Fire Bite

by divagateros

Summary

"Midoriya’s feelings had morphed, but he wondered if they had always been there, and now, like an echo, like a reflection of light in an upturned mirror, here he and Bakugou were.

But then Midoriya had always been one to romanticise everything."

Set right before graduation, Midoriya is forced to address some interpersonal discrepancies after some strange behaviour at a barbeque leaves him floundering. He’ll have to face more than just exam prep and Kirishima’s questionable sausages as far too many fairy-tale allusions reduce his happy little home to cinders.

Well, if it was a house built of straw, it was probably going to burn anyway.

Notes

This takes place in the fictional world of The United Kingdom of Great Japanamerica be im lazy and cba choosing a country to research fully

I basically drank everything lalazee and warschach ever wrote, swilled it around in my throat with some garbage and pretentious metaphorical literature, swallowed, threw up, and then kicked the resulting mess into a story
ENJOY

See the end of the work for more notes.
A Naked Man Among the Pines

“Fear and flee the wolf; for, worst of all, the wolf may be more than he seems.” – The Company of Wolves, Angela Carter.

Reality doesn’t work like a carousel.

It would be ideal: to ride that merry roundabout with its soft ups-and-downs for an easy lifetime, watching the ones you love gesture at you as you spin slowly past, blinking in the click-flash of their disposable camera as you come round again. Realising that you can rely on the rotation as surely as the sun’s slow, arching passage across the azure sky, and know in the comfortable hum of the jingling refrain, that you’ll do it all again, and be content.

Reality doesn’t work like that. There’s always something – someone – powering through the candy-floss crowd, to seize the carousel from underneath like your life weighs nothing at all, and toss it into the nearest lake.

Katsuki Bakugou – the bastard son of fire and fission – was good at such things.

Midoriya didn’t think he meant to be – it’s the sort of thing that happened when you were so focused on a goal that the odd toppled fairground ride was a necessary sacrifice, even if there were a lot of people on it at the time. So Midoriya’s merry-go-round sunk listlessly into the water, and he hoped what was left of the little plastic horse would be enough to prance him back to solid ground.

Bakugou feared no-one; consequently he accepted no guilt for his wreckages.

Some men wanted to watch the world burn, but Bakugou was more the type to pump it full of so much flammable gas that you couldn’t strike a match for fear of blowing a hole in the continent. The coarse nature of what he was – a creature on all fours that sprints for the deer in the pasture – was as unchangeable as the goals he set his mind to. He was as devastating as a hurricane, chasing the fiery thrum of his heart, and literally blasting aside anyone who got in his way. Bridges crumbled.

Midoriya had tried fruitlessly – as he tries with everyone – to help him rebuild. All he could do now was wait, and hope for an event bigger than he was to change the path of nature.

But like the Butterfly Effect, sometimes all you need is something small.

It was a warm afternoon. The thick, white clouds in the baby blue sky above split like the Red Sea in a spear’s throw from the UA school building to the horizon. Beyond the trees of the surrounding woodland, the hills sat heavy in great mounds, grey as huge elephant backs. The sizzling sounds of a barbeque filled the air, along with the heady smell of grilling sausages, the scent of it as thick as soup on the back of your tongue; the first barbeque of summer.

Kirishima, tall and lithe, his red hair pulled back to avoid singeing the tips, flipped a burger on the grill and grinned at Midoriya, who stood beside him with his head craned up, since he was a victim of unlucky genetics and got stuck at least foot shorter than everyone else.

“How’d you like it?” Kirishima asked, reaching for Midoriya’s paper plate. Midoriya shrugged, smiling big in the way he always did – in a way he couldn’t help. Having grown up picked on and
alone, he unconsciously made it known how greatly he enjoyed Kirishima’s easy-going company.

“Just so it won’t kill me,” he said sheepishly. “I don’t think Mineta will ever really recover from your first attempt.”

“That was two years ago,” said Kirishima with mock-indignation, a tone one adopts when one has been teased mercilessly for an event for an unreasonably long time. “And he didn’t die.” He glanced over at stumpy Mineta, at his sloping eyes and mouth curved like a fat sausage. “At least, I don’t think so.”

Midoriya laughed, moving around to avoid the smoke from the barbeque getting into his eyes. Kirishima flipped him a burger onto his paper plate. It dripped with grease, staining the plate with a great oozing spread of yellow. Midoriya drooled. Despite his being teased, Kirishima’s grill-cooking was top notch these days. ‘Gotta learn how to do it,’ he’d said once, tearing into a packet of sausages at three in the morning, high off his face on training adrenaline and cheap coffee. ‘It’s manly.’

Midoriya gestured to Mineta with a shoulder, piling his new burger with salad one-handed. “He’s been a lot more… gentlemanly,” he said with a lilt, searching for the right word. “Since then. Maybe that was why.”

“You think I poisoned the pervert out of him?” Kirishima asked, glancing over at Mineta, who had hopped onto a wooden bench next to gangly Kaminari. Even sat down, Mineta barely reached Kaminari’s bony shoulder, and that was post-growth spurt. “Would make sense. I’ve never seen so much stuff come out of one tiny person. Did he even eat carrots that day?”

Midoriya slowly put down his burger that had been halfway to his mouth.

“Oh, sorry,” Kirishima laughed. “But you brought it up.”

“Please don’t phrase it like that.”

Presently, sweet, curvaceous Uraraka sashayed past, chest a-bounce. Her body squeezed into most things like pillows secured with layers of wrap, and as such her every asset was a closely-guarded secret. There was no invitation in her voluptuous jounce and more fool to those who assumed otherwise – Midoriya had once seen her punch clean through a wall.

You do not want knuckles that hardy threatening your valuables.

Kaminari and Mineta were widely known to be unabashed in their ogling and had somehow side-stepped nut-punches with a weaving of naïve charm. So when Uraraka bounced past them on the bench, two pairs of eyes tracked her movement with stares like a couple of hypnotised Great Potoo watching a mobile vertical tennis match.

Kirishima and Midoriya shared a glance, and the question as to whether Mineta had been gastronomically strong-armed into decency was disregarded with a quiet,

“Never mind.”

“Hey guys!” Uraraka said brightly as she approached the grill. “Got any more sausages?”

“You know we do!” Kirishima crowed, flipping a wurst. But Uraraka wasn’t listening; she spotted Midoriya’s untouched burger with animal greed in her bright, brown eyes, like a Labrador.

“Aw, you got seconds, Deku? Lucky!”
“Here, you can have it,” said Midoriya, pushing the plate into her grabby hands. “Kirishima put me off.”

“Just for the record, I’d like to say that it was entirely his own fault,” Kirishima interjected. “And there’s more where that one came from!” He flipped the wurst again.

Uraraka nodded like this was for granted, her mouth full, holding the burger with a pinky out. Midoriya had always thought that was cute. It didn’t help that she had a face like sunshine and a smile as big and beaming as the crescent moon. She nudged him with a hip playfully, salad flopping out every which-way from the overly-full burger.

“Good training yesterday, Deku,” she said, her big eyes sparkling in the fading sun. “That flip you did right before we stopped was amazing. I think you were the only one who hit all the targets.”

Midoriya felt himself blush. “Thanks! Yours was great too. I think you only missed one or two in the end.”

“Oh come on,” she laughed, good-naturedly. “I missed five. I’m surprised Aizawa didn’t banish me. That course was rough.”

“You still did a great job.”

“You guys are gross.”

The tranquillity was interrupted as Bakugou sauntered up to the grill with a wide, insouciant stride, elbowing Kirishima aside and swiping the tongs. Kirishima didn’t seem to mind, leaning against the table that housed the varied meat and foodstuffs. He straightened a bottle of mayonnaise as Bakugou tossed a sausage onto his plate.

“You still eating, buddy?” he said. “How many beers have you had?”

“Mind your own business, jackass.” Midoriya noticed Bakugou’s speech was slightly slurred, his axis off. He doused his burger in hot sauce and took a sloppy bite, big as a shark’s.

Midoriya and Bakugou’s shaky truce based on a mutual desire to improve was about as steady as a house of straw, but it held. Although their rocky history still flared up like a bad rash occasionally, (particularly when left alone in a room together) proximity was no long culpable for their animosity. Bakugou was too good at his Big Bad Wolf bit; still brash, tall, and overly-lean, with a mean slant to his mouth and eyes. His back was built like it was made of boulders, his arms thick and his knuckles hairy, like an ape. But he seemed to have curbed some animalistic behaviour recently. He hadn’t launched an unprovoked fist at Midoriya in a very long time. A blessing, but Midoriya still pictured fashioning some walls made of bricks and stoking the fireplace sometimes anyway. Just in case.

For Bakugou, Midoriya had recently come to realise, normal human communication was ineffective. He spoke with his body: the weight of his punches, the ridge of his tense shoulders. Midoriya had realised he had experienced more successful conversations with Bakugou during their sparring than he ever had verbally.

The sparring was a new development that had arisen from the cumulative effect of several screaming matches across the training-room floor, with one or more of their respective friends holding them back so that the practice equipment might live to see another day. Eventually Aizawa had announced in a tired voice,

“Bloody Hell, just let them at it. Maybe they’ll learn something and I’ll have less of a stampeding
headache for once in three bleeding years.”

Their classmates had been nervous, but after the first four or five matches when neither of them emerged with more threatening injuries than a handful of bruises and, once, a dislocated shoulder, they let them be. After all, Bakugou walked away from most things unscathed, and Midoriya had done worse to himself on many occasions. It wasn’t even that hard to pop his shoulder back in.

Body language. It was all about body language with Bakugou, and although Midoriya was far from fluent, he had come to realise that if Bakugou didn’t leave their matches rolling his joints in agony, then Midoriya hadn’t done a good enough job.

Even here at a social barbeque, from his head to his toes, Bakugou reeked of danger and devilish intent, but Midoriya catalogued the way he tossed the tongs back to Kirishima when he was done loading his plate, handle first, and smiled softly to himself. A calculated throw: soft, angled to be catchable, and easily caught. At this point it was textbook.

“What are you grinning at, Deku?”

“Nothing,” he said, with a shrug. “Kirishima has hot sauce on his face.”

“Oh, man,” Kirishima grumbled, taking a napkin and wiping his cheeks. “You splashed me, dude.”

“You should keep your face out of the way of my food, then,” Bakugou grunted, his mouth full. In the wake of enjoying their strange display of a unique friendship, Midoriya felt the weight of Uraraka’s shoulder as she leaned dramatically against his side to draw his attention.

“I can’t finish this, Midoriya, help me?” she said, holding up the burger with one lazy arm for him to bite. He laughed, nudging her back upright, taking a big mouthful. Half the salad had fallen out, so it was mostly a soggy mess of meat and bread, but it was still good. He looked up to catch Kirishima and Bakugou openly staring.

A butterfly flitted onto Bakugou’s hand and he shook it off in that sudden panic one is only gripped by when insects touch them unexpectedly.

“What?” Midoriya grunted thickly, still chewing, trying not to laugh at Bakugou’s break in composure.

“Nothing,” Kirishima said too hastily, turning to his burning sausages. “Just thought you were still stuck on Mineta chucking up his guts, that’s all.”

“Yeah, and you two are gross,” Bakugou repeated, not one to mince words. He slung his empty plate onto the table and made to move past them.

Here’s the lay of things: Kirishima was stood at the grill, his cheesy ‘Kiss the Cook’ apron, half-tied and covered in grease splashes. Beside him, directly to his right was Bakugou, peeling away with an expression like they were all doused in excrement. Then, to Bakugou’s right stood Uraraka, her mouth still moving with an overload of burger, her attention elsewhere. Midoriya, finally, stood on her right, his hands empty.

With everyone preoccupied, it was no wonder that no-one but Midoriya was privy to what happened next.

Moving slowly for someone who was so keen on removing himself, Bakugou slipped away from the grill and past Uraraka, who had taken up a conversation with Kirishima about his quirk, and
shifted behind Midoriya. Midoriya automatically stiffened, since Big Bad Wolf in his general bubble was usually a reason enough to duck-and-cover, but for a split second nothing happened, and Midoriya thought that he might just walk by.

Midoriya should know better by now than to think he could catch a break.

Five points of pressure and a hot palm on his lower back, there only long enough for Midoriya to take a stilted breath. His back shivered like someone poured ice down his spine. He froze as the hand moved. Five inches lower: a soft stroke that slipped down to the plane of his pelvis, and was gone. The shadow in his peripheral lifted, and Midoriya turned what felt like a neck made of concrete to watch Bakugou saunter away to play-wrestle Kaminari for his beer.

His personal bubble shrunk in on itself like a hedgehog spooked by a sudden shift in the underbrush.

“Deku, you okay, dude?”

Midoriya had never jumped harder in his life. If he had been holding a drink it would have been all over him.

“Yes!” he squeaked like a prepubescent rodent. Uraraka and Kirishima regarded him with concern. “I just need some water, I think. Uraraka, can you come with me?”

“Oh, sure,” she said. “See you in a bit, Kirishima.”

“No worries, dudes,” he said lightly, then louder, to the crowd on the grounds at large, “Anyone want a taste of one of my sausages?”

Midoriya took Uraraka’s hand and made his way inside to a cacophony of whooping and crude jokes, his burning back to the gathering students.

“Deku, are you okay?” Uraraka said as Midoriya poured himself some tap water with shaking hands. “What happened?”

Midoriya’s knees were like jelly. He forced them to snap back into bone as he chugged the glass as though he had trekked through a desert for three days and this was his first taste of anything besides sand and dry air. Uraraka’s concern was palpable.

“I’m going nuts,” Midoriya gasped, flinching when the glass rattled on the counter with the force of his trembling. How old was he again? Fourteen? When the gentle touch of someone special sent his heart flip-flopping and his hands shaking harder than a stripper making rent? “Promise you won’t tell anyone?”

“Sure,” said Uraraka, placing a hand on Midoriya’s shoulder to stop his shivering.

How sweet she was: a softness in the harrowing Chokey of his day-to-day. They could have had something – they almost did, but some puzzle pieces refuse to slot, no matter how hard you push. Midoriya sighed, and relayed what had happened in the grounds.

Uraraka’s eyebrows shot up into her hairline. “How many beers have you had?” she asked.
“I’m serious!” he gasped. “I wouldn’t lie about this!”

“I know, I know,” she soothed, folding him in her arms. “What do you think it means?”

Curse Bakugou. Curse him and the generous tilting of the world as the carousel of Midoriya’s life rocked from side-to-side like a ship on a turbulent ocean, he clinging pathetically to the horse as he whirled around. He wrung his hands nervously above Uraraka’s back, feeling dizzy.

“Maybe he’s trying to figure out where best to break my spine?” he guessed with a weak laugh. Uraraka pulled back and levelled him with the slant of her brow. “Kidding.”

“You know if he ever really hurt you, I’d snap him like a breadstick.”

“I have never believed anything more strongly,” Midoriya reassured her. “It’s just weird. Why would he do that?”

Something pinged behind Uraraka’s eyes. “Maybe he likes you?”

Midoriya’s heartbeat bounced a funky rhythm up to the barrel of his throat. He choked, and stuffed it back down like gunpowder in a musket.

“Oh, how many beers have you had?” he coughed, wiping an eye with a wrist.

“I’m serious!” she cried. “You don’t just casually touch people like that. It’s not a normal thing to do. Then again, Bakugou’s not exactly normal.”

“I know just...” he trailed off, searching the small kitchen in the dorms as if it would present him the answer, gift-wrapped and neatly tied off from one of the cupboards, like Thing in The Addams Family. “Don’t leave me alone with him tonight?”

“I will stick to you like glue,” she assured him, slipping her arm through to link with his. “Come on, you’ll feel better after you have some more drinks. I snuck in Schnapps! But don’t tell anyone, it’s mostly for me and Tsu.”

They made their way back into the grounds where evening was just beginning to fall. The shadows stretched soft as rugs over the grass and stony pathways. A light breeze sighed through the surrounding woodland. The grill was still smoking, but all the meat was piled up on people’s plates, and the drifting smoke signalled the smouldering end of dinner. Everyone relaxed, their limbs folded over chairs or the grass like a Dali painting, bathing in the orange light from the setting sun. Iida, the class rep, who was sat stiffly on a bench with a book and a hotdog, kept checking his watch: a sure sign that it was getting late.

Midoriya’s eyes found Bakugou, in idle conversation with Kirishima, who had ditched his greasy apron. Midoriya’s knees wobbled back into jelly again. This would be harder than he thought.

“Come on,” said Uraraka, pulling on his arm. She grabbed a couple of solo cups and headed for the wall of the building. Midoriya tripped to follow her as she led him around a corner to cooler tucked underneath a prickly bush. Midoriya was impressed.

“Clever,” he said, as she dragged it out.

“Just a precaution.” She filled the solo cups, handed two to Midoriya and booted the cooler back under the bush. “Pretty sure they wouldn’t steal it if they knew it was mine, but I’m also worried about Iida confiscating it.”
“That’s fair.”

They wandered back to the group, the air now permeated with the sound of music. Kaminari had hooked up his phone to a speaker. He and Jiro leaned over it, her short, dark hair flicking into her face.

“This one’s better,” she said, prodding the screen. “The bass is amazing.”

“I mean, we’re here to chill, not get crunk,” said Kirishima from beside them with a laugh, his legs up on Bakugou’s knees on the bench. “Don’t make it too bouncy or Bakugou here won’t be able to control his rhythm any longer. You know what a party animal he is.”

Bakugou, who looked about the last person aside from Tokoyami who would get up and boogie for anyone, merely snarled and fruitlessly tried to push Kirishima’s legs away.

Something mellow and dripping with soul filled the evening air.

“Oh jeez,” said Kirishima. “Too far the other way.”

“I like it,” said Kaminari, and started to shake his hips slowly. Jiro acted out spanking his gyrating booty.

“I’m gonna hurl,” said Bakugou with all the ill grace expected of his charmless disposition.

Across the way, Uraraka dragged Midoriya over to where Asui crouched on a stool and presented her with the solo cup. She blinked slowly, slightly out of time with one another. They were wide, and vacant, amphibious in their bulge, and it had taken some time for it to stop unsettling Midoriya that they peered blithely in two outward directions at one time.

He would never admit it because he adored her.

Her curved lips split like melted cheese into a baggy smile as Uraraka held up the cups.

“Drinkies!” she announced.

“About time,” croaked Asui warmly, scrambling up to take the drink. “Where have you guys been?”

“Oh, Deku was having a gentle crisis in the kitchen,” Uraraka said shamelessly, plucking the spare cup from Midoriya’s hand for her own. He made a shocked sound in protestation. He had felt Bakugou’s eyes on him as they had moved around; woe betide all of them should he overhear.

“Oh, yeah?” Asui asked. “What about?”

“Life and stuff,” said Uraraka. “He’s not feeling too…peachy. Bit of a bummer, really. I thought he might crack but there you go.”

“Hah-hah,” grunted Midoriya, sinking into a nearby bench as his legs teetered in the sponge of his muscles like the bone were made of Meccano. Also, when were his knees going to grow back in? Was this knee puberty? “Very funny.”

Asui looked curiously between the two of them.

“Someone touch your butt?” she asked with her usual air of pragmatism. Midoriya choked on his drink as Uraraka burst out laughing. “I’m right?”
“Not my butt,” Midoriya gasped. “Uraraka, you said you wouldn’t tell!”

“I didn’t!” she cried. “She guessed! You were there.”

“Yeah, but you couldn’t have made it more obvious!”

“Who was it?” Asui asked. “Kirishima? It was probably a joke in that case. Kaminari? He talks about butts all the time. It probably doesn’t mean much. What about Todoroki? I know you guys are pretty close. He seems like a butt guy.”

Midoriya choked again, and this time didn’t recover so quickly. Uraraka slapped him casually on the back as she spoke.

“No way, surely Todoroki is a boob guy? Hard not to be with Momo around.”

“Look who’s talking,” said Asui, prodding at Uraraka’s bulging chest. Midoriya thought he might pass out. “I think you’re wrong anyway. He’s totally a butt guy.”

“No way, tenner says he’s a boob guy!”

“I’m pretty sure he’s a guy guy, actually,” came a voice from nearby. Todoroki shuffled towards them, his hands in his pockets.

“Oh,” said Asui, frowning into her cup. “What do we do about the bet, then?” she asked Uraraka, who shrugged.

“I guess technically you win in that case?”

“Nah, we’ll void it,” said Asui. “My gift to you, babe.”

“You’re my hero.”

“Why are you guys talking about me?” said Todoroki, slumping beside Midoriya on the bench, whose face seemed to be trying to go through every shade of red in the spectrum without pause for effect. He drank deeper into the cup to try and hide it.

“Someone touched Midoriya’s butt and we’re trying to figure out who,” said Asui.

“Tsuyu!” gasped Midoriya. “Why did you tell him?”

“You didn’t swear me to secrecy,” she said with a shrug.

“A rampant butt-toucher, huh?” said Todoroki. “Sounds more like Kaminari’s field.”

“That’s what I said,” said Asui.

“So who was it?” said Todoroki. “Need us to break some fingers?”

“Oh, please don’t,” Midoriya wailed, burying his face in his lap, resigned to his death by humiliation. “It’s not a big deal,” he added, voice muffled. Then, in a tone of one projecting a soliloquy on-stage, “Why must you mock me this way? Oh, booze, now you are my only dignity.”

“Au contraire, our sweetest friend,” gushed Asui, tapping the rims of their cups together plastically. “We’re here for you and your butt.”

“Your butt’s integrity,” Todoroki corrected.
“Guys,” Midoriya begged.

“I’m out.” Asui drained her cup, not listening. “Want any more liquid dignity?” she directed at Midoriya, who shook his head.

“I’m good.” He indicated his half-full cup.

“Cool. Uraraka, where’d you stash the goods?”

Uraraka glanced at Midoriya and Todoroki on the bench. “You be alright for a second?” she asked.

“I’ll be fine!” he said miserably. “It’s alright, just go.”

“Okay. Todoroki, you’re on Deku duty.”

