Ascendant
by Gentrychild

Summary

Izuku took a deep breath while everyone started running. He took a second to clear his mind, and focused on his favorite quirks, the one he kept close.


He dashed towards the entrance.

Izuku wants to be a hero.

Now has a TVTropes page here.

Notes

I am following the greats, be it HLine with From Muddy Waters, MidnightLightHowlite
with Stolen Chances, and last but not the least, AMournfulHowlInTheNight with Conversations with a Cryptid.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Izuku was waiting in front of the doors, hidden in the crowd of candidates, and he could barely contain the nervous energy inside him. He was in UA. He was about to try to pass the entrance exam in order to become a hero. It didn’t feel real.

His mom was at home right now and she had no idea of what he was doing. She would freak out as soon as she learned about it.

He shifted his weight from one foot to another, trying to evacuate some of his restlessness. He just needed a distraction, but though he had recognized some fellow students from his middle school, none of them was in sight now, and it wasn’t as if he was friend with any of them. Izuku wasn’t close to anyone.

So he took a deep breath and focused on the only thing that could calm it when doubts and worries threaten to overwhelm him: his quirk. A discreet presence inside him, and like every time he reached Inside himself, fear receded for a time.

*You are trained. You know your quirk.*

"AND... BEGIN !

*You can do this.*

"WHAT'S WRONG ? THE TEST'S STARTED ! RUN ! RUN ! THE DIE IS CAST !"

Izuku took a deep breath while everyone started running. He didn't hurry and he took a second to clear his mind, before focusing on his favorite quirks, the one he kept close.


He dashed towards the entrance.

***

Toshinori was waiting for a sign. In a perfect world, finding a successor would have been a matter of instinct. He would have met someone wanting to be a hero and thought "This one. This one will be my successor." There would be no doubt, it would be as clear as a ray of light touching the chosen one, or as the collective voice of every past One for All users whispering to him: "Yes, they shall be worthy of One for All."

Reality had methodically trampled on those hopeful aspirations but no one could prevent him from dreaming.

He didn’t think he would find a candidate among the first years, not when they never had the
chance to correctly train their quirk. But watching them was interesting. He barely remembered being so young. So unsure and full of passion at the same time.

Some of them would become his future students. Heroes' eggs.

He couldn't help a smile at this idea. The new generation, and he would have a role in shaping it.

He focused back on the giant screens and his colleagues' comments.

***

Izuku sprinted towards a two-pointer, slamming his palm on the hot metal. He activated *Breakdown*, and left a second after his quirk started acting, the robot crumbling down in his wake. Back when he had taken this quirk, he had never expected to use it. A sweet old lady had problems controlling it, and after breaking countless TVs, cellphones, and in one occasion a bus, she had asked for help.

The teenager had taken it because the poor woman was sick of it, but right now, surrounded by robots and in need of something non flashy, he was starting to love this quirk. It worked only on mechanical things, and every time he touched a robot, it started to dismantle under his fingers.

He was careful, of course. The damage was from the inside to the outside, and could be mistaken for coming from a physical quirk.

How many points did he need to pass? There were many candidates, fewer and fewer robots, and he had no idea of how many students would be taken. About forty, but there were always the recommended ones. Also, there was no guaranty UA would take the same number on each arenas.

*You should fail this test because if you pass, you would probably get kicked out before your first year is over.*

A shadow loomed over the whole arena, cutting his strategy making, and Izuku had a moment where his mind went blank as everyone around him was running for their lives. He looked up and kept looking up as something huge was approaching, obviously not interested in details like turning corners to avoid buildings.

It was so huge that it was obscuring the sky.

And it looked like the drawing of the zero pointer.

"Def... Definitely not at scale," Izuku stuttered, his eyes wides.

And as he looked at the wreckage it was creating, he saw a colorful form of the ground, moving - no- trapped near the zero pointer. It would stop in time, right?

*Are you sure about that?*

He was already moving anyway.

His feet were barely touching the ground, a handful of Speed quirks spreading through him.

At this moment, the world was clear. It didn't matter that he had a 'bad' quirk. That caution dictated
him to stay low, to not draw attention. He just knew someone was in danger and that he had the means to help.

He was feeling at peace for the first time in months.

He didn't have the time to stop. Even if he did manage to help the nice girl, the pause would probably be enough for the robot to catch up to them. So Izuku jumped, using the wall of a nearby building as a launching pad.

The concrete under his feet disintegrated upon the impact, and Izuku went airborne, wind screaming in his ears. He abandoned Jump and Speed to focus on all his Strength quirks, on Air pressure, and on Resistance.

He screamed as the energy of a dozen of quirks passed through him, and punched as hard as he could. The robot rocked back in a deafening noise of distorted metal and pieces started raining, away from the candidates and more importantly, away from the one who was trapped.

Then he realized how high he had jumped and how far away was the ground.

Oh fu...

Gravity swallowed him whole.

He called all his Resistance quirks to him, knowing that it wouldn't be enough. He had to break the impact. How many Strength quirks ? How long did he have ? How not to break his neck because of the momentum ?

His saving grace came in the form a a building absurdly high. He saw a wall and hanged on for dear life, his feet and palms hitting to the side of a building at the same moment and he used Air pressure like it was originally used to.

Izuku stuck to the beautiful solid and safe matter as if he was a tin man on a giant magnet.

Air pressure was at first given to him as a way to slide and glide. The repellant force akin to air which allowed him to inject more power to his movements could be become an attracting one allowing him to stick to anything like a suction cup.

He sled down the building, gradually decelerating because if he stopped abruptly, his wrists and ankles wouldn't be able to bear it.

He let go at the last moment and the rest of his fall was cancelled by a dumpster he absolutely didn't aim for. The plastic groaned, the plastic container felt under his weight and he finished his course on the sidewalk. Unhurt.

*A good landing is a landing you survive to.* But his stomach didn't seem to agree.

Izuku decided to stay on the ground for a while. It was nice, not life-threatening, and his legs didn't seem to want to work. Hell, if he was quiet enough, maybe no one would see him and he would be able to sleep here.

Luck wasn't on his side because someone was running towards him. Weirdly. A moment late, he recognized the nice girl, who shouldn't be walking if her foot was injured.

"Are you OK ?" she asked with so much worry on her face that Izuku froze, words suddenly fleeing him.
This only seemed to worry her more. And she seemed greener by the second.

"How are you? Please, say something?"

Izuku finally remembered how to talk but not how to actually think about what he was saying.

"I saw my whole life flashing before my eyes," he managed to explain. "I think I need a minute."

They looked at each other and simultaneously sighed, relieved and gleeful to be alright despite the threat of giant robots, gravity, and the collateral damages which came with education.

And then, Izuku ducked as the girl threw up where his shoes had been a moment earlier.

Chapter End Notes

For those who want to visualize how Izuku got to the ground, follow this link:
http://www.gifbin.com/986792
Who guessed where Izuku got his "Wind pressure" quirk?
‘‘Distracted, aren’t we, my dear ?’’ Ms Kuroichi asked.

Izuku immediately stopped thinking about the course of the UA letter in the postal administration. Admission or rejection. He had a good score but he had to be among the bests to be admitted. And for a moment after he had returned home, he had lived in the fear of UA sending him the bill for their giant killer robot. After all, he was supposed to avoid it, certainly not ram in it with enough strength to turn it into spare parts.

‘‘I am sorry, Ms Kuroichi. I was thinking about school.’’

She waved her hand, telling him not to worry about it. At seventy two, Kuroichi Tsubaki was small but very active, never staying in place for too long and and Izuku had the sneaking suspicions she only agreed to sit down so she could feed him more cookies. They had met one week ago and her first words had been something like ‘‘Poor boy, you’re so thin !’’

‘‘Oh, please, don’t worry. I should be the one apologizing. You came all the way here for nothing after all.’’

Izuku almost felt guilty. He didn't come here to hassle her. He didn't want her to feel bad.

‘‘I didn’t come for nothing, those cookies are delicious.’’

She immediately pushed the plates full of sweets towards him, and as he was about to refuse since he had already eaten six of them, he saw something fierce in the sweet old lady’s eyes.

He took another cookie and nibbled on one. Delicious but it was his seventh.

Ms Kuroichi had a taste enhancing quirk. It made her a great cook, but as she had told him the first time he had visited, a good poison detector. Quickly, influential men and women who came for her cooking refused to take a bite of anything until she tasted their meals first.

And once she did, she asked for recipes.

"I thought I could get rid of it. I am getting pickier and pickier now that I have tuned it so much. But I realized as you were coming that I just couldn't."

"I don't mind."

Lies. She had regaled him with so many stories that curiosity had devoured him during the whole week.

"Even if you had changed your mind after," he reminded her. "You'd just have to call me and I would have given it back. I only take donations and there is no deadline."

"I know. You are a good boy."

"By the way, how long can you stay ? If you're not careful, I might bore you with my stories all
Izuku got out of the retirement home a little disappointed but the delicious stories Ms Kuroichi had told him were worth it. Taking a quirk wasn't needed to study it and that might have been his favorite part: knowing how the quirk worked, what were his applications, and how they could be extended.

Quirks kept evolving during life but most people didn't take the time to develop them. To Izuku, it felt like a waste. He cherished all his quirks, and was working on strengthening them every time he had the chance. It was also what led him towards retirees. More experience, so they had found out more practical applications of their abilities.

If he was accepted to UA, this summer would be the last time he could freely explore all his quirks. He had written super power under the mention Description of your quirk in order to be able to use as many as he could, but that wouldn't stand for anything that wasn't an enhancer.

His phone biped, interrupting his swirling thoughts, and his eyes widened when he saw the caption.

[All Might spotted in Furano.]

Izuku activated one Speed quirk, and ran towards the indicated location. There was some villain on the run, so if he was really lucky, he might be able to see him! All Might was notorious for finishing fights quickly.

One police officer saw him running, hesitated, but didn't say anything. Some quirks were more subtle than others and he couldn't say if Izuku was using his quirk on public road or if he was just a fast runner. One distinction Izuku was often abusing. He wasn't raised in the respect of the Anti quirk use laws.

Running on the roofs would be quicker, but there were limits to how far he could bend the rules.

Izuku arrived just in time to see a form high in the sky.

"CALIFORNIA SMAAASH!"

People on the sidewalk ducked as the punch created a shockwave but Izuku just grabbed a lamp post, and used Slide and Glide to stick himself on place. He was at the perfect to see All Might neutralize the villain with a gigantification quirk, a woman who was now slowly regaining a human size.

It was the first time Izuku was seeing All Might in the flesh and he was as incredible as he thought. Strong, powerful, nice, and smiling as if nothing bad could happen. And he had the brightest quirk Izuku had ever seen. The teenager had suspected it when he had watched All Might on the screens, but it was nothing compared to what he was seeing with his own eyes.

All Might's quirk was a secret that Izuku hadn't managed to pierce despite years of study. As far as he could tell, it's was an incredibly powerful enhancer quirk, who had probably started as a force...
ability before evolving along the bloodline. But unless All Might accepted to finally answered his fans' questions, and since he changed subject every time it was mentioned, it was doubtful, Izuku's best chance would have been to take the quirk and to proceed to all the tests he wanted to try.

Not that Izuku would ever consider taking it. People offered him quirks because they didn't need it and sympathized with his desire to become a hero. All Might needed his quirk to protect everyone.

But one could dream.

Izuku wasn't the only one to look at All Might with hungry eyes, and the number one hero had definitely noticed it. All Might stood behind the policemen, waiting for them to secure the villain, and waved at the people who had stopped to observe him. Heroes' fans knew better than to hassle a pro during an arrest, but as soon as the police officers left with the villain, All Might was fair game.

One Zoom quirk allowed Izuku to see the almost worried look on his face when he suddenly faced a cohort of fans. And something else.

All might coughed, putting a hand in front of his mouth, and Izuku could have sworn than his fingers were tainted with something dark.

He tried to see better but All Might disappeared, crushing Izuku's hopes to obtain an autograph.

Anyway, he contained his disappointment and started to leave. Heroes had more important things to do, and it was time to go. His mother didn't like it when he was late for dinner.

No quirk, but quirk analysis in good company and one apparition of All Might. Today was a good day overall.

At least until he saw someone on his way back to the train station.

He had never seen him. He would have remembered, if only because the stranger was so emaciated he could have passed for a blonde depiction of Death itself. Usually, no one would have caught him staring so intently, but there was something else.

Izuku knew quirks. He could feel the moment where someone used them. He could recognize them for the treasure they were.

And in this man who seemed so frail a breeze could have made him fall over, he recognized the golden quirk he had always adored. Despite his skeletal frame, there was strength here. Power hidden under his emaciated physic, and embers of something great.

This couldn't be, right? But it was...

"All... Might?"

The stranger froze a moment, then turned towards Izuku, his head tilted.

"What did you call me?" he asked with enough disbelief to make Izuku doubt what he was seeing.

But only for a moment.

He just knew.

*Same height, limbs that reached as far, same clothes, same hair color, same eye color, same bone structure, same skull structure, similar voice. Either a family member or a , but what are the odds when All Might just rushed here? No, it's definitely All Might. Is this because of a quirk or...*
Izuku realized he was speaking out loud as the thin man’s eyes were widening to comical proportions and he promptly shut up.

"Are you a robot or something?"

The teenager suddenly felt the urge to hide somewhere. People were even starting to look at them.

"Sorry," he continued, "but... You might want to have your eyes examined."

Izuku blushed. Whatever was happening, it didn't concern him and he just made a fool of himself. Not that it was a rare occurrence.

"Sorry for bothering you," he said very quickly under his breath, and he left with the firm intention of never thinking about that again.

Or at least to do his best. Embarrassment was good at vividly preserving memories.

Ten minutes later, unbeknownst to Izuku, an arm appeared from the shadows of the hallways, and he only realized it as a hand landed on his mouth and someone dragged him away from the main road.

****

Though his heart was begging for the right to have an attack here and now, Izuku had no time for this and propel himself backwards, ramming whoever had grabbed him.

He thought it would be enough to hurt him but he only heard a grunt and the steel-like grip was still as strong as before.

And he froze when he saw who was standing in from of him.

"How did you know?" the symbol of peace asked.

All Might was standing in from of him.

"I didn't mean to scare you. I... needed to talk to you in private." He waited or Izuku to manifest some reaction, any, but Izuku.exe had stopped working. "So... I am sorry," All Might apologized and he seemed so dejected Izuku felt guilty.

Izuku tried to say something, really, but his mind was desperately blank.

All Might poked him. And panicked when Izuku almost fell over.

Izuku might have been a little surprised.

"You're All Might," he finally said.

Proving that he was the best hero in the world, All didn't facepalm despite an obvious desire to do so.

This actually freed Izuku from his amazement.
"Of course you're All Might! Sorry. What did you ask?"

"How did you know?" All Might asked again and on these words, the emaciated man appeared in a cloud of smoke.

Who immediately coughed up blood, which made Izuku jump backwards.

I. Was. Right. So there was already that. But Izuku thought All Might had been hit by a quirk, and now, it looked more like his quirk was a transformation one. Albeit, an unique one.

Izuku realized All Might was still waiting for an answer.

It's simple. I have a quirk that allows me to give and take others quirks and I can use it as a radar. The stronger, the better.

He could have told him. It was All Might. How many times had he said on TV that everyone could be a hero, no matter the quirk.

Izuku opened his mouth to explain and instead: "You looked similar. Really. Honestly, it was more of an intuition."

This wasn't a lie. It just wasn't the whole truth.

"Honestly, I am just a fan and I tend to obsess about things I like."

"You are a fan?" All Might asked in a doubtful tone.

He seemed surprised but honestly, who wasn't an All Might fan in this day and age?

Izuku smiled. "Of course."

All Might stared at him for a long time. All Might. It was weird to think of him as such. Not because of his skeletal appearance, though this was strange, no need to hide it, but the more disturbing was his lack of smile.

"Can we talk in private for a minute?" All Might finally asked.

*****

All Might already knew him from the UA entrance exam, which had dumbfounded Izuku. He had been near spontaneous combustion until All Might revealed why he had wanted to talk to him.

All Might told him about his injury and asked him to keep it a secret.

It shook Izuku to the core. Someone had managed to grievously injure the most powerful man in the world.

It shouldn't have surprised him. Everyone could be hurt.
The boy left, leaving Toshinori alone and calmer than before.

Young Midoriya looked like him. The hair, the face, but it was more than physical. The exact same gaze when he had seen Toshinori’s true form, with eyes which seemed to look at his soul but not at the man himself. His smile and the way he had obviously loved using his quirk during the exam had reminded Toshinori of the contentment this man had been showing when he unleashed his quirks.

When he killed...

He pushed away the thought before it contaminated his thoughts about the boy. As he had watched Young Midoriya destroy the zero pointer, he had immediately thought about All for One. Even though it was him for one moment. Flaunting his power in Toshinori’s former high school. As if to say, Look at me. You're just a shadow of yourself while I am back, as powerful as before.

But five minutes talking with Young Midoriya had disabused Toshinori from this idea. One couldn't exactly fake this level of fanboying. And there was something just too youthful and pure about the boy for it to come from a demon in human form.

Toshinori had killed All for One. He wasn't coming back.

Chapter End Notes

I thought about making All Might actually meet Izuku at UA, but where is the fun in that?

A huge thank you to everyone who left a kudos, who bookmarked this fic, and who left a comment. I can already tell you that the comments were read and reread during those five days.

Since I am talking about kudos, JustGettingBI, you managed to leave four of them! So first, thanks, but second, how???
The first time Izuku used his quirk, he distinctly remembered being hit on the nose by the book he had tried to bring to him, and the *thump* sound he had made falling had brought his parents at full speed.

When he had showed them what had happened, they had smiled, while his mother was infinitely snigger because obviously, their son had taken after her.

Until she realized she couldn't use her own quirk anymore.

His father had teased her for weeks.

Izuku had received quirks from his dad ever since. It was their thing, studying the quirks, dissecting them until there was no more secrets, no more hidden applications. To Izuku, using them was almost secondary as long as he could keep them in mind, cherishing the memories, daydreaming about what could be done with them.

It was also their secret. No quirk was bad, only people were, but there was a real stigma associated with unheroic quirks, so Izuku had quickly learned to zip it.

His father was another secret. No one told him he was one, but he was strongly discouraged to talk about what he could do. Other people didn't matter when it was the three of them, and when his dad was away, Izuku and his mother were vague.

It was another thing. His father was not always there. In and out Izuku's life, for work, to protect them and give them a good life, of course. And each time, he came back, it was as if he brought joy and colors in his wake, with quirks for Izuku, with presents for his mother, and once again, the world was safe and nothing bad could happen.

Well, at least as long as he was here.

One day, his mother had grabbed him from their home and they had crossed half a continent without looking back. They had come back to Japan a year later under a different name, the fourth one, and Izuku's mother had taught him to stay low. People didn't need to know too much about him, about his history or about his family. And they certainly didn't need to know about his quirk.

Not even because it was a ill omened quirk. But because bad people could recognize it and now that it was only the two of them, it was dangerous.
For his first day at UA, Izuku was so jumpy it was a miracle he managed to reach his class without stumbling on something or hitting a wall. It might have been explained by the fact he had been using three quirks since this morning, Speed, Balance, and Cooldown. One because he was late for school, the other because he was a klutz and didn't want to risk falling on the pavement at high speed, and the last because he didn't want to arrive sweaty and red on his first day at a new school.

Technically, quirk use was forbidden in public places but Izuku had been raised in the belief that no harm was done as long as one didn't get caught.

Izuku stopped in front of the enormous door, barely able to contain his excitation. It was his first steps to become a hero. To completely dedicate himself to who he wanted to be. No one knew who was Midoriya Izuku, what was his quirk, and what he could do.

He opened it, revealing the familiar hum of a class. And there was already some agitation.

"You cannot put your feet on the desk," someone waving said, "It's disrespectful to your fellow classmates, to the ones who preceded you, and to UA."

His interlocutor didn't seem in a listening mood. Blond, not wearing a tie and with a proud smile on his face, he was goading the honor student. And he seemed familiar.

Extremely familiar.

"Or what ?" the blond asked after another invective about good conduct, showing his palms and Izuku paled when he heard the crackling even before he saw the tiny explosions.

He recognized him the way people realized they were about to get hit by a car. With a rush of adrenaline, without making a move, and by thinking furiously and hoping he was wrong.

A childish nickname came back to him. One belonging to a past classmate, his best friend for a time, when he was little, before he'd moved out. Kacchan had known Izuku when he had started manifesting his quirk, well before Izuku had learned to pretend he had an enhancer quirk. When he had another name than Midoriya.

Izuku took a step backwards, trying not to panic, and all his efforts were ruined when he accidentally hit someone who fell on the ground with a yelp. He turned in time to see the girl he had helped during the exam but wasn't quick enough to catch her. He didn't even think to use a quirk.

"I am so sorry !" he apologized before helping her to get back on her feet. When she took his hand, her pinkie didn't touch his skin. A habit people with a contact quirk acquired. Interesting.

"Well," she smiled, "I guess that makes us even for when I almost threw up on you. You know, at the end of the exam."

Not exactly. Izuku had cleaned the tip on his sneaker in the grass as soon as he had seen a green spot.

"I remember," he said instead, and he slightly turned because it was suddenly quiet behind him and
unless Kacchan had drastically changed, it was a bad omen.

From the corner of his eye, he was the blond boy watching him, strangely quiet. Almost calm.

"Deku ?" he asked and there was something strange in his voice.

As if he wasn't sure. Hope fluttered in Izuku's chest.

"Shit... What was your full name again ?

"Midoriya," Izuku whispered.

_Bless be the faulty memories._

Kacchan hesitated a second before nodding slightly. _He believes me._ And furor passed on his face, coming from nowhere and making Izuku reached for his quirk.

"WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING HERE ?" he roared.

The silence plunged on the class, everyone surprised by the brutal mood swing, included Kacchan himself. His eyes wide, completely still, he didn't seem to know where all this rage had come from, and now, everyone was frozen in place, waiting to see what he would do next.

Izuku just waited, fully ready to bolt.

But Kacchan didn't charge or scream again. He half shrugged, anger still burning in his eyes, but more subdued.

"You know what ? I don't give a fuck. Just stay out of my damn way."

Izuku could completely do that.

And as if a spell was broken, silence was chased by quiet voices and slowly, the class found back the gentle humming it had when Izuku entered, though some students blatantly glanced at Kacchan and him, curious.

Izuku was saved from the embarrassment of being the center of the attention and from the enthusiastic introduction of Iida Tenya by a man in a yellow sleeping bag who admonished all of them before talking about tests.

UA was definitely unlike any other school.

They followed the caterpillar after they changed. Everyone was excited and in a good mood, eager to show what they could do. Izuku didn't share their enthusiasm. Not after seeing Kacchan who knew him with a different quirk. Izuku was certain he had once used a fire quirk in front of him.

That was why his family had moved out. Izuku was careless when he was little.

_You should have known._

He had placed all his hopes in high school, desperately wishing for a new life and the opportunity to make friends, so he had never considered the aleas of life and how coming back near a zone he lived in could put him in danger. He couldn't afford to be negligent.

_You know him. You knew he would want to go to UA. You should have seen such a situation coming._
"Midoriya ?" Iida called.

"Mm mm ?" Izuku answered, showing once again his skills as a wordsmith.

"You look... Well, you look green."

Izuku was about to answer that he was just a little stressed, but hesitated, touched his hair, and tilted his head.

"No," Iida rectified, "I meant that you seem anxious."

_Don't worry, it's only because I am scared._

"I was born anxious. Don't worry about it."

"I have to !" he said as if it was obvious. "Why are you anxious ?"

Izuku gestured vaguely at everything around him.

Next to him, Uraraka burst out laughing. She tried to hide it, but no hand in front of her mouth could have prevented Izuku from hearing it, under Iida's outraged exclamations because he thought she was making fun of Izuku.

"Don't worry," she finally said and her cheerful mood was contagious. "You're super strong. And even if you mess up today, we are at school to learn ! You're allowed to make mistakes."

At those words, Izuku couldn't help a smile. He didn't have to be perfect today. He just had to be average, to take his time,

"The one with the lowest score across all eight events will be judged hopeless... And will be expelled," Aizawa declared ten minutes later,

Izuku and Iida both glared at Uraraka.

*****

One couldn't get wrong with an enhancer quirk and that was why Izuku has chosen to define his ability as such. Society liked flashy quirks. Anyone was willing to believe an enhancer type could go beyond his limits, because as far as they were concerned, it was just them being super. A proof that nothing was impossible with enough incentive, and they were more willing to forgive some manifestations that weren't purely based on Strength.

Also, he was an All Might fan, so it didn't hurt.

Izuku watched Uraraka cancelling gravity to run faster. She dashed out, a determined look on her face, and he dutifully noted her time. Since her quirk wasn't physical, he could run faster than her.

He made sure to be among the last ones to pass every time, noting the results and aiming for third or four place. Though the students were worthy of UA's name and were good at using their quirk., they weren't great at it. How could they when they were self-trained ?

Kacchan was one blatant exception. All in power and rage, he seemed unstoppable.
Another boy with red and white hair was even better, but he wasn't as dedicated as Kacchan, looking almost bored. But his quirk was powerful and he used it in a fluid way that just caught Izuku's eye.

*I miss having an elemental quirk.*

Iida was also among the best. Not only did he know his quirk, but he was giving it all.

"... Midoriya ?"

He finally realized Uraraka was talking to him, and worse, that he had accidentally ignored her. He apologized profusely, making her laugh.

"Don't worry. What were you thinking about ?"

"I think I like this school," he smiled, realizing he wasn't lying despite all the anxiety

"Despite the threats of expulsion. ?"

"Despite that. There seem to be so many amazing people here."

And he wasn't talking only about their quirks. They had all strong personalities, all seemed interesting. And most of them seemed friendly.


He realized what he had just said and blushed.

-----

Shouta was watching one of his students, more annoyed by the minute. Most of them had taken his threats seriously, a sign of intelligence, but not all of them were taking it as serious as they should.

The first one was Todoroki Shouto. Talented. He had obviously been trained by his father, and was among the two bests of this class, though he wasn't going above and beyond for this test. He was simply following Shouta's instructions. This meant Shouta would have to push him as soon as he knew all of his students' strengths and weaknesses.

Midoriya Izuku, the number one of the entrance exam, didn't even do that. Not only did he not use his full power despite the test being perfect for his quirk, but he seemed to make sure to be just in the above tier of average.

Of course, the power he had shown during the entrance exam could be because of adrenaline. Maybe he had pushed his quirk too far at the time because he was afraid the robot was going to crush a fellow candidate, hurt himself in the process, and was now more careful. This would have been plausible if Midoriya had broken a sweat during this test. He was never out of breath, he was never red, and he didn't tire at all.

"Midoriya, a word," he called.

The student froze like a scared rabbit and left the classmate he was talking with, looking sheepish. He was right to do so.
Students immediately looked at them. Teenagers were good at smelling blood in the water, so Shouta made sure not to talk too loud.

"What are you playing at?"

He saw worry in the boy's eyes. *Yes, you just got caught. Deal with it.*

"This speed is nowhere near what you showed during the entrance exam. I don't know if you think you can have an advantage by pretending you're less than what you really are, but this won't do. I have no time for those who think they can slack off in my class."

"I am not slack..."

His voice died under Shouta's gaze.

He had been teaching for several years. Expelling children because they didn't have the ability was a matter of mercy. He wouldn't send them to their deaths. But expelling people who had the ability and weren't taking it seriously was even more logical. After all, there were driven kids desperate to enter te hero course and whose place was taken by students with flashy quirks.

"If I am not convinced in the five next seconds that you're not wasting my time, you're out."

Midoriya was paler than before when he took the ball. He played with it a little as he reached the throwing spot, but it was more a nervous gesture than a way of showing off.

He transferred his weigh from one leg to another, and hesitation turned into determination. He threw his arm back, his fingers clutching the ball so hard they started to whiten, and he moved so fast his arm almost blurred.

No one seemed to expect his strength, not with the results he had been showing, and surprised cries followed as the sudden wind pressure disturbed the dust of the stadium. It was quickly followed by excited exclamations and Uraraka Ochako even loudly congratulated Midoriya.

Aizawa looked down on the measurement device, though he already knew what he was going to see.

375.

With the rest of his results, this was clearly enough to be in the top 5 of this class.

Aizawa sighed.

"Clearly not enough to destroy a zero pointer."

The excited chatters died down.

Midoriya guessed in a second what Shouta was about to say. At least, if he wasn't wise, he was smart.

"You're expelled."
Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed it. 0:)
Thank you for your support, it really means a lot.
Also, comments fuel the fic and make one very happy writer. ^^
Izuku's heartbeat was loud in his ears and there were painful twinges in his chest. Too many thoughts were swirling around in his head, racing through his mind.

*You have more quirks than everyone combined here. How could you fail?*

Cooldown activated. He didn't remember consciously doing it, but it anchored him, and he focused on it to drag himself to reality and to the problem at hand. And he realized this couldn't happen. He just got into this school. He opened his mouth to say something in the lines of 'This is not going to happen,' even though he had never raised his voice at a teacher before.

Aizawa was faster than him.

"That's usually what I say to those I deem hopeless. Right now, to me, you don't seem invested into becoming a hero."

He paused.

A flicker of hope surged through Izuku. Not much.

Followed by annoyance.

"So, you want to try that again?"

He threw another ball at him. Izuku caught it with both hands. A second chance.

"This is the perfect test for an enhancer quirk. This is also the perfect field to give all you have. You have nothing to gain by pretending you are weaker than you really are."

More annoyance passed through Izuku. Some directed at himself, because he wasn't as discreet as he was supposed to be and it was stupid to think a hero and a teacher wouldn't notice what he was doing.

More was directed at the man in front of him.

Everyone was trying to listen in but after Kacchan's throw, all students had wisely chose to stand far away and Aizawa and him were close enough to talk without being heard...

Izuku paused. Kacchan looked like he was about to have an aneurysm. Well, a problem for later. Though, if Kacchan dropped in the middle of practice, maybe Aizawa might forget about him.

He wasn't that lucky, so he took a deep breath. He walked towards Aizawa. *No time to be wise.* He was still clutching the baseball ball.

"Am I in last place for this test?" he asked.

He already knew the answer, so he continued. He had been singled out, so why not speak his mind at this point?

"So I passed it, and you decided it wasn't enough. How can this be fair?"
"Do you really think life is supposed to be fair?" Aizawa smiled.

"Right now, life isn't unfair. You are," Izuku declared.

Aizawa didn't say anything, which was far scarier than anything he could have said.

*You fool. You buffoon. You should have thrown the the damn ball and be done with it.*

Izuku would give a lot for a Reset quirk right now.

*Well, he heard you, so you might as well continue.*

"And so is this test. It doesn't make sense. Why choose a test perfect for an enhancer while neglecting every other quirks, even already powerful ones? It doesn't allow you to judge potential. And it certainly does not allow you to judge someone's drive to become a hero."

The entrance exam was already biased. Was the only way to succeed in UA to have the right quirk? Then, what was the point of studying here?

"Then" Aizawa wondered, "why pretend you can't succeed at a test perfect for you?"

Because he had panicked when he had seen someone capable of identifying his quirk, so he had tried to minimize what he could do.

*Say you're scared of using your quirk at full strength. Lack of control is a good excuse.*

"And you don't seem to understand what this test is about," Aizawa continued without marking any pause. "Your physical skills are secondary. Quirks are varied, and yet, you can't wait to have a situation that suit your quirk. Instead, you have to adapt. That's what this test is trying to determine."

Izuku tilted his head. It wasn't what he was expecting, but it was better than someone waking up one morning to decide on a completely arbitrary test with expulsion as the ultimate punishment.

Izuku was the only one with a full enhancer quirk (as far as they knew), even the boy with six arms had only arms strength, so this might explain why Aizawa was more severe with him...

The familiar fear seized him. Was there something else?

Aizawa continued, and there was something strange in the way he looked at him. Not suspicion. Izuku had learned to recognize that.

"Refusing things at face value is a good reflex. Keep it. But not using your full ability when you can mean that one day, when you need it the most, you won't be aware of your limits and it will put you in danger. Go back to the line, the test isn't finished."

What?

Izuku took a step backwards, unsure of what was happening but it didn't seem like he was expelled anymore. He didn't believe arguing with the teacher was enough to make him change his mind.

Which meant the threat was not real at the time, just a way to make Izuku do what Aizawa wanted.

Izuku wasn't about to argue with him again. Not when he had seen himself announcing to his mother he had been expelled on the first day. But still. *He did try to bully me into using my quirk.*
"What did you talk about?" Uraraka asked when he joined her back. It was the boy with multiple arms' turn to throw the ball. "You got pale like death then really intense."

Izuku shrugged. He had drawn enough attention on himself as far as he was concerned.

There were two more tests next, and Izuku once again didn't use all his quirks. He didn't see how Hakagure could adapt her quirk to run faster or lifting more weights, which proved that even if the test was about adaptation, it was still biased.

Kacchan hadn't dropped dead from his head exploding, instead, he kept glaring at Izuku as if the latter owed him money.

This first day was far more complicated that Izuku expected.

"Also, I was lying about expelling someone," Aizawa declared just before he showed them the results. "That was a logical ruse meant to bring out the best in all of you."

That one created varied reactions. Iida screamed so loudly he almost pierced Izuku's ear-drum. So did Uraraka. Varied sighs of relief came from all around them. And Izuku almost ascended to another plane of existence.

"It was obvious," a girl with long black hair said. "Don't tell me you believed it."

"I did," Izuku said, still annoyed beyond measure.


Izuku's bad mood evaporated as he tried (and failed) to handle the compliment. He had barely paid attention to the ranking now that he knew no one would be expelled.

1 Yaoyorozu Momo  2 Todoroki Shouto
3 Midoriya Izuku  4 Bakugou Katsuki
5 Iida Tenya      6 Tokoyami Fumikage
7 Mezo Shouji    8 Ojiro Mashirao
9 Kirishima Eijirou  10 Ashido Mina
11 Uraraka Ochako  12 Kouda Koji
13 Satou Rikido  14 Asui Tsuyu
15 Aoyama Yuga  16 Sero Hanta
17 Kaminari Denki  18 Jirou Kyoka
19 Hakagure Touru  20 Mineta Minoru

He hadn't noticed how useful Yaoyorozu's quirk despite how well she did in her tests, and he knew exactly why. He had noticed her regularly checking on her phone, probably the composition of what she was creating, so he had ignored it because what was exceptional about her wasn't her quirk but her intelligence.
Izuku kept staring at the list, trying to remember the names of his classmates until he realized everyone was leaving without him.

Sadly, he never reached the locker room. Izuku shrieked as he saw something rocketing towards him.

"What the fuck is wrong with your quirk ?" Kacchan growled, which was almost whispering for him.

"Hard to classify but except that, nothing," Izuku answered automatically.

"Don't screw with me. You have a flame quirk. Emerald flames."

Damn you, four-years-old me. Five quirks at the time and you couldn't choose one who vaguely looked like the one I have today ?

Izuku's face didn't betray anything except surprise, only for a moment.

"... What ?"

"Do you think I don't remember you showing me your quirk as soon as you got it ? You ran towards me and..."

"Like this ?" Izuku asked and he brutally opened his hand, the movement creating a kinetic pulse with the exact same gesture he would have used to show flames to someone.

There was doubt in Kacchan's eyes.

"I have an enhancer quirk, not a fire one," Izuku reminded him, sounding just a little unsure. "Don't you remember that I loved to use my quirk to jump higher and higher when we were little. And that I started to beat you at running only after I was four ?"

Everything was technically true. What were long forgotten memories next to a reasonable explanation ?

Not that much for Kacchan, apparently.

Izuku sensed the quirk activate and jumped backwards as Kacchan's arms was whipped in his direction, his palm not directly facing him.

But no explosion happened as another quirk was activated. Izuku looked behind them to see red eyes and Aizawa looking even grumpier than usual, his eyes as red as blood. Meanwhile Kacchan was still trying to create an explosion.

Izuku's were wide as he could sense the quirk. His fingers clawed by themselves and he closed his fist.

That was some incredibly useful quirk... Izuku frowned.

Wait a minute...


Eraserhead. There was only one hero with an erasing quirk who dressed like a ninja, and if he was a underground hero, it explained why Izuku hadn't recognized him on sight. He was from a kind
who didn't bother with autographs because they were too busy being secretive and they would chase you out without mercy.

"Using your quirk on any of your classmate is forbidden when you're not in an exercise approved by the school."

Kacchan hesitated but left while pretending he didn't have a care in the world. It wasn't as if he had tried to hurt Izuku anyway. He hadn't aimed directly at him, probably to see his reaction with the heat. A pyrokinesist always had some heat resistance, something Izuku had abandoned with his previous fire quirk.

Aizawa's hair fell back on his shoulders and his eyes lost their crimson color. Well, at least, the pupils.

"Doesn't that mean you couldn't pass your own test?" Izuku asked before he had the time to think about it.

Aizawa raised an eyebrow.

"Of course I could. I would just have to cancel everyone quirk to be on an equal standing. Then I wouldn't be last because too many people neglect to train themselves and focus on their quirks."

That left Izuku speechless.

Aizwa smiled.

*****

Toshinori's notes for tomorrow's classes weren't ready and he couldn't afford to stand in front of twenty students without any preparation. They expected someone who knew how to lead a class and help students become better, not someone who had never taught his life, and who had only a vague idea of what was involved.

"You didn't expel anyone? You're getting soft in your old age," Yamada teased Aizwa, a few desks away.

Aizawa was in charge of 1-A, and Toshinori remembered he had expelled a whole class last year. Those poor kids.

"None of them had zero potential," Aizawa simply said. "Though I did consider one. For half a moment."

Poor kid. Toshinori checked his tablet to check a website about pedagogy and advices he would certainly forget as soon as he would be in front of his class.

"Oh? Which one?"

"Midoriya."

"YOU TRIED TO EXPEL YOUNG MIDORIYA?"

The two teachers turned toward All Might while he was dealing with a mouthful of blood. Even he
was surprised by his outburst.

"I mean, didn't he have the best score at the entrance exam?" he asked a little more quietly. "Was there a reason why..."

He didn't know how to finish this sentence.

Aizawa stared at him for a moment, probably trying to see if the Symbol of Peace had just turned insane, then ignored the outburst to focus on the question.

"Midoriya has an enhancer quirk, and with no serious consequences from what I saw during the exam."

Yes, he remembered everyone panicking when a teenager had dropped from an impressing height with no indication that he could land on his feet and all teachers too far to intervene. At least, until Midoriya reached the wall and slowed down his descent. Recovery Girl didn't even need to use her quirk.

"But during the test of today, not only did he not do his best, but he seemed to actively pretend he was at lesser level of development of his quirk. Usually, when a student holds back, it's because they are scared of what they can do. But it's not the case with Midoriya."

Toshinori knew exactly what he was talking about. Young Midoriya smiled and lost all nervousness when he was using his quirk, obviously enjoying it.

He hid some discomfort. It was the same expression that had reminded him of All for One.

At least until he actually met him. The resemblance was gone when he wasn't using his quirk, and impossible to think about when Young Midoriya had asked for a autograph.

Toshinori now didn't know if there was a real resemblance or if he was seeing things, his nightmares infiltrating his perception.

"So you thought he was messing around," Yamada guessed.

Aizawa nodded.

"Once in a while, there is always a student who thinks he is better than the others, which usually stop quickly because UA only accepts the best," Aizawa explained. "Sometimes, they are focused on strategics. Not only this is useless, but this also means that they waste their resources not fully training, so I tried to push him."

Toshinori waited for him to continue. Fortunately, he wasn't the only impatient one.

"And?" Yamada asked.

"It wasn't arrogance," Aizawa simply said.

Toshinori thought about it. If it wasn't arrogance, did it mean that the boy was holding back because he was afraid?

"Anyway, he wasn't the only one not fully using his quirk, so I wouldn't expel him just for that. Why this sudden interest? Do you know him?"

Shit.
Well, he had a passing resemblance to my arch nemesis so I kidnapped him before realizing he was a fan, then I felt guilty.

Also, he is now one of the seven people who know my secret because he has the ultimate eye when it comes to heroes.

"Oh, you know... I watched the entrance exam so I remembered him"

****

Me : [I am here.]

Nagisa answered immediately. Obviously. She never stepped away for her screens.

N : [Come into my parlor.]

Izuku had barely reached the door when it opened. The perfect timing didn’t surprise him. Nagisa had eyes everywhere and loved to remind him of it.

He entered the poorly lit house and looked around. The ceiling was incredibly high and the walls were covered in threads, some thin, some large enough to hold him if he had the disastrous idea to lean on it. He carefully examined them until he saw one moving slightly, and follow it to find Nagisa. She never bothered to welcome him at the door.

Izuku literally followed the thread until he reached the living room, and he found her on the floor, a simple laptop on her lap, a rare occurrence. Nagisa didn’t pay attention to him, though she did see him coming because of the seemingly infinite amount of eyes on her head. She had no blind spot.

But only two arms, which was just disappointing when one looked so much like an arachnid. Four pair of limbs would have been so practical for a hacker.

‘‘You do realize my place isn’t a nursery, right?’’ she asked.

Izuku carefully avoided the threads on the floor. One wrong step and he would have to abandon his sneakers here. Finally, he reached the safe haven of a couch.

‘‘I can’t help it. It’s so welcoming.’’ If he was really not welcome, she never would have let him in.

‘‘Shut up, bug.’’

Izuku refrained a smile. At least, she didn’t threaten to cocoon him to keep him fresh and eat him later. The whole family really loved cannibals jokes.

He had met Nagisa’s mother, Ms Shirubakumo, first because her quirk, Weaver, was ruining her life. Not only she couldn’t control the stickiness factor of her threads, but her hands also didn’t have the specific rough skin that allowed members of her family to not get trapped by their own web, so every time she used her quirk, she was stuck with her threads unless her sisters or her daughter could help. Though Izuku was usually fleeing mutation quirks, he had accepted to take the quirk
and to give it to Nagisa, who was already in college at the time. Afterwards, they had stayed in touch, not without much complaining from the young woman.

"How is your new quirk ?" she asked, still typing.

"Not in my possession. She changed her mind."

She looked up, looking already more annoyed.

"You should stop relying on donations and actually start to trade quirks. You could make a lot of money and a contract can't be broken by a 'Sorry, I changed my mind.' "

"I want to be a hero," he reminded her.

"But a lot of money for almost no effort."

"I need a licence to use my quirk."

"It never stopped you before."

"Should I conveniently forget how I can easily inflict brain damages ?"

The only reason why he had accepted to give her mother's quirk to Nagisa was because they had almost the same quirk, the same mutation, and he had explained again and again it could be extremely dangerous.

She shrugged.

"Make them sign a disclaimer."

Izuku hid a smile. Nagisa had a dark humor but she understood why he wasn't advertising her quirk, the same way she understood why she got glances in public.

"It was your first day at UA. Did you finally make friends or do you plan on hassling me again this year ?"

Friends were a strange subject for both of them. Izuku had had classmates, with whom he even get along with, but he had never been close to anyone. It was his mother and him, and no one else. Izuku had thought that the easiest way for him to keep his secrets was to keep his distances, but now, he wanted that to change.

Uraraka and Iida were nice, but not friends yet. At least, he didn't think so.

His mind went back to Kacchan.

"Could you try to find a Heat Resistance quirk ?"

He usually found his quirks on his own, taking everything people accepted to give him, but he had quickly realized he needed specific quirks to go with the one he had. A fire quirk with no heat resistance was a recipe for disaster. Speed with Friction resistance meant having a relatively good idea of what it was like to stand in the middle of a sand storm. That's when he asked Nagisa for help.

At least, when he had the budget.

"… Well, aren't you popular."
He realized he had completely failed to answer her question.

"Is someone being mean to you?" she teased. "I have this cousin who can talk to spiders. If I give her a call now, we can prepare a nasty surprise for tomorrow. Then, everyone will be your friends to avoid such a fate."

Two could play at this game.

"And how is college life treating you so far?"

She glared at him. It was terrifying.

*****

Izuku came back to his apartment while holding too much food in a fragile equilibrium as he kept dinner from falling on the floor while managing to pull out his key and to open the door. He put their meals on the table, then grab a broom. His mother would be back from her two days trip late this night, and he wanted everything to be ready and tidy.

Once he finished cleaning, he grabbed his Quirk analysis notebooks, all of them, and studied the most ancient one. He had taken notes on every quirk which had grabbed his attention, be it the ones he owned, used to own, or just saw, but he didn't differentiate them.

He stared at a doodle of green flames and the childish handwriting of the notes.

Remembering with certainty which quirk he had owned at specific periods of time was a nightmare because there was a time when he exchanged his quirks like Hero cards. It wasn't rare for him to ask for a quirk to play with for a little while, then give it back like a child putting away his toys when he was done having fun.

He looked earlier in his analysis career, and saw a splash of orange, red, and yellow. Kacchan was here too of course. He closed the notebook number 1.

He grabbed the last one and went back to Air Pressure. It actually wasn't one quirk but the mix of Slide and Glide, Kinetic force, and Strength. Quirks had the incredible ability to mutate when they were mixed, and Izuku was completely taking advantage of it, and not only to contradict drawbacks.

Izuku turned pages and grabbed a pen. He had nineteen new quirks to write about.

He started by the Gravity quirk.

At 11:54 pm, his mother entered yawning, and frowned when she noticed the lights on. Then, her whole expression warmed when she saw Izuku, a mirror of his own.

"I told you not to wait for me," she said with a fond smile.

Izuku walked to her and hugged her.
First, thank you for all the comments, the kudos and the bookmarks. You have no idea how ecstatic I was each time I received a notification in my inbox. I can't thank you enough for that, and for those who left comments, I love your thoughts and answering them.

Now, to the chapter. The cliffhanger last chapter was mean, which I didn't quite realized until I started receiving comments. I could apologize for that, but let's be serious, I won't.

Yes, Aizawa indeed made a mistake here. He shouldn't have pushed Izuku and this will impact of the student-teacher trust. He realized it now.

I actually rewrote this chapter like crazy, because I realized what I previously intended for Aizawa was OOC. (Thanks, RedRobin.) (Also, thanks, everyone on CWAC Discord. Even though I almost had a heart attack.) Kill your Darlings is awful, but I hope I did a correct job anyway.

About Nagisa. I needed an ally for Izuku, and when I was looking for a name, I immediately thought about Rei because this is such a cool name. Then, I remembered YUTS. Then I remembered Todoroki mama. So, bye, Spider Rei.

I hoped you liked the chapter. If you want to fuel my writing, please, leave a comment. Next chapter should be fun.
Green flames were dancing on his father's fingers.

It was late at night but the TV was on, though the sound was low. His dad was often up late, and when he saw Izuku, a hot chocolate usually wasn't far. But this time, Izuku was half hidden behind the door, hypnotized by the quirk. He didn't want his father to realize he was here because there was a good chance he would immediately stop what he was doing.

But fathers always knew and he turned towards Izuku. For a second, his face was almost scary, so cold and his eyes were steel-like, then it was the same fond smile and warmth reached his eyes once again.

"Hello ?"

Izuku tried to hide five good seconds too late.

"Aren't you supposed to be in bed, young man ?"

He was, but Izuku preferred to elude the question and joined his father on the couch. To his delight, the flames didn't vanish.

"Do you like it ?" his dad asked.

Izuku nodded. It was late and he didn't want to wake up his mom. As she said, he had 'volume issues' when he was excited.

"Well, it was supposed to be a surprise, but I thought this would make a good official quirk."

"For me ?"

He couldn't believe it.

"Who else? I immediately thought about you."

This wasn't like the three quirks his dad had given him until now. Jump, Resistance, and Medium Regeneration were far more discreet. This quirk was hero worthy. Like Kacchan's.

Izuku reached out to the emerald flames.

Mine.

Fast as a hawk, his father grabbed his hand in a blink.

"You might want a temperature resistance quirk with that, Izuku."

*****

Izuku woke up groaning as he realized why Kacchan had remembered his quirk. He had desperately wanted something 'cool' when he was younger, at least until he realized that bright
green flames weren't as funny to use as he thought. He couldn't use them in public places without a teacher running to him and he couldn't use it in games either because most children weren't fire proofed.

He was almost certain he had exchanged it for a metal bending quirk when he had moved out. Yes, definitely metal. He had made paperclips fly for a month.

Izuku wasn't the kind to dream about the past. He didn't even think about it. What was the point? But meeting Kacchan had reminded him of a time which didn't exist anymore.

He passed a hand through his hair. Well, on his hair. Curls didn't like being combed, not even by fingers.

"Izuku, why are you wailing?" his mother asked from somewhere in the apartment, with some bite in her voice, which meant she didn't have her first cup of coffee yet.

"Mornings," Izuku answered.

"This explanation is enough for me."

Izuku checked his phone. It was time to get up and prepare for school, but he could sleep ten more minutes if he hurried.

Twenty five minutes later, Izuku bolted from his room, sprinted to the kitchen, drank an unholy amount of coffee that constituted an acceptable breakfast in the Midoriya's household, and jumped in the shower. He wasn't completely dry when he put on his uniform but when he was that late, he wasn't a man of details.

His mother was looking at him from the kitchen, her eyes warm with suppressed laughter. It seemed that watching him run around searching for his shoes was deeply entertaining.

He found the red sneakers, grabbed his bag, and made another turn of the apartment searching for his keys. This time, his mother was actually suppressing a giggling.

"Be safe."

"You too," he said as he was halfway through the door.

"Izuku?"

Izuku stopped, one foot on the air.

"I'm proud of you. You're going to do great," she declared, a determined look on her face.

His mother had never wanted him in any hero school. She hadn't said anything about that, but she had also never encouraged it. She simply didn't oppose it, neither when he passed the entrance exam, neither when he had received the admission letter.

Until a week ago, when she had told him she believed in him.

Even though she was scared.

He wanted to tell her that whatever they had fled, it was in America and the risks here were minimal. That he would be careful. That he was so grateful she supported him to make him happy.

"I will do my best," he said instead, a smile he couldn't and didn't want to suppress on his face.
Despite such good omens, fate was not on his side this morning. He missed his train, almost got hit by a driver who didn't believe in crosswalks, and just as he was about to summon some quirks and to parkour to UA, an armada of police officers appeared.

He was ten minutes late and Aizawa was in his first class. If he tried to expel him for being late, Izuku would use Slide and Glide to stick to the floor. He was in UA, and aside from a natural disaster, no one would drag him out of this high school, and certainly not Eraserhead.

He was so focused on quirks application and ninja teachers that when he saw something far more interesting, his voice acted on his own.

"ALL MIGHT !"

All Might, in his scrawny form and in a suit too big for him, jumped, maybe because of the volume, maybe because he couldn't believe someone had actually screamed his name while he was obviously in cognito.

Izuku was hoping he had avoiding the worse, but a few seconds later, he heard activity in the building nearby and voices. He looked up to see students trying to see what was happening by the windows.

"All Might is here ? Where is he ?"

All Might looked like he wanted to flee like there was no tomorrow. A a terrible idea.

"If we don't move, they won't notice us," Izuku warned. "Running catches the eye."

All Might's eyes widened and Izuku realized how presumptuous he sounded. He immediately bowed.

"I'm sorry, I didn't expect to see you here. It's for an investigation ?"

For all he knew, All Might worked solo but he was also friendly with every pro heroes, so he might be here to ask for intel.

All Might smiled, obviously amused by Izuku's antics.

"Actually, I teach here."

Izuku's head tilted as his brain tried to analyse what he's just heard. Then he realized he didn't care anymore about what Aizawa could do to him anymore. The teacher would need an army to kick him out of this school now that he knew the number 1 hero was teaching here.

All Might saw the danger coming.

"Please, don't scream again."

It would be difficult without any breath.

Since when ? Is that UA's most guarded secret ? Is that AM's "civilian" activity ? This would be amazing.

"Also, aren't you extremely late ?"

Izuku checked his phone.
"No, just about to be."

All Might chased him off and Izuku started fleeing, right until All Might called him out.

"I would appreciate if this could stay between us. At least until this afternoon."

Izuku got extremely lucky as Aizawa arrived at the same time as he did, and Izuku managed to enter the class just before him. He dashed to his desk and wondered on how he would manage to hide how excited he was. He was so cheerful it was ridiculous.

Until he realized on who his hero costume was based.

Oh crap.

*****

"I AM HERE !" All Migh announced right on the afternoon as he entered their classes.

A grin spread on Midoriya's face. He knew about it and couldn't help the giddiness. But at least, the warning had allowed him to prepare himself while All Might's arrival just created a tide of awe through the whole class.

But when All Might announced the training would be about combat, he had a moment of hesitation.

Izuku loved using his quirks. He loved the rush of power, this feeling that nothing was impossible when he was threading on the limits. It grounded him, brought him peace.

However, using his quirks on people was a problem, for people were notoriously fragile when they were hit by more than two Strength quirks. It's been ages since I actually fought while using my quirks. And he had accumulated more and more through the years.

What if I really hurt someone ?

But All Might would be teaching. Their quirks were similar, he knew how strong Izuku was since he had admitted having watched the video of the entrance exam, so as long as Izuku followed his lead, everything should be fine.

Aizawa had been breathing down his neck as soon as he hadn't given him one hundred per cent. No doubt that All Might would be even more vigilant.

His cheerful mood turned into teary, tough not sad, as he entered the locker room, holding his hero attire.

The costume was green, courtesy of his mother who had offered him a jumpsuit and Izuku didn't only cherish it because this was a gift from the person he loved the most but also because it was also when her mother had told him she approved his decision of joining UA. Where she had told him that he could and that she would always be with him, no matter what.

Izuku blinked quickly and put on his costume before he cried on it.

Hero costumes were complicated because they weren't designed just to look cool but also to help
with the user's quirk. Izuku was then at a disadvantage because his fashion's sense was enough to freeze Nagisa in her tracks, and his quirk was ever changing. He had settled on something with enough protection to keep him in one piece, copying the armor of a biker attire, gloved included. He needed bare skin to activate his quirk, and he couldn't allow himself to accidentally grab a quirk in a moment of panic.

Though...

He looked around, in time to see one of his classmates in a sleeveless shirt slap his fists together, the harden skin on his fingers making a clicking noise. He wasn't the only one having fun with his quirk.

*If there was one place where to grab a quirk.*

Yes, the gloves were an excellent idea. He wouldn't steal a quirk but he didn't need to be distracted by the idea.

Izuku grabbed his helmet and saw something scary in the reflection of his visor. One quick glance behind him revealed Kacchan glaring murderously at him.

Izuku tilted his head.

"Your costume sucks," the guy with an explosive quirk and a grenade theme outfit answered to his silent question.

Izuku wasn't someone willing to worry for such obvious lies. His mother had helped him pick his costume, hence it was perfect.

He wasn't as sure of himself when All Might explained the exercise and Izuku realized he would have to fight Bakugou.

*****

Bakugou and Iida.

Iida wasn't a problem. Well, he was, because he obviously knew how to use his quirk and was one of the only person to wear an actual armor, which meant he was more pragmatic than half the class. But Iida wasn't the one who knew Izuku since he was little, and Iida didn't remember a different quirk either.

"Midoriya?"

He had to fight him. At this point, any strategy of hiding would catch Kacchan's attention and make things worse. Now, he had to think about a way to neutralize Explosion and Speed.

"Deku?" Uraraka asked.

It brought Izuku back to reality, making him realize they had stop and they could now talk about their plan to pass the test, but Uraraka also reached out to touch his shoulder. Her eyes widened when Izuku swiftly moved out of the way.

A wave of guilt passed through him. Ignoring Uraraka was incredibly rude.
"Sorry, I was thinking... Did you just call me Deku?" he realized.

"Isn't that your name?"

He needed a second for that one.

"... No, that's an insult. It means useless."

After unneeded apologies, Izuku freaking out because Uraraka was sorry, and an explanation on the term "Dekiru" who meant "You can do it.", and a lot of apologizes from Izuku, they finally went back to the subject at hand.

"Are you able to take care of him? I think I can deal with Iida. And secure the bomb."

"Well..."

He was also certain than Bakugou was more trained at combat but Izuku was better with his quirk. Or...

"Let me think about it," Izuku smiled.

"Wow. You're not shy anymore when you're about to fight someone."

***

Glasses was walking around, talking about bullshit but at least he was guarding the "bomb" and he looked like he could be good enough not to be a drag.

Well, if the fuckers ever decided to show up.

"Where the fuck are they?" Katsuki asked, his patience running thin.

They were wasting time and there was no way they would unless they were complete morons or had a very good reasons.

"I don't know. This delay is strange, but there is only one door here. The safest course of action is to wait for them..."

"Shut up."

He kept talking anyway, but Katsuki just ignored him.

Katsuki had known Deku since he was two. Back, then, he had called him Izu-chan or something, always following Katsuki, extremely shy and prone to hide behind him, though he could get mean when it was time to play All Might vs the villain.

When Katsuki had developed his quirk, greatness had followed. This was a hero quirk, everyone could see it, and Deku had been no exception. He had acted like it was the coolest thing ever. He kept asking him to see it, his eye wide and smiling as if it was the most beautiful thing ever.

Deku had been late to manifest. That he remembered. Every time he had been asked about his
quirk, he had this distinct expression of worry, frustration, and awkwardness. Until he ran at Katsuki one day, overjoyed.

After that, there relationship has started changing drastically.

Deku had started to become at him at everything, and by bound. Each time Katsuki proved superior to him, Deku arrived the next day with better skills. No matter how hard Katsuki was working, Deku was never far, and didn't show any sign of effort.

It had been maddening.

Adults had been praising Katsuki for his hard work and his chance, for how great he was, while Izuku beat him while rarely using his quirk. His friend had become something inevitable without any explanation.

Then Deku had moved out, his rival was gone, but Katsuki had never forgotten about it. He had trained tirelessly to become the best.

Only for damn Deku to reappear and to obtain a higher score than him.

The nerd had been good at sport after he had manifested his quirk, which leaned towards enhancer, but Katsuki could have sworn there was fire involved. Though he didn't remember Deku actually using it. Just showing it, the same way he had showed this air thing the day before.

*Could I be wrong?*

Well, only one way to find out.

"I am going after them. Protect this thing."

"You can't just leave!"

"Watch me!"

***

Izuku and Uraraka arrived on the roof in a matter of seconds, though a little nauseous. Uraraka had used her quirk to make them lighter, had grabbed him, and Izuku had used Air Pressure to adhere to the wall before sliding upwards without being seen. Thankfully, there was no lock so they didn’t have to break any door to access the building, and they sneaked in until they reached the floor just above the ‘‘villains’’. Then, they quietly waited for Kacchan to lose patience. Of course, maybe he had become a model of patience during the time Izuku hadn't seen him, but since he had tried to throw an explosion at Izuku the day before, he was willing to risk it. Uraraka had agreed with his idea.

Kacchan had lasted three minutes.

Iida seemed very surprised when Uraraka and Izuku appeared at the door without any sign of Bakugou.

One second of surprise. Largely enough for Izuku to intervene.
The acceleration surprised even Uraraka who had seen him in action, and it startled Iida, leaving time for Izuku to be in reach before he activated his quirk. Izuku feinted on the right, Iida moved fast, and Izuku kicked him on the left.

Behind him, Uraraka was running at full speed.

The hit wasn't strong enough. Between the armor and Iida's physic, he had seriously underestimated how much strength he needed. Iida almost fell, then immediately kicked him back.

Iida seemed very surprised when he realized Izuku had dodged. His leg was still in the air, ready to kick someone who was gone, and when Izuku punched him in the stomach, with much more Strength, he went stumbling down.

Uraraka appeared from nowhere behind Iida and slapped his back like it has personally offended her. Iida tried to turn and to hit her, but Izuku grabbed his waist and gave him a push. Poor Iida screamed as he suddenly went flying.

Uraraka grinned at him, for maybe half a second seconds.

"BAKUGOU ! THEY ARE HERE !" Iida yelled.

A scream of rage was suddenly heard by everyone who had a pair of half functioning ears in a ten kilometers radius. Either a tiger has found its way into Ground Beta or Kacchan was royally pissed.

"Secure the bomb," Izuku ordered. "I will take care of him."

Of course, if she could secure it before he arrived…

Sadly, Kacchan seemed to have found a way to rocket his way up here and barged into the large room like Asura reincarnated. He saw something green, blasted, and Izuku who didn’t have his jacket anymore summoned Air Pressure before punching the air.

Kacchan was ejected out of the room, but not before Izuku had the time to see his offended look.

Distance was his friend when Kacchan was involved. His explosions started from his palms and unless he wanted to blow up the whole room, he was limited to hand to hand combat.

He couldn't help a grin behind his helmet. Not because of Kacchan, but because of the sudden peace which came with using his quirks. There was no doubt, no fear, and no anxiety. He knew exactly what he had to do, every action bringing a reaction, and during those perfect moments, every thing was limpid.

Izuku tried to get away from the door, wanting more room to use Air Pressure, but the wall exploded as Kacchan passed through it. Chunks and fragments of plaster were flying all around him, but the helmet protected Izuku's eyes.

"DEKU !"

Izuku's palm pushed the air with a pressure blast. Bakugou countered it with a medium explosion then used the recoil of another to jump through the air, touching something on his gauntlet.

Acceleration. Izuku got out of here and punched the air in the same breath. Strength x2. Air.
Once in mid air, even the strongest hero couldn’t do much to avoid attacks, and Bakugou was no exception. The air blast not only returned the explosion on Bakugou, but it made him flew though the room and he crashed on the floor.

Ice cold fear stabbed at Izuku.

Did I...

His earpiece crackled with All Might’s voice: “Young Midoriya...” but was cut down as Bakugou jumped back on his feet. He stumbled a second, shook his head, and stared at Izuku.

There was no fear and no rage on his face, just utter calm. It was as if all anger had been exorcised from Bakugou. And Izuku recognized that, from extremely rare occurrences when he was younger.

He ran, away from Uraraka’s general direction as a horrible scream echoed behind him.

Kacchan didn't get calm. He just accumulated rage in a spectacular way.

Izuku's feet hit the floor so hard he had to use Resistance, and the only thing that allowed him to keep Bakugou out of reach was too many Speed quirks and Air pressure as a way to take brutal turns. Bakugou could use the recoil to propell himself but that also meant he couldn't take sharp turns.

And as Bakugou was completely focused on him, he didn't even seem to notice Iida falling down as Uraraka released her quirk.

She jumped.

Izuku felt the exact the moment she canceled the gravity of the bomb.

"Team 1 wins," All Might declared in their earpieces.

We won.

Except Kacchan didn’t stop.

Izuku was so focused on his victory that he stopped paying attention to Kacchan for one terrifying moment. He had won, until he felt the quirk activate, and heat incoming.

For half a second, he could perfectly predict what was about to happen, how the explosion would come at him from the side, how he had no protection whatsoever, and that from the way he was standing, because of his moment of inattention, he wouldn’t have the time to avoid all of it. How he just had get rid of a lot of armor.

And how he could cancel it by using Air Pressure and Strength.

Do it.

Kacchan was right behind the blast.

The impact would break him.

He activated five quirks and jumped out of the way but it wasn’t enough.
The blast sent him flying like a ping pong ball and he crashed into something that also crashed, but into the ground, and someone yelled. Resistance and Durability allowed him to withstand the impact but they did nothing for the light burn on his bare skin.

Izuku slowly moved, checking that everything was still at their rightful places. He had a Healing quirk, Medium Regeneration, one of his firsts, but it wasn't a strong one. The quirk healed deeply, until there was no trace of the trauma, but not quickly. So if he broke an arm, he wouldn't have sequels, but with a broken spine, he would either die or he would have to wait twenty years to start walking again.

Nothing hurt too much. He would feel it tomorrow but he wasn't injured.

Down there, Bakugou was looking at him, aghast. Iida was right in front of him, yelling about "not being too involved in the role."

He slowly realized he had actually crashed on the 'bomb' and was now sitting on it like the world's most dangerous couch. In a real situation, it would have killed them all.

Uraraka was climbing towards him, her eyes wide. He got on his feet and gave her a hand even though she didn't need it.

"Midoriya, are you hurt?" she asked on the tone of someone who already knew the answer to their question.

"No, just more shook than hurt."

It didn't seem to convince her.

"Your helmet," she simply said.

Izuku removed it to see what was troubling her, and winced when he saw the state of the new material. The green paint of the helmet had been scrapped off on the right side, which was more impressive than actually dangerous. But still, he did touched the side of his head to check for any pain.

Nothing.

Durability was one hell of a quirk.

*****

The yawn couldn't be contained and Izuku stopped just before reentering Ground Beta. He felt exhausted and sluggish since Recovery Girl had treated him, and not even the excitement of a new incredible quirk managed to keep him one hundred per cent awake.

After being copiously scolded about perfectly about risks, being careful, and how he was lucky it wasn't grave, Recovery Girl had answered all his questions about her quirk and gave him gummy bears.

He wasn't seriously injured. Izuku was reasonably sure he would have been sent to the hospital without Durability. Instead, even though his shirt had bee, scorched here and there, and he had
been covered in dirt, it was no more than a sunburn and he would have been fine with ointment and a few days avoiding heat sources.

Like Kacchan's next blast.

Though Izuku didn't think he would try that again. First, he probably didn't meant for attacking when Izuku was distracted. Second, Kacchan had been convinced Izuku had a fire quirk and the resistance which came with it.

Coupled with how Kacchan had aimed next to him the day before, Izuku was reasonably sure Kacchan didn't want to actually hurt him, just to prove a point.

_I still need a heat resistance quirk. Or even several. I have what is needed to survive the blast of an explosion, but the heat is what would get to me, even with Air Pressure deflecting it._

Izuku intended to sneak inside but half the class seemed to be waiting for him.

"Midori, that was amazing !"

He was about to thank her, or stutter, but didn't have the time.

"You just took this explosion and shrug it off, that was so manly !"

"He avoided it, you didn't see ? He jumped so fast he became blurry !"

"Even manlier !"

Izuku just stood there awkwardly, happy.

The rest of the hour got even better as the rest passed their tests, showing all their quirks. He didn't have his notebook, so he was obsessively focusing on the screens and he was mesmerized when Todoroki froze a whole building.

_Control and power._

It wasn't only the quirk that was incredible, but the level of control Todoroki had on it.

_How should I fight against it ?_

Shatter it with brute strength was a way but he couldn't get too close or the cold would get to him. If he stayed at distance with Air Pressure, there was a good chance Todoroki could protect himself with ice.

Every quirk had a weakness. Todoroki had power but did he have enough stamina to keep throwing attacks ?

He was distracted from his reflection by Kacchan. He seemed to be silently fuming.

When he saw Izuku was watching him, he glared at him, but just for a second, Izuku had seen something else than anger.

*****
Izuku shouldn't have followed him after the class. Or ran after him without any idea of what he wanted to tell him.

It was just that... he looked like he was in pain.

"Kacchan ?"

He grunted back at him, which Izuku took as a permission to ask his question.

"Are you... OK ?"

Kacchan slowly turned towards him.

"I know what you're hiding," he growled. "What you're hiding from everyone."

Izuku prepared himself to deny until his dying breath he had more than one quirk.

"You pretend you're fucking weak so you can have the advantage. You're still a scheming bastard, aren't you ?"

"..."

"'You were supposed to be an irregularity. But now... The ice guy is stronger than me. And this girl is so much smarter. And you...."

Kacchan's voice broke.

Izuku recognized the feeling as this familiar cold which was regularly clutching his heart until he could barely breathe. You should be better than this. The thought was a familiar companion which visited at night when he made the mistake of going to bed without being thoroughly exhausted.

He wanted to tell Kacchan he was strong enough. That the only reason why Izuku was good with his quirk was because he had been trained while Kacchan was self-taught. That his quirk was powerful because activating several quirks at once heightened them exponentially, while Kacchan's quirk came from his parents and, though incredible from the beginning, had been honed.

For one crazy moment, Izuku almost wanted to tell him.

But it was emotion talking.

Izuku couldn't trust Kacchan. He didn't trust anyone with his secrets, and Kacchan least of all. It wasn't because they had been friends one upon a time that he wouldn't rat him out to UA. In a moment of anger, without thinking about it, or even to hurt him, it wouldn't matter.

UA would know and doors would start to close. Izuku wouldn't be expelled without a good reason, but opportunities will get harder and harder to find. Disturbing heroes were boycotted.

"Kacchan..."

"SHUT UP ! I don't care about what you have to say. I will beat you. One day, I will come at you and you will regret ever holding back. I will become the best student of this high school !"

Izuku smiled.

If Kacchan was still prideful, he would be alright...
Some instinct chimed inside him as he felt an incredibly powerful and familiar quirk.

"YOUNG BAKUGOU !"

The sudden wind brought by All Might's light speed arrival almost make Izuku swirl. To his horror, he realized the symbol of peace was trying to hug Bakugou.

Does he realize he can explode ?

"Let me tell you, this pride is important. You've got without any doubts the making of a pro..."

"Get off of me, All Might. I can't walk," Bakugou cut in but he sounded calmer than a moment earlier. "Just so you wait. I will surpass you too."

It sounded oddly like a threat, even though he was wiping the tears in his eyes.

Izuku decided Kacchan would be fine.
The morning was especially cold for April but Izuku didn't go back to his apartment to grab a sweat shirt. He had one free hour before preparing for school, and he didn't want to lose time, not when UA had already made quite a dent in his training program.

He ran on the wall, using it as a bouncing zone, and he activated Jump and two Strengths. He rushed through the air, deactivated the three quirks, and in the same thought, activated Air Suction to stick to the wall like a big green spider.

He kicked the wall, throwing himself away from the wall, and let gravity get a hold of him.

Izuku cancelled all his quirks, letting himself fall completely.

During this moment, who could have lasted between the time of a thought and forever, the world became glacial and limpid. For a fragment of eternity, his speed, the air around him, the ground approaching, his ways out, he could feel everything perfectly.

He called two quirks at the last moment.

*Resistance.*

*Air Pressure.*

He barely had the time to break his fall. Barely was enough.

He felt the impact going up his whole body as he landed on his feet, and he fell to his knees but his descent had been slowed down and he didn't hurt himself.

Izuku checked he didn't leave a trace on the wall. The block might have been abandoned but that didn't mean he wanted anyone to know he was here.

Ghost neighborhoods like this formed themselves when the buildings weren't up to norm. In a population with quirks, it could led to catastrophes. Especially since quirks tended to get stronger and more volatile with each generation. No doubt that in a few months, the town would hire someone to rebuild the whole thing. Meanwhile, people like Izuku could use it as a training ground as long as they were discreet. Or others less legal activities, but not so early in the morning.

Not that his mother needed to know about that.

Well, at least, she knew he was training. Transfer was without a doubt the best quirk which ever existed (no, Izuku wasn't biased), but like all quirks, it had limitations. First, Izuku couldn't use too many quirks at once, and the more he used them, the more he tired out. Second, pushing the limits of Transfer was more dangerous than forcing on any other quirks.

Izuku got up, and pursued his training, as he kept alternating between quirks at the last minute. Running, jumping, cancelling the consequences of his quirks in half a second. More playing than actually training, if he was honest, but it had a point.
Izuku had found two ways to strengthen his abilities. First, he had learned to alternate quirks quickly to relieve the pressure. The faster he reacted, the more he could use them while making his stamina last.

Second, it was working on the quirk themselves. Every quirk he ever got was lovingly honed to the best of Izuku's abilities. In doing so, he had more power and didn't have the need to use as many quirks.

It was exhausting and not the activity one should do before going to school. It was also Izuku's favorite game.

Izuku trained to the last minute, then ran back home.

Through the roofs, and with his quirks, it took him no time. He was always baffled by how useful his abilities were, especially since he could only use them when no one was in sight. *It would be good if everyone could use their quirk, even in public places.*

Izuku didn't quite sneak inside, but he made sure to not make noises as his mother was still asleep. He took a shower, put on his uniform, and quickly prepared something a little more substantial that a gallon of coffee saturated with sugar.

Though a cup of it did waited for his mother once she reached the kitchen. She thanked it with a nod and they eat quietly. Breakfast were a silent matter in this household, since both members hated mornings and waking up in general.

She was at her second cup when she focused back on him: "Izuku, I know you are greatly enjoying your hero training but you're not revealing too much, aren't you?"

Proof that he needed more coffee, he thought his mother was talking about costumes and was about to reassure her by telling her one of her classmates was wearing a swimsuit. Though it might depend on quirks, Yaoyorozu actually needed to access skin to use her abilities, so people with similar quirks might have special dispensations to show skin. There was a law about that, because of the heroine Midnight. He would have to look into that...

Until he realized she was talking about his quirk.

The rice almost didn't pass for a second. Pretending his quirk was average was the plan all along, but Aizawa had threatened him on his first day, All Might had been watching during his second, and... using his quirk with others classmates who were as driven as he was was funnier than expected.

*Not your best excuse.*

"Well, I am third of my class so far," he explained carefully. "But all I showed was an enhancer quirk, so even if I am finish first, is that a problem?"

She didn't quite sigh but it was close.

"I suppose it isn't," she finally admitted, though she didn't seem convinced.

"Are you sure?"

"Oh, I am sure for school, but I am not convinced for the Sport Festival."

Izuku winced.
The Sport Festival was THE event of UA, and Izuku had watched it religiously since he was... born. Students who distinguished themselves at the festival were immediately spotted.

Which was the problem at hand.

If his mother didn't want him to participate in the Sport Festival, he would obey his wishes.

But that didn't mean he wouldn't try to convince her.

"We left America," Izuku reminded her.

"And the Sport Festival is aired through the world, the United States included."

"We left five years ago. Time has passed."

Izuku never thought about it. One day they were three, and then it was only the two of them.

One day, his mother had carried him away to never come back. Her mother never talked about it. What Izuku knew, it was what he had guessed. All he knew was that some bad people knew about his father, and by extension, his family, and when he had disappeared into the cataclysm of California, they had come for them.

Izuku had tried to ask twice.

And like every time the subject was brought, something awful passed in her mother's eyes. She hid it quickly, but Izuku could still see it behind her calm expression, hidden behind the smile which didn't reach her eyes.

"I am not saying I don't want to, Izuku," his mother explained. "I just need to think about it."

She stood up, walked to him, and kissed his hair.

Once again, Izuku was comforted in his decision of not dwelling on the past.

*****

Izuku took one step in the direction of the gates and the crowd of journalists that had somehow sprouted in front of UA almost swallowed him whole.

"How is it to have All Might as your teacher?"

"What are your impression on the Symbol of Peace?"

"What is your quirk?"

He was somehow spatted out and he avoided crashing into Aizawa at the last moment. His teacher didn't seem amused. He also looked like he hadn't slept in a week and was only vaguely vertical thanks to an almost lethal quantity of caffeine.

A journalist saw an adult from the faculty, which more more interesting than any students, and she jumped at the occasion, before thinking it through.
"Does All M-... You're a mess !!" she realized. "Who are you anyway !?"

To his credit, Aizawa didn't even react.

"He is off today. You're interrupting our classes. Leave."

She started arguing but Izuku didn't stay to see who would win. There were too many cameras for his tastes, and avoiding them was among the ground rules which had always existed and that Izuku kept following without really thinking about it. He didn't have any public social networks, he refused to have his image shared, and he generally didn't like his picture taken.

He didn't remember how it had started...

"Midori ! You aren't late today !" Uraraka congratulated him when he arrived in class.

"Midori ?"

"That's your name, now," Ashido informed him.

"Indeed," Hakagure confirmed.

Izuku tried to hide how pleased he was by the affectionate nickname, and he miserably failed.

