to him of how he’d do great things.

Because he would.

Her precious boys were nothing like Enji.

They were sweet, kind, and caring of others.

They were fiercely protective of their siblings and looked out for one another.

As she held her 3-year-old close to her chest, she couldn’t help but hope, that this would also be the case for her next unborn.

“Mama! I felt him kick!” Natsuo cried with wonder, climbing down from her lap he stares at her stomach expectantly.

It never ceased to ease her heart, watching her children become enraptured with the thought of new life.

She takes his tiny hands into hers and places them gently against her distended abdomen. Watching Natsuo’s cinereal eyes widen in wonder as the baby gave yet another kick.

“Whoaaa,” he whispers, his innocent eyes still blown wide, “when do we get to see him?”

“In a few more weeks,” she promises with a gentle smile.

“Is that soon?” her silver-haired little boy exclaims, bouncing up and down.

“Pretty soon!” she replies, attempting to match his own excitement.
“Yes!” He fist pumps the air. “I’m so excited!”

“Oh, and why is that, little bear?” She asks with a teasing smile.

She knew exactly why he was so excited.

“Cuz’ I get to be a big brother, too, like Tou-chan!” He replies with bright hopeful eyes.

His tone was so sweet, his expression so pleased, Rei couldn’t help the love that swelled within her.

Scooping him up, she carefully gathers him in close, giving him a warm squeeze.

“You sure do,” she assures him.

“I’ll be the best big brother! Like Tou-chan!” Her little man insists.

“I know you will,” she agrees.

Because if there was one thing she knew, it was that her children knew love.

---

When Shouto was finally born, Enji had not been present. It was merely her midwife and her three children present.

It was better this way.

Because as soon as Rei set her sights on the bundle in her arms, she knew.

She had to protect him.

---

Shouto; much like her other children, was sweet and kind, but much less energetic. He was quiet and meek and often hid just behind her legs when introduced to strangers. More often than not, he’d prefer to read, nap, or lounge around with the family cat.

Rei could tell that her little man had an old soul.

But that, however, didn’t stop his siblings from playing with him or engaging him at any given time.

It was during play that Rei noticed something odd.

Like Natsuo, Shouto’s quirk began to manifest early, at the tender age of 3.

With big fat tears dribbling down his face, Shouto hurried over to her and tugged at the hem of her dress.

“M-mama, please help the fishies!” He exclaims with fervor.

“The fishies?” She wonders aloud, trailing behind her adamant son.

“They’re stuck, Mama. I’m sorry!” He cries.

To her surprise, the fish in the koi pond were indeed stuck. Encased in thick layers of ice.

“Baby… did you?” She starts.
Even more tears streamed down his cherubic cheeks, “I’m sorry, Mama. I didn’t mean it.”

Ice, just like hers.

That ever-present fear lingering within her curbs ever so slightly.

Her little boy would be safe.

“Don’t worry little bro, I got this!” Touya reassured him, coming out of his hiding spot and standing next to his side.

While it was easy to create ice, melting it was never a Kazuyuki specialty.

“Touya, please,” she reaches out for him in warning, “baby you’ll burn yourself.”

His eyes, so young, so earnest. He just wanted to be helpful. He just wanted to make his baby brother feel better. But at what cost?

“It’s okay, Mom, I’ve… been working on it. It doesn’t hurt as much,” he insists.

Rei watched helplessly as her 11-year-old stood before the koi pond and slowly released his electric blue flames.

“Wanna see the fishies swim, Shou?” He encourages his youngest brother.

With a desperate nod and a whimper, Shouto clings to his older brother’s leg as the redheaded boy slowly began to heat and melt the ice.

Rei hadn’t known.

That he was still trying to test himself.

And an instant dread pooled within her.

Touya was not out of the woods yet, not if he could prove to be useful to Enji.

Little did she know; as she and her boys watched the fish burst free from their confines, that Shouto wasn’t either.

----

Rei and Touya kept the usage of his flames a secret from Enji.

And Shouto had never breathed a word about the fish trapped in the pond.

He may have been young, but he knew all too well that his father was volatile.

Rei chalked it up to stories told by firelight. Each of her children, having passed a scary story onto their youngest sibling, like ghost stories and woodland monsters. Stories of who their father really was. While in turn, Rei would tell him stories of the fae.

Stories of fantasy. Of princesses locked in towers, protected by angry dragons. Of princes who were meant to save them.

“But she could save herself,” Shouto says one night.

Rei knew it was likely due to growing up with mature older siblings, but Shouto was as sharp as a
tack. He often read angles in a situation that any normal 4-year-olds might miss.

“Oh?” She replies, incredulously. She’d told this story many times before. To all of her children, but Shouto was the first to ever say such a thing.

“The princess is strong,” he elaborates, “she’s been stuck there for so long, she’d have to be strong, right Mama?”

Rei was sure the shock had shown clear as day across her aging features.

“R-right… absolutely...” she admits, still in awe.

“I think she is strong. She could make friends with the dragon. They could fight the evil king. The princess and the dragon would win.”

He says this with such a straight face, that Rei couldn’t help but burst into a fit of giggles, much to her little boy’s confusion.

“She’d escape,” he reiterates, firmly. His beautiful heterochromatic eyes steady and truthful.

“She would **definitely** escape,” Rei managed to reply through her welling tears.

----

Shouto was 4 and a half when they’d had yet another surprise.

One that Enji had, unfortunately, been present to witness.

Her and Shouto were sitting in the garden, reading a picture book while his siblings played a ways away.

Enji was yet again on another tangent.

He’d been enraged by yet another failure in the popularity polls. All Might had, yet again, claimed the number one spot. But if that wasn’t the worst part, a nosy reporter just so happened to notice and rub this in Enji’s face.

Pissed off, Enji stomps toward her.

“We need to speak. *In private*,” he said sternly.

Fear instantly spiked within her.

She knew that line.

She refused to bear yet another child to be subjected to his hellish brand of training.

“No,” she replies, firmly. It was now or never. If her family wouldn’t help her, she’d have to help herself.

Like the princess, from Shouto’s fairy tales.

“Excuse me,” he hisses in response like water dowsing a fire.

“I **refuse** to have another conversation with you, in which I end up becoming a slab of meat for you
to use. I won’t do it, Enji,” she counters with that same firm tone.

Enraged, Enji reaches down and pulls her up by her arm with a bruising grip, causing her to yelp in surprise.

This startles Shouto, who sat confused by her side, causing him to spring up in fear.

Rei, noticing this tries to placate him, “baby, it’s okay, don’t cry.”

“Shut your mouth, woman! That runt; like all the others, needs to build a spine,” Enji seethes.

“No! They do not,” she protests, coating her own arm in a thin layer of frost she manages to pull free from his grip, “they are children, Enji, they don’t need to do anything but thrive and be children!”