“Noted.”

Midoriya spluttered, feeling more and more like the group’s injured child.

“Sorry, Midoriya,” said Asui as she and Uraraka moved away, “but apparently there’s a rampant butt-toucher on the loose. Gotta be careful.”

“Oh my God,” said Midoriya, lapsing his burning face into Todoroki’s shoulder. He patted Midoriya’s hair awkwardly: a stunted but genuine gesture from a reserved friend. “Could she be any louder?”

“They’re just teasing,” said Todoroki as Midoriya resurfaced. “They care about you. We all do.”

“I know,” said Midoriya. “It’s sweet.” He lifted his cup. “You want some?”

“Not for me,” said Todoroki. “But thank you for offering.”

They sat in companionable silence for a moment, listening to the soft music from the speaker on the table. Jiro was crooning the lyrics, Kaminari following her lips like a lovesick fool. Midoriya smiled. Kaminari was tragic; hopelessly in love with all the girls he knew. Midoriya was pretty sure that gunning for Jiro was a swing and a miss, however. She too watched Uraraka’s hips whenever she walked past.

“They’ve been gone a while,” said Todoroki, looking in the direction Uraraka and Asui had disappeared to three songs ago. “I need the bathroom. You be okay here?”

“I’ll be fine,” said Midoriya again as Todoroki slowly stood. “Really. Go do your thing.”

“Alright, but go to Iida if you…” he trailed off, looking up as someone approached. “Oh, good.”

Midoriya swallowed hard, recognising the shift in Todoroki’s tone could only mean one person had chosen that moment to join them.

“You finally buzzing off, Half ‘n’ Half?” Bakugou grunted. “’Bout time.”

Midoriya, refusing to look anywhere but deep in his cup, could only see the bottom of Bakugou’s dark jeans and his trainers. He wondered, as his ears shot to the temperature of the sun, how much liquid you actually need in order to drown.

“Already making a fool of yourself?” snapped Todoroki. “That might be a new record for you, and that’s saying something.”
“I could beat you into powder if I wanted to,” barked Bakugou, and Midoriya looked up in time to see him flex his ridiculous, rippling arms. “Want to see what it’s like to be a soluble?”

If he didn’t intervene, there would likely be a scrap, and Midoriya didn’t think his nerves could take it. Before Todoroki could retort, Midoriya leapt to his feet and stood between them, seeing Iida’s glare levelled their way. “Don’t you have to use the bathroom, Todoroki?”

“Stand down, Midoriya,” Todoroki said calmly, rolling up his sleeves. “This is more important. Peeing can wait. I’m gonna destroy him.”

“Just go to the bathroom, please,” Midoriya begged.

“I’ll tell you where you can go,” Bakugou roared. “You know where you can go and I’m going to send you there.” Several heads turned in their direction and Kirishima sat up from his lounging position on the bench in concern. There was a ringing silence. Midoriya took another gulp of liquid dignity and put his back to Bakugou.

“Oh!” Midoriya said too loudly. “Isn’t that nice of Kacchan to offer to tell you where the bathroom is, even though you already know, having lived here for ages! Wow, what a nice thing to do. Okay, bye, Todoroki! See you in a minute! If you get lost, he can text you directions.”

“I don’t think that’s what he meant-”

Midoriya wasn’t listening, pushing Todoroki in the direction of the school building.

“Have a good one! Don’t forget to write!”

Todoroki eventually got the message and shrugged Midoriya off, glancing back at them as he mooched away. Halfway to the building, his mooch became a cross-legged jog.

Behind Midoriya, the sounds of the party resumed. He turned just in time to see Bakugou flipping Todoroki the finger.

“Kacchan!” he squawked, trying and failing to lower Bakugou’s brick-wall arm. “Don’t do that!”

“You telling me what to do, nerd?” he snarled down. “That asshole has it coming.” His hot breath fanned over Midoriya’s nose. They were close. Midoriya took a step back, away from the heat that radiated off Bakugou’s furnace skin. He shook his head and sank onto the bench, trying to quiet the hammering in his ribcage. Bakugou glared at him. “You getting mouthy lately.”

The small of his back tingled. Five points of pressure and a hot palm. Bakugou had touched him. Intimately. Midoriya swallowed.

Bakugou dropped on to the bench next to him with a crash. Midoriya was half-tempted to mime a shockwave bounce. How had the last couple of years leant this guy so much strength and size? Mind you, Midoriya had packed on too, just not as much, it seemed. He settled for making his cup swill.

“What you drinking?” Bakugou demanded. Midoriya blinked into the cup as if he just realised he still had it.

“Uh, water?” he tried.

“Liar.” Bakugou stuck his nose in the drink before Midoriya could stop him. Midoriya had a face-
full of wheatgrass hair, smelling like caramel and coconut. His heart hit his Adam’s apple and played a samba in his throat. “You sly piece of shit,” Bakugou leaned away to grin down at him.

Midoriya felt like the proverbial Alice, trapped under the uncanny stretch of a Cheshire cat grin, in a world between worlds. “It’s Schnapps,” he admitted weakly. “But don’t tell anyone. It’s Uraraka’s.”

Unfairly, the sunset made Bakugou glow. The phantom press of his hand on Midoriya’s back burned like a brand. Midoriya’s brain startled like a deer and flipped to autopilot. “Want some?”

Bakugou took it without a word and drank deeply. Midoriya stuffed his sweaty hands in between his thighs.

“Gross,” Bakugou commented to the drink, as if on reflex, but sipped again anyway. He tried to hand it back, but Midoriya didn’t trust his shaking fingers to hold the cup steady.

“It’s fine! You finish it,” he spluttered.

Without a word, Bakugou took one of Midoriya’s arms and pressed the cup into his palm, then squeezed his wrist with just the right pressure to cause his hand to curl around the cup tightly. Then he shoved Midoriya’s shoulder and stood, returning to his original spot next to Kirishima, without looking back once.

Midoriya peered nervously into the suddenly lighter cup, shivered hard, which had nothing to do with the rapid cooling of the evening, and downed the rest.

Uraraka and Asui were crouched in the corner beside the stash-shrub, shoulder-to-shoulder, when Midoriya and Todoroki finally came looking for them. Their heads were ducked, facing the wall in silence.

“You guys in time-out?” said Todoroki. “Draw on the walls again?”

The girls looked up.

“It’s this squirrel,” said Uraraka. “What’s it doing?”

The boys peered over their shoulders. A small, grey squirrel crouched, half-submerged in a hole in the wall, shivering. Its fluffy tail twitched occasionally as they watched.

“Looks like Sero when people tell him he needs a shower,” said Todoroki. “Did you know he flees from soap?”

“Sero smells like citrus and the ocean, so we all know that’s a lie,” said Uraraka. “Maybe it’s having boy trouble,” she suggested, looking pointedly at Midoriya.

Midoriya laughed too loudly when Todoroki glanced at him. “Yes! You know. Because I’m a boy. And I get in trouble.”

“Maybe someone touched its butt?” suggested Asui. Midoriya felt singled-out and took it upon himself to leave.
At Iida’s insistence, he joined the clean-up effort at the barbecue site. More than a few of his classmates were staggering across the grass with tables, chairs and crockery in their arms. The beers had had the desired effect: a light mood, soft smiles and laughter. Midoriya scooped a collection of empty bottles into a box and hoisted it into his arms to help.

Suddenly Bakugou appeared beside him, his arms full of more empty bottles. Midoriya jumped at the crashing sound of hollow glass banging about just below his chin as they were dumped unceremoniously in the box. Before he could say anything, Bakugou hefted the load out of his arms and strode away. Midoriya blinked and hastened to catch up.

“I was going to do that, Kacchan!”

“Well, it’s heavy. You’ll just drop it, nerd,” he grunted, shouldering past. “Watch yourself.”

Midoriya stared as he flounced off, indulging in a short fantasy where Bakugou’s fat head got stuck in the kitchen doorway and the class were forced to butter the sides of it and boot it through. Furiously, he piled up four chairs and carried them in with one hand, just to prove a point.

“Anybody up for a movie?” said Kirishima once all was cleaned up and they lazed around in the living room. Kaminari’s fist shot in the air from the sofa, half his attention on his phone.

“Yeah, boi!” he said, dragging out the vowels. “I’m good for anything.”

“Bet you are,” said Sero, playfully leaping on his belly.

“Dude, no, I’ll barf!”

“I’m off to bed,” said Todoroki demurely. “Goodnight, everyone.” He patted Midoriya on the shoulder as he left, with a soft smile, that Midoriya echoed. Several others followed suit, leaving Kirishima, Kaminari, and Sero on the sofa by the wall, and Ashido, Uraraka and Asui in the kitchenette. Mineta plopped himself onto a cushion on the floor and seemed quite happy there, like a schoolchild in assembly. Bakugou lay draped over the other sofa like he owned it, still taking lazy sucks from the overly-glistening neck of a beer. For doing his best impression of a throw, he took up an awful lot of presence in the room.

Needing a place to sit, lest he stand awkwardly for the duration of a film, Midoriya approached the sofa. He stepped over the leg that shot out expectedly to trip him, and sat on the floor before the telly, his back resting on the bottom of the sofa that Bakugou’s considerable frame occupied the entirety of.

“What the fuck do you think you’re doing, nerd?” Bakugou demanded in an uncharacteristically low voice, unnervingly near Midoriya’s head.

“What?” said Midoriya. “You can see the screen!”

“Moron.” Bakugou shifted his legs. There was enough room for Midoriya to sit. He waited for a moment to see if it was a trick. The slightest raise of Bakugou’s eyebrows had Midoriya scrambling up to take the spot before Bakugou changed his mind. To top off this bizarre sequence of amicable events, he stretched out his arm in possession of the beer once Midoriya settled, offering him a
drink.

With an open mouth of surprise, Midoriya reached for the bottle, only to find it swept out of reach.

“Too slow,” said Bakugou, chugging. To his own surprise, Midoriya burst out laughing.

“I like drunk Kacchan.”

The only response to this was a lingering grimace.

Kirishima hooked up his laptop to the television and finally settled on an action film, since that seemed to be the only genre that didn’t cause at least one person to groan dramatically into the crescent of their hand. The lights were dimmed, and Midoriya became hyper-aware of the sole of Bakugou’s foot pressing against his outer thigh.

Ten minutes in to the film, the door creaked open a slice and Yaoyorozu peeked in, her big black ponytail framed by the hallway light.

“Hey guys,” she said brightly, in a stage-whisper. “I just got back from my trip and Todoroki said you were watching a movie in here. May I join you?”

“’Course,” said Kirishima, whacking pause. “Have a sit. Good trip?”

“Exceptionally!” she said, slipping inside the room. “I’ll tell you about it later, though.”

“Oi, Bakubro, budge up,” said Kirishima. Bakugou snarled out a ‘Fuck you’, but heaved himself into a sitting position all the same. Yaoyorozu slotted herself next to him on the other side and he immediately sprawled wide, knocking Midoriya’s knees together.

Probably for the best, thought Midoriya absently.

They resumed, and now not only did Midoriya contend with a whole lot of Bakugou pressed up against his heated side, but also the steady pump of his breath, the heave and shift of his compacted muscles as he sipped his beer. Midoriya peered around the back of the sofa for something to distract him that wasn’t the film’s lengthy dialogue and spotted Uraraka, perched on a barstool in the kitchen. She gave him a goofy thumbs-up and he wrinkled his nose at her.

“Oi, sit down, nerd,” Bakugou breathed beside him, and Midoriya snapped back into a sitting position like his strings had been yanked. Fearing and obeying Bakugou’s gruff wolf-voice, close by and heavy with command, was too recent a habit to break. “You’re gonna miss shit.”

“It’s alright,” Midoriya breathed, quiet to not be heard over the film. “I’ve seen it before.”

“Nerd.”

Bakugou offered the beer again. This time he didn’t whip it away when Midoriya tentatively took it. It was soaked with condensation like a window in spring. He took several gulps, willing his stomach to stop flipping.

“Don’t drink it all,” snapped Bakugou, snatching it back. “Fucking Deku.”

Midoriya’s stomach took up shag dancing with his liver, his skin tingling like(300,67),(712,98) had electrocuted him on the down-low. That was two drinks they had shared tonight. He allowed himself to feel, for one moment, a little optimistic about their burgeoning new relationship.

He would compartmentalise the rampant butt-touching for now. He had a few boxes in his head for...
A few weeks later, Midoriya felt his bones shiver with the impact of his spine hitting the training mat and reconsidered.

“Come on, young Midoriya!” called All-Might from the edge of the gym.

“Come on, Deku!” roared Bakugou, almost in tandem from above him, his muscles rippling under his tank top. “If you want to spar, you’ve got to at least give me something to work with.”

Midoriya groaned and heaved himself to his feet. This was the third time today that Bakugou had dragged him into practising CQC. He was bruised, shaky and more than a bit flustered. This new amicable Bakugou was making him so nervous that he made stupid mistakes. Over and over again. Bakugou took advantage every time.

Speaking of; Bakugou stepped into his space, feinting a punch and sweeping his feet out when Midoriya put his focus into dodging it. Falling, again. Frustrated with always being at the disadvantage, he forcibly cleared his head as he toppled, snaking an arm around Bakugou and flipping them so that Bakugou hit the mat first. This would have become a pin, but Midoriya lost himself in the rolling muscles beneath him. His thighs encased hot, heaving flesh, compact as an overstuffed trunk. He faltered, and Bakugou had always been good at finding Midoriya’s loose threads and yanking them. He lurched out from underneath Midoriya and pinned him, face-down on the mat in his favourite hold. The foot on Midoriya’s wrist made it ache.

“Suck it, Deku,” Bakugou spat, and Midoriya tried to blame the heat in his cheeks on exertion.


Frustrated, Midoriya ripped himself out of Bakugou’s hold and stomped to the locker room, splashing handfuls of water in his face and willing himself to calm down. He looked at his soggy expression in the mirror. His hair was a matted mess. His skin was bruised and red with the effort of training. He poked a flowering mark under his eye.

There was nothing going on here. He was young. This was a natural reaction from his body. He’d read enough about this stuff to not be concerned.

But then none of his other classmates turned his limbs into melted butter when they brushed past him, smelling of sugar and gasoline. Heat returned to Midoriya’s face. Maybe Uraraka and Asui had a point.

“You done moping, dickhead?” came a wolfish voice from the doorway. In the mirror, Bakugou stood aggressively in the doorframe like a sentry, blocking an escape. Midoriya wondered if throwing a porcelain sink at someone was a federal offence, and if you could get away with it outside of an edgy action film. He closed his eyes and ducked his head, imagining a brick house with four solid walls all built up around him, and a roaring fire in the floo.

Unfortunately, this little piggy was facing a wolf in possession of warheads in the literal palms of his hands, not just a strong respiratory system.
Maybe he could use bigger bricks?

“Oi,” said Bakugou, closer. Midoriya jumped – force of habit – and opened his eyes. Bakugou loomed before him, the menacing flicker in his eye like a distant firework. “Get back out there. You’re stalling.”

“Aizawa sent me in here,” Midoriya protested. “I didn’t just leave.”

“But you wanted to,” Bakugou said. Midoriya couldn’t really argue with that. He knew he made it even plainer by the way his gaze wandered to his feet.

“I’m just tired,” he tried, by way of explanation. Bakugou wasn’t having it.

“You’re not trying,” Bakugou spat. “It was easy as fuck to pin you the last…” He counted on his fingers as Midoriya tried to stave off the humiliation by eyeballing floor tiles. “Seven times. Sort your shit out.”

“I’m not doing it on purpose, Kacchan,” he snapped, louder than he meant to. A mistake, since raising your voice to Bakugou usually resulted in your face taking on Jackson Pollock-esque qualities. As predicted, Bakugou bristled and his palms smouldered as hard as his eyes. Midoriya reflexively shot up two placating hands. “No. Really. I think you’re just better than me. That’s all there is to it.”

“Shut up, Deku,” Bakugou snarled. “That’s a fucking cop-out. I know you can do better than that shit. You’re pushing your luck.”

It was Midoriya’s turn to bristle. Something inside him snapped.

“You just don’t get it, Kacchan. Back off, maybe?”

It had been a couple weeks since Bakugou’s strange behaviour at the barbeque, and not much in their dynamic had evolved at all. Apart from the odd shoulder-barge in the hallway, and snide comment about his hot chocolate at bedtime, Bakugou barely acknowledged him outside of training. Their sparring sessions all ended the same: Bakugou crowing his victory, with Midoriya pinned under him, shivering like the wall-squirrel.

Bakugou would eventually release his elaborate pretzel grip, freeing Midoriya from the hot, trembling sensation that strapped him tight to the mat more absolutely than any wrestling-hold ever could, and storm out the training room. He no longer rolled his joints. It was as if every fight Midoriya lost dealt his partner a personal offence.

As if Midoriya really wasn’t trying.

Wasn’t trying to stave off the violent, angry sensation that thrashed in his abdomen when Bakugou brushed arms with Kaminari, or locked eyes with Kirishima.

Wasn’t trying to force his hands to wander anywhere but over to Bakugou’s sweaty, writhing back when he did one-handed push-ups on the gym floor.

Wasn’t trying to lean back as far as he could in his chair during class, to avoid catching any thin sighs of sea-mineral scent whispering from Bakugou’s clean hair.

It should be noted that, if Midoriya had made a mistake earlier when snapping at Bakugou, he had sat on the nuclear missile launch button by talking back. Bakugou’s eyes flashed.
Midoriya dodged the initial fist aimed at his head but practically walked into the arm that swung around to catch him in a choke-hold. The crook of Bakugou’s arm slammed into his throat and he baulked, falling backwards into Bakugou’s dense chest as he secured the hold, trying to drag Midoriya to the ground with a bellow of rage. Midoriya caught himself, and, standing firm, swept Bakugou’s feet out from under him and twisted free. Bakugou hit the floor hard, but before he could retaliate, Midoriya, fuelled by limitless fury and latent hormones, ripped the entire sink out of the wall using Full-Cowl and lifted it above his head. Porcelain chunks rained down and bounced at their feet. Water sprayed their legs like an aggressive dog at a fire hydrant.

Bakugou’s chest began to heave, his eyes bright and wide.

“Hey guys, Aizawa was just wondering where yo-O-oh my God.”

Kirishima stood in the doorway, frozen in shock, looking from Midoriya, brandishing an entire sink six feet in the air, and Bakugou on the floor, stunned into immobility by the prospect of being smashed into mush with a bathroom fixture. A steady cascade of water from the exposed pipe slowly began to flood the room.

“Hey, Midoriya, you could do that if you want, you know, but I don’t think it would ever get him truly clean,” said Kirishima carefully, clearly wondering if Midoriya had gone to the dark side and would begin some kind of rampage in which he would merrily clobber all in his path with a porcelain sink. “I mean, it is Bakugou.”

“Oh my God,” Midoriya gasped, carefully lowering the weapon into the swimming pool that used to be a locker room. “I don’t know what- Kacchan, I’m sorry!”

“Yeah, okay,” breathed Bakugou, heaving himself out of the puddle and dripping quietly, looking anywhere but Midoriya in the eye. He waded over to Kirishima and gripped him by the shoulder, whispering urgently into his ear. Then he splashed out of the room, squelching into the distance long after he had actually left. Kirishima turned incredulous eyes on Midoriya.

“Alright there, Batman?” he said, approaching slowly. Midoriya nodded, the panic settling in slowly, getting comfortable in his gut. He pulled his hair.

“What did I just do?”

The panic rolled out a futon and started fluffing cushions.

“What did you almost do,” Kirishima corrected. “I don’t think anyone would have blamed you if you had actually hit him with it, though.” He swam over, putting an arm around Midoriya and tugging him away from the washroom carnage. “But I’m glad you didn’t.”

“I gotta go to Aizawa,” he said in a frenzy. “The room is flooding.”

“Eh, we’ll worry about it later.”

“But I broke a sink!”

“I didn’t like that one much anyway,” said Kirishima with a shrug as they squelched in Bakugou’s footprints down the hallway. “It said something tasteless about my sister once.”
Although Aizawa had begrudgingly dubbed the incident, ‘An effective way to weaponise your surroundings’, he still ordered Midoriya to clean up the mess by himself whilst the new sink was being installed. Clearing out a room two-inches full of mouldy water with floating bits of tissue paper is no picnic, so Midoriya resigned himself that the experience would be deservedly dull and demeaning. That was until Bakugou joined him within the first ten minutes, carting a mop and an apologetic grimace.

Not the first time they had served punishment together, and likely not the last. Midoriya was too shy to ask if his presence was voluntary, so they mopped in awkward silence for two hours.

After a long bath and a meal, Midoriya stood in the kitchen, cleaning off his dinner plate at the kitchen sink. The plate dribbled sauce sullenly down the drain, and Midoriya’s self-respect dribbled with it. He wiped the sponge over the plate and slotted it into the dishrack, rinsing the sponge of residual sauce.

“Watch out, lads, he’s got a sink!”

Sero loped into the room like a jackrabbit, nudging Midoriya with one long arm.

“I can’t believe that’s spreading already,” Midoriya groaned. “Who told you?”

“Who cares, dude, it’s fucking great!” Sero hooted. He hooked Midoriya in a light hold and noogied his scalp. “Hope next time it’s something bigger. Like a bath!”

Midoriya wriggled free and flicked suds at Sero, who pretended to cower. Half the class had taken a short Saturday outing into town, and so soon the troops piled in the kitchen-cum-living area, dumping shopping bags into plastic chairs. Kirishima ruffled Midoriya’s soggy hair, and Kaminari insisted on an explosive fist-bump.

“Don’t know what you nerds are celebrating,” barked Bakugou from the doorway, looking effortlessly dishevelled in joggers and a loose tee. His hair was wet. “Deku’s a fucking lunatic.”

“You’re just jealous because you can’t pull a sink out of a wall,” Sero teased, as Midoriya’s mortification hit his hairline.

“Watch it,” Bakugou snarled, ripping into the fridge for a bottle of water.