*****

A wind of excitement surged through the class at the idea of electing a class representative and Aizawa wasn't in his sleeping bag yet that everyone had started screaming many variations of "I deserve to be class rep !".

Being class rep was a task everyone avoided like the plague in Izuku's last class, but for UA, it was an occasion to show their leadership skills. In a school focused on turning them into heroes so they could walk on the road travelled by the Symbol of Peace himself, it was a bonus no one would refuse.

Except if someone needed his free time to hunt for quirks. And hone them. Combined with the homework and the additional training Izuku did, he would need to stop sleeping.

At last, amidst the chaos, one voice, louder than anyone else's, cut through the noise as Iida waved his arms.

"Silence ! Leading the many is a task of heavy responsibility ! But ambition does not equate ability !" Iida declared.

In one moment, Iida had obtained the attention of twenty students. Izuku was impressed.

"It's a calling which requires the trust of those around you ! And thus, to choose a leader, we should elect one !" he finished, his hand raised the highest among the class. Controlling himself to not join the "Vote for me" succession must have cost him a year of his lifespan.

Soon, Iida had drafted the whole class into voting to elect the leader who would light the path for them to become champions of justice, and Izuku barely had the time to hesitate before he wrote one name on his paper.
It was the best choice. Iida believed in justice and rules, and he wanted to help everyone. And most important of all, he wanted to do be class rep and would bloom at the task.

His jaw almost dropped to the ground when he saw the results of the polls. One vote for Iida, two for Yaoyorozu, and two for him.

Who voted for me?

Izuku didn't even react to the news. He just froze, unable to know how to react. Two people somewhere in this class had decided that he was an apt candidate, which, in turn, made him doubt of their assessing skills.

He didn't want to be deputy class rep either!

Aizawa tried to make them vote a second time, but it was lunch hour, and between wasting time and letting the students' antics infringe upon his lunch hour, he chose to let them go, especially after Iida started argue that students needed time to choose between Yayorozu and Izuku. Aizawa saw the rant coming and agreed quickly, to Izuku's relief.

He followed Uraraka and Iida, barely paying attention to what was happening around him. Despite his habit of fighting the need to sleep with coffee and sugar, he couldn't forsake resting, which meant he needed to find time. He didn't know what a class rep did, but depending on the amount of work, he might have to limit his quirk searching hobby.

Izuku had always known he wouldn't be able to devote as much time for travelling through the country searching for quirks, but he didn't want to stop it completely and it was time-consuming.

"Midori?"

You can't stop your quest for quirks. You love that too much. It's your only joy.

The thought made him uncomfortable. He did have friends now, which was an amelioration compared to middle school. He wasn't comfortable being close to anyone, not when he was still juggling with his quirk he couldn't explain and a lifetime of instructions. Searching for quirks had been the activity that filled his days.

"Midoriya?"

Iida put a hand on his shoulder, startling Izuku so bad the sharp movement also startled his friend in turn.

"I apologize," Iida immediately said. "You seemed lost in your thoughts. And worried."

"Are you ok?" Uraraka, all concerned.

"I am fine," Izuku tried to smile.

Unsurprisingly, none of them believed him.

"Don't worry, you can totally win this election," Uraraka reassured him. "You're more approachable than Yaoyorozu. And you impressed everyone during the simulation!"

"Uraraka is right!" Iida continued, almost vibrating with praise. "You showed strategical thinking, and the spirit of a true hero at many occasions! None of our classmates can ignore it! You have
nothing to worry about!"

He must have looked especially grim because Iida continued, trying to convince him he had all his chances.

*Just say it.*

"It's just that... I really don't want to be the class representative."

Their eyes widened and they just stared at him for a second. Izuku shrank on himself, because... He was the one who had the more votes with Yaoyorozu, he should act as if he was worthy of this trust, shouldn't he? Refusing a position everyone wanted felt conceited.

"You didn't vote for yourself?" Uraraka exclaimed.

"No! I voted for Iida!"

Iida forgot his diatribe about his qualities of leader for a second, and he looked at him with awe.

"It was you..." he said, tears in his eyes.

Iida only had one vote, and since he just had told him he had all the abilities to win, his voice probably didn't go to Yaoyorozu.

"I am sorry you wasted your vote..."

He was getting more dejected by the second.

"Midori, just calm down. If you don't want to be elected, just say so."

"I can do that?" he asked, dumbfounded.

"Of course you can. They can't force you to be class rep if you don't want to."

It did sounded obvious now that she was saying it. Still, it still felt incredibly rude.

"Are you sure, Midoriya? If you're elected, it means people have faith in your abilities. It would mean you're the best suited for this task."

"What's the point if I don't have the calling?" Izuku asked, using Iida's own words.

It seemed to convince him. Quickly, the conversation turned to things unrelated to school. Midoriya learned Iida's brother was the Speed hero Ingenium, and he had to bite the inside of his cheeks to not beg for an autograph, but he did geek out about it. At least, he wasn't the only one, Iida was also incredibly proud of his brother. Izuku talked about his mom, without being too specific, and Uraraka talked about her family and how she missed them, which drew his attention.

"You're living on your own?" he asked.

Still eating, Uraraka nodded.

"Be careful."

"I know, don't worry," she smiled.

"Can I ask you what you are talking about?"
"Traffickers," Uraraka and Izuku answered at the same time.

Iida looked at them without understanding what they were talking about.

"Quirk traffickers?" Uraraka explained.

That was obviously not ringing a bell, which was surprising because Izuku remembered being warned about them when he was little. He could hear Ms. Nash telling him "If any adult you don't know is interested in your quirk, you must immediately warn your parents or a teacher."

_Though I was in Boston at the time._

"You know about quirk marriages, right?" Izuku wondered.

After quirks had appeared and when humanity had stopped freaking out, people had realized that quirks evolved along bloodlines, and some of them had started marrying each other to produce people with excellent quirks. Nowadays, it was common for the elite to use a matchmaker to find the right genes and to produce an heir with the right quirk.

"Well, traffickers are not exactly about that. Children with the right quirk are prized in some circles, and there are people who hunt isolated young people with good quirks to sell them to the highest bidder."

"Something that is probably keeping my parents awake at night," Uraraka added. "But don't worry, Iida."

He looked at them as if they were insane.

"Of course I am worrying! That's awful!"

They spent at least two good minutes assuring him that Uraraka was safe where she was and no, she didn't need to live at Iida's in order to be in security.

Iida might have been so affected because he had no idea it existed until now. He was from a family of heroes. This kind of problem didn't affect him because no criminal would decide to target a boy whose whole family had the means to find him, so it might as well not exist for him.

Izuku was almost sure he had met a trafficker when he was seven. Someone who couldn't have been older than twenty who had approached him and had asked him if Izuku could help him search for his dog. He had even showed him photos of the adorable Shiba Inu.

He had never followed him, of course, but his parents had adored this little story at dinner time.

_BRAAAAAAAAAHHHHH BRAAAAAAAAAHHHHH BRAAAAAAAAAHHHHH_

Like everyone else, Izuku looked up, trying to see where this was coming from. He knew UA had a good security system since he had been stalking their site for several years, but he had no idea what the alarm meant, except "Problem incoming."

Thankfully, UA had the answer to their question.

"SECURITY LEVEL 3 HAS BEEN BREACHED. TO ALL STUDENTS. PLEASE EVACUATE IN AN ORDERLY FASHION."

Instinct took over and the three friends dashed towards the exit.
Them and everyone in the cafeteria.

The alarm had summoned general chaos, and Izuku was swept by the human tidal wave, losing sight of Uraraka who was even shorter than he was. He fought against the various movements inside the crowd, more focused on standing upright and being on the move than anything else. If he stopped moving, if he fell, no one would stop for him and he didn't want to experience a stampede first hand.

*Friends first, anything else later.*

Finding Uraraka was tricky but he saw someone who vaguely looked like her, grabbed her by the jacket, and once he checked it was really her, he dragged her towards Iida. Balance and Resistance allowing him to cross the crowd. Iida was hilariously easy to find because he was the tall boy who kept screaming for order and calm while waving his arms.

Izuku shamelessly used Iida as a wall against the rest of the students, taking advantage of his height and stability so he could drag them near a table. The chair were fixed to the floor, so they made the perfect still point.

"Midoriya, it's not the right direction!"

*Midoriya doesn't care right now. Friends safe, now to the problem at hand.*

Izuku climbed on the table in order to see what was happening without behind pushed around by the crowd. *Zoom.* By the window, he saw the same crowd of journalists which had been waiting for All Might this morning.

It meant they had found a way to pass through the iron doors. But they weren't villains. Not a serious threat.

"It's only journalists. No need to worry."

Iida nodded.

And to Izuku's bewilderment, he took care of the rest, in one impressive aerial stunt.

*****

Izuku never looked at anyone in the class. He just looked at the wall, pretended there weren't any people in front of him, or a teacher in a sleeping bag next to him, and he just gave the short announcement he had prepared during their tumultuous break.

"First, I want to thank those who voted for me. Thank you for believing in me. However, I don't wish to become the class representative and I would like to nominate Iida for it. He is the one who managed to calm everyone down during the security breach and I really think he has all the quality to take care of this class."

Uraraka was right and none of them seemed displeased by what he was saying, which proved that his social anxiety was a filthy liar. The class readily accepted a last vote between Yaoyorozu and Iida, though, to Izuku's surprise, some of them regretted that Izuku didn't want to try for the position. *A terrible choice, really.*
Iida won, with thirteen votes.

It was when Iida won, people around him congratulating him and Aizawa asking if they could finally stop wasted time, that Izuku noticed the weight on someone's gaze on him.

Todoroki was watching him intently. Izuku turned his head by reflex, as if he had done something wrong, then glanced several later to see... Yep, he was still doing it.

He didn't do anything wrong, or anything especially noteworthy, so he shouldn't worry, right?

Izu looked at Todoroki who met his stare with unblinking eyes which seemed to see through him. Usually, when one was caught staring, he would look away, if only because it was uncomfortable, but Todoroki didn't seem to care about those unspoken rules and Izuku once again broke away first.

It continued until the end of the classes. Todoroki didn't look at him constantly, but he did it more and more, as if he was looking for something. It distracted Izuku until Iida and Uraraka noticed it.

"Todoroki keeps looking here," he explained.

Uraraka turned, and blinked when she saw him, but she didn't look worried.

"Oh, now that you mention it, he did glanced during lunch. You didn't notice?"

Absolutely not, and that was disturbing.

"Maybe he wants to talk to us. He seemed isolated in the class. Maybe we should go talk to him," their new class representative declared with enthusiasm.

"He was looking at Midori. Maybe he decided he would make a good rival!" she exclaimed as if it was a good thing.

Izuku didn't knew much about Todoroki except that he had one incredible quirk, and that his father was Endeavor: the number 2 hero and the best investigator in the hero society.

If he had taken after any of Endeavor's skills, he was well placed to know Izuku was lying about his quirk.

*You're always thinking something terrible is about to happen. You're paranoid.*

*Or are you?*

*****

The TV was showing the number 3 hero, Hawks, defeating two villains by throwing a barrage of crimson feather at them. The spectacle had stopped Izuku as he was going home, his grocery bag still in hand. He had ice cream, so he couldn't stay long, but he watched the screens behind the glass of the store until the fight was over.

Izuku had flown once, carried by wings as beautiful as Hawks'. Since he had been a child and the
quirk in itself had been still immature, it was more a jump and a good fight against gravity, but he had loved it with all his heart, at least until reality caught him back. After a ruined shirt, a crying Tsubasa, a lot of guilt, and five minutes of total panic when he realized he wasn’t sure, at four years old, how to give back a quirk, he had wisely decided to never do that again.

"Heroes are so cool, aren't they?" a cheerful voice behind him said.

Izuku turned to see that a girl had stopped behind him to watch the same fight. She seemed older than him, taller too, with purple hair falling to her waist and hazel eyes. Despite the late hour, she was still wearing her uniform.

"I love Hawks. Though not as much as Ryuku," she added, still looking at the screens.

She focused back on him, and smiled.

Izuku just froze like a deer in the headlights.

"Let me guess : you're an All Might fan?" she teased him.

He nodded as if the collector hoodie wasn't a huge clue.

"I prefer Ryuku over Hawks," he managed to say, the words refusing to come to him easily.

"A man of tastes. Though, who wouldn't prefer Ryuku? She can turn into a dragon."

Izuku starting to relax. The subject of this conversation was what he lived for, and it was rare to find people who liked heroes as much as he did.

"I also really like Gang Orca," he added, which was the understatement of the year.

Izuku actually preferred Gang Orca over Ryuku, and he was probably his second favorite hero.

"Gand Orca is the epitome of cool. But Ryuku is different for me. There was a time when I wanted to be her. You know, not only have the same quirk, but..."

She hesitated, looking for her words, but Izuku recognized the feeling.

"Be like her. Powerful and confident like her, because like she always know what to do."

"Exactly," she smiled at him, her eyes warm.

That was why Izuku had chosen a quirk like All Might's. Not only to honor his hero, but also in the hope of being as brave and as in control of his life one day.

But despite the wishful thinking society clang to, quirks didn't guarantee a matching personality, and he had realized early that he could never be like All Might. At least, not by counting on quirks. All Might... All Might was the Symbol of Peace. When he was here, everyone just knew everything was going to be fine.

"I have a long way to go before that," he said out loud.

"Same here. Though not too long."

Izuku was about to nod and smile at how she confident she was, but he realized that unless she had a mind-reading quirk, she was still talking about powerful abilities. And there wasn't so many ways to strengthen one's quirk.
"Well, with nectar," she explained when she saw him puzzled.

His mind jumped through training programs, diets, new age sects, but nothing rang a bell.

"I don't know what that is," Izuku finally admitted.

"The nectar? It fortifies your body and your quirk. You really don't know what that is? A lot of people use it, though..."

"A lot of people?" Izuku repeated, dubious.

None of the forums about quirks Izuku was hanging around ever mentioned it. Of course, he didn't know everything but if there were so many people using it, he should know about it.

Even if it was dangerous.

"Well, heroes school are so insane, so a lot of their students use it. Teachers there are more about powerful quirks and culling the herd than actually teaching their students, if you know what I mean. And even the good schools have a regimen incredibly hard to follow without a little help."

Izuku immediately thought about Aizawa's test. And how he still wasn't convinced one of them wouldn't have been expelled, despite being at UA for only a day.

"I do too, because my quirk got so much easier to use. Here, look." She rummaged through her bag and pulled out a green inhaler. "I have another one at home, do you want to try?"

Izuku didn't make any move to reach out for the inhaler.

"You should stop using that," he said instead.

This nice girl he didn't know anything about stared at him, frozen by surprise. She looked like she didn't understand why he was suddenly being so cold. She even seemed a little hurt.

"Quirks are physical abilities," Izuku said and this time, there was no trace of nervosity in his voice, because it was his field. He knew quirks intimately, and the same could be said about their negative effects. "If you take a shortcut, you can really hurt yourself. You could have irreversible sequelae. There is a thousands things that can go wrong with such a product."

Something glacial passed on the girl's face, and her warm gaze became blank. It was as if the person he had been talking with had never existed, only a mask to connect with him.

"You're a sweet kid, aren't you?"

_Air Pressure._

And then, as if nothing had happened, she became cheerful once again.

"Well, it's not a big deal. Until next time, Small Might!" she waved at him as she left.

Izuku didn't follow her.
Chapter End Notes

I had one busy week, so thank you all for the comments, kudos, and general support, it really helped.

I was always meh about how Iida got the job because Yaoyorozu actually had more votes, so I dedicated way too much time about it. ^^
Toshinori Yagi sighed, reassuming his true appearance after saving the hostage and defeating the villain. Out of sight, of course. No one could know about his declining health.

Usually, bringing some good to the world would have been enough to enlighten his day, but since his first day teaching, he couldn't quite relax, uneasy with what had happened during his first lesson. No one had said anything about it. No one had thought anything was wrong. But All Might had this power of people. People trust him implicitly, and even stranger, they were all convinced All Might perfectly knew what he was doing.

Toshinori had realized he didn't handle the fight between Young Bakugou and Young Midoriya well. Young Bakugou's explosion had been quite impressive, and for a moment, Young Midoriya had disappeared behind it, at least until he crashed violently into the bomb. Horribly still until he moved again as if nothing had happened.

He was still haunted by the silence from this moment. Sixteen teenagers suddenly not making a sound. Absolute silence from the time Young Midoriya was hit to the moment he was back on his feet.

And Toshinori had done nothing.

When Young Midoriya had hit Bakugou, sending his own explosion back on the blonde teen, All Might had been worried and was ready to finish the exercise. He had done nothing on the sort for Young Midoriya. He hadn't worried for him, at least not until he saw him unnaturally still. There was a double standard here, and he knew why he had reacted like that. Why he had forgotten for a moment that this was a student he was responsible for.

He didn't even admonish Young Bakugou for using his quirk so recklessly on a classmate. He had comforted the troubled young man, and just entirely missed the opportunity to say anything about Young Midoriya who had been right next to them at the time!

Young Midoriya was endearing with his fanboy tendencies. His whole face lit up when he laid eyes on Toshinori or any heroes. But when he was pondering about something or using his quirk, Toshinori couldn't help being reminded of him.

It wasn't just the curls, or his face. It was his eyes.

The exact same look in his eyes. The way he had looked at him with this "There you are." expression, but not directed at Toshinori Yagi. Not even directed at All Might. Like he was accessory to what those eyes were seeing.

But it wasn't the first time Toshinori met the same gaze in a stranger. Especially since he had lost some dearly missed vital organs. Right after getting out of the hospital, he felt like All for One was everywhere despite having killed him with his own hands.

It wasn't rare for a long time hero to start developing some unfortunate instinct.
He recognized you in a second. That must mean something.

He signed again, uncomfortable.

Toshinori didn't want to be doing that. He didn't want to be doubting a child, one he actually liked if he was honest. It was unfair to Young Midoriya, it was unworthy of All Might, and it was a failure as a teacher.

What would Nana do?

He could almost hear her telling him to follow his instinct.

He took his phone. Called the one person who could help him make sure it was just in his head.

"Tsukauchi-kun?... I am sorry to bother you but I need to arrange a meeting... Yes, I need your help."

He would follow his instinct and he would make sure nothing was wrong. In the meantime, he would do his best to treat all his students fairly.

*****

Today was going to be a good day. Izuku could just feel it, and he wasn't disappointed when Aizawa announced they would train at Rescue. It was perfect. He wouldn't need to punch anyone, so he wouldn't have to worry about hurting his classmates, and there would be a teacher he didn't know yet, so he would be able to fanboy.

Yes, Izuku had no shame.

A tingling sensation spread on his skin, the consequence on one flat stare that started to be a familiar companion, and one glance confirmed that yes, Todoroki was still paying attention to him. He tried smiling at him, but the boy's expression didn't change.

That wasn't worrying. At all.

"You're not wearing your costume?" Uraraka asked, distracting him from the matter at hand.

"No, the helmet must be replaced and my jacket... Well, it wasn't Kacchan proofed."

This poor vest had half turned into charcoal when he had got it back, which had saddened him. It was a gift from his mother. But those were the risks when you threw anything at an angry Kacchan. Aizawa had told them costumes weren't necessary today anyway, though Izuku was the only one who had opted for his gym uniform, some protections, and gloves, of course.

He glanced back and saw that Todoroki wasn't looking at him anymore. With a little luck, it would last.

Izuku followed Uraraka into the bus, and was surprised to see they would all sit face to face. Asui claimed the seat next to him, and soon, they all idly chatted with each other.

Bakugou took offense to one comment, and made it known with his usual calm and tact. Much roasting ensued, which surprised Izuku.
It wasn't mean spirited. But it was unusual. Usually, people with powerful quirks were popular, and with his personality, no one would have made fun of Bakugou in any normal schools. But at UA, everyone had a powerful quirk, or at least knew how to make it powerful. They were all equals.

Izuku smiled. He really liked this school.

"Midori ?" Asui called.

"Hmmm ?"

No doubt that Izuku had the soul of a writer.

"I tend to be blunt," she warned him.

"Oh ?"

"Your quirk looks like All Might's."

Giddiness followed surprise. That was the sweetest thing anyone could tell him. After all, he had put a lot of efforts into creating his quirk!

"Thank for the compliment, Asui," he grinned.

"Call me Tsuyu."

Before Izuku could find out if he was ready to call anyone by their first name, Kirishima confirmed Asui's impression:

"It does look like All Might's! This kind of strength-enhancing quirk is awesome! You can do a lot of cool things with it! Not like my hardening. I am good in a fight, but it's boring."

**Boring ?**

"Don't underestimate it. It's perfect for offense and for defense. And since the quirk is simple, it's hard to counter. Moreover, you won't have to worry about collateral damages, so people around you will be safer and you shouldn't have too much problems worrying about paying for damages. This is an extremely quirk you can use in any situation."

Izuku himself had several Endurance quirk, and mainly used Durability and Resistance, but they couldn't be compared to Kirishima's quirk. Durability only affected his skin, and it wasn't as effective as hardening. Resistance was slightly better, because it made him strong enough to withstand the impact of his others quirks or any other external forces. To a point, of course.

"And you shouldn't be worried about being boring. You obviously take care of your image and even if it wasn't enough, people will just naturally love nice guys."

Silence answered him, and Izuku raised his head to see everyone was looking at him. He slowly realized he was the center of the attention.

Blood immediately rushed to his face.

"Holy crap, Midori is blushing !" Mina yelled.

"And so is Kirishima !"
"Bro ! You're so cool and so nice !"

Izuku hid his face before he spontaneously combusted or something.

*****

"I was waiting for you, everyone !"

As far as Izuku was concerned, the whole USJ was secondary next to the hero and teacher who had welcomed the class. Thirteen, rescue oriented hero, adorable with their fans. Their quirk allowed them to turn into a black hole, whose power could be contained by their costume. An incredibly destructive quirk who had been honed into a useful ability that saved lives.

Also, they were incredibly cool and since Uraraka was also grinning next to him, he couldn't be the only fan.

"I designed this place to imitate many natural disasters and to allow you to train in conditions as real as possible. I named it Unforeseen Simulation Joint : USJ!"

No wonder the place looked like a theme park if it had been created by such a fun loving hero.

But someone didn't share his enthusiasm, and Aizawa approached Thirteen, annoyed.

"Thirteen, where is All Might ? We were supposed to meet him here."

"Sempai..." they then whispered so the students wouldn't hear them, but they showed three fingers to Aizawa.

Disappointment stabbed Izuku in the heart. It meant there would be no All Might today.

Well, he is the number 1 hero, so it's not surprising that his schedule can't always align with classes, and it's probably the case for every UA teachers. It's even worse for him since his time is limited. I didn't say how long he had, but since Thirteen showed three fingers, it's probably three hours. Can he limit his quirk usage like I by activating and deactivating quickly ? Probably not, since his whole physical form changes, he must have to keep his quirk activated constantly...

Something chimed inside him, his quirk whispering to him.

He always had a strange connection with quirks. He loved them. He knew them. He could recognized them most of the time. And he could feel where one was activated near him.

Beware.

Something had drawn the attention of his quirk, but away from their group, and there was no one on the place he was looking at. At least, until he saw something dark, no more than a spot of ink at first, growing bigger and bigger, while the fountain was malfunctioning.

A warp quirk.

"Aizawa-Sensei..."

People started to get out of the the portal, led by a man with pale hair and hands all over him.
And judging from Aizawa's face, it certainly wasn't on the program.

"Is that like during the exam?" Kirishima wondered, starting to walk to see what was going on. "There is no countdown."

"Don't move," Aizawa ordered, his voice spreading urgency through the ranks of students. "They are villains."

"They are the one who infiltrated the premise yesterday," Thirteen realized.

A pale villain dressed in black and covered in hand looked around slowly, as if he had all the time in the world. Another villain whose brain was exposed was towering over him, following like a bodyguard.

"Where is he?" the pale villain asked lazily. "Don't tell me I brought all these people for nothing? All Might, the Symbol of Peace, isn't here?" He paused, as if he was thinking about it. "Will killing the kids make him come back?"

Izuku heard a sharp intake of breath behind him. He didn't know who it was, but he could perfectly empathize with the fear.

*Someone in front of us is ready to kill us.*

It has nothing to do with the unfortunate encounter with the nectar girl the day before. She was mad at him, but there had been no hostility. No killing intent.

"Thirteen, take care of them!" Aizawa ordered.

*Hell no.*

"You can't fight them on your own," Izuku said. "There are too many of them for you to capture them on your own like you usually do."

"Don't worry. No good hero is a one trick pony."

Izuku waited for him to pull out a gun from his scarf or something, but instead, Eraserhead put on goggles.

Before jumping into the fight.

And to Izuku's awe, he hold his own, moving through the villains as if there were toddlers. The number didn't stop him. The limits of his quirk not working on mutations barely slowed him down.

*This is a pro hero,* Izuku realized.

But warpers were a category of their own, and the black mist cut their escape despite all the efforts of their teachers. He stood in front of them, calm, because honestly, where could they run? He could always reach for them.

"Greeting," announced the black mist in a soft voice. "Forgive our audacity but today, we have come to UA, this bastion of heroism, to end the life of All Might, the symbol of Peace."

Izuku hesitated.

Bakugou and Kirishima didn't, blocking Thirteen's line of sight and giving enough time to the villain to activate his quirk.
The black mist engulfed them all.

*****

Water screamed his name and all the air was punched from his lungs as Izuku broke the surface. He sank for a moment, his chest on fire as he couldn't breathe, horribly cold water making every cell of his body go still, and it dragged him to the depths of the lake.

What saved him was an incoming quirk. Nothing better than imminent peril to put things into perspective.

He barely had the time to see a shark shaped villain swimming towards him, and whipped with his arm, Air Pressure in tow. Not only did the villain disappeared from his sight with a cry, but the rebound hit Izuku who was sent backwards, and suddenly, there was air.

Izuku's lungs finally filled with precious, beautiful oxygen, and when he splashed back into the water, he desperately waved his limbs. His clothes, his shoes, everything he was wearing tried to sink him again, but once the moment of panic has passed, he swam with determination towards the ship of the Flood area. It meant something solid under his feet, and right now, this was everything he wanted.

He wasn't the only one to have his idea and he tensed when he sensed another quirk, more diffuse than the first one. Air Pressure was once again ready, but he saw a familiar flash of green and Asui swimming seamlessly, a sharp contrast with the way he was going from point A to point B with a bunch of Strength quirks. She was also helping Mineta to stay afloat.

"Midori!"

He swam toward Asui, grabbed her and Mineta whom she was still holding, and he used Slide and Glide as soon as he put one hands and two feet on the hull of the boat. He put so much urgency into his quirk that they almost rocketed upwards, and when they reached the deck, he fell on his back. Just for a second.

Mineta quickly joined him, which was his signal to stop freaking out. He got up, and pretended he was perfectly in control. Only one person was allowed to lose it, and Izuku couldn't afford this luxury when he was the one with the strongest quirk.

"Is anyone hurt?" he asked.

"I'm fine, kero."

Mineta didn't even bother to answer that.

"What do they want?" he cried, raw terror in his voice. "Why now?"

"He said it was to find All Might," Asui reminded him.

It was actually a logical endeavor. Several generations of All Might's fans could confirm their favorite hero was incredibly hard to find. Most heroes could be found near their agencies, but not
him. So the quickest way to find him...

"They are at UA because this is his only constant schedule," Izuku continued out loud. "Otherwise, All Might is incredibly difficult to track down. He seemed to appear where there is trouble, then vanish until the next crisis."

"So now, every villain knows where to find him and anyone having some beef with him will come here! Where we are!" Mineta whined.

Izuku and Asui looked at each other. Mineta often whined and made unneeded comments, but the waves of fear he was emitting was something new.

"There is a whole group of villain waiting for us in the water! Even if we escape, there are still more! And we don't know when the pros will arrive!"

"And since they are here to defeat the Symbol of Peace, they probably came prepared and nothing guarantees the pros will be able to save us," Asui added.

Mineta's soul almost left his body at those words.

You're not helping, Izuku conveyed with his eyes while Mineta was freaking out even more. Izuku didn't think it was possible, but Plus Ultra weren't vain words.

She shrugged. She hadn't lied when she warned him about her bluntness.

What would All Might do?

"Mineta," Izuku called, catching his attention. "It's going to be fine," he assured with a bright smile, the same All Might gave to terrified people and which never failed to chase fear and sorrow.

Mineta just stared at him.

"Are. You Insane?" he asked.

Well, All Might is definitely better at this.

"That's not the point. They don't know our quirks, or they wouldn't have sent Asui here. She strives in aquatic environments. So we have an advantage and they know it, so they will be careful." Of course, it also meant they were taking them seriously, but Izuku wasn't about to say that out loud next to Mineta. "That's why they aren't on the boat yet. If we work together, we won't risk anything."

Mineta almost looked like he believed him.

You know their quirks because you watched them during the test. You have your own power.

Now, work with that to get everyone home safely.

*****

One of the brats, the one in a gym uniform, jumped from the boat.
They all saw the impact coming when the kid raised his fist, but not all of them had the time to dive. Some even didn't think it would much much of a hit.

One of the villains didn't want to take any risk and reached the depths of the lake in a heartbeat. It wasn't fast enough. The air blast hit him like a trainwreck, pain bursting all over his body as the water was throwing him around like a ragdoll.

He tried to swim against the current, to stay under, but the water was propelling upwards. And as he failed, he noticed something strange.

Have those dark balls always been there?

*****

All giddiness which could have been born for defeating the villains disappeared when the three teenagers approached the Central Plaza. Defeated mooks laid on the ground, and so did Aizawa, in the middle of a puddle of blood. Their teacher wasn't moving. He wasn't even reacting as one of the villain, an obsidian titan whose brain was exposed, was holding his horribly broken arm.

On Izuku's right, Mineta whined, the sound pure fear, and he sank a little more into the water as if he wanted to hide. On his left, Asui looked like she was torn apart between rushing there and keeping everyone here. As for Izuku himself, he was frozen.

The hand villain nodded and the titan crushed their teacher's arm between his fingers. Aizawa screamed, activating his quirk and looking at the villain tormenting him.

Who crushed his elbow under his palm next.

It's like a cat playing with his prey.

"Shigaraki Tomura!"

A spot of black mist appeared next to the leader of the villain, a human shaped silhouette slowly revealing himself instead of the personified mist from before.

"Kurogiri," the villain calmly acknowledged. "Is Thirteen dead?"

Cold gripped Izuku's heart. Please, say no.

"Thirteen is neutralized. But one of the students managed to escape. The pro heroes shouldn't be far."

Whoever you are, fellow student, I love you.

"Kurogiri!" the villain snarled. "If I didn't need your quirk, I would kill you!"

He started scratching his neck, more and more, and when Izuku activated Zoom, he immediately regretted it as he saw the dry skin succumbing under the villain's nails. He kept mumbling, pissed beyond reason, and he was looking at his colleague as if he was really thinking about executing his threat.
"Now, pro heroes are on their way! I was prepared for one boss, not one whole army of them..."] He stopped scratching, and suddenly, he was calm again, as if nothing happened. "Well, I supposed it's game over for us," he simply said as if it didn't matter anymore.

Izuku dove deeper in the water, as if he wanted some protection between the madness and himself. Because it was madness, or at least something seriously wrong. People didn't go from blood-rage to peace in a second. And they weren't supposed to act as if no one was real except themselves.

"We're leaving," Shigaraki Tomura said, a little exasperation piercing in his voice.

"You hear that, Midoriya?" Mineta asked, hopeful. He even tried to grab his arm.

Izuku slapped it away under water. Not now. It wasn't over. He could feel it.

He wasn't disappointed.

"Noumu," Shigaraki Tomura lazily called, "finish the job. As for..."

Several things happened simultaneously.

The noumu moved for the kill, Aizawa unmoving under him. Shigaraki stopped talking as he saw something moving fast enough to produce an air swirl. And Izuku crossed the field in a breath, kicking the noumu in the head with both legs.

Izuku didn't remember taking the decision of activating all his quirks, or even to start running. He just knew he couldn't let that happen.

The noumu took a step backwards as Izuku landed on his feet, his whole body still ringing from the strength exerted. But his adversary didn't seem to feel any off effects, the quick stumbling down more about a lack of balance than actual injuries.

When Izuku had hit him at full strength.

The noumu turned towards Izuku, focusing on him. Away from Aizawa. It's already that.

Now, how do I defeat him?

The noumu never left him the time to think about it. Despite all Izuku's training, there was barely enough time to alternate (This is bad, this is so bad), and he barely had the time to avoid the noumu's huge fists. He chased Izuku around, and the teenaged was reduced to avoiding the worst of it until he finally managed to sneak a punch.

The noumu didn't even stop.

Izuku went almost completely on the defensive. He had to. They had the same speed. The noumu was slightly stronger. And nothing Izuku did to him seemed to affect him. He pushed on his Speed quirks enough to feel his feet protest. Acceleration was not a last resort anymore, but a full-time use. Slide and Glide kept him for having his head ripped off at one point.

And as the noumu was slightly unstable, Izuku turned his whole body and kicked his knee. The skull-shaped protector on it exploded upon impact, and the momentum behind the blow made the titan stagger.

Izuku jumped and kicked him in the chest, throwing an air blast at the same time. Unbalanced, the noumu crashed down. Finally.
From the corner of his eye, he saw Shigaraki running, his hand stretched out. His speed was almost inhumanely fast, to the limit of being a quirk, and he was heading towards Tsuyu. She who was half out of the water, her body turned towards Izuku. To save you. She is running to save you, because you rushed without thinking about the consequences. She had seen Shigaraki, but she wouldn't avoid him in time. Mineta's mouth was open with the beginning of a scream.

Izuku stretched out his arm, focusing on Aim, Air Pressure, and Resistance.

In the time it took him to aim, and throw an Air Blast at Shigaraki, the noumu was back on his feet. Barely a second, but it was enough.

Shigaraki went airborne, tried to regain his balance as he waved his arms, miserably failed, and fell into the lake as Tsuyu disappeared under the surface, Mineta in tow.

And the noumu lunged at him, his fist raised, impossibly fast.

Izuku tried to parry with his forearm, bare skin touching hot and dark flesh, but the angle was wrong, he didn't have enough momentum, and for the second he touched the noumu, he absolutely failed to deflect the hit or even slowed it down.

The noumu's fist hit his chest like a sledgehammer.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone who left a comment, bookmarked my fic, and left a kudos. :) A special thank you for the comments because it helps write the fic. I love hearing your thoughts, so don't hesitate. ^^

LovingPillow, that's a good question. You too, keephimquiet.
Izuku didn't remember touching the ground.

He did remember all the air being chased out his lungs. He remembered the impact which had threatened to cave in his chest. But mostly, he remembered activating the quirk he had stolen during the brief skin to skin contact with the noumu. Something that had allowed him to withstand the impact. *Shock absorption or shock cancelling.*

It saved his life.

He quickly came to regret it.

The noumu grabbed his arm and picked him up as if he weighted nothing, and Izuku, too stunned to do anything else than laboriously trying to breathe, let him. At least, until he felt his own quirk calling his attention, making him focus on something he should have noticed earlier, but who couldn't be ignored now that there was a physical contact.

Several quirks. At least fifteen. All laying inside the noumu. Transfer awakened, reaching out for them, curiosity devouring Izuku.

Until his quirk was drowned under a sea of pain, as his arm cracked like a toothpick under the noumu's finger. Izuku screamed, suffering spreading into his whole limb.

Away from him, Aizawa struggled, trying to move and failing as he fell back into the puddle of his own blood. The angle was wrong and Izuku couldn't see his face, but his powerlessness and despair were tangible.

*No one is coming to save you.*

Izuku's arm was one mass of white-hot pain, and every time the noumu's fingers dug deeper, a horrible noise escaped his lips. No Shock Absorption could protect him from the raw strength applied to his forearm.

Further away, Shigaraki got out of the water, holding his ribs. Izuku hoped it hurt. It would prevent him to run that fast again.

"How violent," he drawled. "I could have broken my neck."

*If only.*

"Heroes are such hypocrites. You forbid violence but you don't hesitate to use it."

Izuku grabbed the noumu's arm but his hand was gloved, cancelling his quirk.

Which was the point. He was afraid to answer to uncomfortable questions, so those measures were taken to prevent that. *Brilliant idea, dumbhead.*
He bent his wrist, the patch of bare skin touching the noumu at an awkward angle. He couldn't force him to let go. Not when they had the same strength and speed. But he could take more from him.

Another quirk transferred from the noumu to him, and Izuku used it immediately. *Shock absorption* again. *How many of the same quirk does he have?*

*More. I need more.*

*Shock absorption. Strength. Resistance. Speed.*

Pain started echoing inside his skull, no more than a headache but he recognized it as the sign he was starting to overuse his quirk. He didn't care. He had no choices right now.

"Kid, do you want to be a hero?" Shigaraki continued, something vicious barely hidden in the quiet words. "What about a hero death?"

Izuku stopped holding the noumu for a second and he threw another Air Blast at Shigaraki before he stopped monologuing and started ordering the noumu to rip off his head.

A spot of ink appeared in front of the villain, a warp gate, and another started to form next to Izuku, ready to redirect the blast... before disappearing as if they had never existed. The Air Blast followed its path and hit Shigaraki who went airborne. Back into the water he went.

The warper looked around, trying to see what was happening, why his quirk had stopped working, and he realized what it was at the same time as Izuku. Aizawa-Sensei was still on the ground, but he had managed to raise his head, and even though the angle was wrong for Izuku to see his crimson eyes, he could feel his quirk.

And another.

A spear of ice stabbed the noumu, almost severing his elbow and making him drop Izuku who crashed on the ground and his mind almost went white because of the pain of his arm. He didn't look. But he could feel warm blood on his cold skin.

Ice kept growing on the noumu, encasing him into one beautiful coffin, but also keeping all those quirks away from Izuku.

*I need more.* Something to dull the pain pulsing in his arm. Something to make his hoard better, and to allow him to protect everyone.

An explosion brought him back to his senses, Bakugou screaming, and he crashed into the warper, quickly threatening him if he ever thought about moving his little finger. As if Todoroki was tired of waiting for him, a wall of ice rised between the noumu and the injured teenager, who got the message.

*Acceleration.* He was next to Todoroki and Kirishima the next instant, tears in his eyes, the price to pay for moving with such injuries. It was alright. He would heal. *Right?*

Todoroki was still watching the noumu, ice starting to form on his own right side, as if he was starting to mirror his target. He barely glanced at Izuku but his eyes widened for a brief moment. Kirishima wasn't so stoic.

"Midoriya," he called and there was fear in his voice, "Are you ok?"
It might be time to judge how hurt I am. Izuku looked at his arm.

He felt himself starting to blank, gravity calling his name, and he looked away, deciding that he didn't need to pay too much attention.

The wall of ice that had encased the noumu exploded, shards of ice flying everywhere and Kirishima threw himself in front of Todoroki and Izuku, shielding them. The villain revealed himself, half of what he used to be, the frost having destroyed two of his limbs, but not for long.

The noumu screamed, maybe from pain, maybe from rage, and the dead flesh fell from him, another red and healthy layer reforming under their eyes, until he was whole again. As if anything they did to him had never mattered.

Todoroki and Kirishima braced themselves.

Izuku just stared.

All those quirks I've stolen and I couldn't get Regeneration?

The Noumu charged.

Todoroki tried to grab Izuku and to get him out of the way but he was already gone.

*****

Ten minutes.

An eternity and nothing at the same time.

It was all he had left with One for All for the day.

Toshinori rushed towards the Unforeseen Simulation Joint as soon as Young Iida confirmed that the students were in danger, while Nedzu was assembling the rest of the teachers. In ten minutes, three quarters of the UA teachers, all licensed heroes, would be on the site. It would only take two minutes to All Might.

Please, stay safe. Hide. Don't engage.

Everything would be fine. Thirteen and Aizawa-kun would never let anything happen to the kids.

They would die first.

Toshinori accelerated.

*****

Eijirou finally managed to reach his teacher, laid on the ground and not moving anymore. There was so much blood, but he couldn't think too much about that.
An air blast threatened to make him stumble on the ground and into the red liquid but he managed to anchor himself. Every time Midoriya moved, the strength of iT created an air pressure. He had jumped at the noumu, as if his arm wasn't horribly broken. Red lines gleamed on his skin, as if raw power was circulating in his veins, and when he moved, he was a blur.

And when he hit, he was thunder. With every hit, everytime he managed to cancel the noumu's insane speed, Todoroki was right here, ice reaching the villain but never Midoriya, encasing him, trapping him. But only for a moment.

And then, they did it again, with no hesitation whatsoever.

They didn't even talk about it. They just did it, while Kirishima was scrambling for safety.

Further away, Bakugou was still holding the misty villain, fuming. He obviously wanted to join the fight, but was stuck as he was the one keeping the warper from putting a definitive end to their heroic stand.

"It's going to be all right, Aizawa-Sensei," Eijirou lied, not because he thought it wouldn't, but because he had no idea.

He took hold of him in the fireman carry, unable to use his quirk because his teacher didn't need any more lacerations. He seriously regretted his costume choice right now.

"It's going to be alright," he repeated even if the man didn't seem like he could hear him, and this time, he almost managed to convince himself.

Bakugou and Eijirou has seen the others near the gates, trying to help Thirteen-Sensei, and they had told them about Iida. It meant that the heroes were on their way and all they had to do was to hold on. Eijirou might not be like Midoriya, but he could still help.

He was climbing the stairs when, from the corner of his eye, he saw something lunging at him. Something wet and bony hit him, with enough strength to make him crash on the floor. Eijirou barely managed to cushion the impact and to protect Aizawa-Sensei when the most horrible pain he had ever lived through burnt his shoulder.

"Get up," the villain growled between his clenched teeth, so angry is breathing was erratic.

And Eijirou obeyed, blind panic taking hold of him, anything to avoid the same pain again. All his skin was starting to harden, except for one aching spot where the villain had put his hand on. And he suspected it was because there wasn't skin there anymore.

The villain's hand, though not all fingers, grabbed the back of his neck.

"Don't move," the villain ordered to everyone, even though the place had gone deadly quiet as soon as Eijirou had screamed. "You," he called Bakugou who was still kneeling on the black mist, "Release Kurogiri ! I need a way out of this mess !"

Water was dripping on Eijirou's back. The villain must have waited in the water until someone separated from the group, and the teenager had done just that, serving himself on a platter.

"How do I know you will let him go ?" Bakugou shouted back. "I am supposed to fucking take your word for it ?"

Was Eijirou going to die today ?
"You don't know that," the villain admitted, fury and venom saturating his every word. "What you do know if that he is going to die if you don't do what I say. I won't hesitate. And I won't regret it. A pitiful consolation prize is still a consolation prize."

"If he dies, you will follow him," Todoroki coldly promised.

A true man would have done something. He would have attempted something heroic to gain some time, to give an advantage to his comrades, anything. But Eijirou's mind was desperately empty. He was only conscious of three things. The fingers on his throat would could cause some excruciating damage. How the fact he was a hostage just screwed everyone over and not just him. And how he had failed to protect his teacher.

"You want to be a hero, don't you ?" the villain asked Bakugou. "Well, time to make hard decisions. Will you let this brat die to arrest the villains ? Will you prove how warped all the system is, a system that cares more about beating people up than rescuing ?"

Bakugou hesitated. Looked at Eijirou.

And did nothing. He just stood still.

Next to Todoroki, Midoriya, still deathly pale and his arm a litteral bloody mess, was oddly calm. He wasn't looking at the noumu still encased in Todoroki's ice tomb like Eijirou had first assumed, but seemed absorbed in his thoughts, or lost in his own world. His gaze was passing though Eijirou and his captor.

*Does he know something I don't ?*

The pro heroes, he realized. The longer they did nothing, the more time the pro heroes had to arrive. That was why Bakugou was so still. That was why Midoriya who hadn't hesitate to jump at a villain and throw him like a ragdoll was so calm. The best course of action was to wait.

It was nerve-breaking.

"NOW !" the villain screamed, having realized it too.

Bakugou hesitated. He knew freeing the villain didn't mean Eijirou would be saved.

Still, he rose slowly.

The metallic doors of the USI exploded as someone crashed into them, his booming voice echoing through the whole USJ.

"NEVER FEAR !"

For all Might was here, and this time, he wasn't smiling.

For a second, the villain froze like a scared rabbit.

Eijirou had read manga about people with so much power that the sheer force of their anger could paralyze someone. He had always loved those scenes. But as he watched All Might, he realized it had nothing to do with spiritual pressure or something like that.

It was something deeper, raw, where someone was confronted to a being who could kill them, and there was nothing they could do about it. Inevitable. Without his smile, without knowing he was the Symbol of peace, All Might was just a force of nature, and the villain behind Eijirou was
confronted to the very real possibility of being flattened without mercy.

"FOR I AM HERE !" All Might finished and it sent chills through Eijirou because this time, he knew that everything would be fine.

And he was right. The villain's grip disappeared and suddenly, Eijirou's feet weren't touching the ground anymore. In a blink, he was transported to the other side of the field, just as Izuku was arriving, holding Todoroki by his harness. All Might gently deposed Kirishima, Bakugou, and Aizawa on the ground, the three of them more fortunate than the wide eyed Todoroki who made the trip being dragged by the back of his costume.

The noumu chose this moment to break free again.

****

Izuku let go of Todoroki, eyeing the villains. Following All Might's movements was a challenge and he had realized he had punched Kurogiri only when he saw the sharp dressed villain flying through the air and landing like a potatoe bag.

Now that the warper was free, things were about to be far more complicated. He would have to make do.

At least until All Might's hand appeared in front of his face, stopping him to take another step.

"Stop right here. It's the adults' role to fight for the children."

*What ?*

"It's a little late for that," Todoroki said mercilessly.

Bakugou didn't even say anything, he just eyed the villain with the firm intention of exploding them. Izuku could feel his quirk charging.

"I know, and I am sorry," All Might apologized. "But now, your job is to stay safe. Get Aizawa-kun away."

Some part of Izuku understood. All Might was a lone fighter, so having someone else around could limit him, especially since they weren't properly trained. While fighting with Todoroki, Izuku had been hindered by his ice because he at first had tried to steal more quirks from the noumu but Todoroki attacked as the same time he tried to leave his hand on the feverish skin, so any attempts to use Transfer resulted in him pitifully jumping out of the way.

However...

"The noumu is a tough one. And you don't have much time..." *Do not reveal his secret, you buffoon !* "You might need help," he concluded, still looking at the noumu.

The last attack seemed to have stunned him a little.

"Young Midoriya," All Might called.

Something in his tone made Izuku hesitate. Maybe the warmth. Maybe the utter confidence.
"Everything will be fine," his idol assured him with a smile.

Izuku had never been naive enough to think things would go smoothly. Or at least, he hadn't been since it was only his mother and him, when his world had drastically changed. Safety was a child notion.

But when All Might said it, he felt a sense of safety he hadn't known since his father had left their lives. The certainty that someone would protect him and that nothing bad would happen as long as he was here.

He nodded.

*I trust you.*

That didn't mean he left as All Might had asked him. He didn't know how long he had with his quirk. If he ran out of time, he would intervene. He wouldn't let them kill All Might.

Izuku looked at Shigaraki who was at the other side of the field. He couldn't see his eyes because of the cut off hand on his face, but he could feel his hatred.

But he didn't need to worry. Not only did All Might managed to fight the Noumu, but teachers finally arrived, securing the students, and chasing any remaining villains with an ease that was just insulting. Izuku tensed when he saw they were leaving All Might on his own, but his worries were dissipated when the number one hero punched him so hard he disappeared into the sky, so far that even Zoom wasn't enough to follow his course.

It was only when he sensed a familiar quirk get activated that he realized he had forgotten about the warper, and he saw a spot of black mist near the limp form of Shigaraki, who had just been shot repeatedly by Snipe-Sensei. The latter shot again, but portals appeared, redirecting the bullets as Kurogiri grabbed Shigaraki.

*No. They don't get to run away.*

*Acceleration.*

Kurogiri startled and yanked Shigaraki Tomura into the portal and they both disappeared without leaving any chance to Izuku, who stopped, dejected. *Why didn't I notice what he was doing sooner?*

All Might chuckled, not far away from him. The sound lightened the weight Izuku didn't know he carried.

"You did it. You won," he sighed just as he saw All Might's bulk form starting to crumble.

"I did. I guess you tenderized it for me."

Izuku smiled, still feeling the comforting weight of his new quirks. *If you knew.*

He slowly realized the danger had passed, and his legs almost betrayed him. He had troubles deactivating his quirks, his brain just refusing to acknowledge he didn't need all of them anymore, and as he did, several things, masked by adrenaline and a state of panic so intense it had made him almost zen, appeared. Like the blinding headache and the fact his nose had started bleeding at some point.

Quirk overuse, and usually the sign that he should lay down and stop moving for a while.
He was seriously thinking about doing just that, until he saw Kirishima rushing towards him, no
doubt to see if he was alright and to give him support or whatever good people did when faced to
someone that had been hurt. Izuku usually would have been hurt, but All Might wasn't far.

Skinny All Might Kirishima absolutely couldn't see.

Izuku tried to tell him to stay where he was, but Kirishima didn't even slow down. From the corner
of eye, Izuku saw All Might trying to turn, as if showing his back would hide the fact he was about
to lose a hundred pounds.

Never fear, for I am here, Izuku's stomach reminded since he had almost been killed, almost had
his arm ripped off, and Tsuyu and Kirishima had almost died in the hands of villains.

Cold sweat run down his back while the content of his stomach went up and Izuku threw up on the
ground.

This at least had the advantage of making Kirishima stop next to him, giving the time to Cementos
to build a wall to safeguard All Might's secret.

***

After Recovery Girl had used her quirk on Izuku, he was near comatose, and it did nothing for his
massive headache and how any source of light was hurting his eyes. He wasn't lucky enough to see
his physical wounds be healed and to walk out like Kirishima, since his real problem was how
exhausted his whole organism was. Quirk overuse, because he had used all his quirks at once for
too long, and stealing more had worsened it.

I stole quirks.

He should have been disturbed by it. Until now, all the quirks he had were given to him. It was a
proof of love or trust. For him, taking a quirk without the permission of the owner was
unthinkable. But he didn't hesitate to take them when his life was in danger, which revealed a part
of him he didn't know.

And what was especially disturbing was that Izuku wasn't troubled about it. He knew he would be
dead if he hadn't stolen Shock Absorption. He had left a crater in the ground. There was no doubt
his chest would have caved in.

Stealing quirks was wrong. But it was a life or death situation, and ultimately, he wasn't brave
enough not to use any means to survive.

But there had to be a limit. Because it was how bad things started. How many times did Izuku see a
quirk and thought 'I could do better with it'?

It had to be only against villains. Only when Izuku or someone else was in danger.

He could live with that.

His fingers started trembling again. Shivers had kept spreading through him once the adrenaline
had worn off and when he had realized he would be fine. Now, his brain was finally realizing
people had entered his school with the intention to kill them. And like every time it had happened,
he focused on the thing that never failed to calm him.

Slowly, he reached for his quirks one by one. Never more than one at a time. Just enough to feel the quirk, to have something beautiful to focus on. There was a story behind each of them. Some were tokens of love, anonymous but filled with warmth because they were brought to him just to spoil him. Others were shows of faith. People had listened to his dream of becoming a hero, and had entrusted him a part of them. And now, five of them were the proof he survived.

The residual panic and fear disappeared, gently washed away by the golden warmth of his quirks. His treasures.

The shiver disappeared as fast as it had appeared.

See ? You're fine.

"Young Midoriya ?"

Izuku immediately removed the pillow that was resting on his face, light stabbing his eyes as soon as he did, and sat. His bed was next to All Might, in his thin form. Even without activating his quirk, he was so tall that his feet were sticking out the blanket AND the bed.

"Yes ?"

It might be the hellish headache raging inside his head but All Might seemed surprised by the brusque movement.

"Nothing, I just wanted to be sure you were still breathing."

"Don't worry, I am just tired. A little," Izuku added before All Might worried. "I will be fine."

And he laid back before putting the pillow back on his eyes. Light was his enemy for now. So were sounds.

"I see," All Might said blankly.

Izuku had the sneaking suspicion the number 1 hero didn't believe him.

He was saved from the torment of awkward conversations by the arrival of a police officer, Detective Tsukauchi, who seemed to know All Might, though Izuku wasn't sure if he knew him as the number 1 hero, the symbol of peace, the strongest hero, or his civil identity. So Izuku kept his mouth shut.

Detective Tsukauchi glanced at Izuku, then at All Might, who slightly shook his head.

The movement was discreet but not only did Izuku saw it but the fact All Might had been trying to hide the exchange in front of him sent a burst of anxiety right through him.

"What's happening?"

"Nothing," All Might reassured him. "He is just wondering what he can say in front of you, but since you already know about my time limit, it's fine."

"Are you sure ?" the detective asked in a lightheartedly voice.

All Might didn't hesitate : "Of course."
"Well, All Might," he called him for the first time. "I would like you to give me your statement of facts."

"Of course. But first, how is everyone? The students! Aizawa-kun and Thirteen?"

Izuku immediately calmed down and smiled, because of course, that would be All Might's first priority.

Aizawa-Sensei and Thirteen were hurt, Aizawa more than Thirteen. He was still sleeping, but Recovery Girl was optimistic. Kirishima and Izuku were the only student injured, probably because the others had the good idea not to approach psychotic villains with annoying quirks.

The Noumu had been retrieved, and Detective Tsukauchi's colleagues were making him ready for transport. He didn't say a word, didn't try to escape. He just waited, and though he wasn't quite cooperating, he was extremely docile, which was a good thing because they were trying not to keep him away from the journalists.

A chill ran on Izuku's skin as he realized he had forgotten one hell of a detail.

"Do the journalists know?" he asked.

Tsukauchi looked at All Might before answering him. He was probably still dealing with the fact All Might had told his secret to a high school boy.

"They don't know about the attack yet but since they were posted in front of the school and they saw almost all the staff running to rescue you, they might be suspecting something."

Izuku jumped from the bed, which was a very bad idea as colors exploded in front of his eyes, and he reached blindly for his bag to find his phone.

"Young Midoriya?" All Might called, concerned.

"My mom can't know about what happened from TV," Izuku explained.

This was the worse case scenario. Since they had fled the United States, his mother had always been worried about bad people finding them and hurting them, and now, it happened. She had to know it has nothing to do with his father's former associates or he might find his bag packed once he came home.

He paused, uncomfortable. He didn't know much about what happened when he was little. Just that his father had known people who had the same disdain for regulation, and that some of them had started being threatening after he was gone.

The shivering came back.

He didn't think about those things. Ever.

Izuku counted his quirks again, leaning on the wall, and he calmed himself. As he unlocked his screen, he saw seventeen missed calls from Nagisa, and was absolutely not surprised to see she already knew. But moms took priorities over hackers.

His mother didn't answer her phone, which wasn't rare when she was at work, so he left a message.

"Hi Mom. There was an little incident at school."

"Little?"Detective Tsukauchi repeated in disbelief.
Izuku ignored him.

"You will probably hear about it in the news," Izuku continued. "What is important is that I am OK and I am safe."

*I am safe* was their code for *No need to panic and to run for the hills.*

"I won't lie to you, I was a little injured, nothing grave..."

"Wasn't his arm broken?" the police officer asked.

"Not only was his arm broken but he apparently kept fighting so it worsened the wound. Recovery Girl was livid."

Izuku closed the door behind him.

"... But Recovery Girl patched me up and I don't even have a scratch anymore..."


****

After getting back to bed, closing his eyes for a second, and waking up an hour later as All Might poked his chest to make sure he was still breathing, curiously an on-going concern since their return from the USJ, Midoriya was allowed to leave the infirmary, which meant braving the sea of journalists.

But to his surprise, he didn't need to as someone was waiting in front of UA gates, her arms crossed on her chest and wearing what looked like an expensive crimson outfit inspired by a kimono. The journalists were staying at distance from this person, not everyone enlightened enough to be comfortable with someone who looked like a giant spider with a semi-human body. The fact she was glaring at anyone who dared to approach her with all her eyes must have also explained the circle of void around her.

Nagisa grabbed him by the hand, her touch strangely comforting, and she snatched Izuku from the journalists before he was harassed.

"What are you doing here?" he smiled as he followed her, still holding her hand.

Touching someone was always intense for him, not only because he wasn't used to it anymore, but because he could feel their quirk though the contact. But Izuku noticed that he made him feel better. So much better.

"Making sure you aren't dead," Nagisa declared as if it was obvious. "Someone saw a villain almost getting ejected out of the stratosphere at the USJ, and I know this is a UA base. You're in one piece?"

Izuku nodded.

"You're hurt anywhere?"

Izuku shook his head.

"THEN WHY DIDN'T YOU ANSWER YOUR PHONE?" she roared, her mandibles furiously
moving, and in the meantime, she made him stop in a ridiculously futuristic-looking vehicle.

"That's your car?" he blurted out.

"A gift for my birthday. I'm driving you to my home. Don't change the subject."

Izuku crawled into the car that could probably land on the Moon if the driver asked it, and since she asked so nicely, he told her. As he recounted the events, he had the dubious pleasure of experimenting for the first time the driving of someone who could see at 360 degrees, and decided he had been safer with the villains.

"So," Nagisa said when he was finished, "You single handily stopped a villain designed to fight All Might, with a broken arm, saved a teacher, and was about to ask for more when the pro heroes made the villains flee?"

Izuku knew better than to answer that but it didn't stop here.

"You're insane. That's not a figure of speech. You must be legally insane."

"That's not the point. Did you hear the part when I said one of the villains had several quirks?"

She immediately caught the source of his curiosity: "A parent?"

"I doubt it."

What made him say that was the fact the Noumu had not reacted when Izuku had grabbed some of his quirks, and if he had something similar to Transfer, he would have noticed it in a second, while Izuku had noticed that most people didn't notice the disappearance of their quirks until they tried to use it. And they all had the same expression. Like there was suddenly a void.

That was why he always asked if they wanted the quirk back immediately after taking it, and why he left a number so they could reach out to him and ask to have their quirk back. Even though he hated it.

He passed a hand in his hair.

"As far as I can tell, he only had several quirks," he added.

"People can inherit both quirks of their parents," Nagisa remarked.

Right before her car made a turn that made Izuku grip his siege while activating Resistance and Shock Absorption.

"That only happens in movies," he said as soon as he got his breath back. "People can inherit a mix of both of their parents' quirk, not two of them."

Nagisa nodded, trusting his judgement in quirks the same way he trusted her judgement with anything electronic.

"Several years ago, there was a drug called Trigger that mutated people. Not only did it change their appearances, but it enhanced their already existing quirks and made them stronger and faster. It's possible he was a remnant from this time."

Interesting.

A drug that could awakened others quirks, probably picking them up in the person's DNA. Despite
having the same appearance, at least for the majority of the population, humans nowadays didn't have much in common with human beings from the past. Invisible mutations had made them more resistant and slightly stronger, probably an evolutionary response to protect them from their own quirks. Bakugou, for example, was remarkably resistant or his quirk would destroy his wrists.

Izuku was very interested in the subject because he wasn't gifted in this domain. Where science had observed that people grew more resistant as new generation were born, Izuku was actually quite frail for a boy from the fifth generation.

Well, he compensated it with the perfect quirk.

He nodded, his mind going in a dozen of direction at the same time.

"Talking of drugs, I met this really nice girl who loves Ryukyu, but I think she was a drug dealer because she offered me something called Nectar. Do you know anything about it?"

Beat.

Nagisa stared at him with all the judgement she could muster, but it wasn't what gave an almost heart attack to Izuku.

"ROAD! ROAD!" he screamed while pointing at it in case she had trouble finding it.

"I can see the road no matter how my head is turned," she reminded him.

"I don't care!"

Nagisa listened to him, only to pacify him.

"Tell me you didn't take a sample or something."

Izuku laughed at the idea.

"I'm serious. You could not only get kicked out of school, but even if it's not cut with some poison, you could be damaged by it forever. I'm not joking, Midoriya."

"My quirk can give me brain damages if I push it too far, Nagisa. Taking those drugs would be suicidal."

Nagisa sighed, and went on a rant about him being too reckless and how he was mistaken if he thought she couldn't leave him stuck to one of her webs for a few days.

Izuku grinned.

Under this tough exterior, she did care.

---

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for all the comments, the bookmarks, and kudos. You have no
idea how happy I am and how much I like talking with readers. So, who realized Izuku took Shock Absorption last chapter?

If I used titles, I would have called this chapter "Shigaraki’s very bad day".

Yes, Izuku has the red lines when he uses his quirk a lot. He get Christmas colored when he is in the Zone.

(Sorry, Luce Chan, I had to give All Might some time to shine. ^^)

EDIT: I am not at ease with action scenes so I really would like to know what you thought of this chapter.
Their return to the bar was especially undignified since the warp gates carried momentum. Kurogiri almost landed on his charge but since Shigaraki Tomura was cursing and waving his hands, blind to the not decayable proofed people around him, survival instinct allowed the bartender to stay upright in extremis.

"Fuck!" Shigaraki yelled.

Kurogiri started walking, not even to get away from Shigaraki Tomura, but to burn through the adrenaline still running through his veins. He needed to convince himself All Might wasn't about to crush him between his fists. And for his brain to realize that no kid with feverish eyes was about to run through him.

A prouder man would have trouble admitting he ran away because of a child. However, a prouder man wouldn't have lived as long as Kurogiri.

"So... I take it didn't go well?" a deep and horribly familiar voice asked.

Kurogiri froze, a foot still in the air. At the same time, Shigaraki Tomura got eerily quiet.

The TV in the bar was on, and someone was watching them, undoubtedly curious about why seventy villains went out and only two came back.

*This is about to be one awkward conversation.*

Fortunately, Kurogiri wasn't the leader of this league.

"We got crushed," Shigaraki admitted. "I was shot, both arms and both legs... He got Noumu too. Our canon fodder was taken down in a flash... Even the kids were strong..." He raised his head, still trying not to move because of his wounds. "The symbol of Peace, is in perfect health. You were wrong, Sensei," he added with an uncharacteristic since he was addressing the man he adored.

"No, I wasn't," Sensei said, absolute.

"What of our creation?" the Doctor asked, clearly more interesting in his bio engineered weapon than details like bullet wounds. "Did you retrieve Noumu?"

"He was sent flying. And without precise coordinates, no amount of warping could let us find him. I just didn't have the time to look for him."

Not when the place was infested with heroes and cops.

Predictably, the good doctor wasn't comprehensive about the disaster that fell upon them.

"Do you have any idea how much trouble we went to make him as strong as All Might?"

"It's a shame," Sensei commented flatly.
"He wasn't as strong as All Might!" Shigaraki Tomura complained. "A kid managed to fight him. A kid as strong and as fast the Noumu."

"Oh?"

Kurogiri sensed the sudden shift of interest and he preferred to keep Sensei focused on someone with an interesting quirk rather than on their abject failure.

"A first year with a enhancer quirk similar to All Might. He was fast, strong, and managed to survive being hit by Noumu. Also, he might have something to block pain. He was almost at a pro-level."

Sensei sighed.

"Another one who walked into the path created by fools."

He seemed more annoyed that interested, but it was true than simple quirks like strength and speed must not have seemed that interesting compared to the variety of quirks Sensei had access to. Especially since simple quirks were favored by heroes.

"It was just a green runt," Shigaraki commented, not happy to see them interested by the first year.

"..."

"If he hadn't been here..." Shigaraki continued, "We could have killed All Might... That damn brat."

"No use over crying over spilled milk," Sensei gently advised him. "This endeavor was not a complete loss."

Like every time Sensei addressed Shigaraki Tomura, the young man focused his whole attention on him, mesmerized by the presence of his mentor.

Even as he was bleeding on the floor.

"Find stronger troops. Take all the time you need. Get stronger. Because for now, as we can't move freely, we need a symbol like you. And next time, the world will know of the terror you represent."

*****

Somewhere in the United States of America, Doctor Tsubasa was quite perplexed about how this mission had turned into such a fiasco.

*And why was Shigaraki soaked to the bone?*

"Do you really think he is ready to be a good successor? This wasn't a frank suc..."

"We're going to Japan," Sensei said as he got up and left the terminal.

The Doctor blinked, but he was suddenly alone, and no explanation came to mind.

"WHAT?" he still asked to the sudden void Sensei had left.
Hizashi was exhausted, grumpy, and angry. He had a recording in an hour, which he had already delegated to a friend, and he needed Shouta to be OK quickly. Instead, his roommate was finally catching back all his sleep hours in the infirmary, covered in bandages. Internal bleeding, broken ribs, several fractures on his arms, and a concussion.

It could have been worse. It could have been so much worse. He had watched the video feed, for there were cameras everywhere at the USJ in order to monitor the kids, and if Midoriya hadn't intervened when he did, Shouta would be dead, and students would have followed.

"Well, congratulations. You managed to protect all of your students and to get out alive after diving into a pool of villains," Hizashi mocked him.

He would be proud later. Now, he was just annoyed because his friend was hurt, and a thousands of questions were swirling in his head.

When will he wake up? Will he be alright? Will he heal fully or will he have to live with the remnants of his injuries for the rest of his hero career?

But also...

How did they know All Might would be here? The students had been warned last, so it couldn't come from a tweet or something, or the villains wouldn't have the time to plan this whole operation. And they planned it since All Might teaches third years most of the time. First years on their third days were easier to handle than students who had two years to hone their skills. Worse, they managed to hack UA's security system. We weren't warned until Tensei's brother arrived, so they also did something to our communication system...

His attention was distracted as he saw that amidst the sea of white bandages that had become Shouta's face, his eyes were now open, and the sight if it was terrifying. Red, blood-filled eyes which seemed to have seen a truth no mortal was supposed to know, and know the weight of it would haunt them forever.

Relief flooded him at the same time he was dealing with the death glare that was Shouta's default expression. He opened his mouth to tell him how relieved and happy he was.

"IT'S ALIVE!" he screamed instead.

… Close enough.

Katsuki went straight to his room as soon as he got home. His parents were still at work, so he would have peace until they turned on a television. Then, phone calls and screams would happen.

"You want to be a hero, don’t you? Well, time to make hard decisions. Will you let this brat die to
arrest the villains?

The words kept echoing in his mind. During the whole fight against the ugly motherfucker, he had been frustrated to be stuck as the warper's babysitter, but when Hair for days had been taken hostage...

Katsuki let himself fall on his bed, watching his hand. He always had been the biggest fish in the pond until he came to UA, but today had proved he was starting to become average. While Deku and Half and Half was fighting a real villain, a villain who had made fucking All Might paused of all people, he was stuck where he was but it wasn't the worse.

If All Might hadn't arrived, Katsuki would have let the misty fucker go. He knew it wouldn't save Kirishima but he wasn't ready to watch him get tortured to death in front of him.

If All Might hadn't arrived when he did, he would have doomed them all because he didn't find another solution.

He chuckled, frustration eating him alive.

Deku would have found something. The nerd didn't even seemed worried.

Why didn't you threaten to explode your own hostage?

Would Handy McUgly have cared?

It couldn't have hurt.

Some part of him knew why. If he killed anyone with his quirk, it would stick to him all his life. Hero students had been expelled for less and no one had any patience for vigilantes. It was the ultimate dark stain on one's record.

Not that Deku and Half and Half seemed to care. They were lucky their villain had regeneration. Though, with how Deku was hurt, he would probably have a pass for lashing out in self defense.

It was also supposed to be the last confirmation he needed. Somehow, he had been wrong about his quirk, even if he could still picture green flames, the same as Deku's eyes when he was talking about quirks. It pissed him off to think he had invented the memory, but if he had this quirk, he would have used it to keep his arm from being crushed like a toothpaste tub.

Still, he grabbed his phone and called someone from his old band. The only other one who had entered at a hero school, in the west. He had to remember Deku.

He picked up the phone at the second ring.

"Bakugou?"

"Who else?"

"… It's just that I don't think you ever called me."

Why would he?

"It won't take long. I just need to know if you remember what was Deku's quirk."

Beat.
"… Deku ?" he asked in a strange voice. "Izu-chan ?"

"Small, green hair, could never shut up about quirks," Katsuki confirmed.

There was another pause.

"Bakugou, it was so long ago... I just don't remember."

Katsuki sighed.

"Thanks for nothing, Tsubasa."

He hung up.

It wasn't like he really needed a confirmation anyway.

*****

At UA, still in costume, Minoru finished throwing up in the toilet. He thought he had nothing left to give but the fear in his guts disagreed.

People had tried to kill him.

He had almost died.

His legs were shaking when he got up.

Minoru wasn't like Midoriya, Todoroki, or Bakugou. Damn, he wasn't even like Asui. His alter sucked. He wasn't brave. And when someone tried to kill him, he got scared!

I didn't sign up for this.

"Mineta ?" Shouji asked. "Are you OK ?"

He wiped his mouth and got out. Shouji was waiting for him, and so was Asui since it was an unisex bathroom.

He almost cried when he saw they had stayed behind to make sure he was alright.

Even though he wasn't.

*****

Inko draped herself in her dark red shawl, enjoying the comfort of something she had in her possession for a decade, and she took a deep breath.

He is fine.

Izuku was soundly sleeping in his bed, surrounded by All Might posters and figurines, and half
dead to the world. Oh, he could answer when he was talked to and he had acknowledged Inko's presence, but that was all.

Her son was a boy with incredible tenacity and stamina, but once he was stopped, he had to bear the full drawback of his vitality. He didn't catch common cold and cough for a few days, but he stayed in bed for three days with fever. When he overused his quirk, he didn't stop because he was tired like most people, but continued until he was done, then his whole body shut down, forcing him to rest.

Izuku was powerful. She never asked how many quirks he had, but when he used them inside the house, it was natural, as if it was just an extension of his will. She never achieved such level of control and she only had one quirk.

And if he was that tired, it meant it was no small incident.

There were times where she would have given anything for Izuku to have the same quirk as hers. And still to this day, she worried about him being a hero. It meant putting himself in danger. Drawing attention to him.

She checked on him again. He seemed even younger than he really was. He was still in uniform, though his jacket was on the floor and he was holding his tie in his hand. She wanted to wake him up, to talk to him and to make sure he was OK, but it would be selfish when he so obviously needed to rest.

She went back to the living room and she switched on the TV, wanting something to distract her from very dark thoughts.

She missed Hisashi. Inko had never been scared with him at her side.

*****

Despite what his mother affirmed, Izuku wasn't in a coma after a quirk overuse. He was conscious enough to be vaguely aware of his surroundings and greatly grateful that no one tried to interact with him in those moments.

He woke up the next morning, a message on his phone indicating that today's lessons were cancelled, but since he was smelling coffee, he dragged himself out of bed. His mom was already eating breakfast and she smiled when she saw him walking wrapped in his blanket.

Izuku expected her to be frantic and ready to reconsider his whole schooling at UA, but she was quite calm. Maybe because she had the time to process what had happened, maybe because it was early in the morning, so neither of them were truly awake. They were just good at pretending.

In the end, she only wanted to know three things.

**Were you in danger ?**

Yes, he had been. Villains had attacked and they hadn't cared that they were kids.

**Were you a target ?**
No, he had only be a nuisance. They had been after All Might.

**Did you put yourself unnecessarily in danger?**

No, he hadn't. Every time he had taken a risk, if had been strictly necessary.

She looked like she wanted to ask something else, but in the end, refrained to do so, and Izuku didn't comment on it. She simply explained she had to go to work, though she could stay in he wanted.

He told her he was alright and not to worry about him.

She asked he didn't spend the day alone, so he called Nagisa, who told him to come at her place this afternoon.

****

An emergency meeting had been programmed to talk about what happened at the USJ and no one expected to see Aizawa-kun here, and Toshinori was no exception. His colleague was covered in bandages, moved like a mummy, actually looked like a mummy, and nothing could explain how he was not collapsing, except maybe sheer will.

Next to him, Present Mic looked desperate but resigned to his fate.

To make things worse, Tsukauchi didn't have good news.

"Shigaraki Tomura had a quirk that allows him to decay anything he touched. However, he isn't on the record dedicated to men between twenty and thirty years old. The same can be said about Kurogiri. They live in the shadows, undeclared."

"So we don't know anything about them," Vlad King summarized.

Snipe sighed: "We have to act fast or as soon as he is healed, we will have to face him again."

Shigaraki Tomura. A man who had led a team of villains into UA to attack All Might himself.

"The leader..." Toshinori accidentally said out loud.

"What it is?" Nedzu asked.

"No sane people would take so much risks. As soon as I arrived, he started to taunt me. He even revealed the noumu's abilities, and I have the impression he was showing off. And when things turned for the worst for him, he became hysterical."

*And Young Midoriya's mere presence seemed to have riled him up.*

Oh God, Young Midoriya. What was left of his stomach dropped every time he thought about what had almost happened. Not only had he been almost killed, but the worse was that his intervention had been necessary. If he hadn't jumped in, Aizawa-kun would probably be dead.

Toshinori had watched the videos of the USJ and this time, he didn't see All for One, but only a terrified child. A child who had almost died again and again but who had kept fighting, despite a
broken arm.

Most people thought adrenaline shut off the pain. It was a lie. Fear of death was a much stronger motivator. When to stop meant to die, everything became secondary. You just pushed through the pain, through the fear, and went at every obstacle in front of you.

Toshinori remembered it vividly.

"Still, he would have to be insane to reveal everything about his trump card," Nedzu declared, his voice clearing Toshinori's memories.

The more he thought about Shigaraki Tomura, and the more uncomfortable he was. He had met a lot of people. Villains usually didn't wake up one morning and decided to be evil. They just stopped abiding by the rules until hurting people was worth it in order to attain their goals.

But Shigaraki was the opposite.

"He is a manchild who think he is entitled to everything he wants," he thought out loud.

"Children usually don't decide to murder a bunch of people," Vlad King said.

"He probably didn't assist to the quirk lessons when he was a child," Midnight noticed.

She would know.

Those lessons were about helping children controlling their quirks but also to make them understand that everyone was equal despite what quirk they could have.

Not that Toshinori ever assisted to one.

"It's concerning to see those people following what amount to a child," Tsukauchi-kun noticed. "Criminals have a rough life because of the symbol of the peace. And until now, this is the first time in decades villains formed a league of their own."

"And children were targeted," Snipe added.

Toshinori gulped down. They could have been killed, but they didn't even have a licence to hide behind so they could use their full strength. Since they were told since birth that using their quirk was illegal, and since the hero system had no patience for Vigilante, this was a miracle they had been able to fight efficiently.

Though, if Young Todoroki and Young Midoriya had seriously injured anyone, they would have never faced the consequences.

_A villain broke his neck when he was punched with super strength? I deeply regret it, but as I was fighting to protect my students and my colleagues and I had to use my full power. Indeed, it's a shame._

_A villain was impaled by an ice spear? Yes, I can confirm that Aizawa used Young Todoroki's remains of his escape as an unconventional weapon. He truly had no choice._

It was probably a good thing Young Bakugou had been busy securing Black Mist. It was hard to explain away wounds provoked by explosions.
Nagisa had been strangely enthusiastic at the idea of letting him spend the afternoon at her house. Not that they didn't spend time together, but... they just did, simply hanging out, doing their own activities in the same room. And Nagisa was always stoic about it.

He should have smelled the trap. He should have sense the abyss opening under his feet, but even he couldn't imagine the depths of such a betrayal. But he had willingly walked into the spider's den, and once he did, it was too late to escape.

Three spider shaped toddlers dropped the diverse sharpies, tablets, and other toys they were holding when they saw him arrive and Nagisa closed the door behind Izuku before he had the time to flee.