“I said, shut your mouth!” Enji shouts, grabbing Rei by her hair and twisting it cruelly in his tight grip.

“Mama!” Shouto cries, his bi-colored eyes, full of fear and unshed tears.

In a split second, Shouto races forward and begins wailing against his father’s legs with his tiny fists.

With a swift kick, her baby boy was sent flying into the grass, alarming her other children as well.

“Weakling,” the older man scoffs as Rei tries yet again to resist him.

“Stop, he’s just a boy!” she all but screams out, still struggling against his vice grip. “What kind of man are you?! You call yourself a hero! You’ll never be him, Enji! All Might would never do this to his family!”

Reflexively, he lets her go, just long enough for him to slap her across the face.

As she hits the ground, Enji makes to grab her again, only to stop dead in his tracks as Shouto stands before her, his entire left side engulfed in flames, a rage burning bright in his bi-colored eyes.

“Leave my Mommy alone!” He shouts coolly.

By the time Fuyumi, Touya, and Natsuo crowd behind her, Rei feels her heart sink.

He was trying to help her.

He’d saved her.

Her little man…

But ultimately… he’d given Enji everything he’d wanted.

----

The months ensuing were grueling and hell.

Her children were like shadows, running about and hiding in the darkest corners of the house.

She’d told them to stay clear of him. To keep safe. As she devoted herself to being watchful over Shouto during these ‘training sessions.’

She’d debated going to the police.
Or begging her mother to help them.

She’d thought for hours upon hours, wrapped around herself in a cold empty room, about running away.

But it never helped.

Enji had realized she wouldn’t stop.

And in turn, he amped up his physical abuse.

It was now commonplace for him to demean her, strike her, and attempt to subjugate her in front of their children.

When bruises littered her face and arms, he’d forbid her from going out in public.

When annual galas, meet and greets, or interviews came about for the famed ‘number two’ hero, he’d make her all but cake on make-up and wear clothing that hid everything else.

To the public eye, they were the famous Todoroki’s.

A loving family of five.

A living lie to the public eye.

Rei knew that Enji painted this picture purposely. It was a construct, to flawlessly hide all of his wrongdoings.

If the world really knew how much of a sham, how much of a fake he really was… they would be appalled.

But no. He’d fabricated this intricate lie, to make her appear as insane, should she ever try to out him.

He’d cut off her every option.

Sufficiently snuffing out her fight.

He’d gotten what he wanted from her, after all.

A sufficient heir.

Her comfort was no longer his concern.

She was disposable.

----

For months this dragged on. Enji using each and every opportunity to beat her down. Mentally and physically.

By the time Shouto was 5, Rei was nothing but a shadow of her former self.

A candle without a flame.

A mother… without her children.

Every day, Enji would try to fill Shouto’s head with garbage and when he stood up for himself, Enji
would beat him down as well.

Gone was that sweet carefree boy. Lost to the cold, harsh climate of his father’s clutches. Where cynicism and pain sunk in.

Her baby was slowly being taken over by his own growing hatred. His impenetrable silence. His own cold stares.

Each day, his eyes looked more and more like his fathers.

Each day Rei spiraled deeper and deeper into the throes of despair.

A prisoner in her own skin.

Trapped and oppressed, subjugated and depressed, anxious and lost.

---

Every now and again, when Enji was away on patrol, or gone on PR trips, Shouto would come to her.

Her sweet boy, with eyes much too cold for a 5-year-old, and together they’d cry.

In these moments, she’d try her best, to remind them both, that there was more to life than this.

She’d hold her boy close as he sobbed against her chest.

She’d remind him what it meant to be a hero.

She’d watch segments on television with him, of interviews featuring All Might, and remind Shouto, that despite the circumstances, he could still become a great hero one day. And that he wasn’t a slave to his lineage.

She held tight to this hope.

She held tight to her boy.

Before his father returned and once again, pulled him further from her grasp.

She held tight.

Held that hope.

She had to.

---

Until she couldn’t.

---

Never in her life, had she’d felt more weak. Or afraid. Or lost. Even at her worst, it was never this bad.

But every time she saw him now, her breath would hitch.

Every time he raised a hand to her, she’d flinch.
Every time his booming voice would cry out angry and enraged, it sent her into a panic.

She saw his face in everything now.

She felt his ire in every flame.

There was no escape.

Even the once sweet, cherubic faces of her beloved children, were morphed, mal-formed, and nightmares to speak of.

The scarlet flecks in Fuyumi’s ivory hair set her on edge.

The burning locks and blazing azure eyes of Touya’s very countenance burned her inside.

The only one of them she could stand to look at was Natsuo and that thought gutted her.

And Shouto…

His left side…

Was completely unbearable.

His cold bi-colored eyes struck her to the core.

She was suffocating slowly.

On her own weakness and self-hatred.

She was a bird, trapped in a cage, malnourished.

Starving for love and comfort in the only things that gave her hope.

And yet… she felt as though she’d failed as a mother.

She failed to protect them.

She couldn’t even look at them.

She couldn’t live with herself.

----

In a panic one night, in some last-ditch effort to calm herself, she’d set the kettle to brew some chamomile tea, when suddenly her phone rang.

It was her mother.

Swallowing past the growing lump in her throat, she answered with hesitance.

“M-mother?” She rasps out.

“Rei,” the older woman replies, “I received a distressing phone call from my grandson. Some of the things I was told were deeply concerning and I wanted to hear it from you. Are you alright?”

It could only have been Touya.
He’s been meddling a lot more lately.

He was pissed.

Frustrated that Rei wouldn’t just take them and leave.

Not altogether knowing how hopeless their situation truly was.

She knew he meant well.

But…

At the sight of his face, in her mind’s eye, she broke down into sobs.

“M-mother… I… I don’t know what to do! I know what he must have told you, and it’s true. All of it. Please… mother… I. I can’t live like this anymore,” she weeps.

Trying and failing to reign herself in.

“Rei,” her mother’s voice calls worriedly from the phone, “please, calm yourself, what are you saying?”

“I’ve tried to leave, mother… so many times… but I’m trapped. They won’t let me leave. They won’t let me take the kids. Enji… he’s even convinced the media that we’re some picture-esque family and it’s lies, all of it!”

“What do you mean you’ve tried to leave?” She could hear her mother’s disapproval as clear as she were in front of her. She was a woman of strict values. She didn’t believe in divorce. “What lies?”

“Enji… he’s let his obsession with power go to his head. He himself couldn’t defeat All Might, so he’s tried for years to enlist the children, like they were soldiers in his one-man crusade! He’s cruel with me and more with them. You have no idea what it’s been like… because you and grandfather and uncle… everyone has turned a blind eye. If what Touya said scared you… imagine living through it,” she implores desperately, trying with her everything to make her mother understand.