Ashido, Yaoyorozu and Uraraka bounced into the room; Ashido looking flashy in a new puffy jacket. Uraraka had a pretty red shawl wrapped around her shoulders. She slung her arms around Midoriya in a hearty hug.

“Glad you’re back from solitary,” she told his shoulder. “Was it super gross?”

“No more than I deserved,” Midoriya laughed weakly, with a guilty glance at Bakugou. He wasn’t looking, chugging his water. Did he have to take in the neck of bottles with the whole of his mouth like that? Uraraka stood up on tiptoe and pressed her lips to Midoriya’s ear.

“He didn’t come out with us,” she whispered. “Did he help you?”

Oh God. Voluntary.

“Haha, yup,” Midoriya said at normal volume, patting her back. She broke off with a cheeky grin.

“Pretty impressive,” she said, taking a mug from the cupboard for tea. “Ripping an entire sink out of a wall.”
There was a general murmur of agreement. Sero winked. Behind Uraraka, Bakugou snorted, backwashing into the water bottle.

“Freak,” he said after he swallowed. Midoriya hung his head. “No one else here would pull shit that insane.”

“I dunno.” Kirishima bounded up with a laugh, hooking his arm around Bakugou’s shoulders and activating his hardening quirk so that Bakugou couldn’t shake him off. “Sounds reasonable to me.”

“Fuck off!” Bakugou barked, struggling. “What do you know, shitty hair?”

“Given the option,” Kirishima said loudly to the kitchen, tightening his arm-lock on Bakugou, “who here would have pummelled my brother with that sink?”

Literally every arm in the room shot into the air. Then, of course, every human body in the room became a smoking outline when they all dashed for the exits, as Bakugou’s hands started to spark, and fury set into his face like a bad smell.
Earth-Stompers don't take breaks from their boots.

Bakugou would continue to rattle the ground beneath Midoriya's feet like a giant disturbing the villages of men for as long as he lived. His false hope that Bakugou’s gentle touch at the barbeque could be passed off as a one-time, drunken thing - that life could return to its steady equilibrium - soon crumbled to rubble. Apparently upsetting Midoriya's carefully balanced infrastructure was his raison d'être.

So it was that another incident came to pass not many days later. It went as follows,

Midoriya had decided, one morning when he woke up in a cold sweat half an hour before his alarm was to sound - again,

*I need extra training.*

If he woke up one more time in the tender hour, prone from vivid dreams of being pinned and riled, he would explode. At least rigorous training was an outlet that wouldn’t be questioned here.

He had swung his legs out of bed, waited for the morning dizziness to ebb away, and plodded into the kitchen.

Swinging open a cupboard to make cereal, Midoriya had experienced that strange, innate tingling that told him he was not alone. Startled, he had spun around, caught in a panic composed by the silent hour, the stilted half-darkness, and the continual ambush of various villains over the last few years. Of course, it had been only Bakugou, which had at once caused relief, and had also doubled his agitation. He had finally understood then why deer in headlights didn’t move.

“What are you doing, nerd?” Bakugou had asked gruffly. His voice had sounded like he’d spent all night with his neck on a grinder, and then had woken up to gargle gravel. He had been slouching insouciantly on the doorframe, his usual furious demeanour perhaps deadened by the task of waking. Midoriya had snapped his head away, almost cleaving his skull on the half-open cupboard door.

“Just woke up early,” he had stammered, pushing the door all the way open. “You know how it is.”

All he had needed to do was add nervous laughter and he officially would be crowned ‘Most Awkward in Front of Crush’ of all time. A ceremony that would probably involve him fumbling and dropping his crown at Bakugou’s feet whilst the audience claps forlornly, and All-Might pats him on the shoulder and says something like, “Well, my boy, at least you can punch pretty good.”

Bakugou had sauntered in. Midoriya could tell by the sound of his bare feet peeling on the tiles. Midoriya had fancied he could imagine the fading footprints he left on the chilly morning flagstone: tell-tale misty trails of his exploits from fridge to sofa.

Midoriya had stiffened when he felt heat approach his back. He had squeezed his eyes shut, half-expecting to be bashed with a building fixture in retaliation for the other day. Maybe a particularly sturdy shower head?
For a moment: nothing.

Then suddenly a hot hand had closed over his bicep, and the entirety of Bakugou’s body was pushed up against his back.

Midoriya had forgotten how breathing worked.

The hand had squeezed. The flaming press of his assailant’s poufy pectorals had rested, piping hot, on Midoriya’s shoulders. Midoriya’s eyes had flown open in time to see Bakugou’s other arm reach up and take the sealed coffee pot from the top shelf. Their height difference was palpable at times like that.

Heat, heat, heat. All up his back. Midoriya’s heart had threatened to pound right through his sternum and tango with the teapot on the counter. He had realised he still wasn’t breathing and maybe never would again.

At last, the hand had released him and Bakugou moved away. Midoriya’s back had felt cold. He was left trying to remember who he was and what he was doing before that happened. He had taken a deep, silent breath, trying to steady his hands long enough to pour muesli.

That was fine. That had been normal, right? People in enclosed spaces would need to reach around each other sometimes. That was totally normal.

Except. Except that there was another coffee pot on the other side of the kitchen in a lower cupboard: unsealed, and half-full. His hands had trembled.

Why was it easier to swing a punch at this guy instead of having a conversation?

The sound of a kettle boiling and the clink of a metal spoon in a china mug.

Midoriya had tossed too much cereal into the bowl and hurried out of the room, refusing to glance at Bakugou as he left. Only when he had reached the sanctuary of his dorm room, sunken into his desk chair and collected his sensibility from when it lay scattered all about his brain in little chunks of alarm, did he realise he had forgotten both milk, and a spoon.

That was two days ago.

Bakugou had been especially distant since then, but Midoriya had felt his eyes on him all through their classes and it was starting to really rattle him.

After class on the third day since, Midoriya changed into some running clothes and wandered into the grounds to jog a couple of laps. He was already pushing it: muscles tense and screaming from the grueling day using his quirk. Iida had accidentally rammed him pretty hard in that last exercise, and his only real consolation for the bruises up his left side was that the wall he’d bounced off of was more damaged than he had been. Ashido had thought the Deku-shaped crack marks were hilarious.

The real reason he was out here, if he was being honest with himself, was to avoid Bakugou’s post-class cooking session in the kitchen area. He’d seen far too much of Bakugou performing feats of strength and power all day long, and rather thought that being in the vicinity of him doing anything
remotely domestic like preparing food would cause some sort of cardiac arrest.

He was overworking himself, but a physical frenzy was easy to handle if it meant satiating the mental one. So far compartmentalising butt-touches and back-presses had been ineffective.

He’d made it one lap, puffing like a fifty-a-day smoker, when Bakugou sauntered into view, still in his training clothes, the breeze doing fun and playful things with their folds. Oh, good. Midoriya debated stopping to chat, but when he came close enough to spot the expression on Bakugou’s face – who looked for all the world like Midoriya owed him money and he was going to be especially firm about it – puffed air into his sagging chest and sped up.

Would have been fine if Bakugou hadn’t clotheslined him.

His back hit the turf and he rolled onto his side, clutching his throat and wheezing.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Bakugou bawled, kicking Midoriya onto his back with the sole of his boot. “You’re going to fucking kill yourself at this rate, you idiot!”

Midoriya made a noise like a steam-powered wheeze machine and blinked the water out of his eyes. He scrambled to his feet, his brain swimming with fatigue, and made to push past Bakugou to get back on the track.

“You gotta be fucking kidding me.”

Bakugou got him. Pretzeled him tight. Midoriya’s limbs were too tired to protest and he just caved, folding like a telescope. Grass sprouted up into his nostrils as he inhaled dirt.

“Lemmego,” he said with a mouthful of mud and worms.

“Nah,” Bakugou grunted. “Where’s that asshole with the stupid meatball quirk when you need him? I’ll carry your dumb fucking ass inside if I have to. You wanna fucking die before you graduate?”

Midoriya struggled against the force of the hold but his muscles felt like they’d been pounded with a mallet for six straight hours and then blasted right out of a canon onto his body. He whimpered, kicking ineffectually at the earth.

“I’m gonna get off,” said Bakugou. “But if you start fucking running again I’m snapping your legs off at the knee, got it? You gonna fucking run?”

Midoriya said nothing. Of course he was going to run. Far away. He wouldn’t turn left at the corner of the track, he would keep going: leap the UA boundaries and with any luck, take off into orbit. The agony in his muscles was nothing compared to the pounding in his head and loins.


“Fine. Notgonnarun,” he mumbled. He wriggled and Bakugou let him go, kicking him away. They both stood on wobbly legs, and Bakugou advanced aggressively.

“Fucking talk.”

Faced with reality in the waning sunshine, Midoriya stood chest-to-chest with Bakugou, heaving, covered with sweat and now dirt, and looked up into his searing eyes.

“I’m sorry I almost hit you with a sink,” he said. Bakugou looked surprised for a moment, but then
he scoffed.

“Hah. As if I would have let you.”

“That’s why I said almost.”

There was a long silence, until Bakugou’s face split into an angular grin. “You little shit.”

“You were winding me up, but I shouldn’t have. I just… I haven’t been feeling right lately and it’s a problem. For me,” Midoriya clarified. Bakugou said nothing, his eyes red as magma, freckled with little flecks of sunshine gold. “Um. It’s probably fine. It’ll pass. I thought that this might help.” He indicated the general vastness of the grounds. Air, sunshine, exercise. Space away from you.

A breeze rumpled Bakugou’s hair and Midoriya watched all the ways it peaked and danced.

“Sometimes,” said Bakugou thoughtfully – and it was a testimony to their new rapport that Midoriya could tell which gruff grumble could be identified as thoughtfulness – “you got something going on in there that works things out.” He indicated Midoriya’s head with a curved finger. “Faster than anyone else. But other times you’re still just stupid Deku. Don’t think bigger, think smarter. You can’t just keep punching if the guy you’re fighting is made of steel. You’re just gonna break both your hands.”

He shoved both of his into his pockets and leered at Midoriya.

“I’ve never seen you run from jack shit,” he said, side-eyeing the running track. “So whatever this is, work it out. Fight it properly. You’re a hero; fucking act like one.

“So you wanna come hang out with these other losers, or what?”

Midoriya couldn’t help how his eyes spontaneously sprouted into dinner plates. Not trusting himself not to babble excitedly, he nodded, allowing Bakugou to swing around and precede him into the school building, wondering if broken hands and broken hearts could come back stronger in similar ways.

The running track was grateful to be granted a few days to recover.

Like the moment after an echo, Midoriya was alone.

Steeped in mounting unease, he stumbled through the long halls of UA. Something was off about this scene: the daylight coming through the tall, slim windows cast no light, but rather soaked the walls in a flat shape, like a low resolution setting on a video-game. The Quirk exhibition would be starting soon, and Midoriya had no entry prepared so he hurried on through the halls. His legs were so heavy and tired it was like wading through cement.

At last, he made it outside to a vast stretch of the grounds that seemed to go on forever and ever into darkness that curled like fingers into the jaws of forests. It was the middle of the night, and he would be in trouble for being out after curfew, but All-Might had said to meet him out here, so he must press on.
Towards what could only be assumed the centre of the endless field, loomed a massive monolith, stretching into the night sky like a black beacon. Midoriya reached a hand to it. It was as smooth as polished marble to the touch.

“Do you like it?” came a voice. Bakugou stepped out from the side of one huge corner, half-soaked in shadow, leaning carelessly to one side like the sloppy teenager he was. He opened a broad palm and laid it proudly on the flat stone beside Midoriya’s. “I made it with my quirk.”

Midoriya peered closer, and saw that the stone was etched with tiny words: every mean thing that Bakugou had ever said to him was immortalised in this magnificent structure. Midoriya stepped back, impressed, and was about to congratulate Bakugou on his efforts when he realised Bakugou had disappeared back around the corner. Midoriya gave chase, but no matter how many times he rounded the monolith’s great walls, he just couldn’t catch up.

Having become all turned around, Midoriya searched for a landmark to take him back to school, because class would be starting soon. He spotted a shack in the distance. Before it, larger than life, stood All-Might, beckoning with one great arm, his pearly grin wide on his enormous face. He ducked through the shack’s doorway, and Midoriya was there in moments to follow.

Inside was quiet and empty. A small fire burned in the grate beside a dusty hearth. The table was set for two, but someone had smashed most of the crockery, and the chairs were the wrong way around. Midoriya set about tidying up when there came a furious knocking at the door. Panicked, Midoriya took up a steak knife as a weapon, quite forgetting for a moment that he had a powerful quirk.

“Who’s there?” he gasped, his voice feeble. The fire crackled in the grate.

“It’s me, nerd,” came Bakugou’s voice from the other side. He adopted a mocking falsetto. “Let me in.”

“Just open the door,” said Midoriya, not dropping the knife. Bakugou’s gravelly laughter sounded harsh in the quiet.

“If you insist.”

The door blasted off its hinges, bouncing around the hut like it was made of silly putty. Bakugou stampeded into the room, dust billowing around him in great clouds. He was in full hero gear: two great green grenades as large as watermelons acting as bracers, channeling his mighty quirk. He was masked, the bandit eye-piece dousing his burning gaze.

Midoriya would have hit him but his hands were tied together above his head and he didn’t think he could get off the training mat anyway. He could only watch as Bakugou dropped the gloves and knelt, running two searing hands up his exposed torso.

“I told you not to push it, Deku,” he said. The door had fallen into the grate and the house was on fire. “Now we’re all in trouble.”

He had never assumed that the last several months of sparring with Bakugou would have cumulated in sex on the training mat, but now that it was happening, Midoriya was unsurprised. He hoped his hooked legs over Bakugou’s shoulders wouldn’t get in the way of Bakugou’s sudden commitment to turning into a wolf.

As he was bounced enthusiastically on the mat, and Bakugou sprouted a wolfish snout covered in tan fur, Midoriya gazed at the collapsing ceiling above them. Stars. So many stars; sparkling
pinpricks in the huge velvet blanket covering the vast earth, like millions of sugar crystals scattered across the plethora of the night sky. Even as he watched, a constellation formed. Stars brightened in formation, beams of lights criss-crossing over to one another to create the effervescent figure of All-Might: a dazzling effigy. Midoriya tapped Bakugou on his massive, hairy shoulder and he rolled off.

“Do you think we’ll make it?” Midoriya asked, finding his feet. He stood up on the training mat, his eyes on the sky.

Bakugou just snuffled, his long, wide ears flicking, so Midoriya patted him on his wolf-head and moved to the blazing entryway.

“I don’t think we’re ready,” Midoriya admitted, flames tickling his cheeks. Bakugou, human once more and stark naked, lounged on the training mat with his hands behind his head, a halo of starlight glittering in his golden hair as the ballet from the fire all around them danced orange on his edges.

“You’re never gonna be,” he said.

“Why not?”

Bakugou stood, and he was larger than life, beautiful bronzed and shining like models in magazines. The fire burned bright behind him. Unable to look any longer, Midoriya turned, tears in his eyes, and jumped through the burning doorway…

Midoriya’s eyes flickered open, swamped in the forest-darkness of his UA dorm-room. The tears fashioning in his eyes dripped and hit the pillow, and a cold hand reached in and gripped his guts, twisting them until he gave and rolled over to get out of bed. The clock on his bedside told him it was four in the morning.

It was a warm night, but he felt cold all the same. Details of the dream trickled away like sand in the palm of his hands as he moved to gaze out of the window. The stars here were not as many or as clear as the ones in his dream, peaking over Bakugou’s bare shoulders as though whispering him secrets. The grounds below were dark and sprawling. Midoriya scanned them for a pair of glowing red sequin-eyes catching the light from the downstairs windows, but there was nothing.

He took up his phone, flicking through contacts. It was useful to have all of his classmates’ numbers in case of attacks or emergencies. Too many times over the last year or so had he hovered over Bakugou’s name in his address book. Their exchange remained empty. He pressed the name. He tapped out the very first message:

Midoriya 04:37

Are you up?

He hit send, his hands sweaty, the images from the dream drumming behind his eyelids. It was only afterwards did he realise quite how wanton the message came across as. Mortified, he began to pray Bakugou would not be modern enough to misinterpret it. Panic settled in. Stupid, stupid idea. He clambered onto the sill and tucked his head into the dark safety of his knees.

Less than two minutes later came the returning buzz. With shaky fingers, he read the reply:

Kacchan 04:39

What the fuck u doing awake nerd
Oh. That could have been worse. He tapped the keys.

Midoriya 04:42

_Couldn’t sleep. Weird dreams._

Kacchan 04:45

_So why the fuck u telling me. Go to sleep._

Kacchan 04:51

_What ur stupid dream about_

Midoriya wiped the sweat from his palms, shivering uncontrollably which was only partly to do with the temperature next to the window. He could lie. He could make something up so wild and hyperbolic that Bakugou would just laugh at him and stop replying. He could exaggerate a disinterest and say ‘Nothing, really.’

In the end, not really knowing what compelled him to do so, he settled on the truth. Or at least part of it.

Midoriya 04:59

_You. About how you’re gonna be a hero and be really good. It was pretty amazing. Then you turned into a wolf._

A silence came then from his correspondent that stretched for so long Midoriya though that this was the end of their stunted conversation.

Kacchan 05:12

_That’s not weird that’s just true. Except the wolf bit u fuckin lunatic. get ur head in the game nerd and get some fucking sleep. Gonna destroy you again in training tomorrow so u better sleep and be ready_

Relief eased Midoriya back under his bedsheets. He flipped the pillow over so that the cool wetness of his drying tears wouldn’t press against his skin in the night.

Midoriya 05:15

_Not this time, Kacchan! Goodnight._

Kacchan 05:17

_Yeah, whatever fuck you_

Kacchan 05:21

_Night you fucking nerd_

Midoriya’s phone remained next to him all throughout the night.
“Okay, slackers,” barked Aizawa, and the class shuffled into a tighter formation, drawn to attention by the sound of his voice. Aizawa had the uncanny knack of controlling a classroom through presence alone. “New exercise today. You’ve spent the last two weeks working on your quirks, and I’ve seen shit-all improvement so we’re back to basics. In the woods around the school there are five hostages that need rescuing. Collect them and bring them to me. One per team. Once the first five have been brought back, that’s it. You do it in thirty minutes and you won’t be writing lines during tomorrow’s swim trip. Huddle up!”

Midoriya was shuffled into a team with Aoyama and Iida. Across the grass, Bakugou fired him narrowed eyes beside his teammates, Ashido and Kirishima.

“You are expected to use your quirks to get to the hostages,” continued Aizawa. “You can fight, and prevent other teams from reaching the hostages first, but no broken bones, please, we only have so much room in the infirmary. If any of the hostages ‘die’, the culprits are in the cooler. On your marks!”

“Okay,” said Midoriya, turning away from Bakugou’s evils and huddling with his team.
“İngenium, we can use your speed to get us to the woods first. Take Navel-Laser and wait for me at the edge. Navel-Laser, when you get to the woods, start looking for a hostage. As soon as you come across one fire your beam and we’ll come find you.”

“What if I don’t find one?” he asked in his affected accent, flipping his hair.

“Keep an eye on the clock,” Midoriya said. “If we come across a hostage in the meantime, we’ll grab them and head back. You can come in after the thirty minute mark anyway and we should still pass. Our best bet is to split up.”

“If I see anyone else?” he said.

“Stay low,” said Iida before Midoriya could open his mouth, leaning down for Aoyama to climb on his back. “No sense trying to take anyone on alone.”

“Ready?” bawled Aizawa. All-Might gave Midoriya a ‘good luck’ thumbs-up from beside him. Midoriya turned just in time to spot Bakugou’s heated glare. “Go!”

Accepting a snappy low-five from Midoriya, Iida took off towards the woods at his impressive top speed, closely followed by half the class, including Bakugou, who blasted off hot on his heels, the fire from his explosions scorching the grass. His teammates shouted after him, running to keep up. Midoriya crouched, fired up his quirk, and began the series of carefully powered leaps that would have him cross the distance in a short a time as possible.

When he reached the edge of the woods, Iida was waiting, as planned.

“Naval-Laser went that way,” he gestured emphatically south. “So I suggest we go the opposite way to cover as much ground as possible.”

“Good idea,” said Midoriya. They set off at a jog, scanning the area and treetops for signs of their targets, and any possible foes in the branches or underbrush. The weather was mild and the trees were spaced apart far enough so that they would have no trouble spotting Aoyama’s beauteous beam sprouting into the heavens when it came.

Five minutes in, they had seen nothing promising, but a series of nearby explosions drew them up short. Iida rammed his back against Midoriya’s as they automatically took a defensive stance. Then at the same time Bakugou burst from the underbrush, covered rather comically in leaves,
Aoyama’s beam shot forth into the sky some half a mile behind them. Iida spotted it with his back
to Midoriya, but unfortunately so did Bakugou.

“Nice plan,” he called to Midoriya. “Gonna beat you losers to it, though!”

“Go, go!” Midoriya barked to Iida, who, needing no further instruction, sped off into the trees.
Bakugou tried to use the dust he brought up in his wake as cover to follow, but, sparking with One-
For-All, Midoriya blasted off the earth and body-slammed him in mid-air.

They tumbled into the soil, carving a meteor track into the forest floor, pine needles spraying like
confetti into the air. Bakugou wasted no time in ramming Midoriya into a tree, face-to-face.

“No broken bones,” Midoriya gasped, images from his dream rolling unhelpfully before his eyes.
“Aizawa will—”

“Aizawa can suck my dick,” Bakugou snarled, his voice so guttural he may as well have been Clint
Eastwood. He threw Midoriya to the ground. Midoriya rolled away as an explosion blew up the
earth behind him. He covered his head as chunks of soil scattered upon him like a strange rainfall.
Bakugou advanced again and Midoriya put up both his feet and delivered a mighty kick that sent
Bakugou into the trees. He crashed through bracken and tumbled into a juniper bush with a scream
of rage.