"I might have found a new quirk for you," she whispered into her ear as if there weren't three children climbing on the wall to get closer to Izuku. "An electrical one."

*Quirk... No, shameless bribe.*

"Children," Izuku answered.

He even pointed in case she didn't notice them.

"They are my nephews and niece. Actually, they are my cousin's children, but that's not important. What is important is that I have a paper to finish and I need help."

Izuku was an only child. He had no little cousins either, nothing that could have prepared him to deal with tiny humans, or anything close to it.

"I survived death, and your cousins are going to finish me."

"Don't be dramatic, Bug. Also, can you sign?"

Izuku could sign but his skills were rusty. It had been a secondary language all around the world since quirks had appeared and people with mutations did not always have vocal cords or jaws which agreed with oral language.

The three little tornadoes where named Hisano, Itsuku, and Rin. Hisano never actually walked on the floor while Izuku was here, and was incredibly enthusiast about everything, which was adorable. Itsuku and Rin were brother and sister, Itsuku a bright little girl who kept asking, well signing, questions to Izuku, and Rin, a year older than the others at eight years old, was extremely dignified for what was essentially a baby. Also, he was the one who had the less spiderish features, with only a few more eyes than usual on his face.

There was some awkward moments, like when Itsuku asked if Izuku was Nagisa's boyfriend, and they both almost had a heart attack. Also, the teasing about Izuku's clothes was relentless, especially as every Shirubakumo seemed to be wearing Fashion Week worthy outfits.

The other things that gave trouble to Izuku was the signing in itself. He used to speak it fluently in America, but had lost some of his skills since he was back in Japan. It was complicated by the fact that even if the sign language they were talking was supposed to be universal, like every language, there was an accent, and in some cases, words that were probably invented, and Izuku couldn't exactly read their face to understand them better. Of course, the advantage was that he caught back
a lot of skills in one afternoon.

The kids also realized that, contrary to almost anyone in their family, Izuku couldn't see what they were doing behind his back. Chaos ensued.

But the providence smiled at him when he asked who were their favorite heroes and they all answered Gang Orca. Nagisa could never have predicted the maelstrom of squee it would produce, and she quickly sought asylum on the ceiling while movies were watched, games were played, and furious conversations about how great Gang Orca were talked.

Izuku also shamelessly took advantage of it. Since he was moving quickly through the house, he frequently got stuck in the webs and he only had to call for help for three tiny heroes to save him. And when he took a quick nap on the couch while he thought they were distracted by an All Might movie, he couldn't even blame them for webbing him.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for all the kudos, comments and bookmarks.
As always, don't hesitate to leave a comment. I love to know what you think.
Life had a way to continue without a care in the world, and this had always been strangely appeasing to Izuku.

Two days ago, his class had been attacked by villains. A friend had been taken hostage. One of his teacher had been gravely hurt. But as he was waiting for his train to reach the station ten minutes away from his high school, he noticed how nothing had changed despite all those residual emotions he carried within him. Same people, same places, and nothing had changed, there was no groundbreaking revelation.

Life went on. Always.

It was the same when Izuku had left home with his mother. He used to be scared, clinging to his mom's leg, but he had slowly realized that what he was feeling wasn't affecting the outside world. It wasn't because he was scared that the world was scary.

He arrived at UA early for once, but he quickly realized he could never compete with his class representative.

"MIDORIYA !" Iida screamed at full lungs as he ran at him. "Where were you ? You disappeared and you're the only one who didn't give a phone number for the group class !"

Izuku just looked at him.

Students were starting to arrive and circling around them to avoid the two teenagers, and especially Iida waving his arms. He was getting more and more frantic.

"Kirishima told us you were hurt during the attack but you left the school before Uraraka and I could see you ! Did you rest ? Did you drink and eat enough ? Are you still hurt ?"

If Izuku didn't talk soon enough, Iida would definitely turn into a mother hen, but he was at loss for words. He had never considered his friends would wait for him. Would worry about him. He had just learned from Detective Tsukauchi that everyone would be fine, and he didn't search for more.

*What is wrong with me ?*

*And what did I do to deserve good people like them worrying about me ?*

"Why are you not talking ?"

"… I am sorry."

Iida froze. Or pull up. Anyway, it was impressing with how agitated he was before.

"I didn't mean to make you worry. I should have thought about it. I'm sorry I didn't reach out."

Tears were welling up, and it was ridiculous because he didn't know if he was feeling guilty not to have thought about others or happy because damn, someone cared about his well-being.
If he thought Iida was concerned before, he quickly realized he had seen nothing until his friend saw him tearing up. Iida was ready to drag him to Recovery Girl, convinced something was wrong.

Uraraka found them still on the pathway leading to their building, and she interrupted Iida's speech and Izuku's attempts to tell he was fine, really.

"Where were you ?" Uraraka asked, a hand on his shoulder. "We waited for you ! We were worried !"

Iida yelped as Izuku hold back his tears again.

They went to class together, Iida absolutely horrified at the idea of them being late, but also categorically refusing for them to run in the hallways. For the first time in his life, he didn't arrive at least ten minute early to class, but he thankfully managed to survive this crushing failure.

Todoroki was already here, so it seemed like a good time to talk to him. The least he could do was thanking him because, if not for his intervention, Izuku would still be holding hand with the noumu.

He was stopped in his tracks by Bakugou's death glare. Sitting at his desk, he was looking at Izuku like he wanted to pierce a hole through his head without moving. He didn't even say anything, the moody explosions at least familiar. Instead, he looked like he was barely containing a formidable wave of irritation, even though Izuku had done nothing.

Technically, he knew that it was nothing out of the ordinary for Kacchan's . But in his heart, he knew there was no way he would accept to turn his back on his former childhood friend, even to cross the classroom and to talk to Todoroki. Survival instinct was difficult to contradict.

So he walked to his desk, very carefully circling him like one would do confronted to a wild animal, and sat at the desk behind him.

"So..." he started, taking example on the rest of his classmates, "What happened is crazy, isn't it ?"

Bakugou didn't turn but he saw his shoulders tense.

"What makes you fucking think I want to talk to you ?" he growled.

Izuku smiled.

"Aren't you talking to me right now ?"

Bakugou's hand slammed on the desk, startling Izuku. Violence was cloaking him and he looked like he wanted nothing more that to use his quirk and to blow off some steam.

Maybe the stress of the attack is making him even more aggressive than usual.

Aizawa-Sensei's arrival, covered in bandage and looking like he should have stayed in bed for the rest of the month, provoked a horrifying distraction.

The Detective said he would be fine?! Recovery Girl's quirk fixed me, why didn't it do the same to him ? And who authorized this man to leave his bed ? Why isn't sedated for his own good ?

But Aizawa-Sensei had no concerns for petty details like grievous injuries, including two arms in casts and at least a concussion : "Don't concern yourself about my health, for your fight is far from over."
Izuku tensed.

Behind him, Mineta started to freak out, saying out loud what everyone immediately thought.

"More villains ?"

"UA's Sport Festival is fast approaching," Aizawa-Sensei said instead.

A wave of relief swept though the class. Something ordinary and not life-threatening. Finally.

Jirou raised her hand, not tricked by it.

"We were just attacked. Should we really maintain the event ?"

"It's necessary to demonstrate UA's crisis management protocols are sound. That's apparently the logic behind it."

Izuku tilted his head. This wording... Was Aizawa-Sensei disapproving of this decision and now just relaying what the Principal wanted to do ?

"But are we safe ?" Jirou insisted.

"Compared to the past five years, there will be five times the police presence," Aizawa assured. "Anyhow, the Sport Festival is the greatest opportunity you will ever get."

*If I am allowed to participate...*

"It's not an event which can be cancelled over a few villains."

It was a whole league of them.

"The nation's top heroes will be watching, so it means there will be there as scoots," Yaoyorozu reminded the class. "How do you think we will obtain our internships ?"

Everyone nodded as if it was obvious, while Izuku slowly realized that if he wanted an internship, he needed an offer, and to have an offer, he needed to attend the Sport Festival and to be relatively amazing enough to interest the pro heroes.

While not showing the full extent of his quirks, as his mother wanted.

He slowly facepalmed, suddenly incredibly tired.

Should he limit himself to three quirks ? But people in UA already knew he was among the best of his class. Wouldn't it be weird for him to hold back now ? Last time he did that, he was almost expelled. Well, at least threatened about it...

"If you're hoping to become a hero, this is an event you can't miss."

The last sentence provoked a surge of excitement, everyone talking and thinking about the future, except for Izuku who was dealing with what felt like an anvil on his chest. Not that he didn't deserve it. He didn't ask for his mother's permission to attend UA, it was normal that he dealt with the consequences.

He was about to left for lunch with the others when Aizawa-Sensei called him, asking for some of his time. This seemed to be the signal for everyone fleeing the classroom.
Izuku didn't have the memory of doing anything wrong, but he still approached Aizawa-Sensei's desk carefully. Now that he was closer, he could see how rigid and careful the man was when he was moving. Definitely still in pain.

"How are you ?" the teacher asked.

Izuku tilted his head, not understanding.

"… Fine ?"

His answer didn't convinced the mummified ninja.

"Are you still hurt ? Are you stressed ? Any nightmares ? Do you feel the need to talk to someone about what happened ?"

Ah.

"I am not traumatized. Don't worry about me."

Well, it was nice that Aizawa-Sensei cared. Though it was strange that he had singled out Izuku when everyone had been in danger.

His teacher nodded, carefully, and continued. Izuku didn't manage to read his body language.

"You survived an extremely stressful situation. If you don't feel fine later, I would like you to talk to someone. Any teachers, one of UA's specialists, or anyone. It's important not to hold in those things."

Izuku nodded even though he knew he wouldn't.

"I also meant to talk about what you did at the USJ. It was reckless. You barged into a fight and you lost track of your classmates, so Asui and Mineta couldn't leave and tried to intervene to help you."

"I know I shouldn't have left Asui and Mineta behind but you were about to be killed," Izuku said in a tone that clearly indicated he would do it again.

Though he would tell Asui and Mineta to get away first.

Aizawa-Sensei stared at him: "Your first priority should have been to stay safe. You. I am aware of the risks of my profession. Actually, you should never have approached the Plaza when you realized villains were still here. Instead, you intervened in an explosive situation, you almost got yourself killed, and..." Aizawa-Sensei paused. "You were hurt."

Izuku understood what he was saying. Himself wouldn't have been happy if Asui had been injured trying to rescue him.

But it wasn't like he took a conscious decision at the time. And he would probably do it again.

He was looking at his shoes when Aizawa-Sensei talked again.

"But you did manage to neutralize three of the leading villains of the attacks. And I would be dead without you. Thank you."

Izuku looked up and couldn't help a smile.
"Oh, and did you know Todoroki before ?" Aizawa-Sensei suddenly asked.

No, but he spent several days glaring at me and he is generally intimidating.

"No, why ?" Izuku said instead.

"You worked well together. It's unusual for people who don't know each other. Which reminds me : your quirk is impressive but what are the side effects ? I know you had a nosebleed."

"It's rare, but I use..." too many of my quirks at once,"... too much power for too long, "I have headaches who keep getting worse and worse."

"And why isn't it in your file ? The teachers are supposed to know that."

"..."

Oh crap.

After one well-deserved but still mortifying nagging about the importance of communicating, Izuku managed to get closer to the door, to the exit, and to freedom, but Aizawa-Sensei wasn't finished and dropped one last bombshell before he managed to escape.

"And good luck for your speech," he added, and despite all the bandages on his face, Izuku could see his Cheshire grin.

"What speech ?" he asked, already knowing he wouldn't like the answer.

"For the Sport Festival. You are the number 1 of the entrance exam, aren't you ?"

Oh.

That speech. The one he had completely forgotten about.

*****

Iida and Uraraka were waiting for him, not quite listening to the door but Uraraka was close to. Izuku didn't even let them the time to open their mouths. He needed to evacuate his worries and those poor unfortunate souls were at the wrong place at the wrong time.

"I have a speech to give at the Sport Festival. On live television. In front of the whole country."

The idea of talking in front of so many people made him shudder.

Uraraka blinked at him, surprised.

"Well, we knew that. You had the best score."

"Why is that a surprise for you ?" Iida asked, genuinely puzzled.

"I forgot," Izuku admitted.
"How ?"

Because when I passed the exam, I wasn't even sure my mother would allow me to stay in the hero course. And when I learned I passed, I was so stressed about it, then so relieved when she agreed, that everything else fled my mind. And nothing reminded me of it.

But fortunately, Iida had his back. A little too much, though.

"Don't worry ! We can help you ! With what happened to the USJ, you should give a message of peace and calm ! People have to know we weren't shaken by the nefarious deeds of those villains ! You should also talk about fair play ! And you have to project confidence ! And speak about the heroic values !"

Uraraka smiled at Iida, deadpan : "Yes, but we also need time actually participate in the Sport Festival, Iida."

Something bright, his quirk warned him. All Might was approaching.

"He just had to find a concise message that sums up all of this," Iida continued.

"I will work on that," Izuku promised, though he had no idea how.

And then he turned towards the glow he could feel, just a moment before the Symbol of Peace arrived.

"Young Midoriya ?" All Might called, half hidden behind a wall, and startling Uraraka and Iida.

Izuku had noticed he was quite silent for someone of his size. He wondered if he trained to be so sneaky.

"Can we eat lunch together ?"

Silence echoed in the hallway.

Ultimately, Izuku abandoned Uraraka and Iida without too many regret. They were his friends, they had to understand he would always be a fanboy first. Even though this was probably going to be another conversation to ask how he was doing. But still, he would take anything.

*****

"Everything is alright with your teacher ?" All Might asked, probably curious about why Izuku had been delayed.

"He wanted to thank me for saving his life. And he told me to never do it again."

This made All Might laugh, not the booming sound Izuku was used to hear in videos when his favorite hero was about to fearlessly fight villains, but a chuckle.

"Well, let's hope you're not placed in this situation before you graduate."

All Might led him to a room on the upper floors, and Izuku sat on a chair while the number 1 hero took the couch, if only to accommodate his size. Izuku noticed he didn't stop using his quirk, but he
didn't comment on it.

"What you did at the USJ was incredible, Young Midoriya. You managed to delay quite a fearsome opponent."

"I had help. But thank you."

He grabbed the bento made by the school and opened it. All Might did the same with his, the portion looking average, and definitely not the meal someone that tall and large should have.

"You handled the villains well. Do you have combat training?"

"No. Though I trained when I was little, but it was more of an activity."

"Oh, you seem quite advanced, still."

"When I was in middle school, I trained at least three hours a day. More on week-ends."

All Might looked at him strangely, not realizing that it was usual for Izuku to obsess about things:
"You must be determined to become the best."

Izuku laughed at the idea.

"It was never like that. I just really like using my quirk. It's easy to train when you consider it as a game."

His mother had learned early that when he went out playing, it was in a discreet location where he could have his fun.

"... A game?" All Might repeated.

Izuku's face must have gloomed over because All Might immediately smiled, putting him at ease.

"No, don't worry. Being a hero is about responsibilities, but what's the point when you don't enjoy what you do?"

Izuku smiled. It was good to hear from All Might that wanting to be a hero not only by altruism could be good.

They started eating, Lunch Rush cooking always up to the task.

At least, until All Might started talking again, as if he was commenting on the weather: "I am just curious about your quirk and your training because it's so similar to mine: One for All."

It came so out of the blue that Izuku just kept chewing, oblivious to how he was just given the secret every fan coveted after. His brain had prioritized the rice.

"My quirk didn't appear with me, you see, but it was passed down to me, like a torch of eternal fire. I inherited the ability to transfer power."

_Transfer?_

But All Might didn't let him take a break to assimilate what he had just heard.

"A power transferred from hero to hero. The first person cultivates the power and then passes it to another. The next refines it and passes it on again. In this way, those crying out to be saved and
those with brave true harts kink to form a crystalline network !"

WHAT ?

Several line of thoughts crashed inside Izuku's head in one massive mental trainwreck.

Is that similar to my quirk ?

Is it possible for me to actually transfer Transfer ? But when I do use to take or give a quirk, I am always at the center if the maneuver.

How do the candidates for the quirks avoid brain damages while I have to monitor myself and everyone wanting to get rid of a quirk ?

Does All Might have several quirks ? Like me ?

But most importantly...

"WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT ?"

Izuku clamped his hands on his mouth far too late, but his outburst perfectly illustrated why he shouldn't be in the known.

"Isn't that a secret ? You've been hiding your quirk from everyone for years !"

All Might handwaved his concerns.

"I am not worried. If you ever tell anyone about it, I will just pretend to be surprised. It's your word against mine."

The word of the Symbol of Peace compared to a nobody's. Well, he has a point.

"But to answer your question... I am telling you this because I am about to ask you if there is something you want to tell me. About yourself. About your quirk."

Izuku's heart dropped in his chest.

"Because it's so similar of mine, even though One for All results from the experience of eight generations of heroes."

The only thing that kept Izuku from turning into a fumbling mess was All Might's eyes. Intense, but no judgement, just calm and patience.

Actions had consequences, and by not taking the adequate precautions, Izuku had brought this on himself. His mother had warned him, he had spent all his life hiding what he could do, and once at UA, he had thrown away all caution because he was having fun, and simply hoped everything would be fine anyway.

Reality caught back to him.

"Young Midoriya ?"

Don't do it.

It's All Might.
So what? He had the perfect quirk. How could he understand the experience of someone with a villainous quirk? How do you know he isn't prejudiced? You don't know anything about him, just what he is showing.

But if he was asking, it was because he had noticed something was wrong with how he fought the noumu. He did fight someone supposed to affront All Might, and he had lost in strength and speed after Izuku had taken his quirks.

_Curse you, Shigaraki Tomura, for yelling at All Might your whole plan and how strong the noumu was! What kind of moron does that?

It was like an anvil had been dropped on his chest. He could barely breathe.

_Am I really going to do this?

"Young Midoriya?" All Might called again while waving a hand in front of his face.

The sudden movement right next to him almost made Izuku jump in his chair.

"I lied to you. The first time we met. I'm sorry," he blurted out, ending his dilemma.

All Might didn't get angry or disappointed about it, though Izuku knew he at least wouldn't get mad about that. He simply waited for him to continue.

_A secret for a secret, especially since you can't hide yours anymore.

"When I recognized you at Furano, I didn't actually recognized you. I recognized your quirk. I can sense quirks when they are used."

All Might leaned forward, and this time, the calm he affected was disturbed. Izuku was so tensed he could almost feel any disturbance in All Might's emotional balance.

"So, you can feel quirks?"

If only it was so precise.

"It's more a secondary ability, and I need to pay attention most of the time. But I did notice your quirk was incredibly powerful, and you seem to be always using it, so after seeing you at one of your intervention, I can now sense you if you're around."

"… Well, that's certainly useful," All Might said carefully. "Is that all?"

_You know it isn't or you wouldn't have called me here.

"Young Midoriya, you can trust me."

"Is it true?" Izuku asked carefully. "Will you keep that secret?"

_Don't betray me.

All Might marked a pause, before he said the two words Izuku wanted to hear: "I promise."

The hesitation wasn't a problem. It meant he took the promise seriously. Ultimately, that was all Izuku needed. Someone of trust assuring him he would understand the gravity of what he was about to say.
"My quirk is named Transfer. I have the ability to take and give any quirk. The reason why it has a similar feel to your quirk is because I have several quirks, donated to me."

All Might didn't react. He didn't move, he barely breathe. The only sign he hadn't completely frozen was the quick glance towards his phone, still on the table.

"Donated?" he finally asked, just a little before Izuku died from sheer stress.

"Well, I ask people who don't use their quirks. The best are those whose quirks are not suited to their bodies, so really, we both get something from it."

"So you can borrow quirks for a time, then give them back," the number 1 hero wrongly summarized.

"… I can but I don't function like that. When someone gives me a quirk, it's supposed to stay with me. It becomes mine. I will give them back if I am asked to, always, but..." It hurt. "I don't like getting attached to a quirk to give it back afterwards."

It wasn't going well. All Might's face was still blank.

"I understand that this quirk could... not be correctly perceived?" All Might started. "But it's not like you ever took a quirk without permission."

"What if I did?"

Izuku got into details about what happened with the noumu. The words crashed into each other as he tried to explain too quickly, how

All Might abandoned his meal and rose. So close, he was larger than life.

Izuku tensed up when he got up.

He tensed up even more when All Might hugged him, not expecting it.

"Normal rules don't apply in life-or-death situations. You didn't have a choice, and by doing so, you saved your life, probably the lives of your comrades, and protected me."

He let Izuku go and smiled. Not the patented All Might smile, but this one seemed more genuine.

"You owe to no one the absolute truth about your quirk," he assured Izuku. "I have no doubts you can and that, if you continue, you will be a great hero. And if you ever need help, or need to talk, you can count on me."

He didn't say it the usual way, to be polite, to be a passing reassurance in his life.

He said it like he meant it. Like he was actually proposing to help him if he ever felt the need, and that was priceless.

All Might hugged him again as he cried. This time, he didn't tense up.

*****
After he calmed down and eat a little more, Izuku realized he had one way to end one of his current predicament.

All Might froze like a rabbit being observed by an eagle as Izuku focused entirely on him.

"You made many speeches..."

All Might swallowed the piece of tuna he had been nibbling at.

"Well, I guess."

"That wasn't a question. I listened to all your speeches, be they in Japanese or in English."

All Might's darkened eyes widened comically, but he didn't pause on the fact Izuku was an ultimate fanboy, which was a good thing for the both of them.

"Do you have any advice for the one I am supposed to give for the Sport Festival?"

The pro hero smiled.

"I will tell you something that I took years to realize... No, no need to take a notebook. Where did you even keep it?"

Izuku sadly put his notebook away.

All Might leaned forward, deadly serious.

"Keep. It. Short," the number 1 hero declared with some urgency in his voice.

*****

Toshinori deactivated One for All and a wave of relief swept through his whole body as he stopped straining himself. He walked to the side of the room and knocked two times once he was sure Young Midoriya was far enough. Tsukauchi-kun, who had been waiting and listening in the other room, knocked back. He was suppose text if he heard any lie, and Toshinori had been relieved as his phone stayed silent.

There were several rooms like this one were the wall were especially thin. Toshinori was a little afraid to ask Nedzu why but not enough not to use them.

He joined the police officer with a lie detector quirk. Tsukauchi-kun was sitting next to the wall, and looked a little dazzled. Toshinori could understand. It wasn't like he ever told him about the nature of One for All.

"It's true?" he asked even though he had to know the answer to his question.

Toshinori still nodded.

"Well, this explains why you suddenly decided to start teaching."

"Thank you."
"Don't. I have to admit I am not entirely comfortable with what we just did."

Neither was All Might. He not only asked a police officer to use his quirk without a licence, but he had manipulated a student in order to reveal something extremely personal and stressful. Not his proudest moment, and his responsibility.

"I asked you as a favor, so it's my burden to bear."

Telling him about One for All was a calculated risk. If Young Midoriya had been linked to All for One, he either already knew, or he either wouldn't be able to tell the fiend something new anyway. Or else, Toshinori could just ask him not to tell anyone, and deny until his dying breath if he ever slipped up.

But at the end, he believed him. If he had been sent by All for One, he wouldn't have revealed anything about his quirk. He wouldn't have been so hurt during the attack, and he wouldn't have been so terrified at the idea of exposing himself of Toshinori's judgement.

His instinct had seen something reminded him of All for One, but it was only the quirk, and he had never felt any animosity in Young Midoriya. Actually, he was quite attaching. Now that he had determined there was no risk, he just had to do his best to guide him of the road to become a great hero.

He couldn't help a smile.

*Though, I am not telling the kid one of his ancestors might be Satan reincarnated.* With a little luck, he could even be a descendant of the first One for All user. And if he wasn't, his ancestry had no bearings on who Young Midoriya was.

"Are you considering him as a potential successor?" Tsukauchi-kun asked, an eyebrow raised.

"No."

*****

From his desk, Izuku smiled at Kirishima, who waved at him. After lunch, he had seen him talking to Aizawa-Sensei, so he probably had the same talk. The two students who had been hurt. It was a relief to know Izuku wasn't the only one he was worried about.

The last class of the day was Present Mic's, and Izuku hence spent all this time doing something else, since he wasn't exactly challenged by a high school level English class, and the fact he could hear his teacher's quirk slipping when he was talking, it achieved to completely distract him.

It was hard to stay focused when he was surrounded by all those wonderful quirks, and his conversation with All Might sooner didn't arrange anything. The class didn't end soon enough, but once it did, he was out of his chair in a heartbeat.

He meant to take this occasion to talk to Todoroki because he still had to actually thank him, but Uraraka's exclamation and the crowd of people in front of their class distracted him. It was as if all the first years, and not only 1-B, had regrouped in front of their door.

"What do they want?" Mineta asked, unsure about the whole situation.

Near the exit, Uraraka had stopped and was slowly approaching Tsuyu and Hakagure.
"What do you think, moron?" Kacchan answered with his usual tact. "We are the class who survived a villain attack. They came to check out the competition. Move along, extras!"

And there goes our popularity with the other classes.

And as if on cue, a kid from Gen Ed with purple hair and dark circles under his eyes got to the front of the crowd, holding himself as if he didn't have a care in the world.

"It's true we came to get a look but you sure are something. Are all the kids in the hero course like you?" he asked Kacchan.

Izuku couldn't see Kacchan's face but his shoulders were almost low. Not about to explode.

"I have to say I am a little disillusioned if this is what you're offering," the purple-haired kid continued. "But it's not a problem for us who didn't make it to the hero course. If you take the Sport Festival so lightly, it will make it easier for us to shine and to be transferred into the hero course. And the reverse is true. This will be the perfect chance to knock you off your pedestals."

Izuku contained a surge of annoyance at those last words.

"Consider this as a declaration of war," he finished.

Izuku's fist clenched on its own. He was starting to get tired to constantly have to fight to stay in this course.

Calm down.

You're just tired with all that happened today.

"Hey! I am from class B next door!" an excited boy with white hair and markings around his eyes said. "I heard you fought some villains and I wanted to find more... but all I see are arrogant bastard! Don't look down on the rest of us just because you stopped a few villain."

The world became glacial.

"Arrogant?" Izuku repeated, and his voice had lost all intonation.

Iida glanced at him, frowning. Sensing how annoyed Izuku was, but the kid with marks around his eyes didn't realize it.

"What I am saying is that you better not make fool of the hero course at this thing."

Izuku walked past Kacchan, and the rest of the students, extremely calm.

Students in the crowd slightly moved away, probably because he didn't stop and walked into a straight line until he reached the boy who had just talked.

"What?" he hesitated in front how Izuku's sudden coldness. "Did I say something you disagree with?"

"Only something that I don't quite understand."

None of this was about defending Kacchan. It wasn't as if he needed anyone to protect him. But the sheer stupidity of what was just said was mind-blowing.

"People tried to kill us," Izuku articulated slowly. "We had to fight to stay alive. Our teachers were
hurt as they fought to protect us. Thirteen had their own quirk turned against them. Aizawa-Sensei was tortured."

Not for information. Not for a reason which could explain the violence unleashed. But just because the villains could.

"One of the villains grabbed me. Broke my arm like a toothpick," he continued without ever raising his voice. "Without Todoroki, Kacchan and Kirishima, I would be dead. Because make no mistake, All Might might have been the target but the villains were willing to take care of us instead since he wasn't here."

The silence was deafening, no one daring to complain anymore. But they didn't matter to Izuku.

The only one who mattered was the boy in front of him.

"So please, tell me. How are we arrogant?"

The boy from 1-B didn't have an answer to that.

Izuku wasn't surprised.

"Alright, alright," Present Mic intervened. "That's enough gawking for today. Don't you have somewhere to be at this hour?"

The crowd started to spread out.

The boy whom Izuku was still watching seemed puzzled by Present Mic's frozen, and slightly shook his head. Until now, Izuku hadn't realized how still he was. He took a step backwards, was about to say something, but finally just left.

"A little worked up, aren't you?" Present Mic smiled next to izuku.

The teenager adjusted his yellow backpack.

"Only annoyed. I don't know, I expected more support from fellow hero students. They are targets for villains too."

Present Mic sighed.

"It can't be helped. You are all in competition with each other, and it will get worse when you graduate. Right now, can you imagine how many Gen Ed students are looking at you hoping to take your place?"

That was no excuse. They were heroes in training. They were supposed to be the good guys. Instead, there was only needless hostility and a constant need to prove they belonged. Competition could be friendly, and instead, there was only pettiness.

"Do they really have to take the place of a student to integrate the hero course?" Izuku finally asked.

"Who knows?" Present Mic grinned, the expression positively diabolical.

But at least, it made Izuku smile.

And in the end, it didn't even matter. Izuku had managed to integrate UA and no one would kick him out.
Toshinori was on his knees, knowing he was about to die, killed by a monster who had been alive for more than one hundred years.

One for All was still trying to spread through him, to give him the force to at least stand, but Toshinori's own body was too weak to exploit it. His strength had left him as he was hurting from a thousands wounds, broken, and helpless.

"Thank you for such a wonderful comedy," All for One said, a smile on his lips as if he was amused by the efforts exerted by the One for All user.

While red lightning was dancing all around him.

All for One raised his hand and brought the end in its absolute certainty while All Might was too weak to prevent it.

Toshinori woke up in his bed, his fists clenched, air blocked in his breath. He stayed between the dream that was still clutching him and the reality of his safe home, slowly convincing himself that he wasn't about to die even though the adrenaline in his system didn't quite agree.

He sat up and passed a hand though his air, focusing on his lungs. His side hurt, which was usual with such vivid memories, even the fabricated ones.

Nightmares were also usual. Toshinori had seen so much. He had made so many mistakes, failed to save so many people. He could usually live with that, reminding himself that he had saved more, and made more right decisions. But his subconscious didn't always care about that.

Maybe this time, it was different. Maybe it was provoked by guilt. He had tricked a kid into telling some deeply personal information about himself, using his literal hero worship to his advantage.

He had been partly right, but it still didn't feel right.

Toshinori got out of bed and dragged himself to the kitchen. His throat was parched, and he had a class with the Third Years in several hours. He needed to go back to sleep if he hoped to keep up with almost-heroes.

They were all very good. Most of them had field experience, they mastered their quirk almost perfectly, and all of them knew their motivations, and they would be great addition to the hero force. And this made his choice so much harder.

Being strong wasn't enough to inherit One for All. There was something else. A powerful quirk was almost secondary, a good physical form was a requirement, but it went beyond. A motivation. An ideal.

At least, none of them will need to fight All for One.

His thoughts were interrupted when he tripped on something and the Symbol of Peace suddenly
had to fight against the traitorous gravity. A fight he won, of course, for All Might never lost.

His house was warm and a mess, though a generally organized one. That was one of his constant dilemma: did he really need that much space? He lived alone, didn't have any family to invite, and he didn't have a housekeeper that could help him manage all the space. But now, he was used to his oversized nest and the idea of moving out just tired him out.

Maybe he needed a pet.

Except he wasn't home enough to keep an animal fed.

He felt a sharp pain in his lungs, and this time, it wasn't brought by a memory. He rushed to the sink. Blood splattered the chromed surface.

He sat as soon as he could, a bottle of Coke in his hand, and feeling feverish. He was getting more and more tired as days passed.

One of the advantage of teaching was that it had least limited his use of One for All to the classes, to his physician's relief. If he could have, the good doctor would have prevented Toshinori to ever use his quirk again because of the strain it put on his body.

A strain more and more intense as days passed, if he had to be honest.

*****

Izuku was living in an intense state of regret ever since he had came home, took a nap, and realized he had revealed his secret to the most popular man of the country.

All Might had been perfect. He had told him everything he wanted to hear.

But things changed, and it wasn't like they were equals. If All Might revealed his secret with even a hint of disapproval, Izuku's career was at risk before it started. While if Izuku revealed anything about One for All, he would get categorized as crazy or as bitter. They weren't on an equal footing.

He had spent the whole week-end obsessively training, and had even beaten his previous speed record by pretending he was running away from his problems. He didn't dare to talk to his mother about what happened. He didn't even brought up the Sport Festival, even though it was only a week away.

But when he went back to school on Monday, the doors let him pass, his classmates didn't ran away to save their quirks or something, and when he saw All Might incognito, he smiled at him, warmth reaching his eyes, which confirmed him that maybe, just maybe, Izuku worried too much. Maybe.

Their schedule had been freed during the afternoon. They had normal classes in the morning, but after lunch, they either had the possibility to train their quirks with Cementos, Midnight, and Snipe, or they could use the free time to do as they wished. Officially, it seemed to be to accommodate people with special quirks who had what they needed at home, but Izuku was semi-convinced that it was because Aizawa-Sensei wasn't in shape to train them.
People from every classes were invited but almost none of them came, which somewhat confirmed his theory.

Neither did Izuku, at least for the first two days, until his mom had enough and reminded him how excited he had been at the idea of making friends, and how socializing at school might be a more successful approach than 'hiding in deserted places playing with your quirks'.

So, on Wednesday, he stayed and followed the rest of the group to Ground Beta, Uraraka and Iida overjoyed that he had decided to join them.

His plan of staying near his two friends failed before it had the time to begin. First, Iida's training consisted in running everywhere, and though he could have followed him, Izuku didn't quite wanted to shadow him. Second, he had completely underestimated how serious Uraraka was when it came to training. Talking to her while she was making rocks float wasn't an option.

Also, she was so focused her eyes were terrifying, so Izuku chose a nice spot, slightly elevated, definitely far away from everyone, and he put on his phone a playlist of special moves he wanted to try.

From his elevated vantage, he could see the others, but this time, it wasn't the quirks that were drawing his attention. Not only the quirks. Even with Ashido and Kaminari, who were playing around, there was a new intensity in the way they were using their quirks. The USJ accident had left its mark.

He understood, of course. Being in competition with each other was one thing. Realizing villains wouldn't wait for them to progress before attacking was another.

Quirk manifestations all around were distracting him. His secondary ability wasn't often triggered because the quirk regulation law usually kept people from using quirks in public spaces. He had noticed that during the entrance exam, but didn't think about it later, haunted by the possibility that UA could send him the bill for their giant expensive, and at the time pulverized, robot.

_I will have to work on that._

Meanwhile, he took earbuds and put music, distracting himself from the quirks and allowing himself to immerse himself into his physical and mostly quirkless training.

He realized a little too late someone was calling him.

Izuku's feet touched the ground again and he took of his earbuds, panting, to see the red-haired teenager down the little plateau he was using. He looked almost sheepish, and coming from Kirishima, this was just strange.

"Sorry, I didn't hear what you just said," Izuku smiled.

That seemed to reassure him.

"Do you want to spar ?" he repeated.

Izuku jumped, down, and at the chance of finally having fun, landing in front of Kirishima. "Yes ! With pleasure !"
Izuku activated Speed. He wouldn't use Strength for now, not until he knew how much Kirishima could bear. This was a great opportunity because Kirishima was a melee fighter, and this was something Izuku wasn't used to. Even better, he could withstand blunt force traumas.

Unless his quirk only protected the external layer of him, like Resistance. Then enough strength would turn his insides into mush, which was to be avoided.

*Let's find out.*

But he waited for the usual quirk-attuned alarm in his mind to ring. Or at least to see some skin hardening.... And waited... And waited...

"You're not using your quirk ?" Izuku finally asked.

"Oh, I thought we would just fight. If you hit me with your bare hands and my quirk is activated, you could hurt yourself."

Izuku smiled, touched that he would worry about him: "I am going to use my quirk, so it would only be fair for the both of us."

*And so much more interesting.*

Kirishima agreed and took of his shirt, but without activating his quirk yet. There was still a wound on his shoulder, red and ugly. Izuku would have to make sure not to touch it.

Izuku put himself in position, arms raised, light on his feet. Kirishima was ripped, so he had weight and power on his size. No matter how strong Izuku was, physics didn't change and if he caught him, he would have trouble getting out since he could hardly hurt him.

Kirishima's skin hardened in front of Izuku's very eyes, taking the consistence of sharpened stone, and the red-haired boy lunged at him, all in power and passion.

*Acceleration.*

Kirishima stumbled down, but managed to remain upright, so Izuku helped him find the ground with a light kick behind the knees.

Izuku circled around the fallen fighter, careful.

"Your quirk is cool, but I am not a wall. You can't break though me."

Kirishima kicked him from the ground, trying to reap his leg, but Izuku had seen the shift in his balance and easily avoided him, but was caught off guard when Kirishima jumped at him as if he was built on springs, and the next punch passed too close for comfort.

*I am underestimating his speed because all I see is a Toughness quirk. Not everyone relies completely on their quirk like me.*

He took advantage of Kirishima's still extended, and hit him in his unprotected ribs, reminding himself at the last moment to use *Durability.*

It was like hitting a wall of bricks. Kirishima was right to warn him, because if Izuku had just hit him, he would have scrapped his knuckles. Since he didn't use any Strength, it wasn't enough to make Kirishima fall, but he definitely felt it.
But it didn't stop Kirishima, of course. He kept trying to hit him, a goofy smile on his face as he was having fun, and he never stop attacking.

He never landed any hit either.

CoolDown was now constantly activated to allow Izuku to keep using Acceleration.

"No wide movements," Snipe ordered from the sidelines. "It makes you slow."

Kirishima did a double take when he saw one of their teacher and a demi dozens of students watching the fight, having somehow missed them.

Izuku didn't took advantage of his distraction to attack, a fact Kirishima noticed.

Seriously, dude ? he seemed to ask silently.

"I thought you were going to use your quirk, Midoriya. Why are you not attacking ?"

His knuckles hit each other, producing a spark.

"… I was wondering how long you could held your quirk," Izuku admitted.

He wasn't going to wait until it stopped, but he was a little curious to see if Kirishima would get more and more tired as Izuku made him run around.

"You little..." Kirishima joked and he tried to hit him again.

Izuku avoided again, but this time, he lowered himself, punch him in the chest, and surged behind him. Kirishima kicked him in reverse, and a quick and discreet Slide and Glide saved Izuku's hip.

"Kick his... bottom, Kirishima !" Ashido screamed.

"Midori ! Fight !" Hakagure yelled.

"Both of you do your best !" Iida screamed, not wishing to take a side.

"Aren't you supposed to be training ?" Snipe asked.

Several variations of "We're taking a break" followed.

Izuku got closer, hands raised, hoping to block Kirishima's hand in order to punch him in the face. He quickly realized the other fighter hit like a mule, and as Kirishima threw one mean punch, Izuku managed to block it, but not the power behind it so he accidentally hit himself in the face. Ouch. That's why I usually don't get that close.

He got away but Kirishima chased him. It was the first time he managed to somewhat land a hit, and he wasn't letting Izuku go.

Ashido cheered from the sides.

Don't chase after speed, a voice from a long time ago echoed in his mind. It's timing, control and fluidity that you want. There is no need to get somewhere fast so long as you get there at the right time.

He parried, avoided, searching for the right opening. Take your time. Kirishima was hitting faster and harder than before, tired of seeing Izuku only playing defense, maybe. No, he was still
cheerful, happy because like Izuku, he felt alive and happy in those moments where they could use their quirks without worrying about the consequences.

And for a moment, he let his enthusiasm get the better of himself. He had been watching his balance and his guard since Izuku had taken advantage of it, but for a moment, he forgot about him and started to lunge at Izuku again.

He got sloppy, because for this brief moment, he thought it wouldn't matter.

Strength.

Izuku jumped and kicked, almost flying. His foot connected with Kirishima's unguarded chest and it propelled him through the hair. The red-haired teenager went airborne and landed roughly on the ground.

A little too roughly.

"Are you OK ?" Izuku yelled, already rushing to him.

Kirishima put a thumb up while trying to breathe but didn't make any attempts to move more than what was strictly necessary.

"I regain the ability to breathe and we're doing that again," he warned Izuku.

*****

One thing which was always underestimated by any PE teacher was how hungry teenagers could become after using their quirks. Fortunately, UA teachers and Iida Tenya had it covered and at one point, the whole class, minus Todoroki, Kacchan, and Yaoyorozu, took a collective break and converged towards the snacks.

Izuku himself grabbed some chocolate bars, and satisfied his craving for sweets away from the crowd, like a greedy squirrel. However, it was without counting the overly friendly Kirishima who walked to him and brought him a can.

They drank orange juice in a comfortable silence

"Can I ask you a question ?"

Since Izuku's mouth was still full of half chewed chocolate, he nodded.

"Friday, when you ripped into this white-haired guy..."

What?

"I did ?"

Izuku didn't remember it like that. He just talked to the 1-B boy.

"Oh yes," Kirishima confirmed. "You were really intense a real change compared to your sunshine personality.. You're also intimidating when you use your quirk."
Izuku just freaked out silently about it. Was he rude? He didn't remember being rude, only annoyed, but he didn't scream or anything.

When Kirishima continued, his voice was flat and he wasn't facing Izuku: "What I mean to say... Despite what you say, I didn't save you at the USJ. I appreciate it but I am the only one who didn't do anything. Except being taken hostage."

Izuku could perfectly remember the USJ. The fear subdued by the need to act, the pain, the wait for the heroes, and at one point, some warmth which had grounded him. He drank a little orange juice, giving himself time to think. He knew what he wanted to say. Now, he just had to find the words to express it.

"You remember when Todoroki stabbed the noumu and I managed to go back to you ? I was in shock, in pain, and generally in bad shape. You asked me if I was OK. Then you put yourself in front of Todoroki and I to protect us. At that moment, knowing someone had my back... it meant the world to me."

Next time Izuku looked at Kirishima, the boy was hiding his smile behind his orange juice can, and relief flooded Izuku.

Afterwards, they sparred together again and this time, Izuku used more quirks. It might have been because his mind finally had the occasion to relax with some friendly interactions, but Izuku realized something that should have been obvious right after his conversation with All Might, but panic had made him stupid.

All Might might know about the nature of Izuku's quirk, but Izuku knew a secret more valuable than the nature of his quirk : his time limit. It could easily be proved, and All Might couldn't deny it.

He was safer than he thought.

Sadly, his mid-fight revelation kept him from noticing one incoming punch and Kirishima made him fly.

*****

Izuku got out of training early, and went to buy delicious food as a bribe, so his mother would be in good dispositions this evening.

The meals were usually his mother's responsibility. Izuku could technically cook, but the management of working in a kitchen simply didn't agree with him. His mind wandered, He could, and liked, being distracted by his own thoughts, but when that happened while cooking, things tended to burn. So he was in charge of cleaning while his mother was the Chef. But when she got home late because of work, she did appreciate when she had nothing to do.

She might have sensed the ambush when she came home to a spotless apartment and a meal composed of all her favorite foods already on the table, while Izuku was already waiting at the door.

"Did you crash the car we don't have or something ?"
"I would like us to talk about the Sport Festival."

She sighed.

"Let's eat first. Then, we can talk."

They actually had a pleasant meal. Izuku talked about his classmates and about the teachers. His mother told him a story about a client with a mutation quirk which didn't let him pass through the door, and there was no housing that could accommodate him, so one of her coworker took a hammer to several walls.

And as soon as she finished the last pork bite, Izuku attacked.

"The Sport Festival isn’t just an event particular from UA. Pro heroes will Watch it, and they will propose us internships, which I will need for school. Later, I will need it when I work."

His mother made a face.

"So this is necessary to be a hero ?"

Izuku nodded.

"But the problem is that you took this exam without consulting with me. And you already knew that I didn’t like the idea of your quirk being broadcast."

"My strictly enhancer quirk that I spend months refining ?" he reminded her.

If she was scared people would know about Transfer, this was taken care of.

"And all those other quirks that I am sure you love to use," she added.

Lies. Izuku was barely interested in quirks. Everyone knew that.

His mother grabbed his hands and looked at him with real concern in her eyes, which sobered him up instantly.

"You trained all your life use to the right quirk in the right situation. So I need you to be frank with me. Will you be able to resist not using them ? There are fights in this tournament. If you feel in danger, are you sure you won’t grab your opponent’s quirk to make him stop ?"

The five quirks taken to the noumu were burning within him.

"I won't grab any quirks. I can promise you that. As for using those I already have. You're worried about someone realizing I have several quirks ? Is that it ?"

If it was all there was, he could deal with that.

His mother hesitated for a brief moment. Izuku noticed it but didn't comment on it.

"Yes, that's my concern," she said.

Izuku put his palms on the table and took a deep breath.

He went behind her back by taking the hero exam. He didn't tell her about the quirks he stole. He couldn't keep ignoring what she thought. It was unfair.
"If it can reassure you, I think I can get by the first trial by using only passive quirks. Especially since I have a Shock Absorption quirk now. I will forfeit for the one on one. I just need to be seen. But next year, when I have more experience and training, I would like to do the full event."

His mother smiled.

"I was about to let you do it, Izuku. I am realizing I can't always overprotect you."

She was about to accept? Why did I open my big mouth?

"But it's true that for now, especially with the villain attack that attracted everyone's attention on the First Years, I would be more at ease if we did that."

Izuku smiled.

Then, it was worth it.

*****

N: [How are you supposed to participate in the Sport Festival without using your quirk?]

Me: [With panache.]

N: [How are you supposed to NOT BE ELIMINATED IN THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES of the Sport Festival, then?]

Me: [I am working on it.]

N: [What about your speech?]

Me: [I am working on it.]

N: [You have no idea of what you’re doing and you’re just saying yes to everything so you can participate in this stupid event, aren’t you?]

Chapter End Notes

I am slowly losing control over this fic... I hope you're still enjoying it.
It's the eleventh chapter and I wouldn't have made it so far without your support. If you are in my bookmark list and kudos list, make no mistake, I know your name. A special shout out to: FandomManiac22, Darn, Cerokun, theuglyfriend, SourLemonXXX, Min, Cloy52, MiracleCola, Thefruitloopchan, guest, CLMac, BrotatoSempai, awkwardnerdgirl_lex, Luciola, Darn, Andi, 824Jacob, fauxphoenix, Pink Pumpkin, StarLost, N, TheKursed, Mysterious_Prophetess, L_just_L, RockEllen_Elly, QueenCheshireWolf, Enternal, Trashworks, Jakob, Artemis_Crimson, Githarnian, NeNeko, Jimmy+Flores, creativsm75, Kiomori, cloudynightstars, Luce Chan, ProclaimersofHeroes, UltimateGamer101, GidgisTwizOx, Marvelgirl98, Hopscotch, Blaiddsumu, theThirteenthChild, uselesstwink, Redsparrow12, Fangirlsinner, Moyya, Vermillion, Mixy, ShinkaAkira, LetMeSleepPLEASE, Zilch_0zilch, SolWriter, Slinggoshotto, joaquy94, Seether00, AspergianStoryteller, Red, Anon, AuSouzus, and Dekuquake.

For the following month, I don't think I will be able to update at the same rhythm, for I will be drown in work, but I am not gone. Get ready for the Sport Festival arc.
Sorahiko had always been impressed that despite all the technology available, his student never called, never wrote a text, but once in a while, he wrote a letter. Since he was at UA, he found the perfect successor, or he was dealing with an abject failure because he was incapable of making a choice. Either way, a letter had the merit of not being personal and Toshinori wouldn't have to confront himself to Sorahiko's judgement.

A takoyaki between his teeth, he started his reading before the Sport Festival started.

Dear Teacher,

Summer is finally on its way and we can enjoy more agreeable temperatures. I hope you are in good health

At the beginning of this year, I started teaching the new generation of heroes, hoping to find a successor. Though my search didn't bear any fruits yet, I have met many children whom, I am sure, will become great heroes in the future.

Abject failure, it is.

One young man drew my attention. He is a first year, and his quirk and his control over it are especially powerful, but he doesn't seem to quite realize it. Already, he saved someone during the attack of the USJ but he was also in danger and he seems to hold everything in. I wish to help him.

The quickest way was to talk to the student, which seemed obvious, but Sorahiko shouldn't expect too much from such a rookie teacher.

I hope you will grant me some advices.

Take care of yourself. I shall inform you of how the situation evolves.

Sincerely.

Yagi Toshinori

Focusing on a student with problems was honorable and the role of a teacher. However, Sorahiko could recognize someone procrastinating. He grabbed his cell phone and typed one short phrase, for he wasn't a dinosaur and could actually technology unlike some old-fashioned student of his.

[OK, but what about your successor ?]

No answer, even though Toshinori had to be at UA to assist to the Sport Festival at this hour. Heroes quickly picked up the habit of always having their phones on them, so Toshinori was probably playing dead. It was incredible how he didn't change in several decades.

Sorahiko couldn't help a smile.
When Izuku arrived at UA on the day of the Sport Festival, he hadn’t finished working on his strategy but at least, he had his speech. Apart from that, it was like someone had left an anvil inside his chest during the night, and this weight refused to go.

He didn't fail to notice how things appeared to be simpler in life-or-death situations. Consequences didn't haunt him then.

But they subdued when Izuku felt the familiar quirk approaching. One for All. Back when he looked at those videos of All Might, he never would have thought that this quirk he loved so much had so much in common with his.

All Might, quirk activated, seemed a little surprised to see Izuku quietly waiting for him in the hallway, his yellow backpack on the ground.

"… You really manage to know where I am, aren't you?"

"In a reasonable distance," Izuku smiled.

He had neglected this ability, probably because to him, other quirks were more fascinating than his own. He would have to work on it.

"At least, this is going to be useful when you're licensed. Listen, I wanted to see you, but I have to make this quick. I have to watch the third years."

"You're going to stay in this form all day?" Izuku asked in a horrified whisper.

"No, don't worry. I just..."

He hesitated, looked around, and after an other hesitation, deflated.

Izuku didn't fail to notice how All Might avoided to show this form in front of students, even Izuku who was aware of his health issues. He understood that he didn't want the time limit to be known, but this went beyond that.

"Today, the world will see you for the first time," All Might announced. "But please, don't freak out."

Too late.

All Might sighed and put a hand on Izuku's shoulder.

"I am not asking you to be perfect," he continued, "But please, try to act as the hero you want to be. Midoriya Izuku, the student, looks like he didn't sleep this night thinking about the festival. Midoriya Izuku, the future hero, knows his abilities and what he is capable of."

Midoriya Izuku, the future hero, was nothing more than a concept at this point.

"So you're telling me to fake it until I make it," Izuku translated.
All Might regained his prime form and gave him his patented grin: "Exactly. And now, I am gone. Sorry for making you late."

One for All shined, and All Might almost flash stepped, leaving Izuku standing alone, a little smile on his lips. That was abrupt but the attention was nice. All Might was watching over him.

It felt good.

However, Izuku didn't have the advantage of being allowed to use his quirk where he could be seen. It was a good thing he was already in his gym uniform because he saw three people barking at him that he was late on his way to the waiting room. Iida, pacing in the hallway, was the fourth.

"I know," Izuku cried, making Iida jump. "I am sorry!"

He rushed through the door while assuring Iida that he was fine and that there was no need to freak out – as if this boy had never seen people crying in his life –, stopping himself from crying, and scanning the room for Uraraka.

"Midoriya," someone called him in the middle of his multitasking.

What? What did I do this time?

He froze as he saw Todoroki looking at him, his eyes glacial, and Iida almost crashed into him. This had the unfortunate effect of making him stumble into the room, closer to the ice quirked boy.

Was he waiting for me?

"I think that we are on similar levels but I have showed better results," Todoroki declared.

Izu just stayed frozen, trying to understand what was his point.

Was this about the USJ? Izuku never had the occasion to thank him. Was it something else that could explain the glares he had received since the start of the school year?

"Despite that, you have enough power to rival All Might. I don't want to know why, but I am going to beat you."

What Izuku actually heard was: I am going to wreck you on live television.

Kirishima obviously heard the same, because he approached and he put a hand on Todoroki's shoulder. Bad move, Izuku thought as he saw Tororoki immediately tense under the contact.

"Hey, man, why pick a fight now? We're about to go on..."

Todoroki shrugged off Kirishima's hand.

"I am not here to make friends," he reminded before starting to leave, but not before glancing a last time at Izuku.

Be prepared. I, as a person trained by the number 2 hero, am going after you. Good luck surviving.

That’s why he saved me, the green-haired teen realized. He wanted to kill me himself.

Izuku took a deep breath.
Everyone was excited because of a possible fight between two of the strongest people of the class.

However, if Todoroki had just thrown a gauntlet at him, that didn't mean he had to accept the dual. Worse, he couldn't accept. He had made a promise to his mother. Not only was breaking it something he would hate to do, but that would weakened the trust he had with the person he loved the most.

Even if he could use his abilities, he wasn't even sure he wanted to fight Todoroki. He didn't have anything to prove.

He smiled, suddenly tired. He was probably the only one more interested in watching all those incredible quirks in action instead of actually winning. And out of everyone, Todoroki had decided to target him. The irony.

"I don't know what you want to prove by fighting me," he said to Todoroki, completely calm because he didn't have anything to lose. "But I admit your quirk is incredible and you're control over it is amazing. Compared to you, I have a lot to learn."

_The more you show me, the more I can progress._

"But we are all aiming for victory. Don't think this is just between you and I."

*****

UA's Sport Festival was absolutely unavoidable. Unless one lived under a rock, they were bound to find out about the winners, and those who had showed impressive feats, and Nagisa had never cared much about modern gladiator games, especially when it was so biased.

Usually, Nagisa would have been at home doing something completely different but some people in her class wanted to do a group activity, so a friend's home had been chosen, everyone had brought food, and those who didn't manage to secure a spot on the couches were on the floor, on pillows.

At one point, Satou's little sister entered the living room to steal pretzels. She took one look at Nagisa and fled without looking back. It was a usual occurrence in her life. Despite all those talks about the definition of humans which had been broadened, people with important mutations faced discreet discrimination, and Heavens helped them if they had a quirk that seemed villainous. There was a reason why Gang Orca was stuck at the tenth position.

An argument about which course to watch followed, and Nagisa left the couch while glaring at anyone who would dare to steal her spot.

"They are babies! The Third Years know how to use their quirks!"

Nagisa made her way to the table, trying to avoid stepping on anyone...

"So do the first years. They fought actual villains! And we already know the Third Years' quirks!"

Nagisa grabbed the remote and put on the First Years. When some complained, she calmly told them they were free to take the remote from her. If they think they could.
When they decided that the big spider in beautiful clothes was stronger than all of them, they watched one small green child climbing on the platform and adjusting the microphone with both hands. They were trembling a little. Poor thing.

"This is the big shot?"

"He is so small and adorable!"

Midoriya looked vaguely terrified for a moment, but Nagisa was pleased to see him taking a deep breath and calming himself immediately. He took another breath and smiled shyly while looking at the camera.

Nagisa had noticed than when he smiled for real, it was with his eyes. They filled with warmth and quiet determination. That was a good quality for a hero.

"Let's all have fun together," Midoriya Izuku said. "And may the best win."

Nagisa snickered as he fled the platform. Yes, the bug certainly wouldn't want to stay one second longer than necessary in front of the camera. And though the message was cute and charming, it could be taken as something else: Midoriya could have fun because he knew that at his level, he didn't have anything to worry about.

She looked around.

No, they think he is just cute. They don't realize what he can do.

"Well, that was short," Nao commented.

"Would you prefer the neverending speech like that one time with All Might?"

She pushed him, smiling. "I thought we all agreed to never mention this speech again?"

Others joined in their antics, and the guy Nao had pushed was quickly avenged.

"Who do you think will win?"

"It's too early to tell."

"The Todoroki boy. He is Endeavor's son after all."

Nagisa smiled and didn't say anything.

When Midoriya had seen the Shirobakumos for the first time, he hadn't even blinked. At the time, her mother's quirk was making her life a living hell. Not having the means to control her web meant that she was dependent on siblings and cousins, even her own child, to get rid of it.

And this child had arrived, got rid of the problem and refused any payments. He had only asked for their discretion, even though the clan had been ready to pay him a fortune if he produced results.

Even now, as Nagisa searched for quirks and anything that drew Midoriya's attention, he paid her for it.

He was really something.

The first event started. Contrary to the rest of the group, she stayed quiet as the students started running, becoming increasingly agitated because of how plain Midoriya was.
For the robots, even if she knew he had this perfect quirk that could break things down, he just avoided them and let everyone distance him.

At some point, Midoriya acquired some piece of metal he started using as a shield or as a ramming board. He seemed serious about not using his full power, and he didn’t look worried despite everyone unleashing their quirks around him.

Honestly, a really well prepared quirkless boy could take care of himself during this run. But Midoriya was used to have several powers at his disposal. He didn't have the ingrained reflexes one acquired over his life to compensate weaknesses. He didn't know his limits either.

She didn't know Midoriya's mother but she was getting annoyed at this woman. It would have been nice to have someone with a villainous quirk winning UA's Sport Festival. Even if only three people knew about his real quirk.

Soon, the cameras focused on the kids leading. They jumped over pits, and ran on mines, and recklessly endangered their lives for sport. The usual thing.

"Why does the Todoroki boy keep looking behind him ?"

"Probably checking on his opponents."

At some point, the camera returned to the last in line, and especially the Gen Ed kids. It was just annoying that they had to participate even though they had no training and no desire to be involved.

She noticed that Midoriya was in the background, doing something to the ground.

"The explosion boy has a quirk fitted to his personality," a comrade of coding noticed, while trying to steal some pretzels from Nagisa.

"Yes, I know… WHAAAAAAAAT???” she yelled, making Chiyoh jump next to her.

Midoriya disappeared into the giant explosion he had just provoked.

_Holy shit, holy shit, holy shit, holy shit, holy shit, holy shit…_

If she couldn't talk, her college friends weren't still had air in their lungs, and some of them swore louder than Present Mic. They all watched the bug ascending through the air, catching up to the two mad kids fighting each other at the lead of the course.

_All this to climb to third place without using those damn quirks he is so proud about._

But nooo... Obviously, she was underestimating the little moron.

In mid air, upside down, Midoriya twisted his whole body and stepped on Explosion and Frosty to use them as leverage. He regained his balance, but was about to land between two very pissed off competitors.

Until he slammed his shield on the ground, and on the mines underneath.

The problems with having so many eyes was that Nagisa couldn’t hide them all, so she watched in all his terrifying glory Midoriya exploding his competitors and used the blast as the world’s most dangerous trampoline once again.

The little bastard landed without slowing down, while Nagisa lost at least two years of her lifespan.
"This kid is on fire!"

"No, but he was close to it."

Nagisa finally managed to breathe again, and she watched this mad bug running as if his life depended on it. And since the two boys he had used as a ladder to success were getting up, murder in their body language, it was probably a wise course of action.

_Run, because in the place of the two others boys, I would murder you. I wouldn’t care that we’re on live television._

*****

Inko was frozen on her couch, too horrified to do anything except crying in fear as her baby boy decided to take on giant robots, abysses and landmines without using all the quirks he had. And all those insane risks he was taking were her fault.

She had never wanted him to be a hero. If she could have bubble-wrapped her child, she wouldn't have hesitated, but instead, she just opposed a meek disinterest to his hero plans while never giving him any alternatives. Constantly avoiding the problem, and letting him deal with her worries without any hint of a solution. Now, she had let her worries talk, and Izuku had to undertake those trials with both hands tied behind his back.

Until now, Izuku and her had only watched the Third Years and though she had been at first perplexed by how dangerous those tests seemed, watching those future heroes perfectly navigating through them had convinced her that UA knew its students and trained them to be able to handle it. But even First Years with a month of training had to survive those, and Izuku was among them now.

Wishful thinking could only take one so far.

And since Izuku knew she was uncomfortable, he never talked with her about his quirks, so she didn't even know how protected he was. This boy did have a tendency to understate the risks.

And all that for what? Next year, he already had the permission to fight to his heart content. To reveal himself to the world. At this point, she was only delaying the inevitable.

_You can't keep limiting him_, a voice that didn't belong to her whispered.

She knew why. She knew why she was so anxious when he used his quirks, showed what he was capable of. But it was unfair to him.

She looked at her cellphone.

*****

Izuku had a bad feeling when he took his phone back from the box near Cementos. They could all keep their phones on them during the trials but anyone with a quirk knew they were the number
one cause of death of anything expensive and vital.

Ma : [IZUKU !]

Ma : [Forget what I asked. Just stop improvising.]

Ma : [You have my permission to do your absolute best in the rest of the Sport Festival. I now understand that asking you to hold back wasn't as easy for you as I thought. However, jumping on several mines is in no way a viable strategy. I am warning you. We will talk about that as soon as you get home.]

Ma : [Stay safe. I love you.]

Izuku stayed silent for a moment, not daring to hope that he just read the authorization he had hoped for since he had taken the entrance exam.

[Absolute best] was referring to his quirks. Even if Izuku had made sure their cellphones were impossible to hack or to track, the Midoriya family was careful with what they wrote or what they talked about in public.

He could do this.

Me : [I love you too.]

Me : [I will. Thank you.]

He couldn't help the smile on his face and the giddiness spreading through him.

He wouldn't use all his quirks, of course, but enough to have fun. Enough to draw the attention of good agencies.

He turned towards the students in his class, his mind already full of possibilities and quirk combinations. The quirk donated to him were limited, but now, he could have so much fun and he had the plans to make his team win. His joy subdued considerably when he saw that everyone was avoiding eye contact.

He made one step and the crowd started shifting like a fishes in front of a shark.

But... I am strong...

"Hey, Ojirou?"

The nicest guy in the class after Kirishima gave him an awkward smile and fled.

Why is anyone running for the hills?

Yes, he had quite a bounty on his head, but he was capable of protecting it and protecting his team. He could keep opponents away, which he had proved at the USJ...

At the USJ, where only Kacchan, Todoroki and Kirishima had seen him fight.
People from his class only knew he was in third place at the test, but it clearly wasn’t worth being targeted by everyone, especially since Todoroki had proclaimed in front of everyone he would take Izuku out. And I-B didn’t know anything about him except that he came from a class they disliked.

No one trusted him enough to team up with him, and teamwork was essential for this trial.

Izuku made a sad sound.

"Midori?" Uraraka called. "Should we team up?"

Izuku managed not to hug her, but this was a close-call.

Then, they looked for the last member of the trio, who was a little too close to Yaoyorozu, so they whisked him away. Not that Yaoyorozu wouldn't be a great addition to their team, but Izuku doubted she didn't already have a team ready, and Iida was theirs.

"We have the advantage of not needing to take any others headbands," Izuku explained, "so all we have to do is escape without taking any risks."

*Please, stay with me, I am not that much of a weight.*

"Iida, at the front. Uraraka and I on the side. Uraraka lightens us, Iida and I add the speed, and no one should catch up."

Uraraka was enthusiastic but she was the only one.

"That's a good strategy, Midoriya," Iida admitted on the tone of someone about to bail out. "But sadly, I have to decline."

*And you say that after I gave you my plan?*

"You are excelling since the exam. In order to surpass you, I can't keep following you. Todoroki and Bakugou aren't your only rival."

And with that, he joined Todoroki's team.

Yaoyorozu, Kaminari, Todoroki, and Iida. Powerful quirks and three of them were legacies.

Izuku shouldn't have taken that personally, but it still saddened him. They were friends. He didn't care about rivals or being the best. UA was a good path to become a hero, but what he really enjoyed was how he had been able to finally form connections since he was here.

Was All Might that isolated? Only because other heroes wanted to prove they were also powerful?

How could that matter next to actual friendship? Kacchan was a rival, but Uraraka and Iida? Even Kirishima? Izuku was stronger because there were people who actually cared for him.

"Mr Number 1," a girl giggled at his back, interrupting his thoughts.

The sound was positively evil.

A girl with pink hair and covered in support items had appeared from nowhere like the Cheshire cat.

"My name is Hatsume Mei, from the Support department. I don't know you but I want to take advantage of your success. Everyone is looking at you, so they will see my cute babies!"
Izuku tried to talk but Hatsume was now presenting her babies, and selling all her strong points, never letting him the time to say even one word.

"So?" she finally asked and there was a mad glint in her eyes.

"You had me at: 'I want to be in your team.'"

Behind Hatsume, Uraraka showed her thumb-up.

Izuku had his third teammate, he now needed the last, and he already knew who he wanted.

Someone he knew. Someone whose strength would be useful for the whole team.

Kacchan was already looking at him when Izuku turned towards him and walked in his direction. For a moment, his childhood friend froze, absolutely dumbfounded by what was about to happen... and Izuku walked right past him to stop in front of Kirishima.

"If you don't have a team, we would love to have you in ours," Izuku said.

Kirishima smiled.

And Kacchan absolutely detonated.

"HE IS ALREADY IN MY TEAM!" he roared, making everyone in the stadium almost jump out of their skin.

He rounded up Ashido, Kirishima, and Sero and physically pulled them away, standing between them and Izuku the whole time.

"Don't go stealing my damn teammates!" he barked at the completely still Izuku.

"So we're hired?" Ashido asked as she was dragged away.

Izuku took two steps backward and passed to plan C. He only had until plan D, so someone would have to accept to be in his team or he would have a problem.

He scanned the crowd, looking for those who didn't look like they had a team yet.

"Tokoyami," he called with a sweet smile.

The bird-headed student took a step back. Behind him, Uraraka and Hatsume surrounded him, also determined not to let another potential member escape.

Tokoyami didn't fail to notice.

"Do I have a choice?"

"Of course," Izuku said just as Hatsume and Uraraka answered "No."

They promptly swept away their last member, and talked strategy.

A complete inventory of Hatsume's wonderful toys was made, and Izuku called dibs on the jetpack. He also asked her if she had a heat resistance something since the quirk didn't seem to want to appear to Nagisa, and the conversation almost got completely derailed but thankfully, Uraraka reigned them in. He also learned about Dark Shadow's weakness, which would pose a problem against Kacchan and Kaminari.
But then, Tokoyami corrected him by telling that they also had to watch out for Todoroki's potential fire.

Izuku just stared blankly at them, but no one seemed surprised. Well, Hatsume clearly didn't care, but Tokoyami and Uraraka seemed genuinely puzzled.

"Oh, that's right, you were with Recovery Girl when All Might mentioned his quirk," Uraraka remembered.

"Todoroki can use flames… And he never uses it?"

If Izuku had half of Todoroki's quirk, the temperatures would have dropped just because of his voice.

"Only to unmake the damages inflicted by his ice," Tokoyami precised as if it made a difference.

"You're telling me that I almost got expelled for not going Plus Ultra with my quirk... While Todoroki was hanging around not using half of his power…"

Tokoyami sensed the danger but Izuku wasn't mad at him. He wasn't even mad at Todoroki.

He glared at the commentator booth and if he had an eye laser quirk, the thing would be burning. Aizawa-Sensei was lucky he had saved everyone's lives at the USJ.

*****

Fighting meant exposing themselves. Every time a team attacked, they brought their headband closer to their opponent, and took the risk of losing their points. To progress in the ranking, they had to put themselves in danger.

Izuku's team didn't have to do that. Despite being the number 1 target, they also have the advantage of being able to only play defense. And his team was prepared. They were weightless, and escaped through the air each time they were in danger, never letting anyone the chance to corner them.

Dark Shadow was their shield and their sword, and awfully efficient. But other teams were good too. So when it wasn't enough, Izuku acted, throwing Air Blasts sneakily that no one prepared for because no one, not even his classmates, knew the full extent of his abilities.

Of course, it couldn't last.

If Kacchan was busy tackling every 1-B team like a lunatic, Todoroki cornered Izuku's team, his Todoroki's own complemented each other in a way that didn't allow any weaknesses. Even their leader's refusal of using his left side was protected by Kaminari. Dark Shadow hated light and Air Pressure couldn't do much against electricity.

An incredibly silly tactic of staying on Todoroki's left side and poking Kaminari with Air Pressure every time he was about to use his quirk ensued, everyone playing the clock.

All they had to do was to hold on for a minute.

But the problem with plans was that they rarely survived their first contact with reality, and Iida
decided to remind them of this fact as his quirk suddenly burned inside him.

And just for a moment, as Iida suddenly accelerated, Izuku admired the quirk, fascinated. He activated his own Speed quirks a second later, because watching the new shining thing had become the priority.

And it was enough for Todoroki to snatch the headband from him.

*Did I just...*

Everyone was frozen because they didn't have the time to react, except Izuku who was frozen because he was suddenly realizing the full extent of his stupidity. What he had done.

"After them!" he screamed, trying to make the team turn in Todoroki's direction all by himself.

Suddenly, he was feeling so stupid where he was. He wanted his feet to touch the ground. He wanted to be able to use all this quirks, to not be limited by working with others...

*Don't blame them. You are the one who screwed up. Not them.*

"Wait, Midori..." Uraraka started.

"Let's go after the other teams," Hatsume cut her. "They can't electrocute us or throw ice at us!"

"No."

One word but the tone was so definitive that no one talked back. Even Dark Shadow stopped fidgeting.

Izuku didn't know how many points the other teams had. What he knew was that there was barely any time left, Todoroki had all of their points, he was the closest, and Iida couldn't do Recipro Burst again if his red-hot pipes were any indication.

He was responsible of the headband. Of their points. He had asked them to follow him, to trust him, even though they would be targeted.

He screwed up when he couldn't afford to.

And Uraraka, Tokoyami, and Hatsume would pay the price of his distraction.

"After them," he ordered calmly this time, raising a hand and starting to flick his finger towards Yaoyorozu.

But not before he asked one more thing of his team.

The Air blast almost made Todoroki’s team fell, but their leader immediately created an ice wall to protect them, at least on the right. Izuku and co ran at them, on the left of course, and as Kaminari saw them coming, he started to charge.

He certainly wasn't expecting Hatsume to throw the now useless jetpack at him with such strength that he bend over after it hit him on the chest. He was lucky the thing didn't explode.

Hatsume said something, praising her prototype baby or something, but the words never reached Izuku. The only thing that mattered right now was Todoroki and Izuku's headband. Todoroki, who had their only chance of advancing in the Sport Festival.
Izuku threw his hand.

He felt Todoroki's starting to activate his quirk fully before he felt the change of temperature, and even then, he had to fight the instinct screaming at him to get away from fire. His fingers clawed, ready to grab the pesky quirk that could hurt him, and he reigned himself in at the last second.

While his hand was still approaching the source of heat.

... I will heal, some part of him decided while absolutely not talking about it with the rest of his brain.

Izuku forced through, feeling the scalding temperature on his skin, just for a moment. He batted Todoroki's arm and the flames about to appear on it, and his fingers grabbed the headband.

At the same moment, Kacchan's team appeared and their leader jumped at Izuku and Todoroki like some demented kite.

And Present Mic announced the end.

*****

Shouta dodged Yamada waving his hands and kept looking at the two teams whose leaders had went still while the rest of their team members were surexcited. Midoriya was clutching the hand holding Todoroki's headband and didn't seem to be paying attention to Uraraka.

As for Todoroki, he seemed more stoic than usual, but his fists were clenched. When Midoriya had attacked, he was on Todoroki's left, and since Midoriya was being careful with his hand, there was a real possibility Todoroki had used his flames, or at least started to use it by reflex.

Since he was in the commentator booth and not looking at the cameras feed, he couldn't confirm it, but if Todoroki did despite refusing to ever use his flames in training, it was probably a reflex. The kind of survival mechanism one couldn't fight when a strength quirk similar too All Might got too close.

They would have to be careful during the rest of the Sport Festival.

*****

The side of Izuku's hand and his fingertips were starting to go red. It made sense that Todoroki's side would have a drastic temperature change, after all, his quirk needed to come from somewhere. Izuku could have betted that in the moment where he started to summon the effects of his quirk, the temperature change was the most dramatic to create ice or fire as quickly as possible, and then it adjusted.

Todoroki's quirk was already fascinating when it was only ice, but now, Izuku was devoured by curiosity.

Izuku clenched his fist and he turned towards his team, but especially Tokoyami. Dark Shadow was positively beaming, holding two other headbands in his beak, none of them the One Million,
but they had agreed that any points was better than the absolute zero they had. Well, they hadn't had much agreed that Izuku had shouted as stress saturated every inch of his body.

615 from Todoroki. 460 from two other teams.

*Was that enough?*

They all looked at the electronical board. Saw their names in third place.

Relief almost cut Izuku's legs. He didn't destroy his team's chance of qualifying to the next event. Tokoyami had caught up on his mistake.

They would be fine.

"IN FIRST PLACE, TODOROKI, IIDA, YAOROZU, AND KAMINARI!"

"The One Million was out of reached, hidden away," Tokoyami explained. "Fortunately, you distracted him enough so I could take two."

Izuku took a step toward him.

"IN SECOND PLACE, BAKUGOU, ASHIDO, KIRISHIMA, AND SERO!"

So did Uraraka.

Tokoyami sensed the danger, but couldn't do anything as the two overrelieved teenagers hugged him. Tokoyami froze like a scared baby rabbit while Dark Shadow and Hatsume were dragged into the giant hug.

"'IN THIRD SECOND PLACE, MIDORIYA, TOKOYAMI, URARAKA, AND HATSUME!' Present Mic confirmed.

After a big second of hesitation, Tokoyami hugged back.

"IN FOURTH PLACE, SHINSOU, OJIROU, AOYAMA AND SHODAI!"

The hug quickly ended, and Izuku wiped the tears from his face.

"Are you crying?" Hatsume asked.

"No, I am not," lied the crying Izuku as Hatsume passed behind him.

His tears of pure relief weren't the priority next to the remnants of the broken jetpack on his back and he could only thank her for that.

"The headband doesn't seem to be the only thing you got," Hatsume noticed.

The three of them looked at the headband Izuku's fingers were still clutching, trying to understand what she meant. Then kept looking...

Uraraka winced, Tokoyami's eyes widened and Izuku finally realized there was some red and white hair on the headband. Oups.

Izuku shook the headband to make the proof disappear. Here. Nothing to see.

Everyone pretended that they didn't see anything.
Hatsume had finished removing the jetpack and had started tinkering on it when Todoroki approached, looking like he just wanted to take a stroll or to commit a homicide, definitely one or the other.

He walked straight to Izuku, who was relieved he got rid of the red and white evidences. Even if Todoroki noticed, Izuku would deny he had panicked and just yanked the headband until his dying breath.

But instead, Todoroki grabbed his hand and activated his quirk, lightly. The light touch was the only reason why Air Pressure wasn't activated by reflex and Izuku watched him icing his wounds.

And he left as abruptly as he had arrived.

"… Thank you?"

*****

Sorahiko rewound the cavalry battle. Something had drawn his attention, and it might have been nothing...

Just before the Iida boy helped his team take the headband of the number one boy.

The green kid hadn't been taking the competition seriously. Sorahiko could see it in the way he was smiling, talking to his teammates. The boy was having fun, and he was enjoying it.

Not that it was a bad thing. For Sorahiko, who had obtained his licence in order to be free to use his quirk, he could perfectly understand someone who wasn't dedicated to become the number 1. Hell, he had only rised through the ranks because he had to progress to help Nana.

But there was something.

He put the image by image.

Wide eyes, mouth slightly open, the start of a smile. Fascination. Not a hint of worry.

Then the headband was taken. Guilt. Fear. Anger. Absolute distress.

In less than a second, the kid had went from childish awe to anguish.

Brutal moodswings weren't normal for teenagers despite what some morons thought. He would have to tell Toshinori to keep an eye on the kid, because something must have weighted on his mental state to react so rashly.

But what interested him was right after.

The cold determination in his face and body language. The intensity. It was as if he had an adrenaline rush while being perfectly in control of the surge. While it was already unusual for a kid with three weeks of training at most, but something in the exact expression troubled Sorahiko, as if he was reminded of something.