“He’s hurt you… and the children?” She asks, quietly.

“Yes!” She gasps through a sob.

One by one, she goes through incident after incident and exposes Enji for the man he is.

And the longer this goes on, the more panicked, and desperate she becomes in trying to make her mother, her one last hope, understand.

“I can’t live… I can’t breathe. I see his face… in everything Mama… and everyday… the children… they seem more and more like him,” her breath catches, flinching at the smallest of sounds, a creak in the floorboards, she lowers her voice to a whisper.

“And Shouto… that child’s left side sometimes looks… unbearable to me. All I can see is his father. I… I can’t do this… I can’t raise him anymore! I want to run away from this life!”

Another creak from the doorway makes her flinch, eyes blown wide as her mother calls out to her from the phone.

“Mom…” a tired, broken voice calls, “what are you saying?” His voice cracks with worry.
With hurt.

Slowly, shakily she turns, panic teeming through her veins, she lays her fearful eyes on that face.

The once sweet face of her baby boy.

The face that reminded her so much of…

The kettle begins to whistle, startling her, tearing at her already frayed nerves and as Shouto begins to close in on her, she panics and throws the first thing she could get her hands on to defend herself.

The still of the night dissolves into blood-curdling screams.

----

When Rei came to, shock flooded through her veins.

The sound of muffled screams and pained cries muddled through her ears.

What…

Had she done?

Shouto…

She had to reach him.

She had to make sure he was okay.

He sounded like he was in so much pain.

What had she done?

Another scream rips from her mouth despite herself.

Just as pained as those that met her muddled ears.

Her baby…

Her boy…

She swore to protect him.

But…

Pain.

She felt a sharp sting as she was literally smacked across the room, her back screaming in protest as she struck the stove.

More screams drowned out around her.

Her sight, though hazy, catches the emergence of brilliant blue.

The feeling of intense heat.

“Stay the fuck away from her!” A sharp, juvenile voice rips through the din.
“Touya… get out of my way,” came the cold, hardened order.

“No. Fuck you. You aren’t laying a single fucking finger on my mother, you piece of shit!” Her enraged son barks in protest.

“Shouto! Oh my god!” Another voice, shrill, yet soft. Fuyumi, then.

Rei watched through hazy eyes that felt not like her own.

She watched on, as her children, defended Shouto.

Defended her.

While Enji’s terrifying form, loomed tall in front of her 13-year-old son.

Who was currently hurting himself in her defense.

She failed.

She failed.

She couldn’t keep them from the fear.

The violence.

The torment of their daily lives.

She couldn’t even protect herself.

“Touya…” she rasps out, “baby… please don’t,” she pleads.

“No, Mom!” He snaps sharply.

Never having taken that tone with her before, she clamps her mouth shut.

“That piece of garbage has hurt us long enough,” he intones, with a determination she’s never heard before.

“Touya, Shouto’s unconscious!” Fuyumi calls out in distress.

“Take him and get out of here!” Touya calls out to her, “go get help!”

In an instant, an angry wall of flames blocks Fuyumi’s escape and Natsuo’s arrival.

“You aren’t going anywhere, child. None of you are. Especially not with my masterpiece,” Enji snarls.

“Masterpiece, huh? You speak as if he’s just a tool. Like we were. Right Endeavor? We’re just stepping stones to further your washed up career, you call yourself a hero? That just makes me sick,” Touya spits, his teeth grit tightly in both pain and anger.

“Move boy. Or you’ll regret the day you crossed me,” Enji warns, his voice low and cruel.

“If you were really so worried about your precious masterpiece, you’d be finding a way to get him help right now, not squabbling with a 13-year-old, like some fucking sell out!” Touya rebuffs.

“I SAID MOVE!” Enji shouts, making Rei flinch and sink into herself.
“AND I SAID NO! YOU WANT HER, YOU’RE GONNA HAVE TO GO THROUGH ME!”” Touya retorts angrily.

“GUYS! PLEASE STOP! Shouto is…” Fuyumi cries out before she is sufficiently silenced by an errant ball of flames.

Rei has barely enough time to react, using her quirk to shield her children just in time.

In an instant Touya and Enji went head to head, the physical manifestation of their anger engulfing the entire kitchen in flaming red and blue.

Using the distraction for what it was, Natsuo who’d been trapped by the wall of flames outside the kitchen, reaches out and grabs Fuyumi, pulling both her and Shouto to safety.

The last thing Rei sees before losing consciousness is her baby boy…

Her firstborn, engulfed in flames and screaming.

Either out of rage, or intense pain.

And then her world whites out.

----

When Rei finally comes to, her worst nightmares had been realized.

She was alone.

Cold.

And in a padded room.

Her family was in shambles.

Touya having run away, with injuries that he couldn’t possibly have healed on his own.

Natsuo having resigned himself to silence.

Shouto, who was very badly burned had closed everyone out.

And Fuyumi, who had resigned herself to taking care of the both of them, was worried sick about her twin’s safety.

While her husband spun and fabricated some story of a house fire, started by none other than Rei herself. Explaining Touya’s disappearance as circumstance and Shouto’s injuries as consequence.

----

Silent tears rattle through her thin shoulders as she barely holds herself together.

He could tell she hadn’t told anyone this in a very long time.

“A-after that… I was silent… for five years. Therapists came to see me. Psychiatrists and psychologists alike, I never uttered a word. Not… until Fuyumi… and Natsuo came to see me for the first time since the incident. It was after that… that I began to open up. That I began to read to the children here, in this hospital, just like you…” she finishes in a whisper.
Izuku swallows against the lump in his throat, sitting rigid and stiff from the horrors that had been her story.

Her life.

_shouto_’s life.

And this didn’t even explain the aftermath.

Or how much worse things must have gotten.

Izuku knew demons when he saw them.

He had them.

Rei had them.

_shouto_ had them.

Standing abruptly, Izuku leaves his seat in lieu of sitting next to her and pulling her into a warm embrace.

It was the least he could do.

To provide her with comfort, as she did with him.

There were many nights. Many nightmares. Many long endless hours here, spent in Rei’s comforting company.

He rocks her back and forth. Holding her together as she shudders into sobs.

Each one, tearing a hole in his heart and solidifying his decision.

He hides his own tears, in her soft pearlescent hair.

By the time she quiets down, she stills against him, still locked in his hopefully nurturing hold.

“Izuku…” she murmurs after a while.

“Y-yes, Ms. Rei?” He replies softly.

“Please… I know I’m asking a lot… but whatever you do… help my Shouto,” she implores, a desperate edge to her voice, “he’s been lost for so long. He needs someone like you to help him find his way.”

A determination like no other burned within his deep viridian eyes and as Rei rose to meet him, he saw hope spark to life in hers.

“Y-you have my word,” he vows.

----

Before either of them knew it, visiting hours were over and with a tight hug and reassurances, Izuku bids her goodnight.