“You little shit,” he bellowed, trapped momentarily in the jaws of the shrub. “Think you’re so
fucking good, huh?” He ripped a chunk of greenery with great prejudice from his face and
launched it to one side in frustration.

With Bakugou lying there like an upturned turtle, Midoriya reflected on the all the sparring that
had led to nothing beneficial for either of them so far. Perhaps it was time for a different approach.

Midoriya crept up like one would upon a wild animal. Eye contact. He extended a hand.
Bakugou looked for a moment like he was going to bite it.

He took it, allowing Midoriya to drag him to his feet, shedding the juniper like a leafy shell.
Midoriya bravely brushed a chunk of foliage from Bakugou’s shoulder; watched him swallow
tightly.

“Race you,” Midoriya said. Bakugou’s face split into a wild grin, and they took off between the
trees.

They were ambushed by another team in-coming from the west and in the ensuing fight, Midoriya
lost sight of Bakugou. He manged to slip out from underneath Dark Shadow and flee for a glade in
the trees, watching the skies for Aoyama’s beam. The clock was ticking: they only had thirteen
minutes to grab the hostage and head back to Aizawa if they wanted to avoid a punishment.
Midoriya shouted for his teammates in desperation.

To his surprise, the beam shot up into the sky fifty or so feet to his right almost immediately.
He burst through the trees into a clearing, where Aoyama clung to a tree branch twenty feet in the air, and Iida stood guard at the base. The ‘hostage’ – a soft dummy stuffed with wool – sat in a metal cage hung precariously on the branch with Aoyama shakily shimmying towards it. Iida shouted, “Look out!” as Midoriya charged forward to assist.

Bakugou, presumably drawn by the second laser-beam, crashed into Midoriya once again, sending them toppling away. Iida moved to help, but was detained at once by Kirishima.

“Bakugou!” he chided. “Don’t just run off by yourself, dude, we’re doing teamwork shit here!”

“Shut up,” Bakugou bawled, tussling Midoriya into an arm-lock. “Where’s that pink bitch?”

“You call me that again, and I’ll acid your face!” said Ashido brightly, hopping into the clearing. “Your beam’s so bright, Aoyama, I think everyone who’s left will be coming this way now!” She started searching for foot-holds in the tree trunk.

Aoyama just whimpered, trying not to look down.

“Bakugou, get in the tree, dude,” shouted Kirishima.

“I’m a bit BUSY AT THE MOMENT!” came the response, bellowed so loud across the clearing one might have thought he and Kirishima stood at opposite ends of a football field instead of ten feet away. He had a leg hooked around Midoriya’s shoulders and twisted him into the dirt, grappling with his fists to stop his low-powered punches.

The ground was springier than the training mat. Midoriya could break free of the hold with enough momentum. This gave him an idea. There were trees all around them. All he needed was the right timing.

“Aoyama,” he screamed. “Get upside down! Break the chain with your b-”

Figuring out he was shouting orders, Bakugou slammed a fist into Midoriya’s throat and he choked, but it was enough. Sobbing, and possibly praying now, Aoyama swung around on the branch, gripping it tight with both knees.

“Ah shit,” said Kirishima as his beam lit up the clearing.

The beam blasted through the chain that held the cage. Realising what he was about to do, Bakugou tried to pin Midoriya down with an explosion, but familiar with his holds and moves by now, Midoriya had already manoeuvred himself. Trying to use his quirk in desperation left Bakugou unbalanced, and he screamed as Midoriya burst out from under him. Bakugou’s explosion fired harmlessly into the atmosphere, hot and dense. The air rippled.

Wasting no time, Midoriya launched himself off the turf at the nearest tree, and used it as a springboard to bounce in the trajectory of the falling cage.

“DEKU!”

“Bakugou, no, the hostage!” Kirishima yelled in warning as an explosion cracked through the clearing.

Bakugou had fired at him again. Midoriya could feel the heat chasing him through the air. He reached out with both hands and blocked the hostage with his body. The force of the explosion sent him and the cage toppling to the ground, crashing through the haggard teeth of branches and underbrush. Thankfully, the tough material of his uniform protected him from the worst of the
blast, but one sleeve went up in flames, and he wasted precious seconds dousing the fire.

“Iida!” he screamed.

There came a smashing through the foliage and Iida shot through, Kirishima being dragged along in a kind of piggyback, trying to dig his feet into the earth to stop him.

Bakugou crashed into the open, pursued by Ashido, who fired a stream of acid in Iida’s direction before he could react. Midoriya booted the cage straight up in the air with Full-Cowl, and dived to shove him out of the way. Kirishima toppled off. Iida lurched to his feet, clutching his head, and made to run for the space where the cage would land, but Kirishima, just in front of him had made it to his feet first. With an expression like he was going to regret this, Kirishima solidified his entire body as Iida lurched forward. Unstoppable force versus immovable object. There was a horrible crunching noise as they collided and they both went down again.

At once, Bakugou and Midoriya made for the cage. Midoriya dodged Ashido’s acid attacks and used the towering trees to bounce into the cage’s trajectory once again, as Bakugou blasted straight towards it with the force of a well-placed explosion on the forest floor. They both reached the cage at the same time, wrestling for a split second before they crashed down through the leaves, rolling a good long way before they came to a stop at the roots of a massive tree.

Midoriya struggled to his feet, dazed, feeling hot blood trail down his face from where a rock must have lacerated it. His head was pounding. From about ten feet away, he saw Bakugou stand too, holding his shoulder. His left arm hung useless.

Between them, equidistant from their positions, the cage lay on its side forlornly; its occupant miraculously undamaged, if a bit twiggy. Midoriya opened his stance to fight. If he could take down Bakugou and make it back to Aizawa with the cage, they could still win the point.

“Think you can beat me, Deku?” Bakugou snarled, cracking his neck and raising a flashing glove. His left arm still hung by his side, bare as a branch. Was it dislocated? Broken? His face still held colour. Was he faking it? “Come at me!”

Midoriya went on the offensive and gunned for Bakugou’s hanging left arm.

He dodged in time, using an explosion at his feet to flip over Midoriya’s head and kick him in the back. Midoriya tumbled, but so did Bakugou without the use of his left arm to catch him. They rolled up simultaneously and this time Midoriya got a hit in, snapping Bakugou’s head back and causing him to eat dirt. With a scream of frustration, he kicked Midoriya’s legs out from under him and leapt on top, pinning him with his knees, a scalding glove to Midoriya’s throat.

“Think you’re better than me, still, Deku?” he raged. Midoriya could get out of this. If Bakugou’s arm really was broken, he didn’t stand a chance. He pretended to struggle, wanting to hear what Bakugou had to say. “Think you can beat me, huh?”

Heaving above him, bigger even in real life than he had seemed in the dream, Bakugou may as well have been something descended straight from Olympus. Dirty from the forest floor, reeking of pine needle and nitro-glycerine; he billowed steam like a dragon into the damp air. His face was split into a snarl, like a beast. He was a devil with blazing ruby-red eyes; as terrible as the pit, shoulders built like a brick house, dripping with sweat in eager little droplets down his nearly-bare chest.

The heat from Midoriya’s face this time drained instantly to his groin. What was the point in denying it anymore? His feelings couldn’t have been more evident. It would be like trying to
ignore a tornado as it drew you in, or the shuddering clap of an active volcano as it saturated your world in liquid fire.

“No, I don’t. But I am ready, Kacchan,” said Midoriya, panting like a dog in a hot car. His neck was sweating into the wet earth. “You were wrong. And I am going to be a hero. As strong as I can get. You are too. We’ll do it together. We’ll go on and be heroes together!”

“You’re such a freak, Deku!” Bakugou screamed. He feinted a punch with his gloved right hand, and when Midoriya predictably blocked it, raised his naked left to blast Midoriya’s face through to the other side of the planet.

Midoriya knew it wasn’t broken. That conniving, dirty, lying scoundrel.

Fortunately, Midoriya had guessed as such and knocked the incoming explosion to one side. His only confusion on the matter was why Bakugou would scream, “NO!” when he was the one who had launched the attack.

Ah, the dummy.

They both turned to watch the cloth go up in flames.

More detention with Bakugou. Their teammates seemed strangely understanding about the matter, despite being cooped up with them in a stuffy classroom to write essays, a handful of others that hadn’t passed joining them in moody silence. The rest of their friends enjoyed a day in the pool.

This included – to some surprise – a team that consisted of Koda, Mineta and Hagakure. They had devised a rather clever plan involving Koda creating a distraction with an army of birds mirroring something out of a Hitchcock film, Mineta sticking everybody in place with his purple balls whilst they batted at the wildlife pecking at their heads, and an invisible Hagakure slipping away with the hostage during the chaos. Aizawa also pointed out that the only team of two had also managed to pass. Although since that consisted of Todoroki and Uraraka, this came as no surprise.

In the woods, after the smoke had cleared and the dummy had well and truly expired, the alarm had sounded to signal the end of the exercise. Drawn by the explosion, the others had found Bakugou and Midoriya stood ten feet apart, hands folded rather sheepishly, like naughty schoolchildren caught throwing fistfuls of sand at each other. Kirishima had whistled when he saw the smouldering remains of their target.

“Well,” he had said evenly. “Can’t really say I’m surprised.”

This had cut more deeply than Midoriya wanted to admit. Even Kirishima predicted that Midoriya and Bakugou’s cesspit of a relationship put their missions and their victories in danger. He wasn’t sure how he and Bakugou were supposed to move forward when everything between them became a wall of concentrated chaos every time.

Detention was uncomfortable. Midoriya knew that he was at least partly culpable for their predicament and spent the first two hours not speaking to anyone, keeping his head down and working in silence. During the short break, he locked himself in the loos for the entirety. However, when lunch came around, Kirishima cornered him in a hallway.

“Midoriya, what’s up?” he asked kindly. “You’ve been really off lately. So not like yourself. You
wanna talk to me, bro?”

Midoriya shook his head, feeling glum and ostracised. Truthfully there was so much calamity vying for attention in his head that he struggled to settle on one subject these days anyway.

“Well, that’s okay, dude, but you know, I might be able to help.” Kirishima’s earnest face broke into a brotherly smile.

Suddenly Midoriya was tired. Tired of lying to himself and keeping silent. Tired of waking up in a sweat in the night with thoughts of Bakugou spinning like Catherine Wheels in his mind. The running track was so full of his footprints that if you lined them all up, the resulting trail would probably circle the planet twice.

So he told Kirishima everything, and braced for impact.

“Really?” Kirishima said, with a light tone of surprise. He didn’t sound disgusted. Midoriya glanced up with hesitance and trepidation, but Kirishima looked more thoughtful than anything else. “I guess it makes sense. But I think you’re complicating things.”

“I am?” said Midoriya, relaxing enough to speak.

“Yeah, I mean Bakugou’s more straight-forward than people think. Just be honest with him, dude. He respects that. It’s the same as with this hero thing. He’s got an agenda and pit-chew!” He mimed the act of heading straight for your goal with one hand. “You got much to lose?”

Midoriya thought about it. “Not really. I had hoped we could… try to be friends.”

“I think you already are,” said Kirishima shrugging. “With him, you just have to decide that’s what’s happened and go with the flow. Some days I don’t think me and him look like friends, but I know that he’d take a bullet for me in the end. Not that he’d have to.” Kirishima solidified an arm and tapped on it to demonstrate. Midoriya patted it too.

“You’re better at taking those sorts of hits than me,” he said with a sigh.

“I’ve seen you get back up every time.” Kirishima shrugged. “So you want me to tell him?”

Midoriya coloured. “What? Please, no! You mustn’t, Kirishima, really!”

“Okay, no worries!” Kirishima put his hands on Midoriya’s shoulders to calm his sudden panicked outburst. “Just don’t burn yourself out over this. You’re a catch, Midoriya. Anyway, you wanna go hang out with the others and get some grub?”

Midoriya never thought he’d have friends like Kirishima in a million years. He was lucky. Lucky to have been singled out by his all-time hero and given an opportunity to be here where there were people who looked out for each other.

Kirishima let him go when they reached the lunchroom and dropped into a seat next to Bakugou, dragging him into conversation to keep his attention off Midoriya. For this, Midoriya was grateful, and slipped unnoticed into the line next to Iida. They were all here together, laughing and joking in the echoing hall like Midoriya hadn’t brought their last training session down in literal flames around them. They were a family: a protective shell; a safe cottage in the dark woods to hide from the weaving tendrils and gnashing teeth.

Bakugou wasn’t the only one who gave this hero thing his all. Sometimes it was difficult for Midoriya to admit he worked hard to be where he was now. Perhaps watching Bakugou behave so
flashy and self-important had encouraged Midoriya to stamp down his own ego. He didn’t want to come off like *that*. It was common knowledge that Bakugou’s self-righteousness was his Achilles’ Heel, but who was brave enough to remind him?

Oh, my, Bakugou what an inflated ego you have!

All the better to crush you like a bug with!

Still, Midoriya couldn’t help but admire him. Even now, lounging like a delinquent in a plastic dining chair, his uniform and proprieties a mess, Midoriya saw an ideal. Haloed with burnished gold sunlight flicking through his hair, his wide mouth with its jagged canines and wolfish grin, Midoriya kind of saw art.

But then he’d always been one to romanticise everything.

His greying mash slopped off his fork in unappetising chunks and he chalked it up to irony.

That evening came sullenly, dragged into being by the big, crescent moon’s steady hands. The stars popped in by their thousands in the night sky, giddy once more with the chance to sparkle, whilst the sun harrumphed and mooched over the horizon in a gaudy, red defeat.

Midoriya watched this develop, pretending to read a book on arithmetic by the large, cool window in the living area. The room was deserted apart from him. Most had retired to their rooms after dinner, exhausted from their swim. It had been great fun, apparently, and Midoriya tried not to look too guilty about it all. Bakugou told them where they could go with all the articulation of a brick wall, as was his wont.

A wide pizza box yawned on the coffee table next to Midoriya’s armchair, containing one meagre slice of pepperoni pizza left over from Sero’s takeout. It had been sloppy, greasy and twice the size it needed to be for one person. Everyone had chided Sero for being lazy, but they all wanted a bite. Food-sharing wasn’t uncommon for Class 1-A. A varied diet made them all stronger after all. There was, of course, one notable exception.

Bakugou thought himself an exception to a lot of rules.

The sun sank but Midoriya didn’t move, comfortable in his reading nook. He had been here so long that the armchair seemed to have risen up around him like flower petals, and he cosied up, a veritable Thumbelina. The room fell into darkness with sudden sincerity as the sun tucked itself away; sequestering Midoriya’s light to read by. In poor trade, the reflection from the grinning moon lay on his book like a stubborn cat, greying and obscuring the wiggly words. He put the book down.

His stomach growled and he reached faintly for the pizza slice, unwilling to peel himself from the chair.

The door in the corridor banged against the wall as someone bruised their way in, a split second before curfew. Midoriya didn’t have to look to know who it was.
“Oi, nerd, why are you in the dark?”

The lights flicked on, sudden and blinding. Midoriya acquainted his face with the cool darkness of a fat pillow.

“Mmfflrrrrmmph,” he said in protest.

Bakugou just grunted in his way and there was the sound of heavy, crinkly shopping bags being dumped onto the kitchen counter. Midoriya peaked his head over the frilly edge of the cushion, watching Bakugou’s wide shoulders at work as he clattered about with someone else’s washing up.

The bags were filled with greens: big, leafy pak-choi and leeks the length of Midoriya’s arms. Thin, paper-white noodles in clear plastic poked out of the top, and along the bottom, the outline of fruit, and cans stretched the bags thin. So much food. Soon the sizzle of frying meat filled the room, and Midoriya’s mouth watered. He reached weakly for the pizza again but it was so far and his arm was so tired and it really wasn’t worth the effort of getting up.

Lulled into comfort by the domestic sounds of cooking – just like his mother at home – Midoriya dozed off in the chair, his face deep in the blackout pillow. He drifted into a stupid dream about Kirishima spraying everyone with hot sauce until he laughed so hard that his teeth fell out.

The sound of someone dropping a glass onto the coffee table jerked him awake. Bakugou, blurred at the edges thanks to Midoriya’s sleep-tacked eyes, was sinking into the chair beside him, toying with the remote.

“Oh, you woke up,” he said, and flicked the television on.

Midoriya blinked at him, confused by the sudden light and sound. He self-consciously wiped drool from his chin and the pillow, slowly pulling himself into a sitting position. His legs felt like they were made of concrete. His stomach growled.

Bakugou slurped, which was a funny sound for him to make, until Midoriya realised he was eating a noodle soup dish packed to the brim with meat, greens and a delicious smell.

Midoriya’s stomach made a noise like an angry bear stepping on a pushpin and he reached for the pizza slice. This time his hunger won out and he crawled out of the chair to reach it, debasing himself, his belly stretching long like a cat’s, trying to make the whole thing look nonchalant.

Trying to do something without Bakugou noticing was like trying to hide a pink elephant behind a doily.

“Was that your fucking stomach?” he said, a pinch of mirth twisting his tone. His eyes narrowed as he watched Midoriya pick up the sad last slice. “Did you fucking eat anything proper?”

Midoriya blushed and shook his head, cradling his morsel. He arranged himself in the chair so that he didn’t have to face the judgement on Chef Bakugou’s face. Bakugou made an astonished sound, like he couldn’t believe his ears, and Midoriya heard him stand.

“You are so pathetic,” he said. At first, Midoriya thought he was so disgusted that he had up and left the room, until he heard the bang of a cupboard door. The telly droned and Midoriya chewed the cardboard pizza morosely. Bakugou stomped back into his peripheral, dumping something that bonked onto the coffee table, right next to his book. Then Midoriya heard him slump back into his chair, the legs scraping on the carpet in protest.

Midoriya sat up. On the table was a bowl absolutely brimming with noodle soup, a pair of novelty
chopsticks lying across it like a bridge. He glanced over, confused in his groggy, post-nap stupor. Bakugou slurped from his own bowl, his eyes pinned on the telly.

The soup looked good. Really good. Thick but still watery; bits of meat and vegetable bobbing invitingly to the surface. He licked his lips like a cat.

“You gonna fucking eat it or wait for it to start its own eco-system?” Bakugou snapped, still not looking at him.

“This-” Midoriya stopped, lowering the pizza slice back into the box. He picked up the chopsticks slowly, waiting for it all to be a jape and have the bowl tipped into his lap with a maniacal cry of ‘Gotcha!’

Bakugou ignored him in favour of the ten o’clock weather report.

“Thanks,” he breathed. Bakugou still refused to look at him, sucking on noodles with his eyes plastered on the screen. Apparently looking at the people you were conversing with had recently gone out of fashion. “You’re amazing, Kacchan.”

Bakugou asked him not to tell anyone, since doing so would probably cause them to all expect free home-cooked meals from then on,

“If you fucking mention this I’ll gut you. Not having those leeches eat my fucking food like the useless roaches they are. Now eat, fucker.”

Midoriya ate. I don’t know if you’ve had food cooked by someone else when you’ve been famished, but it’s quite possibly the national standard for meals in Heaven.

“These noodles are really good,” Midoriya said, munching, trying not to let his eyeballs roll so far back that he lost them in the recesses of his skull.

“Of course they are. Better than the shit you eat.”

“Hey! I eat noodles.”

“Pot Noodles don’t fucking count, Deku.”

Midoriya wasn’t lazy about food. He ate when he had to, and most of his meals were home-cooked. His mother taught him a lot, and working together with the others in the class, had learned much about nutrition to support their hard-working bodies. Sometimes, though, when the day had been long and the night gripped him with such fatigue that he acquiesced to the gentle ease of a long nap, or simply shut himself up to study, dinnertime seemed like an unimportant illusion. And then it was ten o’clock and he begrudgingly shoved something in the microwave.

Bakugou was the opposite: almost counting calories; piling on the extra protein after a grueling workout, grumpy if he missed so much as a snack. Midoriya admired him for it, as he admired him for so many things.

This meal would mean a lot to Bakugou. It was part of him building his future.

So cradling it like a tiny child, delighting in the warmth from someone he had long thought of as lost to him, Midoriya showed it meant a lot to him too: he ate the lot. With relish.

“You’re doing the washing up, nerd.”
That was fair.

After that, things entered a tentative equilibrium.

Perhaps that was an exaggeration, since ‘equilibrium’ and ‘wild, explosive tendencies’ aren’t generally simpatico, but it was steady enough. The snide remarks drifted by almost like distant whirring in the mechanical plod of Midoriya’s daily life, and his defeats became less personal, almost business-like in their execution. Bakugou sometimes even let him go when he slapped on the mat.

He resolved to spend more time with his friends. Movie nights eased his nerves, sinking into the comforting embrace of one or more sets of arms on the sofa as they piled up. Bakugou was seasonably absent for most of these. His routine had become even more stringent recently and Midoriya wondered if it was pressure of exams.

One evening, he settled into a game of chess with Uraraka. He had been teaching her how to play, and she was getting pretty good.

“How’s things?” she asked, as she took his knight with her bishop, lining up her conquests at the edge of the board in a cosy formation. Midoriya thought it endearing how kindly she treated everything she touched, except in the arena, when she became a powerhouse of passion and force.

He admired her greatly. At one time, he had thought he loved her, in all her gentle grace, but like her quirk, she was lightness and freedom, something that couldn’t support the weight of his burden, his responsibility. He was like the earth in his power; in his craving for the wild bursting of nature and the deep rumblings of posterity in the tectonic shifts of time. She couldn’t mould him, and he would never constrain her.

“I’m alright, thank you,” he said, truthfully. Equilibrium. The carousel of his life was rotating again, if a little off-axis. He moved a pawn forward.

“I was worried about you, Deku,” she said, taking it immediately. Damn. “You were training so hard and there was all that stuff with the sink and everything. I mean, I still think that was pretty cool.” She giggled, twirling his knight in her fingers. It floated about on a bubble of anti-gravity. “I just hope you’re okay. You know, about him.”

Midoriya coughed to hide his reddening face. “It’s fine. I don’t want to burden you with things like that. It can’t be very nice to hear about.”