But his memory wasn't what it used to be.
He put the video at normal speed, and watch the rest until the green boy cried in his teammates' arms. The unease started to disappear. Maybe the kid was just over sensitive, or going through a rough time. He would have to keep an eye on him for the rest of the Sport Festival, and contact Toshinori if something seemed really wrong.

After all, one didn't react so strongly for nothing.

****

Being dragged willingly to a deserted hallway right before an important match didn't seem like the epitome of wisdom but Izuku still followed Todoroki while accepting the 2% possibility of being shanked and left for dead.

Not that he wasn't used to it. With Kacchan, it was usually 20% and it was that low only because his childhood preferred explosions.

Izuku waited for Todoroki to say something, but he took his time, seeming lost in thoughts.

"What did you want to talk about?"

Todoroki took a deep breath. Looked at Izuku.

"I heard you talking about quirk marriages and traffickers. Most people our age aren't that aware of those."

*When and where?*

Izuku had to dig up though his memory but he remembered talking about it the day when Iida had been elected. Todoroki had started watching him from this moment, but he hadn't made the connection at the time.

"Your quirk is similar to All Might," Todoroki continued. "And you obviously know how to use it in a fight. It's not something you learn in quirk control classes. It has to come from training, and an intense one since you were able to go toe to toe with someone able to fight All Might. But you usually try to be discreet about it."

*And obviously failing.*

Izuku crossed his arms.

*Think of something to say. A good explanation. Stay close to the truth, so you won't get mixed up later on.*

"Midoriya," Todoroki asked, "Are you a Lost Child?"

Izuku stared at Todoroki but didn't talk, probably because his jaw had dropped on the floor.

One of the consequences of the appearance of quirks and the rise of the hero system was that people had started to want children with a specific quirk, worthy of their idol's. Especially since heroes had a tendency to take under their wings people with quirks similar to their own.

Human traffickers had brought the solution to the demand. For the right price, they sold the right
genes, even the surrogates if necessary. It was a despicable and horrible business, and the children born from it were called Lost because they were 'designed' to have quirks similar to 'Long lost children'.

It was like asking: *Hey, is one of your parent a monster?*

Izuku opened his mouth to explain that Todoroki was utterly wrong but only a pterodactyl screech escaped his throat. The second tentative was slightly better.

"Nope. Definitely no. Absolutely not. Just no!"

"… So, it's not that?"

*Of all the things I have to defend against, you had to accuse me of something no one would have thought. No one.*

Izuku sighed.

"I always loved heroes, and All Might was always my idol, as far as I can remember. There was a time when I wanted to be like him. And as I trained, I was pretending to be him. Powerful. Always knowing what to do. Always here for those who needed it."

It wasn't the whole truth, of course. But it wasn't like he could tell Todoroki about those times where he had to flee his home with his mother. Where he always felt lost, and didn't know how to make his mom less sad.

All Might had been his light at the time.

"It passed. But I still have those ingrained reflexes. You noticed a similarity because there was a time where I emulated him. That's all." He rubbed his neck, uncomfortable. "Why would you even think something like that."

The question was to have some breathing room and no answer was expected, but Todoroki explained himself.

He told Izuku about his own familial situation.

About how Endeavor, not very loved but still a cool hero as far as Izuku had been concerned, was in private. Ambitious, driven, a hard worker, all those qualities were suddenly taking a turn for the worst. It had driven his entire family into despair.

Until a mother had scarred her own son.

"I chose you as an opponent to get my revenge on this bastard," Todoroki concluded. "I don't need his quirk. And I will become number 1 without using it."

Izuku didn't know what to say.

He had lived through some troubles in his life. But his family had always been there for him. He had never felt as safe as when his father was still here. None of his parents had ever raised a hand on him, even to spank him as a child.

Home and family had always been his safe haven, and Todoroki didn't even have that.

But Todoroki wasn't looking for kind words.
"Whatever your circumstances are, I will defeat you," he declared as he left.

But there was one thing that Izuku could talk about. One thing he knew about.

"Todoroki? Do you really think you can win with half your strength?"

He stopped. Turned towards Izuku.

"Obviously."

Wrong answer.

"One day, you will have to use you flames to save yourself or someone else, and you won't be able to control your quirk because you ignored half of it," Izuku warned him.

Something passed into Todoroki's mismatched eyes. This time, Izuku managed to read it.

It was disappointment.

"Don't lose your match," Todoroki simply answered to that.

---

Chapter End Notes

"Why does the Todoroki boy keep looking behind him ?"
For those who wondered, yes, he was wondering what the hell Izuku was doing.
Izuku never reached the cafeteria after his conversation with Todoroki. He sensed the dread creeping up on him, and he realized the crowd of people talking about the incoming tournament wouldn't be good for him.

There was a wooden zone inside UA, not far from the stadium. It was calm, almost peaceful, so Izuku sat on the grass, his back to a tree, and he texted Urarara and Iida to warn them he wouldn't arrive anytime soon. Which caused much screaming from Iida because he estimated that Izuku might pass out from skipping lunch or something.

Izuku sat in the middle of the silence, mentally checking on his quirks.

The counting grounded him.

He wasn't unsettled because of the talk with Todoroki. Or by his mistake during the cavalry battle. This was probably just a general excess of everything finishing to well up. Izuku could be perfectly fine for weeks and suddenly feel numb and empty.

The fact you can't reveal too much at the Sport Festival or hiding for a year your intention to go to UA despite your mother's wishes, probably didn't help.

But it always passed, and this time was no exception.

Izuku took his phone in his bandaged hand, noticing that Iida and Uraraka had sent him messages reminding him not to be late. He scrolled though his contact list and after hesitating for a moment, called his mother, who answered in the second.

"Izuku ? Are you hurt ?" she immediately asked.

Which was quite vexing.

"Not that I'm aware of. Can't I call my mom unless there is a problem ?"

"Never. You usually text."

It was incredibly hard to bluff against someone who knew you since birth.

"It's just that the one on one are about to start," Izuku admitted, "And I want to know what you think about it."

His mother hesitated : "I think you should do what you think is right for you."

Izuku brought his knees to his chest and put his face on them, but carefully controlled his voice in order to not show any hint of anxiety. She would worry, it would worry him, and that was a cycle difficult to break.

"Please, don't tell me what you think I want to hear. I know you're worried. But I also know that I won't slip up. And I know I can manage not to get hurt. Do I have to worry about anything else ? I won't be disappointed. I won't give you the sad puppy eyes. I am simply asking for advices."
Izuku wanted certain things, but he wasn't ready to sacrifice too much for it, and his mother shouldn't have to pay the price.

At the other end of the line, her mother took a significant pause.

"Izuku, you're on a road where you will fail if you keep worrying about being found out. It's OK. The risks are minimal. I trust you."

Those last three words finally managed to make him smile.

He sighed, realizing just now he had been holding his breath for quite a while.

"I love you, mom. I will try not to be trip on my own foot."

She laughed.

"I love you too, Izuku. Do your best."

****

To everyone's surprise, Ojirou and another student from 1-B had forfeited because he had almost no memory of the cavalry battle. And since the team's rider looked like a purple cat who'd just eaten the canary, Izuku could guess how it had happened.

1-B decided between themselves, and at last, a girl with vine for hair and a boy with an interesting softening quirk were chosen. Tetsutetsu, the boy Izuku had talked to, declined because he thought they had a better chance to make 1-B win.

As for the fights in themselves... Izuku wasn't expecting the tournament to be easy, but he was at least hoping for Todoroki and Bakugou to weed each other out.

The universe laughed at him.

**Midoriya vs Honenuki and Todoroki vs Sero.**

**Kaminari vs Shiozaki and Iida vs Mei.**

**Uraraka vs Bakugou and Kirishima vs Shinsou.**

**Aoyama vs Ashido vs Yaoyorozu and Tokoyami.**

Well, that's interesting.

"Midoriya, you have to fight at least two recommended students," Mineta noticed.

His face was still a mess of bruises where Yaoyorozu had repeatedly hit him during the obstacle race.

"I'm aware," Izuku simply answered.

Behind them, Sero, who would be affronting Todoroki in his first match, sighed.
"I understand your point but that's still a little insulting, guys."

Izuku pivoted towards the tape boy, the swift moment making him raise his eyebrows.

"Sero? Please, win so I don't have to fight Todoroki," he asked, completely serious. "I want to fight you, then Uraraka. That's all."

Mineta, Sero, and Izuku looked at Uraraka who was still pondering on the fact she would have to fight someone with an extremely powerful quirk and an instinct for fighting worthy of a war god. In turn, she looked at them and there was something really scary in her eyes.

"You know that I wouldn't go easy on you, don't you?"

"Uraraka will beat us with her bare hands if she has to," Sero joked.

Except Uraraka seemed completely serious when she nodded.

"I wouldn't expect any less," Izuku smiled.

"Then, it's a promise, Midori," Uraraka smiled back.

They fist bumbed, Sero joining a moment after. Mineta didn't join, calling them crazy but it didn't matter.

None of them were as confident as their words would imply, but they were all taking All Might's advice at heart.

_fake it until you make it._

*****

Izuku advanced on the cemented arena, deeply conscious of all the stares on him. During the two first events, he had been lost in the crowd -at least until the two explosions he had provoked, and afterwards, he had been distracted from the stares- and in the middle of his team. Now, all those gazes were piercing at him.

"ON THE RIGHT! HONENUKI JUZOU! RECOMMENDED STUDENT AND ONE OF THE TWO HOPE BRINGERS OF HIS CLASS!"

"Calm down," the monotone voice of Aizawa-Sensei said.

Honenuki Juuzou. Recommended students since he wasn't on the list of students who took the entrance exam. And a softening quirk. He needed a contact point for his quirk to act during the cavalry, so like Todoroki, it came from him towards the exterior.

Which meant Izuku had a window of opportunity.

_Don't get distracted._

He had underestimated Iida because he thought he knew his quirk and this had almost cost everything to his team. He wasn't doing that again.
"May the best win," Honenuki mouthed, repeating the first phrase of Izuku's speech.

Was that sarcasm or playful banter?

Did it even matter?

"ON THE LEFT, MIDORIYA IZUKU, THE MAN WHO DOMINATED THE FIRST EVENT!"

"Let's have fun," Izuku answered with a shy smile, still burdened by all those eyes looking at him.

An amused glint passed in Honenuki's eyes.

"READY? GO!

Honenuki stomped on the ground, starting to soften it.

Izuku had already jumped, and as his opponent quirk's activated, he kicked in mid air.

Jump, Aim and Air Pressure combined into an air blast that directly hit his opponent who never had the time to dodge. Honenuki flew backwards.

By the time Izuku touched the ground and landed just outside the quicksand Honenuki had started to create, the recommended student had landed outside the arena and lost.

And the whole stadium had gone completely quiet.

"Midoriya wins!" Midnight announced after a moment of stupefied silence.

Izuku went and checked if Honenuki wasn't hurt.

*****

"... AND IT'S A WIN FOR MIDORIYA! SOMEONE IS NOT HERE TO PLAY AROUND!"

Present Mic screamed as Midoriya walked towards the white-haired boy. They talked for a moment. As they did, Honenuki's fist unclenched, and finally then they both slightly bowed.

In front of his television, Sorahiko smiled.

The quirk was good, but the timing was even better. This kid had known when to hit in order to secure the most efficient victory.

Which meant a some solid training.

He grabbed another taiyaki without looking and bit it in half. This year was going to be interesting.

*****

As he was going to his match, Shouto gritted his teeth, still annoyed by what had happened.
Some things about Midoriya didn't make sense. You didn't get so good just by working out by yourself. People panicked, froze, and hesitated when they weren't trained. They didn't almost die, then immediately went back into a ruthless fight without a pause.

And powerful quirks didn't come from nowhere.

Maybe Midoriya had lied to Shouto, though he didn't think so, but now, he had to focus on how to fight a quirk so similar to All Might's.

He remembered vividly the USJ and how Midoriya's nose had started bleeding. He was powerful, but there was a limit, and since he had barely used his abilities during the FIRST two events, it might be a time limit. Shouto could play the clock but it wasn't at his advantage either because of the risk of hypothermia.

But first, Sero.

Shouto frowned when he realized his old man was waiting for him, his flickering flames making the shadows in the hallway move. Shouto should have noticed that before Endeavor was in sight. Being absorbed in his thoughts was a dangerous habit to get into.

Of course, he had to be here. How else would he remind everyone who's creation Shouto was? He couldn't escape his name, his blood, and he would have to live with the title "The son of Endeavor" for the rest of his life.

"You're disgracing me, Shouto," the number 2 hero said and Shouto almost smiled at that. "You could have crushed both the obstacle course and the cavalry battle if you'd used your left side."

Shouto didn't look at him. He didn't even slow down.

"It's time to grow up and to stop this childish rebellion. You have a duty : to surpass All Might."

For a time, Shouto hadn't given a damn about his so-called duty. But now, it was his goal too. Surpassing Endeavor. Surpassing All Might. Make everyone forget the name of the flame hero so the very memory of him would die, and all his stupid ambitions would be shattered.

"Do you understand?" his old man continued. "You're different from your siblings. You're my greatest creation."

A creation, not his son. A weapon created and honed to destroy a rival who would never acknowledge Endeavor as such.

Not that being his child was better.

"That's all you have to say to me?" Shouto asked but he didn't expect an answer. He knew that he was nothing more than his father's creation as far as he was concerned.

Anger was burning within him, and the fact he could get so aggravated by this man only made it worse. This was the proof Endeavor had a hold on him. And it was intolerable.

"I'll win this with mom's power alone. And I will never use your power in battle."

He wouldn't let him gain more ascendancy on him, and smothering those flames were the first steps in this direction.

Endeavor scoffed at that. Shouto wasn't looking at him but he could perfectly picture the disbelief
on his face.

"That may be good enough while you are at school, but you'll reach your limit soon enough."

*One day, you will have to use your flames and you won't be able to control your quirk because you ignored half of it,* Midoriya's voice said once again.

Shouto didn't answer. He didn't need to when he was about to show them what he was capable of. He would beat Sero. He would crush Midoriya. He would surpass Endeavor.

He walked into the fight in a dream-like state, his mind still on his father, a little on Midoriya's inability to understand what he had tried to explain, and he managed to focus back on his opponent only when Sero's tapes made him move.

"Sorry," he said because that seemed like the polite thing to do before unleashing his quirk.

****

The ice Todoroki had created almost reached the front rows, which included Izuku's seat. He was suddenly reevaluating some of his life choices. Todoroki's greatest strength had always seemed to be the control he had on his ice, but now he could also simply throw icebergs at people.

Acceleration would have to save his skin because if he was trapped in ice, the cold would get to him even if he managed to break free.

"The Abyss is calling your name, Midoriya," Tokoyami declared.

"Is that your way of telling me he is going to turn me into a popsicle?"

"Indeed."

Izuku winced, and it didn't disappear as Todoroki started to melt the ice around Sero. He leaned forward on his chair, and this time, it wasn't because of the beautiful quirk Todoroki refused to use fully.

Among the awe and the admiration of the spectators, and their compassion for Sero, something about Todoroki seemed really sad.

****

Eijirou had walked into the fight with Ojirou's warning still ringing in his ears, and he had still managed to walk out of the ring without being able to do anything. Now, he was hiding in the bathroom, ashamed and horribly frustrated because he had missed his chance, despite being warned and only having three opportunities to prove he had the potential to be a hero.

Before the tournament, he hadn't quite understood why Ojirou and Shoda had forfeited. But now that he had went through that quirk, he could understand the frustration which came with the violation of being turned into a puppet, unable to do anything to fight back. He had started to
answer as his friends were insulted, then he had been out-of-bounds.

Eijirou had wanted to scream, to fight, to do anything really, just not be stuck as powerless, as too late for his own fight. Instead, he had been left with all this restless energy.

At least, when he sparred with others, he understood why he lost. He knew he did his best. He knew he could progress. But how was he supposed to fight against something like that?

*This is a frightening quirk*, he had thought for just a second. He couldn't help it. *Almost too frightening for a hero.*

Then all the students in Gen Ed had cheered for Shinsou.

And the expression on Shinsou's face... It was like he couldn't believe it. Like he had never expected it.

It had made immediately made Eijirou reconsider a lot.

Eijirou lost. It hurt. But he lost because his opponent was, if not stronger, better than him.

He passed some water on his face.

He couldn't show his disappointment.

*****

Kirishima walked out of the arena and he lost without a fight. The red-haired boy was trying to hide it but he was extremely disappointed. When interrogated afterwards, he admitted he had no memory of what had happened. Since it had happened right after a conversation, the gen ed boy's quirk had to be voice based. Siren-like quirk, maybe.

Mei destroyed Iida but forfeited, making Izuku wince in empathy for his friend during the whole match. He was a little too honorable for his own good.

Shiozaki won against Kaminari, and the latter had to be evacuated as his quirk had temporally fried his brain. The fact his quirk couldn't protect him from his own electricity was concerning and Izuku's noted it for when he would pick up the electric quirk Nagisa had found for him.

Finally, Izuku didn't stay for the match between Ashido and Aoyama, especially since he already knew Ashido would win since she had better results in physical tests and Aoyama had told them the weakness of his quirk on first day. Instead, he wanted to talk strategy with Uraraka, but she wanted to do this on her own.

If Izuku hadn't known the reason why she was so driven during the training, but Uraraka explained why she was so determined to have her hero licence. She told him about her parents, something Iida was already aware of.

This put things in perspective.

A lot of his fellow students were determined to win. They had this drive that Izuku was missing, and that was what would make the difference.
Izuku assisted to Kacchan and Uraraka's match, completely calm as the crowd was getting more and more worried and judgmental.

The fact that they didn't realize Kacchan's playing offense was because Uraraka was a worthy opponent was one thing. The fact that even his classmates were started to comment about Kacchan's being a brute quickly was something else that got on his nerves.

So when Izuku talked, his voice cut through the talks of 1-A and 1-B.

"Pitying her is disrespecting her."

He took advantage of the second of stunned silence he had provoked.

"Uraraka is strong and determined. Kacchan has no other choice than to be careful, and that's not a sign of cruelty on his part, but a sign of strength on hers. You're missing something important here."

A moment later, Aizawa-Sensei was chewing out pro heroes - who would have thought Izuku and him would have similar ideas - and Uraraka quickly showed she wasn't only driven, but also had a strategical mind as debris Kacchan hadn't noticed because of his own smoke fell from the sky.

It ultimately failed but it was still an incredible move.

"How could you not notice the thousands of rocks above their heads?" a blond kid in 1-B asked.

Izuku chose to shut up about since he had been monitoring the quirks his two classmates during the whole match, so he didn't notice as much as he got curious of why Uraraka's quirk was being used.

"We were focused on Bakugou trying to barbecue Uraraka," Hakagure explained, probably with a pout.

As he left Uraraka and went to the prep room, Izuku met Kacchan who was walking up the stairs, his hands in his pockets. He was oddly calm.

Izuku quickly realized it was because he hadn't noticed Izuku yet.

"What do you want?" Kacchan barked like an angry Pomeranian. "Looking to die, scum?"

Izuku took two steps back, a reflex, really.

"I'm up next so I have to go to the waiting room... Congratulations on your win," he threw before starting to flee.

Well, at least tried to.

"You love messing with me, don't you?" Kacchan accused him, making him stop. "You're the one who gave this crazy plan to Round Face, aren't you?"

*Why do people keep underestimating Uraraka?*
"I didn't. Uraraka came up with this plan. So if there was anyone messing with you, it was her."

The blond teen paused for a brief moment.

"Are you even going to fight seriously?" he finally asked.

"Why wouldn't I?" Izuku asked, not understanding the question at first.

"Because you never take anything seriously, and you keep playing around. You're worthless. It doesn't matter who wins between Half and Half and you. I could obliterate the both of you."

Izuku just stared at him.

**You never take anything seriously.**

Izuku was constantly training. He dedicated his time and energy on looking for quirks, on making them better. He dedicated years of his life to better Transfer. He had made so much efforts, despite his doubts, his worries, and he was always careful, always, because his mother and him were at risks.

But Kacchan wasn't talking about that. He was talking about how Izuku seemed to hold back.

Izuku held back _because_ he took things seriously. Because every time he took a quirk, he had the obligation to control it and not to let anyone be hurt by it. Despite mutations and people being sturdier than before, human beings were ridiculously fragile. One bad hit on the head, one infected open wound, one hit at the wrong place, and they could be severely injured.

Winning was easy. Being ruthless was simple. He could win against Todoroki by blasting him and half of the stadium, but he wouldn't survive. He could neutralize Kacchan's quirk permanently by breaking his wrists, and he could have won in the test if he hadn't been worried of badly hurting him.

But Izuku knew about the risks one bad move could lead to. He had to, in order to survive mastering his donated quirks, and the knowledge never left him.

_Throwing his power around was reckless, for himself and for others._

The threats were typical, but this... This touched a nerve Izuku didn't know he had. Maybe because he was almost expelled while Aizawa-Sensei didn't seem to see a problem with Todoroki's lack of flames. Maybe because he was tired.

So, he immediately thought about something that would annoy Kacchan in return. He was strong, but also defined by his pride. And there was one thing he hated above else : people not taking him seriously.

So Izuku put on an All Might grin on his face before cheerfully saying : "Yes, but can you do this?"

He did the finger guns and used Slide and Glide to hover backwards and into the waiting room, before closing and blocking the door on a dumbfounded childhood friend.

The roar Kacchan made after one long moment of stupefied silence was worth it.

*****
A powerful quirk but not All Might's, Izuku's quirk warned as he was walking towards the stadium and a Todoroki determined to beat him.

It was a common knowledge that only villains used their quirks in public, but Izuku couldn't decently judge people for that. Too much hypocrisy wasn't good for one's health, after all. However, it didn't meant that he didn't have Air Pressure ready just in case since the presence was walking in his direction.

He almost jumped out of his skin when he realized it was Endeavor, clothed in flames. The teenager froze like a scared baby rabbit, his mind full of Todoroki's previous revelations.

"There you are," Endeavor simply said, confirming that this wasn't an accidental encounter.

Izuku stopped, and waited, uncomfortable but trying not to show it. Endeavor had always been intimidating but it was incredibly worse so close to him. He was taller and larger than life, a bear of a man. Though All Might was probably taller, but the number 1 hero made an effort to appear reassuring, while Endeavor's presence was crushing.

"I saw what you did out there," Endeavor continued. "You have an amazing quirk. It even seems on par with All Might's."

Izuku squinted at him.

Please, don't accuse me of being a Lost Child.

Apart from that, it almost seemed like a hero congratulating a promising student. But this didn't reflect in Endeavor's eyes.

It looked like he wasn't even seeing Izuku.

"My boy, Shouto, has a duty to surpass All Might. His match against you will prove a valuable test."

It was like everything clicked at this moment.

"So give it your all. Put up a good fight with him."

Once upon a time, Izuku had obsessively created a quirk similar to All Might's thanks to a patchworks of him, pretending to be his idol, pretending to be as strong as him in a time when he had never felt so powerless.

But it never worked.

As much as he loved quirks, they weren't something that defined a person. He had enough of them to confirm it.

"That's all I have to say," Endeavor said while started to leave. Izuku took a step on the side, not because he was scared, but because he didn't like the idea of being too close to real flames. "Sorry for my bluntness."

Don't forget to play your part. That's why Endeavor came to see Izuku.

"It's true that my quirk is similar to All Might's. But I am not him."
Endeavor seemed surprised.

"It goes without saying," Endeavor said, frowning.

"Then, you understand that Todoroki isn't you,"

He didn't wait for an answer. He crossed the hallway, emerged in the stadium and under the hundreds of stares, and he made his way to the arena. He didn't try to smile like All Might told him, he didn't look at his classmates in the crowd to find courage.

"Are you ready ?" Todoroki asked.

Todoroki wanted to beat him without using his fire.

Endeavor wanted him to do his best so his son could prove his skills.

"READY ?"

Todoroki put himself in position, right leg and right arm first, so he could use his ice without Izuku taking advantage of the blatant weak spot that was his left side.

Izuku sighed.

"GO !"

Chapter End Notes

It would be hilarious if the first line of the next chapter was something like "And then, Izuku immediately forfeited to spite both Endeavor and Todoroki."

Thank you so much for all the comments last chapter. I was ecstatic.
Power exploded from Todoroki's quirk and a mass of ice rushed towards Izuku, the kind that had trapped the noumu back at the USJ. But Izuku had been able to stop the weapon designed to fight All Might.

So Todoroki shouldn't have been so surprised when Izuku avoided it and seemingly appeared into his space. He had the time to summon a wall of ice, and it shattered under Izuku's punch, making Todoroki fly backwards in the middle of ice shards.

But not enough as he stopped himself with another ice wall, bouncing harshly on it.

*I was right. Air blasts are out.*

Long distance attacks were probably better if Izuku wanted to play it safe, but unlike Honenuki, Todoroki could stop himself from being flung around. The trick would be to hit hard enough to break the wall at his back and any defense at the front, but Todoroki was in the middle and Izuku wasn't trusting his control enough not to break his opponent's neck.

And the middle of the Sport Festival was no testing ground.

Izuku fled as ice flew towards him, stalagmites attacking him instead of the usual surges of ice Todoroki could summon. Someone really wanted to stop Izuku. Still, it wasn't fast enough to actually threaten him.

He kept avoiding the stalagmites, destroying Todoroki's ice, and hitting him when he wasn't fast enough to create a shield. Izuku hounded him, relentless. In return, the ice quickly spread through the arena, Todoroki trying to keep him away or at least to break his run. With the unleashing of this quirk, the temperature dropped, and the cold air started to burn the inside of Izuku's lungs.

"MIDORIYA DROPS HIS PREVIOUS TACTICS OF OVERWHELMING IN ONE HIT HIS OPPONENT, AND PREFERENCES A HIT-AND-RUN STRATEGY!" Present Mic screamed.

"He has to be careful since Todoroki can keep himself from being thrown out of the ring," Aizawa-Sensei explained.

The two commentators distracted Izuku for a second, and he almost slipped on a patch of ice, the soles of his sneakers hindering him under the polar environment Todoroki was creating. He almost fell, calling *Balance* to keep himself from crashing to the cemented floor, but he was too late and fell on one knee.

Ice surged towards him, faster than before. Spikes once again, instead of the regular entrapment.
Izuku punched the ground, and the ice didn't as much shattered as exploded under the impact, and with it, the cement underneath started to crack.

Todoroki looked at the fissures, evaluating, and as he breathed, mist escaped his mouth. Izuku got back on his feet, fists clenched in an attempt to hide the shivers that had started to run on his arms.

This strategy also had its limits. Since Izuku was so close to Todoroki, mist was escaping his nose and mouth every time he breathed. His skin had started to burn because of the cold. He had been using Speed quirks like crazy but had stopped using Cooldown. And every time he moved, he created wind pressure, which was making it worse.

If this continues, can I get hypothermia just by standing next to him?

Todoroki didn't seem to fare better, ice starting to cover his left side. But since he could allow himself to stay in place and to let his quirk do the dirty work while Izuku had to move so Air Pressure, Speed and Strength could work, Izuku wasn't sure he had the advantage here.

Three spears of ice almost kebabed him as he was trying to think of a way to make Todoroki lose without beating him to a pulp on live television.

"You think too much," Todoroki calmly said, drawing another ice shield just before Izuku kicked it again.

Ice shards scratched him, but he didn't slow down. Izuku pretended to attack on the side, circled around Todoroki as he protected himself, and kicked the ice wall that should have stopped Todoroki's fall, then Todoroki himself, in the back. His opponent went airborne, but not before he froze Izuku's leg, from knee to ankle.

He didn't even touch me. He doesn't need a contact point if I'm close enough. He couldn't help a smile. Interesting.

Izuku retreated so he could break the ice. He couldn't let it stay. The longer it was in contact with him, the more it weakened him. He stomped on the floor, letting Strength break it.

"And you're shivering, Todoroki. It's almost like you're not using the mechanism that keeps you from being hurt by your own quirk."

He saw the stalagmites coming at the last second but his feet slipped a little because of all the ice on the ground, and something stabbed him a little. His fault, he should have noticed it in time to use Durability.

Todoroki took advantage of his pause to kick him in the stomach, which was just rude. Izuku didn't manage to stop his fall despite Balance. It wasn't even the ice patches but his body wasn't perfectly responding to him. Because the cold is getting to you. He landed on his side, and kicked the air, Air Pressure in tow, hitting his opponent and the ice he has started to throw at him.

And once again, Todoroki stopped himself with an ice wall.

How annoying.

But Izuku was back in his space before he had the time to think. He kicked the ground at Todoroki's feet, making the boy stumble. His movements were slow and uncoordinated, and he would have fallen if Izuku didn't grab his wrist. He pushed on his feet, and started throwing
Todoroki like a human frisbee.

*Throw him away, kick him in mid-air so he isn't protected by another ice wall.*

*End the fight.*

Except this time, the ice never came.

Instead, pure and complete absence of warmth sank its claws inside his chest, and it was as if his heart tried to drop in his chest.

Izuku jumped back, crashing though some mass of ice as he did, and he almost fell. He could feel the pain in his chest, as if his heart was about to stop, and nothing else existed apart from that.

*Resistance. Durability.* Nothing worked because the frost was already inside him.

He had fallen to his knees at some point, and it's the chime of Todoroki's quirk activation which brought him back to reality.

*Speed.*

Izuku clutched his chest, fighting to not lose consciousness. Falling asleep meant dying. He wasn't in a mock fight anymore as far as he was concerned.

All of his Speed quirks were activated and he wasn't even moving. He couldn't, not when he was feeling so bad. But the one common point every speed quirks seems to have was the warmth they created.

"Sorry Midoriya," Todoroki said, holding out a hand, almost entirely covered in frost. "But you're too much like All Might to be stopped by anything less."

But Izuku wasn't listening to him. And he barely acknowledged the iceberg coming his way.

He had never felt so cold in his entire life.

-Shouto had underestimated what a pain in his side Midoriya would be.

He was hurting all over, as he kept being flung around by someone who only slowed down when he was about to hit him. He also hurt a little – probably a lot for anyone else- every time he breathed, and two kicks ago, his vision had become worryingly blurry.

Even when Shouto managed to freeze Midoriya, instead of wincing or showing discomfort, he just effortlessly broke through all of his attempts to encase him in ice. The only sign that Midoriya was indeed affected by the cold was that he was taking longer and longer pauses before attacking.

It was enough.

Hypothermia led at first to shivers, numbness, and the start of the absence of coordination. Then, people became slow, and mildly confused. Shouto had learned to recognize the signs and to push through the cold, while Midoriya's quirk probably provided enough stamina to deal with it. But he didn't have enough experience to realize he was starting to slow down.
Until he let an opening large enough for Shouto to focus the intensity of his quirk on Midoriya himself, lowering his core temperature. The backlash hurt Shouto more that he would usually care to admit, and he needed a second to push through the pain of the extreme cold he had created.

Extreme temperature shock. He never would have done that against anyone else. It was too dangerous. But he had seen Midoriya surviving worse.

"Sorry Midoriya," Shouto still apologized as he froze Midoriya's feet to the ground since he had finally stopped moving. "But you're too much like All Might's to be stopped by anything less."

Shouto unleashed the full power of his quirk as Midoriya was still kneeling on the ground, unable to run.

Ice spread out, before engulfing his opponent and half of what was left of the field.

"TODOROKI TURNS THE FIGHT AROUND BY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF MIDORIYA'S PAUSE ! AND HE SHOWED NO MERCY !"

Shouto started to advance, conscious he couldn't let someone encased in ice for too long. There was no such a thing as harmless freezing. Even for him and he had a resistance to cold.

His legs weren't responding correctly, numb and slow. Shouto had destroyed his mobility while trying to outpower Midoriya.

It was worth it. If only to see the look of absolute annoyance on his father's face.

"Midoriya can't continue," Midnight declared.

Shouto put a hand on the ice.

He barely had the time to feel alarm when he heard a crunching noise.

Ice exploded in sharp shards around him, and though he didn't have time to see Midoriya jumping out of the ice trap Shouto had created, he perfectly felt him punching him in the face.

Shouto crashed into the ground, stunned.

"I am not All Might," Midoriya said, completely still. He wasn't even looking at Shouto. He was pale, but he wasn't shivering. Not showing any sign that he was affected by the cold. "And you can't beat me."

*What does it take to stop him?*

Shouto managed to get back on his feet. His flames were begging to be released, but he wouldn't.

Instead, he was focusing on Midoriya. He raised his arm, looking at his hand.

"MIDORIYA MANAGED TO FREE HIMSELF BUT DON'T ASK ME HOW ! HE IS DETERMINED TO GRAB VICTORY !"

No, he wasn't. He was angry. He was monumentally angry, the cold kind which could make ravages. Usually, anger made quirks more powerful but also made people clumsy but not this time.

Midoriya clenched his fist. "You are about to pass out because of your own quirk. I don't even have to defeat you when you are doing your best to lose."
Midoriya looked at him.

Shouto immediately understood what he meant when he said he wasn't All Might. The Symbol of Peace's eyes had never felt so cold and intense. It was like Midoriya wasn't even seeing Shouto but something at his core. It was chilling.

"You want to surpass All Might? Or Endeavor? Or even me? That's impossible while you're playing around. I limit myself too, but at least, I admit it and it's not out of spite."

Annoyance shot through Shouto.

"Why can't you understand..."

Midoriya whipped his hand, and with it, a shockwave swept through the field, drowning sounds and even the sensation of Shouto's back hitting another wall of ice.

_This bastard._

Shouto dragged himself up. Somehow.

At other end of the arena, Midoriya was unmoving, calmer than he had ever been.

"Now, shall we begin?" he asked Shouto, his green eyes burning with something incredibly cold.

Toshinori had stopped pretending he was watching the third years and he was focused on his phone. He had intended to glance at it to see how Young Todoroki and Young Midoriya would fare, and the answer seemed to be: busy unleashing hell.

At least, that was he had thought. Until Young Todoroki almost won. Until Young Midoriya emerged from the sea of ice, a horrible expression on his face. Confusion, shock, and something blank that could almost be mistaken for peace for those who didn't know better.

It was the kind of all-out response a call close to death could provoke, and Toshinori knew intimately to what it could lead.

He grabbed his phone. Called Cementos.

As Young Midoriya and Young Todoroki gave up on any strategical thinking they had at the start of the fight, and simply threw the full force of their quirks at each other, starting to destroy the arena that was supposed to withstand the exploits of Third Years.

"Be prepared to stop the match."

Midoriya was a blur, disappearing between Shouto's attacks, when he wasn't crushing any shields he could create.
It wasn't like before.

Midoriya's usage of his quirk was less careful, all caution thrown to the wind. He used to avoid the ice spears. Now, he broke them or passed through them. He used to slow down before trying to hit Shouto's ice. Now, his attacks rattled Shouto to the bone even when he wasn't hitting directly.

Shouto answered in kind, ignoring the pain on his whole body as the cold was robbing of every sensation.

Until Midoriya broke the shield in front of him, the ensuing shockwave almost breaking Shouto too.

Then, almost in the same breath, Midoriya destroyed the wall at his back, almost leveling the field at the same time.

At this moment, Shouto only knew that something was behind him, something faster and stronger than him, and he reacted with only one thought in mind.

Get away from me.

Flames burst from him in an incandescent veil, and for the first time since the beginning of this fight, Midoriya retreated before landing a hit.

Shouto's fire grew, spreading on his arm and his entire left side. With it, the numbness brought by the cold finally started to subdue. Pain started to spread in his skin, as if his whole body was remembering what it was like to feel something.

He didn't realize how much he was suffering until now.

Midoriya's eyes were wide, and though he wasn't moving for now, he had lost this specific stillness that came with anger. He sighed, seemingly relieved, and the frightening intensity that had taken hold of him was gone.

His hand was clutching his chest, as if he was out-of-breath. Or in pain.

Panic, Shouto realized. He wasn't angry. He was lashing out because my attack scared him. Hurt him.

Which meant that despite what Midoriya was pretending, Shouto had managed to injure him.

Now, he just had to continue and to finish this fight because his body gave up on him.

"Finally", Midoriya simply said, the beginning of a smile on his face. He was looking at Shouto's flames as if it was something beautiful.

There was something peculiar about how Midoriya reacted to things that could kill him.

"You're insane," Shouto realized.

"That's not the point."

This actually made Shouto smile. Though this might have to do the exhilaration of going all out for the first time in years.

As they used their quirks again, they both knew that this had to be the last attack.
Midoriya ran at him and jumped as if gravity didn't have a hold on him.

Shouto gave everything he had, pushing on both of his quirks like he never did before, because he was conscious of the aftereffects of extreme temperatures brutally coming into contact.

He braced himself.

As much as Midnight hated to interrupt two young men fighting with such passion, she was already starting to rip her sleeves even though her quirk probably wouldn't reach them in time. But Cementos' did, walls rising in front of the teenagers in a desperate attempt to separate them.

The two boys destroyed them as if they had never existed.

Right before Midnight was ejected from the platform, she saw the two boys disappearing into a storm of fire.

Everything hurt.

Shouto clang to the remnants of the circle of ice he had created to protect himself and used it to get back on his feet. Even breathing hurt and his vision was blurry. He couldn't see Midoriya past the swirls of smoke and the remains of what had been the arena.

Until the smoke brutally dissipated, and Midoriya appeared, standing calmly as if he hadn't just survived a massive explosion. His hand was still raised as he has lightly used his quirk in order to get rid of the smoke and to see where Shouto was.

Midoriya put his full focus back on him, and Shouto could almost feel the intensity of this quirk so similar to All Might's being summoned. *There you are,* he seemed to say silently. He started walking towards Shouto, clenching his fist.

Panting, Shouto prepared himself to use his quirk again. Fire, ice, he didn't know what to use since Midoriya seemed to be impossible to harm permanently, but he wouldn't give up.

But Midoriya stopped.

He looked down at his feet, and every ounce of his previous intensity disappeared as if it had never existed. He sighed, and bowed at Shouto.

"Midoriya is out of bounds," Midnight screamed as she climbed back on her platform. "Todoroki wins!"

Shouto finally understood as he realized where the broken line of the delimited field stood. His ice, fire, and Midoriya's strength had mostly destroyed it.

And Midoriya was outside of it.
Nagisa sighed, the weight on her chest being finally lifted as she saw her favorite bug leaving the ring without any sign of injuries.

This wasn't the case for his opponent. The winner tried to leave. Limped a few steps, then hanged on pile of ice and cement rubble, slightly hunched as he tried to fight what looked like a mix of exhaustion and pain. Be it because of the beating Midoriya had inflicted, the effect of the cold his own quirk generated, or the last explosion, the fight had left his marks.

While Midoriya was none for worse for wear.

"Midoriya would have won if it wasn't in a tournament," Chiyoh said next to her. "The Todoroki boy looks half-dead."

More people started to agree but Nagisa stayed quiet, worry clutching at her.

The medical robots told Shouto to wait so he could be transported to the infirmary but he refused, iced his injuries, pretended nothing hurt, and dragged himself away from the pit. He couldn't bear the claps and the spectators, not when he was this agitated.

He had won but he didn't feel like it.

He had used his left side.

Shouto's hand went to his scar, the gesture instinctive. Midoriya had scared him. Or Shouto had desperately wanted to win. He wasn't sure.

His mind was a mess and he needed time to think.

"Without control over your flames, going all out is dangerous," Endeavor smiled, almost giddy.

But fortunately, his father had decided to visit him again, replacing the maelstrom of thoughts and unidentifiable emotions by the familiar feeling of utter annoyance and the desire to hit him with something heavy.

He thought he had heard him screaming during the match but Shouto was used to ignore what escaped his father's mouth.

"This was a close-call, but at least, you've put aside your childish rebellion!"

He was in the way, so Shouto had to stop, and instantly regretted it.

"You're finally ready to replace me. To surpass me, even." Endeavor hold out his hand, so proud of the weapon he had created. "Come work with me after you graduate! I will guide you down the path of supremacy!"

"I didn't put anything aside," he managed to say. His ribs didn't like him talking. And they didn't
seem to appreciate air either, which was concerning.

His father finally shut up. Shouto didn't know if it was because of what he had said or the calm in his voice. It was a rare thing during their father-son conversations.

"It's just that... in the moment... in the instant... I forgot all about you," Shouto realized. "Whether that's a good, bad, or something in between... That's something I will have to think about."

He did manage to walk away. At least ten steps. Then, his knees gave away, and suddenly, he couldn't remain standing anymore. Endeavor rushed to him, trying to catch him.

Shouto at least had the time to slap his father's hand away before he crashed to the ground.

Toshinori's attention was brought back to his phone as his old master sent him two messages.

A screenshot of Young Midoriya just after he had escaped the ice.

And a question.

Gran Torino: [Doesn't he remind you of someone?]

Chapter End Notes

Another fanart from Akirama who had an idea about how the fight would proceed
https://gentrychild.tumblr.com/image/181379323629
There were several things which could lead to an incredible awkward situation.

Izuku losing it, and dramatically declaring to his opponent that he couldn't beat him right before Todoroki proved him wrong, was one.

Izuku being surprised by the explosion, while he was mid-air with no possibility of anchoring himself, then losing sight of the edge of the arena, was another. Though he was ready to admit it was because Todoroki had out maneuvered him.

And finally, being in the same room with the boy who had almost stopped his heart, was the last but not the least.

Todoroki and Izuku had both been admitted to the infirmary and they hadn't said more than two words ever since. Recovery Girl had pestered non-stop after Todoroki had been found face down by the assisting robots, but she had fixed him. She had also given a UA sweater to Izuku, wrapped him in several blankets and gave him a steaming mug of hot cocoa. Then, she had asked - threatened- them both to rest as she took care of a second year with bad burns.

Ever since that moment, the lingering silence was so thick Izuku could have cut it with a spoon. What was he even supposed to say ? *Sorry I freaked out and broke several of your bones ? Nice fight ? Your quirk is amazing and I hope you consider using your flames someday ?*

His mug was empty, so he walked to the little Nespresso machine on Recovery Girl's desk, made another hot cocoa, and added a decent amount of sugar.

After a hesitation, he grabbed another mug.

"Todoroki, do you want a hot chocolate ?" he asked.

The awkward silence turned into something more surprised.

"Yes ?" Todoroki answered, unsure.

So Izuku prepared another one, put half the amount of sugar he usually used, barely noticeable, really, and brought it to Todoroki who sat up and put his hands around the ceramic. Izuku, who was holding his own mug by the handle, noticed how Todoroki wasn't afraid to burn himself.

But Todoroki didn't drink, preferring to stare at Izuku. And Izuku stared back, unable to not notice that Todoroki looked like hell. His eyes were feverish, dark circles underlines them, and he was pale. Recovery Girl's quirk took its toll on her patients.

"So you're not injured," Todoroki said, his voice devoid of any intonation. "At all."

Izuku nodded as he sat and sipped his beverage. Unlike Todoroki, the only damage he received was because of the hypothermia, and because of that, Recovery Girl couldn't use her quirk without taking resources he desperately needed since the only thing to do for him was to warm up.
What had saved him was the activation of every Speed quirks he had. He had used them to vibrate and bring his core temperature to something acceptable, had stubbornly refused to pass out, and had broken every piece of ice in his way with Strength and Durability.

He wasn't keen on repeating the experience.

But Todoroki obviously wasn't finished.

"You don't become so good at using your quirk without training every day for years." He glanced at Izuku who didn't deny it. "Do you really train so much because of your admiration for All Might?"

Izuku understood why he was asking. Most people wouldn't devote so much time at training their quirks. Todoroki was forced to, while Izuku sought refuge in it.

Though he still wanted to know how Todoroki could have thought he was a lost child.

"It's not about All Might" Not completely. "It's because I like quirks. There is a point when I use it where everything is peaceful and exhilarating at the same time.

There was nothing like letting himself immerse into a quirk, any quirk, and letting anything else go. Anxiety, fear, doubts, everything was gone and there was only absolute certainty.

"I see exactly what you're talking about," Todoroki said.

Maybe he was talking about their fight, or something that happened before, but Izuku was certain it was when he was using both his flames and his ice.

"You say you like quirks," Todoroki abruptly added, changing the subject. "Is that why you were angry that I didn't use my flames?"

"I wasn't angry."

If Todoroki had been a little less stoical, he would have raised an eyebrow, but despite that, he still managed to convey how utterly unconvinced he was.

You decided to lash out. You took the decision to use more strength that you would normally do, consequences be damned. Isn't that anger? Frustration? Fear? All of that comes to the same place.

Izuku drank some of his hot cocoa to give himself the time to think about it, but all he found out was that he didn't really want to know.

"When you talked to me, I didn't have the words. I still don't have them. But I know a thing or two about quirks, and I think that's why I pushed you, though I didn't quite realize it at the time."

Todoroki didn't look like he was too annoyed with him, so Izuku continued, the words crashing into each other like every time he wanted to explain something but was afraid that he wouldn't have his interlocutor's attention for long.

"Your quirk allows you to regulate your temperature by using your left side when you draw ice, and your right side when you use fire. Since those protections are dependent on an equilibrium, and protect you when your resistance to extreme temperatures fails, this is the proof that you actually have one quirk and not two...."
"Do you have a point?" Todoroki interrupted him but he sounded more amused than annoyed, which was a more positive reaction than what Izuku was used to.

He quickly went back to the point. "What I am trying to say is that your power is your own. You don't have your father's quirk and your mother's quirk. Since I presume they can still use them, they didn't pass it on to you. You have something new, that only belongs to you. So hating it made no sense."

This seemed to strike a cord this time, and Todoroki stayed silent for a while. At one point, he raised the mug to his lips and started to drink.

And his whole face did something. It was extremely quick, but for just this moment, he lost all the usual stoicism.

Todoroki put the mug down, and stared at him.

"Midoriya?"

"Hmm?" Izuku braced himself.

"I think you forgot to put the chocolate milk in the sugar."

"Does Midoriya Izuku have more than one quirk?" Gran Torino asked.

Toshinori gulped down.

He had made a promise to Young Midoriya, and as much as he respected his teacher, he couldn't break it now.

"I... I can't answer that."

"So that's a yes."

Izuku had decided that he needed to go back to the tribunes, if only to escape Todoroki and Recovery Girl, his mug still in hand, when he realized he had ignored his phone for far too long.

His mother hadn't called, or sent any messages, which didn't mean this was good news.

However, Nagisa had done her best to crash his inbox, and the last two messages were slightly ominous.

N: [If you don't call me as soon as you receive this message, I will send every spider I know into your bed.]
N: [Don't test me.]
Izuku, who was about to watch the next match, ran outside the building until he was sure he was alone and called Nagisa back. She might not have the quirk but she had the network for it.

"YOU IDIOT !" Nagisa screamed so loud Izuku had to get the phone away from his ear. "You scared me ! How did you get out of the ice ?"

Izuku took a moment before he answered, fighting against the pain inside his skull. His headaches fed on light and loud sounds, and Nagisa had just thrown a buffet at them. "Speed to generate friction and warmth, then I just had to think about sunny things and break the ice." It had been far from enjoyable and he had been hanging on his consciousness like a man desperately trying to get a hold of a wet soap bar. "I thought you didn't like watching the Sport Festival ?"

He had actually counted on that.

"I do when I know someone participating in this travesty. It's even more interesting when the person I know jumps on mines, and creates explosion with some fancy legacy kid. It's a good thing that you're so durable."

Izuku quietly sipped his remaining hot cocoa, which was bordering on lukewarm. My mouth is full so I can't talk and dig my grave deeper.

"So you're okay ?" she asked, wanting a real confirmation and not Izuku's exquisite explanations about multiple quirks use.

"I am."

"Will the Todoroki boy be a problem ?"

"Why would he be a problem ?"

"Because sometimes, people who come from old families with powerful quirks don't like to realize they aren't as powerful as they thought. And sometimes," she added, her voice low and something dark roaming underneath, "They can be vicious."

There was a story here, and it wasn't difficult to guess what had happened.

But Nagisa didn't pause on it, of course. To her, the past shall remain in the past, and she wouldn't have mentioned it if it wasn't to make sure Izuku was safe, so she continued, making sure to cross her t's and to dot her i's.

"Did you call your mom ?"

… And finding exactly what Izuku had been pushing away.

"Not yet."

"Is there a reason why you didn't ?"

There was.

"Midoriya ?"

He wasn't going to avoid this. He could feel it.

"She wasn't comfortable with me being in the Sport Festival," he finally admitted, to himself and to her. "But I begged and got what I wanted. I took so many risks, and I have nothing to show for it.
It's not easy to call her and talk to her right after I messed up."

Izuku knew his mother loved him, and that if he really wanted something, she would accept it. So he had pushed, blinded by how much fun he would have in an environment where quirks could be used freely and in flashy ways.

But it wasn't all.

Izuku stared in front of him, taking a deep breath.

He had lost and he hated it, while he had only himself to blame.

Calling his mother now would mean to hide how disappointed he was, to hide any sign of distress, and he... He just didn't want to do that right now. He just needed some time to hide those feelings in the place where he put everything he didn't want to acknowledge.

It would be fine. Eventually.

A sigh was heard at the another end of the line, a perfect distraction for Izuku not to linger on his feelings.

"You're even more nonsensical than usual, Midoriya,"

What?

"You finished first at the race," she reminded him slowly with the tone one would take while talking to a small child or a fool. "You qualified during the cavalry battle. And for the tournament, you destroyed one recommended student in five seconds and you basically beat the son of the number 2."

"I didn't," Izuku reminded her in case she had missed the moment when he had the clear memory of realizing he was out-of-bounds, and lost because he hadn't been careful.

Nagisa snorted. "You didn't have a scratch and it's a miracle the poor boy managed to walk out on his two feet. Any pro hero worth the name knows who would win in a real fight."

"Nagisa..." he called, not liking what the was saying. It was invalidating Todoroki's victory, which was unfair.

"Don't Nagisa me. You achieved several things for which you should be proud of, and instead, you're focusing on the fact that you didn't finish number one. This is insane. Learn to draw satisfaction from the good thing you manage to do instead of only settling for perfection."

This last phrase didn't sound like an advice and more like an order.

_____________________________________

From the corner of his eye, Minoru was watching Midoriya. The lucky bastard was surrounded by girls fussing over him -actually, only Uraraka and Asui but it was far too many for someone so plain faced. Yaoyorozu even made him sunglasses when he mentioned the light was hurting his eyes!

The green haired boy had went back to the tribunes, without a scratch despite surviving attacks
which had destroyed the arena created by Cementos.

It was insane. Minoru had seen him in action at the USJ. He had seen him attacking the villains all by himself, until Asui had dragged him away the villain that had fallen into the water. And now, he had walked out from every attacks Todoroki had thrown at him and even a freaking explosion.

Minoru was realizing Midoriya was in a league of his own with Todoroki and even Bakugou. They had taken the idea of Plus Ultra and ran with it, because unlike Minoru, they could. They were powerful enough to unleash incredible quirks, strong enough to survive those powers, and that made them different from others. Hence, they could fight with each other, but Minoru and people like him would get crushed if they tried to go toe-to-toe with them.

He focused back on Bakugou's match who was about to start.

Some part of Minoru was a little relieved he didn't make the cut to the tournament.

Hitoshi knew that Bakugou was stronger than him. He had a perfectly flashy quirk that hero society loved, he wasn't afraid to use it, and he seemed more interested in fighting strong people than actually wanting to be a hero.

But that wasn't important next to his temper. Hostility was constantly simmering under Bakugou's skin and that was Hitoshi's only chance to win. Either people used anger or they were used by it, and he could take advantage of the latter.

Midnight gave the signal.

Hitoshi barely had the time open his mouth, let alone say a word, and the world was suddenly drowned in flames and violence. He went airborne, his ears ringing, and crashed into the ground.

He tried to get to his feet, and saw Bakugou who wasn't focusing on him anymore. Only there did Hitoshi realize what had happened. The shock of the explosion Bakugou has sent him flying out-of-bonds.

Just like that, he had lost, and with it, his hopes of joining the hero course.

Once upon a time, All for One was the one evil who didn't obey any rules. His quirks kept changing, his strength was unrivaled, and he seemed more like a chaotic entity which could only be fought but never defeated than a being of flesh and blood.

Until their last battle in California.

Nana had been the catalyst of this victory. Her death at the end of this monster had given unlimited strength to those who loved her. Never again, Toshinori and Gran Torino had decided. Never again would an One for All holder fall just after transferring this sacred torch.

For a horrible time, All for One's existence and the mission they had to defeat him was the only
thing that allowed Gran Torino and Toshinori to keep going.

So when his teacher, after listening to his frantic story about a child who had the same quirk as the man he hated, talked in an extremely reasonable voice, Toshinori could hardly believe it.

"So, you met this boy who looks like All for One and you didn't think to call your teacher."

Maybe he had dodged a bullet?

"I can understand. After all, I am old. Decrepit. Useless now."

Or not.

"Then, you let him be enrolled in UA without telling anyone that something could be wrong. You told him about your quirk, which is the most guarded secret in the country. And you cleared him despite the fact he has the same quirk as this son of a bitch, because he is a good kid and because you checked his answers with your friend's quirk. Did I forget something?"

Toshinori needed to deescalate the situation so his teacher wouldn't appear in UA to drop kick Young Midoriya while screaming "Vade Retro."

Though he probably wasn't that dramatic... *Probably*.

"The resemblance isn't that pronounced," Toshinori explained, though he almost winced when he remembered the picture Gran Torino had sent him. "The same curls and something in the face, yes, but I am almost certain that what set us off was how he looks when he uses his quirk."

Toshinori had been alarmed every time he had seen Young Midoriya actually using his quirk, and not because of his appearance. And since the young man seems to be attuned to powerful quirks, he had this feeling every time they were looking at each other.

"He told me he could sense others quirks, so this feeling of similarity, at least to me, seems to be more about the same manifestation of their quirks than physical resemblance. Even you became alarmed only after he was almost frozen alive and had to use the full extent of his quirk."

"Quirks," Gran Torino reminded. "Several quirks because he is able to take them like that his acquaintance of ours. Do you really think the son of a bitch didn't know? That he wouldn't keep an eye on his bloodline?"

Actually, Toshinori had thought about that, then desperately tried to avoid thinking about it.

"If he quickly went through... paramours, it's possible that he didn't notice that one... God, you get the idea!"

"Or he could be a sleeper agent. Someone who has a perfect quirk given to him so he could be a hero and infiltrate the higher spheres. He could be aiming for One for All since he appeared right when you're supposed to be searching for a successor." Guilt stabbed at Toshinori. "It could be a plan left by All for One for beyond the grave."

"He obtained his quirks by asking people who didn't want them anymore. Tsukauchi-kun confirmed it. And you don't know Young Midoriya. He is a hero in making."

Of that, Toshinori had no doubt.

There was a long pause at the other end of the line. Toshinori started sweating, recognizing the
calm before the storm.

"I want to meet him," Gran Torino finally declared.

All Might suddenly had a vivid remembrance of his old teacher training him until he was bruised, repeatedly sending him kiss the floor.

And Gran Torino had liked him.

There was no chance in Hell that he would let his teacher approach Young Midoriya if he thought he could be linked to All For One's nefarious plans from the afterlife.

"I won't allow it. He is a young hero in training who has to deal with enough stress without having to deal with someone realizing his true quirk and that he could be related to a villain. He is a child, as such, he had to be protected. You know that..."

"Don't be ridiculous," Gran Torino cut him off, admonishing his former student. "I am not going to treat a kid as a villain just because he has the same quirk as this scumbag."

It was fortunate that Toshinori wasn't standing because he would have dropped to the floor from sheer frustration.

"Didn't you just tell me how I was stupid for letting what is an obvious villain mole close to me ?" he sighed, suddenly really tired by his teacher's antics.

"No, I was just illustrating how stupid and dangerous it was for you not to tell me anything. And since I am curious, I am going to offer him an internship."

Hitoshi almost jumped out of his skin when the green-haired boy who had almost killed Endeavor's son appeared next to him in an oversized UA sweater and wearing sunglasses.

"Hi," Midoriya said with a shy smile as if he hadn't just appeared from nowhere. "Do you have a minute ?"

"What do you want ?" Hitoshi asked, ready to use his quirk.

Despite what his former classmates thought, he hadn't used his brainwashing ability more than a couple of times when he didn't have the authorization, and always when "well-meaning" people wanted to take care of a villain in the making. Even then, he didn't make them do anything, only stopping them in their tracks and leaving.

Though, he was completely aware that they were alone in the hallway, and that Midoriya could be extremely fast. *A flashy and powerful quirk perfect to be a hero.* If he really tried to hurt Hitoshi, he might not have the time to protect himself. Bakugou had proven that.

"First, I have to admit I was wondering about your quirk," Midoriya said because of course, he would, "But now, I know that this is activated when people answer to you."

*Did he read my records ?*

Hitoshi kept himself from asking because then, he would have to ask a question again to use his
quirk, and he was starting to get creeped out by this boy who seemed completely calm after having destroyed the stadium in a fit of power.

But he didn't need to.

"I felt it when I answered your question," Midoriya explained as if it was obvious. "Your quirk is cool and incredibly useful, but do you have a physical training apart from that ?"

Annoyance surged through Hitoshi. Here he went, this boy with the perfect quirk who had granted him a place in the hero course and an access to physical training and quirk analysis.

"Are you the one who told Bakugou not to let me talk ?" he asked, surprised at this idea since he had thought the students in 1-A and 1-B would be too competitive to help each other at the festival.

Midoriya seemed amused by this. "I didn't. He wouldn't listen to me and he didn't even need to. You used your quirk on Ojirou and Kishima who told us they didn't remember anything," he reminded Shinsou, though not on a patronizing tone. It was almost as if he was digging through his memory to remind himself of everything that had revealed Shinsou's quirk. "After that, since we all saw Kirishima walking without a fight, it was easy to understand that you could hypnotize people, or something. Kacchan is hot-blooded but not stupid."

Hitoshi decided that Midoriya was strange. Not because of how he had appeared but the total dissonance with the monster who had destroyed the arena and the boy who was gushing about quirks.

" But I went to meet you to tell you about a girl named Hatsume Mei in the support department. She is very enthusiast about her inventions. Since your quirk is subtle, you could talk to her to have a support item because once your quirk is known, people will just have to shut up to counteract it. If you want, of course. I know that Hatsuma would love to work with a hero in trainin, and it's far less expensive that asking a company to create what you want."

Hitoshi's mind immediately went to Eraserhead.

But that was too good to be true.

"Why are you telling me that ? Aren't you worried I will be able to beat you now that you have given me a way to neutralize my quirk's weakness ?"

Two questions, his quirk activated, because he wanted to see how Midoriya would react.

He wasn't disappointed.

Midoriya smiled at the idea, warmth reaching his eyes.

"It would be interesting, and if you're better than me... You will win."

May the best win, Hitoshi remembered. Midoriya seemed quite relaxed and less competitive that one would assume from a 1-A student.

"As for why ?" Midoriya continued, passing a hand though his hair. "I don't know you, but you seemed like you really want to be a hero, and since the entrance exam was about fighting robots... Well, I think that anyone who wants to be a hero should be given the occasion to be one... Though that sounds conceited of me now that I'm saying out loud..."

Hitoshi listened to him tripping over his words, finally realizing why he felt so peculiar to him.
Everyone was worried about Hitoshi brainwashing them, even the people he knew. They couldn’t get rid of the worry, of the doubt because in one question, Hitoshi could take their autonomy. But not Midoriya.

Hitoshi smiled.

Maybe because there was someone who thought he could be a hero. Who had even called him a hero in training despite the fact he wasn’t in the right class. And because, even if he was still disappointed and incredibly mad that he lost, he was starting to believe that his dream was still within reach.

Maybe he had failed this time, but... He wasn’t giving up. He would show them he had what it took to make the hero course. And he would become a great hero.

---

On TV, Nagisa watched the Todoroki boy managing to win against Ingenium's brother just as he was about to be dragged out-of-bounds, obviously still exhausted.

*He isn’t going to win the tournament. Not after fighting Midoriya.*

And she was right.

Todoroki and Bakugou fought, and at some point, Todoroki simply stopped responding. She heard someone screaming for him to keep fighting, desperately encouraging him, she saw some flame, but they disappeared as fast as they had appeared and ultimately, just as the Bakugou was about to unleash an impressive attack, he gave up.

But not early enough, and the human grenade managed to propel him out of the arena and knocked him unconscious.

Ultimately, it was a disappointing way to end UA Sport Festival, though Nagisa wasn't mad that people shared her lack of appreciation for the tournament. Especially for the first years, it was just a modern gladiator games where kids with only three weeks of training fought each other for the pleasure of the plebs.

But right as Bakugou was declared the winner, things devolved. The boy who had landed face first on the ground of the arena got back on his feet, obviously upset. Screaming at his unconscious opponent.

*Don’t do that, kid.*

In a fight, tempers could run hot and emotions go wild, especially for a child, but right now, the world was watching him and it was unforgiving.

She could see the disapproving gazes around them, her college classmates silently judging what they were seeing. Because it wasn't a behavior worthy of a hero.

Finally, Midnight didn’t take the chance of letting calm down on his own -which he would have, for Nagisa could recognize frustration from hostility- and she put him to sleep just as the kid was starting to calm down.
The consequences of this mishandling could have been easily contained. That's what PR departments were for. People would be indulging towards a teenager with a heroic quirk. Bakugou had time to evolve.

But things went from bad to worse when someone had the bright idea of putting the winner on the podium, bound and muzzled as he was screaming and fighting like a rabid animal. The kid kept fighting and screaming like a lunatic even as All Might removed the thing on his mouth, and he kept screaming at the number 1 hero as the latter tried to give him his medal.

He didn’t look like a sullen teenager. He didn’t look like someone with blood knight tendencies.

He looked dangerous.

All trace of compassion and inner wincing vanished within Nagisa, replaced with pure annoyance.

*He can't be that stupid, right?*

Chapter End Notes

Hey! Thank you so much for all the nice comments from last chapter! I am about to finish my finals, and the support really helped!

Poor Izuku spent the rest of the Sport Festival running after people. In Shinsou’s case, it was because he wanted to encourage someone with a "bad" quirk like him.
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: abduction in the fourth part and human trafficking until the end of the chapter. I tried my best not to be graphic, but stay safe.

The morning following the Sport Festival, Izuku's phone chimed awfully early but even dawn and his allergy to it couldn't prevent him from checking the message. It was from Nagisa, which wasn't surprising since only the hacker and his own mother called Izuku, and there was just a link.

UA'S SPORT FESTIVAL AND WHY RANKINGS MEAN NOTHING.

The Sport Festival might be the most important event in the country since the rise of quirks, and most of us are used to watch the third years, those closest to become heroes, those who had the time to master their quirks. However, this year, the first years were also at the center of the attention because of the USJ attack at the start of the school year. And we were not disappointed.

The tournament of this year was always going to be special, especially as the famous 1-A survived a villain attack, and the result of this experience showed. Most of the last students standing were from this class, and they gave everything. And yet, the tournament managed to be disappointing in its own ways.

During what was the most spectacular match of the season, one of the contestant lost as he was ejected out of bounds, in a incredible explosion provoked by the number 2 of the Sport Festival, but unhurt and after having dominated the whole fight. A lot of spectators couldn't help but to be disappointed by the arbiter's choice of disqualifying him when his opponent could barely continue. A lot called it, at least, a tie.

Even more saw Midoriya as the superior fighter.

But that wasn't the end of the general disappointment. As the matches were decided randomly, some students had to fight more than others. Todoroki Shouto had to fight during the most brutal fight among the first years, and most importantly, barely had the time to rest for his following fights.

And it showed.

Was Todoroki really defeated by Bakugou's attack or by sheer exhaustion due to his fight with Midoriya, then with Iida?

And if Midoriya had been the one to continue into the finals, would we still be left with this
feeling of dissatisfaction?

But the last nail in the coffin might be the winner himself.

[Image]

Read more

Izuku slowly blinked at the screen of his phone as he saw the face of a furious Bakugou tied up and muzzled as he received his medal.

He looked at the source of the article, because there was no way it came from anything official.

The good news was that it was basically a Tumblr post which could have been written by anyone. The bad news was that, after a look at the number of notes, it seemed like half of Japan had liked or reblogged it, and that wasn't even mentioning the comments.

Izuku put his phone down and hid his head under his pillow. He didn't want to deal with this.

People tended to make one common mistake: when faced with something upsetting, they tended to ignore it.

Sorahiko couldn’t afford this luxury. He would have loved to trust Toshinori’s intuition and to leave Midoriya Izuku alone, but his former student was too much like his old friend: they both saw the best good in people. Which was a good thing. The world needed beacons of light to bring good and optimism. And people like Sorahiko had to keep nagging to protect those lights.

Especially when one person in particular seemed determined to snuff them out. One person who was dead, according to Toshinori, but in Sorahiko’s nightmares, he always came back to destroy everything the old hero held dear.

And Midoriya Izuku had the same presence, a cold intensity allied with an overwhelming power. He even looked like the bastard.

The teenager didn’t have any social media that could be linked back to him but that wasn’t the case of his former classmates. Sorahiko spent his evening on his computer, stalking any former classmates of the green-haired kid who were imprudent enough to let anyone access their photos.

Despite the fact that a lot of kids these days seemed trustful to the point that it was bordering on stupidity, Midoriya was almost nowhere to be seen. The only luck Sorahiko had was on the school official page where, in the seemingly trillions of pictures taken for this class, Midoriya was only on three. On the first, a girl had playfully taken a selfie with him in the background, as he was too busy writing into some notebook to notice what was going on. A second was the class photography where, like for the official photos from the sport festival, he looked like someone was holding him at gun point outside the frame. The third and last was even more disappointing, because even if Midoriya's name was mentioned, it was because he was the one holding the camera.

The next step was the teachers. Midoriya's former homeroom teacher was extremely talkative, and glad to talk about a former student of his who had everything to be a hero.
He described to Sorahiko a shy student with good grades, and a complete loner. He got along with everyone but no real friends. He spent most of his time alone, "scribbling into this notebook of his". He didn't join into any activities, didn't hang out with anyone after school.

Of course, there was a possibility the teacher didn't know anything about his student, but if this was true... It was never a good sign when a child was willingly isolating himself from others. It usually meant he had problems trusting others, for a variety of reasons.

Also, the homeroom teacher had never seen Midoriya using his quirk.

*You should be thankful for that,* Sorahiko couldn't help thinking.

But he didn't say it out loud. Instead, he kept digging into the child's past.

In the afternoon, after the consummation of a near-lethal quantity of coffee, Izuku went to Nagisa's house and even if she had opened the door for him, he didn't find her at her usual spot. He walked through the corridors covered in web, extremely careful not to step or touch anything which could trap him.

*I was a very grumpy spider, where would I hide ?*

He closed his eyes, and let his mind wander, until he sensed that a quirk was activated.

*Where ?*

He had a general direction and nothing more. He followed the nebulous lead. Sensing quirks being activated was a second nature for him, but tracking them was just outside his abilities. It was no more than a sixth sense, an impression, and he had to be extremely calm for it to work.

And he almost tripped as something stuck to his feet. One look down revealed a thin shiny thread he hadn't seen and when he tried to get free, it followed him, making every threads around move with his movement.

After a merciless fight, Izuku went into the kitchen with only one red sneaker and looked around without seeing any college student clutching her laptop. Then he remembered who she was. And he smiled as he looked up.

Nagisa was on the ceiling, upside down with her legs crossed and holding her computer on her lap. Around her, several objects were stuck to the threads that spread though the house: books, a tablet, and some snacks. She looked at Izuku and even if she didn't have the features to smile, he could still see it in her gaze.

"Hello, most deserving winner of the Sport Festival," she greeted him with a note of pride in her voice.

Usually, it would have warmed Izuku's heart but he was still uncomfortable by how some people had put in doubt Todoroki's and Bakugou's victories.

"Don't call me that," he asked.

"As you wish."
Izuku (carefully) walked to the massive kitchen table and leaned on it so he could look up more comfortably. These kind of conversations weren't good for his neck in the long-run. But he didn't even need to as Nagisa took her stuff then got on her feet, still upside down. She walked on the ceiling and then on the walls as if gravity had no hold on her, and Izuku almost squeed at the new ability displayed.

He had no idea. He had thought it was only a mutation quirk and the production of an especially sticky web, with the build-in mutation on their skin to keep them from being stuck.

"Just so you know, last time sometimes looked at me like that, I was asked on a date," Nagisa warned him. "I would almost be worried if I didn't know you only have eyes for quirks."

"Since we're talking about quirks..."

"Yeah, don't worry," she assured him as she gave him her tablet. "Do you want anything to drink? I can eat anywhere but quenching one's thirst is ridiculously difficult upside down."

She let Izuku study the file she had made and grabbed two cans from her fridge, orange soda. Izuku barely looked at it as he was furiously reading the quirk training reports. Electrical quirk, not much more than a taser, but the man who had it had never intensively trained it so it could possibly evolve. Coupled to that, there was a note in his file which indicated that he had trouble controlling it into his old age.

It didn't mean he would accept to give it to Izuku but it was a promising start.

"Why do you even want a quirk that isn't an enhancer?" Nagisa wondered as she was looking above his shoulder, a hand on the back of his chair.

The question calmed down Izuku's enthusiasm. Since he had declared an enhancer quirk, hunting from elemental quirks were dangerous and not as useful.

However...

"Because I have always wanted a railgun," he admitted, and he started to feel the blush spreading on his face.

A railgun was a electromagnetic gun which could accelerate a projectile to speed of Mach 6, with only using electricity. It was over 7400 km/h. The current military railgun had a range of over a hundred and sixty kilometers.

He needed to convert electrical energy into kinetic energy by creating a magnetic field that would accelerate the projectile. He was thinking about coins-throwing for the projectiles because it was small enough to be inconspicuous and because, thanks to his aiming quirk, he could easily control where the hit would land.

A heavy silence started to spread and Nagisa went and sat at the table, before drinking her soda like she wished it was something stronger. Obviously, she was familiar with the concept.

"Can you even use that in your job as a hero?" she finally asked. "Isn't that automatic lethal force?"

Well, that was the problem but he had thought about it when he had been day dreaming about quirks.

"Not against someone with a resistance to electricity. Or a giant robot. Or I can threaten someone
and they will stop because they are in awe?"

"You just want to have a railgun, even if you never use it, don't you?" Nagisa realized with a deadpan expression on her arachnid face.

Izuku tried to hide behind the tablet, and Nagisa had mercy on him and started working on her laptop again, though in a way where she was respectful of gravity this time.

Different sounds started to fill the air around them, keyboard noises from Nagisa and the sound of Izuku's pen of the page of his notebook.

Izuku wasn't sure of when they started to do that. Just staying around each other, working on their own projects in a comfortable silence.

They had probably chosen this at some point. Izuku didn't strictly need someone else to do those researches, it was just a considerable gain of time, but he had decided to use Nagisa's help again and again. As for Nagisa, despite often threatening him to turn him into a snack, she didn't drive him away and had allowed him to stay in her space.

Izuku didn't think they were friends, but he knew they trusted each other. They wouldn't share so many secrets if that wasn't the case.

"A lot of people were impressed by your quirk at the Sport Festival," Nagisa informed him without looking away from her screen. "They are comparing you to All Might."

The blush he had managed to subdue came back with a vengeance.

"You didn't know?"

"I avoided social media all day," Izuku admitted. "A lot of people are... It's weird. I didn't realize how strange it would be."

He had expected to be recognized. Worried, actually, but because of his past. But he wasn't quite prepared for people declaring they wanted him to be the one to win.

"Well, it was the most impressive fight of the first years. People had to be hyped, especially when the finals and the winner were so disappointing," she noticed, annoyance piercing in her body language.

*Argh.*

Izuku understood that she wanted to be nice when she was telling him how good he was compared to Kacchan, but he hated the idea of people overestimating him and underestimating talented students.

"I know Kacchan seems a little rough, but don't blame him for what was essentially a bad moment in a highly stressful situation."

"Sure," she shrugged. "Who is Kacchan?"

"Bakugou Katsuki."

Nagisa looked at him.

If Izuky had detected a hint of annoyance earlier, this was nothing next to the wave of irritation that sipped through the air.
"Then, no," she declared in a sweet voice. "I will be as judgy as I want with this one."

Unease shot through Izuku.

"Nagisa... He is fifteen and hated as much as anyone else how the fight with Todoroki ended. UA never should have forced him to accept this medal."

"Yes, he is fifteen, so some things can be forgiven. But tell me, Midoriya, if it had been someone like me or someone like you, or anyone with a villainous quirk, do you think they would have acted like that in front of the whole country? Or in front of anyone?"

Izuku didn't say anything.

The answer was no.

Nagisa, who was grumpy at best, wouldn't have acted like that. Izuku, who had freaked out during his fight with Todoroki, had stayed in the limits of the duel and didn't cross the line.

"No," Nagisa confirmed even though he never said the word out loud, "Because we know we can't. We have to be always in control. We can't be angry. We can't be aggressive. We can't lose our tempers, or people are uncomfortable, and suddenly, they start to see anyone with a bad quirk as villains. So excuse me if I have no patience for a brat who was probably told all his life how special he was so he never made an effort to learn to control himself."

They stared at each other for a moment, both convinced they were right and also knowing that so was the other. But ultimately, Nagisa's seemingly infinite numbers of eyes soften and she went back to her laptop.

And she did something that Izuku translated as wincing even without the facial muscles for it.

"Remind me: is the Iidaten boy in your class?"

Iida Tenya.

"He is. Why?"

"It might be time to get check your notifications."

Izuku did.

That's how he learned about the Hero killer's latest victims. And how Ingenium was among them, the only one who had been left alive, but severely hurt. The article emitted doubts about his ability to continue his career as a pro hero.

And now, he was remembering how Iida had left the school the day before after one phone call. He had seemed alarmed. Why had Izuku not picked up on it?

This is bad. This is really bad.

Izuku had never met Ingenium but he admired him. He didn't like him only because of his great quirk, but because of how nice he was with everyone. He worked with sidekicks, with other heroes, and was incredibly hard-working and beloved.

He could still see the proud smile on Iida's face as he was talking about his big brother.

*Ingenium horribly injured, left for dead, and no one knew where he was. No one would know what*
"Midoriya ?" Nagisa called.

Her voice brought him back to reality. Ingenium wasn't lost. They knew what had happened to him.

"I have to call Iida," he heard himself say. "He's a friend."

And he bolted, his phone in hand.

This day couldn't get any worse.

Ochako was coming back from the train station, still amazed that her parents had actually come here to make her feel better. One part of her was horrified at the unneeded expense of getting here for a day and was blaming herself for worrying them. Another part, the vast majority, was moved and her heart was so filled with love that it seemed it was about to burst. She had hugged them until the last second, and she was still happy because her parents had been here and they had lifted any worries and residual fear about the internships.

She was almost bouncing as she walked up the little street that led to her apartment (nothing fancy, but it was home, and the neighbors, often students, didn't pose any problems), when she saw him. A man, young with two horns as black as his hair protruding from his head, and for a moment, he got all her attention though she didn't know why.

"Hey !" he smiled at her, as if he was happy to see her.

Do I know him ?

Before she had the time to look through her memories, someone tased her from behind.

She didn't have the time to scream. She didn't manage to. Her whole body froze up and she fell, terror spreading through her with violence, as if she had just felt into cold water.

Ochako fell on the pavement. In a rush of panic, she noticed the people around her, and the van. So close, and she didn't see any of them a moment earlier. How was that possible ?

"Hurry !" someone barked and rough hands grabbed her, sinking painfully into her flesh. She heard the doors of the van being opened, and at this moment, she had the certitude that if they managed to get her in, she would disappear forever.

Move.