As the forested boy exits her room, his peripheral vision catches sight of a familiar silhouette.
An ever silent sentinel.

His movement catches his eye.

“I thought I told you I’d get a ride?” he signs, not trusting himself to speak.

Katsuki merely shrugs and leaves his perch against the wall.

Judging by his own somber demeanor, Izuku would wager what he’d heard.

Silently, Izuku wills himself a small smile and links their hands, only to receive a comforting squeeze.

As he takes time to peer into somber crimson eyes, he sees many truths.

Many assurances.

Sworn promises.

“Let’s get you home,” his love intones.

He believes in them all.

Chapter End Notes

A few more announcements!

For those that don't know! We have a discord channel for Stars!
As well as a twitter account, where I will be posting tidbits and chapter update reminders!

You can find those here: https://twitter.com/StringlishOnAo3 and https://discord.gg/geDC2r3

ALSO! Our dearest Sammy, my beloved Waifu, has a totally awesome discord server as well that caters to fandoms of all kinds, cats, and her lovable kids! Send her a shout out if yall are interested in making more friends and being a part of a fandom community! That can be accessed here: https://discord.gg/Ddk5cAU

This goes for the Stars discord as well, we are a warm and inviting community, full of wonderful and talented artists, writers, and cosplayers! We'd love to have you join us!

Thanks for your time, I hope you enjoyed the chapter! (Well... as much as one can enjoy intense angst, anyway.)
Heavy Is The Crown (Part 1)

Chapter Summary

Enthusiastic energy permeated the air.

Today was the big day and for the inhabitants of U.A. excitement was abound.

Well… all except for maybe one or two of them.

Chapter Notes

Hello, my loves!

I would like to apologize for the long overdue wait. Not to get into too many gritty details, but I had an extremely bad bout of depression that I had to work through. A lot of big changes occurred in my personal life and the story got put on the back burner.

But I'm here now! And I'm super excited to start cranking more chapters out!

Can you believe that it'll be a year in September that this story was first started?! I am so jazzed about it!

Thank you ALL SO MUCH for your encouragement, kudos, comments, and bookmarks. Even your bookmark comments, because I read and adore those too! All of you have been so supportive and a handful of you have even re-commented to check up on me and I totally appreciate you. You have no idea how much you all touch my heart!

I hope you enjoy the chapter!

It was reflexive.

A reaction.

An emotion gone wild.

One that burned as hotly as the flames he tried to rebuke.

And the moment it happened, Shouto had never felt more ashamed.

He'd been wound up so tightly.

So engrossed in his own self-imposed misery, that he'd snapped and lashed out.

Like him.

At the one person who didn’t deserve it.
He’d all but openly attacked his best friend; who was not only quirkless, but was still recovering from debilitating injuries and couldn’t have defended himself; in front of the entire class.

Over something as silly as... an inquiry.

He didn’t even need to glance at Bakugou’s steely expression to know he’d fucked up.

So consumed with anger at himself and shame, Shouto had fled from the room and from the school grounds altogether.

He couldn’t stand himself.

He couldn’t trust his emotions.

And to keep Izuku safe…

He had to stay away.

---

Hours later a knock quietly rapped at his bedroom door.

Along with a timid murmur.

Fuyumi.

She’d no doubt received the phone call. Something he was grateful for. Because even though she’d coddle him with concern, he’d much prefer that to his ire. He could only imagine the hell he’d be subjected to if Endeavor found out his masterpiece had had a mental breakdown in class.

She was checking on him again.

She’d been trying for days to get him to eat.

As Shouto sat crouched on one of his tatami mats, encroached upon himself, he couldn’t bring himself to even consider eating anything solid.

Not since he and his bastard of a father’s last confrontation.

He was nothing more than a pawn. As all of them were. He was merely a tool to be used in an effort for his family to achieve greatness. The Sports Festival was the prime opportunity for that.

As Shouto stared intently at the mats woven texture, he couldn’t help but wonder…

As everything stirring within him came to a head…

He couldn’t help but wonder if his mother had felt this trapped.

Was this guilt akin to what she must have felt toward him?

After that night?

He could only hazard a guess.

But if he himself felt this miserable, he could only imagine how she’d felt.

As the night burns steadily on, he entertains these thoughts for hours.
He chases the memories of sad cinereal eyes.
Longing for one of his mother’s warm hugs.
Fuyumi’s knocks fall on deaf ears.

---

A new ice-cold resolve settles within him the next morning.
He’d show the so-called hero Endeavor that he was exactly what he didn’t need.
He would win the Sports Festival…
With his mother’s power alone…
Just to vex him.

---

Enthusiastic energy permeated the air.
Today was the big day and for the inhabitants of U.A. excitement was abound.
Well… all except for maybe one or two of them.

When they were little boys, Izuku and Katsuki dreamt of the day they would take part in the U.A. Sports Festival.

It was a time where heroes-to-be got to show off their quirks. A time for potential scouts to take an interest in them. And like any other festival, it was a time spent playing games and buying food from vendors in celebration.

Year after year, both boys would watch the festival as it was broadcast live on television. Both of them yearning and pining for when it would be their time to shine. Back then, they were just two hopeful boys, longing to make their mark on the world.

As it would turn out, reality would be vastly different compared to their dreams.

Everything would change when they found out Izuku was quirkless.

Their paths would split, their motivations would change, a great divide would be set between them. And although they had their own trials they’d had to face alone, their paths would eventually meet again.

And after years of being told what he couldn’t do, Izuku stood proudly at the gates of their school; yet again, in awe. It choked him up to think about. After everything, he was here. And even if he couldn’t physically participate, at least he would get to see Katsuki live their dream for the both of them. For Izuku, that was enough.

“Seriously, Deku, shouldn’t you be at least a little upset that all those other extras in Gen-Ed get to compete but you don’t?”

Katsuki seemed to have some extreme; and frankly biased, opinions on the matter. Despite knowing full well why Izuku couldn’t compete. While it was touching, it was unnecessary.
If the forested boy were honest, after the last couple months of unending physical therapy and pretty much astounding his doctors with his leaps and bounds in rehabilitating to walk, Izuku was just glad to be standing on his own two feet. Even if it was with the assistance of a cane.

He didn’t need the Sports Festival to prove his worth, so he tells the blond as much.

“To be h-honest, Kacchan, I’m just g-grateful t-to be here s-standing next to you. Y-you gotta learn to w-walk b-before you run, right? A-all of y-you are much more s-suited to all of t-this than I am,” he gestures to U.A.’s main gates, which were currently decorated to the nines. “B-besides, M-mr. Aizawa and T-Thirteen gave me my own ch-challenge, r-remember? Today, I f-finally get to see if my w-work p-paid off.”