“I don’t mind,” she said. She put the knight down again and, scooting over to Midoriya’s side of the coffee table, dropped beside him on the sofa. “You need to talk about it. I bottled it up when it was me and it was awful.”

“You did? You know… how it feels?”

Her eyes captured his, big and brown as the earth on the mountaintops. After a moment, they flicked away.

“I know how it feels,” she admitted quietly. “Because that’s how I felt about you a couple years ago.”
“Oh,” said Midoriya. What else was there to say? “I’m… I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault,” she said in earnest, squeezing into his space even more. He revelled in the reassuring press of her against him, even spiralling in guilt as he was. “It’s different now but I still love you.”

“Me too.”

She gently bumped his shoulder with her forehead and he smiled, stroking a piece of hair away from her plump cheek. “You’re my best-”

She suddenly stopped, breath catching. She was staring at something over Midoriya’s shoulder.

“Oh no.”

Midoriya glanced around, startled. He was horrified to see Bakugou freeze-framed in the doorway, an expression of malice etched into his ever-serious features. He turned and stamped away.

“I gotta-” Midoriya gasped to Uraraka. She nodded.

“Yes, yes,” she said, hand on her mouth. “I’m so sorry, Izuku. I didn’t mean to-”

“I know, I know,” he said, already running out the door. “It’s not your fault. I promise. Wait here.”

He hurried down the hallway, panic twisting in his gut like snakes. Where? Which way? He ran down a coldly-lit corridor and spotted a door to the grounds swinging on its hinges, the handle burnt off and tossed to one side.

Outside, Bakugou was storming blindly into the darkness.

“Kacchan!”

He didn’t stop, didn’t turn. Just held up a hand and let off the most enormous explosion Midoriya had ever seen come forth from his palm alone directly into the stratosphere. Midoriya shielded himself against the blast of heat. The grass bowed in a great circle as if trying to flee. A cloud of starlings rose screaming into the air from a nearby tree in a flurry of feathers that rained down like debris.

“Don’t fucking follow me around, nerd,” Bakugou bellowed, his shoulders hunched. A strong breeze ruffled his hair and Midoriya caught the lingering stench of smoke on it. “Go back to that Round-Face bitch and leave me the fuck alone!”

“Kacchan, nothing happened!” Midoriya squeaked, feeling like he was defending a case that hadn’t entered court yet. “Uraraka’s my friend!”

“I don’t care!”

“Then why are you out here?”

Bakugou stiffened. He shoved his hands into his pockets and began a strangely purposeful stride towards the library.

“Walking,” he spat.

Midoriya watched this odd display for a moment, his mind blank, his heart racing. He let his legs possess him and jogged to catch up. Bakugou stomped onward, refusing to even look at him.
“You broke a door handle,” Midoriya said, matching Bakugou’s elongated march.

“Door wouldn’t open. Not my problem.”

Bakugou suddenly stopped and Midoriya almost crashed into him. He teetered on his toes and tried to look composed and innocent when Bakugou finally spun to look at him. His lips were paper white, his eyes searching, pin-pricking every point on Midoriya’s body. Midoriya felt trapped in the teeming peril of Bakugou’s frantic gaze. He clenched his fists.

“Not that I give a shit,” Bakugou said, a rattle in his voice, “because I fucking don’t, but that shit didn’t look – You wanna look me in the eye and – Fuck. No-one wants a hero that’s a fucking liar, Deku.”

Midoriya blinked. “I’m not a liar.”

“You fucking are. You’ve lied about loads of shit.”

“I wouldn’t lie about this!”

“Why not? You’ve lied about pretty much everything else, why not this shit too?”

Midoriya couldn’t think of an answer that wouldn’t spill his heart out of his chest like garbage into a furnace. He shook his head.

“I wouldn’t. I don’t. Anyway,” he cleared his throat. “We shouldn’t be messing around with that sort of thing when we’re training to be heroes, right? It… complicates things.”

There was a long, heavy pause. Midoriya could practically feel the air between them thickening.

“Right,” Bakugou grunted. “You’re right. We don’t think about that.”

Some thread of composure Midoriya had been twining carefully around his heart suddenly snapped. The carousel spun off into orbit. Thankfully Bakugou turned and headed for the library before he could catch sight of the tears that pumped, unbidden and hot, over Midoriya’s stricken face.

Chapter End Notes

¯\_(ツ)_/¯

also i’m really not a furry guys it's thematic

thanks to those who have left kudos & comments! had a look and took some feedback on board, as well as gushing over your super sweet words <3
A week or so passed, and summer bounded in with balloons and confetti, bringing with it bright, succulent flowers and warm, breezy afternoons. The hot weather made it harder to hit the running track all the time – for fear of melting like pudding – and Midoriya was low on outlets. Tokoyami saw him pummelling the stuffing out of a punching bag in the gym one evening, closed his copy of Lovecraft, and asked if he needed a hug.

Disheartening.

Since it was now the weekend, the gang decided to celebrate with a summery picnic in the woods. Kirishima promised smuggled beer and grilled sandwiches the likes of which had never been tasted. Sounded perfect. They had all been working so hard, and with exams and summer school approaching, Midoriya was eager to escape. He pictured reading in a sun-dappled glade whilst his friends frolicked gaily in the fresh, green grass.

Kirishima said that when they had been doing the ‘hostage rescue’ training in the woods, Shoji and Yaoyorozu had found a beautiful spot to picnic on the east side, with a trickling stream, and so covered in wildflowers that it looked like a Monet painting. Everyone expressed their enthusiasm. Even Bakugou grunted that it would make a change from being cooped up with ‘you lot’.

All the world defied Midoriya’s glum mood. On the day they were to embark, the sun seemed to know their plans and blessed them with a golden afternoon. The grass had sprung green and gay on the lawns, thick and lush as a blanket despite how often it was mowed. The great admiral-blue sky bowed down to the ground with nary a white wisp in his body. So hot it was, that the boys’ t-shirts stuck to their backs within two minutes of stepping outside.

“Oi, give us a hand with this grill.”

Kaminari hurried over and joined Kirishima in hoisting the wide metal barbeque together. Uraraka looked on apologetically.

“Are you sure you don’t want me to float it?” she asked, already balancing ten chairs and a table that bobbed in the air above; people holding them by their legs like funny-shaped balloons.

“It’s cool,” said Kaminari, winking. “Let us manly men handle the grill. We’ll be fine.”

“Yeah, just love toying with hot meat, don’t you boys?” said Ashido, walking past carrying bottles of fizzy pop. Kaminari spluttered as Kirishima laughed out loud. The others mooched about collecting food, crockery and blankets from their rooms, and the kitchen. Yaoyorozu skipped past with what looked like an entire library in her arms.

“For something to do,” she said brightly when Midoriya stared. He shook himself.

“Looks great!” he said. “Did you bring our study books?”

“Mostly that’s what they are,” she admitted. “I thought we could get some reading in before the exams next month.”

“You nerds still need extra studying?” Bakugou scoffed, sauntering past with a box of plates in his
arms. Midoriya stolidly avoided eye contact and vaguely wondered if entrusting the breakables to Bakugou was the wisest decision.

“Ah, don’t give them that, dude. I happen to know you were up till two last night with those flashcards,” said Kirishima bravely, backing past with the grill. Midoriya was saved the lingering pierce of Bakugou’s heated glare as he whirled around to give Kirishima a piece of his mind for ratting him out.

Since Yaoyorozu and Shoji knew where the site was, they elected to walk in two groups, with the people less laden down with gear to go on ahead and set up with Shoji. They had fashioned a makeshift map to the area on a back of a piece of homework that Kirishima stuffed in his back pocket in case they got separated. Despite saying they could manage it, he and Kaminari needed frequent breaks from carrying the grill, and Kirishima didn’t want to hold anyone back. Besides, he thought the map made the whole ordeal feel like a treasure hunt.

Under the luscious, green canopy, with sweat sticking his loose shirt to his body like a second skin, Midoriya rather felt like Jim Hawkins following Long-John Silver up to the mountainous Spyglass. Birds called high and cold in the treetops. The leaves whispered and the wet earth crunched underfoot. A big spider on a thin, witchy tree waved her long, hairy legs at him as he went past.

Midoriya stayed with Kirishima and Kaminari in case one of them needed him to switch out. He also found himself walking with Yaoyorozu, who had taken up a bit of a one-sided conversation with him over this week’s mathematics classes. Mineta joined them, carrying two small carrier bags of food, like Midoriya, that brushed the grass beneath their feet thanks to his meagre height and stumpy arms. Their other companion was Bakugou. He had hung back to walk with their small group. Midoriya tried not to overthink why. When they stopped, Bakugou tapped his foot impatiently on the springy moss underneath.

“I’ll go get Round Face,” he grunted, when the grill was put down for the third time. “She’ll take it the rest of the way.”

He disappeared into the trees, following the sounds of the preceding group on the forest’s slope. They could just about see Uraraka’s floating chairs peaking up over the treetops on the spruce-covered incline.

Yaoyorozu, Mineta and Midoriya politely waited for the boys to catch their breath, but they had not gone more than ten paces when Yaoyorozu suddenly gasped, wretchedly loud in the whispering hush of the forest. All four of the boys jumped and Kaminari dropped his end of the grill on his foot and let out a chorus of vicious swear words. Midoriya wrenched his body into a defensive stance. His shopping, cast away in his haste to protect, rolled everywhere.

“I forgot the picnic basket!” she cried. Everybody grumbled and Kaminari hefted up the grill again, shaking out his sore foot. “It has those lemon tarts in that Kaminari wanted to try.”

“Aw, man!” Now Kaminari looked stricken. His eyes flicked to Kirishima, and the grill they carried between them.

“Don’t you dare drop this again for tarts, dude,” said Kirishima. “We’re seeing this through.”

“But!”

“I’ll go back,” said Midoriya, gathering up his dropped items and handing his carrier bags to Mineta. “I’ll follow the map to the site.”
“Okay. It’s in my back pocket,” said Kirishima, angling so that Midoriya could fish it out. “Message us if you get lost!”

“Sure,” he said, and began the hike back.

Alone in the woods, the sounds and smells around him seemed to amplify. Each birdcall, cold and distant as an answerphone message, echoed a hundred times all around him. The strong smells of wildflowers and dewy grass filled the air as thick as soup. Cicadas trilled happily from their spaces in the undergrowth. Above him, the sun cooked his shoulders, and he wished he’d thought to put on sun-cream. His freckled skin was turning to bacon under its sizzling gaze.

Back at the school, he found the basket in the kitchen on a counter. It was a traditional-looking picnic basket with two wicker flaps, lined on the inside with chequered linen. He popped open a flap and inside saw several mouth-watering baked lemon tarts, yellow as daisies, and piles of bright, virginal fruit, so fresh they gleamed. Trying not to drool, Midorya hooked the basket on one arm and made for the door.

As he passed the sofa, he spotted Uraraka’s new, crimson shawl draped over the back of it. She must have left it since the weather was so warm. Midoriya wrapped it over his shoulders and head as a bit of protection from the overbearing sunshine. It was short on him; it only just touched his mid-back, but it would work.

The jaws of the forest closed over him.

Some of the rock formations and trees sprung familiar to him from their initial excursion, but after he passed the point where he had left the others, he became a little lost. The directions weren’t so much directions as lines and scribbled notes, mostly relying on the idea that one of the site’s founders would be accompanying them. He stepped over a trickling stream on a series of rounded rocks and kept going. His reflection flicked past red as blood in the water.

The forest yawned. Great towering trees twisted up into the canopy all around him. He was climbing slightly uphill, for he could feel it underfoot and his legs began to ache. In the distance, a deer flicked her ears as she heard him approach and bounded away into the whispering lips of the woods. The shawl kept off the worst of the sun’s rays but it was scorching to wear, like being wrapped in foil and put on Kirishima’s grill. Hot air, hot body, hot breath. He ripped into the basket and grabbed a peach, slurping on the sweet juices as he walked until he had gnawed it to the pit.

Eventually he reached a rock that looked kind of like a fist, which was a note on the map. At the base was an arrow that had been dug into the earth with a foot, pointing north. This really was Treasure Island. He stepped carefully around the arrow and continued climbing uphill.

He had not gone much more than one hundred yards when he realised someone was up ahead.

Still feeling jumpy from excessive villain attacks, and the sombre, oppressive isolation of the forest’s great, green dome, he approached slowly. Bakugou popped out from behind a large tree and Midoriya almost had a heart attack.

“Oh!” he gasped, worrying at the shawl. “Kacchan, you almost killed me.”

He looked Godly: big, strong arms tapering into the pockets of his joggers. The sun had begun to bronze his flesh already, spreading in dark patches over his shoulders and points of his face. His skin sparkled with perspiration, a delicate smattering of moisture that looked nothing like how drenched Midoriya felt under the shawl. Too perfect.
He tried not to cry.

“Don’t be such a wuss,” Bakugou grunted, teeth bared like a wolverine. “I came back to find you. Everyone’s starting already. Hurry up, nerd.”

He made to take the basket from Midoriya’s hand, but for some reason, Midoriya clutched it tight to his chest and hauled it out of reach. Perhaps thinking in indignation of when Bakugou had refused to let him carry a box of bottles, or the idea of being empty-handed around a creature like Bakugou. It was silly, really, since Midoriya could easily do more damage with his fists than a wicker basket filled with pears and oranges, but maybe then it was for the best that he held onto it.

“What’s with the scarf?” Bakugou asked, indicating the red shawl draped over Midoriya’s head. Sheepishly, Midoriya pulled the hood down.

“Just keeping the sun off,” he said.

“Whatever, grandma, come on.”

He turned and led the way through the trees. He walked a little ahead and paused often to help Midoriya under branches that would normally ping back into his face. When he did this, he was too close, and Midoriya held his breath so as not to be tempted by any smells richer than the ones singing from his basket of goodies.

“Remember we did this when we were kids?” Bakugou grunted, stepping over a patch of thistles. His joggers caught on little thorns and branches, tearing tiny holes. Midoriya recalled similar pairs from years ago, also lacerated with bobbles and nips from the earth.

“Yeah,” he said. Bakugou hung back so they could walk side by side, although Midoriya had no idea where they were going at this point, having not looked at the map since Bakugou joined him. “I missed that.”

Too honest. He blushed as Bakugou eyed him from the side.

“Yeah, well,” he grunted. “Coulda done more shit I guess, if you weren’t such a weird fucking kid.”

Midoriya stopped short, his mouth falling open. He shut it again when a curious fly buzzed a bit close. Bakugou stopped too, turning on his heel.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Midoriya managed, almost too appalled for words. Insufferably, infuriatingly, Bakugou shrugged.

“You being all,” he waved a hand, as if searching for the right words at this time couldn’t be of less importance to him, “clingy and shit. Following me around like you could even keep up with me. I thought you might toughen up eventually but clearly – OW! What the fuck was that for?”

Without realising he had done it, Midoriya had ripped into the basket and thrown a big, red apple at Bakugou’s head. It bounced off in a little arch and thudded to the ground a few feet away. Bakugou rubbed his scalp, whirling around.

“You-!”

Midoriya was seeing red. He armed himself with a fat orange. Better than fists, better than fists.
Where was the sense in building their delicate balance of power during sparring if he ruined it all with a rage-induced spat, Quirks and all?

Still, the sheer audacity of Bakugou’s blasé attitude following his cold rejection, seized Midoriya in an unbreakable jaw-lock of fury that postulated a release.

“I was a child, Kacchan,” he spat, flinging the fruit blindly. “You tortured me! You bullied me!”

“I didn’t bully you,” Bakugou scoffed, ducking. The orange soared through the bushes, never to be seen again. Midoriya dropped the basket, his rage consuming him, a pear bruising in his grip.

“Don’t you fucking dare do that.” The pear exploded on the tree above Bakugou’s head and his palms started sparking. “Yes, you did! You were a bully, Kacchan, and I never even hated you for it. But I should have done.”

“It was your fault!” Bakugou bellowed, blasting an orange out of the sky. The miasmic smell of burnt fruit spread through the air. “Waiting that long to even tell me the truth about your quirk. Like you weren’t watching me that whole time like you didn’t think you were better than me! I got your number, Deku! You wanted me to look weak. I knew you thought you were better than me and now look! All-Might’s prodigy. Trying to leave me behind. Not to mention tongue-fucking Round-Face on the sofa. Fuck you!”

“I can’t believe you,” Midoriya screamed, tugging his hair out in frustration. His foot knocked the basket and the contents tumbled out. He grabbed something. One of the yellow tarts. “Do you know how many times you made me cry? How much I sat on my own in my room and wished I could be like you? Could be friends with you? You are such an inconceivable asshole. Fuck you!”

He was really screaming now. Years of pent-up aggression and sexual frustration fuelling an explosion that he didn’t know he held within him. “FUCK you! I must be fucking mad to even think I’m in love with you!”

Ringing silence.

Bakugou’s mouth hit the floor and flopped out like a red carpet. Okay, exaggeration, but it may as well have.

Midoriya wondered if gnawing his own tongue off would be enough to undo what had just rolled off of it. He willed his legs into moving, but before he could, he was swept into arms that lifted him off the ground and slammed him against the tree. The smell of pear dripped by his head. The tart wobbled in his hand. His legs snapped around Bakugou’s waist and he tasted fire and fury as Bakugou rammed his way into his mouth.

“Goddammit, Deku!”

It wasn’t a physical fight anymore, but it still felt like one. Bakugou ripped into him like a starving man upon meat, his mouth hot, filled with fireworks and magma. The claws snatched at his shirt and seared his skin. Bakugou bore love like he had fire inside him and Midoriya marvelled how you could encase so much power and ferocity inside one person, like an atom bomb that refuses to stop detonating.

He thought he would hurry to make it to grandma’s house first, because, knowing Bakugou, by the time he got there the woods around the cottage would be ablaze.

Midoriya tried not to melt; tried to flee from the magma spreading over his skin, but like the sea, he had no choice but to swallow it, and erupt into a vast column of steam. He gave as good as he got,
his body singing as he sunk his free hand into Bakugou’s halo of soft hair, bit down hard at wet skin when Bakugou broke to breathe. His heart, oh, his heart: stamping a tireless rhythm of ‘finally, finally, finally!’

The world tumbled, and Midoriya had no hand in it. The springy turf came up to meet his back, cool on his feverish skin. He sizzled under Bakugou’s heavy weight, panting when he pressed Midoriya into the dirt with his dense body, licking and kissing and biting, devouring Midoriya like a wolf in the glen.

But they were still in a fight, and Midoriya was still confused and furious, so he hit him with the tart.

It was just about the only thing that could have pulled Bakugou from the heady depths of Midoriya’s body; cold and surprising on his back. It exploded in dollops of cream and yellow, plastering his skin with crust and mush, like some sort of sweet-smelling bout of leprosy. Bakugou shuddered and rolled off with a strangled, “Urgh!” as a handful of their classmates came running down the hill towards them.

Bakugou staggered to his feet, shaking bits of tart out of his shirt. Midoriya pushed himself into a sitting position, panting hard, wiping spittle from his chin. He could feel how red he must be, the heat practically steaming off his skin. He hoped they would all chalk it up to the weather.

“We heard shouting, did he hurt you?” cried Uraraka, skidding to a halt with her fists up. “It’s breadstick time! Wait – is that my shawl?”

Midoriya stood guiltily, brushing the leaves and dirt off the new garment. “Sorry,” he said, stuttering. “It’s fine, though. Kacchan didn’t hurt me.”

Behind him, Bakugou snorted.

“The tarts!” cried Kaminari, sinking to his knees in mourning next to the basket. Kirishima patted his head in sympathy as he tried to scoop what he could back into the mouth of the wicker. Uraraka saw Midoriya’s face and must have known how tormented he felt inside, twisted up like yarn, and took him by the hand to lead him up to the campsite.

Partway up the hill, he glanced back and Bakugou watched him blush and whip his head away, almost tripping over a root. Uraraka said something soft and floated him over it.

“We gotta stop leaving you guys alone together,” said Kirishima. “What the heck happened?”

“Nothing,” Bakugou grunted. “Let’s just fucking go.”

“You’re covered in tarts,” said Kirishima. “Which would usually be fun, you know… but I saw you guys fighting? The others wouldn’t bring it up but-” He cleared his throat. “You know what I mean?”

“No. Fuck off.”

Kirishima sighed, following him as he mounted the hill, great shoulders swinging like some sort of gorilla on a warpath. Behind them came the sound of chewing. Kaminari had found an intact tart and was paying them so little attention that they could have said all sorts of exciting things about his mother and he would barely have even looked at them, so Kirishima tried again.

“Dude, you need to come clean about this,” he said, pulling at Bakugou’s shoulder. He shook him off. “You know I see through you, dude. You’re about as subtle as an air-raid so you think I’m not
gonna see what’s up?”

Bakugou swung around, fury setting his jaw into stone. He said nothing, and silence was usually an invitation for Kirishima to continue. Good. He was getting somewhere.

“Midoriya likes you,” he said, cutting to the chase like a chainsaw carving through a starting gate. “He told me.”

“The fuck is he telling you for?” Bakugou demanded.

“Cause I’m a great listener?” He paused, thoughtful. “Not a great secret-keeper, though.”

“Yeah, well I already know, so you suck at being a blabbermouth, too.”

“Oh.” Kirishima brightened. At least he couldn’t be blamed for this one. “So he told you? How’d it go?”

“How’d you fucking think?”

“Well,” said Kirishima, ducking under a branch. “He hit you with a tart, so I’m guessing not great. Look, dude, you gotta let up. You’ve been a Grade-A dickbag to Midoriya since as far back as I can remember.”

“Mind your own business.”

“I am,” said Kirishima with a shrug. “Hero business is all our business.” Bakugou turned to look at him. “We kind of look up to you guys. You’re the best in the class and we know you could be a great team. We want you to be heroes at the top, the same way you do. Although,” he added with a cheeky grin, “Midoriya might end up more famous, since he’s nicer.”

Bakugou crashed through a bush and let all the branches hit Kirishima in the face.