Her body didn't want to obey her. Her limbs were just trembling and swaying around instead of moving with a purpose and she wasn't touching the ground anymore, carried like a potato sack.

But she wasn't stunned anymore.

"HEEEEEEEEEEEEELP !!!!" she screamed at full lungs, so loud she hurt her throat.

Someone tried to put a hand on her mouth. She bit viciously, and he cried out in pain. Good.
"HELP ME !"

From the corner of her eyes, she saw a woman holding a syringe.

Several thoughts and raw emotions crashed through her and managed to converge into a single *Fuck it* thought. She kicked like crazy, only wanting momentum but she managed to get free of one hold and to kick a blue-haired man in the throat. At the same time, her shoulder crashed into the van, the syringe between them and she felt the shards of glass through her thin jacket.

"HELP !"

She slapped her hand on the tight of the one who was holding her shoulders, activating her quirk. He gasped when he felt himself floating, and dropped her. Ochako fell head first on the hard street, pain bursting though her skull.

One look up indicating a villain desperately trying to hang on to the van as he was floating, and Ochako threw her hand and pushed him up with all her strength. He screamed as if the sky was going to eat him.

"Are you fucking kidding me ?" someone growled, the one with the horns, and suddenly, he was right next to her, and she felt his fingers in her hair. The brusque apparition surprised her so much that she froze for maybe half a second.

It allowed him to smash her head against the side of the van.

One, two, three times.

He only ceased when Ochako stopped moving.

She couldn't even see. Her eyes were wide opened but her brain couldn't register what was happening to her. It was as if her whole body was alien to her.

"Isn't she worth a lot ?" a female voice asked with worry.

Pure fear drenched Ochako, and she couldn't do anything. She could feel her consciousness fading slowly and she was desperately hanging on.

"She isn't worth all this bullshit. Get her in."

*Move.*

She was carried and thrown inside what had to be the van.

*Do something.*

She heard the doors closing on her, and she knew that she was done. That she was never getting out of here.

Her arms were grabbed and the woman who had stayed behind with her started tying her hands.

"Hero incoming !" the driver screamed.

"For fuck's sake !"

Ochako threw her head back and she hit something soft and the woman screamed. The teenage girl scrambled around, trying to get away, and she found the doors of the van, and the mechanism to
open it.

Half blind with panic, she managed to unlock it. She turned around to see the woman who had tried to inject her something, her nose bleeding, her eyes crazy. She looked at Ochako with a mix of fear and hate, as if she was the one who was having a horrible day, and she hit Uraraka with both hands.

Pushing her from a moving car.

Things became even blurrier at this point. Ochako remembered tapping her chest with both hands, activating her quirk just before she touched the ground, and behind her, she heard the screams of the tires as a car was abruptly braking. But she remembered looking at the licence plate. Not the woman who had thrown her out to save her life, not the car behind her, but the licence plate because she knew she needed it to find them again.

She had started floating up when a beautiful woman with black hair and glasses rushed out of a beautiful sport car and grabbed her, making her panic, until she finally recognized her.

Midnight, who looked extremely different out of her hero costume.

"It's alright! Everything is alright."

The teacher was holding her in her arms, and only at this moment Uraraka realized that she was trembling all over. She tried to join her hands, fingertips on fingertips. Failed, and only succeeded on the third try.

_Release._

Midnight's arms prevented her from falling on the ground, but she didn't manage to completely catch her, so they both slowly knelt in a controlled descent.

But of course, Midnight couldn't do anything for the other charge Uraraka had been carrying with her quirk. The villain from earlier screamed as he was suddenly falling. After the swift ascension Uraraka had provoked, he crashed onto a car with an incredible loud sound of screeching metal.

Ochako wasn't proud of the deep satisfaction that came when he made a pitiful noise of pain, but she wasn't ashamed either.

"Are you okay?" Midnight asked.

She opened her mouth, not even knowing what she wanted to say when she felt the nausea rising up.

Once again, Ochako had to avoid throwing up on someone who had just rescued her.

Izuku was at home when he received Uraraka's phonecall. At first, it was just because she wanted to talk, but little by little, she told him why she was calling.

She was at the hospital and something terrible had almost happened.

She told him everything. How scared she had been. How Midnight had been passing there by pure coincidence. How she was now in the hospital, after Recovery Girl had healed her concussion, and
Endeavor had interrogated her to find who did this.

How worried her parents were and how they had to come back and stay with her, and how horrible she felt because everyone was worried about her, and she didn't even mean to tell Izuku but words kept flowing and she couldn't stop.

And there was one detail that kept being repeated. How Uraraka had desperately memorized the licence plate. At first, she told him to share her hopes that Endeavor would be able to find them. Then, she insisted because as she had been trapped inside panic, it had been the only clear thing in her mind.

Izuku would have given a lot for a quirk that allowed him to find the right words. Still, he did try, but it was lacking. So he listened. And told her she had been amazing and that she was safe now because she had kept fighting until the end.

After Uraraka asked him not to tell anyone, especially Iida, and that no, he shouldn't come see her at the hospital, they finally hanged up and Izuku was left in the silence of his room, looking at the wall without even seeing the All Might posters on them.

He did hesitate before making the call. But not for long.

"Nagisa ? If I give you a licence plate, can you find out where the car is ?"

She hesitated for a long moment.

"There is only one way to find out," she finally said.

Izuku was thinking about his mother as he walked into a warehouse district at night. The day before, she had told him he was incredibly cool, and that she had passed out five times while watching the Sport Festival, and guilt had repeatedly stabbed him in the guts at that one. But she didn't seem mad about the usage of his quirks. Just extremely surprised.

She would go catatonic if she knew where he was and why.

Nagisa didn't manage to locate where the van was but she knew where the cameras had lost it, and it was in the middle of an urban jungle, extremely isolated and full of empty buildings owned by diverse companies.

If he hadn't find anything, he would have kept searching for the rest of the night. Just to be sure.

But he did. He felt several quirks activated into a warehouse, and as he looked from afar, with Zoom and Night Vision, he saw people being taken into trucks.

Pure luck, really.

He gave the address to Nagisa. Asked her to call the police. His phone was supposed to be impossible to trace but Izuku knew without a doubt that Nagisa could leave no trace at all.

It was supposed to be all. He had found them. Now, the police could stop them.

But as he watched from a roof, he saw a lot of people panicking and a lot of victims being thrown
into vehicles, and he wondered if the police would be here fast enough. If one of those trucks left, would any of the people in it be found again?

*How many of them will disappear without a trace?*

Izuku zipped up the hoodie Nagisa had lent to him. Black, a little too big since Nagisa was taller than him, the collar was high, there was a hoodie, and an extremely thin fabric fell in front of his face, reflecting the light from outside and completely hiding his face. A feature Nagisa probably appreciated when she didn't want people staring at her.

In term of comfort, it was like wearing a hug. The fabric was slightly stiff, like a hero costume, but a high quality one, not one made for a student. She obviously hadn't bought his "It's just a recon mission" and she had repeated several time that it wasn't a gift but a loan.

Izuku kept watching for a long time, crouched on the roof.

*Think.*

To climb up, he had used *Slide and Glide* to stick to the side of the wall and ascend. He didn't bother to use it go down, activating his three *Shock Absorption* and simply taking a step beyond the end of the roof and into the void.

The lack of light engulfed him, wind screamed around him, and the ground rushed at him.

He landed with a *Thump* sound, his knees bending instinctively to accommodate a shock that never reached him, and he ran, several *Speed* quirks in toe.

As he did, he activated *Silencer*. A quirk he never used in UA because he had never needed to be sneaky there, not even at the USJ since the villains already knew where he was. It could completely smother any sounds he made, and as he sneaked inside, no one could detect him by ear, not even with a quirk.

Caution and a lot of physical quirks did the rest. He sneaked inside the two-stories warehouse and into the local with five trucks. Five people, three men and two women were locking them, making sure that everything was in order, and no one saw Izuku.

"All of this mess because of one girl," a woman complained as the teenage boy moved on the top of one of the truck, low enough not to be seen by anyone on the ground.

*Is she talking about Uraraka?*

He put his knuckles of the roof of the truck, activating *Breakdown*. He didn't experiment as much as he should with this one, if only because it seemed to have a knack for destroying anything fragile and/or expensive, but he had learned a trick or two.

In appearance, nothing changed with the vehicle. But as soon as someone tried to drive it, they were going to have one hell of a surprise.

"What did you expect?" a male voice asked. "How were we supposed to know her parents would arrive the day when we were supposed to pick her up? This was a rush job."

*Definitely Uraraka.*

Izuku crawled to the edge, and made sure no one was in sight. The usual rule was that if you couldn't see them, they couldn't see you.
He was looking out for quirks, but the problem was that several of them were activated, notably right under him. Flickering. Weak. Everyone was trying to use their quirk inside the trucks and it was overwhelming any chance of being warned in time.

And he was almost certain that there were other quirks above his head. Upper floor.

"I expected Yukihara not to be so blinded by greed!" she snarled and Izuku took it as a opportunity to jump on another truck like the world's heaviest bunny. He landed without making a sound, and without any new quirks randomly activating and getting thrown at him, so he called it a success. "We never should have targeted her. She is a trained, even if it was for a few weeks. And worse, her disappearance would have been noticed."

_Breakdown._

Izuku jumped to the ceiling, and used _Slide and Glide_ to adhere then slid to the next truck where he used _Breakdown_ again.

His heartbeat was so loud in his ears he had to focus to hear what the traffickers were saying, and he quickly came to regret it.

"It's because there were several buyers already lined up for a UA kid," another male voice added as if it was obvious.

Revulsion spread through Izuku, giving him goosebumps.

There were talking about people. It was like they didn't realize they were hurting actual human beings.

_Calm down._

The police was called. Izuku's only job was to make sure everyone stayed in place before the police arrived.

_If they arrive. How much credit will they give to an anonymous tip?_

_Shut up._

Not that Izuku was scared of walking farther into the road of vigilantism at this point, but he didn't want to be the one to go through a crowd of criminals when there were so many potential collateral victims around. Izuku could more or less control where his quirk went, but he didn't think that quirk traffickers would be as careful.

He stayed a long time on the fourth truck, because they were too close.

"We can't stay here," the woman muttered. She seemed scared. "We have to finish moving them."

"Not before Yukihara arrives."

The woman almost growled at that.

"Then let's take care of the others upstairs! Or at least, let's start moving those ones!"

A man tried to calmly explain to her that it wasn't what their boss wanted, and how he wanted to oversee the whole operation, and the woman answered that she quite disagreed with him and suggested him to do several things anatomically impossible.
Thanks to the argument that broke out, distracting everyone, and Izuku passed to the fifth truck, used *Breakdown*, and hid behind it to reach one of the exits.

There were other people in the warehouse but Izuku managed to avoid them, the sounds of their steps incredibly light compared to the silence in which the teenager was evolving. Another advantage given by *Silencer*.

He was getting close to a bunch of flickering quirks when agitation erupted downstairs. Voices, furious and surprised reached him, but also metallic noises.

Izuku had a sneaking suspicion a truck had suddenly turned into spare parts as soon as someone had tried to start the motor. It might have motivated Izuku's decision to speed up and he slightly barged into the vast room that had drawn the attention of his quirk.

And he got really still when he got in.

Izuku saw cages and a dozen of people inside them. He saw chains, and the same device Bakugou had been wearing when he received his medal: the rectangle of metal which bound both hand so destructive quirks couldn't be used without hurting the user.

"I... I am here to help," he managed to say.

He realized he wasn't waiting for the police anymore. Everyone was getting out right now.

"Are you a hero?" a boy his age asked slowly, as if he had to focus to talk.

Izuku shook his head, then realized that unless they also had a *Night Vision* quirk, they couldn't see him, so he said no out loud. None of them seemed to care as Izuku started using *Breakdown* to dismantle the cages.

"Can you walk?" Izuku whispered.

Some of them nodded, but when Izuku destroyed the chains holding a first woman, she almost fell on the floor and had to hang on to the wall to stay upright.

"It's going to be fine," Izuku assured even though he wasn't half as convinced as he was pretending. "We are not going to take any risks. I called the police before entering."

Everyone was in a really bad state, at least drugged. No help to hope from them. But it wasn't like he could stop and leave them here. He just couldn't do it.

*You know you're letting your emotions take over. You're supposed to be efficient in those situations if you want to keep anyone unhurt.*

Izuku sighed for himself.

He was dismantling another cage with *Breakdown* when he sensed something behind him.

The same way he sensed when Todoroki had been repeatedly staring at him before the Sport Festival or when someone had started following him that one time when he was little. This was this sixth sense anyone had which told them when something or someone with intent was paying attention.

Izuku sensed someone behind him even if, a moment earlier, he had passed there without seeing anyone.
Click.

"Hello," someone said and there was a smile in his voice.

Izuku slowly turned towards the horned man who was holding him at gun point.
The general consensus was that no one was faster than a bullet.

Of course, there were speed quirks that could potentially disprove this, but Izuku had never had the opportunity of testing his quirk against that and now wasn't the time to find out.

However, if Izuku didn't know if he was faster than a bullet, he was aware that he was faster than the one holding the gun.

_Speed_.

Every single one of them.

He ran at the shooter as he started to press the trigger, startled by his sudden movement, but Izuku's hand was already on his wrist, forcing him to put the gun up. Someone screamed behind him, ruining any chance he had of taking care of the situation quietly, but the gun went off because of the struggles or because Horns had panicked. *Moron either way.*

If Izuku hadn't put the barrel up, the bullet would have hit those behind him.

_Strength_. Izuku crushed his wrist and Horns screamed as he dropped the gun. The teenage boy kicked it away, and he noticed that he had grabbed the trafficker at the throat at some point. He could feel his pulse under his fingers. His quirk under his skin. Which flared up.

And suddenly, Izuku was looking at the wall, his eyes looking for Horns even though he was currently holding him. It was like he was incapable of paying attention to him.

_Not invisibility but something else that allows him to be beyond notice. Uraraka mentioned she didn't see any of the other people until they were right next to her._

_I can't let him sneak up on me again._

The quirk transferred from the quirk trafficker to Izuku, and as soon as he had it, he punched him in the face with one *Strength*. The guy dropped like a potato sack, and Izuku caught him by his jacket
a second before he touched the floor.

The whole thing had lasted three seconds, maybe. A small eternity.

The gun was the priority. Izuku grabbed it and get rid of the magazine, checked for a bullet in the chamber, find one, and left the gun on the floor and the bullets in the pocket of his fancy sweat shirt, to the indignation of the woman that had almost fallen earlier.

"What are you doing ? You should use it ! Or give it to us !"

"Anyone here knows how to use it ?" Izuku asked and he didn't wait for the answer. "Then no one touches the gun."

He knew three things about those. A gun is always loaded. If someone points the gun at you, it's with the intention to shoot. And don't touch it if you don't know how to use it. He wasn't letting anyone with a gun at his back.

He activated the quirk he had just stolen (it was better to admit it), and it didn't do anything. He was feeling it, but it wasn't working and there was no time to find out how to use it. Too bad.

People were coming up. He was too freaked out to look for them with his quirk, but he knew they were because someone had screamed and there was a gunshot.

*How do I fix this ?*

Everyone was looking at him, as if they were counting on him to save them. As if they thought he had any idea of what he was doing.

Right now, his only thoughts were that he wasn't supposed to hit someone in the head because there was no such a thing as a light tap on the head. Horns was still breathing, he didn't hear any sound from his neck, but there might be neurological damages, or worse if he didn't went to the hospital.

The woman raised her hand to touch him, startling him.

"What do we do ?" she asked. "You have a plan, right ?"

Izuku took a deep breath.

And he bluffe.

"You stay inside. Hold the door. Free the last ones. If you hear anyone who isn't me or the police, you do not let that door be opened under any circumstances. Is that clear ?"

"You're going to take them on your own ?" another one asked, obviously not convinced.

Izuku looked at him. There was barely enough light for them to see Izuku but it didn't matter.

The boy was taller than Izuku. Larger too. And he seemed to shrink under his gaze.

"Yes, I will. But only if I have free range so you have to stay inside. Do you understand ?"

He nodded, and others followed.

Izuku rushed outside the room, and activated his *Speed* quirks once again as soon as the door was closed behind him. He ran in the hallway, a melange of fear and excitation spreading through him.
He should have never entered this place. He should have waited for the police, for the heroes, for someone actually trained to do this.

But what had alarmed them was the state of the trucks when they had tried to drive away. People would have disappeared forever if he had waited.

He never should have entered but, as scared as he was, he didn't regret it.

A bunch of people had climbed the stairs, a woman holding another gun at the front, anger on her face.

Izuku tried to take the gun away, but he was too fast.

Her wrist made an awful cracking noise and she screamed a moment later but at least, she dropped it. He didn't have the time to stop, so he kicked the ground next her with Air Pressure, projecting her into the wall. She left the ground, and when she fell again, she must have landed on her wrist because he heard a piercing scream.

He didn't have the time to stop. To be honest, he didn't even care that much. Just don't kill anyone. They had made their choices when they had decided to sell people.

Another man tried to hit him, a punch, and dizziness fell on Izuku, because of a quirk. His head was spinning when he ducked down, using Balance to stay on his feet, and he grabbed him by his clothes.

And threw him in the stairs and on the people still on it.

The look on their faces when they realized they were about to be hit by a ninety kilos man AND gravity was almost comical, and then, Izuku had the opportunity to appreciate a snow ball effect.

Mom is right. Stairs are out to get us.

He jumped down the stairs, ignoring the groans of pain, and kept running. Five seconds between the moment he had left the room and now. Keep the Speed. Don't let them the time to react.

If he hadn't been using Silencer at the same time, he would have missed the police alarms.

Now ? You're deciding to arrive now ?

Half an hour ago, he would have been overjoyed but now, he was a vigilante who just had used his quirks on multiple people. He had to get out of here or he would be trapped. The law had no tolerance for hero students who burned through steps and took the vigilante road.

Izuku barged in the first floor of the warehouse, where four trucks were, along with the remnants of one. People were inside, but they weren't moving. No, I can see them breath. Unconscious.

But another man was standing, older, dark hair, dark suit, dark shirt. He was also holding a girl by the shoulders, her eyes opened but not looking at anything, and not paying attention to the gun at a few centimeters away from his head.

Hostage.

Izuku usually took advantages of pauses. That's how he managed not to be hit, he had to move fast and always keep moving, and hit when people were distracted, even so slightly.
And when he saw the girl who was barely unconscious held by a man with a bored expression on his face, he did exactly what he wasn't supposed to do. He froze, just for a second, because at this moment, he was looking at what he had done and he realized how everything could go wrong.

Because of him. Because he didn't think things through.

Something clacked though the air, the sound horrible, and Izuku blocked it before he was hit in the face. Durability. Something transparent coiled around his arm, burning even through his sleeve.

On his left, the woman holding an almost invisible whip with both hands, smirked at him.

He didn't care about her. She was secondary. Nothing mattered next to the gun pointed at someone's head. Close range, so he wouldn't have any time to do anything. No Speed could allow him to get in reach fast enough. Breakdown needed a contact point.

"You move and she dies," the man warned him, as if Izuku had any attention to move any time soon.

He didn't fail to notice he hadn't been that afraid when the gun at been aimed at his own head.

"Do you feel better ?" the man in black continued. "Did you get everything out of your system ?"

He was talking to him like he was a disobedient child, and Izuku was wondering if it was just to be scornful or if he had guessed how young he was.

The whip was still around his arm, something trying to pierce through the armored fabric, and he wasn't sure of what to do if she pulled. Would that be considered a move ?

What would he do without putting the hostage in his hands and everyone around in danger ?

"Say something !" the man in the suit ordered, pissed off by Izuku's lack of reaction. It was so sudden that even his colleague with the whip froze.

"You're hearing them," Izuku said. "It's the police. Heroes will arrive too. What will happen to you if they see you killed someone ?"

Izuku was hoping for a hint of fear. At least some worry.

Instead, he got a warm smile, like this man was genuinely finding Izuku funny. It was absolutely terrifying.

"You're young, aren't you ? Raised watching heroes. Admiring them. That's why you're here. You must be smart if you managed to find us. Only armed with this quirk that destroyed my trucks and courage."

Apart from being smart and having only one quirk, he is disturbingly right.

"You did a good job. If you continue like this, you will save all of them."

Izuku took hold of his most recent acquisition.

Uraraka had told him she hadn't seen anything suspect, too focused on Horns. Earlier, Izuku had passed in front of this man without seeing him. But it wasn't invisibility.

"I only need one person with one strong quirk and I will leave. You understand what I am saying..."
Horns hadn't managed to threaten him and to use his quirk at the same time. There was one potential explanation Izuku could think about.

*God, let me be right.*

Izuku focused on the man in the suit. Not on the gun. Not on all those people around them who were treated as merchandises. On him, on how he could smile despite the countless lives he had destroyed, inflicted pure fear upon, and generally ruined. Emotions Izuku had been ignoring all his life and with which he was intimately familiar with.

Using them so pure will was pushing the new quirk.

*Look at me.*

And the man in a suit did, as if, right now, nothing existed except Izuku, because he was the only threat. His hand and the gun he was carrying moved almost on their own, away from the hostage, aiming at Izuku.

*Durability and Shock Absorption* would never stop any bullet, but Izuku still activated them by reflex, along with *Speed*.

But he didn't run.

*Aim. Air Blast. Speed x3.*

He managed to flick his fingers a moment before the man in a suit pressed the trigger. The Air Blast hit him in the shoulder and chest, throwing his aim off and the man himself backwards as he let his hostage go.

The bullet still went off.

Izuku heard it whistling right next to his ear.

The woman with the whip tried to keep him in place. And the smile disappeared as Izuku grabbed the whip and used it as leverage. He anchored himself to the floor, ignoring the pain in his hand, and he threw her using her own whip which she couldn't exactly drop. She crashed on the the side of one the remaining truck and dropped to the floor with a weak pained noise just as Izuku was getting rid of the whip around his arm.

It was like getting stung by a medusa, though a weak one. A really interesting quirk, made to neutralize people for a long time period. Exactly what Izuku would need. *No time to go back.*

The blue and red lights of police cars were already approaching.

---

Izuku managed to reach the roofs just before the first police car pulled in, fleeing. He barely had the time to make sure the girl who had been taken as a hostage was semi-alright and he had just used all his quirk to disappear into the night.

When he looked back, he saw something burning, and another glance with *Zoom* and *Night Vision* confirmed that Endeavor was on the scene.

It would be alright. Izuku didn't trust him but it would be alright.
He kept *Jump*. And as he threw himself in the air, the usual rebound that came with this specific quirk never happened.

As if it was *erased*.

Without the rebound, Izuku jumped came short, but right before he could fall, something snake-like wrapped itself around him, immobilizing his arms. He thought he would drop over the edge of the building, out of sight, but the scarf yanked him up as if he was a fly about to be eaten by a spider.

Izuku knew exactly who this scarf belonged to and pure fear washed over him, because if someone could identify him, it was this man.

He didn’t drop *Jump*. Time to test a theory.

He bent his arm and did his best to grab the scarf between his fingers.

And he activated *Breakdown*.

It might have been because adrenaline was rushing though his veins as he had just jumped into a warehouse full of criminals. It might also have been because Eraserhead, his teacher, was about to arrest him and this act of vigilantism would mean the abrupt end of his hero dreams. Or maybe he was simply scared of his mom’s reaction if he was caught at night in the middle of a dangerous situation.

But because of that, two things happened.

If *Jump* was still out of reach, *Breakdown* wasn’t, as if the first quirk was shielding it, and it confirmed his theory that Eraserhead could only erase one quirk at a time.

And for any reasons above, *Breakdown* didn’t as much dismantle than vaporize the scarf.

Shouta felt the ribbon as it stopped answering his commands before the shadow on the roof got free and started plunging into the darkness below. He stopped on his tracks, what was left of his support item wrapped around his arm, and when he looked at the streets, he already knew the faceless suspect was gone.

*Did I blink ?*

He had to or his weapon wouldn't be wrecked. Probably because of the medicine he had to take to function. Sleepiness was one of the side-effects and his mind wandered because of it.

*But if he wasn't using a Enhancing quirk, why did he fell when I looked at him ?*

*A coincidence ? A support equipment ?*

Shouta still checked, without following. He knew his limits, and as he was still slightly injured and exhausted for Recovery Girl’s quirk, running blindly after someone so at ease in the dark and who moved like that without a physical quirk, without his combat ribbon anymore, would be suicidal.

His fist was clenched at the idea of letting someone who had targeted his student escape, but this was the logical choice.
One hour after his first act of vigilantism, Izuku crawled inside his room by his window, his heart beating so loud he couldn’t hear anything else. He was shaking. His head wasn’t hurting, because he actually hadn’t used that many quirks, and not for long.

Comparatively, it would have been more difficult to fight his classmates.

*This was a very stupid thing to do anyway.*

Nagisa’s sweat-shirt was almost thrown on his bed but at the last moment, he remembered the substance on his sleeve. His hand was hurting where he had grabbed the whip, but the fabric had saved his arm by absorbing it and he didn’t want to put a corrosive substance on his bed.

Izuku sneaked into the bathroom, put the sweatshirt into the washing machine on its own, and then, took care of his hand. There was a red and itchy rash on his palm and lines of it on his fingers. Throwing alcohol at it hurt like hell.

If it didn’t hurt less in the morning, he would go to the hospital, but ultimately, he decided to leave it be.

Two days after the end of the Sport Festival, Toshinori woke up to an email in his inbox explaining that Young Uraraka had been targeted by criminals, had been rescued by Midnight and herself, and that the trafficking ring had been dismantled by Endeavor, Aizawa-kun, just after a vigilante had passed. It was an interesting way to wake up. The intense rage and fear, followed by relief, then confusion had to be good for the heart.

He sent several emails to thank the two heroes and to ask them to keep him informed concerning this case. Aizawa answered in a minute, telling him that Young Uraraka was with her parents, and that she was unhurt.

Now, sitting at his kitchen table, Toshinori was looking at his cellphone the same way cats looked at a bath. They didn't want to do this, hated the idea of doing this, but were conscious they wouldn't be able to escape their predicament.

He sighed and took a hold of himself. He was the Symbol of Peace. He was the number 1 hero. He was undefeated. He had to be able to keep Young Midoriya and Gran Torino from meeting.

How hard could it be anyway ?

He took his phone and called.

One ring. Two ring.

"Yes," Midoriya answered, his voice flat, almost brusque.

It made Toshinori pause. He wasn't used of Young Midoriya being anything but sweet.

"Young Midoriya. This is All Might," Toshinori explained as he realized the teenage boy couldn't know since the number came from his student file. "I was wondering if you were free today ? I wanted to talk with you about your performance at the Sport Festival."

*And how you drew my teacher's attention...*
There was a long silence at the other end of the line, and Toshinori started to fidget on his chair, uncomfortable.

They got along just fine, but maybe Toshinori had crossed a line. Maybe Young Midoriya was trying to find a polite way to tell him he didn't want to spend his day off worrying about school.

"Of course, I would understand if you won't. I'm calling at the last moment and outside of school..."

"With pleasure," Young Midoriya interrupted him, but despite what he said, his voice was devoid of any warmth. "When and where ?"

Hizashi was going home from his radioshow and was greeted by the the spectacle of his roommate, sitting on the floor of the living room, surrounded by papers, and his tablet in his hand. His hair were tied into a messy bun, he had exchanged his hero suit for comfortable black clothes, and his eyes were injected with blood. He looked even more sleepless than usual.

The pro hero had to refrain himself from taking two steps back and fleeing, but being brave was one of the conditions of his job.

"I don't even have the beginning of a positive ID !" Aizawa growled.

Hizashi let himself in. Threw his coat on the couch and looked at the mess of papers on the floor.

"For the villains ?"

He knew it was about quirk trafficking. And he suspected that Aizawa didn't sleep much since when people were drugged and in a stressful situation tended to use their quirks as soon they were conscious again, with catastrophic consequences. Eraserhead's quirk was needed so Aizawa's recovery and sleep were secondary.

"For the vigilante," Aizawa sighed. "The vigilante who called us. The vigilante who took down every quirk traffickers there by the time the police showed up. And who protected all the victims on his own."

"The victims can't ID him ?" Hizashi asked.

In his experience, the more they were, the more details could be obtained until there was a global image.

An ugly laugh followed.

"Twenty witnesses and everyone seems to have seen nothing. None of them remember a quirk. The only useful information I have is from the villains, and no one saw his face."

Pure revulsion coursed through Hizashi. "Are you telling me you're reduced to check the quirk register ?"

Aizawa's eyes looked up at him, something demented in them.

The quirk register was the last measure any hero was willing to take when they had to ID a person of interest. It meant going through pages and pages of people categorized by their sex, age and quirk, and it was the most bothersome thing that had ever existed.
And because Hizashi was a true hero and a really good friend, he said something incredibly stupid: "I will help you. What quirk are we looking for?"

Aizawa almost threw his tablet at him, probably fearing the possibility of Hizashi changing his mind.

"Some swear he had a physical quirk, but there is proofs of a quirk that dismantles things," Aizawa explained very quickly.

Hizashi yawned and sat on the couch, consulting the horribly familiar tab. "The dismantling quirk, then. Every time someone fights a physically trained quirk user, they love to proclaim they had a All Might-worthy quirk. Unless you think there were several vigilante? Potentially wearing the same thing?"

What Hizashi didn't say was that it would be hell on hearth to find an organized team like that. Fortunately, Aizawa shared his headache.

"Let's say dismantling quirk so we don't have to look for three types of candidates."

Amen to that.

"Age?" Hizashi asked without too much hope.

"Unidentified. More than ten, less than sixty. Maybe."

"Man or woman?"

"Yes," Aizawa answered without looking at him in the eyes.

Why did I open my big mouth?

"This is going to be a long day," Hizashi whined shamelessly.

Still in his bed, Izuku put his phone away, blinked, and went back to sleep.

He woke up some time later because his brain had finally registered what had happened and he used a Speed quirk to be ready in time, stress devouring his insides, and not only because All Might had called him. Maybe it was because of the match with Todoroki where he had managed to break his opponent’s bones. Or maybe All Might knew about last night. After all, Izuku had used Strength, Speed, and Breakdown with leisure. He had tried not to be seen using two quirks at the same time, but when he had been held at gun point, he had to use Speed despite using Breakdown a moment earlier. And downstairs, even they didn't, somehow, recognize the quirk of one of their fellow traffickers, there was still Strength, Speed, then Air Blast.

I have been known to be more subtle.

Izuku arrived in front of the restaurant thirty minutes early and then, he just started to walk. No destination, no idea of what he was doing. He was just trying to get rid of the nervous energy that was buzzing through him.

But then, he realized that frantically walking into circles might clue All Might that something was wrong, so he parked himself back to a wall, kept using Cooldown so he wouldn't sweat, and read old hero articles on his phone to distract himself from his worries.
It worked surprisingly well and Izuku only looked up when he felt the familiar shining quirk somewhere on the roofs. He smiled and put his phone in his pocket.

"I AM... here," All Might finally whispered as he fell from the sky and into the alley next to which Izuku was waiting, in a semi-discreet way. Or maybe not discreet, but at least out of sight. "Have you been waiting for long?"

"Not at all," Izuku said, because what was half an hour in a day of twenty-four?

"Then, let's eat," All Might declared dramatically, but he didn't get out of the back alley, taking a long pause.

Izuku waited, not understanding what was wrong even after a quick look around. He didn't have the time to ask All Might what was the problem.

"Are you okay? You seemed odd when I called you earlier?"

Izuku frowned, trying to remember what he had said.

Then, he remembered at what time All Might had called.

Oh crap.

"There was nothing wrong. It's just that you called me before I had coffee."

"Say that again?"

Izuku gulped down: "You kind of called me before I had my first cup of coffee... And I am not a nice person first thing in the morning."

Izuku and his mother had never mastered the fine art of being nice before a caffeinated beverage.

All Might's chuckle and his 'I can relate to that.' were almost worth admitting it. Afterwards, he abandoned the regular All Might's form in a cloud of steam, his green cargo pants and his white shirt hanging on him, and they went to the American restaurant without a fuss.

A really enthusiastic waitress sat them at a table upstairs, near the window. She called All Might Yagi, so he ought to be a regular. Since heroes tended to hide their civilian identity and their private life, bringing Izuku into a place he liked was a mark of trust.

Izuku grabbed the menu handed down by the waitress. He had already seen an enormous hamburger full of bacon three tables away and he wanted it.

"What happened to your hand," All Might suddenly asked as he saw Izuku's bandage which was hiding the rash left by the invisible whip.

Lying didn't come easily to Izuku, despite having spent most of his life misdirecting people.

So he didn't say anything that wasn't the truth.

"Nothing much. During the Sport Festival, I grabbed Todoroki's headband even though he had already started to protect it with flames."

Sorry, Todoroki. Especially since you have complicated feelings about your left side and that you iced this burn as soon as the cavalry battle was over. It hadn't left more than a red mark, not even painful, and it had been Izuku's fault anyway.
All Might might have insisted, but something down the road drew his attention, and when Izuku glanced by the window, he saw someone running with a handbag which didn't seem to belong to him.

The pro hero was already in his feet. "I will be right back. I just have to... wash my hand. Tell her I want the usual." He fled before Izuku had the time to say anything.

Izuku ordered the food and his milkshake and All Might's coke arrived just as All Might was giving the thief to the police, and Izuku was shaking with excitement because he was assisting live to an All Might hero work.

He didn’t try to help. He didn’t have a license and he had done enough vigilantism for the week.

All Might came back to the table, looking disheveled. "Sorry, I was... You actually know what I was doing. That's actually why I love this spot. You can see the whole street from here. Watch out for everything."

"I am not surprised," Izuku smiled.

They promptly shut up as the waitress came back with their burgers and their fries.

"Any new quirk?" All Might asked as soon as she was gone, and coincidentally just as Izuku was taking a bite too big for his mouth.

The teenage boy bravely didn’t choke on his burger as he thought of the quirks taken from the noumu and Focus last night.

"I didn’t have the time since the school year started. Well, except at the USJ..." Izuku admitted. "But I am trying to find a heat resistance quirk... And I may have an electrical one in sight..."

_Time to change the subject._ "What about this successor?"

The napkin almost warped in front of All Might's mouth but Izuku saw a spiteful of blood.

"It's... It's complicated," he admitted. "I have several candidates lined up. I have more to look for. I need someone with strong abilities already on the path of becoming a great hero, in the best case scenario."

"Is a strong quirk really needed if they are going to inherit something so powerful?" Izuku wondered out loud.

"What do you mean?"

"What is the purpose of your quirk? What will the next holder have to do?"

It was probably rude to ask. Too personal. Izuku had often weirded out people by asking about their quirks, but if it was hard to resist with the usual powers, it was worse with his idol's quirk.

Fortunately, All Might didn't seem to mind.

"The mission of One for All has changed since my time. Now, its role is to achieve and keep the peace. For people to smile without worrying. A beacon of light so no one gets lost."

When Izuku thought about All Might, he thought about his smile. How in control he was, how his mere presence

"Then, does the next holder needs to have a powerful quirk? Don’t you only need someone who
has the right…’’ He hesitated, looking for the word.

‘’inherent heroic quality ?’’ All Might proposed with a smile.

‘’Yes ?’’

The hero's smile grew wider. It was different from his All Might grin, but just as warm. "That's exactly that. But I never talked about strong quirks. Just about strong abilities."

Izuku froze. Not because he didn't think about it, but because of course, he knew that. He knew quirks weren't everything, and the thought that All Might assumed he didn't know that was bothering him.

Before Izuku could explain what he meant, All Might excused himself again with a story about a stomach ache. Izuku barely had the time to turn in the direction of the window when All Might appeared in the street.

There was a cat up a tree, and its owner was also up there, two branches below. Ironically, the cat managed to come down before All Might finished climbing, under the disgusted look of its owner. But just as they both reached the ground, an explosion was heard in the whole neighborhood.

Since his absolutely delicious bacon burger was finished and the fries didn't last long, Izuku ordered a dessert called the Chocolate Menace.

When All Might came back, Izuku was facing a cake the size of a food tray, armed only with a little spoon : "You can't possibly finish this."

"I have many years of training," Izuku warned him.

All Might finally got to finish his burger while Izuku was attacking his cake. Even despite the difference of quantity, All Might was eating slowly and little bites by little bites.

Around them, customers were talking, laughing, and waiters were laughing with them. The great food and the view weren't the only reason why All Might liked this restaurant.

Izuku rarely ate out. His mother was a great cook, and they both like to eat at home, hidden in their own world. But this was good too. No one was paying attention to him, but he could enjoy this atmosphere.

All Might didn't start talking again until he finished his burger.

"I forgot to tell you : you were great during the Sport Festival. I didn't see any sign of stress !" Argh. "Why are you suddenly so gloomy ?"

Stuffing his mouth full of chocolate probably wouldn't make him drop the subject.

"I was supposed to do better than that." By that, he meant that with all the risks he took and all the worries his mother had to face, he should have done better. He had more quirks than his whole class, he was supposed to be better than this. "And Aizawa-Sensei told us that the Sport Festival would be an important step to have an internship."

At this last word, All Might's face dropped. It was really quick, but disturbing on the face of the Symbol of Peace.

"I wouldn't worry too much about that," he said, but Izuku wasn't sure if he was just trying to
reassure him or if he was honest. "Anyone arriving to the tournament will receive offers of internship."

Maybe.

"That's good," Izuku answered instead.

"And about those offers... Can I give you an unsolicited advice ?"

"Always," Izuku smiled because it should be obvious.

All Might leaned forwards, his blue gaze suddenly incredibly intense. Izuku braced himself.

"Choose someone you know and who can bring you the experience you seek."

...

Does he think I was going to close my eyes and pick one out, hoping the Fates are on my side ?

"Okay ?" Izuku said instead.

This seemed to greatly relieve All Might, which meant that there was something Izuku wasn't realizing about this whole situation, but as long as they weren't talking about vigilantism, he was fine with that.

They talked about All Might's hero work, Izuku freaking All Might out with his knowledge, and All Might delighting Izuku with anecdotes. They also talked about their respective experience at UA, and what had changed since All Might's youth. Half of those anecdotes made Izuku look fondly at the security on the training grounds.

At some point, Izuku put his spoon away and All Might looked down to see the empty plate.

His eyes were wide but he didn't say anything about it.

He didn't need to talk either when they started to leave and Izuku started pulling out his money. All Might just sent him a 'Don't even think about it' look.

"Heroes are so cool, aren't they ?" a cheerful voice behind Minoru as he was watching the footage of the fight between Midoriya and Todoroki, when they had decided to try to murder each other on live television.

Minoru turned to see that a gorgeous girl watching the heros over his shoulder. She looked like an idol, with long pink hair and hazel eyes, and wearing an oversized All Might sweat-shirt, the hoodie up.

There was a beautiful girl right in front of him, and who was interested in heroes. Minoru knew exactly what to say in such a situation.

"I know," he said with fake modesty. "I am a hero student myself."

Her eyes widened in admiration and she gasped : "Seriously ? Where ?"
"UA."

Only the best hero school in the country.

"Wow. This is like the elite. But I don't remember you from the festival..." Minoru immediately deflated at that one. "Oh, of course, the grape boy !"

Well, if she recognized him from the race and the cavalry battle, it meant it must have done something right.

"I hope you hang on," she said with such a warm smile, as if she was really concerned for him. On his side. "Heroes school are so insane, with all those students with powerful quirks and the teachers who only care about culling the herd rather than actually teaching... But UA probably isn't like that, is it ?

Minoru was about to agree, but he remembered the first day at school, when Aizawa-Sensei was about to expel Midoriya. And how he had been thinking: *What are my chances of staying in this class if this teacher is ready to get rid of someone with such a strong quirk ?*

The more he talked with her and the more his doubts were difficult to ignore.

Was his quirk enough ? Would his grades be enough ? Was the villains attacks, the monstrously powerful fellow students, and the constant risk of expulsion worth it ? Would he fail ? What would happen if he failed ?

Minoru had the answer to this last question. He would join the ranks of the losers who thought they could be heroes and who had crashed into reality.

"Some people are born with the perfect quirk," he tried to laugh it off, "and some have to obtain it."

"Working is good," she admitted. "But actual help is better..."

Help ?

In Minoru's experience, no one helped. Ever. You had to prove you were up to the task.

Minoru realized that he had stopped following the conversation, and listened again. Chicks didn't like when men didn't pay attention to them.

"... I do too, because my quirk got so much easier to use. Here, look." She rummaged through her bag and pulled out a green inhaler. "I have another one at home, do you want to try ?"
who idolize him.

Thank you for all the comments. I reread them again and again.

I will have to slow down the updates because RL is just being petty right now.
By the time Izuku reached UA, he almost had three heart attacks as people kept recognizing him from the Sport Festival. Except that Izuku was still on the edge because of his recent vigilantism, so when he heard ‘It’s you’, his heart dropped in his chest until the person added ‘from the Sport Festival!’ But to be honest, people recognizing him and congratulating him would still be mortifying on its own.

But pleasing. A little intimidating. He was blushing when he left the train, but there were some warm feelings involved. Definitely.

Managing to control his new quirk would have been useful but despite what Horns had showed, Izuku could only draw attention towards him, not away, and it took a lot of concentration. He had tried to draw the attention on something else than him, using Nagisa as a guinea pig, but it had failed miserably.

The advantage with obtaining quirks from willing donors, apart from the obvious, was that Izuku had all the information even before he tried the quirk for the first time.

Rain had greeted him as he was walking, only for Izuku to realize that his umbrella was still at home, and he was holding his yellow backpack above his head to have some measure of protection when he heard someone making too much noise running behind him, and turned to see Iida.

"This is no time for a iddle stroll! We will be late!" his friend warned him as he kept running.

In poncho. And rain boots.

He stopped next to Izuku, rummaged through his bag now half hidden by the poncho, and pulled out an umbrella - proving that he was crazy prepared – and opened it above Izuku so he would be protected from the rain. Then, he remembered to actually greet him. "Good morning, Midoriya!"

"Late? Don't we have five more minutes before the ring bells?"

"The students of UA make it a point of arriving ten minutes early!" Iida explained as if it was obvious.

Izuku was fairly certain that it wasn't the case because since the semester had started, he made it a point to be at his desk before Aizawa-Sensei arrived, and only that.
But that wasn't what was important here.

They were at the lockers when Izuku managed to ask what he wanted to know since he had learned about Ingenium.

"Iida, how are you do..."

"Midoriya," Iida cut him. He turned towards him, not smiling, but controlling his expression like everything was alright, but he wasn't as good with his body language. Izuku could see the sudden tension that had appeared as soon as he had talked. "You don't need to worry about my brother. I apologize if he or I caused any undue concern."

From Izuku's experience, no one liked people fussing about them. Actually, in a stressful situation, they liked to be left alone because they had no energy to spare in convincing others it would be alright and other social niceties.

But he also knew that when something happened to someone you love and admire so much, it was like their world was torn apart. Suddenly, they realized they weren't in security. Vulnerable. Alone.

Or maybe it had just been Izuku.

"It's not undue concern. And I won't push you on that. But if it ever becomes too much and you need to talk, remember you have friends."

_It's not hypocrisy because it has never been too much for me._

Iida nodded, and seemed relieved when Izuku dropped the subject.

They went into the classroom, everyone talking about how they were recognized in the streets and how exciting this was.

Uraraka was already here, for she had came in with Yaoyorozu. Izuku knew that the second class rep had invited Uraraka to sleep a couple of days at her place and Uraraka suspected Midnight to have told her, especially since the Yaorozus were extremely welcoming.

The three of them hanged out together before the start of the class, at Iida's desk, and it was interesting.

Iida was down because of his brother but didn’t want people to worry. Uraraka was down because of the encounter of this week-end, but she didn’t want people to find out so Izuku had had to swear not to tell a word. As such, his two comrades were louder and more enthusiast than ever to hide their worries, and Izuku was right in the middle of it.

Uraraka kept punching his shoulder in what was trying to be a playful hit and Iida almost hit him several time in the face while talking with his hands, but a Speed quirk saved Izuku every time.

He wouldn’t have exchanged his place for anything in the world.

---

Aizawa-Sensei's eyes were so red it'd have looked like he was using his quirk if his hair wasn't down. He was standing in front of his desk with the specific look of scorn one addressed to everything standing between oneself and a much needed night of sleep, or at least, a first cup of
coffee in the morning.

Izuku was incredibly thankful he didn't have to fight Aizawa-Sensei a few days ago because he would probably have drop-kicked him into the ground.

"You'll be coming up with your hero names," his teacher announced, unaware of the extremely nervous accidental vigilante sitting in his class.

*If he knew, he would have dragged me out of class before the bell rang to throw me at the police. I'm safe.*

"But first, concerning the internships I mentioned the other day... It's based on who the pros think will be ready to join the hero workforce after another two of three years of experience... So you could say it's a way for them to show interest in your futures."

This was supposed to be a good thing but... Where they supposed to choose something so important for their future now? No, probably not. And it was more about experience at this point.

*And what tells you you will receive any offer? You're at the eight place and you just threw your quirks around with no strategy.*

*Not now, anxiety.*

"But there is more than enough time for their interest to wane before you graduate," Aizawa continued. "And any and all offers can be arbitrarily revoked. It happens quite often."

Izuku's anxiety decided that now was actually a good time to strive and he thought about quirks to calm down. Behind him, Mineta pestered about useless adults.

*That's just a way to motivate us for keep working. Nothing more.*

"Now, here is the complete draft pick number."

And they saw the results.

*Holy cra...*

"They are usually more spread out but the three of our own stole the spotlight."

The third one was Kacchan with 3 456 offers.

The second one was Todoroki with 4 123 offers.

And the first one...

"Midoriya, you're the one who has the most offers!" Mineta said behind him, so loud in the apprehensive silence, sealing Izuku's fate.

But still, Izuku hoped. He didn't make a move, didn't make a sound, and pretended he wasn't here, not even daring to look at the blond teen in front of him. He could feel the pressure cooking up and it would explode out of Kacchan in three...

Two...

One.
"ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME ?" Kacchan screamed, suddenly up and turned towards Izuku like he was the source of all the annoyance in the world. Like Izuku was personally responsible for the polls, and the Sport Festival, and life poking at Kacchan was something personally engineered by Izuku himself.

If they had been four years old, tiny explosions would already be bursting on Kacchan's palm.

"You lost ! I won the Festival ! Not you !"

"I know that," Izuku said.

He had been there when he had been ejected out-of-bounds, raging afterwards because with all the quirks he had, he was supposed to do better than that. There was a difference of training here.

But Izuku's calm answer seemed to anger him even more.

"Then why do you have so many fucking offers ? What are you playing..."

"Bakugou," Aizawa-Sensei called and this one word cut through the noise and Bakugou's wrath.

"Sit down."

And he did, but not before sending one last glare at Izuku.

"Strength is important for a hero but so is advertising," Aizawa told him. "If someone shows skills during the Sport Festival, their ranking becomes secondary.

Aizawa gave them their offers and despite all those names he knew, Izuku couldn't look at it yet when he could feel the burning anger building inside his childhood friend.

Izuku understood where it was coming from. Kacchan had won the Sport

"Kacchan ?"

"Go fuck yourself," Kacchan answered without looking up from his list of offers.

His knuckles were white, gripping at the paper.

"Lord Explosion Murder !" Bakugou declared dramatically.

A heavy silence answered him, no one wanting to point out the obvious.

A tiny group of students absolutely unprepared to choose a name were cmustered in the back of the class, and Izuku was at the center of it. Around them, those who already had a hero name decided to help and a seance of brainstorming ensued.

Izuku had sent a text to Nagisa as soon as he had realized he didn't know what to choose, his poor phone was opened on seven "Choose you hero name" sites, and of course, he decided to focus on someone else because God forbid he took care of his own problems.

"You should choose Frost so if you use your flames, the villains will be very surprised," he smiled just before realizing that if Todoroki had not used his flames against Kacchan, maybe he actually..."
never wanted to do again and Izuku had just overstep.

"Do not do that !" Iida screamed, unaware of his turmoil. "A hero name is important ! You can’t use one as a subterfuge !"

"No," Todoroki said, "Let him talk, it's interesting..."

Izuku was about to explain a lot of idea to misdirect villains when Uraraka interrupted his thoughts :

"How can you not have any hero name ? I thought about mine when I was six !"

Izuku suddenly had a vivid memory of three-years-old him jumping on the couch in an All Might onesie while he was chanting his potential hero names such as All Might II, Mighty Boy, Wonder Might, All Might Junior, Mini Might (this one courtesy of his mother), Ultra Might, and so on…

He looked at Uraraka in the eyes and said : ‘’I don’t remember any.’’

You know, like a liar.

"Baron Explosion Murder !" Kacchan screamed at the other end of the class.

"I think you fail to see my point," Midnight sighed.

Taking advantage of the Kacchan's noisy troubles, Todoroki started to sneakily write something on his plate, so of course, Izuku himself, Uraraka, Yaozorozu, Ashido, and Asui who was passing near their table all look at it.

"Shouto ?" Izuku read out loud.

"It's actually a good idea. It has the kanji for both Heat and Cold," Yaoyorozu noticed.

"I can't always change for Frost later," Todoroki shrugged.

"Todoroki ! No" Iida screeched, making them all laugh

"What about Izuku for your Hero name ?" Yaoyorozu asked.

"No," he declared and the tone was so final that an heavy silence fell around him. Uraraka was looking at him with wide eyes. Iida was slightly leaning back, not at ease, and Todoroki’s gaze was piercing.

Using his first name wouldn’t do because if he had calmed his mother with the fact that after six years, he had changed enough not to be recognized by people who had barely seen him, and only when he was a toddler, using his not so usual name was a no-no.

"I would feel weird if people called me by my first name," he explained away, probably helped by the warmth spreading on his face at the idea of strangers calling him Izuku. Only his mother called him that.

"So you're against first names as hero names ?" Todoroki asked.

"I am perfectly fine with that. As long as it's not mine."

Fortunately, his phone biped, distracting everyone from the cold Izuku had conjured without a frost quirk. Nagisa had answered.
Ashido almost warped behind his chair to read above his shoulder, and once he made sure that there was no quirk talk, he let her.

N: [Are you Fucking serious ?]

"That's one angry friend."

N: [Do you think I only have that to do ?]

N: [Never mind, I have Ethics in the Utilization of Information Systems, so any distraction is welcome. Let me think about it.]

"Ah, not anymore."

"What about Midori or Green ?" Uraraka proposed.

Simple, both were reminders of his suit. He had a preference for Green, if only to differentiate his hero name from the real one, but he wrote both of the suggestions down.

"Bunny !" Ashido decided. "Like the helmet you had on your first day !"

"Wasn't that a jackal ?" Todoroki asked.

"It's inspired by All Might," Izuku explained, putting his index fingers in front of his forehead to imitate his idol's haircut.

There was a long second of silence and everyone more or less cooed at him. Even Iida spared a smile

"My vote is still on Bunny," Ashido reminded him before taping on the notebook with her index finger.

Izuku refused to write that but she grabbed a pen and did it herself.

[Bug.]

That might be offensive for a number of people with mutations if he claimed a name like that.

[Elpis.]

It was added to the list.

But she wasn't done.

[Ariel.]

[Ariel would suit you.]

"Ariel is cute !" Ashido said.

"That's a good one !" Yaorozu agreed. "It reminds me of the chaos Ariel unleashed in the Tempest."

Everyone looked at her.
"From Shakespeare," she added as if it explained everything.

"He wrote a lot," Ashido reminded her.

"Ariel was the air spirit helping to the magician Prospero. Despite his aerial nature, his nature allows his power to express different abilities, a little like yours, Midoriya!"

Cooldown activated swiftly so Izuku wouldn't sweat because someone was mentioning how odd his quirk was.

"You said air and chaos, I am convinced for Midori's name," Ashido declared.

The name got added to the list because, with such recommendation, how could he ignore it?

Tenya knew which name to choose. Which name to carry. He had his brother's blessing and his mother's approval.

But Ingenium was gentle and helped everyone. He inspired the trust of people around him and he was only stronger thanks to their help. He was the spirit of chivalry. He was this hero who put a smile on everyone's face.

Ingenium was his older brother.

And carrying this name while he was alive felt like he was asked to replace the greatest man he had ever known.

Tenya would have to be enough for now.

---

Why did you never think of a hero name?

Probably because if Izuku had wanted to follow All Might's path for a long time, he took the actual steps fairly recently. Going to the entrance exam was actually a last minute decision and he hadn't thought about it in the meantime because he didn't want to think about his eventual failure.

After that, there was the USJ, the Sport Festival, and what had happened to Uraraka. No time to think. Perfect distractions for someone trying to keep his brain from thinking too much about anything that could go wrong.

The last push he needed for his decision came from the advice of Lord Explosion Murder.

"You should call yourself Deku."

Izuku laughed it off and wrote Ariel down on his plate.

Midnight accepted it.
Learning about Young Midoriya's mountain of offers immediately cheered up Toshinori, because it meant that the boy choosing Gran Torino was even more unlikely. His former teacher wasn't in the hero ranking, wasn't known, and even though his quirk was great, Young Midoriya had no way to know about it.

Everything would be fine.

Toshinori lasted an hour before unease started to grip at him once again.

Gran Torino was wise and relentless, and he didn't seem worried at the idea of reaching Young Midoriya. Toshinori had thought it was because he would find him with another way, but what if he had a plan? What if he had already reached out?

As the number 1 hero and the Symbol of Peace, Toshinori hold out as much as he could, until stress threatened to devour him from the inside at the idea of Gran Torino holding Young Midoriya by his ankles above a balcony, yelling "WHY DO YOU HAVE THE SAME QUIRK AND HOW ARE YOU RELATED TO HIM?"

He had seen it happen with someone else.

When he couldn't take it anymore, he ran to the classroom, still bent in half because of a monstrous stomachache.

"I-I-I am here! In a peculiar pose!" he announced just as Midoriya was opening the door, his eyes wide even though he had to have seen him coming with this quirk of his. "I need to talk to you!"

"… Okay?" Young Midoriya answered with an apprehensive look on his face but he still followed him without asking any question.

It wasn't the first time Toshinori noticed the blind trust the boy was showing to him. Almost since their first encounter.

But it was more about idolatry, and that was why he had to be extremely careful. He couldn't take advantage of it.

"First, I learned that you received many offers. Congratulations," he said as the boy was blushing. "Has one of them picked your interest already?"

The list of offers appeared in Midoriya's hand as fast as his notebook did, sometimes. And now that he was paying attention, Toshinori could see that the list of names was almost as thick as the notebooks. And it was already covered in writing.

"'Actually,' Young Midoriya said after flipping through pages to find a name underlined twice, "I am curious about a hero named Gran Torino."

Shit.

"It's so rare when I don't know a hero so I am a little excited," Young Midoriya admitted, "But there is no trace of him online. I will have to search more when I get home."

How? How could Gran Torino predict the boy's curiosity? Or was it just bad luck?
Quick! Change subject! Maybe he won’t notice it.

"But apart from him, is there another offer you’re interested in?"

The green-haired boy didn't even hesitate.

"Everyone of them," he answered and for a second, his eyes almost gleamed.

Toshinori couldn't help a laugh.

"That’s kind of the problem," Young Midoriya continued, a hand in his hair and half hiding his face. "I want to go everywhere. So many heroes with so many quirk and so many different experiences. But right now, I am interested by someone who is good at investigating because this is a skill I really want to learn."

"Endeavor is the hero who solved more cases for the past twelve years."

But Endeavor was known for being a loner, so he wasn't sure that he was making offers.

"I did receive an offer," Young Midoriya surprised him, "from his agency and I thought about it, especially since Todoroki decided to go there... But I don't know. Especially since I also received an offer from Gang Orca and he is known for making his interns do a lot of things to acquire different skills..." He looked up at Toshinori and froze. "Not that I am trying to be picky but..."

"It's good you have so many choices." Toshinori simply said with a fond smile. He couldn't help it. "And don't worry yourself about making the perfect choice. You will learn wherever you go," he assured, and his hand moved on its own.

All those quirks but he is still at the beginning of the road, a multitude of choices waiting for him.

"Thank you," the boy said just as Toshinori patted the mop of green curls on the top of his head, and Young Midoriya just froze, his head tilted like a curious bird. Toshinori was about to take his hand back but he just accepted it.

Young Midoriya distracted him from his thoughts as he transferred his weight from one feet to another, clearly building up the courage to ask him something, and Toshinori took his hand back in case he had actually made him uncomfortable.

But it wasn't that.

"Can I ask you a question? You don't have to answer if you don't want to."

Despite a really bad feeling, Toshinori nodded.

"Do you know who Gran Torino is? Because I really tried to find him and I didn't manage to. It's rare."

Oh, Great spirit of America, don't fail me now.

"Why are you asking?" Toshinori asked as if he didn't care and didn't have a worry in the world.

"Your face became really white and your quirk flashed on its own."

For the love of...

"I do know him," he admitted. "He was once an instructor at UA. Just for one year. And he was my
Young Midoriya looked at him the same way he had look at him the day they met. When he thought he was incognito and this young man had seen through his quirk as if it was staring at something wonderful.

He had to make him understand this was a horrible idea. Now.

"He is the one who trained me after my mentor passed away. But he was brutal and he retired so long ago I almost forgot about him," he added really quickly and his leg started quivering. He looked away from Young Midoriya to get it under control. "He isn't interested by rankings, he just wants to use his quirks and to navigate into the crime fighting world without being slowed down..."

And Gran Torino was also good at investigating but Young Midoriya couldn't know that.

He looked back at the boy and froze when he saw Young Midoriya's face, like it was Christmas and his birthday at the same time.

Toshinori had a sneaking suspicion he didn't hear anything after "He is the one who trained me."

He had made a horrible mistake.

Aizawa-Sensei asked for a moment of Katsuki's time after the class and Kirishima asked if he wanted them to wait for him for their stupid lunch outside. As if Katsuki wanted to mingle with them, and he told him in no uncertain terms what he thought of their friendship moments.

He went back to his teacher, who looked like shit. He must have went back to his hero activities as soon as the bandages and casts had been removed because his face looked twenty years older than usual, his eyes were red without his quirk, and he radiated a "Don't fuck with me" aura. Katsuki could respect the latter.

"Why do you think you aren't the most sought out despite winning the Sport Festival ?" his teacher asked.

"Because I couldn't show what I could do. All my fights were short and disappointing, except with Uraraka."

But even when he had fought with Uraraka, people had booed at him. Worse, he hadn't be able to prove himself with the following fights.

It was Deku's fault. He had messed with Half and Half so he didn't fight back when faced with Katsuki. Worse, he didn't even have the decency of winning his fight so Katsuki couldn't throw makeshift grenade at his stupid face, and prove he could win because he was actually working for it.

"You're wrong," Aizawa-Sensei said. "Flashy moves are appreciated but neutralizing quickly someone proves you have control over your quirk and any pro will be able to notice that." For a moment, his eyes flashed red. "Frankly, the problem is your attitude."

That pissed him off. More than it should have.
Aizawa-Sensei had been the one to defend him against all those dumb motherfuckers during his match with Round Face.

"You didn't get as many offers because people don't trust you. The pros are looking at you and they are thinking 'I don't want someone so volatile representing my agency.' And if you keep blowing off, you will be ignored by the hero world despite your strength."

There was a lot of things Katsuki could have said. Screamed. But he didn't. Instead, he listened.

"Think about it," Aizawa-Sensei asked him.

Izuku was walking down the hallway when something exploded, the reinforced metal door flying from its hinges and crashing into a wall with a loud noise that almost made his heart stop.

_There was no quirk. I would have noticed that._

He rushed inside, ready to put down any fire. Instead, he found the system that drastically lowered the oxygen in a room to smother the flames and Hatsume who was taking the matter in her own hands by smothering something definitely in more fire than the rest of the room with one fire-absorbent fabric in one hand, and tinkering with something high tech with the other.

But that wasn't the weirdest part in this picture.

Shinsou was also here, sitting at a desk behind what looked like a Plexiglas shield and he kept writing something on his notebook without a care in the world.

Izuku blinked.

"It's a common occurrence here," Shinsou explained without looking up. "Don't worry."

"Oh."

Hatsume froze.

"Is that the Mister number 1 I'm hearing?"

"I only won the race."

The girl dropped what she was doing, start of a fire included, and almost materialized in front of Izuku, a Cheshire grin on her face.

"You're the one who sent me Shinsou Hitoshi! That's a good start! But now, I need more. More people wearing my cute babies and exposing them to the world and to sponsors! Feel free to send more to me!" she declared and there was a crazy glint in her eyes.

"What about finishing my ribbon first?" Shinsou called out and Izuku used the distraction to take two steps back.

"I finished it! I even perfected it! You're the one who nag me into making a sub par version!"

"No, you made a version of Eraserhead's combat ribbon that will electrocute me if I blink at it too
Izuku actually shuddered as he thought of what would have happened if Aizawa-Sensei had been able to taser him two nights ago. There wasn't much to do if the electrical shock didn't kill you, so he would have had to wait, then escaped after he wasn't immobilized anymore.

"Improvise. Adapt. Overcome," Hatsume told Shinsou, without any mercy.

Shinsou grabbed his pile of History books and showed them to her, silently threatening her though Izuku wasn't sure of how. Hatsume raised her hands and went back to her table and what she was working on.

"I am doing her homework so I she can keep working and destroy her health," Shinsou explained.

"And I thank you for it, Test model 1," Hatsume said without paying attention while smothering what was left of the flames for good.

Since Hatsume's items had an unfortunate tendency to explode, Izuku went to Shinsou's side of the room. He needed this Heat Resistance quirk as soon as possible if he wanted to keep studying at UA.

"What are you working on ?" "The Great Riots of six years ago in California."

_Durability. Resistance. Shock Absorption. Shock Absorption._

"A bunch of heroes and villains fought like crazy and everyone panicked," Shinsou continued. "Now, I just have to write ten pages about it, and I don't think I can go beyond five."

Izuku went through all his quirks slowly. He wasn't activating anyone of them, but he was just making sure they were here. Golden lights in a sea of darkness. Usually, he just like to know they were here and was swooning over them, but now, he _needed_ the ritual.

"When you're talking about the heroes and the villains," Izuku explained, "Mention the fact that they were several of them and that might be an example of a league like we've seen at the USJ but we don't know because almost no one was recognized. And what happened after the actual fight."

His voice didn't change and his face didn't betray anything.

He was still mentally checking on his quirks.

"It was chaos. The villains stopped but there was so much collateral damages that people just lost their minds. For a moment, there was no lights in the whole city. Those weren't just riots but people using their quirks in the streets and destroying everything in their path. There were fights of groups with similar quirks, the police was overwhelmed, and urgency services actually stopped answering during those three days. The US army had to be mobilized to control the crowds."

Shinsou finished taking notes and when he looked up, Izuku had everything under control once again.

"How do you even know all that ?"

"I did research for a paper in my middle school," Izuku lied, still disturbed. "We are eating outside with the class. Do you want to join in ?"
"With a bunch of hero students? I will wait until I am actually in your course."

"I have to build more things to get filthy rich," Hatsume explained as if it was obvious.

Izuku nodded and left as fast as he could.

More than half of 1-A had decided to take advantage of the half a day of class and to eat together outside. After getting burgers and other unhealthy and delicious snacks, they all decided to picnic and found a decent spot near a pond. At least until they saw a sign with the drawing of a goose.

"This explains why there is no one around," Jirou understood.

"A few geese won't be too much trouble. I mean, we survived the USJ," Kaminari reminded them.

And somehow, they all decided to trust him.

They had a good time. Almost everyone had decided on where to go and they were all excited at the idea of working in an agency, even if it was only for a week. As for Izuku, he just listened to them, enjoying their presence.

He felt at peace.

But some things never lasted.

"Honk?" someone asked behind Izuku.

Izuku turned, expecting to see one curious bird drawn in by the food and ready to hide behind Kaminari because he was messing with no murder bird. Heroism had its limits.

Instead, he saw twenty of them, a whole flock having managed to sneak behind the students. But Izuku didn't even focus on all of them. He was aware of them, an instinct usually reserved for life-of-death situation screaming at him that the students were outnumbered, but what was drawing 90% of his attention was one of the geese.

One of them was looking at Izuku like he owed it money. There was something in its beady eyes, something predatory which shouldn't have belonged in the eyes of a bird but which was still here because once upon a time, those things were dinosaurs.

And they obviously had never received the memo that they weren't raptors anymore.

No one moved. No one dared.

Except for one man. Maybe because he knew no fear. Or maybe because he knew it so intimately that he had mastered it. Whatever the answer was, Tokoyami just looked at the abyss, unafraid of it looking back, and drank the remaining of his cherry milk-shake without showing any fear.

Tokoyami finished his drink without a care in the world.

And then, he screamed one word.

"Scatter!"
In a formidable crowd movement, everyone did just that. They got up to their feet, and they ran in every direction, no one looking back, no one slowing down. Crowd instinct had taken over, because this was one of those situations were he didn't matter to be the fastest, just to be faster than the one behind you.

Speed.

Izuku grabbed Uraraka and Todoroki by the back of their shirts, taking speed while half-dragging the both of them, and letting Iida on his own since he had the quirk to save himself, and he couldn't help a laugh.

He had no doubt that anyone not having a Speed quirk would laugh latter about how ridiculous this situation was.

But first, they had to make sure that the last sound they hear before their death wasn't "Honk ! Honk !"

---

**Five days later**

*Am I really going to do this?* Jin wondered.

"Are you sure?" the seventy-two-year-old man asked the teen who was patiently waiting to be attacked.

"Certain."

So Jin hit him in the chest, his palm meeting hard muscles. He didn’t hit hard, because he didn’t actually want to hurt him and because at seventy-two, he has passed the age to fistfight with youngsters.

And it wasn’t like he needed strength anyway.

Electricity awaken within him and coursed through him, Jin now a conduct who couldn’t be hurt by the lightning. The electrical energy was drawn to the other body, surging though it and the young man froze and fell on the chair strategically placed behind him without making any movements to catch his fall.

For a moment, Jin was worried. Maybe he had underestimated the current? Maybe he had been contaminated by the boy’s enthusiasm?

Jin had spent all his life not using his quirk. He didn’t have the experience to know if something went wrong.

But Akatani moved again without any complaint. At first, it was slow, like a squid out of water testing its limbs, then he sat up instead of being slouched out and he started to stretch. He wasn’t looking at him, lost in thoughts.

Analyzing the sensations, Jin realized.

"Yes, it really is like a taser."
That was exactly what Jin had told him but he still had asked him to test the quirk because if he ‘‘had to use it on someone, I want to know exactly what it’s like first.’’

Akatani Mikumo stretched like a cat then went back to his feet with ease.

It wasn't his real name. He had apologized for that, but when he had revealed what his quirk could do and what he was offering, Jin understood why. His first thought had been 'villain' and he was supposed to be old enough to be over his prejudice.

Akatani had also explained to him that he wanted to be a hero. And why he was interested in his predicament. They had talked for a long time. Akatani had left him a phone number.

And today, Jin had called him so he could take away the quirk that refused to obey him.

‘‘Is there something special to do ? A ritual ? A chant?’’ he joked, trying to get rid of the sudden surge of stress.

All it took was actually a handshake, which was frankly anticlimactic for such a frighteningly powerful quirk.

But nothing happened.

Akatani took his hand back, not commenting on the misfire, and Jin wondered if he was embarrassed. It was actually cute that such a funny mistake could happen to someone so intense, appearing to solve his problem like a fairy tale character. Kids will stay kids.

‘‘The taser ability is incredible but the resistance to electricity is just as great,’’ Akatani noticed and Jin was about to ask him if he wanted to try again when he saw the sparks on his fingers. Weak, of course, but Akatani was looking at it like it was the most beautiful thing in the world.

Jin just stared.

And he activated his quirk.

But nothing happened. No familiar surge of electricity to hold back. His quirk was gone and he didn’t notice. Akatani had told him that it wouldn’t hurt, but he wasn’t expecting this.

Akatani noticed. Of course he did. This child had been incredibly attuned to Jin’s reactions since they have met.

‘‘Are you okay ?’’ he asked, worry and doubt in his voice, and at this very moment, Jin knew that if he asked for his quirk back, he would have it in a heartbeat.

Jin tried to use his quirk again, and nothing happened.

It was so strange. He was expecting something to change. Anything. An almost physical void he would have to live with. But instead, there was no change, just his quirk not working anymore.

‘‘There is no problem,’’ he forced himself to smile. ‘‘At all.’’

Giving his quirk away meant he wouldn’t have to keep being afraid of lightly electrocuting someone every time he touched them. It meant his daughter wouldn’t have this half-moment of hesitation every time she hugged him, bracing herself for a potential electric shock. That meant he could hold his grand kids again.

And that if the teenage boy had wanted, he could have any quirk he wanted. Jin had realized that
when he had explained what his quirk was, because overpowering old people shouldn't be too
difficult, but that was beyond. He just had to bump shoulders with someone and he would never get
captured.

This was a very frightening quirk. If Jin hadn’t spent his life ignoring his ingrained prejudices, he
would have been afraid and lashed out.

Akatani told him once again that he only have to call to have his quirk back. He made sure Jin was
okay, dutiful child that he was, and when he left, he couldn’t hide his smile. Neither did Jin,
because this awkward kid was endearing and his quirk couldn’t hurt the people he loved anymore.

But still, it felt strange.

Chapter End Notes

So, a new hero name for Izuku.
I actually saw it coming for a while. I changed Izuku's past so he was never bullied,
because he didn't know Katsuki for more than a couple of years, but also because he
has a powerful quirk. Izuku's connection to the Deku name didn't make sense
anymore, because it didn't shape it. It never hurt him. It's no more than a silly
nickname because Katsuki is Katsuki, and he couldn't be Deku the same way Katsuki
would never choose Kaachan as his hero name.
Also, I want to say I was hoping for Hline and PocketRamblr to change Izuku's hero
name before I had to so I wouldn't get inspired when choosing a name ! xD Sadly,
Pocket masterfully found a way to keep Deku's name in Hand-Picked and Hline isn't
at their part of the story yet and I have no idea if they will change the name too.
So here I am. With a new hero name for Midoriya. And I think it fits for the
Ascendant Midoriya.

Thank you so much for all the comments.

Pocket, thank you for sharing your enthusiasm for Shakespeare and telling me so
much about the Tempest. A tiny fraction of what you said was incorporated to
Momo's character.
Gran Torino wasn't working from an office but from his home, one of those old constructions built right after the apparition of quirks when the contractors were hired to create something which would last through a tornado, or whatever great quirks they could think about. Izuku never lived in one of those but he remembered visiting one and a man had told him that the walls were unbreakable, causing his mother to immediately ordered him not to take it as a challenge.

Izuku took a deep breath, clutching the case containing his costume, and after the slightest hesitation, he knocked two times. The door opened under his knuckles, not only unlocked but also opened.

"Is there anyone in?" Izuku called.

No one answered.

He was fairly certain he had once seen a horror movie that started exactly like that.

"I'm coming in," Izuku announced loudly in order not to surprise anyone. The last thing he needed was to startle a hero who had trained All Might himself.

But he didn't need to worry.

Because the pro hero he had came to train under was laying on the floor, a tiny old man in a puddle of red and with what looked like to be guts around.

Izuku paused, only one foot inside the house, and he just stared.

There was a lot of things to be done. See if he was still alive. Call an ambulance if that was the case. See if the perpetrator was still in the house. Run away not to be targeted because the only thing worse than one dead body was two dead bodies. At least, move.

But Izuku just stood there, frozen. Half inside, half outside. His fingers were gripping at the door and his heartbeat was so loud in his ears that he couldn't hear anything else.

His mind was blank.

So he was absolutely not prepared for what happened next.

"I'M ALIVE!" the old man yelled, making Izuku almost jump out of his skin.

He took a second to make sure his heart wasn't about to escape his ribcage and he rushed towards Gran Torino, trying to help him get up but the pro hero was already back on his feet, tiny and frail, leaning on his cane, and absolutely not like All Might had depicted him.

But for all he knew, Gran Torino's quirk turned him into a titan or he was an expert at martial art. Or maybe his strong point was his intellect. It wasn't because All Might had described him as brutal than it was because he was physically strong.

Or maybe time is the only enemy you can't defeat.
Gran Torino looked at him with eyes that were clear with a mix of calm and wonder: "Who are you?"

_Someone about to die from a heart attack._

"Midoriya Izuku," he bowed while examining the crime scene. Sausage, ketchup, and an unbroken plate twelve steps away. He should have seen that but he was too busy panicking. He didn't even know why.

Gran Torino tilted his head: "Toshinori?"

_Who is Toshinori? Does he live with someone?_ Izuku listened but there didn't seem to be anyone around. He would have to check.

"No, I am Midoriya Izuku. Your intern." It didn't seem to ring a bell. "You sent me an offer for an internship. Do you remember?"

A flicker of recognition passed through his eyes and he nodded, finally remembering him.

"Toshinori. You're late."

_Or not._

Dread filled Izuku, from his toes to the tips of his hair.

"Midoriya Izuku?" he said one last time, refraining himself from crossing his fingers behind his back so he wouldn't have to call All Might to tell him his mentor was suffering from dementia.

"And who are you?" Gran Torino asked again.

"Who do you think I am?"

This made the hero pause. "Toshinori," he repeated.

Izuku had met his fair share of confused people as he looked around for quirks in retirement homes, and he had learned that what distressed them was to realize that they were losing memories, and to have to confront this fact. At those times, they seemed lost and confused, so he had learned not to insist.

So he smiled, and stopped contradicting Gran Torino.

"Would you like a glass of water?"

There again, a hesitation.

"Yes, I am parched," Gran Torino answered.

Izuku went to the fridge, grabbed a bottle of water, and after rummaging through the shelves, found two glasses and poured them a drink. Izuku was about to sit at the table with Gran Torino but he got up as he realized someone had to clean the mess on the floor.

Once he was done, he apologized towards Gran Torino, his phone in his hand. "I just have to make a call. I will be right back." That would be an interesting news to deliver to All Might.

Izuku really didn't want to do that.
He was calling All Might when, from the corner of his eye, he saw something moving sneakily and he turned towards Gran Torino who was crouched near his case, looking at Izuku's costume. The green didn't match the jumpsuit his mother had picked for him, and alarm passed though him as he was perfectly imagining someone like Hatsume making modifications.

"Put on your costume quickly," Gran Torino ordered, his voice not shaking anymore, "I have to evaluate your quirk before I can work with you."

Izuku just stared at the new man in front of him.

Did he just...

"Nice costume!" Gran Torino declared, confirming this whole man-whose-memory-was-failing-him'act was a joke, and not a good one. "Put it on. You're going to need the armor."

Seeing as Izuku wasn't moving to take the case, the pro hero tilted his head and changed his whole body language once again: "Who are you?"

"That's not funny!" Izuku shrieked, giving Gran Torino exactly what he wanted: a reaction.

"It is for me," the pro hero smiled as he closed the case. "Honestly, I didn't think you would fall for it so completely. But I guess I have to convince you I am worth your time, now."

Before Izuku could make him realize he would never be arrogant enough to think a pro hero had to prove himself to him, the little man disappeared from Izuku's line of sight in a burst of wind, so fast that by the time Izuku had turned his head to follow him with his gaze, he was already gone.

**Jump or Bounce, but there is also an air movement that can be useful for speed and for attacks.**

Wall, floor, wall, and wall again, and suddenly, Gran Torino was rushing towards Izuku.

**Speed.** Izuku avoided him but it wasn't necessary for Gran Torino had never meant to hit him and he had already jumped on the ceiling, where he stuck as if he was using a variant of Slide and Glide. Definitely an air pressure involved, allowing him to stuck to the wall like a suction pad.