Izuku could tell that Katsuki was still miffed as he folded his arms over his chest, but he was much less so, “well, when you put it like that, I guess in your own nerdy way, you’re already competing.”

“That’s the s-spirit! N-now stop f-fretting over me a-and get your h-head in the g-game! There’s so m-much to see and do b-before the c-competitions begin!” The forested boy replies with his own growing excitement.

It felt like an out of body experience, just to be able to be here and see for himself what the sports festival was all about. U.A. really didn’t spare any expense. He felt like a mere mortal among giants. It was an incredible experience no matter which side of the fence he was on.

As they made their way into the courtyard it was highly evident that U.A. took the security of this event very seriously. No doubt due in part to the recent terrorist activity. The guards were hard at work, keeping the media bogarts at bay, only allowing reputable news reporters within the walls.

Heroes from all sorts of agencies were here, as guests and as guards.

It was exciting to see and Izuku couldn’t help but mutter to himself, itching to reach for his leather-bound notebook nestled safely in his backpack.

The forested boy belatedly felt a warm hand slip into his own as they made their way toward the stadium, his viridian eyes blown wide in awe as they went. Unconsciously, he smiles and gives Katsuki’s hand a light clench in response.

“Geez, nerd, you look like you’re about to blow a fuse, nice to see that motormouth of yours is in full swing,” the blond remarks with a growing grin of his own.

“I didn’t say I wasn’t,” he replies petulantly, carding his free hand coyly through his blond spikes, a slight tinge coloring his cheeks.

Izuku eyes him knowingly, “w-when are you g-gonna m-man up and admit t-that y-you’re as big o-of a f-fanboy as I am?”

“First of all, according to Shitty Hair, I’m manly as fuck, secondly, in your nerdiest of dreams, maybe,” he retorts haughtily.

“Izuku rolls his eyes, “o-one of these days, y-you’re g-gonna prove me right a-and w-when you do, i-it’ll be the h-happiest day of my l-life,” he kids.

“Tch, you’ve got some pretty low standards, dork,” the blond smirks, his crimson eyes alight with
mirth.

“Ah well, we both k-know my j-judgment was never the b-best,” he shrugs, trailing off as yet another hero catches his eye. He could literally feel Katsuki’s eyes roll, if his silent nudge was any indication.

“So… are we gonna talk about it?” Katsuki asks bluntly, a serious edge to his voice.

Izuku visibly recoils and stops still in his tracks, startling Katsuki as he pulls his arm taught like a rubberband.

“T-t-talk… a-a…a-about… i-it? L-like…it it, or it it?” Izuku panics, dropping Katsuki’s hand as he gestures wildly.

Katsuki arches a brow, deadpanning, “wow, Deku. That was so articulate, you’re a modern visionary. Plato is rolling in his grave at how insightful that shit was. Wonder what he’d say about your theory on ‘it it’ or ‘it it’”

Izuku can feel his face begin to flame as he sputters in embarrassment, he can feel his arms flailing a mile a minute, “O-ohm-g-g-ggodSTOPT-talking! …Y-you k-know w-what I m-meant!”

Katsuki couldn’t help but grin at his expense, the asshole.

“Depends on which ‘it’ you’re talking about,” he snarks.

Seriously… he had to have taken one too many hits to the head for him to even consider kissing such an insufferably adorable prick.

“W-which ‘i-it’ a-are y-you t-talking about?” Izuku stammers petulantly.

“I meant Half ‘n Half’s family drama, but if you’re referring to when you attacked my face and left me slack-jawed in the hospital parking lot for 20 minutes, then, we can talk about that too,” the blond clarifies; his expression clouding, like that of a hungry shark.

That expression did odd things to Izuku’s stomach.

He was sure his entire body was blushing at this point, his knuckles white as they gripped his cane. Then what he’d said suddenly fully dawned on him.

“W-wait… S-slack-j-jawed… i-in the p-parking lot?” His viridian eyes widen in awe of another kind.

For 20 minutes???

Katsuki shrugs, Izuku taking note that his own cheeks were flushed just as brightly as his.

“I… K-Kacchan…O-oh my g-god, y-you m-must think… I-I’m-,” he starts nervously.

“Nope,” the blond rebuffs him immediately, shoving a hand against his mouth for good measure.

“N-nope?” Izuku parrots through his fingers, thoroughly confused.

“Look, if I was weirded out by it… I’d have left. You damn well know I would have. But I stayed. So don’t even bother apologizing like I know you were going to do,” the blond assures him, “I…” he starts nervously, his hand falling away as he grips his own arm, “I didn’t mind it.”
It was said… almost shyly.

Izuku knew he must have been a sight.

His rabbit heart was racing, his nerves were frayed, and he couldn’t help but wonder when his head felt like it was shoved inside a fishbowl.

But more than that, he felt… relief.

“S-so… w-we’re good?” He asks, sounding meeker than he intended to.

Katsuki rolls his eyes, taking a step forward, he and invades his space with a soft press of lips to his forehead.

And Izuku feels everything simply stop.

His nerves. His heart. His ability to process sounds.

He felt everything within him ebb and melt away.

That simple gesture doing more for him than words ever could.

And it was a realization in and of its own.

Katsuki was meeting him in the middle.

“We can talk about it some other time, nerd,” the blond assures him, yet again, his words coming in breathy wisps against his forehead before he pulls back and gives them a measured amount of space. “Shit’s about to get started and I really think you should find Half ‘n Half and settle things before it does. After what we heard, he probably feels… rough. I know I would.”

Izuku eyes him again.

And he really looks.

Katsuki’s posture was stiff and awkward. His cheeks were a dusty pink. His eyes wandered to everything else but him, for everything he looked at odds with himself, but Izuku knew.

He felt it like a pulse.

Katsuki was tabling their own issues in light of being supportive and Izuku; once again, swells with affection.

This time Katsuki was ready for him when Izuku lunged forward and laid a chaste kiss across his cheek. He held him steady, even after the forested boy pulled away. A smile like stars alight in his eyes.

“W-we’ll t-talk about it. L-later,” Izuku replies. Giving him his own assurance before he once again, leaves to boy slack-jawed in the crowd.

His recovery time had to have kicked into high gear this time around, because Izuku could hear him griping at him as he went.

“WE’RE ALSO GONNA TALK ABOUT THIS KISS AND RUN BULLSHIT, DEKU!”

Izuku couldn’t help but feel a thrill at the thought.
By the time Izuku found Shouto, he along with the rest of their class were being ushered into the arena’s 1st floor waiting rooms.

Without so much as a greeting, the bi-colored boy sidestepped around him, not sparing him any acknowledgment.

Izuku would be lying if he said that didn’t sting.

His friend’s eyes were cold, calculated, and completely closed off, his posture stiff and robotic.

It hurt Izuku deeply to see him like that.