Like time and tide, Midoriya should march on because he has to.

Warriors didn’t lay down their weapons and repine in air castles of thought just because they got ravished in a mossy glen.

Superheroes certainly didn’t shirk their duties no matter how foundation-shaking a turn their life has taken. Heroes confronted their problems. Heroes didn’t ache to get back to their dorms and erode a trench into the running track.

They also probably shouldn’t sit straight-backed and pursed-lipped on pleasant riverbanks with their entire graduating class around them, pretending to laugh at Mineta trying to do spry cartwheels in an attempt to copy Ashido, when actually using any excuse to avoid ravisher-to-ravished eye contact across the picnic rug.

Midoriya felt he rather needed to be rigid, as relaxing would start the rattling that would have him spewing bricks and mortar all over the sunny spread of gingham.

Funny how the gay afternoon could be encouraging beauty all around him, when on the inside he felt like an old shoe going three cycles in a washer/dryer with an angry pitbull. This mess of a
relationship with Bakugou – now messier than a bomb in a paint factory – made Midoriya’s gut twist like someone jabbed a cake mixer into his abdomen. There was so much to unpick that it would be easier to restart the life’s work of a quilter trying to warm the entire population of Greenland.

Bakugou kept peering at him across the rug. It was making him antsy so he clambered to his feet.

“Just gonna go take some photos of the river,” he said to the curious looks Uraraka and Todoroki shot him, waving his phone.

“Oh, cool,” said Uraraka. “Let me finish this burger and I’ll come join you.”

“I’ll just be up there,” he indicated the incline of the stream’s little waterfall with one arm.

The sounds of the barbeque, music, and laughter faded away as Midoriya hopped up the riverbank, using some glossy, grey protruding rocks as footholds. The trees thickened here, drooping long, heavy branches into the water like trailing fingers. Midoriya liked the way they looked, reminding him with their twisting bark of his own scarred hands. Despite using the camera-phone as an excuse, he took a moment to snap a few pictures of their melancholy dip in the rushing water.

The world here was bright and tantalizing; the ground soft underfoot. The rich, potent wild garlic on the other side of the river smelled honest and overwhelming. Birds cackled high in the treetops like laughing ladies, echoing prettily all about. The bright ivy climbing the sides of the trees was jade green, and so thick that it turned all around him into a great emerald, whilst along the bank and underfoot the sprinkling gaiety of colourful wildflowers sprouted like sweets on a green birthday cake. Reeds swayed along the riverbed; thin soldiers with big, brown beefeaters. Midoriya raised his camera again to photograph the happy gurgle of the river curling around rocks as colourful as a Greek mosaic.

Out here, he could soak in a bit of peace.

“Watch out, nerd.”

Midoriya cried out and almost dropped his phone as two hands slammed into his back. He toppled forward towards the river, unable to find footing on the precarious, sloping grass.

The cold water was the least of his worries: the river was only two or so feet deep, and those rocks looked sharp.

“Eek!”

“What the Hell!”

Abruptly, the world stopped tilting. The hands gripped him, hauled him back panting into Bakugou’s chest.

“You’re such a fucking airhead, Deku,” he growled, giving Midoriya a little shake. “Don’t even try to save yourself or anything.”

“You pushed me,” Midoriya said, shoving past Bakugou to get away from the water. “I was surprised! Did you follow me?”

Bakugou shrugged, shoving his hands deep into the pockets of his loose jeans. “Got sick of those extras.”
It suddenly became clear to Midoriya – after the initial shock of almost being a natural water-feature faded away – that they were alone together in the soft embrace of the trees once again. Bakugou looked pulled-taut and tired, if the hard line of his mouth was anything to go by. He still had tart on his neck. His eyes fixed on Midoriya in a sullen, crocodile-like way, as if waiting for answers as to why Midoriya was getting too close to his eggs.

Maybe it was time they dragged this out, kicking and screaming, into the open.

Midoriya sighed and sunk into a patch of grass by the river, fiddling with his phone for something to do in the ensuing silence. For a long time, he thought Bakugou would just leave. Instead, he dropped into the space next to Midoriya on the riverbank, a polite three-inch gap between their outer thighs.

Midoriya’s heart began to piston. He tucked his phone into his pocket and gazed out over the water, gurgling a path through the forest.

“You-” Bakugou began, stiltedly breaking the hush. “Fucking say something, nerd.”

“Why do I have to talk first?”

“Because,” said Bakugou, like that settled it.

“You’re not being very fair to me, Kacchan.”

“Fuck fair.”

Midoriya huffed. He looked at the nice, clear water bubbling over the stones, and drew a foot up to untie the laces on his shoes.

“What are you doing?”

Midoriya ignored him. He pushed his socks into his shoes and tucked them besides a rocky outcropping to his left, adding his phone as an afterthought. Then he slipped carefully into the river. The water was cool as ice. It rushed cheerily over his feet, dragging in the divots of his ankles, and tickling his toes. The rocks were smoother than they looked as he took a few shy steps into the depths. They danced up to the knees of his rolled-up trousers.

He glanced up to see Bakugou joining him, edging into the water like it might bite.

“Fuck, that’s cold.”

Two steps in, Midoriya splashed him.

“OI! FUCK!”

Midoriya expected retaliation. He covered his head as a torrent of water splashed over his shoulders. It clung freezing to his clothes in thrilling pinpricks. He shuddered, delighted. Conversations weren’t something they could do, but they could do this.

He kicked at the river, activating his quirk just a little. The attacking wave was huge, and drenched Bakugou’s jeans. He barked a high-pitched laugh and Midoriya only had time to turn and duck as he aimed an explosion into the water. The resulting tsunami drenched him from head to foot.

Midoriya came up soaked and gasping with laughter. He tackled Bakugou into a soft patch of earth against the bank and they both went down, bits of grass and twig sticking to their sodden clothes.
The water lapped at their sides, seeping through to their skin. Midoriya found himself between Bakugou’s large legs, propped up on his elbows in the shallow part of the river.

Bakugou’s long eyelashes glinted gold in the afternoon sun, even here in the shade of a hundred twisting willow branches. The river rushed between them. A butterfly fluttered past his nose and twitched its wings on a nearby hydrangea.

After a breath that felt like ten years, Midoriya sat up and folded his hands in his lap under the water.

All the things that made up their relationship played like sombre minstrels in the back of his mind. He remembered the anguish of watching Bakugou sink into that portal as he was taken, seeing the distant fear in his eyes. He remembered their vicious fighting under the pale moon, all thanks to a bruised ego, aching because he couldn’t change any of it, even if he wanted to. Midoriya’s feelings had morphed, but he wondered if they had always been there, really. A butterfly starts off as a caterpillar, and although it curls into a cocoon and peels out as something new, it’s still the same creature. It’s always been what it is.

And now, like an echo, like a reflection of light in an upturned mirror, here they were. Bakugou had fallen into the river, soft and wet and a little sad-looking.

This time, because you can only be brave so much before it starts to feel like martyrdom, Midoriya hesitated to offer a hand.

Instead, Bakugou just took it. Took it for himself. Took it right out of his lap and held it, sopping wet. Only for a second. He dropped it again, and then he pulled himself to his feet, dripping onto the bank. The butterfly flittered into the air and disappeared.

How odd and heavy everything felt, and not just because of the water.

Midoriya wanted to kiss him, but he didn’t. That slant of his mouth still warded Midoriya away like a warning sign, ruby red and brazen as a detonation.

“Better get back,” Bakugou said, voice sounding like charcoal and broken beams. Midoriya nodded, swallowing the tears, trying to think of warriors and superheroes and being brave. Tried to think of how far you had to walk to just get to the ashes surrounding ground zero.

Bakugou as a child had been too sharp, too reedy. As a teenager he was too brash, too quick to fight. Midoriya hoped that, whether he was a part of it or not, one day the world would know a Bakugou that was just right.

His hand tingled, and he thought perhaps that they were getting close.

The others either didn’t notice how Midoriya and Bakugou came back one hundred percent more watery than when they’d disappeared, or they didn’t care. Some of them had taken a paddle in the river themselves, so maybe their wet clothes just blended in with everyone else’s. Bakugou didn’t say anything else to Midoriya once they reached the picnic site, but he did take a half second to brush his knuckles on the back of Midoriya’s hand, with a lingering glance like Midoriya was a rich, chocolate éclair he couldn’t break his diet for. Midoriya rubbed his hand on his wet trousers and lapsed into a bad mood.
At this rate, not an inch of him would remain unsullied by the gentle scorch of Bakugou’s touch.

After that it seemed like Bakugou was always in his space, reckless and omnipresent as the wind, but never saying much. Midoriya threw himself harder into training, knowing that ignoring Bakugou’s advances would have consequences. The rational part of him knew that Bakugou was still a danger; a feral howl in the forest. So Midoriya sharpened his knives, ever on the defensive, waiting for something to happen. Waiting for the catalyst to the chain reaction. His classmates felt it too: that rumble in the hot air that preceded the storm.

It was only when sparring with Uraraka that, pinning her underneath him without even a semblance of teenage furore, he realised something when she gasped,

“Jeez, Deku, you’ve gotten so strong! You’re, like, bigger than a bear!”

He released her and was seized with the urge to sprint.

A week later, in the dorms, Midoriya had squirreled away into his room after a gruelling day of training. He lay on the bed, toying with an old All-Might plush he’d had since he was three: a choice purchase by his mother that had (just about) survived the onslaught of time and the brutal gyration of the washing machine. The only thing that the doll had lost was a few threads here and there and the paint on its glass eyes.

He stuffed it hastily under his pillow when there came a knocking at his bedroom door.

“What’s up?” he said, instead.

“Wanna talk.”

This could be a ruse, Midoriya reasoned, enjoying the way Bakugou pulled at a loose thread on the pocket of his joggers, clearly fighting nerves like they were his training targets. He opened the door an inch further, girlishly captivated by the concept of Bakugou making the first move like this.

It was a bit foolish, he reasoned, to disregard a lifetime of closed fists and spiteful words like that. His heart cried out, ‘Let him in! More kisses like the ones in the woods, please!’ and his nethers quite agreed. But baring his neck and his intentions freely rather felt like a lamb voluntarily climbing onto the chopping block and declaring, “I say, would you like a chunk clean cut or to just kind of go at me like a starving dog?”

Wasn’t Bakugou always the one telling him he needed to be firmer?
He kept the door at half-mast. Took a steeling breath.

“Okay,” he said, adding when Bakugou moved to enter, “then talk.”

Predictably, Bakugou fumed. He braced his hands on either side of the doorframe, leaning heavily into Midoriya’s space. “Not out here, idiot.”

Midoriya let One-For-All spark up his body, just once: a warning. It wasn’t a challenge, it was a restriction. He wasn’t defenceless anymore, and boundaries would not be crossed any longer if this, or anything similar, was to go on. Bakugou pursed his lips.

“Mouthy,” he said in a low voice.

“Kacchan,” said Midoriya. “What is with you?”

It was an echo of the question Bakugou had spat at him in the grounds whilst Midoriya got acquainted with some bugs and dirt. He bristled like Kaminari had shocked his ankles. He flung his hands up without a word and stormed halfway down the corridor in childish fury. He then paused, heaving like a man emerged from icy water, and stomped back.

“Fuck you,” he said. “Let me in. I wanna talk – about shit. About us. This whole fucking mess. I can’t stop thinking about you and it’s pissing me off. You’re an asshole. And I’m-” He glared, shaking his head as if the words were tumbling about in there like fireworks in a cement mixer. “I’m an asshole,” he grumbled, his lips popping around the words like a loose skyrocket. “I didn’t think – I don’t fucking think that you’re gonna even wanna look at me after everything but- but fuck that. Fuck all of this. I’m going nuts.”

He pressed his eyes into the spread of his hand, leaning hard against the doorframe like it was the only thing keeping him upright. In the heavy silence, the buzz from the fluorescent lights above hummed like bees in the empty corridor.

Midoriya would have been appalled by the atrocious series of expletives staining the air outside his room if Bakugou hadn’t articulated exactly how he felt every waking moment since the he was about thirteen years old.

He opened the door a fraction of an inch further.

“You don’t make this easy, Kacchan,” he whispered. Bakugou looked at him through his fingers. “Every time we talk you act like you want to hit me. Makes it hard to want to have a conversation with you.”

“You can duck,” Bakugou offered, and by his expression Midoriya could tell even he thought it was a lame response.

“Not the point,” Midoriya said into another awkward silence. “And I didn’t used to be able to. Sometimes I think I didn’t really want to.”

Bakugou sighed for so long that Midoriya wondered if he would completely deflate and become a fetching rug. “I fucked up.”

Midoriya searched his face, startled. “Do you really think that?”

Bakugou, his countenance stricken, a signature vein popping in his forehead, looked at the flat wood of the door, and Midoriya’s wary eyes.
“Yeah,” he said. “Now.”

There was another frightful pause. Bakugou cleared his throat.

“We could talk in your bathroom,” he said. Midoriya frowned at him, befuddled. “There’s a sink in there,” he clarified. “You know, in case you go ape shit and want to hit me again.”

Midoriya couldn’t help it: he laughed. Bakugou being coy drew him in like the pull of a magnet, and with his bottom lip in his teeth, still shivering with suppressed mirth, he opened the door.

Having Bakugou in his room felt like watching a fox enter a chicken coop. All his eggs laid bare, unprotected as he tried to collect the hens flapping about in a panic over his head. He clasped his hands, moving like a man with eyes on a wild beast, keeping his back to the walls. Bakugou didn’t seem to notice, swivelling his head around at all the superhero memorabilia, like mooching into Midoriya’s room after training was day-to-day. He plucked a Hero magazine from the desk. Midoriya’s chickens squawked.

“What’s this?” he said, flicking to an article on All-Might. “Fuck, the old man can’t help himself, can he?”

He slouched to the bed and flumped into it, kicking one ankle up onto the opposite knee, magazine open and tongue between his teeth.

Midoriya blinked, recalling Kirishima’s advice, *With Bakugou, you just have to decide you’re friends and go with the flow.* Apparently that worked both ways.

In all the fantasies Midoriya had indulged in when he should have been studying – ones where Bakugou came calling at his dorm door, apologising for being a jerk-off and begging entry – not one ended with him leafing through Midoriya’s magazine collection and settling on his bed, content to ignore him. Was this friendship with Bakugou these days? Drawn-out silences punctuated with the flaccid paper noise as he licked a thumb and turned the page?

Interaction between them came about as easy as pulling a balloon through a keyhole. Midoriya sank defeated into his computer chair and gazed out the window.

The grounds spread, dark in the night-time under a black sky and a big yellow moon.

The sky was a steady oscillation of day-and-night, like Midoriya’s other friendships: easy and real. Back-and-forth. But with Bakugou it was like wild weather. Unpredictable. They needed a catalyst, like the man needs the pale, wide moon to learn to run on all fours.

Under such a wild moon, a distant howl could raise a thunderstorm in your chest.

“What’s this?”

Bakugou was pulling something from under the pillow. Midoriya rose to stop him.

“Hey!”

Too late. Bakugou had found the All-Might plush.

He held it for a long moment. It looked tiny in his huge hand.

“I remember this,” he said. “I remember its freaky fucking eyes.”

“They’re not freaky!” Midoriya gasped, lunging for his toy. Bakugou danced it out of reach and
Midoriya suffered a brief flash of schoolyard bullying. But Bakugou wasn’t taunting him with it: he was studying it.

“Not quite so great now we know the real guy, huh?” he said quietly, putting aside the magazine to jiggle one of All-Might’s arms up and down. “Its hair is wrong.”

Midoriya said nothing, twisting the hem of his shirt in fretful fingers. Bakugou flipped the toy over so that it lay on its belly, and plopped it onto his head like an odd little bonnet. How bizarre.

It was like a disguise, that toy resting with its soft, bean-filled arms and legs dangling just above Bakugou’s furrowed brow. Like sheep’s clothing; like a monster disguised as your sweet old grandma. It nestled in his hair like a baby chick, utterly ridiculous. Bakugou folded his arms and raised a leer to Midoriya as if daring him to comment.

Midoriya would do no such thing, but the ache in his gut was growing, spreading like vines and pulling him to the bedside. How familiar and safe Bakugou looked, like this.

“Kacchan.”

Midoriya stood, placing himself at the side of the bed, at the mercy of what lay in it. Bakugou sat up at once, the All-Might toy wobbling on his scalp. Midoriya wondered if he had already forgotten it was there. Bakugou’s head levelled with Midoriya’s navel and he swallowed when big hands came to rest on his hips. Belatedly, he realised he was shaking.

“I don’t know how to do this,” he admitted, honestly. “But I didn’t lie to you. I had things I had to protect. Our responsibility is more than just us now. Saving people. It’s the whole world.”

“It’s not so big,” Bakugou grunted, perpetually pig-headed.

“You were the one,” Midoriya said, and had to take a breath as the emotion wrangled with his oesophagus like a lariat. “You were the one that said we shouldn’t think about this stuff.”

The hands folded and became fists, perched by the wrist on his trembling hips. Midoriya felt that was saying this all wrong. Why couldn’t they just communicate?

“Kacchan, I—”

Bakugou swept to his feet, gathering Midoriya into an embrace that dissipated the air between them into nothing. Bakugou’s body was like a furnace, and when he kissed Midoriya, his lips were like hot iron. The All-Might toy fell off onto the floor with a little pat.

“Deku,” Bakugou breathed, hoisting Midoriya up in his arms like he weighed as much as one of those training dummies.

“I thought we were talking,” Midoriya squeaked as he was whirled about and smacked back-to-paper with his bedroom wall.

“Fuck talking.”

As well as hot iron, and dense pressure, there was something tangy and off about Bakugou’s kisses; something that hadn’t been there before.

“Kacchan, have you been drinking?” Midoriya asked when Bakugou ran wet bites down the side of his throat.
“Yeah,” he breathed into Midoriya’s clavicle. “That shitty-haired bastard thought it would help or some shit. Just some beers. Why, is it gross?”

Midoriya pressed the palm of his hand onto Bakugou’s shoulder and Bakugou’s hands slipped reluctantly from underneath him, aiding a careful slide to the floor.

“No, it’s fine,” Midoriya said, his shoulders heavy as lead for reasons he didn’t quite understand. He gently traced the transfer of dumbbells on Bakugou’s tank top with the pad of one finger. “How long have you had…?” he asked as he did so, unable to finish.

Bakugou looked down, clouded with confusion. “What? This dumb shirt? I don’t fucking know, like a year? Present from Kirishima. Why, you want it?”

“Not the shirt,” said Midoriya even as Bakugou slotted his hands under the hem.

“Hah?” he said, then realisation dawned on his features. “Oh.” He clammed up, his lips pursing and his face tilting away. “Does it fucking matter?”

That long, huh?

He had a funny way of showing it.

Or maybe Midoriya still wasn’t versed in Bakugou’s language. He eyed the dumbbells again.

“Do you want to go train?” he asked. Bakugou stared at him like he’d sprouted an extra head.

“What? Now?” he said, glancing at the digital clock on the bedside. It was past curfew. “Are you losing it, Deku? One too many knocks to the head?” He rapped on the wall by Midoriya’s ear to accentuate his point.

Midoriya ignored his taunting and slipped out from underneath that long arm. He shucked his loose t-shirt and found a clean training top in a pile of laundry. It clung to the contours of his body and he turned to find Bakugou staring, totally unashamed. Midoriya moved to the door.

“Are you coming, Kacchan?” he said. Bakugou said nothing, but stormed out before him, knocking him by the shoulder as he did so.

“I’m always ready to kick your ass,” he said and led the way. Midoriya shrugged, locking his bedroom door behind him.

“No quirks,” said Midoriya as they hauled out a couple of training mats. “Or we’ll alert someone.”

“I fucking know, nerd.”

Busting into the training room had been easy, after a mad dash across the dark grounds to the massive, brick building on the other side of the campus. Midoriya had a good idea of the security camera layout, having gone over it with All-Might as a precaution over the recent villain attacks. They made it across with no alerts sounding, hearts hammering as loud as war-drums in their chests.

Midoriya added ‘lock-picking’ to the extensive list of talents inexplicably in Bakugou’s repertoire.
His clever hands had worked open the gym door and they had slipped inside, moving to cover the two cameras stationed in here with their shirts. The second one had involved Bakugou scrambling up a rock-climbing wall to reach it, and Midoriya stood at the bottom, ogling upwards to ‘catch him’ in case he fell.

He didn’t, of course, and Midoriya ogled all the way up, and all the way back down again.

Now they squared off across the training mat, the oppressive silence in the gym meaning that every slide of their bare feet echoed a hundred times off every surface. If he concentrated, Midoriya could hear Bakugou’s breath, hard and heavy as a horse’s, rattling in the air. He adjusted his mouth-guard and rolled his shoulders.

Bakugou made the first move, naturally, bounding across the training mat in a low bow, his fist gunning for an uppercut that would fold Midoriya in half like a sheet of paper. Bakugou nearly always made the first move. His impatience, his pride, meant he had to: to mark, to destroy, to possess. Midoriya kept his distance. He twisted away at the last moment, trying to hook his arms around Bakugou’s neck to pull him down. Bakugou slipped away with a snarl and went back to circling.

Midoriya’s strategy was always defensive. Wait for the opportune moment and only then launch a strike. Bakugou had seen it in action for so long that it had become stale, predictable. His defensive fight-style was everything to do with Bakugou’s treatment of him, of their strained relationship. It was a pull, pull, pull that had yanked Midoriya, thrashing and sobbing, into the underbrush every time. Midoriya had eventually developed defences: he had ways to panic and kick and flee. Somehow that had evolved again.

Just like when they were kids, Midoriya looked at Bakugou and saw such a gleaming ideal that it was no wonder he acceded to those fangs and claws as often as he did. Perhaps in the hope that, like a vampire bite, some of it may seep into him and make him beautiful too.

But Midoriya had come to realise he had grown his own fangs and claws. Now he was the earth, steadfast as oak, fiery as the magma under its surface, and timeless as the sprawling forest. He was like the mountain, stable but ever –yielding under the fierce thumb of posterity. He could be formidable.