One quirk, different applications, and a power developed over the years. Something that never showed up with civilians in their society, something born of experience and not from the quick road of obtaining multiple quirks.

And like every time Izuku was confronted to such a quirk, he was in awe.

"You have power but you don't have the experience to control it," Gran Torino declared, "And this will be your downfall. You are shackling yourself for some reasons, and this means that the day you will meet someone on your level, and trust me, this will be soon, you are going to lose because you will be busy trying to control your quirk as you're fighting."

Like when he had fought Todoroki, unable to get him out of the ring because he was scared of inflicting serious damages.

This time, when Gran Torino nudged the case containing his suit at him, Izuku took it.

A really enthusiast support student had modified his costume, putting more black into it, more protections, especially on the legs, and Izuku sighed in relief when he saw that the design of the jacket and the pants didn't change too much. Better, there was pockets inside the jacket and his notebook almost spontaneously appeared inside.
He smiled at the black fingerless gloves, the modification he had asked, then put his helmet on.

Izuku activated his quirks as soon as he finished, already thinking on a strategy. Gran Torino activated his quirk and hit in the same breath so waiting for the fight to start would mean it would already be too late.

Any Speed he could spare was a given. So was Shock Absorption and Durability. The taser quirk would be so useful if Izuku was able to use it in front of a pro hero. Izuku sighed as he thought of all his perfectly good quirks which couldn't be used in front of someone.

By the time he left the little room where he changed, Gran Torino was already half out the door, and Izuku rushed as he imagined the pro hero abandoning him here.

"What's happening?"

Gran Torino looked at him as if Izuku didn't make any sense. The irony.

"We're not staying at my house! I saw what you did during the Sport Festival and I don't have a lad with a cement quirk to fix it afterwards!"

Eh?

Endeavor seemed awfully proud to see Shouto in this oversized office of his, a place no member of the family had ever visited. As far as his old man was concerned, it was a sanctum reserved for heroes worthy of the name, and now, Endeavor was enchanted to see his perfect successor stepping up.

"Are you ready to conquer the world?" Endeavor smiled.

Shouto knew this internship was going to be annoying but he had obviously underestimated the problem. Despite the high number of words contained in the Japanese language, he could never string any of them together to explain how much he wanted to hit Endeavor with a chair.

"Not by following you. I will make my own path."

"If you want," Endeavor conceded, obviously amused.

He had been in a good mood since the Sport Festival, when Shouto had used his flames, obviously smug to know he had been obliged to use a power that came from the Flame hero. And he assumed, like everyone else, that now, Shouto would use his flames during fights.

Even Midoriya did, even if he had taken in back right after.

It wasn't that simple.

Shouto didn't want to abandon his pledge. He hated the fact he had spent so many years working on his ice, molding it so it would be as powerful as it was, only to realize this wasn't enough.

And now, he had to deal with the fact his flames were incredibly difficult to control because if he had grown in power, he had neglected control.
What if he lost control of his quirk and hurt someone?

"Get ready, then," Endeavor said, interrupting his thoughts. "We're leaving."

*That's new.*

"Where are we going?" Shouto asked.

Endeavor's grin widened.

"I am going to show you what it is to be a hero."

---

The gymnase chosen by Gran Torino was square and devoid of any equipment, except for the mats on the floor. As if someone had removed anything expensive only to leave the sturdy walls.

Izuku had a bad feeling about this. He could still remember All Might shaking in fear, and if Gran Torino hadn't told him the helmet wasn't necessary, he would be hiding his face behind it.

*But All Might doesn't have several Shock Absorption.*

It quickly appeared that *Shock Absorption* didn't keep Izuku from being slammed by Gran Torino who was moving at lightning speed.

Now, Izuku was supposed to have the quirks to rival with him in speed, and he did. *Almost.* But every time he paused, even for the tiniest moment, to try to aim in Gran Torino's direction, the pro hero took advantage of it to try to kick him in the teeth.

Izuku kept moving, trying not to be the kind of obvious target that stayed in the middle of the room while impersonating a punching bag, but Gran Torino kept appearing in his space too fast for him to register it, and he could only parry or dodge, only by a hair.

He was completely on the defensive.

Izuku was smiling.

He had an internal radar able to detect any quirk, but Gran Torino was too fast for Izuku to be able to pinpoint his location due to his quirk. So he stopped trying to do that, and he just let his mind wander. Trying to mentally follow Gran Torino was as useless as trying to run after him since his jumps were so erratic. *Let him come to you.*

It almost worked.

Izuku avoided a mean kick to the face but Gran Torino was already gone when he tried to catch him by the arm. *Balance.* Too late. He crashed into the ground, on the side, and got back on his feet in a second.

"You know you're supposed to hit back, don't you?" Gran Torino asked from the wall.

*Don't focus on his quirk. You're losing energy for nothing.*

"I am getting so bored right now. I should have asked the ice boy to come."
Stop playing with your quirks. Remember why you're here.

Izuku kicked the air in a wide move, Air pressure in tow as Gran Torino propelled himself to escape. Still, the air blast provoked by the kick touched him, not enough to stop him.

Just slowing him down enough for Izuku to hit him.

The elder smacked the wall and fell on the ground, screaming.

"AAAAH! MY BACK!"

Izuku froze then rushed towards him, panic swallowing whole. He hadn't used any Strength, afraid of just that, and now, the pro hero was broken!

"Oh my God, I am sorry! Are you okay?"

The kick he received to the face for his solicitude projected him through the room, a taste of blood in his mouth. You bit your tongue. Durability didn't cover internal injuries, after all.

"Why did you lose against the Todoroki boy?" Gran Torino asked while the student was still sprawled on the floor, checking for injuries.

"Because he was stronger," Izuku answered automatically just as 130 centimeters of pro hero try to embed him into the floor.

But this time, he felt him coming. There you are. Izuku dodged and hit in the same breath, palm open and Air Pressure again. Not enough to stop the propelling quirk on Gran Torino's feet but enough to slow him down once again as he kicked him in the back, and the elder retreated again.

"No, he wasn't," Gran Torino retorted. "You are. It's obvious. So why did you lose? Scared of winning?"

I don't want to win at any price.

Izuku never had the time to answer. A barrage of kicks rained upon him, relentless.

At some point, the hit were harder. Izuku couldn't avoid all of them, and even if he wasn't actually hurt by them, every time he paused for the tiniest moment, Gran Torino absolutely bashed him.

Why aren't the Speed quirks enough?

Because he isn't wasting any second. Every movement is efficient. He is used to fight physically while you rely on your quirk.

Nothing to hide behind but Izuku could take distance and he jumped back, feinting left and right to by some precious seconds.

He let his mind roam, feeling Gran Torino's quirk who kept flaring up, and trying to predict where he would appeared next. He used every of his usual tricks. Speed, Jump, Acceleration and Cooldown, anything that allowed to be as fast and mobile as the prop here. Resistance and Shock Absorption to take care of the hit and the momentum behind every kicks. Air Pressure to keep him at distance.

It was like trying to fight against a tidal wave. You could push against the water but it would win in the end. That was the difference made by experience.
It was thrilling.

Izuku started to hit back more and more, taking advantage of the any opening, *Acceleration* flaring to give his just an edge, and more and more, this was enough.

At first, Gran Torino relied on patterns during his attacks. Izuku started to notice, and when the pro changed, he learned the new ones too. While fighting, avoiding, and using *Air Pressure* to gain some distance when needed, the teenager started to understand the limits. What he could do. To realize how not to break his opponent.

It allowed Izuku to drop to the floor, surprising Gran Torino, and to kick with *Air Pressure* without worrying of what would happen. Gran Torino managed to almost dodge, but Izuku got back on his feet as the pro hero was starting to accelerate again (predictable for only a second), jumped, and punched him in the chest, only using *Acceleration* and the momentum born from the quirk.

Throwing him through the room once again.

"My back!" Gran Torino screamed.

Then waited. When he looked up, he saw that Izuku didn't move towards him, and that his arm was raised, his fingers in position to flicker with *Air Pressure* when he would inevitably attack him again.

This made the pro hero smile.

"So you're finally learning." He sat up and stretched. "I was starting to wonder if you were really invested into becoming a hero."

Izuku stop aiming at the pro hero and started -just started- to relax. He would sense the moment Gran Torino would use his quirk, and worst case scenario, he had *Shock Absorption*.

He didn't know how long they had been fighting but it was long enough for the bite on his tongue to stop hurting, replaced by a light pain in his skull.

"It's my dream," Izuku said, blinking to see his reaction to light. He wasn't bothered by it so he didn't overuse his quirk.

As for Gran Torino, apart from the fact he was sitting, he didn't seem tired or anything.

*Does he have a Stamina quirk or something?*

"Why ?" Gran Torino asked. "Why did you choose that dream?"

"I want to help whoever needs help."

"That's all?"

*I want to be here for anyone who wants to be helped, even if they think no one cares.*

"That's enough for me. Why ? Why did you decide to become a hero ?"

It wasn't a question Izuku usually asked, because everyone wanted to be a hero. Everyone, at some point, had that dream. But that specific pro hero didn't seem to share this almost universal mindset, and All Might had told him why, though Izuku had believed he was exaggerating at the time.

"To use my quirk freely," Gran Torino confirmed with no hesitation.
Izuku laughed. He couldn't disagree with that.

"There is an ice box with drinks and snacks right behind the door. Be a good intern and bring them back. We're taking fifteen minutes, then we're doing that again. You have the dreadful habit of holding back so you don't know your limits. Training for the rest of the day should be a good start."

Toshinori didn't move as Tsukauchi-kun was leaving. The detective had just told him about the noumu, how he had been created, how he had the DNA of several completely different people, and that thanks to it, he had several quirks.

They both knew that additional DNA alone didn't result in extra quirks.

It needed a Transfer.

Toshinori couldn't help but wonder if Young Midoriya's DNA got altered every time he took a new quirk.

He was supposed to be dead.

It couldn't be Young Midoriya. Even if Toshinori wasn't trusting him, he didn't have the means to change someone's body with drugs and science.

All for One was alive because somehow, Toshinori had failed.

Midoriya Izuku was horribly powerful but he had no real technique. Whatever training he had was probably self-taught and that was the reason Sorahiko had managed to punch him in the face many times.

But the problem was that the kid didn't care. Usually, a hit to the face stunned, a hit to the body at least stop the opponent for a moment. But Midoriya was barely slowed down, and quickly, it appeared he wasn't taking damages when it came to blunt force trauma.

Of course, there was still the likely possibility Sorahiko hadn't hit hard enough, since he was certain both of them were holding back, but he wasn't about to go full strength against a fifteen-years-old. After all, filling the paperwork for killing an intern was quite dreadful.

Unlike Sorahiko, Midoriya didn't hide how tired he was after their session, but he was positively giddy about it.

And Sorahiko didn't see the sharp resemblance with All for One anymore. There wasn't this same intensity and wild emotions he had seen during the Sport Festival, and without that, he was just a kid. Toshinori had been right to notice this only happened when he was using his full power, and only in dire situations.

Allied to the fact Toshinori had checked that he never took any quirk without permission and that he didn't know about what would happen at the USJ...
There was the real possibility they were facing a descendant of All for One, someone the fiend hadn't found and corrupted yet. It could be an incredible opportunity.

Or it could be a clever trap with All for One placing a talented boy who was obviously mimicking All Might near Toshinori just as he needed to find a successor.

Ultimately, Sorahiko was well disposed towards him. There was an innocence hard to feign here. When he had thought Sorahiko was losing his memories, he had been nothing but caring, taking care of the situation. Making sure Sorahiko was alright, calling Toshinori without delay. Caring. Helping.

But Sorahiko wasn't like his student. He couldn't take the risk.

He needed one more verification, but he couldn't check without Toshinori.

He wasn't surprised when the kid sneaked out. It was around eleven, and he passed by the window and dropped to the ground as if details like momentum and gravity didn't have a hold on him. Sorahiko watched him disappear into the street, unhurried as he was looking around, searching for something.

Obviously, Sorahiko had to follow him, for he didn't trust anyone and if Toshinori himself told him the sky was blue, he would still look up to check.

Now, Toshinori had told him Midoriya was able to sense quirks around him, so he didn't run after him. Instead, he simply followed him thanks to the tracer Sorahiko had put in his shoe while he was taking a shower.

Yes, he did that.

He was expecting Midoriya to meet someone or to at least do something fun and reckless teenagers ought to do but instead, he found him between two buildings.

Climbing the walls in bounds like Gran Torino did. The jumps were clumsy and more than often, Midoriya was throwing his hand to the wall to keep himself from falling.

He is clearly unafraid of the interdiction to use quirks in public spaces.

And he wasn't making a noise. Even with the noises of the city, Sorahiko should have heard him, especially since he was far from graceful. One of his quirks must have allowed him to smother any sound.

Sorahiko spend a long time watching this child who could have taken his quirk and who was instead reduced to mimicking him.

Midoriya was putting too much weights on his bounds, an usual mistake. It took him half an hour to stop crashing into the wall and actually climbing with sheer speed.

He trained for two hours more, grinning.

Whatever happens, he is going to be a handful.
"To truly accomplish anything, one must need will and conviction. Those without them, the weak ones, they will be weeded out," the Hero Killer announced as if the knife near Tomura's throat wasn't enough of a clue. "It's only natural. That's why you're about to die."

Stain was stupidly fast and he had neutralized Kurogiri in a moment before pining Tomura on the floor. The physical strain was making the wounds from the USJ hurt again and Tomura didn't want to deal with this nonsensical situation.

It wasn't even like Tomura wanted his help. He just thought it would be interesting to have another hero-hater around. But this one had principles, as if killing heroes for a cause was nobler than killing them because they were annoying.

Stain moved the huge blade near Tomura's head and he realized he was about to touch the hand on his face.

*That can't happen."

"Hold on. Not this hand. Not this one."


The type the young man hated the most.

"I'll kill you," Tomura said, meaning every word as he went to this cold place where might made right, and this time, the Hero Killer paid attention.

Tomura's hand was on the serrated knife, his five digits already working their wonders, and the blade starting to crumble between his fingers. He had sent only a little push, so he knew it would soon stop. Just enough to leave a memento of what he could do to the hero killer.

As for what he had said...

"You're sure talk a lot. As for conviction... Nah, I've hot nothing as grand as that. But if I have to say what drives me, I'd say it's All Might. That piece of garbage. And the society that worships him."

All Might was responsible for everything. The state of his society. The responsible of this smothering peace. The one who had hurt Sensei.

Tomura had dreams about turning his smiling face to dust, for leave him flayed and pitiful so people would realize what heroes were really like: piles of cold meat that couldn't save anyone.

Maybe he would take care of the stupid kid first, right in front All Might's eyes to teach him how powerless he really was.

The blade decayed, the effect of the quirk stopping right at the hilt.

"I wanna crush them all into dust," Tomura laughed. "That's my conviction."

The Hero Killer fell back, but for a moment, his eyes widened and Tomura could see he had gotten to him.

At that point, Tomura wanted to kick the parasite out of his place, and he certainly didn't want to hear talks about alliances and destroying society together despite their difference in ideology, but Kurogiri had insisted, arguing that Stain would be a good ally, useful for their goals and so on.
Nagging.

Sensei kept telling him several times to listen to Kurogiri, so Tomura accepted. After all, he could use the hero killer.

And kill him afterwards.

As soon as Kurogiri escorted him out, he turned towards the monitor, aware that Sensei had been listening in. The man who has saved Tomura was never far, his voice always in reach, but it was truer than before now that he was back in Japan.

Sensei didn't usually tell him where he was, so that must mean that a visit in person was imminent. That meant Tomura had to show results with the league.

"Sensei, how many noumu are ready to go?"

"None of the level of the one who attacked UA with you but six are operational at this point."

"Send them my way," Tomura asked.

"Why?"

"Because I don't like the hero killer. And I am allowed to kill what I don't like, right?"

That was what Sensei had taught him but Tomura sensed the pause right before Sensei answered. He should have tried to say why he needed them instead of what he wanted them. Sensei liked plans.

"You can have three. Use this opportunity to learn something."

Around 6 am, Sorahiko received a call from Toshinori, who told him that All for One was alive. It wasn’t a great way to start the day.

Sorahiko checked on Midoriya who was hidden in his blanket cocoon, some strands of green indicating that he was indeed here and didn’t turn into a pillow monster during the night, and the retired hero left his house because this wasn’t something the boy needed to hear.

‘‘Are you sure?’’ Sorahiko asked.

‘‘It’s not Young Midoriya,’’ Toshinori answered and there was a note of impatience in his voice. He was rattled because he always made sure to be overtly respectful. ‘‘He doesn’t have the financial means, he was almost killed by All for One’s very creation, and Tsukauchi vouched for him.’’

Or maybe he was protective of the boy.

Hard-working and wanting to help people. Toshinori probably didn’t have a chance.

‘‘On that, we agree. The midget isn’t a villain. Personally, I think his heart is in the right place. But hell is paved with good intentions and he could grow into someone terrifying.’’ Sorahiko stopped once he found a nice spot in the park and sat. "And that’s not even talking about All for One finding him.’’
“He would have to go through me first,” Toshinori growled.

That’s what worries me.

The simple thought that this bastard was alive was painful. They had sacrificed so much. A friend. Their life. Toshinori has exchanged his health against a death, and it didn’t even stick.

At the other end of the line, Toshinori sighed, and there was so much weariness in this simple sound. “I have to tell Young Midoriya.”

“Yes, you do,” Gran Torino confirmed.

And he had to be there at the time. Just to be sure.

“… Really?” Toshinori asked, obviously perplexed. "I thought you were going to tell me to keep it secret and that no one could know. Why do you always agree with me when I least expect it?”

This made Sorahiko smile.

“’To keep you on the edge. It’s good for your health. But as far as the boy is concerned, you have to tell him because first, he could be in danger. The son of a bitch could be interested in a member of his bloodline with so many interesting powers. Second… the more we keep from him, the more distrustful he will be and it wouldn’t be the first time a child with a quirk disliked by the society went on a dark path because the adults around him failed.”

Idiocy created more villains than actual evil.

“Can you watch over him?” Toshinori asked.

“Do I have to? I was planning on leaving him in a car in a parking during a hot day with the windows closed.”

His former student quickly changed the subject.

“And I have to seriously look for a successor,” Toshinori added, confirming what Sorahiko was suspecting.

“Didn’t you tell me you almost had a successor?”

“I might have exaggerated.”

Nana had found a successor when she was much younger than Toshinori, but unlike every past One for All holders, Toshinori had managed to stop All for One, if only for a time. Sorahiko wasn’t about to nag him into picking someone quickly.

“It’s your power, Toshinori. You will make the right choice, in due time.”

Youth was the future. That meant that despite an enormous amount of stress and the massive appearance of white hair, the old generation had to trust them.

By the time Sorahiko returned to his house, he realized that Midoriya was still in bed and didn’t look like he would wake up any time soon. Those youngsters these days, out at night and sleeping all day. As a moral guardian, Sorahiko couldn’t let it pass.

He took several deep breath, before vocalizing. He repeated the exercise three times until he decided that his voice wouldn’t fail him.
And it certainly did not.

“GOOOOOOOOOOOD MORNIIIIIING VIETNAAAAAAAAM !!!!” Sorahiko screamed at full lungs.

The door was fortunately opened so Sorahiko had the privilege to see the kid rocket out of bed and clang to the ceiling like a scared cat in a cartoon. He jumped down a second later, frantically looking around the same way firemen looked for fire when they were brutally woken up, and instead, he saw Sorahiko’s grin.

Afterwards, Midoriya showed no reaction when Sorahiko starting to rant about those young people who stayed all night on their phones and how the early bird got the worm. But though he wasn’t saying anything… His eyes and his body language were clearly trying to convey a ‘My good sir, could you kindly shut up as soon as possible, please ?’, an silent Morning Communication Sorahiko mastered even though he didn’t have the occasion to talk it in several decades.

So of course, he kept ranting just to annoy the kid.

As soon as Midoriya saw the coffee machine, he made a beeline for it and didn’t stop looking at it until the pot was ready. Quickly, he poured it in two mugs even if Sorahiko hadn't asked anything and he grabbed the sugar pot. One spoon went in the boy’s mug. Then another. Then a third. Then, it simply didn’t stop.

Sorahiko, magnanimous man that he was, didn’t say anything as the boy destroyed his insulin level. But he did put his palm above his mug to protect the beverage from being turned into syrup. He watched Midoriya drinking the abomination that could barely be called a coffee anymore as fast as he could without burning himself, but Sorahiko couldn’t quite contain his smile as nostalgia swept through him.

The last time he saw someone who needed coffee that badly to become a person, it was Shimura Nana.

At nightfall, the nomu brought chaos and desolation in their wake, terrifying the civilians who were running for their lives, realizing for the first time in their lives that peace was a lie and how weak and pathetic they really were as they had to face a real danger. Even the heroes were quickly overwhelmed, desperately trying to contain the threat Sensei had created.

"Well done, my nomu," Tomura smiled as he was standing on the rooftop, proud like a mother watching her child making their first steps.

"I take it you're not joining the fray?" Kurogiri noticed behind him, a shadow of sarcasm tainting his voice.

"I'm hurt, you idiot. That's why I took them."

He would fight another day, when he wouldn't be nursing so many gunshot wounds. As for now...

"By tomorrow morning, the world will have forgotten all about you, Hero killer," he smiled, watching the show he had prepared to eclipse Stain.
He looked at one of the noumu with fondness as he crashed through a train. Probably terrifying the passengers inside.

Izuku was rushing forwards, ignoring Gran Torino's orders to stay put. He couldn't, not when there was another noumu.

"Come back!" the train agent screamed.

But Izuku was already gone, in free-fall. Shock Absorption. Speed. He reached the ground and started running without taking a pause, but Gran Torino and the noumu weren't in sight.

But others were.

Izuku passed through the panicked people, trying to reach the noumu, to help, but he was shooed by the heroes as soon as he approached. The common courtesy during hero fights was for the civilians to stay out of the way because no hero wanted to take care of an untrained person, so they thought they would make an exception for a hero student. Clearly, he was wrong.

*Fall back. They are used to work in teams, you can't go in there and ruin their dynamics by forcing them to worry about you.*

Was this an attack from the League of villains?

It had to be because they were the only one who had a noumu and who would just randomly let them loose.

"Tenya! Where are you?" a pro hero screamed, panicked. "Tenya!"

*Blue costume, water quirk.* Manual. Iida was supposed to intern with him.

Everything suddenly became so clear it almost hurt.

Iida wouldn't run around without his supervisor, especially during a villain attack. He was the perfect student, someone dutiful. There was only one thing which could be more important than the duty owed to the hero who had offered him an internship.

The Hero Killer usually stayed around for three attacks. The one on Ingenium was only the second one.

No wonder Iida chose Hosu.

*On his own. Against a S-Ranked villain. Blinded by rage.*

Izuku ran, climbed the wall with *Slide and Glide* and jump, and ran even faster on the roofs.

He had a whole town to cover.
Tenya was a man on a mission. He was a little brother whose whole family was hurting because of one criminal, and Tenya had to find him. To make him pay for all the pain, all the despair he had put them through.

And the Hero Killer would know which hero had brought his fall. He would know he would meet his end because of Ingenium and those who loved him.

It did not work out quite as planned.

First, Stain stabbed his arm. Then he kicked him in the face. And as Tenya fell on the ground, unable to move, he hadn't managed to even touch the Hero killer.

And because he had been blinded by rage, he didn't realize there was someone else here. A trapped hero he could have saved if he hadn't rushed in.

Tensei would have never made this mistake.

Tenya realized he was going to die. He thought he was prepared to it, prepared to sacrifice his life to take down the criminal who hurt his brother. But he realized he was going to be another victim, though a helpless one this time. He wasn't able to do anything.

Not like that. I can't go like that.

"It was nice meeting you, Ingenium. And farewell," the Hero Killer mocked as he raised his katana, about to deliver the killing blow. "Consider yourself a humble offering to improve the society."

And as the sword fell down, something cut through the air and hit the Hero Killer in the head with a boing noise, so hard it almost made him fall.

Stain took a step back, stunned by the projectile who was actually a green helmet who felt near the Hero Killer's spiked boots. He raised his head to touch his forehead, and he realized he was bleeding from a cut that was crossing his eyebrow.

Before Tenya had the time to realize what'd just happened, a pair of red sneakers appeared in his field of vision.

Chapter End Notes

Gran Torino's training was a reference to the All Might Rising PV. And his "Good morning Vietnam" was a Supernatural reference. (Yeah, I know. Robin Williams movie.)

Thank you for reading.
Izuku had made a mistake.

The plan was to grab Iida and to never look back. That was what he was about to do as he rushed towards Iida, ready to haul him on his shoulders and to run in the general direction of the crowd of pro heroes still fighting noumu, but just as he was about to grab him, he noticed a very still shape in the darkness of the back alley. A hero, horribly near Stain, whom he recognized as Native.

In a fraction of second, he realized that getting Iida out of reach would sign Native's death warrant. So Izuku placed himself in front of Iida, communicating to everyone with a semi-functioning sight that if anyone wanted to hurt his friend, they would have to go through a lot of quirks.

Stain looked at Izuku, his sword pointed in Native's direction, but he wasn't furious or even mad because of the improvised projectile that had hit him in the head. Instead, he was calmly looking at Izuku, examining him. Analyzing him.

"A well-timed rescue..." the Hero Killer rasped. He didn't seem to care about the blood on his face. "Not bad, I guess."

Izuku could feel the pressure of his gaze, and he knew this man would kill him and that he would enjoy it. Even the noumu from the USJ didn't feel like that. With him, there was nothing personal. But the Hero Killer would give his all and go beyond in order to kill them all.

"I can show mercy towards children. Leave. Alone. And you will be spared," the Hero Killer offered as if Izuku could seriously consider something so ludicrous.

Can I save Native and Iida?

"Iida, I need you to move," Izuku urged him.

He couldn't even use an Air Blast because Stain was too close to Native, the hero near an unsheathed sword.

"I can't. He cut me and since then, I am paralyzed."

Of course, you are. No one said Izuku's life was easy.

"Don't interfere, Midoriya," Iida continued. "This has nothing to do with you."

Izuku quickly glanced back to see if Iida was miraculously back on his feet and about to use his quirk to get the hell out of here, and sadly found out this wasn't the case, so he must be witnessing a suicidal feat.

Too bad for Iida, Izuku preferred to lose an arm than to abandon him.

"Don't ask me to leave you when you're in danger, Iida. I don't have it in me."

And with this, he accepted the fact he would have to beat Stain to get them all out. Without a licence. With a hostage to rescue to boot. But it wasn't like a lack of licence would have ever stopped him from helping someone.

Stain almost looked like he was regretting it. Almost.
"It's the destiny of the weaker of us to be culled."

"Is that why you targeted Ingenium and all those other heroes?" Izuku asked.

His hand had already found his phone, and he was unlocking it behind his back. The problem with a secured model was that the series of passwords were a pain in the side, especially one handed and without being able to see the screen.

But luckily for Izuku, Stain was in a talking mood.

"They were posers. Heroes are supposed to be inspirations, the great ones. Not posers who worship money."

Focus. Just a little, so everyone would focus on his words and not on what he was doing on his phone.

"Ingenium is loved and always helps everyone," Izuku reminded him. "He is adored by his sidekicks and everyone living near his agency. But you're right, he's paid. You know who else is paid? All Might. Endeavor. Best Jeanist. Hawks. Ryuku. Miruko. Gang Orca. But somehow, you never approached any of the heroes too high in the ranking. Could it be that your crusade had less to do with fake heroes and more to do with who you can kill without taking much risks?"

Beat.

Izuku had never suspected how loud horrified silence could be.

The swordfighter puts himself in fighting stance, finally not threatening Native anymore. Some room to maneuver.

"I am going to stop you. And I am going to save them," Izuku declared, and since he remembered All Might's world, he smiled.

And in a blink, he had bridged the distance between them.

Shouto had come to Hosu for the Hero Killer and they had found several noumu instead, which was just typical. He was running after his father and sidekicks, not allowed to do anything except watch them work, when his phone biped and he saw he had received a message from Midoriya. No text, just a location. He was also at Hosu.

"Put down your damn phone and watch me, Shouto!" Endeavor barked.

Why would a too friendly and optimistic human cataclysm send his location to Shouto without explanations?

A too vivid image of Midoriya at the USJ, screaming as the first noumu was breaking his arm, immediately came to Shouto's mind. If this wasn't an SOS, he would have sent a real message, and it might mean he had met something able to give trouble to the boy who had destroyed the arena at the Sport Festival.

Shouto turned and ran, already putting his GPS on to find where Midoriya was.

"Where do you think you're going, Shouto?!"
He didn't even glance back.

"An alley at 4-2-10 Eko Street. Once you guys are done here, send any pros you can to back me up. Right now, I think my friend is in trouble."

The Hero Killer's sword seemed to have its own bloodlust, striking so fast it was a blur Tenya had trouble following, fear gripping at him as he was getting ready to see the Hero Killer killing his classmate, and it would be Tenya's fault.

But he never managed to strike Midoriya.

Stain had been talking while he was beating up Iida, telling him why he was wrong and why he was failing as a hero, like a demented teacher determined to share a twisted philosophy which would never be applied. Maybe this demented brain of his really thought there was some wisdom to spare.

But against Midoriya, he was quiet, for Tenya's friend didn't let him any time to catch his breath. Midoriya wasn't taking any chance for the Hero Killer to cut him and when he hit, it was fast, hard, and dirty.

And as Tenya was frozen on the ground, desperately trying to move, he slowly realized that Midoriya was actually faster than most pro heroes. Maybe even faster than Tensei.

Why is he not pulling the moves he had at the Sport festival? He could end the fight now.

Then, Tenya realized than during the Sport Festival, he had the luxury of not worrying about collateral damages but now, Stain had placed himself near two hostages and there was the very real possibility Midoriya could injure them as they were paralyzed and unable to protect themselves from his air blasts.

Not only was he fighting because of Tenya, but he was also handicapped by him. What have I done? I dragged him into this mess because I was reckless and impulsive.

Midoriya chose this moment to break Stain' arm, the sound of the bones snapping filling the air and something dark inside Tenya deeply enjoyed it.

The Hero Killer screamed, more in rage than in pain, but didn't slow down and Midoriya retreated, never taking any risk as always, waiting for another occasion to strike, and there was no fear on his face, just absolute focus.

Stain was going to lose. Midoriya was making sure it was ineluctable. The only control the Hero Killer had was over how much damage he could make on his way out.

So he tried to kill them. He tried to run at Native and not only did Izuku managed to swipe low and to kick Stain in the knee, shattering the protection on it, but as the pain made the Hero Killer freeze, Midoriya also managed to hit his hand, making him drop his sword.

Only to be replaced by a knife thrown at Tenya. He didn't have have the time to worry, for Midoriya hit it in mid air to make it fall on the ground, but it had let time for Stain to grab another sword, smaller, more of a long tactical knife. He was hurt but more furious than ever, and he made a noise not unlike something a cornered and feral could make.
It didn't keep Midorya from grabbing his head and to smack it violently against the wall.

And as he did, suddenly, Tenya could move again, as if a weight on his whole body had just been lifted. Maybe because of the hit on the head -he knew concussion could affect quirks-, maybe because Stain had just hit his time limit, he didn't care. He got back on his feet, ignoring the pain of the wounds inflicted by the Hero Killer.

Midoriya had jumped back just as Stain kept trying to stab him. Tenya couldn't help him. They were too fast, Midoriya was controlling the situation, and trying to fight alongside him would put them all in danger.

But there was one thing Tenya could do to help his friend.

*Recipro Burst.*

Tenya grabbed the injured Native and ran with him, half carrying and half dragging him to the other end of the alley. He had let hatred made him forget to save him, it wouldn't happen a second time.

And with that, Midoriya wouldn't have to worry about them anymore.

Just as he reached the end of the alley, he saw a familiar figure with red and white hair appearing, and Todoroki looked back at Midoriya. Whatever he saw, he nodded and the temperature suddenly dropped, massive amount of ice rising in a massive wall blocking the alley.

Trapping Midoriya with the Hero Killer.

"Midoriya is still back there!" Tenya screamed as he looked back.

"I saw that," Todoroki grunted as more ice, thicker than anything he had created at UA, was growing, sealing the alley.

The last thing Tenya saw before the ice made them disappear behind a protective dome was Midoriya, up in the air, a smile on his face and his fist raised.

And Tenya could feel the massive shift in the air.

The shockwave was heard through the whole neighborhood, every hero busy fighting or helping civilians freezing for just a second, because of the kind of strength one had to unleash to obtain this result.

All of them thought about the first noumu from the USJ, the one designed to face All Might, and every hero not trying to capture the last noumu standing rushed towards the place where the impact was heard.

Gran Torino and Endeavor were the first to move.

Stain was flat on his back, but his chest was still moving. Slightly. *At least, I won't be charged with murder.* When Todoroki had created the ice wall to let Izuku have room to work with his quirk, the green-haired-boy had just wanted to finish the fight as quickly as possible. His enthusiasm had
ended with Todoroki's wall shattered and Stain would have one hell of a headache at the end of his nap.

Iida and Native were fine, though the latter was wounded, a deep slash on his belly, but Iida was taking care of him. Meanwhile, Todoroki was disarming Stain and Izuku was taking a break, looking out for quirks or for any movement. He was slowly realizing he had just fought a serial killer and his reptilian brain wasn't appreciating.

As for the Hero Killer's quirk was with the rest of Izuku's hoard, and it was extremely weird because he hadn't meant to take it. He had wanted to tase him, but with the panic of the moment, he had forgotten what he was doing and yanked the quirk to him as soon as his fingers had touched bare skin, but Stain still have a ton of sharp means to kill him, so it hadn't been especially useful.

"I propose to dump him in the nearest police station and to say Native defeated him," Izuku said.

"I'm fine with that," Todoroki shrugged.

Iida didn't say anything, rubbing his arm and pointedly not looking at anyone. This wasn't the case of Native.

"WHAT?"

He seemed more panicked by the idea than by being almost killed by a serial killer.

"None of us has a licence and the law isn't kind to hero students who... Too late," Izuku sighed as he sensed a bunch of quirk coming their way.

If they were lucky, it would be a noumu.

Instead, Gran Torino appeared and would have kicked Izuku in the face if he hadn't sensed the quirk coming and ducked his tiny mentor.

"I look away five seconds and you disappear into a city infested with noumu ?" Gran Torino growled. "Really ?"

Endeavor joined him, but he didn't say anything, his gaze stopping on Stain, then on Todoroki who tensed and whose body language was pure defiance. Izuku decided that if things turned ugly, he would put himself between them.

But he didn't need to worry because even more pro heroes arrived. Manual was among them and he looked like he had aged ten years while looking for Iida. Questions were asked. All of them seemed horrified at the idea a couple of teenagers had fought the Hero Killer. Native accidentally spilled the bean and revealed Izuku was the one to defeat him.

They starting to leave, unspoken promises of consequences hanging in the air but no one acknowledged it, the general relief being too strong to think about what would happen to a hero student on the loose who had just used his quirk against a villain without a licence.

And then, everything happened so fast, and Izuku was the last one to notice it.

Maybe because he was looking out for quirks. Maybe because he was tired and his own quirk was less energy-consuming than actually paying attention.

But Izuku was the one who had Stain's quirk, and when the villain awoke, a blade appearing from
nowhere into his hand, Izuku's back still to him, it was a hero's sharp intake of breath and the almost melodic sound of iron being unsheathed that allowed him to realize what was about to happen.

In one of those instances when one could predict so well what was about to happen that they could almost see it, Izuku watched himself get killed. He saw Stain running at him, and stabbing him because he was the one outside the flock of heroes, the easy target.

*Speed.*

Izuku turned, his arm rising to defend anything vital, *Durability* already answering his call even though he knew it wouldn't be enough if Stain put too much strength as he stabbed, and he jumped back by pure reflex, *Air Pressure* following the movement.

But it missed the Hero Killer. Because he didn't stop for Izuku. Probably had no attention to attack him.

The Hero Killer was looking at Izuku, something amused in his expression like a childish 'Got you!', right as his military knife cut through Iida's armor as if it was made of butter, under his shoulder.

Izuku would remember the sound Iida made, half-pained, half-surprised, even if he lived until he was a thousand years old.

Not even a second later, Izuku had grabbed Stain's by his dirty shirt and he yanked him back, punching before the killer had the time to react. The time to hurt someone else. Izuku felt something crack under his fist, but he didn't care. Instead he tried to catch Iida before he fell, and they both stumbled to the ground, Izuku's arms failing him for some reason, and he could only slow down his descent.

Stain crashed into the wall, another cracking sound following the impact but he never had the time to fall. Todoroki's ice had violently grown and encased him six or seven meters above ground, only leaving his head free.

In Izuku's arms, Iida tried to say something but he choked on the words, his eyes darting everywhere, and cold terror gripped at Izuku.

There was blood flowing on Izuku, incredibly warm as it escaped Iida's body.

Native dropped next to them, intimating Iida not to talk, and his quirk spread on him, making the boy goes still. *Suspended animation*, Izuku remembered. Native was a rescue hero with an almost medical quirk.

The noise of something started to break dragged Izuku away from his panic, and he looked up to see thin shards of ice starting to drop.

"Both this sham-filled society... and the criminals who wield their power in the name of petty mischief... are targets of my purge... All for the sake of a better society...If I don't fix it..." Stain growled, still trapped his prison of ice like a demon of the old stories, and he seemed to be trying to kick it, still trying to escape. "If someone isn't... stained with blood...!

Ice started to break as Stain was trying to get out, still trying to kill them, foaming at the mouth and his eyes crazy. Everyone was looking at him, no one daring to move.

"Come! Just try me... you fakes!The only one allowed to kill me is... All Might, a true hero!!"
And he froze, passing out as the weight of his wounds were finally catching up to him.

Far too late.

Blood smelled like iron and salt, and the scent was still in Izuku’s nose even though he had taken a shower and changed clothes. He could remember the warmth of Iida’s blood on his skin and the ice summoned by something that went beyond fear. Dread, maybe.

He splashed water on his face. His eyes were red but he didn’t care, the water was needed to make the exhaustion disappear. He wouldn’t rest until they had news about Iida.

He wasn’t worried. Iida had to be fine.

When he returned to the hospital room he shared with Todoroki despite the fact that neither of them were injured, he found Gran Torino, Manual, and an unknown man in an expensive suit with a dog head. They let Izuku sneaked into the room, acknowledging his "Hello?" without any hint of a smile.

Todoroki sat on his hospital bed, still in costume. He was tense, his hands were on his knees, and he looked more pissed than worried. He looked up as soon as he saw Izuku coming in. He expected Todoroki to tell him how Iida was doing. He almost didn't want to because no news meant good news as far as he was concerned.

"Did you check the news?" Todoroki asked instead.

"I didn't."

There was no time. He has accompanied Iida as long as he could, then was sent to clean up because a pale teenager covered in blood seemed to be quite unsightly. He had just sent messages to tell he was fine, then hurried to come back here.

"A video of Stain was uploaded. It’s everywhere. We see him attacking Iida and we see us neutralizing him."

Two hero students without a license using their quirks. Vigilantism and a long jurisprudence about hero students being buried in law suits when they did just that immediately came to Izuku's mind.

He didn't want to deal with that now. He wanted someone to tell him Iida was fine, that the operation went well. He didn't have the strength to worry about Iida and to worry about what would happen to them.

Todoroki designated the dog-headed man.

"And he doesn’t like it, " Todoroki finished and he was so annoyed that if he was a cat, his fur would be standing.

"I see," Izuku answered because he had no idea of what to say. He needed to sit. Actually, he needed to not deal with that, but since miracles didn’t happen, he needed to sit, so he took a place next to Todoroki, on the bed. He put his phone on the covers since he was tired of holding it and there was no Pocket in his hospital scrubs.

"This is Kuragamae Kenji," Gran Torino introduced. "Hosu's chief of police."
You knew this would happen. Now, take care of this mess.

"How are you doing, woof?" Hosu's chief of policed asked Izuku.

"I'm fine. Thank you, sir."

"That's good to hear. But sadly, that's not the case of the Hero Killer. He is recovering from frostbites and an impressive amount of broken bones and internal damage, woof."

No one said a word, clearly understanding what this was about.

"At the dawn of this extraordinary era, the police moved to prioritize leadership and to maintain statut quo, so they decided not to use quirks as weapons. The profession of hero rose to fill that void. This was a heavily criticized decision at first, but it garnered public support. All because your predecessors acted morally and complied with the law, woof."

This was the story everyone knew. How the heroes were the only one who could use their quirks. How they abided by the rules to protect everyone. None of the pro heroes heroes here realized Izuku had never complied with this law. How could he? No one had ever explained to him why it was wise for the police not to use their quirk even when they confronted criminals. It didn't make sense. And no one had given him a reasonable explanation about why people couldn't use their quirk outside of private properties.

Why abide by a rule that didn't make sense?

"And you acted without permission," Kuragamae Kenji continued. "Inflicted harm without explicit instruction from the police and powers that be. Even against the Hero Killer, such actions represent a stunning breach of the law, woof."

"What were we supposed to do?" Todoroki asked. "Leave people to die in the name of the law? It was a serial killer! Native would be dead without Iida! Iida would be dead without Midoriya!" He got on his feet, and it might me Izuku's imagination but it seemed like the temperature was dropping around him. "Isn't that a hero's job to save people?"

Todoroki took one step towards the adults and Izuku put an arm in front of him so he wouldn't do something crazy like insulting a police chief right after they had committed vigilantism.

"Clearly, you've much to learn, woof. Clearly, some education you're getting from UA and Endeavor."

"You mutt..."

Too late.

Izuku was emotionally drained. Where Todoroki seemed to have burned off all his patience, Izuku just had nothing left to give, and certainly not caution. But he had no choice so he stood straight and made polite noises.

"I am sensible to your plight. Really. But those were special circumstances. The city was attacked. I only had a bad feeling and no proof if Stain was about to attack, so the noumu took priority. I only had a hunch to confirm or not and once I was on the scene, I had to intervene or Iida would have died."

"You didn’t know…” Manual started.
"Yes, I knew," Izuku interrupted him and he looked at him. There was no hostility in him but whatever Manual saw, he let him finish. "His sword was raised and he was about to kill Iida. Native was already injured and I can only suppose that the only reason why he is still among us is because Stain was distracted by my friend. Not acting would have resulted in two deaths. Then, the Hero Killer would have escaped and killed more. I called for back ups, I tried to delay. And then I had to fight or I would be dead too. You are reproaching me of saving two people and my own life."

"But that's another problem. The young Iida wasn't saved. He is currently injured because two young hero students didn't take down correctly the Hero Killer, woof."

The shame Izuku had been trying to ignore came back with a vengeance.

"Neither did the pro heroes," Gran Torino sniped.

The police chief sent him a 'Whose side are you on?' look, and Gran Torino immediately pretended to be a frail old man who just told whatever came to his mind. It didn't fool anyone and it was hilarious.

"Worse," Kuragamae continued after one non amused glance at Gran Torino, "Since you were filmed, we have no choice but to take care of this matter publicly. It's not like we can hush up this story so the consequences of your actions are inescapable."

"And what does that mean?" Todoroki asked.

He meant it as "If you keep being stupid, in about five seconds, I am going to provoke something that will make the Hero Killer look like a discreet and peaceful man in comparison." but Izuku jumped on the occasion to make it look like a "May you explain the full ramifications, sir?"

"He is saying that UA reputation will take a hit," Izuku explained. "The three of us are students there and we were high ranked in the Sport Festival. This will also affect Iidaten and Endeavor Agency because they are irremediably linked to Iida and you. This might even end up in front of the tribunals in a spectacular legal fight."

He paused at that, letting the time for everyone to imagine what would happen if Iidaten and Endeavor were involved. One almost lost two sons to Stain, the other was Endeavor -which didn’t necessitate anymore explanations- and they were old, wealthy, and practically hero nobility. This would be a long battle and to be honest, public opinion favored heroes over the police, even chicklings like them. Awkward question would ensue like: why was a serial killer allowed to roam for so long and isn’t the police just embarrassed because children stopped the Hero Killer when they couldn’t catch him?

If not, Izuku would be the one to ask those questions. Iida was injured, he was tired of everyone trying to kick him down after villains tried to kill him, and he had several journalists in his quirk list contact, two of them still grateful about his help.

"Or we could find a solution together," Izuku proposed. "Native was here. As a pro hero, he can judge situations and give hero students permissions to use their quirks in dire situations. I am sure that if we all work together, we can resolve this predicament."

On his right, Todoroki was a comforting presence. An ally who would keep helping him. Facing him, Gran Torino was failing to hide a smile and Manual was looking at them with his eyes wide open. As for the Chief of Police, his canine head didn’t betray anything for several seconds.
A small eternity.

Until his shoulders slightly relaxed.

*I can convince him.*

Shouto watched Midoriya haggling their freedom and the lack of repercussions for their actions, perfectly aware that he was using his statute of Son of Endeavor and Iida’s legacy at Iidaten so they wouldn’t be prosecuted for what should have amounted to self defense. It should probably have bothered him, but if his old man's name could be used for good, they had to take the chance.

It was decided that due to special circumstances, Native had authorized them to use their quirks to defend themselves and the permission wasn't revoked when they had been filmed, right after Iida... Right after Iida had been attacked. So technically, in such situation, no law would have been broken.

There was a brief moment when Manual and Gran Torino were ready to be punished for Midoriya and Iida's actions, because someone had to, but Midoriya very politely refused. After all, punishing them implied they did something wrong and they had just made sure that none of them would be accused of vigilantism.

Midoriya didn't get angry. He didn't get shy either, unlike what he was like in class. He simply explained that things would or wouldn't happen with such certainty that people *had to* listen to him.

Compared to him, Shouto had let his anger talk and worsened the situation. He had to watch how he reacted. Only despicable beings like his father were ruled by their tempers.

The compromise was reached. They were asked not to talk to the medias. Midoriya was warned that though neither him or Gran Torino would be punished, his internship wouldn't continue this week and he was welcome to take that as vacations for neutralizing the Hero Killer.

One by one, they left, leaving Midoriya and Shouto at the hospital. Manual looked like he couldn't believe his ears and seemed a little scared of Midoriya and Gran Torino, and Shouto could see why Midoriya had interned with the unknown hero. They had the same disregard for stupidity, and they were good at hiding it. Gran Torino himself threatened Midoriya and ordered him to stay out of trouble. Did the same thing without threats to Shouto.

Hosu's police chief was the last one to leave. He still had something to say.

"As the police, I can not condone your actions. But as a man invested in keeping the peace..." He bowed. "I can thank you."

If only he had started by that.

As soon as he left, Shouto glanced back at Midoriya, who was staring at nothing, his fingers clawing at the white sheet of the hospital bed. He was right next to Shouto but lost in his thoughts as he was, he could have been kilometers away.

"He said that but he talked to us without our guardians, even though we are minors," Shouto noticed. "Because he though he could intimidate us into complying with him."

It brought back Midoriya, who allowed himself a little smile.
"I noticed."

"And despite what he said, I doubt my old man would have been punished too."

Actually, there was no doubt. Endeavor was the number 2 hero and rules tended to bend around him.

"I know. But he didn't have to accept this deal. He was almost a good sport about it and I take my wins where I can find them."

"It should have been self-defense anyway. I don't even know why they are so strict towards hero students."

"That, I know," Midoriya perked up so Shouto immediately knew he was about to talk about quirks. "You know how self defense has to be necessary and proportionate? If someone punches you, you can't retaliate with a weapon. And when quirks appeared, this was exactly how quirks were regarded by the law: as weapons. Afterwards, the only ones who had the licence to use their quirks were heroes, who started as a military group that fought other superpowered individuals people. Laws didn't really change in two centuries and now, hero students are still considered as weapons without licence, so the administration is still mistrustful and self-defense doesn't apply for us."

That was one explanation. A really interesting one, by the way.

However Shouto wasn't convinced that the police hadn't tried to be difficult simply because they were embarrassed that three teenagers had succeeded where they had failed for several years. Stain had been active for years, after all.

He lie down on the other bed. Stayed quiet for a long moment. Thinking.

"Do you think Iida will be alright?" he finally asked.

Midoriya didn't even hesitate.

"He will. He has to."

Neither of them wanted to talk about how even if Iida survived, there was still the risk he was too injured to continue being a hero, like Ingenium.

Todoroki was the one charged with disarming Stain. If he had done his job correctly, Iida would never have been hurt.

"Todoroki?" Izuku called as if he had sensed the dark thoughts. He waited until Shouto was looking at him to continue. He looked sheepish. "Thank you for answering my call for help. It's the second time you have my back when someone tried to kill me. I appreciate it."

He took a second for Shouto to realize he was also talking about the USJ.

"Anytime," he answered awkwardly.

Midoriya smiled.

Talking was better than ruminating in silence about what would happen to Iida, so Shouto decided that for once, the silence wasn't gold.

He could have told Midoriya he went and visited his mother. How he had gave up before seeing
her the first time, because he was scared she would see Endeavor in him like the last time they had seen each other, so he had come home just as he arrived to the mental institute. And how when he had found his courage for good, when he had seen her after all those years, it had been almost magical.

But Midoriya's knees were pulled up to his chest, his arms around them, and he was almost in fetal position, and more often than not, his gaze seemed to look at something far away that Shouto couldn't attain, so he preferred to ask him about his internship. To slowly bring Midoriya back from the dark place where his mind was almost trapped, he made him talk.

This seemed to work as Midoriya was delighted to tell him how he had trained with Gran Torino for a while, and then, he had helped anyone who had a problem in the neighborhood. One cat stuck in a tree, things to carry, reparations to make -though he admitted he wasn't good at those but willing to learn-, etc. In turn, Shouto told him about the heroes at Endeavor agency, and how it worked.

And they just waited, trying not to be devoured by their worry.

In the dark of the night, a young nurse named Akihiko Natsume went to the room where their special guests had been asked to rest, no one in the hospital wanting them to wander when they needed to recover from such a traumatizing experience. The fact that several journalists had also managed to sneak in the hospital also helped this decision, but Natsume had no doubt that if they were unlucky enough to escape security, the very non-amused head nurse would take care of them.

Midoriya Izuku and Todoroki Shouto, two UA students, froze when they saw her entering, watching her face, getting ready for any type of news. Fortunately, this was one of those good days when she could soothe worries.

They barely reacted when she told them Iida Tenya would be okay. That the operation went well. She recognized that as the exhaustion of someone who had lived in absolute fear of the worse for several hours.

When she told them that the doctors expected a full recovery and that everything would be fine, Midoriya Izuku burst into tears. Next to him, Todoroki Shouto froze like a deer in the headlights, unable to deal with a crying boy. In a second, the two hero students who had fought the Hero Killer himself appeared as they really were: scared children who should have never been put in such a dangerous and stressful situation.

Fortunately, Natsume knew how to comfort scared children.
Before leaving the hospital, Izuku visited Iida quickly. His friend was sleeping, recovering from the exhaustion of the operation and a lot of healing quirks, but he didn't care. He just opened the door to his room, checked he was still breathing, and once Izuku was reassured, he left.

He went back to the room he had shared with Todoroki. The bichromatic boy was in civilian clothes, like Izuku, but he also had a red cap and a mask, which was probably an excellent idea since a flock of journalists had appeared right outside the hospital during the night.

"How is Iida?" Todoroki asked, proving that the new cup of coffee in Izuku's hand didn't fool at him.

Izu grabbed his yellow backpack Gran Torino had brought him the day before and tried to put it on without putting his second coffee of the day down. It wasn't that he didn't want Todoroki with him. It's just that he had just wanted to see Iida but he also absolutely did not want to talk to him. There were a lot of thoughts that had been curdling during the night and which shouldn't be said after a sleepless night and too much caffeine.

"Sleeping," Izuku answered quietly.

Todoroki didn't seem vexed or anything, so he didn't apologize. The two boys had seen their friends a little after the end of the operation, when he was still full of morphine, and Iida was too out of it to be coherent.

"What are you going to do now?" Todoroki continued.

Now that your internship is officially over, he meant.

"I have to talk with Gran Torino this morning. And after that... I guess I am in vacations for the rest of the week."

This was bothering him more that he cared to admit. He loved the idea of having an internship. Of meeting heroes. Of working with them, already starting to help people, and legally. Being deprived of that... was probably a tiny fraction of the punishment he should have bore.

At least, he had free time. Izuku barely had the time to work on his quirks since he had enrolled in UA. Focus and Taser were absolute priorities at this point.

Someone knocked at the door and Nurse Akihiko told them that it was time to escape. They were sneaked into the parking lot and into a car with tinted windows, and they left by the staff exit, while the journalists were none the wiser.

Their driver, a really sweet man in his fifties with blue hair, named Maehara Ao and employed by Endeavor's agency, dropped Izuku at Gran Torino's house, though they first circled the block to make sure there were no journalists hidden in the bushes. Once they were sure none of them
remained, Izuku got out of the car.

But still, since he was slightly paranoiac, he checked around, sensing for quirks.

And he sensed All Might inside Gran Torino's house.

*It can't be good.*

*Why are you worrying? It's not like you took an internship with his teacher, disobeyed his order of staying put, get caught red-handed in the middle of some vigilantism where a fellow classmate was stabbed, and almost made him lose his license.*

After this lovely thought, it took Izuku twenty good seconds before he dared to knock on the door. Opened, once again, and he half expected to see Gran Torino in a puddle of ketchup. Instead, All Might and him sat at the kitchen table where tayakis and mugs of coffee were already placed.

"We have to talk," All Might said, a somber look on his face, without even looking at him.

Izuku's anxiety shot through the roof.

Gran Torino seemed to notice it and he... Well, he didn't smile at him but his gaze warmed and there was no sign of annoyance.

"Take a seat. There is tayaki and coffee."

At those words, Izuku's blood got replaced with stress but he still obeyed, marched towards his doom, and nibbled one tayaki. It was that or attacking his nails.

All Might was still looking at the table and he looked like the weight of the world had fallen on him when he wasn't expecting it, and now, he was quietly resigning himself on carrying it for the rest of his life. It wasn't even his thin frame that gave this impression but... everything.

*Did I do that?*

Izuku didn't say anything, not daring to accidentally worsen the situation.

He expected them to talk about Stain and how reckless he had been. Instead, they told him about One for All and how it was born.

Izuku wasn't prepared for that.

A man named All for One had found the quirk which would become One for All, accidentally creating the weapon that would be used to defeat him.

All for One who could take and give quirks. Who had brought darkness to the country, controlling men, creating puppets, and he was the one who had injured All Might. Almost killed him.

Izuku starting counting his quirks as soon as he realized the villain among villains had a quirk eerily similar to his. And he became more and more uncomfortable every time he passed on a stolen quirk. *Shock Absorption, Stain's Paralysis, some Speed...*

*You knew you were crossing a line when you took them with no permission. You would be dead without them. Now deal with it.*

Izuku could read between the lines. He knew quirks so similar were genetic. Two thousands years ago... Long ago to have a child to perpetuate the bloodline.
Did my dad know? He had always been so careful about how no one could know about their quirks. Maybe because he knew what kind of villains was at the origin of their quirk. Or maybe he didn't. He didn't need to, not when people were so touchy about their quirks and a quirk like Transfer would always be associated with stealing people's most treasured possessions, as if their quirks were all that they were.

If anyone realizes you have the same quirk as a villain, you life is over.

There would be no forgiveness. Izuku would be guilty by association. Any dream of becoming a hero would die, and so would any hope of a job worth the name in Japan. His mother would pay the price too.

"I thought my generation had managed to bring him down," All Might finished and he looked exhausted. No doubt that thinking he was finally free of the burden placed on every One for All holders only to realize this wasn't the case was crushing. "But he survived. And now, he is on the move again as the brains behind the league of villains."

Izuku passed his cold fingers on his face. Don't cry. He took a deep breath.

And he looked at Gran Torino.

All Might wouldn't have told him the story of One for All and All for one in front of his teacher if the latter didn't know about Izuku's quirk.

"I met All for One," Gran Torino confirmed, "And I recognized the power that can be gained from multiple quirks at the Sport Festival. That's why I called Toshinori for confirmation. And that's why I wanted to meet you."

There wasn't any suspicion in his gaze, just quiet worry because Izuku was obviously not hiding how much he was freaking out as well as he thought. But Izuku didn't care. He wasn't thankful about his consideration, because Gran Torino wasn't supposed to know.

"I'm sorry," All Might apologized, his head hanging in shame. "It wasn't my secret to tell."

"He didn't say anything," Gran Torino assured. "I guessed and I know when he tries to lie to me."

Later.

Izuku drank some of his coffee, fortunately with a decent amount of sugar, and pushed any emotions under a lid of absolute control. They were going to talk about this. But later.

"Back at the USJ, the noumu had several quirks," he remembered. "I thought this was because of a drug called Nectar. I did researches and I saw that people sprouted new manifestations of their quirks."

He had explained to Nagisa a whole theory about how several generations of quirks where hidden in everyone's DNA, which was why some people had mutations that had nothing to do with their quirks. Nagisa had been pretty enthusiastic about it and helped him look for papers online, even took a class and brought some questions. Genetics was quite fun, especially since the apparition of quirks.

All Might shook his head: "A DNA test proved the noumu has strands of genes that don't belong to him. Trust me, I already saw that. This is All for One's work."

Now, the real question.
"Do you think I have something to do with that?"

"No," All Might and Gran Torino bluntly answered. Izuku would lie if he pretended some part of him wasn't pleased by their lack of hesitation.

*Maybe they are lying again.*

All Might didn't lie directly. Gran Torino, not at all. Now that I'm aware of the misdirection, I can deal with it.

"The only reason why I am telling you that is because All for One was always interested in powerful quirks and we can't exclude the possibility of you being targeted," All Might explained. "He cannot find out. Being related to him or to One for All will only put a target on your back."

There was a point when there was so much things going on that one could rise above the maelstrom of emotions and reactions, and reached a place beyond where the stress was so powerful that one was almost zen.

Izuku was starting to get there.

He was fifteen, and since he had manifested his quirk for the first time, he had collected a certain amount of quirks. Some given to him by his dad. Some donated. And lately, some taken from people trying to kill him. But numbers weren't the most important thing. One good and trained quirk was worth a dozen of never used ones, and Izuku trained all his quirks as much as he could.

All for One was two hundred. Izuku's mind had trouble wrapping around so many years. And he didn't even want to think about how many quirks he had and how much time he spent training them.

Izuku's father had had associates living in the shadows and one day, he never came home and they had to run. Izuku didn't like to think about it.

But what if All for One had found him?

Izuku leaned on the table and took a deep breath. He hadn't stopped counting his quirks since the conversation had started. But now, his chest was hurting.

All Might put a hand on his shoulder.

Izuku thought about batting it away, which said a lot of his state of mind.

"There is a real possibility you're related to All for One. But also to One for All, because longevity quirks damage fertility. But it doesn't matter. I was absolutely honest when I said you would be a great hero one day. As One for All demonstrated, good things can be born from evil."

Izuku didn't need All Might to know that ill-omened quirks could do great things and helped a lot of people.

But it was good to hear that from his hero.

However, All Might wasn't over. He glanced at Gran Torino, silently asking for support but he got what would quickly appear to be a 'You're on your own.' look.

He got on his feet and bowed, far too low for the number one hero.

At least, until he told him that the only time Izuku had told what his quirk really was, his answers
were being monitored because All Might had to be sure he wasn't affiliated with All for One.

When Izuku's mom was angry, she counted to ten. But not Izuku.

Because he didn't get angry. Ever.

"Are you okay?" Gran Torino asked in a little voice after a while.

Izuku hold out a finger, asking for more time to deal with that.

All Might was still bowing when Izuku found his voice again and he repressed anything he needed to suppress. All Might looked distinctly nervous.

"I can understand that you needed to confirm I wasn't affiliated with this man," Izuku finally said.

It hurt, it hurt so much. To know that his hero had gotten so close to him because he wanted to be sure he wasn't a villain.

"But my quirk is personal. I don't want people to know. It's my choice for people to know about it. Because you think that you told that to trusted people, who knows about One for All and who knows how to keep a secret. But that was your choice, a choice you robbed me off and now, I have to live in the fear that my quirk will one day be known and any hope of becoming a hero could be shattered just like that."

Izuku had never been close enough to anyone for him to even think about telling the truth about his quirk. But he liked to think about it. About someone he would trust, someone he could reveal a secret that shouldn't even be one if some people weren't morons.

"I wouldn't tell anyone," Gran Torino intervened.

"You don't know that," Izuku cut more harshly than he intended to. "When I told All Might, I thought no one else would know. I made a mistake when I share this information. I have no right to ask anything to you, Gran Torino, but you made a promise," he reminded All Might. "You should have told me that someone else knew. Because if this breaks out, if people know I have this quirk, I have to be prepared for what will happen."

If All Might had looked terrible when Izuku had arrived, it was nothing compared to now. He looked like he was devoured by guilt.

All Might had done something wrong, but there were reasons. It was because of All for One, and to prevent further harm. It wasn't because he had just kicked in the wasp nest that constituted Izuku's fear and anxiety that the teenager had to vent his stress at him.

"Just... Don't do it again, okay?" Izuku finally asked lamely. "Please."

"I won't. I am sorry, and I assure you that I just needed to confirm what quirk you had but the day I met you, I knew you couldn't be linked to anything nefarious. I sought you out to know more about your potential relation with All for One but if it was just for that, I... I would have kept our relationship strictly teacher-student-like."

Izuku thought back how easy it had been to talk about their respective quirks to each other.

How great it was to not hide to someone.

"I did lie to you first," he admitted, starting to get embarrassed by how he had acted. "And you
didn't do that to hurt me."

"Midoriya," Gran Torino called his attention. "You have my word that I won't reveal your quirk to anyone. I know how people can be especially stupid."

"Thank you," Izuku said even though he didn't know himself if it was for keeping his secret or for understanding the prejudice he would have to face.

All Might sat in his chair and he slouched on his chair, as if the

"Now, take a tayaki," Gran Torino ordered. "The both of you."

All Might and Izuku obeyed.

"Any groundbreaking revelations to add? No? Good, because now that All for One is back, we cannot tolerate heroes being alienated from other heroes. United we stand, divided we fall."

---

*Look away.*

Someone glanced at Izuku, looking straight at him but fortunately, didn't seem to recognize him thanks to the grey cap and black mask he had bought in Hosu. Izuku stopped using *Focus* and the passerby looked away, probably not understanding what had caught his attention.

The other side of *Focus* refused to come to Izuku. Horns had managed to be almost invisible but he had the indelicacy of not loudly explaining how he had done it.

*Look away.*

A woman with a young child looked straight at him. No hostility. No fear. She just had to look at Izuku.

If it was triggered by intent, it should have worked. Izuku wanted nothing more than to disappear, but *Focus* either slipped away or did the opposite of what he wanted.

This was one of this day where he needed for things to work. Between Iida, All for One, and people knowing about *Transfer*, he needed for something to be right, as soon as possible.

And since *Focus* refused to unleash its full potential and to offer a beautiful distraction to the mess that had become Izuku's life, he decided to heal his woe with some fried chicken.

He braved the crowd of people who had the same idea as he had, and without even using any quirk, even though *Shock Absorption* kept reminding itself to him, after a legendary tale of endurance and courage, he finally reached the counter and ordered a giant bucket.

The worker told him he might have to wait a little, he waited for his food to be ready, trying not to be swayed by the crowd again.

Places packed with people had never bothered Izuku. His mom had taught him it was easier to hide in a crowd. So many people, all with their own problems, their own thoughts, but with this awareness of each other. His mom called it crowd instinct and told him to be careful of it, but when he was little, he liked to think about it and to clear his mind to focus on the general emotions of
several people in the same place. It was like disappearing.

Maybe...

Izuku emptied his mind. He didn't think about not being seen, he stop thinking altogether. Accessed Focus. And when he didn't feel it slip away, he focused on this feeling of nothingness. Of not being here, without any parasitical thoughts.

At first, it didn't work. Izuku's mind hadn't been quiet since he was a child. But in a true 'Fake it until you make it' spirit, he pretended to be above all those swirling thoughts and emotions.

He lost Focus -or is it Vanish now?- several times. Picked it up again and again.

And then, hold it as long as he could, picking it back up every time he dropped it. He continued after his order arrived, because it wasn't like he needed to eat right now, and honestly, quirks would always be the priority.

Until he saw someone familiar grabbing several drinks from the soda fountain, right next to Izuku, but he was too focused on his task to see him.

"Tokoyami?" Izuku exclaimed, happy to see his classmate.

The bird-headed boy jumped so high he almost flew, startling Izuku and making Focus slip away once again. The half filled soda cup jumped with him, and though Izuku caught it, helped with Speed, he couldn't catch back the actual soda inside and it drenched his sleeve. Meanwhile, his classmate had a hand on his heart and seemed to be fighting a heard attack.

"You appeared like a ghost in the night, Midoriya," Tokoyami accused him as he was looking for napkins.

"Sorry." I forgot I was playing with my new quirk. "I was just so happy to see you."

The napkins were found, Tokoyami apologized, Izuku blushed because he shouldn't since it was his fault, and both of their cardiac rhythm stabilized again.

At least, until Tokoyami decided to be a nice and concerned human being.

"I learned about your encounter with the Hero Killer. How are you? And Iida? And Todoroki?"

That immediately put a damper on Izuku's enthusiasm. He rolled up his stained sleeve to give himself the time to think.

"You saw the video?" he asked.

Tokoyami nodded, which meant he had seen what happened from the moment they had existed the alley and Iida had been stabbed in the back to when he was yelling about the corruption of society, trapped in an ice coffin.

"Iida was injured but he is expected to make a full recovery. And Todoroki and I are fine, so don't worry."

"I will worry. And I realized we didn't exchange our phone numbers," Tokoyami added while rummaging in the pockets oh his hero costume.

Both of their phones were out and Izuku was worrying about the growing number of people having his phone number - he had picked the habit of not giving personal information easily and even UA
didn't have his phone number or his address – when a man in a suit and with white, gray, and black
feathers for hair appeared, startling Tokoyami again. *Not his day.*

"Tsukuyomi! Everything is alright, you're taking your time..." He stopped when he realized Izuku
was here. "Hello?"

At this moment, Tokoyami and Izuku realized they had both forgotten about the sodas he was
supposed to be here for, half of it being on Izuku's white sleeve. Well, less white now.

"Forgive me, I didn't realize I was taking so long. This is Midoriya, my classmate."

"Midoriya... Why do I know that name ?"

Unlike Tokoyami, he was wearing civilian clothes, and Izuku wasn't recognizing him, so he
probably wasn't a hero. Maybe a sidekick. He didn't know all of them.

Izuku took of his mask : "I'm Midoriya Izuku. You might have seen me during the Sport Festival if
you watched the First Years."

"Ariel? You are Ariel?"

*Or while watching this video with Stain, apparently. That's right, Ariel is my hero name and
people are going to call me that.*

Izuku didn't have the time to confirm that that the feathered man was already shaking his head,
looking positively cheerful.

"I am Takahiro Kaname! It's a pleasure meeting you. I am working in public relationships with
Hawks Agency. The whole team is having lunch upstairs, you have to join us!"

"Heu..."

*Am I emotionally prepared to meet the number four hero? To interrupt his lunch? I only came here
to have fried chicken!*

Just as Izuku decided that he longed for nothing more than going home and just not think about
Hosu, about Iida, about the new quirk in his hoard, Takahiro basically dragged him upstairs,
insisting how it was going to be great. Tokoyami joined them a moment later, the sodas in hand.

The second floor offered several large table, and Hawks and his sidekicks weren't difficult to find.
Their masks or helmets were on the table, they still were in costume, and one of them was at the
edge of the table to accommodate giant crimson wings which were moving as he was telling some
story, talking with his hands.

At least, until one of his sidekick noticed them and immediately say, panic in his voice : "Tokoyami
is back, stop talking."

"Oh right," Hawks said just as he was turning, and he raised an eyebrow when he saw Izuku.

For a moment, his face showed absolutely nothing. Not the blank expression people had when they
were too tired to react to something or weren't listening and then didn't know to react. It was the
absolute neutral face of someone controlling everything in order not to reveal anything they didn't
want.

It disappeared quickly and Hawks went back to the amused/neutral/blase face he always showed in
"Look who our intern found downstairs!" Takahiro announced just as Izuku was wishing for a permeability quirk so he could disappear into the ground. "I invited him."

"Of course you did," Hawks repeated and though he was smiling, there was a certain edge to the way he retorted. An edge which disappeared as soon as he reported his attention back to Izuku.

When Hawks invited him to sit next to him and as far away from Takahiro than humanly possible, Izuku started to suspect the flying hero didn't actually have a problem with him in particular. Chicken was shared, so were drinks, and anecdotes were told.

It was far better than what Izuku had feared.

Izuku only knew two of the sidekicks: Romeo and Dove, but not Aqua, Spriggan and Lima. They were good-natured and joyful, and their conversation was easy. Izuku felt free to stay silent and not to talk to be polite, but when he talked, they actually listened to him. They made Tokoyami and him feel included, and they loved hearing about UA.

Takahiro was the type to ask questions. He liked people to elaborate. Though he wasn't the one to start asking what had happened at Hosu, he was the one who insisted until he realized Izuku wouldn't go into details.

Hawks was surprisingly silent. He answered every time sometimes pulled him in the conversation, and he was never too serious, but he was more interested in listening. Enjoying the company of others while keeping away.

Exactly what Izuku was doing when he came back to Japan. *To never let anyone approach.*

"Ariel, if your internship didn't work out," Lima said, "We have room for another intern. Don't we?" the sidekick with a strength quirk asked Hawks.

"Well, thank you for asking me. But yes, we definitely have room for other interns. Join us, Ariel. We have cookies."

"That's be a great idea!" Takahiro confirmed.

Izuku imagined the reaction of Hosu's chief of police if he realized Izuku had simply changed agency.

"I would love to but I was asked to take a vacation for the rest of the week."

"Vacation," Hawks sighed. "I barely remember the concept."

"Are you going back to school?" Tokoyami asked.

"Maybe if I want to use the facilities. But probably not because I prefer to have Todoroki and Iida with me when Aizawa talk to us about Hosu."

Tokoyami said something something that suspiciously looked like "All men must die" but the words were muffled by his piece of chicken.

"Who is Aizawa?" Dove asked.

"Eraser," Lima answered.
"Oh yeah, you should hide, Ariel," she confirmed, provoking the general hilarity.

Afterwards, Takahiro insisted in taking a photography of the whole group to put on their website, the conviviality being good for their brand. He succeeded, but only after Izuku was back wearing his cap and his mask, which seemed to disappoint Takahiro and to really amuse Hawks.

Before they left, Hawks gave Izuku his card and asked him if they could talk later this week.

Midoriya had looked like a kicked puppy when the police had firmly advised him not to continue his internship, and though Shouto had felt bad for him at the time, he was now filled with envy.

"Were you scared when you fought the Hero Killer?"

"How is Tenya?"

"Shouto, look here!"

"Are you planning to team up with Ariel when you graduate?"

And so on. Journalists had found him as he was patrolling with Extinguisher, a hero who could smother flames, and since then, they had grown in number, taking pictures and trying to shove microphones in Shouto's face.

Extinguisher had immediately turned around and confronted with a crowd of journalist who refused to let them pass, she had simply walked through them. The journalists had no other choices than to move or to be trampled by a very non-amused hero.

It didn't keep them from asking questions and bombarding them with camera flashes.

"Shouto! What do you think of the Hero Killer's ideology!"

"Do you think you were spared because you were worthy?"

At those last words, Shouto stopped and turned, trying to look for the one what had just said that.

No one had spared them. Iida was the proof of that. As for Stain's ideology, it was just another strain of fundamentalism that would

Extinguisher took him by the arm and made him keep walking until they reached the agency. He never managed to know who had talked, and the flock were ready to keep stalking them until they saw Endeavor, waiting right outside, his arm crossed and he took one look at the journalists.

They didn't move, not asking questions anymore but still taking photos.

Endeavor took one step towards them.

The reaction was immediate. They scattered, maybe because they knew the Flame Hero had no lost love for their kind, maybe because Shouto's old man was literally on fire and people tended to give him his space because of that.

Extinguisher and Shouto sneaked back inside. Endeavor warned him they would work late tonight,
and advised him to rest, but Shouto went back to the work space assigned to him, slightly isolated from the other sidekicks but still better than the office originally assigned to him.

He consulted several files and reports on a new drug called Nectar, something that could boost quirks and physical abilities in general, when Uraraka almost made his phone explode. Apparently, Midoriya was being sparse and she was wondering what he was hiding.

Technically, Shouto knew Midoriya was probably avoiding talking about Hosu and simply needed to clear his mind, and he said as much to Uraraka, but he also didn't trust him not to be in trouble and he had time to spare.

*Me*: [Why are you not answering Uraraka?]

Midoriya answered him in the five seconds.

*Midoriya*: [I am busy thinking.]

Shouto couldn't help a smile. No denial here.

*Me*: [Anything interesting to share?]

*Midoriya*: [Milk chocolate are the best and anything else is just pretentious.]

Shouto remembered the love for anything sweet Midoriya had showed at the Sport Festival, and he wondered if it was related to his quirk. Satou could augment his strength thanks to his sugar consummation but it was an information he had volunteered and if Shouto asked Midoriya, he had no reason to answer. And it might even be rude.

Anyway, there were more pressing matters.

*Me*: [Are you not home despite the journalists hunting us?]

*Me*: [Tell me you're not continuing your internship.]

He would. Shouto had no doubt about that.

*Midoriya*: [My mom won't be back before two days. We already have a "discussion" scheduled but right now, I don't want to be alone at home.]

*Midoriya*: [No, I am not.]

*Midoriya*: [Are the journalists really hounding you?]

Shouto recognized the change of subject but didn't comment on it. He didn't especially care about returning to an empty house but it was probably easy to say when he had known all his life that Fuyumi would be waiting for him at home, and would always worry about him.

*Me*: [I can't patrol around the agency because of them but it will be better tonight because we are going to investigate on some drug suppliers, so we won't be followed.]

*Midoriya*: [Have fun and be careful.]

Fuyumi had also told him to be careful, but coming from Midoriya, it was ironic. As for the "Have fun"... Midoriya was definitely missing his internship.
Madman.

What would Natsuo say? He was the only Todoroki who had friends.

Me: [I promise not to jump in any back alley to fight some serial killer, but I might now be condemned to be bored for the rest of the week.]

Midoriya: [How boring. Learn to live a little.]

Yuuki had never thought he would one day get arrested. How could he? He was untouchable. Even if everything fell apart around him, he knew the rain would never touch him because he had learned how to become a ghost. How not to be seen.

Really, he was born with the perfect quirk. It could open any doors, he knew he never would have to worry about his future, but he still finished in the underworld despite what twelve-years-old him thought at the time.

Why?

Bad crowd, mostly. Choices that weren't really choices. An easy path, even easier to fall into. And a lot of money, worth any ethics he could have had.

But now, he was inside a prison transport van, his hands were tied behind his back, the skin between his left horn and his skull itched, his quirk was gone, and life fucking sucked these days.

It had started with a rich old fucker who wanted powerful children and who had bride shopped by watching the Sport Festival. Hero students always fetched a high price. Hero students from UA or one of the other great hero schools were retirement plan on their own.

Go there, they told Yuuki. She is a hero student. We need to surprise her. Just in case. But Uraraka fought like a fury from the old tales, using everything, be it her quirk or her strength. But it wasn't the worse. Some would think that it was the heroes that had dropped on the warehouse, especially the underground one who was surprisingly even scarier than Endeavor. No, the problem was No Face.