But with the events already in full swing, Izuku was forced to wait for the right moment to approach him.

He just hoped it wouldn’t be too late.

He shares a meaningful glance with Katsuki before the blond disappears from sight.

Not knowing what to do with himself, Izuku lingers long after the doors close, his expression tight.

The sound of a throat clearing nervously next to him, rouses his attention. His eyes widen marginally.

“Young Midoriya,” the older man greets him awkwardly.

“M-Mr. Yagi…” Izuku replies, hesitantly.

“Aizawa was coming to fetch you, to show you where class 1-A would be seated for the tournament, I… kinda asked him if I could do the honor, is… is that alright with you?” He asks nervously.

“Oh… o-of c-course,” he acquiesces.

Mr. Yagi; or All Might, his mind mentally supplies, gestures for him to follow him. Izuku quietly complies.

This conversation was long overdue, but where would they even start?

The silence was a bit awkward for both of them as they walked to the stadium’s elevator.

True to form, Mr. Yagi was brave enough to break the ice, “Aizawa and Thirteen have been raving about you, you know?” the taller man smiles shyly down at him.

“H-have they?” Izuku eyes him, trying not to seem so clinical.

“They’re quite proud of you. I… I am too, we can’t wait to see what you have in store for us,” he replies just as the elevator door dings, the panels gliding open easily.

Quietly they step inside, standing rigidly side by side.

“M-Mr. Yagi…” Izuku starts, with a nervousness of his own.

“Yes?” There was a hint of both urgency and hope in his tone.

That stung too.
“I… I a-ap… pol… I’m…” he stutters in frustration.

“It’s okay, take your time,” the older man reassures him surprising the boy with JSL. “You can sign to me if you want, too.”

Izuku smiles bitterly and nods.

“I was unfair to you, I should have let you explain. I’m sorry… for being so hasty,” Izuku finally conveys.

He’d been doing so well lately… or at least better. Sure… his words get jumbled and become a mess when he’s flustered, but it hasn’t been this bad in a while.

It kind of felt like a kick to the ribs.

“Midoriya… please… you don’t have anything to apologize for. If I were in your position… I’d have likely reacted the same way. I apologize. This was on me… not you.”

He sighs in defeat, “but you’re All Might, you literally always know what to do in a tense situation. You know what words to say.”

“No, my boy,” he replies sadly, “I don’t. Not always… I…. I’d hate to shatter your childhood image of me, but… I’m human. Just like you. I said many things to you that day, that I’ll always regret and if our roles were reversed… I dunno kid… you handled the situation with a lot more grace than you think you did,” the older man admits, “you were right to be angry.”

“I… I w-wasn’t a-angry… I… w-was m-more hurt,” Izuku admits quietly.

The elevator chimes as it comes to a stop, the chrome panels gliding open.

The pair of them step off into a stark white hall.

They stand there silently, facing one another.

Mr. Yagi startles him, by crouching down to meet his eyes.

“Midoriya, there hasn’t been a day since I met you, that I didn’t wish things were different. That I didn’t wish I’d have said something different, or spared your feelings. If I could take it all back… I would in a second. I want you to know that,” Mr. Yagi intones.

He might not have been in his more muscular form, but he looked every bit like the All Might he knew.

“There also hasn’t been a day since you came out of your coma, that I haven’t cherished just… getting to know you. Seeing you flourish. You’ve come so far. It… might not mean much, but I’m incredibly proud to know you, and… I am so sorry, to have hurt you…” he adds quietly, sincerely, and it makes tears spring forth in Izuku’s eyes.

It was becoming a frequent thing lately, him bodily throwing himself at people, he was beginning to sense a trend, but as he wrapped the older man into a tight hug, he couldn’t care less.

He doesn’t allow his tears to fall as he replies, but he means every word, “Y-you k-know I f-f-forgive you, r-right?”

Spindly arms wrap around him, just as tight. A nod presses against his shoulder. As if Mr. Yagi
didn’t trust himself to speak again.

They linger in silence for just a moment.

Like an air raid siren sounds off, Present Mic’s booming voice literally shakes the stadium, causing both of them to jolt apart.

Each of them looking worse for wear in their own right.

This was in no way done.

“Looks like that’s our cue,” Mr. Yagi laughs awkwardly.

But for now, it had to be.

“Y-yeah, g-guess so…” Izuku agrees.

The older man leads him the rest of the way to the booth class 1-A would be seated in, but before he departs, the older blond lingers in the doorway.

“We have much more to talk about… after all this is said and done, would you care to meet with me again?” The older man queries tentatively.

“O-of course,” Izuku agrees again, feeling just a little lighter.

“Good luck with your observations ...and thank you, young Midoriya,” with a shy wave, Mr. Yagi departs, the door closing behind him with a quiet click.

----

Katsuki was pissed.

At a multitude of things.

Society allowing, frankly archaic, traditions to continue.

The hero ranking system and its flaws.

The fact that a child abuser/wife-beater was masquerading around like he wasn’t a goddamn criminal.

The so-called ‘number 2’ hero…

He was such a fucking fraud it made him physically ill to think about.

So; not to be misunderstood, he did understand where IcyHot’s shitty attitude stemmed from.

But seeing the look of hurt on Izuku’s face, at being snubbed by someone he considered a friend, hit way closer to home than he cared to admit. And that incensed him to his explosive core.

The more he stewed on it, the more his anger rolled to a boil.

Just because daddy dearest was an asshole… that didn’t give the bi-colored bastard the right to treat his friends like shit.

Katsuki all but leaps from his chair with such force that it squeals across the linoleum behind him, startling his classmates. He stalks across the room like a man on a mission. Because he damn well
was. If Izuku wasn’t able to defend himself, he’d do the fuckin honors.

“IcyHot,” he intones. Trying for all he was worth to reign in at least some of his righteous indignation.

He was met with cold calculating eyes.

Familiar eyes.

And silence.

“Look, I don’t give a single fucking shit what kind of ‘daddy issues’ you’ve got going on, I could frankly care fucking less, but you snubbed the wrong fucking person today and that pisses. me. off. So you better be on your fuckin’ game today, Half ‘n Half, because I’m comin’ for you. And you better fuckin’ bring it, with all you’ve got. You hear me?!”

“W-whoa, dude! What’s with the declaration of war?” Kirishima intervenes with outstretched hands, reeling him in.

“No. It’s fine, Kirishima,” the half-bastard finally replies, his heterochromatic eyes sharp, he too stands, staring him down, “I have a declaration of my own. You’re on, Bakugou, I accept your challenge, I just hope you’re prepared to lose, because I’m going to win.”

A feral grin overtakes him then as he strains against Kirishima’s hold, “We’ll see how well that goes. You just better not fucking insult me or the rest of our classmates by fighting handicap!”

“Geez, c’mon man, simmer down. Save it for the competition, okay?” Kirishima gripes.