So he launched a surprise attack.

He saw the split-second confusion that flashed over Bakugou’s face as he scooted in on the offensive, hard and fast. He could feel his body coiling for the take-down, like a powerful cat upon its prey. He wove in, kicked twice high that Bakugou found himself forced to defend, hooked his arms around Bakugou’s waist and slammed him ruthlessly into the mat. The heat of his body seeped into every one of Midoriya’s pores like hot bathwater.

He knew he could never pin Bakugou when he was this riled, cursing and spitting, so he hopped away like a rabbit, on his toes, as Bakugou flipped to his feet. He held his arm out and it clicked loudly in the echoing hall.

“You’re gonna get it, Deku,” he spat, and swung.

Midoriya ducked fast, but not quite fast enough as Bakugou landed a hard punch on his ribcage with his other hand. Midoriya backed off, defending. This time, when Bakugou punched, instead of forcing an evade, he took the hit on his forearm, thinking of Kirishima and indigenous rock, and flung a kick up to the back of Bakugou’s head. Claws and fangs. Bakugou went down, hissing. This time, Midoriya tried a hold, yanking Bakugou into submission on his back like an upturned
turtle. He struggled, kicking, tussling. They rolled, gripping tight, an equal force. Ruby-red faces pressed together through the forehead, sweat building in smears on the training mat.

Bakugou gave first, his lax in grip cueing Midoriya in, who let go and allowed Bakugou to scramble away, his bare chest heaving, his erection huge.

Ah, huge.

Midoriya panted, planting his hands on his knees in an exhausted bow. Bakugou wiped the sweat off his forehead with the crook of his arm. They weren’t done yet.

Bakugou exacted a series of kicks. In each one that Midoriya batted away, he could feel Bakugou’s anger, his frustration. The angle of his shoulders when he stiffened to block Midoriya’s retaliating swipes was as unwilling to budge as a stone wall. When he pulled Midoriya to the flush of his body, ramming him into the mat, and rolling on top, his hard breathing in the shell of Midoriya’s ear hummed with a siren song, with desperation. Midoriya did the kind thing: broke free, and pinned Bakugou on his back with his legs over Midoriya’s hips, Midoriya in complete control with his arms hooked underneath.

Bakugou lay beneath him, breathing hard through his nose.

“Vous been practising?” he gasped, exhausted. Midoriya shook his head and slipped his mouth guard away from his teeth to talk.


He sounded so out-of-breath, and it was only partly because of the wrestling.

He released Bakugou, who remained supine beneath him on the training mat, catching his breath, his eyes sparkling with the fluorescent light from the ceiling. Midoriya wriggled his stiff legs out from under them, nestling them either side of Bakugou’s waist, on top, and seating himself unabashedly on his crotch. Bakugou’s throat hiccupped. He seized Midoriya’s hips.

“How long?” Midoriya asked again, starting a deliberately languid grind. Bakugou’s eyes fluttered. His mouth twitched as he licked his top set of jagged canines.

“Since the boot camp,” he said, that Clint Eastwood rattle back in the wheel-well of his throat. “Fuck, Deku.”

“That’s a while,” Midoriya whispered, dragging his claws down Bakugou’s bare chest. His moans came forth in a wavering ballad of lust.

“Yes,” he gasped, tonguing a ring of saliva onto his lips. “You fucked me up. All I can fucking think about.”

Midoriya slipped down onto his elbows to huff his straining words in the recesses of Bakugou’s waning mouth.

“I think I’ve always loved you, Kacchan.”

Bakugou shuddered, hips bucking, clinging to Midoriya like a mast in a storm. Midoriya bowed his head, kissed into Bakugou’s mouth, and beset upon him with all the inexorable power of the ocean drawn to the sand. Bakugou’s hands on his hips anchored him, ramping up the exhaustive drag of his body until they were panting again, bare chests heaving, glistening with sweat like dew on
morning grass.

Midoriya sunk his teeth into Bakugou’s steaming nape. His body bounced. Bakugou’s echoing howl filled the gym.

Midoriya felt as though he had emerged – had shucked his red shawl and craned his head to the full moon. He hadn’t tamed the wolves; he had learnt to run with them.

Chapter End Notes

haha gaaay

been struggling a bit with the pacing of this fic but i finally figured out a way to split it that doesn't leave two chapters with ~5k and one with a whopping ~10k. so the fic is now 4 chapters, not 5, but it's the exact same content.
Funny how fast things can change.

Bakugou and Midoriya’s arguments in the kitchen had become something of a norm in the student dorms these days, but their usual strained silences, and horrific spats of discouraging words, had been replaced with something akin to actual discourse.

“Idiot, you need to supplement your protein after you push yourself that hard or your muscles will fucking suck forever.”

“I know, Kacchan, I’ll eat an egg or something.”

“Fuck you and fuck your egg. Eat some fucking meat, you pansy-ass.”

If the others had noticed the strange evolution of their dynamic they didn’t say anything about it. Kirishima offered the odd cheeky wink and inexplicable high-five, but it could have just been a side-effect of his jovial personality.

Still, the tentative nature of their elicit relationship meant that they couldn’t be affectionate in public. It was too soon, and would be too weird for everyone involved.

Midoriya’s nerves crackled like electric currents whenever Bakugou brushed him in the corridors. One, particularly excruciating time, he had been trapped for three floors in an elevator side-by-side with Bakugou, pressed against the wall, as the rabble that was the class piled in to go to training after their impromptu lunch on the roof. Midoriya resolutely watched the trailing lace of Iida’s shoe on the metal floor, and kept his clenched fists by his side, as Bakugou’s body and smell smothered him like a duvet.

Bakugou had left the elevator looking a little red, so Midoriya felt validated that at least he wasn’t the only one.

Waiting to kiss Bakugou was weird, like the moon needing permission to be in the night sky. He could tell Bakugou felt the same by the way his eyes bore through Midoriya every minute of the day.

At last, with the others engaged in another famous movie-night, they came together in Bakugou’s room, crashing over the threshold like two bumbling canines seeking hearth, and fell upon one another in a wild frenzy that would be better suited to a rocky cave in the forest, than a peaceful dorm room. The scabrous grit that should be sanding the skin off their backs was actually the smooth, plump bosom of Bakugou’s bed. An owl hooted outside, too far away to matter.

Bakugou kissed him with his face clamped between his hands like he was afraid it might waltz out
the door, and take the rest of Midoriya with it. As if Midoriya had any choice but to stay right here. He felt a bit brazen on his back with his legs open and Bakugou mounted between them, kissing fireworks and fission into his mouth, but that’s just how it was.

“Fuck,” said Bakugou, allowing Midoriya a moment to breathe. “You make me fucking crazy. So fucking hard to keep my hands off you.”

Midoriya tried to sink into the next fiery kiss but he broke and laughed. Bakugou scowled at him.

“What?” he said, affronted.

“Nothing.” Midoriya bit his lip and the way Bakugou’s eyes caught on it did not go unnoticed. “You’re just cuter than I realised. And cheesy.”

Bakugou huffed, rearranging his arms in a more comfortable position around Midoriya’s head, cradling it like an idol. “There you are pushing your luck again,” he breathed, nosing Midoriya with the warm tip of his snout. “Don’t learn, do you?”

“You’re teaching me now?” asked Midoriya, resting his occipital on Bakugou’s forearm and grinning at him in insubordination. “What are we learning?”

Bakugou hummed deep in his throat, a distant thunderstorm. He nudged Midoriya’s head up to reach his exposed jugular, and sucked a leisurely series of bites into his flesh. Midoriya took pleasure in the pressure of his teeth when he swallowed through one.

“How to be good,” Bakugou said at last, speaking into the slaver on Midoriya’s clavicle. “Gonna make you be good.”

“Mm.” Midoriya lifted his knees and shifted just so. Bakugou’s composure wavered as he was gently jostled. “Been a bit lax in that lately, huh?”

“Dekus should learn to do as they’re fucking told,” Bakugou reiterated, jostling back. Midoriya’s loins picked up a fun twizzling sensation.

“Oh, Dekus?” Midoriya said. “There a lot of us, then?”

“Nah,” Bakugou breathed against his lips, “but if there were, then you’d be the worst.”

“Gotta keep you interested in me somehow.”

Bakugou pulled back to look at him. “I got enough reasons,” he grunted.

Midoriya failed to resist the pull to smile. Bakugou huffed again and surprised Midoriya by climbing to his feet.

“Kacchan?” he said, following. “Are you-? You don’t wanna-”

“I do,” said Bakugou suddenly turning as if he didn’t answer fast enough then Midoriya would take flight with all the wrong reasons in tow. “Fuck, I do. I wanna-” He looked stressed.

Midoriya first raised his eyebrows and then his fists like old-timey fighters across from each other in rings shouting things like, ‘Have at you!’

“Wanna fight it out?” he said, cheekily, bouncing on the balls of his feet, his stance sloppy. Bakugou snorted and pretended to block as Midoriya swung some soft punches. He seemed to ease as they connected lazily with his palms.
“Why me?” he said in a low voice, catching Midoriya’s hands.

Midoriya shrugged. “You’re Kacchan. It’s always been you.”

Bakugou used his grip on Midoriya’s hands to pull him against his chest. He gathered him all up like he was a precious thing, all cosy and safe and folded. How strange to fall so tender and easily this way to someone who, a short time ago, struck fear into him merely by breezing past. But just like under layers of ice and snow, the heart of the warm earth beat perpetual underneath.

“Yeah,” whispered Bakugou, melting. “Same. Sorry it took me a fucking century to figure it out.”

He sunk into another kiss, seemingly unable to resist the magnetic fusion of their lips, chasing down Midoriya’s tongue, and sieving breaths through his nose with a noise like wind in the trees. Midoriya’s heart banged between Bakugou’s ribcage and his own spine, like it was trying to generate enough G-force to ping through the roof. He wouldn’t have missed it: all his heart was here in his arms.

If possible, Bakugou’s kisses heated up even more when Midoriya slowly revolved their embrace and drove Bakugou to the edge of the bed. His long, broad fingers dug craters into the flesh of Midoriya’s seat, even lifting him momentarily so that the earth swooped from under him. Midoriya thought that was just Bakugou showing off, however.

He wriggled away, gazing at Bakugou with hazy eyes, drunk in the wild inferno that Bakugou surrounded himself with.

“What do you want?” Midoriya breathed, like Midoriya giving and Bakugou taking wasn’t part of who they were. His expression turned candescent, as if everything Midoriya brought was more than he had ever dreamed of having. He stood like a deity, emblazoned against the wild sky outside his bedroom window, a feral slant to his features that may never fade. Midoriya adored his wide, strong shoulders and the ferocious way he licked his teeth.

There was a reason, after all, that he was Midoriya’s hero, despite everything.

“Can you kneel?”

Midoriya could do naught but nod.

And it was okay. It was okay when Bakugou pressed a hot hand onto the nape of his neck and ordered him down, because wolves know how to bow to might. He sank to his haunches and relished in the drag of Bakugou’s fingers mowing paths through his scalp. Without being bid, he closed his eyes, and opened his mouth on a soft sigh.

Above him, Bakugou swore.

For a moment or two, he did nothing but trace the rugged scape of Midoriya’s face with his thumb, burning routes between his freckles, outlining his scars. Every mark was proof Midoriya was just as unfettered now, unbound, and craving.

Bakugou’s zip creaked, and his belt dropped open like a maw. Midoriya, riding on instinct, slid his hands up Bakugou’s thighs.

“I haven’t-” he started.

“It’s fine.” Bakugou’s voice was ragged. He slipped a salty thumb between Midoriya’s lips, tugging his erection free from his jeans, finally presenting himself before his quarry. “It doesn’t
Midoriya took it in his hands, revelling in the heavy way Bakugou rested in his palm, more trust than they had known between them in years. He ran his hand up it and back down again. Bakugou wove his fingers into Midoriya’s scalp.

“I’ll do my best,” he said. His eyelashes felt heavy as bird feathers.

“Sure,” Bakugou croaked.

“Stop me if-”

“Deku, fuck, please just su- uh-”

He bowed to the pleasure of Midoriya opening his mouth as wide as he could and taking up as much of the length as would fit. It dried his chops, salt and leather burning the edges of his mouth, so he licked them until they were dripping and tried again. Bakugou’s legs trembled. He kept sweeping Midoriya’s hair off his forehead in fistfuls, eventually trapping it back so that his face and ministrations were exposed.

The air was thick with his curses, and the musky smell of his genitals.

Midoriya’s jaw ached, so wide did he have to hold it open for all of Bakugou to fit. Spit dribbled in unsightly floods down his chin, but he daren’t release his grip on Bakugou’s legs to wipe it, lest the mood vanish. He felt the fingers in his hair become a grip, and Bakugou started a steady pump that was all his own.

Would have been fine if Midoriya hadn’t choked.

“Fuck,” Bakugou croaked as Midoriya hacked and wiped his face on his shirt sleeve. “Didn’t think- Fuck that was- Can you-?”

Midoriya felt gratified that at least he’d induced some incoherency, even if he looked supremely unsexy right now. Bakugou staggered back a step and sank onto the bed.

“Come here,” he said softly, indicating the space between his legs. Midoriya was unsure if he meant him to carry on, but when he dragged his carcass over to the bed, Bakugou pulled him right up, and after an awkward second where he glanced at Midoriya’s lips in ambivalence, bit a trail of marks into his shoulder, and smacked kisses against his throat.

Midoriya hummed, digging his fingers into the soft burst of Bakugou’s hair. He wondered what to do next. Should they touch each other? Bakugou had other ideas.

“Can I fuck you?” he said raggedly, drawing Midoriya down to look at him. Midoriya’s whole body thrummed. He felt a blush heat his face into a furnace.

“I-” he said, wondering if carousels could spin upside-down.

“I wanna be in you,” Bakugou continued, like he wasn’t shaking Midoriya’s whole world like a snow globe. “Gonna make you scream my name, Deku.”

He had started a delirious grind that set Midoriya and the bed bouncing. His cock, still wet from Midoriya’s waterfall experience, rammed against the divot in Midoriya’s joggers, soaking his trousers and punching his body up and down like a piston; just like that first time on the training mat. Midoriya, overcome with something animal, rammed down the elastic of his waistband and
took himself in hand, seizing the advantage of the motion.

“Kacchan-!”

It was clear they weren’t going to make it any further than this fragmented frottage tonight, but that didn’t stop the barrage forthcoming from Bakugou’s dirty mouth.

“Gonna fuck you up, Deku. Gonna come –hah – inside you. Then I’m gonna put my cock in your mouth again. Fuck.”

Midoriya gasped like a man drowning in oil, his body coiling, his heart hammering so loud it was like a war-drum. His hips bruised from the force of Bakugou’s grip slamming him in a boisterous, unstoppable metronome over the curve of his cock.

His world whirled. Bakugou had used his untameable strength to roll him onto his front, rip down his cotton trousers, and continue the relentless pounding like an unleashed dog. Midoriya grabbed something for support. A pillow.

Midoriya’s voice was lost into the plump cloud of the cushion, his broken cries like muffled howls in the night. Bakugou stretched flat across his whole body, and Midoriya thought of that time in the kitchen against his back, and wondered belatedly if Bakugou had been hard then. But right now all of him was hot, hot, hot and he caved to the relentless slam of Bakugou’s hips and the unyielding way he gripped Midoriya about the neck as he pounded against him.

It was with all of his teeth in Midoriya’s neck that he came into the curve of his ass, with a strangled, guttural moan that bled into the depths of Midoriya’s spine. He wasted no time in dragging Midoriya up, although his muscles were shaking and must have been spent, to reach under and finish him off in a handful of rapid strokes that felt like fire on his flesh.

They collapsed, breathing in the musk that permeated the room, boiling in the heat of this formidable summer.

With a grumble, Bakugou sat up to pop the window, his dick still out like an animal in a breeding pen. Midoriya closed his eyes as the cool breeze wrapped her fingers around his steaming torso, cooling the furnace that raged beneath his skin.

“Ahh.”

Bakugou was considerate enough to provide a spool of toilet tissue on his nightstand. Midoriya broke off a ream and awkwardly snaked a hand behind his back to use it. Until Bakugou took pity on him and took over.

“Useless Deku,” he said softly. Midoriya hummed, the swabbing of the tissue, and the residual warmth of Bakugou smoothing the area with the slab of his palm lulling him into languor. He felt the mattress baulk as Bakugou sunk down next to him in the tiny bed. He placed a hot palm on the small of Midoriya’s back – the same place he had touched him at the barbeque.

“Not useless,” Midoriya mumbled, rolling his head on the crushed pillow to meet Bakugou’s eyes. A coquettish grin tugged at Bakugou’s flushed cheeks.

“Nah,” he said. “Need me to save you. Always gonna need me. Tiny nerd.”

Midoriya batted his hand away good-naturedly, but they were in such close confines that it didn’t really have anywhere else to go, so he allowed it back again. “Not tiny,” he argued around a huge yawn. “You just got stupid big.”
Bakugou practically preened, although he tried to conceal it. Midoriya saw his shoulders romp, bare naked over his pectorals in a suppressed, posturing dance. Midoriya snorted. “You’re ridiculous.”

“And fucking what?” Bakugou snarled, jostling Midoriya in the bed. He squealed at the fingers digging hard into his sides in a violent tickle. He bucked, gasping with mirth as Bakugou dragged him in. “You wanna fucking talk ridiculous?” More tickling, more squealing. “How about that shit with the sink, huh? Telling fucking Kirishima that you wanted my ass? How about tongue-fucking that floaty bitch on the sofa when you were hard for me the whole time? Yeah, yeah, I know you didn’t fucking kiss her, don’t look at me like that.”

Midoriya heaved breath back into his lungs, trying to act indignant at the same time. It probably just made him look like he’d been sprinting after a badly-behaved pet and had finally caught it, prime for chastising.

“Don’t call her that,” he admonished with a grumpy poke to Bakugou’s nose. Bakugou just huffed and nuzzled close. “Anyway, me and her were always just friends.”

“Yeah, well so were we. Shit changes.”

“We were until we weren’t,” Midoriya corrected, with an edge to his voice. Bakugou sighed hard into his hair.

“You’re gonna bring that up a lot, aren’t you?” he grunted.

Midoriya pressed his lips together. “No,” he decided. “I really won’t, Kacchan. I just – You can understand why-”

“Yeah, yeah,” Bakugou peered at him, appalled. “Gross. Don’t ever fucking say that.”

Midoriya shrugged in Bakugou’s arms. “It’s not a stretch,” he said, reasonably. “But if that’s how it is with Kirishima, then you know how I feel about Uraraka.” He paused for a moment in thought. “Did they ever fix the door handle?”
“Nah, they just boarded it up,” Bakugou said in a voice, heavy and hoarse with the vestige of imminent sleep. “Funny as fuck.”

Midoriya agreed, in hindsight. At the time, the discarded handle had looked like an open grave. Midoriya experienced that time-old sensation of realising that a lot of things had seemed world-shattering at the time of conception, in this new cocoon of a dawning future, strangely insignificant.

He rolled out of Bakugou’s limp arms, kicking his legs free of the remnants of duvet tangling their feet like spiders in a web, and lay in the cold air, exposed for a moment, thinking.

“We probably shouldn’t tell anyone yet,” he said, meaning their classmates, families, and the whole wide world. “About us. This.”

Bakugou shrugged, as if it couldn’t matter any less to him one way or the other. Knowing his attitude towards most social committals, it probably didn’t. “Whatever,” he said: a confirmation. “But those nosy assholes will find out eventually.”

“I know,” said Midoriya, pulling himself into a sitting position. “That’s okay. It might be better that way.”

He stood on creaking bones, reaching to tug his joggers back up to his waist. Bakugou surprised him by putting a hand on his rear.

“You going somewhere?” he grunted, sleepily, pulling Midoriya back by the slack in his trousers.

“Back to my room?” Midoriya offered. “Less suspicious?”

“Don’t think so,” Bakugou grunted. “Get back in bed, loser.”

Midoriya caved, of course, as the plates of earth underfoot invariably succumb to the shift of magma beneath their surfaces. He held Bakugou as he drifted into sleep, his nose full of gasoline and caramel and the musky scent of sex, thinking how, in the dark of the night-time, no matter how well you seal the walls, wolves will inevitably quest their way inside to reach the hearth. Perhaps they will eat you.

If you’re kind enough to them in, perhaps they will curl up before the fire and slumber, the windows rattling with the howling wind, in time with their ancient breathing.

Butterflies came that summer in their thousands.

Wide wings flashed vivid mosaics as they twitched on the flowers and grass, suckling sweet nectar, drinking in the very essence of life and fluttering hither and thither like bejewelled snow. The truth of summer closed in, tight and warm. One balmy evening, days before exams that would determine who each of them would emerge as – heroes of the people – Class 3-A decided on a final trip to the woods. A friendly race with all the usual checkpoints and flags and goals, but freeing, not constrained by usual barriers. It was a chance to express themselves, be lost in the vibrancy of nature, and drink in the wild candour of youth.

At its essence, the rule was to just run.
Midoriya emerged from his room an hour or so before they were to set off, carrying in his arms a bundle of books for last-minute cramming. Yaoyorozu bumped into him on the path down the corridor, smiling sympathetically at his academic burden.

“Was the one I gave you interesting?” she asked, indicating the novel she had lent him on top of the pile.

“It was!” said Midoriya. “Although I’m not sure why the hero didn’t just admit how he felt and get it over with. Seemed like it was just dragging things out. Also are their quirks supposed to be metaphors? What about all the other metaphors?”

“Depends how you interpret it, I think,” she said. “I have a companion notebook somewhere. I’ll dig it out for you, if you’re thinking of doing your essay on it?”

“I might have to,” Midoriya grumbled, hoisting his cumbersome stack in an effort to distribute its weight. “Wish I could just do the essay on All-Might.”