Yuuki still had nightmares of the fiend finding him while he was hidden by his quirk. No Face had appeared from nowhere, and walked in their base of operation with no fear. By the time he walked out, he had mercilessly beat Yuuki, left him among a lot of pissed of merchandises, and was responsible for his new accommodations in prison.

Without a quirk.

The prison doctor had said it was because of the concussion. Or the trauma. She obviously didn't really care about how vulnerable Yuuki was in the middle of a lot of quirked criminals.

The transport car stopped so abruptly that Yuuki was almost ejected of his seat.

By pure luck, he avoided landed on his face, and turned towards the narrow window communicating with the driver.
"What the hell is going on?"

The driver turned towards him and looked at him. He didn't utter a single word. Then, he reached for the and closed the window of communication.

Leaving Yuuki alone just as he was sensing something on his skin, like static electricity if it was comparable to mist, he saw something dark, and before he had the time to react, he was falling on a cold surface that wasn't the floor of the transport van.

Someone helped him to get back on his feet, someone covered in the same black mist which had brought him here, but he was nothing compared to the man politely waiting at the other end of the large windowless room. Even sitting, he was massive and his face was hidden by a black helmet.

Yuuki could barely breathe.

Because of his job, he knew about quirks. How they affected their holders. Those with powerful quirks had this presence, this aura that came with the absolute certainty that nothing could attain them. No Face had hidden it well but once he was in action, Yuuki had recognized the absolute confidence of someone who knew his quirk was powerful and knew he had absolute control over him. But the man in front of him... He made the Vigilante look like a boy scoot.

"Thank you, Kurogiri," the man in a helmet said. If dragons could speak, they would have this kind of voice, Yuuki thought. "If you could leave us, please. Mogami and I have a lot to talk about."

Kurogiri left, to Yuuki's absolute horror because he didn't want to be left alone with this man. He had just been abducted from a prison transport van. The driver knew about it. That meant bribery and men inside. And only organized crime would do that.

The man in an expensive black suit got to his feet, easily two meters tall.

If this was a criminal looking forwards to take the operation Yuuki used to belong, Yuuki could deal with that. Hell, maybe he could find another job. It was his world. And to survive, he absolutely could not show any fear.

"Well," he smiled, "I guess I should thank you for getting me out of this..."

He never had the time to finish as his face was grabbed one-handed before he had the time to react. Yuuki gasped, tried to get away from him, and pain burst through his skull, fast and hard. He felt on his knees, his legs refusing to carry his weight and each cell of his body refusing to move in fear of the pain reappearing again.

Is that his quirk? If this was a pain quirk, he didn't need Yuuki, he just had to torture him to have every answer he wanted.

The masked man hold his head for a long moment, the iron grip just soft enough not to crush his skull and Yuuki had no doubts he would be able to and willing to do so, so he just waited. Begging his quirk to work, to make the villain forgot Yuuki was here.

But of course, it didn't work.

Yuuki didn't know how long he stayed on his knees, the sound of his beating heart so loud in his ears, a taste of metal and copper on his tongue. But finally, he let him go, and his whole demeanor changed.

"I heard you had quite an interesting encounter before you were arrested," the scary son of a bitch
said, almost cheerful. "I would be delighted to know more about it."

Yuuki told him anything. He didn't even hesitate. He even told him everything about how his quirk worked because somehow, it was important to the man in front of him. But before that, he explained how he had seen this shadow entering the cells, freeing their merchandises one by one with some unknown device or a quirk. Obviously trained, guaranteed to fetch an high price.

He had obviously underestimated the training part and he realized it when the vigilante had jumped at him. Yuuki hadn't planned to shoot him but his finger was on the trigger and... It didn't matter. He had lost, and he had been left alone and unconscious in a room full of young people he had helped capture to be sold.

Yuuki still had the bruises.

He supposed it was fair.

The man who almost crushed his skull stayed quiet for a long time. Or maybe panic was stretching the seconds, he wasn't quite sure.

"A man or a woman?" he finally asked.

"A boy, I think" Yuuki couldn't be one hundred per cent sure. "A teenager. His face was covered and his clothes were loose."

The villain nodded.

"So a potential teenager destroyed your operation, and when you tried to shoot him, despite your quirk, he overpowered you." He marked a pause and Yuuki could have bet his life he was smiling behind his helmet. "And when you woke up, you couldn't use your quirk anymore."

Those last words... There was a special kind of mockery over them, as if he knew something Yuuki couldn't suspect.

"Do... Do you know why can't I use my quirk?"

*Did No Face do something? Did he erase my quirk? Is that his quirk and how he managed to get rid of my colleagues?*

"It's a shame you don't have your quirk anymore. From what you told me, it could have been incredibly useful. But I suppose someone is happy about it, and that's not so bad."

Yuuki didn't understand what he was talking about.

"Is this about my job?"

*Is he talking about people I can't help to abduct anymore?*

"That's something else. Did you know that not too long ago, there was no quirk traffic in Japan?"

Yuuki nodded. The market had freed itself these last years. Some member still refused to approach quirk trafficking, fearing something but never elaborating. But criminals were a superstitious lot, so Yuuki had never paid too much attention to it.

"And you never wondered why?" the masked man asked, an horrible smile in his voice.
The driver didn't say anything when Mogami reappeared into the van. He simply called the hospital, telling them a prisoner had dropped unconscious during a transport and he couldn't find a pulse.

He already knew they would only pronounce him dead from a heart attack but he still drove.

Something with a sweet scent woke up Tenya and he looked up to see a blurry form on the chair near the window, curled up on himself. It was too blurry to see anything but he manage to identify the green mop of hair and the red sneakers.

"Why does it smell like chocolate?" Tenya asked Midoriya.

"I bought and gave a box to Native. He is very grateful we saved his life, and he is recovering one floor below you."

His voice was strange, but Tenya's myopia refused to let him see the facial expression of his friend, so he reached for his glasses on the table. He always put his glasses at the same place because the problem was that once they were off, he literally had to look for them blindly.

As he did, the wound on his back flared up, reminding him that yes, moving would hurt for some time. Actually, breathing would also hurt. It was Tenya's fault of course. He had asked for less morphine because it made him loopy and sad.

And feeling the bite of this pain was a good reminder.

Midoriya got on his feet, the movement fluid and he breached the distance in an instant, as if he was using his quirk but Tenya doubted he would do that on a non private property. He leaned forwards and put Tenya's glasses on his nose, and the world was clear again.

And Midoriya's face was blank, except for his eyes. They didn't show any emotions but they were red, as if he had cried recently.

"You can't do that again, Iida," Midoriya said quietly.

He seemed exhausted, and that was Tenya's fault. He had almost gotten them all killed.

Midoriya took a deep breath, sat back on the chair. His hands were fidgeting on his knees.

"I'm sorry," he said, to Tenya's absolute horror because Midoriya wasn't the one who should be apologizing. "I fucked up. I was the one who thought he was unconscious, I should have hit harder or made sure he couldn't get up again. I was the closest to him but I messed up and didn't react in time. It's my fault."

Tenya found his voice back too late but once it was here, there was no half measure.

"IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT!" he accidentally screamed, startling Midoriya. "Don't you understand? It's mine! I was so blinded by hate and rage... You could have died because of me." Tenya felt the tears arriving but he certainly couldn't stop them. "Stain was right. I am not worthy of being called a
hero."

"Iida..."

"But I won't ever make that mistake again. I won't ever let my hate or my fear overwhelm me. And I apologize to you, Midoriya!"

His friend leaned forwards and put his hand on Tenya's, before squeezing it. Tenya squeezed back, and they stayed like that for a moment, Midoriya hanging his head so Tenya wouldn't see his face, and they too comfort in each other presence.

"I understand," Midoriya finally said as he took his hand back. "Someone hurt someone you love. You wanted that to never happen again. You didn't want for anyone to go through the same pain. And you couldn't live with the frustration of someone capable of harming your brother getting away with it."

That was exactly what had happened.

How could Midoriya be so comprehensive? He had almost died. He was forced to use his quirk without a licence.

"How can you be not mad?" Tenya asked.

"Mad?" Midoriya repeated with a sweet smile.

Then the smile dropped as if it had never existed.

"I am not mad, I am furious," Midoriya said slowly, as if he was controlling any emotions that could slip up.

Tenya braced himself. Tensei had already screamed at him, his mother had promised a talk, and it was his friend's turn. Midoriya checked on Tenya, as if to be sure he was in a state to be lectured - which was honestly more than Tenya deserved, and he talked, not hiding anything anymore ; Tenya was ready.

"I was scared," Midoriya said. "I thought you were going to die. I searched for every alley in Hosu. I arrived almost too late. I was on the roof and I knew I wouldn't have the time to get down there."

Midoriya continued while guilt was piercing at Tenya's chest. His friend wasn't crying. He wasn't getting mad either. His face was blank, and he was constraining himself to an unnatural calm, the same calm he had fighting Stain.

"But you know what's the worse? I had a hunch. That's the only reason why I looked for you. If I hadn't saw Manual looking for you... You could be dead in an alley somewhere. Your family wouldn't know. Your friends wouldn't know. Do you know what that does to a person?" Midoriya asked and there was something akin to desperation in his voice. "This simmering feeling that something is wrong, that you try to ignore, until it's impossible? Just. Not. Knowing."

At this moment, Tenya realized that something must have happened in Midoriya's life. Something had explained why he had worked on his quirk so it would be that powerful. Something that explained why there was such absolute focus every time he fought.

"But you would have been found, eventually," Midoriya reminded Tenya. "I won't pretend to know your brother but can you imagine what your death would put him through?"
Something worse than what Tensei's wounds had put him through. Because his older brother would have blamed himself for the rest of his life. It would have destroyed his family.

Tenya had never realized how selfish he could be until meeting Stain.

Midoriya passed a hand on his face, looking exhausted. Actually, he probably was. Pale face, dark circles under his eyes. Worse, he looked on edge.

"I am not mad that you decided to find Stain. I don't know if you wanted revenge or justice. But you were reckless. You should have come to me. You should have come to Uraraka. We would have listened to you. We would have tried to help you deal with your pain. And worst case scenario, I would have come with you to back you up."

What?

"You would have come with me?"

Midoriya nodded as if it was obvious. Not because he wanted Stain to pay but because he was willing to break the rules to make sure Tenya was safe, and he was even thinking Uraraka would do the same thing.

Because they are my friends, he realized.

Midoriya looked at him like he was an idiot. Maybe that was the case.

"You are not alone, Iida. You have people who love you. And if you forget that once again, villains will be the least of your concerns."

Chapter End Notes

So, it's time for a big thank you because without all your comments, this fic would have never lasted as long as it did.

Thank you. Really.

Shout-out to ProclaimersOfHeroes, Cloy552, Vsadboi, MiracleCola, piades, theuglyfriend, Hopscotch, Kiomori, the_forgotten_traveller, SaLtYrAiNbOwS, TheliteralunitJakob, Redsparrow12, hubbletuff, justsomebread, pocketramblr, Mixy, Guardian_Rex, TheOneFromTheForest, Cerokun, SavageSamurai, TheKursed, Tibli, Sadracrab222, Andi, NeNeko, Thebest1171, Crystal_Sky, AspergianStoryteller, Rapture38, the_crownless_queen, Ayuman, Sunrise_Flame, Someone, willgramah, Cathanode, Goofy_Boss, StrudelQueen, Blaiddsumu, Red, Akirama, Min, MusicalTogekiss, AspergianStoryteller, iiRabbiit, MidnightLightHowlite, JadeStone29, TheStoryWever, Penbrand, Steve6_6, thefruitloopchan, ThermicSine, Dragxon, ThatOneGuy3540, Anonymous, Miss_Write, ihatemyson, Chlorinecurrant, redrobin1989, MellowSund, Ayuman, animefan104, Myasha, NHarmonic, verawyr, Coolc341, Seether00, Excellent+avian, zoeticValidation, the_incidental_author, tyry95, beloved_garlic, Agaxs, Taj, TheFanGirl, Kirbylover, guest, Marvelgirl98,
About two days after what was starting to be known as the Stain accident, Izuku woke up in the middle of the night, in a cold sweat and his breath short, with the certitude something awful was about to happen. Not that it was true, of course. His brain was lying to him, and though sometimes, he could ignore it, he knew he wouldn't be so lucky tonight.

He got dressed, put on shorts, a gray tee-shirt, a Fatgum hoodie, and his running shoes, and he climbed out of the window. The cold air of the night hit him, finishing to wake him up, but it didn't manage to chase the remnants of fear. Only one thing did, so he took a step in the void, and he let himself fall.

One month ago, he would have slid to get down, but he didn't need to. Not since the fight against the noumu, not since he had stolen so many incredible quirks.

A rush of adrenaline swept through him as he fell, wind screaming in his ears, and all his resistance quirk and his Shock absorption activated, and when he touched the ground, the shock which should have broken his bones passed through him without hurting him.

He should think about searching for a kinetic release.

Izuku ran, as if he was chased by someone. He started with one Speed quirk, but the others followed quickly. Then Cooldown when the drawbacks of those quirks started to be felt. Stamina when the exhaustion of those last few days started to get him. Resistance when his feet started to hurt as they hit the pavement at a vicious stampede. So many quirks in balance to compensate for human limits, and Izuku managed to juggle with them without really taking the time to think about it because he was focused of the feeling of escaping. The power rushing through him, this feeling of being untouchable.

Of running faster than the fear and the shame.

Some people were awake and noticed his mad sprint, so Izuku diverted his run away from the lights of the town, and by doing that, he slowed down.

Grave mistake.

The voice of reason which he had managed to ignore thanks to the familiar rush of using his quirks reminded itself to him.

Mom would be horrified to know you just took off in the middle of the night. She was already disappointed in him. She didn't say it in as many words, but she was worried, and it was without even knowing about All for One or how three people knew about Transfer, two more people than Izuku had meant to.

Acceleration.
He ran through a park, completely in the dark, using *Night Vision* so he wouldn't slam into a tree. He had experienced that and he didn't want to repeat the experience.

The new quirk added his toll to the others. He didn't care, because as it did, joy took place. The childish wonder he had felt the first time he had used a quirk, his mother quirk, had never receded.

Izuku ran to a tree, and at the last moment, climbed it, like Gran Torino would, except for one detail.

*Jump.*

He rushed through the air, above any tree and most building as if he could fly. He felt himself fighting gravity and winning, and in this moment, his quirks pulsing through him, he felt happy. Not just the absence of unhappiness, but the real emotion which brought a warmth that would stay with him.

Gravity took hold of him again, of course. He could never escape it for long. But that didn't matter. There was a smile on his face when he got to the ground, and this time, when he slowed down, the weight of everything he had done wrong didn't try to bury him alive.

He walked a little. Put his hood on even though there was no one around. Fatgum's line of clothing always felt like being wrapped in a blanket.

The start of a headache was starting to pulse inside his skull, but he was reasonably sure that if it would vanish if he didn't use any more quirks. He got out of the wooden zone, hands in his pockets, when he realized that he was really close to downtown, which meant that he was faster than what he thought.

Izuku realized with horror that he didn't have his phone, and he immediately felt naked when he realized it. He actually considered going back because his mom had to be able to call him at any time, but he was already here and he discovered some money in his pocket, so since his night was finished anyway...

What could go wrong anyway? He had already fistfight a serial killer in an alley. That wasn't the kind of things which could happen twice in the same week.

Not much was opened at this hour so Izuku went into the first fast-food he saw and ordered an ice cream with a lot of chocolate and started to work on a strategy as he ate. Strategies made life easier to handle.

He had been careless. He used to think his mom was a little paranoid about criminal from the United States finding them in Japan, but now that he knew about All for One and that he was All Might's student... It had the potential to be really bad.

But All Might had defeated him once. He had almost killed him. So if the need arose, and if Izuku was with him, they could fight this. Together, and with Gran Torino.

Izuku had never wanted to be number 1 but maybe it was time to aim for it, because all his classmates seemed to grow stronger thanks to having a goal.

So there was that. The other problem was Stain. Actually, the problem was Iida because Izuku was really scared for him because a lot of things could go wrong with his wounds, but Stain wasn't making it easier. Izuku had stayed away from all this but Nagisa had told him the video had gone viral and a lot of people agreed with his ideology of getting rid of fake heroes. Some people even said Izuku had been spared by the Hero Killer because he was worthy.
That was absolutely maddening. It was like all those people were forgetting the Killer part in Hero Killer. It was like they were saying that Iida, Native, and Izuku deserved what had almost happened, that it was just a trial to be a hero.

Izuku would understand the frustration with the hero system. There was a reason why he was hiding his quirk. But Tensei and all those other heroes didn't deserve that and their families certainly didn't need to hear about it.

It sucked. Really. And there was nothing he could do about it. But sugar helped, he pondered as he ate another spoonful of ice cream.

*If I haven't just used a dozens of quirks, I would be depressed.*

So he ate more.

Of course, he had to leave eventually and when he did, he passed through backalleys, away from the busy streets, finally calm enough to use *Vanish*. Izuku loved all his quirks, but this one was becoming a favorite.

Then, *Vanish* dropped as Izuku realized he wasn't as good as he was to avoid troubles, *Air Pressure* and *Resistance* activating. *Vanish* was too fragile to handle Izuku using another quirk at the same time.

What had drawn his attention was the collector All Might sweat shirt Silver Chrome edition, and then, he noticed who was wearing it. A girl with short pink hair, taller and probably older than him, and oddly familiar, who was walking in the opposite direction, holding her light backpack in one hand, and looking at the phone that was in the other.

He realized where he had seen her.

*I can't be that unlucky.*

He stopped, which drew her attention.

Hazel eyes met Izuku's green gaze. For a short moment, it reflected shock, worry, then something incredibly cold and calculating which quickly disappeared, replaced by a more neutral glint.

"Long time no see," the girl who had introduced Nectar to Izuku greeted him.

"Long time no see," Izuku repeated back. "I've been thinking about you."

It made her smile.

"I'm flattered." She laughed, as if they were acquaintances and she was genuinely happy to see him. "I can't believe I tried to give you Nectar. You should have seen my face when I saw you during the Sport Festival. I was rooting for you, by the way. You deserved to win."

What Izuku heard was: *I am watching the Sport Festival, maybe so I can target students for hero schools by connecting with them using heroes.*

"Why are you doing that?"

She shrugged.

"Most people aren't as fortunate as you, Midoriya," and the way she said his name gave him
goosebumps. "They try to work hard, they try to believe in the fairy tales heroes are trying to sell, but they quickly realize they aren't actually special."

There was something cruel in her smile now. As if she enjoyed others' despair.

"That because of their quirk," she continued, "The dice has rolled and they can never compete with people like you. I am the solution."

"I was asking if it was about money or some other purpose."

Izuku was quite done with people who pretended to have ideology to do whatever they wanted.

"Smart kid," she conceded, one of her hands in the pocket of her All Might hoodie.

She nodded, was about to say something, and she lunged at him, hand stretched, her quirk activated, but Izuku was already far thanks to Acceleration.

_Aim. Air Pressure._

He flicked his finger before she ever had the time to bridge the distance. He used a little power, not wanting to hurt her, and it hit her as she dropped something. Izuku saw something the size of a soda can, black, and he frowned, not recognizing what it was.

Until the Nectar girl who had felt harshly in the pavement turned on her belly, not facing it anymore, and even though Izuku closed his eyes, the white light blinded him, burning his retinas and he grunted, completely blind. Tried to get away.

But someone touched him, on his shoulder, and he _Jumped_ backwards, reclaiming distance, but she didn't follow him. Instead, she stood there, at least he thought in the mess of shadows and bright lights that didn't let him see much.

He had sensed her quirk but he wasn't feeling anything.

Actually, he was feeling incredibly fine. Light. As if all the pains one accumulated over their life, all of those little things people learned not to feel anymore because they were used to them, had disappeared.

Except that his sight didn't come back. The cold air seemed distant. Izuku took a step backwards.

He was almost certain he fell but he didn't actually feel the fall or the impact.

"You look like a nice kid who never had the occasion of knowing how harsh and cruel the world is. Let me educate you."

Pure panic overwhelmed him. _That can't be happening._ He tried to get up, but he didn't sense his hands or his arms, or anything. Sight wasn't coming back.

Her voice was getting farther and farther away.

"Painkiller. Pain disappears. Then sensations. Then your five s..."

Izuku never heard the end of what she was saying, but he didn't need to.

There was no light, so sound, no smell, and no sensation. It was like falling inside himself, desperately trying to hang on to something, anything, despite how impossible this was.
She is still here.

Move or you're going to die. You completely defenseless.

Izuku didn't know how long he stayed like that. There was no time. There was nothing.

So his mind compensated. He couldn't feel his body but his brain did a good enough job to make him feel like every nerves of his was in a state of red alert, his body and mind trying to reclaim control on the absolute powerlessness he was subjected to.

But there was nothing to hang on to, nothing except the certitude that he was in danger.

So Izuku did what he always did when he was scared. He reached for his quirks. A multitude of shiny points in the darkness, the golden treasures that were protecting him.

And suddenly, the dark wasn't as petrifying as before because he has something he could hang on to. It was like stars in the night, and since it was his and so familiar, the instinctive fear disappeared. Enough for him to feel the other quirk coming in his direction.

It was her.

And he could see her.

Taser.

The quirk wasn't as strong as Izuku would have like it to be. A little more than a taser, far away from the railgun Izuku knew it could be one day. But it was more than enough.

He couldn't sense what was happening, but if it was anything like what he had tested, the drug dealer's every muscles had just locked in complete stillness while her nerves were communicating a general feeling of pain and 'does not compute' feeling.

Darkness receded. He heard something that looked like a grunt, but from far away. Forms started to appear in front of his eyes, but too blurry to really see it past the shadows. And he felt the quirk, Painkiller, flashing again. So did Taser if she ever tried to touch him again. And if she touched his skin with her bare hand and hold for long enough, he would have a new interesting quirk.

But the drug dealer didn't use it on him. Her head made a sharp movement, maybe looking at something behind him, and she started to scramble to her feet, failing a moment, but then she took off and ran like Hell was after her.

Izuku wouldn't have the time to get rid of Painkiller's effect and flee, so he let her run, and pretended to be invisible.

Vanish.

Shouto rushed to where the light had appeared, Extinguisher right behind him but she didn't tell him to slow down. He wasn't sure he would have listened to her even if she did.

Someone was running, slow and half hunch over, and Shouto knew he would have no problem catching up to her right up to the moment where his foot touched something soft and elevated and
he almost fell.

*I stepped on something.* But he couldn't find what it was, the road smooth and unable to explain what had made him stumble.

"Shouto! What are you doing?"

He didn't answer and sprinted, so he would be close enough to use his ice and to trap whoever was fleeing. But that didn't keep him from glancing behind him.

Still nothing.

---

Toshinori was half asleep when the familiar noise of an email could be heard from his phone. Half in the land of the dreams, or at least near-comatose sleep, he checked it quickly only to see that Nedzu had sent him the students files of Hadou Nejire, Amajiko Tamaki, and Togata Mirio, as he had asked.

The three of them had the potential to be a successor.

And they would have to fight All for One.

---

On Sunday, Izuku woke up late only to remember that Hawks had asked him if they could talk over lunch, so he ran. A lot of quirks were used in blatant violation of every quirk use laws, but he arrived on time, and he waited in the street because there was no trace of the Flying hero.

Curiously, he wasn't stressed about meeting a hero who hadn't felt necessary to tell him what he wanted to talk about. Maybe it was because he had survived Stain, maybe because he has actually managed to survive being paralyzed by one intense drug dealer, but at this point, not much worse could happen. It wasn't like Hawks had learned about his quirk, then revealed it to two persons behind his back.

Izuku actually froze at that last thought.

*I might be a little more bitter than previously assumed so...*

*Transfer* flared up, sensing the use on another quirk, the pressure light and not unusual in a crowd. At least, until something red floated right outside Izuku's line of sight and he grabbed it by reflex, his fist clenching something soft and strange.

When he opened it, he saw a feather. A red one.

It was floating on his palm for a moment as Izuku's mind proceeded what he had just done. There was some some ground rules about people with mutation type and one of them was to never touch a mutation without permission, unless you were a small child who didn't know better.

*You remember how you weren't stressed?* his brain asked him. *Now, it's time to be hit by all of it.*
He dropped the feather and put his hands in his pockets, pretending that nothing had happened, but
the feather kept floating in front of him like some feathery scarlet letter. Where is he?

The answer to that question was: sneaking towards him from the opposite direction where the
feather had come from. He was wearing civilian clothes like Izuku, but he looked like a fashion
model while Izuku looked like he had just rolled out of bed.

Hawks didn't seem upset about the feather. That didn't mean that Izuku started to breathe again.

"Ariel! I'm so glad you could make it." The feather came back to his wing, the left one, and
Hawks' smile wasn't mischievous but not the fake one and passive-aggressive he had showed with
Kaname. "I was dying to talk to you."

While Izuku was dying from sheer nervosity over here, still feeling the fluttery sensation of the
feather in the palm of his head.

Hawks took pity on him and didn't tease him about what he had done but Izuku could see in his
eyes that he wanted to.

The awkwardness didn't diminish.

They went to a nice restaurant -a little too nice- and a waitress who seemed to know Hawks took
them to a private room, and they didn't say more than five words to each other before ordering.
Then a heavy silence.

His mom had once told him that the trick every interrogators used was to say nothing. They just
make people wait until they became so nervous that they just starting blabbering to make the
awkward silence stop. So in doubt, stay quiet.

Izuku waited without saying a word. Hawks had a reputation for efficiency and was well-liked,
with a strong presence online via his PR, but he wasn't known as an investigator. Or maybe his
mom had also taught him about interrogations.

The meals came quickly, giving Izuku something to do and he kept obstinately not talking. He
didn't have anything to say. At all.

Nom, nom, nom. Good chicken. Too busy eating to talk.

"How was your internship with Gran Torino?" Hawks finally asked. "I mean, apart from the Hero
Killer and the league of villains?"

"Oh? It was really good. He trained me in combat and then we went through several neighborhoods
and helped anyone who needed it. I regret to not have finished the week with him."

"That's good. I didn't know who he was so it's interesting to know he is able to fight with someone
who had a quirk so powerful and similar to All Might."

Usually, Izuku would have been so happy and embarrassed if someone, especially a hero,
compared his quirks to All Might's. But since Gran Torino was directly linked with One for All's
secret, he was only embarrassed, his cheeks burning.

Find something to say before you spontaneously combust.

Thankfully, Hawks had started the conversation on quirks and if there was one thing Izuku could
talk about, it was them.
"I appreciate the compliment, especially from someone who has so much control over his quirk. I have power but not control, while you can mastered telekinetic and echolocating feathers!"

Hawks froze, a skewer half-way to his mouth. "How do you know that?"

"I bingewatched every of your fights after your fight with Hel, and after that, I kept myself updated. And during some of your rescue, I saw you finding people trapped in building and that you couldn't see. But maybe I'm wrong?"

Hawks blinked.

And changed subject.

"I am taking an interest in the Hosu attack, so I would love to know what happened at the USJ."

*That's it. I officially weirded him out enough for him to stop playing with me.*

Izuku barely hesitated before he told Hawks what had happened at the USJ, focusing on the noumu. He explained how he was barely a villain, but a weapon. Bio engineered to fight All Might. And how they had survived him.

At no point did he lie. He just kept some details for himself.

"That's impressive," Hawks said when he finished, which surprised Izuku. "I mean, if you managed to survive a villain who was supposed to kill All Might, doesn't that mean you're on a similar level as the Symbol of Peace?"

Izuku immediately realized the paradox. He didn't know what Hawks knew about the USJ attack but if the noumu was supposed to defeat All Might, it didn't make sense for him to be... well, relatively unhurt, and to be taken out so quickly by All Might.

The reason for that was because Izuku had rebalanced everything by taking a lot of quirks, the very quirks that had helped him against Stain.

Hawks couldn't know about Transfer. Izuku had never used any quirks other than what could pass for an enhancement in front of the other heroes.

But Izuku couldn't show any fear, so he laughed as if he didn't understand what Hawks was talking about and he did. Not. Lie. "Not even close. Shigaraki is the one who said the noumu was supposed to kill All Might. He obviously didn't pause any challenge. As for how I manage to survive him... the noumu broke my arm and would have killed me without Todoroki's intervention."

That sobered Hawks up in a second. He frowned. "I didn't know that..."

"Can I ask you a question ?" Izuku asked him.

"It seems fair."

"There is a new drug called Nectar in the streets. What do you know about it ?"

That seems to amuse Hawks. "I thought you were going to ask me tips about heroism." "First, don't do drugs. It's bad," the Flying Hero said as if it was a big secret. "There are several enhancing drugs, some which can even mutate their users, but the Nectar, which is extremely recent by the way, has two uses : it boosts the quirk and it also enhances the body. I am talking physical
strength, better reflexes, but also an adaptability to the quirk."

The adaptability was exactly what Izuku was looking for every time he took a quirk. For example, *Strengthen* couldn't be used without *Resistance* or it would break him.

"Honestly," Hawks continued. "I am telling you that because with a quirk like yours, it would make no sense for you to take nectar. But I know that this is getting popular in hero schools."

"Even with the prestigious hero schools like UA?"

He had trouble believing it. At least no UA, not where everyone knew how to use their quirks.

"There are no reported cases of Nectar uses in UA," Hawks reported on a tone that didn't reassure Izuku.

"That's not a no."

Hawks simply smiled and didn't answer. "There are some people who claimed to have developed mutations because of it but the real drawbacks are when you stop it. The withdrawal is hell and the users suddenly have a powerful quirk and a quirk factor that suddenly can't deal with the new effects."

Everyone loving heroes knew that there were public personas and that how they interacted with their fans wasn't the real them. Actually, everyone had a mask when interacting with others, but for heroes whose rank depended on popularity, they were forced to be nice.

Of course, they were exceptions. Endeavor was known for never being social as if he was allergic to the very concept. But Hawks was different. It seemed like he had two modes: nice with his fans and messing with people. For the latter, it was as if he was searching for something.

Hawks was really popular, a good fighter whose sidekicks couldn't follow, but he wasn't known as an investigator. Apparently, the rumor was wrong, and someone with secrets like Izuku should probably avoid him like the plague.

"Anything else you want to know?" the winged hero asked with a smile worthy of the Cheshire Cat.

Ariel, also known as Midoriya Izuku, was lying about how strong he was.

When Hawks had invited him, he wanted to know more about the USJ incident and the Hosu attack, wanted to keep an eye on a kid who was obviously headed to the top 10, and more importantly, he was seriously wondering if Ariel was using Nectar.

Quirks didn't get so powerful without either a rigorous training since a young age, or some chemical help. And there was also the fact that the kid who was getting easily flustered in front of him seemed vastly different from the future hero at the Sport Festival and the one who had neutralized Stain before any of the pros had the time to react. Overpowered quirk and moodswings.

Despite those signs, Hawks was leaning towards the training. Ariel seemed to keep his head cool under intense situations, and using a quirk during those wasn't as easy as it seemed.

But there was something about him...
If it was the Hero Commission training him, they wouldn't let him hide from the media.

Ariel had left for ten minutes when it hit him.

Some heroes took children who had similar quirks under their wing.

Is All Might making a successor?

But then why hide it?

On Monday, for once in his life, Izuku arrived early at school. It was a complete accident because on this very specific day, he wanted to be almost late. He had simply underestimated how easy it would be to bypass the journalists with Vanish, and now, he was trapped inside UA.

Bad luck continued as he saw Todoroki, also early. Vanish disappeared as he couldn't hold it anymore and he sprinted after him.

"Todoroki! You're going to class?"

"Where else am I supposed to go?" Todoroki asked after a hesitation.

Izuku appreciated how Todoroki hadn't planned for their homeroom teacher's reaction. Probably because he actually did something during his internship, while you were playing with your quirks and thinking too much.

"Well, I was planning to avoid the classroom and not to be seen by Aizawa-Sensei until the class starts..."

Todoroki understood in a second. "That seems wise."

"Technically, we didn't do anything wrong so he shouldn't be angry, but..."

"But he is probably angry with Iida," Todoroki noticed, "And since he isn't here, we are the next best thing."

They fled to the other site of the campus. They talked a little about what they did this week, and Izuku was pleased to know Todoroki and Extinguisher had arrested a Nectar dealer. As for Todoroki, he seemed almost jealous to know that Izuku had no problem with journalists.

And during the whole conversation, they were... paying attention to their surrounding. In case of a robot snitching their position to UA or something. They might be overreacting but there was a video of them online about an unsanctioned rescue and Hosu police had tried to charge them for it, so they both had a healthy dose of mistrust.

"Aizawa can't possibly find us here," Todoroki said as they were hiding near the Beta ground.

But naming him was invoking him.

"Midoriya, Todoroki," Aizawa-Sensei immediately contradicted him from right behind them, somehow.
Todoroki flinched and Izuku jumped three feet into the air, and without a quirk.

Aizawa-Sensei looked like he was only standing only thanks to spite and anger. "I was dying to talk to you two."

Izuku gulped.

They went to the teachers room, Todoroki and Izuku not quite being dragged by Aizawa-Sensei but there was this silent promise that he didn't want any trouble anymore.

Which probably had the opposite effect of what the erasure hero wanted. He wouldn't get contrition from them, not when they were reminded of the Hosu police and of the fight with Stain. Of how Iida has almost died because Izuku had been too slow.

But he was underestimating Aizawa-Sensei.

"How are you?"

Todoroki seemed stunned. No doubt that not a lot of people had asked him that. Nurse Sorahiko did, but to Todoroki, that was probably all, while Izuku's mom and Nagisa had been circling around him to make sure he was alright.

"Fine," Todoroki said after a brief pause. Izuku nodded.

"You could have been killed. Do you realize Iida almost died?"

"We know, we were here," Todoroki reminded him.

Izuku clenched his fist behind his back in order not to laugh, but his flash of amusement didn't last.

"And quite honestly," Aizawa-Sensei continued after a mean look at Todoroki. "I don't know what kind of favor the police or Native gave you..."

"No one did us any favor," Izuku cut in.

Aizawa-Sensei looked at him, obviously not pleased that Izuku interrupted him, but Izuku didn't apologize. Not because he was angry, but because he was just that tired, and he was slowly realizing that he didn't want to go through this.

"You might be right," Aizawa-Sensei admitted after a pause, looking at Izuku like he was trying to gaze into his mind. An horrible idea, really. "You are hero students. Because of that, you have responsibilities and society holds you at a higher standard than most. You have to follow your mentors. You have to obey their orders. Because you simply don't have the experience to keep yourself and others safe. And because you should never be placed willingly in dangerous situations. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

Todoroki and Izuku didn't say anything. Gran Torino did told Izuku to stay put.

"You also went through a life-threatening situation. If you say you are fine, I will believe you," he said on the tone of someone that didn't especially believe them. "But if that changes, do not hesitate to talk to me or any teacher."

Both Todoroki and Izuku knew they wouldn't.

Their teacher quickly let them go, but not before telling them that since the fight was 'sanctioned', there would be no problem with UA. He also told them not to say anything to the hoard of
journalists outside who was apparently swarming anyone from UA to ask questions about those 'three students of Hosu'.

But right before he left, Izuku asked a question to his teacher, this hero who had so much experience.

"What were we supposed to do? Because I couldn't let anyone die."

"At the very least, call for back-ups," Aizawa-Sensei said as if it was obvious.

And that was why Izuku couldn't take seriously anyone telling he did something wrong.

"I did. Todoroki is the only one who came."

His teacher didn't answer.

Toshinori always knew a moment of intense nervousness every time he was about to teach something to his little students. He knew how to be a hero, had the experience and he had probably done all the mistakes, so he knew he couldn't mess it up too much. But now, he was standing in a brand new place.

The exercise was simple. All Might was the innocent at the center of Ground Gamma, a maze of metal piles and platforms, and the first hero to rescue him would win. This was a good exercise testing mobility and speed.

And some students were more gifted than others in those two fields.

Young Midoriya was moving as if he was on the ground, unafraid of the heights. He was running on the pipes as if it was an actual racetrack, jumping through the air and landing lightly as if if gravity barely had a hold on him. As if the possibility of falling, of failing, was just an afterthought.

Until one of the pipes broke under his foot.

All Might saw Young Midoriya starting to fall, but the boy didn't panic, didn't even flail. He just twisted his body mid-air, somehow found his footing again and kept going without losing any speed, leaving everyone else in the dust.

But he wasn't happy about it, or at least didn't show it. His expression was serene, slightly amused, and distant at the same time. The same as the nemesis of One for All, and it was probably because behind their neutral expression, they were desperately juggling with several quirks.

Young Midoriya arrived first and as soon as he landed in front of All Might, his mask disappeared and his fanboyish smile replaced it, a hint that maybe, just maybe, he had forgiven Toshinori.

They hadn't talked since this morning at Gran Torino's. He had sent messages, and Young Midoriya had answered politely, but he didn't know...

"THANK YOU, BRAVE HERO!" Toshinori congratulated him, making him blush. "YOU RESCUED ME !"
The training went along faster than he expected, and some of the students had obviously immensely progressed during their internships.

For example, whatever had happened to Young Mineta during his internship, it had unleashed something in him. He wasn't only jumping from purple ball to purple ball, but he also threw them at his classmates in a continuous, as if there was no limit to his supply.

Toshinori, wise man that he was, ignored the imaginative expletives and some specific—and not as discreet as they were thinking—gestures some stuck students addressed to Young Mineta, and he also congratulated him for rescuing him.

He had just rounded everyone up and was about to first congratulate them on their progress, then to expose their strong and weak points for now, when Toshinori's phone rang in the middle of the class.

Now, as a hero, he simply couldn't shut off his phone, no matter the reason. It could be grave. Someone could be in danger. It could be...

*Oh my God, it's Nighteye.*

He looked at the twenty students who were watching him, waiting to see what he would do. This was supposed to be their time but if Sir Nighteye, his former sidekick, called after several years of absolute silence, it had to be for a reason.

"I will be right back," he told his students. "Don't do anything."

His plan was to take a swift exit but at the last moment, he realized that he couldn't let twenty quirked teenagers on their own. For all he knew, someone would get hurt as soon as his back was turned. So he just got further away, still in sight, watching them like a hawk while they couldn't hear him.

"All Might," Nighteye greeted him as soon as he picked up the phone.

"Nighteye. *God, that's awkward.* "How are you?"

"Alright. And you?"

There was a second of floating as they both remembered that Sir Nighteye had stopped being his sidekick because of how All Might wouldn't retire despite being warned of what could happen.

"Everything is fine," Toshinori breathed.

As he was having a strange conversation, the rest of his students were surrounding Young Todoroki and Young Midoriya, probably because of what had happened in Hosu.

Then, for some reason, Young Shouji advanced and Midoriya made him pivot so he could carry him on his shoulders. Then, without showing any sign of effort, he held him at arm reach, above his head.

Young Satou followed. Toshinori expected Young Midoriya to drop Young Shouji but he didn't. He just let him fall on his shoulders, and after a little momentum and something that sounded like Young Shouji squealing, Young Satou was also carried.

*Should I stop that?*
Toshinori wasn't proud to admit it but curiosity got the better of him.

"I am calling because it came to my attention that you consulted my student's file: Mirio Togata."

Well, so much for being discreet in his search for a successor.

"How do you know that?" Toshinori asked.

"Principal Nedzu asked me complementary informations on Mirio's student file. I am not in the habit of giving informations about my students to anyone but he told me it was for a teacher. I know you're teaching at UA this year and Mirio's other teachers don't need his file."

"I see," Toshinori said because there wasn't much he could add.

"I trained Mirio myself, if you need someone to vouch for him. Though I would say that his results speak for themselves."

Young Kirishima followed, and at this point, Young Midoriya, who was comically small next to all this human pile, had to bend so he could also use the surface of his back. The crowd of students started to get more and more agitated, urging him to carry more.

Young Asui hopped on the top of the pile, graceful.

Young Uraraka should have been next but she was banned from trying because her quirk could allow her to cheat.

"Did you... make a choice?" Nighteye finally asked after All Might's too long silences.

So Young Todoroki took Young Uraraka's place. But he didn't climb or used his ice as a stairway, or anything. No, nothing of that.

He preferred to take momentum, to use his ice as a launching ramp, and he pounced.

Where Young Asui had been graceful and light, Young Todoroki crashed on top of the human pile with the subtlety of an American football player, and he only missed Asui by a hair.

The pile started to swing. They are going to fall. Toshinori thought it. Everyone did. But Young Midoriya anchored himself into the ground, fighting against gravity and the general concept of momentum. Toshinori could swear that Young Midoriya was calling several quirks to his rescue.

And with a grunt of effort, he got everyone and everything back in balance.

"Not yet," All Might finally answered. "There is no doubt Young Mirio is incredibly talented and he will make a great hero. But I didn't make my choice yet."

"I see."

The crowd of children had gone wild. There was no other word. Students were screaming, clapping, and phones were starting to get in the open even though the children weren't supposed to have them during the hero training.

Even All Might couldn't help but smile.

But he was being rude.

"You will have to forgive me, I am talking to you while watching twenty young hero students so I
am not giving you all the attention you deserve. But I would like to talk to you again. It's been too long."

"... I would like that too. And I apologize for interrupting your class."

Toshinori hang up and gave his full attention back to the students who had ignored his request not to do anything. No doubt that Aizawa-kun never had to face anything like that.

He had to give them a lesson about respecting their teacher. Obviously.

"MY TURN !" All Might yelled as he ran towards them, pretending to jump like Young Todoroki did.

Everyone screamed, Young Midoriya included.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for all the comments last chapter, I was on a little cloud.

I completely forgot to tell you that no, Nurse Natsume isn't evil or anything. I know some of you were wondering, but no, for once, there was no cliffhanger.

I usually try to post every ten days but next chapter will be heavy, so it's probably going to be at least two weeks before the next chapter.
Inko was going home when she felt this specific feeling of being watched. She hesitated, wondering if it was just her mind playing a trick on her. Since her baby boy had entered the Hero Course, she had felt constantly exposed and there wasn't much she could do about it.

She didn't look back. Instead, she looked at windows and any reflective surfaces on her path, searching for a face that kept coming back in the crowd. But she didn't notice anything of the kind.

Still, Inko walked in the opposite direction of the apartment. Then she dived into a store as soon as she could, and even managed to leave by the exit reserved to the staff.

She did that three times until she was certain that no one was able to follow her. She didn't even know if there was someone out there, but it didn't matter. She knew she wouldn't be at peace if she didn't do anything to keep anyone from finding her home.

By the time Inko came home, Izuku was asleep in his room, still in casual clothes and one of his notebooks still in his hand. He must have fell asleep while working on quirk applications.

She looked at her son for a moment, filled with love towards this adorable boy, so strong and so sweet. And with a light that would shine on the world, no matter how much she would prefer to hide him and to keep him safe.

At least, he was happy. Before high school, Izuku had been a ghost. No trace, no attachment, no friend. Quiet. Now, he had friends and seemed happy to live his life.

She thought about telling him that she had a feeling she was followed tonight. Two years ago, she wouldn't have hesitated. But ultimately, she decided against it. Izuku would blame himself, and it would undo all the progress he had made, and just for a hunch.

*This is probably nothing anyway.*

The date of the exams closed in, bringing stress to everyone but especially to Iida who was still on bed rest. And he became what polite persons would call *a little crazy.*

Iida was horrified at the very idea of missing classes, so not only did he took Yaoyorozu's notes, but also Uraraka's and Izuku's in order not to miss any details. He asked to know everything that happened during training.
Izuku didn't even study for his exams. He just kept repeating what happened in class and reading his notes out loud to his friend, and it was more than enough.

Finally, the day of the written test, Izuku was almost certain that Iida sneaked out of his home to take it.

And when Recovery Girl warned him that he wouldn't be allowed to go to the practical test, their poor friend on hospital leave looked like his soul was leaving his body.

But Iida wasn't the only one affected by stress.

In the meantime, Kacchan had turned into a ball of nerves and Izuku was the trigger to every single one of his explosions.

If he approached, Kacchan screamed. If he trained quirkless, Kacchan yelled at him to stop wasting time. If he blinked in his general direction, Kacchan usually glared but Izuku could sense he was biting his tongue not to bark anything at him.

Interesting times.

On the day of the practical exam, when 1-A learned that they would have to fight their teachers, All Might included, a general feeling of outrage and fear swept through the ranks as if all the students formed one mind.

It was supposed to be robots, Izuku whined silently, while his classmates were a little more vocal about their feelings. Robots were easy, at least for him. He could use all his quirks without worrying about collateral damages. He didn't have to be afraid to hurt anyone.

"Aizawa-Sensei!" Hakagure revolted. "This is an ignominious lie!" she said with everyone else.

But what set her apart for her classmates was that she stumbled on something on the ground, and from the corner of his eye, Izuku saw her starting to fall. He was still distracted by who he would fight and mentally checking what he knew about his teachers' quirks, because his hand immediately flew to stabilize her, despite the fact that no one, especially the boys, touched Hakagure.

And his fingers did touch her, but never made contact with the skin. Instead, Izuku felt something that couldn't be anything but fabric under his fingertips.

An actual costume.

"Don't say anything!" Hakagure whispered frantically.

All this time. All this time and everyone in this class was afraid to hit her and to touch something strategic during the hero training.

This was brilliant.

"Hakagure, you're a conman," Izuku said, in awe.

"You say the sweetest things, Midori. But don't. Say. Anything."
Izuku couldn't see her face but he could hear the threat and one just did not mess with the ultimate invisible prankster, so he pretended he didn't discover anything, and listened to the groups and who they would fight.

Now, they were missing Iida, so they all knew one of them would have to fight alone. And Izuku had the bad feeling that it was going to be him, because let's be honest, he had never been lucky. Worst case scenario, he would have to fight alone against Eraserhead. From a strategical viewpoint, it made sense because everyone thought Izuku had one powerful quirk, but his first act of vigilantism had shown he could get rid of the effect of Erasure. And no one could know because he wouldn't be able to sell his quirk as a mutation and too many questions would ensue.

Fighting quirkless would be complicated. Fighting with several quirks while pretending to be quirkless every time Aizawa-Sensei would look at him would be even more.

It turned out Izuku was twice wrong.

Ojiro was the one who was alone, against Power Loader.

And Izuku, allied with Kacchan, would fight All Might.

All Might. Even with limiters on his wrists and ankles, it was All Might. The Symbol of Peace. The number 1 hero. The holder of One for All. The god of pro heroes.

And Kacchan. Who... didn't quite appreciate him those days.

Izuku almost started counting his quirks to calm himself, but instead, he looked at All Might. And looked at One for All, the shiny quirk he hadn't been able to ignore since the day he had first met All Might.

He took a deep breath.

Okay. You can deal with that. Both of you just have to find a plan and to stick with it.

"We have to fight him. To fucking hit him with all we got as soon as this starts."

"Are you insane? It's All Might! We need to run!"

Toshinori was waiting in front of the giant gate that would lead him to an entire complex of empty apartments. Ground Beta, the place where he had first taught his class. Also the place where Young Bakugou and Young Midoriya had fought each other.

The two boys' interactions were explosive, especially since the internships were over. Childhood rivalry was proof of passion but future heroes couldn't afford to be overwhelmed by those kind of feelings during hero work, so this trial by fire was necessary.

Actually... Toshinori's old doubts interrupted him but he didn't listen. Aizawa-kun had made the
team and Toshinori was trusting his judgement.

All Might was left outside the field and a villain entered Ground Beta, ready to track down the two little heroes who deluded themselves into thinking they could stand against him.

He half expected them to go and find him at the gate, but it made sense that they would prefer to ambush him inside. And who was he to deny them the chance to affront him?

He walked inside the block of buildings, curious - he had to admit it - of what they would do.

He didn't expect to find... something that wasn't a student but that shouldn't have been here anyway. He paused, looking at Young Midoriya's helmet on a stick.

*Is that a totem?* Toshinori didn't approach, but pondered. It couldn't be a trap because it was only a stick in the ground, with the helmet on top of it. Maybe a totem, but what would be the point?

*Make me pause at this precise location.*

Toshinori had barely finished the thought when a green blur appeared from nowhere and Young Midoriya punched the ground with all his power. The earth rippled and the shockwave hit Toshinori like a car crash. He anchored himself and pushed through it, *One for All* starting to flare up, but as spectacular as it was, Young Midoriya had avoided hitting him directly so it was withstandable.

But someone else who had been sneaking behind his back hadn't been so lucky, and when Toshinori glanced behind him, he saw that Young Bakugou had been sent backwards at high speed, not expecting it either.

"**FUCKING DEKU !**"

The small force of the nature immediately became sheepish. "Sorry Kacchan!"

So, naturally, Toshinori tried to grab him while he was distracted. Maybe that will teach them not to be distracted during a fight.

But Young Midoriya avoided his hands at the last second, and did it again when Toshinori tried to punch him. Absolutely focused, he avoided most of Toshinori's hits, but barely. No doubt that he was using everyone of his speed quirks.

*How long can you hold that speed?*

The answer was long enough but Toshinori pretended to go to the right and when Young Midoriya reacted accordingly, Toshinori kneed him in the face. The boy flew backwards with a grunt and hit a wall.

"Who do you think you're facing, heroes?" Toshinori asked with the same intensity he used against villains. This was what allowed to convey how serious he was and for them to realize that fighting what was about to happen wasn't worth it.

He reported his full attention to Young Midoriya. He didn't know why, as he didn't even move, but Toshinori suddenly had the feeling he was the one to watch out and that something was about to happen.

"You're right," the boy admitted while swiping his face with his sleeve.
He got back to his feet, without showing any sign that he was hurt. His head didn't even show a red trace where Toshinori had hit him.

"I'm sorry for underestimating you, All Might," Young Midoriya smiled.

And then, his whole demeanor changed. He didn't even move but the hesitation and nervousness vanished as if they had never existed.

Red lines of power started to appear on his skin, the same as All for One when he started to activate quirks.

A lot of quirks.

Uh.

Young Midoriya whipped his arm, throwing an air blast at Toshinori who avoided it but it still gave Young Midoriya the occasion to appear in his space and to start fighting him in close range.

Toshinori felt it every time the boy managed to land a punch. Fortunately, the hero was stronger even with his manacles, but they matched each other in speed and Young Midoriya was completely taking advantage of it, avoiding the worst of All Might's punches at the last second thanks to brusque accelerations.

And at some point, Young Midoriya became the only thing he could pay attention to. Someone who would one day match him. Someone with several quirks.

Someone who didn't seem to care that much when Toshinori's hits landed, except for the fact he was pushed back. But never for long.

Impossible to defeat, Toshinori could just stop him for a moment and then, he was back in the game. Relentless.

Toshinori's heart started to beat loudly in his ears.

And since he had been so focused on Young Midoriya, he didn't see that his opponent was actually leading him towards a specific direction, where Young Bakugou was waiting for him.

The explosion hit him when he wasn't expecting it and he didn't even manage to avoid all of it. It rattled him to the bone, making his ears ring, and he retreated twenty meters away from them, unable to hide a smile. *They are working together.*

Both boys stood side by side, though at a distance. Young Midoriya was watching him intently, all his quirks still activated and ready to bolt as soon as Toshinori would make any move. While Young Bakugou seemed as ready -if not more- to fight but more ruffled. Toshinori realized than when Young Midoriya and him were fighting, Young Bakugou probably had to handle the wind caused by their movements.

"That point is for me," Young Bakugou said.

"That's cruel, Kacchan. I did bring him to you."

"Shut up!"

And with that, their half second of teamwork is gone.

That just wouldn't do.
"Congratulations, heroes. You showed wits and courage. But this was only a warm-up."

Suddenly, both of the boys didn't look so confident.

And Toshinori took advantage of it.

It was obvious they couldn't work together for long. They weren't coordinating their attacks, they were actually in each other spaces' and Young Midoriya had to dodge explosions as much as Toshinori while Young Bakugou was frequently hampered by the wind pressure Young Midoriya's attacks brought.

It finished with Toshinori throwing a fence at them and both knocking them down. They started arguing before they were even back on their feet, making Toshinori roll his eyes.

"Stop always interfering."

"I'm trying to help you!"

"I don't need your fucking help!"

"You know what? Fine!" Young Midoriya screamed back before jumping on the walls like Gran Torino and leaving through the roofs.

Toshinori was about to follow him but Young Bakugou attacked, and kept him busy between the fire and the shock of the blasts. Truly, Young Bakugou was strong and had the drive of facing any villains.

He had just managed to push him back when Young Midoriya jumped from the roof, in the opposite direction of where he had disappeared, and, still in the air, threw what looked suspiciously like a Texas Smash at Toshinori.

That could have worked if he hadn't prioritized power over speed.

Toshinori countered with his own, propelling Young Midoriya even higher but the boy managed to touch a wall, and immediately slide downwards and onto the street thanks to one of his quirks.

Toshinori wasn't surprised that Young Midoriya didn't even pause and immediately attacked him.

But then, it happened again. This horrible feeling of déjà vu he had to control.

Focus, Toshinori.

He knew they weren't the same person, obviously. But he couldn't help that his instinct, honed by decades of fighting, was screaming at him to be serious, recognizing the power that had hurt him all those years ago.

But somehow, he had to keep reminding himself that, and as they fought, he noticed the similarities more and more.

The same expression as he was juggling with several quirks, the same amused eyes.

The same tranquil and devastating strength.

Toshinori's next punch was slow because he was disturbed and Young Midoriya took advantage of it, grabbing Toshinori's wrist and using it as a support base to launch his foot and to kick Toshinori in the face. It stunned him for half a second, and with his speed, Young Midoriya took the
opportunity to hit him again.

He was probably aiming for his plexus solar. But then, Young Bakugou arrived with the attention to blow Toshinori's face off, so he moved in order to grab him by his arm and to use him as a human mass to bludgeon Young Midoriya. With all the care in the world, obviously.

Except that he got distracted. Just as Young Midoriya's super charged fist connected with the painful scar on his side, exactly where he had lost his stomach.

And just like that, Toshinori wasn't in UA anymore but in California, about to have his guts ripped open in a fight most of his predecessors hadn't survived.

Toshinori reacted before he had the time to think, ceasing to hold back and putting all his strength in the punch, in a desperate and frantic attempt to make his enemy get away from him.

Young Midoriya only had the time to put an arm in front of him. The punch made him smack himself in the face and hit him like a trainwreck, propelling him through the air.

And through the wall of one of the empty building.

Ouch.

Pure horror gripped All Might and he ran towards the hole Young Midoriya had made upon the impact with the building. Young Bakugou didn't follow him, frozen where he stood.

God, tell me the walls are made in cardboard, he prayed despite the dust of the broken bricks all around him.

He found the landing impact, but Young Midoriya himself was nowhere to be found.

It's only when Toshinori heard the scream of surprise and anger of the explosive boy that he realized that Young Midoriya was already out. Toshinori got out of the building just in time to see them flee, Young Midoriya looking none for the worst for wear.

Toshinori didn't follow them.

He needed a moment to regain control.

"Let me go!" Kacchan growled just as they arrived in one of the empty buildings, safe from All Might.
Izuku stopped holding him by his arm, just above his elbow and the grenade part of his costume.

He felt... He felt like after a very long session of training. He wasn't in pain yet, but tomorrow, he would wake up stiff and in pain because all his muscles would hurt. But at least, he now knew the limit of three Shock Absorption quirks, so there was that!

Izuku couldn't keep himself from smiling. It was All Might. His hero who he was fighting with so many quirks, and it was strangely exhilarating. Almost as interesting, though his head hurt, it was nothing compared to what had appeared with the noumu or against Todoroki.

That meant he had gotten stronger since he had arrived to UA.

Izuku focused back on Kacchan, who was silent and obviously thinking. Usually, he would let him be, but they couldn't waste any more time.

"We tried to do it your way and to fight. Can we do it my way and run for the hills now?" Izuku asked.

"Let me think," Kacchan growled but not with real animosity. Something other than Izuku was troubling him for once.

But they were in the middle of a test.

"We have seven minutes left. Time to think fast."

"Shut up, Deku! We can't do that anyway. All Might isn't going to look for us. He is going to wait for us at the gates."

No, he wasn't. All Might was still moving. Izuku could sense it, and even if he had the direction instead of an actual distance, but he knew he was right. He just had to explain to Kacchan that he had a way to track All Might, and hence to avoid him.

"He isn't..." Izuku started.


"I at least know that. He is still at the center of Ground Beta because he is a teacher and his first instinct will be to make sure we are okay. He can't help it and if we hurry, we have a chance to cross the gates before he has the time to reach us. All we need is to get out of the buildings zone so will have a straight line. It makes sense."

"Shut up..."

"We have six minutes now. Why not listen to me this..."

Kacchan punched him in the jaw.

Now, Izuku had just been thrown through a building, and though he was definitely going to feel it in the morning, he was fine. But it had been because all of his Shock Absorption quirks and some more were activated.

The same quirks Izuku had stopped using as soon as he was safe.

The punch stunned Izuku who crashed into the ground, pain only registering after a second, and he stayed there, incredulous.
There was a taste of copper and salt in his mouth. Blood. He had bitten the inside of his mouth.

When Deku had hit the ground, a flicker of regret had crossed Katsuki. Not much. Just a 'Maybe I shouldn't have done that' moment, overwhelmed by an intense surprise at the idea that the one who had survived an explosion unscathed at the Sport Festival could be hurt by a simple punch, but anger smothered both.

The same anger that hadn't left him since the news of Hosu had reached him. The same anger of when he had seen that while he had been stuck in this stupid agency, being constantly criticized and poked at to make him change, Deku had been been doing actual hero work. And though the situation had been bordering on nightmarish, agencies were now fighting between themselves to have Deku, Half and Half, and Glasses.

But if he was honest, it had nothing to do with Hosu and everything to do with Deku himself. Deku who was half-hassing everything while Katsuki was busting his ass off. Deku who was actually so fucking strong than when he got serious, even All Might himself paid attention.

Deku who didn't follow any rules, didn't follow any logic, and hence, was deeply unsettling.

"Listen," Katsuki said after a hesitation. "Here is what we're going to do...

The plan was simple. Katsuki would distract All Might. Deku would use one of his gauntlets to hit him, distracting him because there was no way he would guess they would willingly work together, then they would cuff him. If that didn't work, Deku would have to run while Katsuki would keep All Might from coming after him.

Deku listened without saying anything, sitting on the floor. He wasn't looking directly at Katsuki, and the fingers of his right hand were clawing during the whole conversation. Katsuki had previously noticed he sometimes did that when he was training with someone.

When Katsuki finished, Deku nodded once, still not looking at him and he started to get up.

Apologize. Katsuki knew he had to.

But then, Deku glanced at him.

It was as if his gaze was made from the essence of cold itself. It was something that made Katsuki realize how heavy the silence was around them, and how empty the city was.

And there was no way he would show weakness after witnessing something like that. He didn't even want to turn his back on this bastard but Katsuki was the first one to leave, so he had no choice.

Katsuki found All Might. And he was disturbed to see he hadn't tried to go back to the gate, searching for them, almost frantic, obviously worried. No doubt that it was because he was scared he had hit Deku too hard but Deku was the bastard who had survived an explosion, and nothing seemed to be able to fucking stop him, so why fear that anything would happen to him?

All Might saw him, tensing, and he immediately glanced around, trying to know where Deku was hiding. Which catapulted Katsuki to a new level of rage.
Always focused on Deku, almost ignoring Katsuki as if he was small fry next to this crazy bastard.

"YOU'RE FIGHTING ME!" he screamed.

And he pushed his quirk to the absolute limits. He fought with all his strength, all his rage, never giving up.

But it was All Might.

And as frustrating as it was to admit it, Katsuki couldn't beat him on his own.

_Deki needs to hurry the fuck up._

His wrist were burning, the pain of going plus ultra reminding itself to Katsuki. But he didn't stop. Even when All Might grabbed his face, even when he thought he didn't have anything else to give.

And then, All Might dropped him and ran, leaving him in the dust.

Katsuki just watched him, in pain, exhausted, not understanding what was going on.

Only to realize why Deku wasn't coming.

______________

_Five minutes left._

Izuku left, leaving the gauntlet behind. He didn't use Vanish. He couldn't not when he was so... well, he wasn't calm enough and let's leave it at that. It didn't need the quirk anyway. He could sense where All Might was and Kacchan's explosions were loud enough to wake up the dead and make them call the cops.

This was his plan, at first. Hide, and avoid All Might. Minimize the risks, and get away.

The noises of the explosions were still reaching him when he started to walk outside the complex of buildings but they stopped when he was about ten meters away from the gates. He sensed One for All flaring up.

_Acceleration._

He passed the gates just as All Might was about to reach him.

______________

Young Midoriya didn't stop when Toshinori called him, and as he walked, he didn't seem injured. Because it was Toshinori's first thought. _I injured him so he had no other choice than to leave._ Which was actually a good thing, better to quit than to push beyond his limits and break. But he had accelerated, and even though All Might was only seeing the back of his head, he seemed more furious than anything.

"Did I injure you?" he still asked as he ran to reach his level.
Young Midoriya didn't stop, still looking straight in front of him, and when he talked, he was distant: "No, my quirk gives me enough shock absorption."

That was a very good thing to know but it didn't explain why Young Bakugou was still in Ground Beta, alone.

"So you abandoned your partner?"

He didn't mean to ask it like that. He meant it as "Did Young Bakugou and you planned for him to be a diversion and for you to escape?" but he was still unsettled by what had happened and how his own brain was playing tricks on him, so the words escaped before his brain had the time to check their meaning.

And before he had the time to rectify what he meant, Young Midoriya answered his question, still as unbothered as before. "I did and I won."

"What?"

That wasn't like Young Midoriya at all. Young Midoriya wasn't cold towards others. He didn't care about being the best.

"This is a good lesson," Young Midoriya continued. "If he keeps treating people like they are beneath him, one day, they are going to leave him for dead," and there was a frightening edge to his words.

This was an ugly and cold anger that All Might was witnessing for the first time with Young Midoriya. It was the kind of things which could lead the sweetest boy to a dark path unless someone didn't set him straight.

"Heroes aren't only strong quirks," Toshinori reminding him, struggling to find the right words. "You should know that they have to be model of bravery and of noble deeds. Abandoning your partner... Taking the easy road... It's not something we do and it's disappointing that you made such a choice."

Young Midoriya froze.

And turned towards him, so Toshinori finally managed to look at him in the eyes and to see his whole face. There was a mark, starting from his jaw and spreading though his cheek, the kind that promised a spectacular bruise. For a moment, Toshinori was horrified to think it was because of his own knee or when he had used a California Smash on him, but he hadn't blinked at those, so it couldn't be him.

If Young Midoriya had tried to control his anger before, it had now gained a horrible edge and Toshinori could feel it spreading through the air. That was the kind of emotion only quiet and calm people could show, for they controled everything until the rage gained a new dimension, more akin to wrath. Next to that, Young Bakugou's difficult temper was nothing.

"Why is that he can insult me and hit me and I don't even have the right to walk out? Why do I have to be the better man about it?" Young Midoriya said, his voice barely above a whisper but saturated with something horribly cold.

"What... What happened?"

Young Midoriya shrugged, anger gone once again as if it had never existed but Toshinori now knew that it was only hiding.
"What always happens with Kacchan," the boy simply said.

As if he had heard them, an explosion was heard from inside Ground Beta.

By the time he looked back, Young Midoriya was gone.

His jaw was throbbing, pain spreading in half of his face, but Izuku didn't care. It just hurt. No, what was bothering him was the red mark on his skin which would evolve into one spectacular bruise.

Now, it shouldn't be that complicated. He had a healing quirk. Self-healing. Deep range, which explained why he didn't have any scars, but also incredibly slow and on a bruise, he was almost certain that it wouldn't do anything.

But he didn't want to explain to his mom why, despite several Resistance quirks, someone had managed to hurt him. This would lead to awkward questions, so he looked at his pitiful reflection and focused on *Medium Healing*, trying to push it the same way he pushed all his quirks.

And it didn't do anything.

*I had this quirk for eleven years and it still does whatever it wants.*

Izuku wasn't beyond good old threats: "If you don't fix that right now, I am naming you Minor Healing instead of Medium Healing."

Sadly, it didn't work either.

"You suck," he childishly said to Minor Healing, just as someone was entering.

"Who are you talking to?" Todoroki asked, in a new costume.

Not trying to hide his left side with ice anymore, which warmed Izuku's heart. In training, he used his flames to keep his ice from freezing him, but it was rarely more than that. Sometimes, Izuku wondered if they were facing the same problem. Not enough control to use their quirk.

"Myself," he answered, noticing how Todoroki's eyes trailed to the soon-to-be bruise on his face.

"First sign of madness."

"I'm well past the first sign," Izuku reminded him.

Todoroki grabbed a towel from his locker and the temperatures dropped around him. Izuku watched him create an ice cube the size of an apple, which he shoved into the towel, and he gave it to Izuku.

"For your face. I didn't expect All Might to be so hard on you."

Izuku didn't answer. He didn't want Todoroki to think All Might had punched him in the face but he also didn't want to snitch on Kacchan. That was between them.

But he didn't need to. Todoroki just looked at his face and he guessed. "Bakugou? Why would he
do that?"

Izuku shrugged, not wanting to think about the exam. When they were little, unlike everyone else, Izuku had never been intimidated by his friend. He took everything in stride, at least four quirks at his disposal at anytime. He remembered playing with him and the others, but the more he thought about it, the less he remembered being friends with them up to the moment he had first manifested his quirk.

He put the iced towel on his face, wincing.

He didn't want to think about All Might either. You were rude at him.

"It must be the day," Todoroki continued. "You missed Mineta fighting Sero."

"What?"

"When they finished their exam. Sero woke up, they talked, and Mineta attacked him and insulted him. I am not sure why, but I saw Uraraka separating them. She just walked to them and touched them with her quirk. Aizawa had to lasso them back to the ground."

Izuku blinked, then waited for Todoroki to tell him more. This sounded like an interesting story.

_____________________________________________________

After sending Young Bakugou to the infirmary, Toshinori didn't manage to find Young Midoriya again. He wasn't answering his phone, but it might simply be because he wouldn't answer it inside the school.

Or maybe because he is angry at you.

As he kept looking for him, he had the time to think.

Did I... Was I unfair to him?

Apart from the obvious, of course. Apart from tricking him into revealing his quirk, from sending him to Gran Torino without warning him that he was aware of Transfer.

But he was reminded of several things. How he tended to trust that Young Midoriya would be fine, no matter what. Because he was powerful, because he had the quirks for it.

During his first day of teaching, he remembered consoling an upset Young Bakugou while Young Midoriya was standing right here. Young Midoriya who had almost been blown up by his classmate. Young Midoriya whom All Might had almost called off during the training without worrying about what Young Bakugou would do.

Did I ask him if he was okay after Stain?

No, he had not. He had been busy coming clean to think about everything else.

And you did it again today. You used too much power against him, and as soon as you realized he was okay, you didn't even ask how he was doing or apologized.

There was a frightening pattern of Toshinori not considering Young Midoriya like the child that he
was. *Did I do that because he is powerful or because I assimilated him to All for One?* He wasn't sure of the answer. He wanted to think it wasn't the latter.

Young Midoriya was obviously careful with his quirk. He hadn't used all his quirks until he was against Toshinori himself, careful not to hurt his classmates. Compared to that, Young Bakugou didn't show as much care.

*If Young Midoriya had send an explosion towards Young Bakugou, how would I have reacted?* The answer was clear.

That wasn't a rivalry. Toshinori, hell, even Aizawa-kun, had thought it was because Young Midoriya was so strong, and as such, he wasn't seen as a victim. But he never talked back to Young Bakugou, never started anything. It was as if Young Midoriya's very presence triggered Young Bakugou's temper.

And that wasn't even talking about what Toshinori himself had done today.

He went back to the school, changed into a suit as he stopped using One for All, and walked to the teacher room, knowing Aizawa-kun would still be there. Just as he was about to enter, Young Mineta, still in costume, fled as if hell itself was after him, almost running into Toshinori and he apologized without slowing down.

Toshinori found Aizawa-kun inside, looking at his computer screen while doing some paperwork, and looking even more exhausted than usual. This man needed to sleep.

"What happened with Young Mineta?"

Aizawa-kun didn't look up: "He attacked Sero, and without any provocation, so he is going to cool off for a couple of days. He told me he had trouble sleeping since the USJ attach, which I can understand..." He rubbed his eye, probably not realizing what he was doing. "... but that's no excuse."

Then he looked at Toshinori and confronted to the glare, the number 1 hero had to refrain from hiding behind a lamp.

"As for you...," the Erasure Hero growled. "What was that with Midoriya? I know you're new at the job but attempted murder isn't a validated teaching method."

"You saw that?" Toshinori winced.

Aizawa-kun nodded. "And so did most students. No one wants to fight you, now. What happened?"

*I don't know.*

"He accidentally hit a old would and... I panicked."

The words were light but Aizawa-kun immediately understood what he meant, dropping his pen on the pile of paperworks.

"Sometimes," his colleague started carefully, "Pro heroes can't help but to reach as if they were in a real fight. Do you think it will... happen again?"

Translation: **Do I have to keep you away from our very fragile students?**

"It's unlikely," Toshinori said even though he had no idea, but could only hope.
But he doubted it would happen with anyone else. Only Midoriya had created this kind of reaction, and he still remembered the horror that had passed through him when he had hit him. He would remember it for the rest of his life. And he wouldn't let that happen again.

"I will. But I need to talk to you about something else."

Aizawa-kun braced himself and Toshinori told him what had happened between Young Bakugou and Young Midoriya. It must have happened in a place with no cameras because it was obvious that he had no idea a fight had broken out.

"They fought with each other?" Aizawa-kun repeated. "During the exam?"

"No, that's the problem. Young Bakugou punched Young Midoriya and Young Midoriya didn't retaliate. And I am just realizing that it's a common pattern."

Shouta's plan had been simple: force the two boys who absolutely didn't get along to fight a common enemy so they would either learn to put their difference aside, or they would fail.

He had completely misunderstood how the animosity had started to fester. Unlike All Might, he knew the animosity was one-sided. But he hadn't actually paid attention to it. He wanted Bakugou to progress, and Midoriya was the perfect way to make him realize how destructive his behavior was. He had rationalized that by thinking that Midoriya had to learn to deal with difficult people anyway.

But Midoriya might be quiet but he wasn't a doormat. And now, because Shouta had not thought this through, he had just given the boy another reason to do things on his own and to not talk to the adults in his life when he had a problem.

Bakugou was standing in front of him, back in uniform, dark circles under his eyes because of Recovery Girl's treatment. He looked positively furious, but was trying to reign the anger in.

"Did you hit Midoriya?" Shouta cut to the chase.

Bakugou nodded. "I did."

"Why?"

This time, Bakugou hesitated. Looked up, and Shouta saw something like worry amidst the perpetual anger.

"What did he tell you?" the teen asked carefully.

"He didn't tell me anything because when I went to find him, he seemed to have vanished and I couldn't even call him because he is the only one in this class who didn't give me his phone number."

Which greatly annoyed him. Worse, he was almost certain that All Might had Midoriya's phone number but he had become pale like Death when Shouta had asked for it, and quietly explained that he didn't want to share Midoriya's private information without his permission.

Bakugou sighed, avoiding once again to look directly at Shouta.
"He pissed me off. I was trying to think and he kept talking, and... I just wanted him to shut up for a second and to let me think."

*He lashed out.*

"I see," Shouta sighed. "You're suspended for three days."

"WHAT ?!"

"What were you expecting ?" At those words, Bakugou froze. "You attacked a fellow student."

It finally seemed to dawn on the boy. He had attacked a fellow classmate. He had almost injured him. And he didn't say anything, because despite what most people believe, Bakugou was careful of respecting the rules. His file was perfect, he obeyed every teacher, it was just that when Midoriya was concerned, rules didn't matter anymore.

Because he was lashing out. Getting rid of his frustration on someone else, and that was unacceptable.

And Shouta, moron that he was, had thought it was a good idea to use Midoriya to help Bakugou get over serious issues.

When Shouta talked again, he had Bakugou's complete attention : "I want you to think about what you want to become. A hero ? Someone people can count on and who can defeat villains ? Or someone no one will trust, or like, because you are attacking indiscriminately allies and enemies ? And then, I want you to act to become who you want to be. Because right now, I am only seeing someone incapable of controlling himself."

Izuku went back home after visiting Nagisa, hoping for once that his mom wasn't here yet, but he found her cooking.

She took one look at his face and dropped everything, rushing to him and holding his face between her hands, all concerned.

"What happened? Who did that?"

"A classmate. I had the practical test today, and we had to fight, and I wasn't expecting it. I don't think he expected to hurt me like that either, not after what I did during the Sport Festival ?"

Alas, he had pronounced the two forbidden words, and his mom gave him a definitely non-amused look.

"When you jumped on landmines or when you decided to decided to be frozen alive then roaster, then blasted away?" she asked, deadpan.

…

*I can't win.*

*But at least, I diverted her attention away from Kacchan, right?*
But of course, he was wrong.

"Do you teacher know? Don't think I didn't notice you haven't gave me a name yet. Is it the boy with an ice quirk?"

"No, it wasn't. It was someone else, and Nagisa already offered to eat him."

"What a nice girl," his mom said with a worrying smile while still checking him for injuries.

Later, while he was in his bed, pretending to sleep but actually checking some new quirk analysis online, Izuku received a message from Amano Jin, the man who used to have Taser. He was regretfully explaining that he wanted his quirk back.

It was as if a hole has opened under Izuku.

He laughed. He couldn't help it. It was just ridiculous how this day was getting worse and worse.

The video was barely finished, but Mamoru still rewound it, eager to grave every image in his memory, and already remembering every word. The middle school student was in class, his phone hidden behind a textbook so he could watch his new obsession to his heart content, but sadly, he couldn't listen to what Stain was saying.

Not that he needed to. Stain's message couldn't be forgotten. But now, he liked to watch how all this supposed heroes were terrified by his mere presence, by how true his message was. How this wannabe hero student got what he deserved for thinking he was hot shit just because of his quirk, his money, or his network, or all three of them.

Even this crazy guy from the Sport Festival wasn't proud as he was holding his pathetic friend in his arms. Though, even Mamoru had to admit that how he had reacted, so fast and so similar to All Might, was cool.

It was probably why Stain hadn't cut off his head when he was distracted...

A paper ball bounced on the back of Mamoru's head in the middle of the class, and it landed between his chair and his back but the middle school student didn't bother to check what was written on it, and let it fall on the floor. Something like VILLAIN, CREEP, or FREAK. His classmates weren't as imaginative as they would like to think.

He hated every single one of them. He hated how they had decided he was a villain because if his quirk. How they all wanted to be heroes even they weren't worthy of the position. Even those who hadn't made fun of him were too happy to look away when Nakamura was pushing him around.

But Mamoru didn't say anything. He didn't react, trying to control his expression so he wouldn't smile, and he waited for the end of the classes.

Finally, their homeroom teacher freaking let them go. It wasn't like he wanted to spend more time
than necessary with his students, but as they left, the useless adult thought he had to share some wisdom: "And don't forget to consider your future options. High school will arrive sooner than you're expecting it, and you can't allow yourself to be caught off guard."

At this thought, unease swept through Mamoru. He didn't have the grades to go to the big leagues like UA and Shiketsu. As for the rest... Being a hero was out of question with his quirk, and even gen ed wouldn't like someone whose quirk could only be used to hurt people.