A frigid glare is all he receives as he’s finally towed away by his more altruistic friend.

He was more than ready to knock some fucking sense into him.

In a very literal sense.

----

A cacophony of excited cheers echoed all around the stadium, drowned out only by Present Mic’s booming voice.

This only makes the crowd that much more wild.

Izuku is in complete awe of it as he leans against the rail, listening intently as his English teacher riles up the audience by introducing each course by class.

“LET ME HEAR YA SCREAM AS OUR STUDENTS MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE MAIN STAGE!”

One by one, each class files out onto the field.

Izuku grins widely as he waves enthusiastically to his friends in course’s A and C.

Eventually, Ms. Midnight is called to the main stage, unsurprisingly in the most sensibly inappropriate attire for the given situation, to be sure. But it does calm the roaring crowd instantly, allowing her to call the first-year representative to the stage.

“SILENCE EVERYONE,” she command’s the audience, “AND FOR THE STUDENT PLEDGE,
WE HAVE BAKUGOU KATSUKI!

This is both surprising and yet not, to Izuku. He knew Kacchan had finished first during his entrance exam, but in the haze of coming out of his coma, it hadn’t occurred to him that he was technically their first-year representative.

Pride swelled within him as he watched the blond walk up to the stage confidently, despite the mixed reviews coming from the crowd. He knew Katsuki didn’t exactly have many fans, in or out of 1-A.

Having finally reached the top of the stage, Katsuki stands in front of the microphone, hands situated lazily in his pockets.

He clears his throat.

“I just wanna say… I’m gonna win.”

Shock and excitement seemed to erupt from the crowd in the form of booing and outrage and cheers.

And that was apparently all that needed to be said as Katsuki leisurely makes his way back down to the arena, completely devil may care.

It was all Izuku could do, but to sigh and facepalm.

This was gonna be a long day.
Chapter Summary

The festival thus far could be described as; in the words of his good friend Tokoyami, 'chaos, pure chaos.'

Chapter Notes

HELLO LOVES!

I am back! With a shorter, albeit, EARLIER, update!

I ran through the chapter several times, and honestly, I really liked where I decided to end it.
>:D It gives us all something to look forward to. Bwhahahaha!

I hope you all enjoy! ♥♥♥

(P.S. I'm super tired, so let me know if yall see any spelling errors I may have missed lol!)

When it came to declarations of war, it came as no surprise that Bakugou would come for him.

Shouto could admit that his behavior as of late was out of the norm. He was closed off and pushing those closest to him away. Out of anger or frustration, he didn’t know.

He just couldn’t seem to keep himself in check.

Especially not with that bastard lurking around.

So what else was he to do, other than accept the volatile blond’s declaration for what it was?

He knew, in some strange way, that this was Bakugou simply looking out for Izuku, and by proxy, Shouto too.

He couldn’t help but respect that.

But even so, Shouto couldn’t deny that the idea that he’d have an actual challenge out on that field truly fired him up inside.

It affirmed his determination.

He would win this.

And as sure as he could feel the scorching heat of his bastard father’s eyes upon him, he would win this to spite him, with his mother’s strength alone.
And when he was done, he would show the world, that the name’s Todoroki and Kazuyuki were nothing but relics of the past.

Obsolete, obtuse, and outdated.

A once-mighty dynasty, brought to ruin by its own greed and lust for power.

He would show the world that he wasn’t an object to be owned.

And one day, he would free her.

----

The festival thus far could be described as; in the words of his good friend Tokoyami, ‘chaos, pure chaos.’

It started off straightforward enough.

An obstacle course had been used in the past, no biggie!

But then there were these gigantic mecha robots, like something out of Pacific Rim, or an episode of Gundam Wing.

That definitely threw him and the other students for a loop.

But despite those, and the mini Grand Canyon, ominously named ‘The Fall’, and the literal landmines that his fellow classmates had to traverse around, well… it was just another typical sports festival!

That is… if you didn’t count the general disdain and animosity currently being thrown in Katsuki’s direction.

No doubt due in part to his ‘inspirational speech’ and his first big win.

Mind you, not that Izuku doubted his skills, but in a race, his money had definitely been on Iida. Who; oddly enough, came in 5th. Just after Shiozaki Ibara and Honenuki Juzo of Class 1-B, who ranked 3rd and 4th respectively.

That just went to show how unpredictable the sports festival could be!

Or… maybe it was just how oddly determined both of his best friends were.

Katsuki had literally propelled himself through the air, using the blast radius of his explosions to carry him, like a determined angry bird.

Shouto had taken a more subtle approach, by literally surfing or skating across his own ice paths, being able to fully dodge Honenuki’s quicksand in his haste. Which… come to think of it, was no doubt why Iida came in 5th.

Izuku could imagine that quicksand being lodged in his engines hadn’t done him any favors.

He quickly jots this down on the page he’d reserved for Iida in his notebook.

Despite them being in 1st and 2nd place, he could see Katsuki and Shouto glaring intensely at one another from his perch in the stands.
It made Izuku wonder what had even happened between the two of them? What exactly happened down there?

Shouto went from being cold as... well, ice, to being all fired up.

And Katsuki was way more rancorous toward him than usual.

Whatever animosity it was that sparked up between them, he just hoped it wouldn’t make things worse.

---

Soon enough, everyone was ready to set off on their second challenge: The Cavalry Battle.

And with the 1st place champion having been pinned with 10 million freakin’ points; everyone once again, was gunning for Katsuki, who… seemed decidedly indifferent.

Izuku honestly didn’t know how he did it.

Katsuki had always been so confident. He was always able to draw strength in situations that would make any other person freeze up from anxiety. He never once doubted himself when it came to his skills or his quirk.

Izuku knew for a fact that if it were him down there, he’d likely be freaking out, trying to devise the best possible plan for any outcome.

But not him.

No, Kacchan, true to form, was as cool as a cucumber.

In fact, where those 10 million points would have scared most people off, it would definitely seem that it wouldn’t deter the BakuSquad in the least. Ashido, Sero, and Kirishima all flocked toward him. No doubt wanting to take advantage of their already established dynamic. It made perfect sense.

They all worked flawlessly together and it also helped that Kirishima and Katsuki experienced actual combat together, they would undoubtedly make a solid team.

As Izuku peered down onto the field, he saw a lot of curious combinations.

But the one that certainly piqued his interest was Shinsou’s group.

It was definitely a ragtag group if he’d ever seen one, but it also made sense.

Although he had his theories, Izuku still wasn’t 100% certain as to what the heck Shinsou’s quirk was.

But seeing as he was paired up with Uraraka, Hatsume Mei, and Tokoyami, it was clear that his quirk was definitely passive. Hence the need for people who specialized in evasion and defense. What better way for a person to defend themselves, than by taking to the sky if need be, and having an omnipotent being serving as defense and offense, as well as a 5th pair of eyes. It was a solid game plan.