Yaoyorozu laughed brightly. “I’m really glad we have you, Midoriya,” she said. “We all worried about you for a while. I’ll find you the book. Maybe we can study together? I’m really going to miss you all when we leave.”

“Don’t,” said Midoriya. “I’m doing my best not to think about it. But I’d like that. I’ll catch up with you later, after the run.”

Yaoyorozu smiled understandingly and bid him goodbye, slipping into her room as Midoriya walked the elongated path to Bakugou’s door. Unable to knock, he bumped against the panelling.

“Kacchan? It’s me. Let me in?”

At once, the door opened, to reveal Bakugou in his loose joggers and skull-shirt, half-eaten plate of spring rolls and tonkatsu balanced in one hand, chewing crudely. “Hey, nerd. What’s this?”

“Books.”

Bakugou looked at him from under his eyebrows. “I’m not fucking blind, Deku.”

He turned from the door, leaving it open for Midoriya to enter, parking in the standard-issue plastic desk-chair with his meal. Midoriya sauntered in, dropping the books into a pile on the desk next to him.

“I got them so that we can study later,” he said by way of explanation, shaking his arms out, relishing in the feel of them now unburdened. “Also, wanted an excuse to bother you.”

“Yeah?” Bakugou grinned, wiping his hands on his trousers to run them up Midoriya’s hips without leaving greasy trails. How considerate.

“Are you coming for the run?”

Bakugou shrugged one shoulder, half his attention on digging into the waistband of Midoriya’s shorts. “Nah, leave you guys to that weird one-with-nature shit. I got better things to do.”

He slipped his tongue over Midoriya’s navel, making him start and giggle.

“That tickles!”

“Pansy-ass.”
“The run should be good, though,” said Midoriya, placing his hands on Bakugou’s shoulders to stave him off. “Feel like I should be getting all the training I can in to the stretch to the end.” He felt a familiar anxiety rising in the pit of his stomach. They were moving on. Such change was inexorable, and the responsibility of their roles – and Midoriya’s desperate yearning for his dream – made it that much more important that he do well.

“Oi,” said Bakugou, shaking him by the hips. His abdomen rolled like a wave. “Not the end, you idiot. We got loads of shit we’re gonna do. I’m gonna keep kicking your ass till we’re wrinklely old fucks that chuck our fake teeth at each other. None of this ‘end’ shit.”

Midoriya flushed, thinking of a future with Bakugou stretching that long. Whatever way they were, they would be inseparable as earth and sky. Of this he was suddenly without question. Such two as they could be worlds apart, and still be so intrinsically tied that it would take the heat death of the universe to cleave their union.

Even then, he thought their atoms might find a way to stretch and fling themselves back together. Birth a new world, a new life. Birth a planet full of butterfly wings and canine teeth and friends and heroes. What a concept. What a delight.

“You’re muttering,” Bakugou said in a low voice.

Midoriya stopped at once, but wasn’t embarrassed. Not with the way Bakugou regarded him with the sweetest, darkest eyes. “Let’s be heroes,” he said.

Bakugou bared his teeth in the grin of the most feral at heart. “You’re gonna be a fucking hero if I have to blast you into doing it properly.”

He pulled Midoriya to him by the wrists, tangling his fingers like vines into Midoriya’s shirt sleeves as he bowed, carving out a tempestuous route through his mountainside. Midoriya curved into the draw of a molten kiss, dragging his own blazing lips across Bakugou’s, frenzy and need working their way in tandem through his veins like venom.

Bakugou plucked his face away with both huge hands, looking hazy and drunk. He glanced to the door, still ajar from Midoriya’s careless entry. “We got time?” he asked, his voice rusty.

“A little,” said Midoriya, breathless with awe and anticipation. Bakugou was up at once, ramming the door shut with a shoulder, and clicking it locked from the inside. Midoriya’s nerves hummed into life like he was full of fibre optics, or the northern lights.

Stiff-lipped, Bakugou gestured to the bed with a sharp incline of his chin. Midoriya toyed with the idea of defiance, but backed himself onto the bed after a strung-out moment of internal indecision. There would be plenty of time to be insubordinate when he wasn’t buzzing with the potent electricity of anticipation.

He sank unsteadily onto the familiar sheets, as Bakugou crossed the room and pulled open a desk drawer. After a dig, he withdrew a tube, and a box. He set both very deliberately on the surface of the desk. When he made eye contact, Midoriya fought the pressure to combust.

“We got enough time?” Bakugou reiterated.

At a loss for how to express how badly he wanted them to stretch this moment into infinity, Midoriya just swallowed all the tennis balls in his throat and nodded.

Bakugou gathered his spoils and dropped them into the valleys of the bedsheets. Midoriya scrambled down to meet him on his back, adopting his favourite spot beneath Bakugou’s hulking
frame, his legs either side, one knee pressed against the cool flat of the wall. Bakugou settled in-between like a jungle cat upon a branch, licking into Midoriya’s mouth, a promise, a pure sensation.

“You want it like this?” he breathed, all smoky. Midoriya dug trenches into his scalp, noted how he was already sweating against the pads of his fingers.

“Like this,” he agreed, “or the other way. It’s fine.”

“Can’t do both,” Bakugou grunted, pulling back and yanking Midoriya’s hips onto his knees.

“Why not?”

Bakugou huffed, an indication of his composure flickering like a candle flame in a strong wind. “Jeez, you- I didn’t think you’d ever be like this.”

“I can do worse,” assured Midoriya, grinning cheekily.

“You’d better.” Bakugou pushed his legs to his shoulders as if testing his flexibility. “Want you. Want you bad. All of it.”

“Yeah,” Deku breathed, storms swirling in his chest as his knees tapped against his cheekbones and Bakugou’s eyes consumed the effortless fold of his body. “Me too.”

Bakugou didn’t come in segments, like two-for-one at the supermarket. He wasn’t pick-and-choose or ‘less of this’ and ‘more of that’. He was a hero that came with hulking shoulders and jagged claws. His fury was part of him just as the bitter salt was intrinsic to the sea.

His lolling, red tongue swiped his jaw, and he issued an order with a voice like rocks tumbling down a mountainside,

“Hold them.”

Midoriya did as he was bid and grabbed the backs of his knees, pulling them to his shoulders. Bakugou released Midoriya’s knees, and lowered his head to push his snout into the hardening pith of Midoriya’s open legs.

Hot mouth to his crotch; wet breath bleeding through to his aching skin. Midoriya moaned aloud and Bakugou laughed churlishly, sinking lower, pushing his mouth between Midoriya’s clothed cheeks, his hands crushing on the taut muscles either side.

“Ah- Kacchan-!”

“Mm,” he said, guttural, resurfacing. He leaned over Midoriya’s body and a nefarious grin split his features. “Noisy.”

“Sorry,” Midoriya gasped reflexively, but immediately shrieked when Bakugou ripped his shorts up his thighs and dug his thumbs into his core instead. Unable to move, pinned by Bakugou bearing down on him and the electric surges from his heart to his extremities, Midoriya gripped his knees harder and held on.

“Ooh!”

Bakugou pressed his length against him, between his thumbs, hard and sure as packed earth. He started a fastidious roll of his sturdy hips. The soft material of his trousers was warm against
“It’s gonna be like this,” Bakugou huffed, releasing his hold and bending low to pull Midoriya’s fluttering lips into a kiss that heated him from end-to-end. “It’s gonna be slow. Gonna make you beg me. You want that?”

Breathlessly, Midoriya nodded, and Bakugou sat up, satisfied. Midoriya reached down, one leg at a time, to grapple himself free of his shorts. Once he was liberated, Bakugou rammed into him a little harder, as he sunk into another broiling kiss. Midoriya, lost and consumed, released his knees to twine his hand around Bakugou’s back, sucking in the same air, deep in the throes of their love, and the bedsprings.

Bakugou pulled back, his hand snatching blindly for the bottle on the bedspread.

“Where’s the fucking-”

He found it, and wetted two fingers. Already. This was already happening, this was their moment. Midoriya’s chest heaved unbidden as anxiety rumbled below the surface.

“Kacchan,” he whispered, drawing Bakugou’s attention. “Be careful. Please.”

Bakugou froze, his eyes searching Midoriya’s face with a concerned twitching. When Midoriya said nothing more, they slipped shut and he pressed a fretful frown into the side of Midoriya’s knee, gathering the whole leg to him in a remorseful embrace, holding the lubricated hand awkwardly above Midoriya’s hips.

“Fuck,” he said. “You gotta- I can’t promise that I- Deku, I’m not a fucking saint. I’m not always gonna be-”

Midoriya sat up quickly, crawling into Bakugou’s arms and pushing his lips against Bakugou’s in the softest kiss. Even so, he still looked unhappy when Midoriya pulled away.

“Silly, I get that,” he said. “But this is different.” He paused, pulling a face. “You’re about to put your fingers up my butt, Kacchan, I’m just asking you not to be rough.”

At last, Bakugou laughed, shoving Midoriya back down so that he bounced on the mattress.

“Fucking weak, Deku,” he said, mirth staining his tone. “So fucking nasty. Bite your arm or some shit.”

Midoriya licked his chops, deliberately keeping eye contact, and Bakugou’s lips tilted in a smirk as he pushed his fingers inside. Midoriya baulked.

“Mm!”

Midoriya’s eyes squeezed shut and he flailed for something to clutch, settling on the waves of the bedsheets. Bakugou sunk further, slow as tar seeping into sand, and Midoriya’s breathing rattled.

“You good?” Bakugou asked.

“Fine,” Midoriya gasped, lying. “Just- Give me a minute.”

Bakugou did, a rare semblance of patience making a guided appearance. Midoriya’s body ached with the intrusion, his instinct’s begging for it to stop, his heart yearning for more. Gradually the soreness ebbed into something distant and thrumming. Above him, Bakugou used the back of an
arm to fitfully dab moisture from his brow.

“Okay,” Midoriya said, on a loud exhale, releasing a breath that felt as though it had been entombed for centuries. “Go.”

Bakugou dug, and Midoriya’s sand crumbled. He writhed, his fingers entrenched in the bedsheets as through attempting to rip straight through. Somewhere, with Bakugou so deep that he felt as though his core were being tapped into, pleasure zipped through and punched a moan through the flap of his throat.

“There, huh?” Bakugou asked, smugly. He sunk an arm into the bed next to Midoriya’s ribs, scooting closer and encouraging the angle. Midoriya hiccupped on another moan, curling over Bakugou’s bare arm beside him. “You sound so good. Your noises. *Fuck.*”

Midoriya’s breath came in great waves, like an earthquake under trees, sending them shaking and crashing down in his lungs. Bakugou entered another finger, slathering everything in lube. When he put the bottle down for the second time, he closed his fist over Midoriya’s length, squeezing and pulling in a varied rhythm. For the irregularity of it, Midoriya was grateful, because anything steady would have destroyed him.

“Kacchan,” he found himself begging. “I can take it. Please-!”

“Yeah,” Bakugou croaked, his voice barely above a whisper. He shoved Midoriya’s shirt up to his neckline to run a searing hand over his ribs in reverence. “Wait.”

He reached blindly for the box, and Midoriya flung an arm over his own eyes as he heard the metallic rip of a condom wrapper. The bed arched and dipped as Bakugou shucked his bottoms.

Midoriya could do this. He could fight monsters ten times his size; he could punch through igneous rock; he could leap distances that made him dizzy, so this – baring his heart, his body – this should be easy.

“Look at me, nerd.”

It wasn’t.

Midoriya felt his arm being moved away. Bakugou’s dark eyes poured into his, the soft afternoon light from the half-open blinds haloing the hair about his head, and Midoriya was reminded so suddenly and violently of his dreams that he seized up, clutching his mouth on a gasp. His eyes leaked.

“Shit,” Bakugou said, suddenly stricken. “What?”


His teeth suddenly stabbed into Midoriya’s flesh on a fathomless bite, and he shoved inside him at the same moment. Midoriya, stolen of breath, opened his mouth on a soundless cry, digging his scarred fingers into the divots of the ribs encasing Bakugou’s broad back.

“Oh,” he gasped, “Oh.”

Bakugou hushed him tenderly, slipping his fingers into Midoriya’s hair, stroking his cheek with a
branding, calloused thumb. He began to drive forward in gentle gyrations, determinedly eking Midoriya open piece-by-piece, like a hollow in a rock.

Midoriya caved; his body sparked. His being flashed like lightning as he was cradled through the breaching, unable to encase the power that surged through him, unable to quiet it. Bakugou pressed a kiss to the side of his mouth.

“That good, huh?” His voice was strained. He shuddered, pushing harder. “You’re good. So good. It’s tight as fuck.”

Midoriya’s heart hammered freely as the sand in the desert flies over the dunes. His legs were shoved up as Bakugou’s hips bore down upon them and stopped, with nowhere left to go. A pause as the dust settled, Bakugou’s hard breathing like flames licking his ear.

Bakugou dug nails into Midoriya’s flesh like claws in a tree. They stung perfectly and Midoriya unchained his moans, not caring what wild animals his carrying voice could attract.

After all, he had chosen the company of a wolf.

Bakugou pulled back, grinning toothily, his chest heaving, his cock boring Midoriya open from the inside.

“You’re still gonna get it, nerd,” he promised in a low voice. Midoriya laughed in a strangled, broken way.

“You’re still ridiculous, Kacchan,” he murmured on a pant, stroking a leaf of hair from Bakugou’s slanted brow. Bakugou hoisted his hips with a playful snarl, burrowing deeper inside. Midoriya gripped his forearms.

“Hrk!”

“Don’t think I should let you talk much,” he said rather menacingly, bumping against Midoriya’s hips. “Gimme that pillow.”

Midoriya fumbled behind him to do as he was bid, passing the pillow to Bakugou, who heaved his hips skyward with one arm and shoved it underneath his lower back in a folded heap with the other. Midoriya felt the gravitational press of his chin on his sternum couldn’t be flattering from this angle, but Bakugou didn’t seem to mind.

Indeed, he began to plough forwards, sudden and heedless. Midoriya cried out, the pain acute and burning.

“Ow, Kacchan!”

Bakugou slowed, the thick drag of him more noticeable. Midoriya felt the agony slowly ebb until it settled into something that blossomed and alighted in his belly.

“Better?” Kacchan asked, his eyes rolling, his voice like ash.

“Yeah,” Midoriya moaned, equally dusty. “Harder?”

Bakugou accented, pounding Midoriya firmly into the pillow. His eyelids fluttered, his canines digging into his lower lip in concentration above, apparently cruising on a sensation so powerful that it rearranged his features.
Feeling mighty, and utterly desirable, Midoriya closed a hand over his unflagging hardness, riding the twin sensations until he was crying out on every thrust. If time stretched into forever, and they stayed here, trapped in this moment for eternity, Midoriya would think it too short.

“Kacchan,” he gasped, grabbing great fistfuls of Bakugou’s soaked hair, his body coiling. “Can you bite- Can you-”

Teeth plunged into the flesh of his shoulder and Midoriya choked as his body erupted, magma spewing in great bursts over his fist, a gaggle of birds rising screaming from his lungs into the smoky atmosphere.

“That’s so hot,” Bakugou gravelled, unclenching his iron jaw. Midoriya fancied he may scar. “That’s so fucking hot.”

Bakugou’s hips, which had slowed during Midoriya’s climax, resumed their wild thrusting, ramming him bodily into the mattress, stretching his spent muscles. He closed his trembling limbs over Bakugou’s back like a claw, urging him further in. He couldn’t help the cries that bled into the open air, tumbling on currents that ripped him up, threw him to fire, and burned him alive. His thighs throbbed, his fingers knotted, his heart – oh, his heart – wailed.

Bakugou’s rutting suddenly stuttered and he closed over Midoriya with a great tremor that coursed through his entire form. Midoriya clenched, partly in surprise, and partly with wanton intent.

Bakugou lifted his head, emptying his lungs of a sound like the wolves’ wild lament to the sky, and pulsing like a heartbeat into Midoriya beneath him. A moment that stretched like wild moors...

And then Midoriya felt all power slip out of Bakugou’s limbs as he dumped himself, boneless, on top.

Silence, apart from their desert-dune breathing. Midoriya coughed the sand from his lungs as Bakugou lifted his head with what looked like a gargantuan effort and plunged his tongue into Midoriya’s mouth. His deep, languid kisses eased Midoriya’s heart into a steady thrum, setting his moth-wing limbs to stasis.

He tugged Midoriya’s lower lip in his teeth as he pulled away on a heavy breath.

“Still feel like running?” he teased gruffly. Midoriya smiled sleepily at him.

“I’m not done being a hero yet,” he said. Bakugou huffed a tiny laugh through his nose and pressed a small kiss to Midoriya’s.

“You’re a freckly motherfucker,” he said. Midoriya blushed. “Like all over you. Even your ass.”

“Kacchan,” Midoriya hid his face in a palm. Bakugou nipped at the bones of his wrist.

“Just saying.”

The air in the room felt suddenly cool as Bakugou heaved himself off to the tiny en-suite toilet. Midoriya searched for the beside tissues and used them to wipe down his belly, and his hands. He was a mess, tumbled in the natural wetness of their love-making. He wiped ineffectually at the slop between his legs.

“Kacchan,” he called. “Gonna use your shower.”

“Fine,” came the response. “Give me a fuckin’ second.”
Midoriya waited, and presently Bakugou emerged, naked as a wildman, using his t-shirt to rub water from his face and hands. “Sweating,” he grunted, in explanation. “Almost blew your nuts off at the end there.”

He tumbled into the bed, trapping a squawking Midoriya beneath him.

“Kacchan, I’m so gross!” he cried.

“Mm,” Bakugou sighed, rolling them into a prime make-out pile. “Smell good.”

“Jeez-”

“Thank fuck you’re mine,” he murmured into the flesh of Midoriya’s neck. “Thought you weren’t gonna be.”

“When did you change your mind?” Midoriya asked, squirming away from the press of their bare skin beneath the rolls of his shirt. His skin felt tacky and over-sensitive. Bakugou didn’t seem to notice.

“Ain’t about- I didn’t- Fuck, it was that stupid barbeque that shitty-hair arranged,” he said, muttering. “She- All over you. Fucked me off.”

“Uraraka? You mean when you touched-” He mimed the hand that had brushed the small of his back all that time ago.

“Yeah. And been drinking.”

Midoriya smoothed the hair sticking all up on Bakugou’s nape from where he had pulled it in passion. “Why didn’t you just tell me this stuff, Kacchan?”

Bakugou shifted uncomfortably and Midoriya felt it in all the points of his body.

“Didn’t want you to think-” he started, and closed off. But Midoriya could piece it together: didn’t want you to think that I was weak; that I could drop my guard for even a second and assume that you wouldn’t charge through and demolish all of my defences. Because Bakugou wouldn’t hesitate to do the exact same thing to Midoriya, why should he expect any less? “Also I was pissed at you.”

“Why?”

He felt Bakugou shrug.

“Why?” Midoriya pressed.

“Because,” spluttered Bakugou against his neck. “Just- Fuck. You wanna do this hero shit but you overwork yourself. Your priorities are all jacked up and you’re fucking good but you don’t use it. Fucking also,” he added, batting Midoriya’s shoulder it what was presumably supposed to be a chiding, “cook proper fucking food.”

Midoriya digested this, pondering. “I thought about telling you many times,” he admitted. “About how I felt about you.”

Bakugou went still and quiet.

“Yeah?” he breathed. “Why didn’t you?”

It was Midoriya’s turn to shrug. “Didn’t think you’d want to hear it.”
There was a long silence where the soft wind rustled the curtains past their heads in a hushed dance. Bakugou huffed in Midoriya’s ear and spoke, his voice strained.

“Pissed me off the most that you were with… her.”

Midoriya grumbled. “Me and Ochako, we’re really not-”

“I know,” Bakugou said, raising his head to meet Midoriya’s eyes. “Not that. I didn’t really think that- It was easier to think you were – you know – with her or something, than that you didn’t want… anything with me.”

Midoriya gently placed a hand on Bakugou’s cheek, capturing his embarrassed, wavering gaze.

“It has always been you, Kacchan,” he reiterated. “Really.”

“Sap.”

He bullied Modoriya into a kiss that left him breathless, and determined.

“I’m going to shower,” Midoriya said, his voice sure as thunder. “And then I’m going to go run with the others.”

He closed a heavy hand over the scruff of Bakugou’s neck.

“Yeah,” said Bakugou. “But then you come back here and train with me. Be fuckin’ heroes.”

As if Midoriya could resist the call of the wild.

As if he could do anything but sink, sink, sink into murky depths and frolic with the mad-eyed creatures that wade around abandoned carousels down there.

As if he was anything but a monster with a wild howl and haunches that could take him across the vast, wondrous spread of entire continents.

Then, once he was done, he would come home; nestle between the paws of fire and fission.

The scruff of Bakugous’ neck thrummed with the uncaged frenzy of his firebrand heartbeat.

“Hm. I think we’re ready,” Midoriya said.

Bakugou grinned. “Of fucking course we are.”

End.

“Nearing perfection, but wisely electing to shun my reflection, preferring instead shoe inspection. Cheese and chalk do not talk, but their eyes synchronize with a secret rhythm. […]


Flammable, undiagrammable sentiments pass between animal beings.

Hard to explain but it’s plain that I love you for psychological reasons.” – They Might Be Giants, I Love You for Psychological Reasons.

Chapter End Notes

Was this all just an elongated excuse to write overblown, self-indulgent smut?

/jazz hands/

Thanks for all the nice things people have been saying on this piece. Was trying to push my writing style more with this one, and people have picked up on that so thank you!

Amazing (nsfw) fanart this fic inspired by am-yuki: https://am-yuki.tumblr.com/post/179522511510/am-yuki-i-dont-usually-draw-nsfw-but-when-i

End Notes

so basically I had a dream I was deku and that bakugou touched the small of my back and then this happened. stop side-eyeing me i know you’re think about stephenie meyer stop it now you know I use big words sometimes to mask the fact that I actually don’t know what im talking about fuck

Peering over Angela Carter’s shoulder copying heavily from her homework in the middle of class

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