One that Izuku was certainly interested in seeing in action.

Shouto’s group was also comprised of people with strong, fitting quirks, as well. Yaomomo would be able to create anything they’d need for defense or offense. Kaminari, who had likely been sought
out personally, would be yet another great offense, assuming he didn’t over-do it, and Iida backing
them up with speed and mobility was a surefire way to secure a fast victory.

It was anyone’s game, really.

As each team congregated and went over their plans of attack, Ms. Midnight called out for them to
begin.

With the sound of excited screams and Present Mic’s ever-enthusiastic commentary, the airhorn
sounds off, drowning out the din.

----

As it would turn out, Izuku wouldn’t have to divide his attention too much between the three teams
he was interested in seeing. Each and every one of them was locked in a battle of wills with the
BakuSquad.

It was honestly pretty humorous to watch.

Katsuki hated being crowded upon. He’d never admit to having claustrophobia, but he certainly fit
the bill, and with that many people coming at him at once, the poor guy looked like he was gonna
bust a blood vessel. Even without the surrounding microphones, Izuku could easily hear him griping
loud and clear from his perch.

Ashido, Kirishima, and Sero made a great team for defense and evasion, while Katsuki flew through
the air indiscriminately attacking and stealing headbands in retaliation. Screaming about being the
‘indisputable champions.’

Shouto’s team took their pursuit very seriously and with extreme prejudice. Almost as though they
were coordinating tactical battle plans. They were trying to look for any and every opening.

Meanwhile, most of the other teams were making less risky, albeit smart, choices.

It would seem that Shinsou and his team took to taking out the small fries and racking up a cache. It
was a small kings ransom compared to Katsuki’s points, but it worked out all the same. Using
Uraraka and Hatsume for mobility and evasion, he and Tokoyami made quick work of stealing
headbands from a safe distance, by using dark shadow and Shinsou’s capture tool respectively, to
swipe headbands from unsuspecting teams.

Their game plan was solid and they would no doubt make it into the finals.

Some, however, were much more cunning.

Izuku didn’t know much about Monoma, other than that he was extremely rude and considered
annoying, but it was plain to see that he was a thinker. He was both a wildcard and a walking feint
attack. He used smoke and mirror tactics to get around obstacles and was very clever in his
gameplays.

He knew exactly who he could rile up in order for them to drop their defenses, and once he got them
going, he’d steal their quirks and use it against them to steal their headbands next. He spent so much
time trying to create this annoying persona, that most people didn’t pay attention to his ulterior
motives until it was too late.

It was a bit underhanded for a hero hopeful, but in this instance, it played out seamlessly.
Izuku was at war with himself, between watching each team intensely whilst simultaneously taking as many notes as he could.

With Ms. Midnight announcing the dwindling time limit, everyone began pursuing one another indiscriminately. The need for haste outweighing the need to obtain the 10 million points.

From his perch, he could definitely see that most teams without points were getting desperate.

Eventually, either out of frustration or tact, Shouto forms an impressive wall of ice, to section off any escape route Kacchan and his team could utilize and freezes most of the other teams in place.

This makes little difference to team Shinsou, however, who merely fly up into the air to evade the onslaught.

It was down to those three teams now.

With less than 5 minutes to spare, all of them were locked in head-on.

Izuku watches as Shinsou starts jeering at the other teams. Attempting to bait them into making hasty and costly decisions.

Each of them stop, tense in their tracks. They each eye one another carefully, as if in some silent agreement.

The forested boy takes express note of this. Noticing how none of them even attempt to open their mouths again to communicate or convey instructions. When suddenly, Katsuki signs something to Kirishima that Izuku couldn’t quite catch.

Together, they bolt, Team Shinsou hot on their heels.

2 minutes were left on the clock now.

And Izuku now had more than enough answers to make his deduction.

Shinsou Hitoshi had a quirk that was no doubt verbal. A quirk to be feared enough that the teams stopped communicating. A quirk in which Katsuki and his team had a slight advantage over.

It made sense now.

With a passive quirk like his, he’d have to build up his physical strength in other ways. Shinsou would have to use alternative techniques in situations where his words would fail. A situation like that could only be if he didn’t get a response.

A response.

He nibbles the cap to his pen, deep in thought.

That was undoubtedly what it was.

Shinsou would jeer and get them riled up in some way. He’d make them talk and once he did, he must have had some element of control over his opponent.

An element of control that everyone on that field feared.

Such as, perhaps making his opponent do something they normally wouldn't do.
Hence… his quirk could only be…

“M-mind Control!” He shouts to himself as he jots everything down enthusiastically.

“That’s g-gotta be it,” he mutters to himself.

No wonder Shinsou was so frustrated with him.

He was literally the only one he couldn’t control. Since it wasn’t very often at all that he communicated verbally.

And Katsuki knew this too.

The blond had a very interesting advantage in this respect.

So long as he didn’t blow up in a rage and spew verbal vomit at the guy in battle, he’d be untouchable.

Interesting, indeed.

With 59 seconds left on the clock, everyone made to lunge for whoever was closest.

In the last few tense seconds, Shinou’s team closes in, only to be stopped short mid-flight by a blast of ice to their jetpack. It sputters, throwing off their trajectory and forcing them to land.

Utilizing some hidden speed, Iida helps his team zoom around the ring of ice, gunning for Katsuki. Shouto remaining poised and ready for an attack.

Between the ice, the explosions, and Shinsou’s capture tool being thrown into the fray, it was a very close game to call as the final buzzer sounds off.

A frustrated scream peels from Katsuki, who’d undoubtedly lost his 10 million point headband.

The scene was overly dramatic and honestly hilarious to see.

Shinsou’s shit-eating grin as he held the 10 million point headband, Shouto’s stoic astonishment despite having several bands around his neck, Kastuki’s rage, and Sero’s sheepish grin as he pulls the tape off of several headbands he’d swiped at the last moment.

All three teams had secured their victory.

Some… more than others.

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Soon after the challenge, a brief intermission was called.

This would give the participants in the next round some time to eat and recuperate before the tournament began.

Izuku found himself hastily leaving 1-A’s stands, in search of his friends.

After all that excitement, he was definitely ready to congratulate his friends on their wins and finally get the chance to properly speak with Shouto.

As he hobbles hurriedly through the hall, cane gripped tight in his hand, he almost collides with a
large mass standing directly around the corner.

“O-oh! I’m s-so-” he cuts himself short.

He blinks at the towering man before him.

It dawns on him quickly once he sees exactly who it was that he’d almost run into.

His initial nervousness is swallowed up quickly, by a wave of unholy anger that begins to churn like a maelstrom within him.

It was him.

The man before him, was none other than the so-called number 2.

Endeavor.

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