**It's not like I can actually train with my quirk.**

Three of his most idiotic classmates left school together. One was Nakamura, a dude with an electricity quirk who had made sure everyone in Mamoru's school knew he had a villainous quirk. The other was Tanaka, who had an infrared quirk, and who followed Nakamura around while never contradicting him. And finally, Ito, a girl who had long metallic hair she could control as she wanted.

Mamoru followed them to the abandoned spot they used to train their quirks, because everyone of them was determined to become a hero. As soon they made sure no one was around, familiar inhalors appeared in their hand, and they all took a whiff.

Because they were morons who thought that taking Nectar once in a while when they needed it was enough. It actually didn't work like that. The long you took it, regularly, and the stronger you got.

Mamoru startled when he revealed himself, all of them immediately hiding their colorful inhalers. Afraid Mamoru would snitch.

"What do you want, you freak?"

Mamoru smiled. He didn't say anything. He just brought the inhaler to his mouth and pressed the tip, tasting the familiar taste of the Nectar.

Time for a test.

---

Chapter End Notes

The reason why Bakugou isn't as present in All Might POV is because Izuku was using Focus like crazy and All Might had no chance but to hyper focus on him. It's also why he reacted so strongly.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ALL THE COMMENTS LAST CHAPTER! I WAS SO HAPPY I WAS FREAKING OUT!
Six years ago, somewhere in America

It had been two days since Hisashi was missing and the only think that kept Inko from going steer-crazy was the little boy playing in what was actually a disguised panic room. She had left Izuku with Chiyo an hour ago as she paced through the safehouse where they had been taken as soon as the first fights broke out, but she knew that she would be back soon. She couldn’t bear to stay away from him for too long.

She peaked by the window, which was supposed to be forbidden but Chiyo could bite her. Further away, she could see the lights of people moving in bands, looking for a fight or travelling in packs for safety, she didn’t know.

There was no lights in the streets, first because the power had been cut off at some point, then because no one dared to use generators or make fire because lights marked them as targets. Though, as far as Inko and her little tribe were concerned, they were supposed to be safe. Not much could make a dent in this house.

But Hisashi was supposed to be safe too.

No one was sure about what had happened. They just knew villains and heroes had been involved, even All Might himself, and since then, part of the State had plunged into absolute chaos. Power still wasn't back in some neighborhoods and those who had electricity were too scared to use it. And no one knew where Inko's husband was.

You can't keep thinking about that. You will drive yourself insane.

If that's not already the case.

Unable to keep waiting on her own, she walked down the stairs to join the other residents of the house.

The panic room was large, colorful, and Izuku was on the floor, drawing as if nothing else existed. On the couch right next to him, Chiyo was half keeping an eye on him, half typing something on her phone when Inko returned to the room. Older than Inko, black hair cut short and her bare arms showed her muscles, she had at first started as Izuku and Inko's unofficial protection detail, but she had become something more. She also had a Shock Absorption quirk, something Inko could never forget because Izuku kept asking more and more questions about it.

Chiyo smiled at Inko, immediately picking up on her anxiety, and Inko forced herself to smile back.

She couldn't let Izuku see how scared she was, and she sat next to him before ruffling his soft curls. Her son hadn’t asked where dad was because that was how it happened. Sometimes, as far as Izuku was concerned, Dad was here, and sometimes, he wasn’t. It was something Inko had encouraged because it was better than to have to answer impossible questions.
Inko kept passing a hand though Izuku's curls and he kept drawing. She braced herself, ready to see another All Might drawing but instead, she saw a dozen of colorful stars maybe, in a dark sky.

“It’s pretty.”

Izuku nodded, and didn't stop drawing. Inko hugged him without making him move. Her son answered the hug with one arm.

Then, he yawned, which reminded her how late it was starting to be. Inko turned to tell Izuku was going to retire for the night, and was surprised to see Chiyo was still on her phone, not paying attention.

Inko hesitated, but finally didn't say anything.

It appeared that Izuku was more tired than they both thought because he stopped moving as soon as his head touched the pillow. She exited her son's bedroom, her phone in hand, and she almost jumped out of her skin when she saw that Chiyo was waiting just behind the door.

Her friend apologized as Inko was trying to keep her heart in her ribcage, thank you very much.

"Sorry... Izuku gets more adorable everyday."

"He does,” Inko agreed with a smile. A smile that dropped quickly. “I think he is waiting for his father.”

They walked away so Izuku wouldn't hear them.

"It's going to be alright," Chiyo assured her, a hand on Inko's shoulder. "Your husband is the greatest man I have ever known. I hope you know that."

Inko hesitated.

Then she hugged this woman.

"Thank you, Chiyo. I don't know what we would do without you."

Chiyo leaned back into the embrace, smiling.

And as soon as Chiyo left, Inko look at her phone and confirmed that the cloning with Chiyo's had been successful.

Because her friend had been on her phone a lot these days, and it was just a little bit strange because she usually watched Izuku like a hawk.

And it was probably nothing.

But Inko wasn’t willing to take any risk.

[Maybe we should drop it.

It's too dangerous.]

[You’re the one who told me the villain who fought All Might was pronounced dead at the site.]
Inko reread it several times. She could barely breathe. It was like she was under water, pressure on her chest and all the air in her lungs refusing to be breathed.

And then, she cried. She cried because a woman she considered her friend, a woman who had watched over her son for years, was willing to sell him to the highest bidder.

But she couldn't cry for long. She couldn't stay. She recognized the names. They belonged to two people who belonged to her husband's circle.

That meant there could be more. There was more.

Now that Hisashi wasn't here, the absolute protection she had made the mistake of leaning on had disappeared.

In the middle of the night, Inko packed a bag with all the necessary items, put on dark and comfortable clothes, and sneaked in her son's room.

"We have to leave. Don't make a sound. Like a mouse."

He did just that, of course.

She was scared he was going to ask if they were going to Hisashi. But he didn't. He never asked what had happened to his dad.

So Inko never said anything.

Nowadays

The good thing about fighting All Might was that when you arrived the next day with an enormous purple bruise on your face, everyone assumed it was his fault. And since Izuku had woken up with the All-Mother of all muscular pains, he could understand why they would assume that.

But to Izuku’s horror, a lot of his classmates were alarmed and circled around him, and Jirou, seeing his awkwardness, even proposed to hide it with concealer. Ashido also proposed to draw Ojiro’s lost eyebrows. Whatever had happened with Power Loader, he had passed his trial by the skin of his teeth. On this day, Izuku learned that concealer and make up depended on skin tone, and the conversation was diverted to make ups and how the cosmetic industry didn’t offer enough choice, and everyone forgot about him.

And the chatter allowed Izuku not to think of how he was going to lose Taser. How he hadn’t done
much of what he wanted with this quirk, how he would never test the railgun…

But as always, Aizawa-Sensei was determined to remind them they weren’t safe anywhere and the caterpillar man appeared from behind his desk, making everyone scream in surprise because no one had noticed he was sleeping behind it. By that time, everyone had noticed how Mineta and Bakugou were late, especially Izuku who was surrounded by empty places, and their teacher explained why.

"Bakugou and Mineta are suspended for three days. Both of them attacked their partners, and this behavior will never be allowed as long as I teach here."

At those words, everyone, except for Todoroki who already knew, looked at Izuku, realizing he had misdirected them.

He had no regret about that.

At least, until the end of the class, when Aizawa-Sensei called him.

Midoriya seemed sad. He made sure not to show it in front of his classmates, but there were dark lines under his eyes and every time he thought no one was looking at him, his expression dropped. And after what had happened during the final exams, he was wondering if it was usual for Midoriya to hide everything from his classmates.

The student didn't even seem surprised to be called. He just waited for Shouta to talk without showing any curiosity.

Shouta's eyes keep going back to the student's face. Though he didn't condone Bakugou's way of venting, far from it, he was also under the impression that Midoriya's quirk allowed him to withstand most traumas. It appeared there was another condition.

There was too much he didn't know about his student. The intel on his quirk was minimal, he didn't have his number and couldn't reach him, and before that, he didn't feel the need to look more into it.

If he was honest, there was actually a reason why Shouta liked to think as Izuku as difficult to hurt. Something Shouta hadn't realized until All Might had mentioned how he had panicked during the test, and Shouta had allowed himself to think about why himself could barely sleep these days.

He still had nightmares about the USJ and the bone-chilling scream Midoriya had made in the noumu's hand, while Shouta was unable to do anything. He hadn't even been able to look at him, to see what was going on, and at the time, he had thought one of his students, who had barged in to save him, was going to die.

After that, knowing how strong and durable Midoriya was had helped. Made him think that he wasn't in as much danger as he thought.

It was illogical.

"All the tests were designed so the student who would undertake them would learn how to deal with one of their weaknesses," Shouta started. "Mainly, yours was your relationship with Bakugou."
"Ah."

No reaction here. This was starting to be concerning.

"I apologize, Midoriya."

An emotion finally appeared: surprise.

"Why are you apologizing for, Sensei?"

"I had realized this rivalry of yours was one-sided. But I still pushed the both of you to become partners. Bakugou needs to learn to cooperate with others. And I found out that knowing how to deal with someone contradictory is an useful skill. But when I learned what had happened with Bakugou, I realized I was forcing you to teach your classmate and to deal with the unfair situation I had just created."

To his surprise, Midoriya didn't say anything for a long time, thinking about it. Then, finally, he nodded.

"Yes, that was actually unfair of you. Does that mean I won't have to be partnered with Bakugou anymore?"

"Not for some time. If his behavior improves, I will consider it. But why didn't you tell anything to All Might, during or after the test? He had to guess and since there was no cameras, I had to confirm it with Bakugou."

Midoriya gave him the "Are you actually serious?" look. "Would that change anything?" he wondered, more to himself that for Shouta's benefit.

Shouta was starting to suspect that Midoriya simply didn't trust people to take care of him. He probably wasn't bullied, not with a quirk like his, but something must had happened to make him so independent and unwilling to ask for help.

You might have played a role here.

"Of course. We need to know when something like that happens so we can put an end to the behavior. And you, as a student and a child, have to talk to us when you're having a problem. We are here to help and martyrdom rarely solves anything."

Midoriya didn't answer, starting to blush.

"Is there anything you want to talk about?" Shouta asked.

"I am worried about my results and to not be able to go to the Summer Camp," Midoriya finally admitted.

"I am worried about my results and to not be able to do to the Summer Camp," Izuku lied straight to his teacher's face.

For Izuku had a deep dark secret he never told to anyone.

If he hadn't had the quirk for long, it was still okay. He made sure not to get attached to a quirk before a week after obtaining it, just in case. But the longer the quirk was with him, the more he worked on it, and the less inclined he was to giving it back. They were his. His treasures. Yes, they were given to him, but for most of them, he polished them until the quirk was almost new. He brought them to new potentials.

And he had worked on Taser. He was far from the Railgun but with more free time, he could have it. He had even learned how to modulate the impact!

Honestly, Kacchan’s temper was so far down on his list of priorities that he was surprised when Aizawa-Sensei called him for that.

But no one needed to know.

Fortunately, Aizawa-Sensei believed him and assured him that he didn't need to worry about that. He also refused to let him leave until he gave him his phone number, something he had carefully omitted when he had filled the student form.

Ochako was watching Midori intently as he was barely eating, and he was answering automatically, obviously not in the conversation. Something was bothering him, and it had to be Bakugou. He wouldn't have fought with anyone else.

She exchanged a meaningful look with Momo.

Should we talk to him? Momo silently asked.

Since they were now living together, they had worked on this famous silent telepathy close friends developed after a while.

I have no idea, Ochako answered just as quietly.

Midori was a private person, and if he hadn't talked about it earlier, he probably didn't want to mention it now. All they could do was make him understand that they were here for him. He could try to hide it as much as he wanted, but he obviously had to be affected by what had happened with Bakugou.

And Ochako had her theory about why Bakugou had so much animosity towards Midoriya.

He was scared of Midori.

She wasn't sure of why. Todoroki had also an incredible quirk and training that allowed him to destroy the ring of the Sport Festival too, but even though Bakugou obviously didn't like him much, it was nowhere near the level of violence he showed Midori.

It's almost like he is scared, so he wants to distance him. While Midori is almost friendly with him.

Maybe it was because of that. Bakugou didn't want a friend, he wanted a rival, while not being able to stand anyone being stronger than him.
But honestly, whatever, the reason was, Ochako didn't care. It was unfair and there was no excuse for it.

And it was unfair how Midori had to deal with that.

They were supposed to be safe. Why did people refuse to grant this simple courtesy?

Midnight's arms preventing Ochako from falling on the ground, but the teacher didn't manage to completely catch her, so they both slowly knelt in a controlled descent.

Right after she had been thrown from a moving car.

Ochako shook her head, getting rid of the bad memory.

Just as Monoma, from Class 1-B arrived, his lunch trail in hand: "Well, 1-A, I heard that two of your students were suspended for fighting. Isn't that strange for those who are supposed to be UA's representatives?"

Fortunately, Kendo was here, and she began to drag him away with her now giant hand, apologizing on his behalf and wishing them a good day, which Momo and Ochako reciprocated. Kendo was really nice and Ochako knew that Momo and her had been on the same internship, the one no one should talk about.

It would have been the usual 1-B interruption if the blond boy hadn't touched Kendo's hand and used his quirk on her.

"You realize I can do that too, right?" Momona asked, his hand suddenly the size of a pizza.

To say that it brought Midori's attention was an euphemism.

"YOU HAVE A QUIRK THAT ALLOWS YOU TO COPY QUIRKS?" the green-haired-boy screamed, suddenly standing and stars in his eyes.

Monoma froze, not knowing how to react but there was no stopping Midori now.

I knew he loved quirks, but not that much...

"That’s amazing! Any quirks? Do you have a trick to deal with the backlash? Do you immediately know what to do with the quirk or do you have to proceed by trial and by error? Do you have a limit to how many quirks you can copy? And people can still use their quirks when you copy them? If that’s the case, that would be so cool."

Monoma blinked repeatedly, while Kendo was looking at them, trying to understand what was going on. Momo, Todoroki and Ochako shrugged. Anyone knowing Midori for more than an hour would know he adored quirks.

"Yes, I have a great quirk," Monoma dramatically declared. "Almost any quirk around there can be mine. Up to five minutes!"

Midori's expression dropped.

He stared at Monoma, his face carefully blank, all enthusiasm having evaporated.

"That’s impressive, Monoma," Midori calmly said, his voice suddenly incredibly flat.

"Thank... Thank you?" Monoma said, not understanding what had caused the brusque change of
There was nothing more mortifying than All Might apologizing about the final exams and promising to do better. Izuku had told him that there was no need to apologize for anything, especially since Izuku himself had been rude to the hero, but All Might found the way to win the conversation by presenting a cake from an expensive bakery, as a token of apology, and Izuku had grabbed it before he had the time to even think about it.

Izuku was weak against sweets.

Then, All Might, who was still smiling because he had found Izuku's weakness, informed him that he was going to see Gran Torino and that he was welcome to go to the 'war council' with him.

"I am going to choose a potential successor," All Might explained. "It's my choice but I am willing to take all the help I can get."

A successor for One for All.

The man or the woman who would have to fight All for One.

Instead of All Might.

It made him feel a little uneasy.

"Are you okay?" Izuku asked his hero.

"Oh course." All Might frowned. "Why do you ask that?"

"I... I have this quirk I have to give back. On Saturday. And of course, I am going to give it back, that's not the problem. But still, separating myself from one of my quirks isn't easy," he admitted.

For a moment, All Might didn't say anything.

Until he ruffled Izuku's hair, a smile now on his face.

"I am sorry you have to get rid of one of your quirks, Young Midoriya. But don't worry about me. I knew I would have to transfer One for All before it was even given to me. It's the raison d'être of my quirk."

And once again, Izuku was in awe of All Might.

All Might drove him to Gran Torino's in an American car so high Izuku had to jump to get out of it. Gran Torino greeted him by calling him "Toshinori", he greeted All Might by nagging him about how he never called, and the three of them made their way to Gran Torino kitchen's table. It appeared that for Gran Torino, a war council was the study of several student files, surrounded by tayaki, ice cream, and tea.

All Might's present was also put to contribution : an enormous cake with raspberries and almond paste, probably more suited for a birthday than for one person.

So there was barely enough for the three of them, to All Might's amusement.
Hadou Nejire, Amajiki Tamaki and Togata Mirio were the candidates selected for One for All. UA's Big Three, and though Izuku knew of them, he had never met them and he simply couldn't pass the chance to study their quirks from their files. He has some quirk stalkish tendencies he couldn't quite refrain when the intel was in his reach.

Permeation, Wave Motion, and Manifest.

Their quirks weren't just great, they had also be honed by years of training to become something entirely different. Though, Togata Mirio was the one who had made the greatest progress, turning a dangerous quirk into something hero-worthy.

As he was reading the drawbacks, which were the inability to see, hear, and breathe, Izuku couldn't help being reminded of the Nectar Girl's quirk. At least, he had managed to breathe at the time, so if the experience had been scary, Togata must have had incredible mental fortitude to hone Permeation.

"They aren't bad but they are greener than leaf, Toshinori," Gran Torino said while giving a new slice of cake to Izuku. "Have you met any of them yet?"

"Not yet. I was planning to teach the Third Years, but Nedzu told me that for a neophyte like me, First Years would be complicated enough," All Might admitted.

Gran Torino laughed and All Might blushed.

The Third Years' loss and our win!

"Is One for All compatible with any quirks?" Izuku asked.

"It is," All Might answered. "One for All was at first intended as a quirk for a frail man in an era were quirks were rare, so now, anyone can be given my quirk. Apart from wanting to be a hero, there is no restrictions allowing us to limit the number of candidates, that's why I am thinking about making my choice among UA's best students."

"That's good."

It wasn't the case with the quirks hold by Transfer. Even Izuku himself had to make sure to activate Resistance when he used too much speed or strength, and it wasn't even talking about how most people couldn't deal with having more than one quirk.

"Well," Gran Torino interrupted, "There is still the chance your limbs will blow off if you take One for All."

"What?" Izuku screamed just as All Might was coughing a mouthful of blood.

"Don't listen to him! I didn't have any problem!"

"Maybe the next one won't be so lucky..." Gran Torino nagged on the tone of someone who was amused by the possibility.

The fact All Might was suddenly affirming that even though the first time was always the worst, it got better little by little wasn't reassuring, and Izuku, who didn't know any of the Big Three, could now perfectly picture them without limbs now that he had read their files.

"Okay, I am willing to give one Shock Absorption quirk to the cause!"
He couldn't believe he was actually saying that – and he actually regretted it as soon as he said it – but if his role in defeating All for One started with making sure the successor would have all their limbs where they were supposed to, he didn't have a choice.

The two adults paused. Looked at each other.

"Young Midoriya..." All Might started, moved. "Thank you so much, but that won't be necessary. One for All is enough on its own."

"Nothing like some bone breaking to forge character anyway," Gran Torino said and Izuku was almost certain he was serious.

"Please, teacher, stop worrying him. He doesn't realize you're joking."

"Am I?"

Whatever faces All Might and Izuku did at this moment, it made Gran Torino laugh in his tea.

"Honestly," Gran Torino continued a little more seriously, "I am more worried about our selling argument. I hope you have something better than : 'Would you be interested in a quirk that will draw a giant target on your back, with an immortal villain who has two centuries worth of quirks?', All Might."

All Might nodded. "It's hard to ask anyone to make such a great sacrifice."

When Izuku thought about All for One - and it made sure not to think about him too much - he just imagined this being with a multitude of quirks, older than Izuku could really comprehend. If Izuku's ability to stock quirks improved with age and training, he realized how far away he was to rival with someone like All Might's enemy.

And sometimes, when Izuku wasn't quick enough to kill the thought, he wondered if All for One was the reason why now, it was only Izuku and his mom.

"I suppose that the only thing you can do is to tell your successor about the risks so they can make their decisions with all the informations," Izuku simply said to All Might, who smiled at those words.

They both silently agreed that it would have been great if it wasn't necessary.

"What about you?" Gran Torino asked.

"What about me what?" Izuku asked back like the wordsmith that he was.

"Would you be interested in a quirk which is powerful but which will draw a target on your back?" Gran Torino asked with an odd intensity.

Young Midoriya thought about it while Toshinori was raising an eyebrow at his teacher, who suddenly pretended he was a senile old man.

And Young Midoriya started mumbling, lost in thoughts, and though Toshinori couldn't quite follow what he was saying, he could hear some words such as: "All Might's quirk... A quirk that
would boost all my quirks while giving me even more physical power... Even if there is drawbacks, I should have even Resistance to deal with it... Maybe... And that..."

That's it. Gran Torino broke Young Midoriya.

"It's okay," Toshinori assured with an amused smile, he couldn't help it.

But Young Midoriya wasn't done : "This is an incredible quirk and All Might’s so yes, I would love to have it as one of my own. But it's just that I don’t think I should have it."

He looked at his hand, slowly clenching his fist.

His eyes were almost shining but that had to be a trick of the light.

"After all, if I continue to accumulate quirks, I will one day rival with One for All itself. Maybe even with All Might," he added, making it clear he was thinking All Might was greater than One for All.

And at this moment, both men paused because in those shiny eyes and pensive expression, there was All for One. Analysing, confident, and someone who would one day rival with a quirk transferred over eight generations.

And then, Young Midoriya sneezed like a kitten, immediately cancelling the resemblance. Toshinori couldn’t help a smile as he was seeing his mentor blink furiously, trying to reconsider the brusque change of intensity.

"And I was already planning to fight All for One," Young Midoriya continued. "I really think if it's better to fight alongside All Might or One for All."

Toshinori realized he didn't want this boy to fight All for One. He never wanted the bastard to be aware of his existence.

But Young Midoriya already seemed to have taken his decision.

"What was that about?" Toshinori asked as soon as Young Midoriya was gone.

Gran Torino knew exactly what he was talking about but it didn't prevent him from feigning ignorance.

"What? I was just wondering! Hypothetically! If I can't ask questions anymore..."

Three days after the finals, Ochako was watching Midori like a hawks, ready to wrap him in a blanket as Bakugou was ready to arrive any moment from now on.

Midori had been down since he had been punched, despite what he dared to pretend, and at this point, Ochako was just mad, and she knew she wasn't the only one to be annoyed on Midori's
behalf. Other were just worried that they would start fighting.

So, when Bakugou arrived, no one expected Midori to barely look up his notebooks, dropped a sweet "Oh, hi, Kacchan, welcome back.", then to go back to what he was writing, not showing any reaction.

Everyone looked at each other. Even Bakugou looked taken aback.

*He wasn't depressed because of Bakugou?*

---

Finally, they were all going to Summer Camp, Aizawa-Sensei having lied again, and when the students growled about it, he promised to limit his logical ruses in the future.

But sadly, the remedial hell was here.

The condemned were Satou, Kaminari, Mina, and Kirishima.

And Kacchan.

---

So not only did Stain stole Tomura's credit even though he was the one who wreaked havoc in Hosu while the Hero Killer was busy being beaten by a brat, but now, Giran had brought him a psycho brat and a slightly scorched scarecrow -the latter not even hiding his scorn- while expecting him to integrate them to his league.

"Seeing you in the flesh... You're even creepier than in photo," the lanky bastard with patchwork skin who looked like a vampire who didn't apply sunscreen evenly one day and had a nasty surprise at noon, in clothes he might had stolen from a high school sized wannabe delinquent, dared to say.

"So you're the buddy of Stain-chan?" a brat with stars in her eyes asked, confirming Tomura's awful feeling that they were indeed Stain's fans.

*This is just getting better and better.*

He crushed the picture of the green brat he had been looking at before being so rudely interrupted.

Tomura politely asked Kurogiri to send them away because he already couldn't stand them. But of course, Kurogiri had to disagree, and Giran already started to sell them to Tomura, urging the two fools to introduce themselves.

"I am Toga. Himiko Toga," the serial killer exclaimed. "Life is too hard! I want to make a world that's easier to live in! So let me join you, Tomura!"

But Tomura really didn't want to...

"I wanna be Stain-chan! I wanna kill Stain-chan!" she added, blushing. "So, please, let me join you,
Tomura!

Tomura hadn't suspected it was possible for him to be even less convinced than before, but here they were.

And he wasn't the only one.

"I'm not sure about this," the other "recruit" sighed. "Is this group really dedicated to the cause? I mean, they are about to let this nutjob join up."

"The nutjob can introduce yourself, unlike you." Tomura snarked back. Not that he wanted to defend this one but the other was even more annoying. "If you're a proper adult, what about trying that?"

"I go by Dabi right now."

Crematorium.

"That's no good," Tomura sighed. He had no use for tacky aliases. "Your real name."

"You will know it when you need to. Anyway...

Not even able to give his real name...

Tomura looked at Kurogiri. They either leave or I clean the place.

"I will be the one to make the Hero Killer's will come true," Dabi continued.

Good for you. Now, fuck off.

But they didn't take the hint.

Tomura guessed they were going to make nice piles of dust, then.

On the day Izuku had to give Taser back, the class decided to celebrate Iida's return by going to the mall. They would prepare for the Summer Camp and eat together afterwards. Even if it hadn't been to celebrate Iida's official bedrest leave, Izuku would have still come. Any moment he could spend with his class was cherished.

But somehow, Izuku managed to find himself all alone as everyone, Uraraka included, was running around shopping.

Typical.

Not that he didn't have anything to do. He had seen some tee-shirts with funny messages and you could never have too many of those.

And he carefully ignored the Stain merchandise when he passed next to the store. He hoped Iida hadn't seen that.

Izuku and the rest of 1-A had been recognized as soon as they had entered the mall, and though the
green-haired-boy had thought about using Vanish, he couldn't quite forget what would happen tonight and how one of his quirks would be lost forever. Because of that, keeping Vanish up was a little too tiring, especially when Izuku could simply use the white hoodie he had brought.

It quickly appeared that it wasn't enough as someone else recognized him.

"Hey, you're the kid who destroyed the ring of the Sport Festival!" someone in a black hoodie called him.

Older than him, white hair escaping his hood, he approached quickly, and Izuku just let him, wondering how to react.

"And you were in Hosu and even manage to beat the Hero Killer," the stranger continued, placing an arm and too much on his weight on Izuku's shoulder.

It made him flinch because someone was touching and he wasn't a fan of that, but he didn't want to be rude but he also wanted space, so he froze, stuck between the hammer of courtesy and the anvil of disliking most physical contacts.

"How funny that we would meet again and here of all place. Maybe it's fate."

Izuku didn't understand who he was when he saw his face. He brutally realized who he was facing when the stranger with the scarred face and crazy eyes's hand grabbed him by the back of his neck, under his hood, with only four fingers.

Fuck.

"Let's get some tea and chat, Midoriya Izuku," Shigaraki Tomura grinned.

His hand was on Izuku's hoodie, so stealing the quirk was out of question. He needed a skin contact and a solid second.

He had seen Aizawa-Sensei's arm, he knew what would happen if five digits touched his skin. A part of him wondered if he could steal the quirk if he was fast enough.


Izuku could feel the grip on his neck.

"Easy now. You're going to act like we're old friends. Don't make a scene. Stay calm, breathe naturally. If you try anything, you will die. The second my five fingers touch you, your neck will crumble inwards," Shigaraki explained in an almost dreamy voice. "You're fast but not that fast."

If it had been a limb instead of the back of his neck, he would have tried. Losing some flesh would hurt like hell, but it was nothing compared to having his vertebra decayed. With the wrong timing, he would be dead, or at least paralysed and in a world of pain, in a matter of seconds.

Think. Stay alive.

Durability. It wouldn't protect him but it will allow him to gain time.

"What do you want to talk about?"

"Smart move," Shigaraki laughed.

They sat, but sadly, still in a crowded area. Shigaraki typed something on his phone quickly, but
when Izuku tried to sneak a look, the grip on his neck got stronger. *Okay, I understand. No lookie.*

Shigaraki didn't stop gripping so hard and put his phone back in his pocket.

"I pretty much hate everyone and everything, but right now, what really annoys me is the Hero Killer."

"Wasn't he working with you " Izuku asked, eager for more informations.

Because Shigaraki Tomura was connected to All for One. He had to be, or he wouldn't have access to noumu.

"I've never agreed to that, even this stupid society seems to think so. And that's my problem. Everyone got their eyes on the Hero Killer. Our attack on UA... The noumu I unleashed on Hosu. It's all been overshadowed by him. No one is noticing me. I wonder why. You fought the both of us, so tell me. What makes me different from the Hero Killer?"

It was a really good thing they were both looking ahead because Shigaraki could have seen the look of utter disbelief that passed on Izuku's face.

Back at the USJ, he had noticed that Shigaraki was odd, talking in gamer terms and not seeing anyone as actual people, but now, he was actually asking for advice to Izuku?

Shigaraki had seen someone he knew in the crowd, he had a problem, and he had decided to talk about it the same way Izuku would have talked with Nagisa about something bothering him. Not caring about details like he had almost killed him, how he was threatening to kill him.

*He doesn't know how to human. He probably doesn't have any real relationships so he took the occasion to talk to me because as an enemy, I must be one of the few people he has a connection to.*

This was both sad and terrifying. *What do you do to warp someone that much?*

Izuku answered carefully. He couldn't exactly tell Shigaraki how both villains were pretty annoying in his opinion.

"I don't understand you. I don't understand what you want. I don't understand why you do those things, or even if you have a goal. While I understand what Stain wants : a world with perfect heroes, all on All Might's level. Which is stupid, by the way, because All Might himself isn't perfect either, no one can, but there is an ideal here. He wasn't doing that for fun."

Shigaraki froze, something intense coming in waves from him. Before, he had seemed lost and pouting like a child who didn't have what he wanted. Now, it was... Izuku couldn't quite describe it but it felt like all his doubt had been swept away, leaving a focus not unlike Izuku's own quirk.

"I now understand..." Shigaraki realized just as Izuku was about to end the conversation. "Why the Hero Killer pisses me off so much... And why you're so damn irritating... It's all about All Might."

*That's... not what I said. And that's some serious mental leap.*

"That's the reason," Shigaraki said. "He is the reason why everyone can smile, because everyone think they will come save them. And that's what I have to focus on. Create a world without All Might. And cause enough destruction to show them all how fragile their justice really is. From this day forward… that’s my conviction. It’s all about All Might."

*I forgot he was crazy, Izuku realized.*
Shigaraki smiled at him, a sight that would haunt Izuku for the rest of his life.

"Thank you, Midoriya," he said, and he sounded almost sincere despite the painful iron grip still on the back of Izuku's neck.

"What does All for One want " Izuku asked before the villain had the time to go on a monologue or something.

"Who?" Shigaraki asked absentmindedly, frowning as if Izuku was annoying him. And as if he had no idea of who he was talking about.

Izuku sighed.

Taser.

For what would be the last time, Izuku was able to send electricity through someone and Shigaraki froze, all his muscles locked in a painful grip. Izuku knew from experience how it was impossible to move with so many volts passing through one's body, and he heard Shigaraki's pained gasp with a certain amount of satisfaction.

His hand was still holding Izuku so the teenage boy grabbed it behind him, maintaining the contact so Taser would keep making its wonders and the wrist -the sleeve, not the skin- he had just grabbed broke with an awfully loud noise.

Izuku finally got away from him, which proved to be a mistake.

Usually, people electrocuted tended to stay down. Izuku himself had taken five after he had happened to him. But as soon as Shigaraki wasn't in contact with Taser anymore, he managed to get back to his feet, with difficulty.

And before he did, he touched the ground, creating a hole in the floor.

People screamed, realizing a villain was here, and Shigaraki grinned as he was seeing all potential hostages or victims, and Izuku couldn't let that happen. He didn't even bridge the distance. He couldn't fix the mess he had created quickly. He needed to fix it now.

Shigaraki starting to move, his arm whipping and ready to grab a woman who was too stupefied to move. Because he wasn't afraid of create a carnage to get out of here.

So Izuku needed to make him more afraid of him.

Focus.

"You attacked my friends. My teachers. Your noumu almost killed me. Almost."

Shigaraki didn't move, all his attention focused on Izuku. He clearly wasn't understanding what was happening, but he didn't matter.

Because Izuku had his complete attention.

"And you, Shigaraki Tomura, are no noumu," he reminded him.

Izuku took one step.

Shigaraki ran, in pure panic. He didn't try to use someone to cover his escape. He couldn't. Because Izuku would be just behind him.
If you slow down, I will catch you. If you even think about hurting one of them, I will kill you.

Izuku jumped over the ditch Shigaraki had created -fortunately, they were on the first floor-, and ran as fast as he could, which meant not much because there was a ton of people in his way. Thankfully, Shigaraki had heard his silent warning and didn't aim for collateral damages.

If he did... Consequences would be damned.

Just as Izuku manage to catch up to him, his hand on the black hood and already ready to throw the Decay holder to the ground, he sensed a quirk activation, but Shigaraki wasn't touching anything so it couldn't be him.

Black mist engulfed the villain and Izuku's whole arm. Cold and ethereal, it spread on Izuku's skin, trying to take him too, and he jumped back before it could spread to the rest of him.

The portal disappeared, taking Shigaraki with it and leaving Izuku standing with nothing to show for all the risks he had taken.

That's why he used his phone earlier. He asked Kurogiri to come as back-up.

Damn it.

"MIDORI?" someone screamed from upstairs.

Izuku looked up to see Uraraka, Ashido, Iida, and Kaminari, their eyes wide, and an expression on their face that looked like they were collectively taking the decision of never leaving him unattended again.

Mamoru's heart was beating loudly in his ears, but despite that, he could still here the noise of the crowd, even if he had taken refuge in a deserted alley.

His hands were trembling where he retrieved the gas mask from his schoolbag. Slowly, he put it on.

Showtime.

Chapter End Notes

I have to prepare for my finals, so I have no idea when I will post the next chapter.

Thank you for all your comments last chapter.

Also, Izuku sneezing like a kitten was inspired/a homage to what a reader said, but I didn't manage to find it again, so please, remind yourself to me so I can put your name
in the notes.
Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: what is basically a terrorist attack and all the aftermaths. I don't go into graphic details but if you're not feeling it, feel free to skip the chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

People saw Mamoru coming but it was too late.

The dark purple gas spread from him, in every direction at once, potent and stronger than it had ever been. Making its way through the place, enveloping people in its nectar-fueled embrace.

Mamoru could feel all of them inside his mist, some of them panicking and running around, other freezing where they was, and some continuing what they were doing, unaware of what was about to happen to them. Some even started filming him, and he let them, a rush of emotions making his head light and making feel more alive than he had ever been.

And soon, they dropped. One by one.

Inko was muffling a yawn, walking home from an extenuating day when she had dealt with the hell of bureaucracy, when she saw something in the air and quickly tracked it down to a middle school student.

She blinked, wasting a fraction of second.

And then she ran. She ran so fast and so hard her feet started to hurt as they hit the pavement, searching for some place safe.

The apartment would be safe but was too far. The agency where she worked had had an isolation problem for two weeks now and it would be impossible to keep the place airtight. She was about to attempt to outrun something that could be poison gas when her eyes paused on a real door, and she almost rammed through it, startling the customer of the vintage library inside.

"Villain attack! Gas! I need duct tape or fabric!"

Nobody moved, still trying to understand what was going on, their brain frozen because of the multitude of possibilities, of choices, of ways to react, and instead of choosing one, they were freezing.

Inko didn't have time for this.

"Now!" she barked, already yanking the scarf from around a woman's neck.
Everyone sprang into action, relieved to have someone who knew what she was doing. They didn't need to know that Inko was terrified. All they needed to know was that every opening had to be closed and sealed just in case.

At least, Izuku wasn't here. He had to go to Furano to give back a quirk, so he wouldn't approach this zone until the heroes arrived.

Now, they just had to arrive in time.

---

Tsukauchi-san wasn't especially amused to see Izuku again, and the teenage boy was squirming on his seat, uncomfortable because he had used his quirk(s) in public and hadn't even managed to catch Shigaraki.

Although, officially, he had just ran after him. Pushed him away, maybe, in panic. His speed had been limited by the crowd at the time, so it was perfectly possible and Izuku was ready to take advantage of it.

There was a reason why he had so many enhancer and invisible quirks.

Tsukauchi-san himself shot him a look of quiet disapprobation, clearly knowing the truth, but he was more interested in what had happened.

Apart from that, Izuku told him everything. How Shigaraki had found him, how it seemed to be a coincidence. He repeated the conversation almost word for word, and answered as truthfully as possible when the detective asked him for precisions, interested in everything, to Shigaraki’s motives, leaps of logics, and so on. He seemed especially interested when Izuku told him Shigaraki had planned for a way out as soon as they had started talking.

There was one thing Izuku didn't mention: how Shigaraki Tomura had not reacted to the All for One name.

Because even though All Might had told him Tsukauchi-san knew about One for All, he wasn't sure he knew everything, and it wasn't his secret to tell. He would just have to confirm that with All Might.

The discussion was interrupted by the beeping of their two phones, which had been placed on the table because they were both dependent on them, and that's how Izuku learned about a massive villain attack.

About how heroes couldn't approach.

And of where it was.

He looked up to see Tsukauchi-san, barely reacting, no, compelling himself to stay calm and in control, but his eyes couldn't lie. They showed the strain.

"It's... It's right in our neighborhood," Izuku heard himself say.

Tsukauchi-san said something back. Izuku didn't hear him. Instead, he called his mom. Once. Twice.
He didn’t call a third time.

*Speed.*

All of them.

"Midoriya!" Tsukauchi-san called.

He didn’t stop. He couldn’t. He ran and no one managed to stop him, found a window, climbed out, and exited into the streets.

His heart was beating so loud in his ears, and there was a taste of iron on his tongue.

He had forgotten. He had forgotten what it was like to be that scared.

He passed by the roofs. Reached downtown without being seen, but even if pro heroes had noticed him, he wouldn’t have stopped for anyone.

He tried to go to the apartment but it was in the zone contaminated by the fog. With Zoom, he managed to see forms inside the purple mist, most of them limp, but there were people in spacesuit or whatever already evacuating the fallen.

Izuku had no quirk to go in there. No breath-holding quirk. No poison immunity quirk.

His mom still wasn’t answering.

Then, Izuku tried to go to their apartment. Back home.

And discovered it was also in the zone affected by the villain attack. Of course. His mom liked how she could go to work on foot, so it made sense.

At this point, Izuku was breathing so loudly it was the only thing he could hear.

So he waited. Sometimes among the crowd of terrified people who couldn’t go home, or who were waiting for their loved ones to pick up the phones. Sometimes, back on the roof, away from everything as the wind was chilling him to the bone but he didn’t care. He just wanted his mom to pick up the phone.

All Might tried to call him. So did his classmates, everyone asking if everyone was alright.

Even Aizawa-Sensei left a message.

And at some point, it stopped. Everything was saturated, and no cell phones could pass because everyone in the zone must have been trying to call their loved ones.

Izuku went back into the crowd. Let his ears pick up any conversations, any news, and instead, he
got only hopes and fears.

And then, he realized videos had dropped. The villain who had done that had been recorded by several phone cameras, and Izuku watched everyone of them. It was awfully blurry but he took note of the middle school student uniform. Of the boy's height compared to the building and other geographical marks Izuku was familiar with because he lived there.

Of his quirk. Purple gas, not unlike Midnight's, but the color was different, and so were the effects.

Izuku studied everything because not doing anything was eating him alive.

Then, the word spread about the government putting a list of who had been retrieved from inside the fog. The site was also saturated, but Izuku persevered until he was able to check the list. Refreshing it again and again to know who had been evacuated.

Until he found his mom's name.

Some people hated hospitals but Izuku had never been one of them. It was just a place. If something bad happened there, it was because of the accidents, of the diseases, and in this case, because of the villains, who had send people here, not because of the hospital in itself.

He had cried when he had arrived. He had just confirmed that his mom was indeed here, and tears had started to flow because now, he had found her. It was like he was lost in the fog and he couldn't see anything beyond the next step.

And now, he needed to wait to access the step after that.

And this waiting devoured him from the inside, emptiness spreading through him. Technically, it shouldn't have been different from when he had waited to know if his mom had been inside the fog. But now, it was real. Now, the answer to his questions was close.

Either she would be alright. Either she wouldn't.

I can't lose someone else.

If he could have used Vanish, he would have. But he was exhausted, scared, angry. Instead, he waited among the crowd of terrified people, standing because he had left his chair to someone who really needed it and he had a stamina quirk that would allow him to wait as long as necessary.

It's my mom and I. We are here because we can count on each other.

Nurses asked him questions about his mom. Were nice to him. Other people tried to comfort him despite their own pain, despite their own fear. He answered on auto pilot, almost annoyed by their interruptions. He aspired to oblivion, and every time someone was concerned for him, he was pulled back to this horrible reality when he risked being all alone.

What if she...

This thought circled around in his mind again and again, but he never let himself finish it.

Finally, someone told them what the hell was going on. By that time, Izuku was only standing
because he was inside his hoard, surrounded by the golden warmth of his quirks.

*Stabilized.*

*Coma-like symptoms.*

*Wait.*

Izuku was starting to hate that word.

---

In her hospital bed, in the empty white room, Izuku's mom didn't look like she was sleeping. She was pale, looked tired even though she was unconscious. She looked so fragile Izuku didn't dare to touch her for too long. Sometimes, he held his hand, trying to warm it up. Most of the time, he was curled up on the chair, using *Stamina* so he would stay awake despite the emotional exhaustion. He knew this wasn't good and that it would mess with his ability to stay aware of his surroundings, but he needed to keep an eye on her.

He *needed* it because he couldn't quite get free of this feeling that if he looked away, she would disappear.

That's how he missed someone entering in the hospital room. He actually vaguely registered the sound of steps coming this way, but it's when the shadow of the newcomer touched him that he actually looked up. And then, kept looking up because of the height.

*What are you doing here?* he wanted to ask but he didn't manage too. Too tired.

A solid hand touched his shoulder, anchoring him to reality.

"Young Midoriya," All Might said, an incredible sadness following the hero, "I am so sorry."

He hugged him carefully, as if he was afraid Izuku was going to break.

Izuku allowed himself to lean into the embrace.

He didn't make a sound as he wept.

When he was done crying, he felt better, like always. Crying always made him feel better and he was too tired to be embarrassed about doing it on public.

"If there is anything I can do, tell me," All Might said.

Izuku closed his eyes, so tired but calmer than before.

The medical bills wouldn't be a problem. They had money, and his mom had made sure Izuku could have access to everything.

Asking about the villain... wouldn't be wise.

It only left one thing, but he hesitated.

All Might saw it. "Anything," he repeated.
Other people still need help.

"If you see a camera somewhere, can you say how this isn’t about a villainous quirk but about an individual? It would really help."

All Might didn't want him to stay alone but Izuku convinced him, explaining him that he wanted to stay with his mom.

To have no fear, for it would be fine.

And as soon as he left, he activated all his quirks.

Nemuri felt the vice of animosity closing in as soon as the news of the gas attack spread.

She had forgotten what it felt like. To see a villain with a similar quirk hurting people, so other people starting to see everyone with the same quirk as a threat. No doubt that in a few hours, the resentment against anyone with an ill-omened quirk would peak.

Also on the backseat of the car driving them to their destination, Yamada touched her shoulder, drawing her attention, and he showed her his phone. On the screen, a video of All Might who had appeared in some journalists' reach, to their delight.

"... What happened today was a tragedy, and my heart goes to the victims and their family. But we must remember that this is not the act of a quirk, but of an individual who wanted to hurt people. We can't let him divide us and fall into resentment. We stand together and no one can be left behind."

It was the first time All Might had ever say something about an on-going case.

Does he realize what he just did?

People would listen to him. They had to, he was the Symbol of peace. And maybe, just maybe, people with similar quirks wouldn't be looked at with open distrust and scorn.

Yamada smiled to her without saying a thing and she bumped shoulder with him, silently thanking him.

Then, Yamada, Nemuri, and Kamui Wood, arrived to an unassuming house in a quiet neighborhood, their gas mask already on, and Kamui Woods was kind enough to immediately kick the door for them, making a woman older than scream. She had the same gray's hair as her son.

Because honestly, between the quirk, the age, and the uniform, it was a wonder Watanabe Mamoru hadn't just screamed his name and address for everyone to hear.

"Hello," Midnight asked, anger piercing into her voice despite how she knew she had to show nothing but calm, "is Mamoru home?"
Nagisa was a selfish woman, for the first thing she did when she heard a massive attack was to hope that the villain wasn't someone whose quirk would be traditionally associated with villainy. That was the first thing, the first worry that passed through her mind.

Then it had hit her.

She had called everyone she knew. Every member of her family. Her classmates. Midoriya. And the bug was the one who hadn't answered. The one she couldn't track down because she had helped him obtain phones that couldn't be found, even by her.

As soon as she saw the name of Midoriya Inko, she got out and drove, but even there, she didn't find him.

So when he knocked on her door a few hours later, his eyes empty, she didn't know if she wanted to strangle him with her bare hands for worrying her or hug him, wrap him into the softest blanket she had, and tell him everything would be alright.

Instead, she invited him, guiding him through the house without touching him. She was under the impression that startling him would be a bad idea. He was giving off the impression of a bare blade : she would cut herself if she touched him without care and he would get damaged if he kept himself in this state for too long.

She was also certain he was using several quirks just to keep standing.

"They know who he is," Midoriya said without looking at her. He sounded so tired. "He is younger than me. A kid who loves Stain and who took the risk of overdosing on Nectar to make his quirk more powerful. Deadly."

She knew that. But she wanted him talking. She wanted him to show something that looked like an emotion because if he kept holding everything in, it would devour him from the inside.

"Did you look for him?" she asked.

He nodded.

"Why?"

If it had been one of her cousins or any members of her family, she would have snapped this bastard's scrawny neck, so nothing he could say would shock her.

"To throw him in the first secured laboratory I would find. He has the quirk responsible of putting all those people into a coma. They need to study it to find an antidote and since he probably half overdosed on Nectar, it's a different quirk than the members of his family. He needs to be found for my mom to be healed quickly."

It wasn't being good or bad. It was Midoriya being coldly efficient. He had a problem, and he needed to take the steps to solve it.

"And how are you right now?"

Stupefaction flashed in his eyes. Finally.
"You want to know how I am? Really?" he asked, not mean in any way, but dangerously calm.

"Tell me."

Midoriya exploded. Nagisa wasn't scared in any way, but the brutal change from the quiet and tired boy to someone far more angry, far more dangerous, startled her.

"How dare he? And how dare they?" he snarled, never raising his voice, but his eyes were shining with something that looked like wrath. The kind born from something so unfair there was no real outlet. "He wasn't influenced. He wasn't brainwashed. He woke up one morning and decided to hurt people. And now, do you think people will blame him? Do you even think they will blame Stain? They will blame people with ominous quirks as if every quirks weren't capable of hurting someone!"

Nagisa killed the very same fear that had been blooming inside her all day. She couldn't let herself contaminate her with her own worries, no matter how true they were.

"I mean, about your mom..." she corrected herself.

And just like this, the anger was gone again. And Midoriya's sad smile was the most heartwrenching thing Nagisa had ever witnessed.

"It's not like I can do anything. Actually, it's not like anyone can do anything. She might die in a hospital bed..."

Midoriya's voice broke, but he was too worked up to stop.

"... If not, I don't know when she will wake up. I don't know if she will wake up. A normal healing quirk won't work, because this is poison, and she is too weak so bear the strain on the Healing quirk she would need. All because some bastard decided to wake up society, and now, my mom is gone too."

He paused, shivering. He might not even realize it.

"I don't want to be alone," he finally admitted.

Nagisa rose. She approached, starting to raise her arms, silently asking for the permission, and when he didn't react, she hugged him carefully, letting him the possibility to quietly refuse.

He didn't, and his own arms wrapped around Nagisa, his hands resting on his back, so she hugged him tighter.

"You're not alone, bug. Not anymore. You have friends. You have me. I won't let you fall."

---

Watanabe Mamoru, nicknamed Mustard, hadn't been found yet, but he would be. The whole country was looking for him, his family was being interrogated right now, and the police and the heroes were working together to find him.

Now, Toshinori had to deal with the aftermaths.

Aizawa-kun and him were in Nedzu's office, trying to deal with everything what happened today.
All of the three men were feeling the weight of what had happened. If Toshinori had been here, or even Aizawa-kun, this tragedy could have been avoided.

The peace Toshinori had worked for was starting to crackle. He needed to do more.

"I underestimated the problem of the nectar," Nedzu admitted, holding his cup of tea without drinking it. "A drug that can power up any quirk and with no side effects at the time... I hope none of the hero students are using it."

"Some must," Aizawa-kun intervened. It's even possible some of our own use it. Hero schools were never easy, and that was before the villains started targeting our students."

The mere thought was chilling Toshinori to the bones. He couldn't quite believe their students would count on such dangerous products to walk down the path of heroism. They were all good and smart kids.

But Aizawa-kun had a point of how the USJ attacks had weakened the trust of the nation in UA. And the students were amidst it, 1-A having even witnessed the killing intent of several villains.

"Even today," Nedzu sighed, "Midoriya-kun was approached by Shigaraki Tomura. Thankfully, no one was hurt but this could have led to a catastrophe."

All Might had a clear picture of what would have happened if Young Midoriya had tried to apprehend Shigaraki with the same power he had showed against All Might. Or more specifically, a clear image of what would have happened to the people around them and to the mall in itself.

It's probably a good thing he didn't manage to catch him.

"Did he use his quirk?" Aizawa-kun asked.

He did. Toshinori didn't even ask him but he knew the boy and he knew several quirks must have been involved.

"The police said that he didn't," Toshinori answered carefully.

Unfortunately, the Eraser hero saw straight through his misdirection.

"Midoriya already showed at the USJ and at Hosu that he wasn't afraid to use his quirk without permission, so they're probably covering themselves."

_As long as Young Midoriya isn't punished for using his quirk in self-defense..._

"What's important is that his mother is a victim of the attack," Toshinori reminded them, "and he can't return to his home as long as it's not decontaminated."

The authorities had quarantined the zone and were studying the remains of the gas, having already confirmed that it was still toxic, and no one was left in until it lost its potency. They thought it would take a day or two, and because of that, the town had created zone to welcome people who couldn't go home.

Aizawa-kun glared at him. Or simply stared. It was hard to differentiate his expressions.

"You left him alone at the hospital?" the teacher almost growled.

… _It was a glare._
"He didn't want me there. Young Midoriya... He can be someone extremely private."

Which was quite the understatement. If Young Midoriya had been happy to see him at first, he had quickly chased him out. His pain wasn't something he was willing to share and Toshinori had preferred leaving him a couple hours to breathe for the time being.

Aizawa-kun nodded. He didn't like it but he understood. "Tsk. I can take him in."

"But there isn't enough place in your apartment," Nedzu reminded him.

"Hizashi can sleep on the balcony," the Erasure hero declared without even hesitating, while Toshinori was furiously thinking.

*I can take Young Midoriya in. I have the space.*

"Fortunately," Nedzu intervened before Toshinori had the time to talk and before Aizawa-kun had the time to kick out Mic from his own room, "in all my years of leading this school, I have mastered the fine art of shoving misplaced students in the home of family who have the means to take care of them. I already called someone."

Like when Young Uraraka had been attacked. She was now slowly but steadily being adopted into the Yaoyorozu family, and Toshinori wondered if Nedzu had planned to place Young Midoriya there. It might be better for him to have more people to lean in, and parents had to know how to take care of children, unlike the Symbol of Peace who wasn't quite sure of how to keep them alive.

Someone knocked on the door.

Toshinori activated One for All so fast he almost got whiplash and Aizawa-kun grabbed a file and waved it around to get rid of the steam provoked by the transformation.

"Come in!"

Someone almost as tall as Toshinori made his way in Nedzu's office.

He was covered in flames.

"What did you want to tell me?" Endeavor asked. "Is it about Shouto?"

Aizawa-kun and Toshinori shared an uncertain look.

Izuku was taking an accidental quick nap on Nagisa's couch when someone calling yanked him away from his slumber. He tried to sit, realized that several blankets had appeared on him, as if someone had been trying to trap him into a cocoon. Since Nagisa was wearing her innocent face, he could guess who.

The teenager managed to fish out his phone from the maelstrom of blankets and pillows, only to see that All Might was calling, probably worried that he had decided to sleep on the floor of the hospital room. Izuku took the call and was about to tell him he had a friend who was willing not to let him sleep under a bridge when All Might got his attention.

About Nedzu making arrangements so he could live in a classmate's house. Well, into a classmate's
"Endeavor ?" he repeated.

Like the Hero who investigated on the Nectar supply. The Number 2 hero who would probably be charged of the investigation.

The one who could lead him to whoever had committed this attack.

"But I am perfectly willing to..." All Might tried to say, but Izuku had already made up his mind.

“That seems like a great idea. Do you have his number? I have to thank him for his generosity.’’

Mamoru couldn't breathe and he couldn't even scream because when he had been hiding at a friend's vacation house, the man who had found him and who was currently dragging him by the hair, had smashed his head against a wall and broken his jaw.

He had tried to beg for mercy. Tried to explain he was just a kid who had made a mistake. One look from the masked man in a suit had stopped him dead, as he understood that drawing his attention, more than necessary, meant more agony to come.

It didn't prevent him to try to fight back. He couldn't help it as he was dragged on the floor of a place he didn't recognize, vats and strange forms inside them, a smell like a hospital. His quirk, polished by Nectar, refused to work. The hold on him, only fingers in his hair, refused to be broken despite all the teenager's squirming.

Until he was dropped on the ground, and he curled into a ball, desperately trying not to move. Trying not to be seen because he knew that whoever had found him, it wasn't someone who would abide by the rules of civilization.

"What a lively specimen!" someone old said.

Mamoru opened an eye, terrified. A short bald man with glasses and wearing a white lab coat was looking at the villain without daring to say a word. There was something on his lap, like the most deformed black cat ever known to men.

The man in a suit didn't answer. He walked to the giant vat, his fingers changing because of his quirk, long black tendrils reaching inside and pulling something up. Mamoru's eyes was too blurry to exactly see what it was, but the man wearing a helmet touched it before dropping it down. It made a splashing noise.

"Work on this," the man said, his voice chilling Mamoru to the bone. It was the first time he heard it, having been beaten in a perfect silence, but there was nothing in it. No warmth, no anger, no indication that it belonged to a human being. "I want an antidote as soon as possible."

"Of course, milord."

The villain, who seemed even bigger than before, reported his attention on Mamoru. Black tendrils wrapped themselves, pressing painfully into his flesh and a second later, his broken face was pressed against the vat of one the vats, making him weep in pain.
"Now, no need to be afraid, Mustard-kun. After all, soon enough, all of them will be your siblings."

The fingers in his hair tightened, the order clear.

*Look.*

So Mamoru obeyed. He saw what was inside. And even if there was nothing wrong with his eyes, the thing was so alien and so strange that his brain could only analyse it in flashes, selecting details to analyse them but unable to comprehend the whole thing.

*Black bruised skin. Rippling muscles. Exposed brain. And suddenly, it opened golden eyes.*

The thing inside the vat screamed, but the sound was muffled by the liquid in which it was trapped, bubbles forming.

When Mamoru followed its example, he didn't have this handicap.

---

Chapter End Notes

I want to thank Proclaimerofheroes who asked for angst back in the early chapters, and who cemented my decision to go through all this.

*Goes and hides under a rock.*
Izuku woke up early -which was already an abomination in itself- and completely disoriented. He didn't recognize where he was, his bed was weird, and everything was weird and not his, but it wasn't so bad at first.

Not until reality hit him without mercy, shattering his disoriented peace.

Izuku wasn't recognizing anything because he wasn't home. He was at Todoroki's. In a Japanese-style house, on a king sized bed too soft for his taste, because his own home was still being decontaminated since no one was really sure of the effect of the quirk powered by an absurd dose of nectar, and his mom was in a hospital bed.

*All those quirks and you can't even protect the people you love.*

Slowly, he realized that what had woken him up was the use of a quirk. A powerful one. Further down, away from him but still in the house.

He closed his eyes, spreading his strange sixth sense to make sure it was only one quirk. Probably Endeavor's and there was only one, so Todoroki hadn't been roped into an early training.

Knowing this allowed Izuku to lie down again. He knew he wouldn't be able to sleep. Despite how tired he still was, there was too much worry in his mind, too much of everything, really, but maybe his eyes would stop burning if he simply closed them.

Just for a second.

Shouto had always been an early riser and this morning was no exception. He trained outside for two hours, not using his quirk. The familiar movements were almost soothing, grounding him until he reached a peace born from habit and concentration.

Finally, he stopped, calling some ice to cool down, and went back to the house. He kicked his shoes at the usual place, by the door.

And then, he noticed a familiar pair of red sneakers.

Shouto pondered, not sure of what was happening. He placed his own foot next to the sneaker, noticing it was the same size, so it couldn't be one of Natsuo's.

For a moment, he entertained one strange thought, but he realized that it was absolutely impossible.

But still, he looked for Fuyumi. He found his sister in the kitchen, eating her breakfast while reading something on her phone.
"Shouto? Do you want some breakfast?"

'No, I... If there someone else in the house?'

Fuyumi looked at him strangely. "Dad didn't tell you?" she asked, putting her chopstick down. "You were already sleeping last night, but I thought he would since you both wake up so early."

Of course not. My schedule was expertly crafted to avoid this old bastard, Nee-san.

"Didn't tell me what?" Shouto asked instead.

Three minutes later, Shouto was carefully opening a bedroom that hadn't been used in years. There was a lifeless form on the bed, under a blue blanket, with a mop of green hair on the pillow.

Something moved from under the blanket, and honestly, if Fuyumi hadn't told Shouto that Midoriya had arrived late this night because his home had been in the middle of the gas attack, Shouto would have started to worry that some strange caterpillar had mutated into this abandoned room.

Instead, an arm appeared, fist clenched except for the thumb up. Then, Midoriya let his arm fall back on the bed and curled up even more on himself.

Shouto silently closed the door.

Izuku didn't get up because he had enough sleep, but because he needed to move. He had a thousands things to do, a thousands more things to plot, and right now, he was wearing the clothes he had on his back when he had arrived during the night. He still remembered the weight of Endeavor's hand on his shoulder as he guided him through the house, and the voice of Todoroki Fuyumi right after he had passed out on the bed, too exhausted to do anything else than saying thank you and calling it a day.

A horrible, stressful, and soul-eating day.

Two people had entered the room while he was asleep. He was almost certain one had been Todoroki. The other, his sister, and she was probably responsible for the clean clothes on the desk.

It was thoughtful because Izuku couldn't access his apartment, his possessions, and had nothing except what had been in his backpack at the time of the attack.

He dragged himself to the bathroom, took a burning hot shower, and he thought about using Stamina to replace his coffee today. He was just eager to use quirks, to be soothed by their influence, but ultimately, Stamina was a bad idea. The quirk was between the pure essence of caffeine and a shot of adrenaline, but once he stopped using it, he would crash down, so it wasn't worth it.

Once he was dressed, he took a moment to compose himself.

He looked in the mirror, taking in everything he was showing to the world. Noting everything that he didn't want people to see.

He erased the pain, replacing it by a smile who reached his eyes. Anyone thinking eyes couldn't lie
just wasn't trying hard enough.

He couldn't do much about the dark circles under his eyes, but he reached for his quirks. One by one, all of them, shiny beacon of lights inside him, and knowing they were here brought a measure of peace. Just enough to summon some optimism.

As for the rest, he locked that behind a door.

And once he was ready, he paid attention to where he was, examining his new environment.

This was an... extremely western room in a very Japanese house. And something else was drawing his attention now that he was calm enough to notice it.

The room Izuku was occupying had the furniture strangely arranged.

The bed wasn't perpendicular to the walls, the desk wasn't against a wall, and the wardrobe and the library seemed to have been placed randomly in the room.

Izuku considered feng shui for half a second, but then, remembered his first official quirk, so he pushed every bit of furniture to find out what was underneath.

He wasn't surprised when he found scorch marks. The wood under the library, in particular, had all but disappeared and there was still some ash left. There was also an extinguisher half empty under the bed, and that was almost a relief.

Well, whoever was here before, he has a fire quirk.

Midoriya appeared in the kitchen without a sound and made a beeline for the coffee machine, only used by Fuyumi. He greeted Shouto with a nod, but didn't say a word until he had downed his tiny cup. Shouto wondered if he realized it was an Espresso, something only Fuyumi drank in this house, so it was stronger than common coffee.

Since his eyes widened and he gave the cup a nod of respect before taking another one, he was probably appreciating the near heart attack Fuyumi's coffee gave.

For a moment, Shouto had no idea of what to say. More precisely, Midoriya wasn't giving him any possibilities to say anything, acting like it was completely normal for him to be here. Even Iida hadn't pretended that much when his brother had been hurt.

So Shouto still tried to reach his friend: "I heard about your mom." Not from you.

Midoriya nodded.

"She is asleep for now. They are trying to counter Mustard's poison but they need time, so all I can do is wait."

Asking him if he was okay would be stupid.

"I have something to do today," Midoriya continued. "Then, I have to go to the hospital to take care of... everything."
Something to do sounded ominous, and Shouto could suddenly perfectly remember Iida being stabbed by Stain. I have to keep an eye on him.

"What do you have to do?" Shouto asked when he really wanted to ask if he was planning to track down Mustard.

"Visiting a friend," Izuku explained, and something breached his mask, something that looked like annoyance. "I was supposed to see him yesterday, and now, I just want to get that behind me."

It looked ticked off enough for Shouto to believe it has nothing to do with the villain. He trusted Midoriya to hide his true intentions if he ever planned some vigilantism, but that still didn't take care of the invisible wall between them.

*What would a good friend do?*

Shouto had no idea. He never had friends before. But he could try.

"About your mom... Do you want to talk about it?"

Midoriya looked at him, surprise and something as cold as when he had fought Shouto during the Sport Festival shined in his eyes.

"Why would I want that?" his friend smiled.

Shouto realized that Midoriya was right there but he had no idea of how to reach him.

Jin was nervous as he was waiting in the middle of the crowded market, and not only because Akatani Mikumo had delayed their meeting by a day. To be honest, this unease had started the day after he had abandoned his quirk.

Not that this quirk was needed. A quirk that was never used. A quirk that was going out of control in his old days. Being found by this strange boy, this powerful and kind young man who wanted to be a hero and who had appeared in his life like something born from a fairy tale... it had been a wonderful opportunity that directly benefited him.

Jin was aware of it. He was aware that since he had given his quirk away, he didn't have any misfire, his life was easier, and no doubt that Akatani was actually using it instead of letting it wither because of the anti quirk law.

And yet, he was feeling incomplete. The sparks weren't answering to him anymore, something that had always belonged to him was gone, and despite all logic, he couldn't forget it.

So he had called Akatani.

And now, he was waiting in rush hour in the middle of the market, and no one cared about an old gentleman, so he was pushed around and there were moments where he regretted not having a cane with him. Maybe people would think before bumping into him if he had a way to retaliate.

*Another reason why my quirk would be useful*, he thought with a smile.

Not that he would do it, but the thought was entertaining.
At some point, he admitted what he had actually realized when he had contacted the boy: he wasn't getting his quirk back. A choice was a choice.

And that when he was leaving that he received the message.

\[ \text{Akatani Mikumo : [It's done.]} \]

The old man looked at the screen, not understanding.

Raised his hand.

And sparks of lighting appeared on his fingers.

Jin gulped down, realizing that among all those people who had bumped into him since he had arrived, one of them had left him a gift.

Without being seen or noticed.

---

As Izuku was leaving the market he had specifically chosen for the crowd, the same way the mall had been bonded and allowed Shigaraki to approach him undetected, he was feeling the emptiness - where Taser should have been - clawing at him.

Deep breath. In and out.

Giving a quirk back was never painful, but right now, his mind couldn't keep itself from coming back to the empty spot again and again. It was just gone, missing, and he wasn't liking it. At all.

He kept breathing, but by his mouth, not feeling well. It was like there wasn't enough air around.

Think about all the cool quirks you still have.

Izuku dragged himself to the first isolated alley he could find, hidden behind the dumpsters that would keep curious people and good Samaritans away, and he sat, his back against the wall.

He stopped trying to count his quirks, because he was always coming back to this empty spot. No matter how many quirks he still had, Taser had left a hole more important than the rest of his treasures.

Remember how you survived all your previous fights because you had the ability to electrocute anyone getting too close?

He was gasping for air, but he couldn't hear it because of the drums resonating inside him, his heart trying to painfully escape his chest.

It had never been so bad before. Not even close. Izuku knew this was because of the stress, knew that it was because he was mentally in a bad place.

But it didn't matter.

Anyone can touch you. You're vulnerable.
Izuku would be fine.

He just needed to breathe.

When Izuku returned to Endeavor's house, Todoroki almost jumped out of his skin when the green-haired-boy entered his room. He might have been using Silencer.

He was actually using a lot of quirks he didn't really need to, but he didn't care.

Izuku made sure his friend wasn't about to have a heart attack, but the pro hero egg was holding on.

"Do you... Do you want to watch a movie?" he asked Todoroki.

By that, he meant: I need company and distraction but also to keep all my emotions right here, and then I will die.

Todoroki stared at him for a moment without blinking. Izuku had no idea of what he was thinking.

"Sure," he finally said.

Izuku appreciated the fact he didn't ask questions.

"So, you don't want anyone to know you're living with me for now?" Todoroki asked Izuku as they were riding the train to UA.

Aizawa-Sensei had called everyone for an emergency meeting, and if Izuku had been a betting man, he would have said the summer camp was cancelled. It made sense since between villain attacks and All Might's declining health, UA wouldn't be incline to take the risk.

"Exactly," Izuku answered. "They don't need to know."

Todoroki raised an eyebrow at him. The red one. "Would you have told me?"

Izuku hesitated, because he knew what Todoroki wanted to hear. But he chose to say the truth.

"No, I wouldn't have."

The air around them got colder and it wasn't because of a quirk.

"Oh, yes," Todoroki mocked, sarcasm dripping from every word, "I now remember how you said to Iida to deal with his grief on his own and to keep everyone out..."

"There is no grief. My mother isn't dead."

Todoroki froze, realizing what he had said. A slip of the tongue, nothing grave, but for a moment, it pissed off Izuku so much that he could feel the rage burning within his chest.
He smothered it with a thought. He was getting better and better at that.

"I am tired, Todoroki. Really tired. It's not that I don't want to worry them or even you. Trust me, I am not trying to protect you," he smiled, and the very expression was broken. "It's just that I have no energy to spare, and I would worry about you, about how you see me. And I can't deal with that right now."

Thankfully, his honesty seemed to convince Todoroki.

"Fine. But since I know... Don't hesitate to lean on me."

Izuku only smiled, but this time, it was real.

The two boys arrived last to the class meeting in UA. Every student was wearing civilian clothes, so Izuku's lack of uniform wasn't a problem, but Uraraka still raised an eyebrow at the clothes that were slightly too big for him. Only slightly because he had raided Todoroki's closet, and not the one in his borrowed room.

Tomorrow. Tomorrow, I can go back home.

To a place he knew. To a place where he wouldn't have to pretend.

Despite what he had hoped, his friends immediately noticed something was amiss, but thankfully, Aizawa-Sensei was already here. Also in civilian clothes, jeans and black shirt, his eyes red because of the lack of sleep, it was clear he didn't want to waste time.

"You all know what happened at Mustafu two days ago. This was the result of a villain who risked overdosing on a new drug called Nectar in order to make his quirk more powerful. We know that this drug is used by young people who wants a stronger quirk, and it affects several hero schools."

Izuku barely paid attention to it since he was already aware of the Nectar situation, and his mind detached itself from Aizawa-Sensei's words, more interested by the empty spot where Taser should have been.

"I will not assume that UA is too good for that," their homeroom teacher continued. "There is a possibility some of you are using this drug. And UA won't tolerate it."

Izuku didn't fail to notice how his classmates were looking at each other, uncomfortable at the idea of someone desperate enough to use Nectar.

"So if you're caught using it, it's over. You're expelled. And trust me, no hero agencies will accept you."

And then, he put a little plastic bin on his desk.

Izuku blinked.

"If you have drugs, you get rid of it here," Aizawa-Sensei explained. "No questions asked. If you need help to stop, you go to Midnight or me, and we will help. No questions asked. You either own it up or you're get caught and your career ends right here."

Only silence answered him.

"That will be all. I will all see you at the Summer Camp. Cheer up. You're on vacations, now."

Ah. It was a good thing Izuku wasn't a betting man or he would have lost.
They started to leave, no one even daring to look at the drug bin.

"Midoriya?" his teacher called. In front of everyone. "How are you holding on?"

Nineteen heads turned towards Izuku.

Well, so much for secrecy.

Izuku talked with Aizawa-Sensei for a while, telling him he was fine, that living at the Todoroki household was fine, and he fled as soon as it was possible.

Only to find Iida, Uraraka, and Todoroki waiting for him right outside the door. At least, the rest of the class had left.

"Midori? What's happening?"

There was so much worry in Uraraka's voice that he told them.

Not caring anymore.

Uraraka gasped. Iida's face became white.

"What didn't you tell us?" Uraraka asked, not understanding why Izuku hadn't called her in the minute. After all, she understood perfectly what it was like to be hurt like that. And so did Iida.

He had friends who were in the perfect place to empathize with him.

"I just..."

Come on. Tell them you don't trust them. Because you can't let anyone in

Iida didn't let him the time to find a good answer. Instead, he just hugged him, a bear-like embrace that made Izuku's bones groan.

It was warmer than what Izuku expected.

Or maybe he was just realizing how cold he had been since he had waited in that hospital.

---

N: [My mother left a present for you at my house. Hurry, I don't have all day.]

At first, Izuku was confused of why Nagisa was offering him a suitcase. It's only when he opened it and found it full of clothes that he realized what was gifted to him.
Without a word, he took the first item, a simple black shirt with the white letter HERO on it. The fabric felt like Nagisa's hoodie. And like his hero costume.

Protective clothes. Of high quality, the kind only a well ranked hero could access to, not really comparable to the student costumes 1-A had.

And it felt like touching a hug. It must have costed a fortune. He could probably use any quirks he wanted in those and it wouldn't have a scratch.

He looked at Nagisa, who wasn't saying anything, but she seemed awfully smug.

"How?" Izuku asked and he had to try several times for the word to pass his throat.

Nagisa pretended to be absorbed by what she was doing on her laptop, but it was a lie because she always typed, even when she was watching something. She was incapable of doing one task at the time.

"I think my mom wanted to do that for a while. Your tee-shirts are an insult to everything we stand for. And it should be your size. The many eyes aren't for nothing."

He just stared at her.

Nagisa shrugged. "You helped a family of tailors. You should have seen that coming."

This was incredible.

"How much?"

Now, Izuku had enough speed quirks to rival with Ingenium. But even that wasn't enough to avoid the pillow that Nagisa threw at his nose with such strength that he almost fell. He managed to stay upright in extremis while his dignity as a hero student was scattered somewhere on the floor.

"I will pretend I didn't hear that," his friend growled.

Izuku had never been arachnophobic but he suddenly understood why some people were afraid of spiders.

"I think you're so tired that you're not really seeing what's happening," Nagisa continued and Izuku saw how she was getting closer to another pillow. "So listen to me : there are a lot of people who care about you. Rest. Breathe. And when you're ready, let us in, because we are here to help you and I am personally not afraid to kick your ass to do so."

Izuku managed to avoid the second pillow.

Todoroki seemed extremely pensive and Izuku doubted it was because of the All Might movie they were watching on Netflix, in Todoroki's room.

Izuku fidgeted. Hesitated. And finally asked.

"I know I should be the last person to ask that, but is there something on your mind?"
The sarcasm in Todoroki's glance burned Izuku to a crisp, but he still answered. "It's about the Summer Camp. We will train our quirks."

"So?"

Personally, Izuku couldn't wait for all those classmates who would go beyond with their quirks. He would have to pack a new notebook.

"I am thinking about it," Todoroki simply said.

Izuku immediately understood he was talking about the flames he was still ignoring most of the time. He only used the heat as a way to avoid being encased in ice, but nothing like what he had showed to Izuku during the Sport Festival.

Izuku didn't push the subject.

---

Living with the Todorokis was strange, and not just because Izuku was still numb due to what had happened to his mom.

The house was big, and often full of people because even when Fuyumi and Todoroki weren't here, they was a staff who helped cleaning and cooking, but somehow, everyone tried to be invisible. Everyone made sure to stay out of everyone's way, and Izuku didn't manage to establish any connection to them. They just waited politely to see if he wanted something. Made him feel like he was in the way. So he stopped.

The other thing that he didn't manage to get used to was the silence. The house was never empty, but that wasn't something Izuku could know by ear. In the apartment with his mother, he could know what she was doing from his room, just by listening, and in return, he made sure to use his Silencer quirk when he didn't want to bother her. But here, voices were muffled, people moved silently, and there was no music or no noises from the TV.

It was only until the first evening that Izuku understood why.

Endeavor was quiet. For someone his size, he moved without making enough noise, and didn't announce himself, so everyone in the house had to watch out for when he returned. No one wanted to notice him when it was too late, because there was something inherently intimidating about him. Especially compared to All Might, taller than him and just as large, but who always appeared non-threatening -except in front of villains or during exams- and more precisely, took measures to be non threatening.

It was like the whole house was holding its breath when he was here.

---

The day when the authorities declared that going into Izuku's neighborhood might not be lethal anymore, Todoroki Natsuo came back home and apparently, no one had told him Izuku had moved in, but he still didn't blink when he saw Todoroki, Fuyumi, and Izuku eating breakfast together.
Yes, Izuku had started calling Todoroki’s sister Fuyumi because she had insisted, despite how funny it could be to call a Todoroki only for three heads to turn towards him.

"I'M BAAACK!" Natsuo sang as he threw his bag on the floor and hugged Fuyumi. They both shared Endeavor’s body type and had white hair with red streaks. "Did you miss me? Don't lie, I know you all did..."

Izuku -with his mouth still full of rice- greeted him by waving his hand, and Todoroki Natsuo answered the same way, a smile on his face, before he realized Izuku wasn't a Todoroki with a new hair color.

He tilted his head. Looked at Todoroki. Then at Izuku. Then at Todoroki again, to finish on Fuyumi, who quickly explained the situation in what she thought were hushed words. But Natsuo seemed like he had trouble wrapping his head around the very concept of Endeavor helping someone.

"So... My father... From the goodness of his heart... decided to let you stay here for as long as you need?"

"Exactly," Fuyumi said.

"How generous of him," he said as if he was disturbed by the very notion of Endeavor being nice.

Izuku thought he was done.

He was wrong.

"Are you… Are you my father’s secret lovechild or something?"

Todoroki choked on his rice, Fuyumi gasped, and Izuku suddenly saw the family resemblance.

That's how Natsuo got recruited into accompanying them to Izuku's apartment to help him take some belongings. Even if Izuku told them they didn't need to and that there was nothing to carry. But they simply ignored him, so here they were.

Izuku finally realized that the siblings were less motivated about accompanying him than spending time together. In the car trip, they had been awkward, and trying a little too hard, and with Todoroki admitting at the Sport Festival that he had been isolated from his siblings, it explained why they weren't natural with each other.

Anyway, since this apartment was compromised, his mother and him would move as soon as possible. Them knowing his address wouldn't be of any consequences as soon as his mother would wake up.

Everything would be fine. Eventually.

The first thing Izuku grabbed was his mother's red shawl on the couch. She loved it so it was better if he kept it close. Then, he went to his room, Todoroki in tow while Fuyumi and Natsuo were exploring, checking if anything needed to be done like taking out the trash or washing dishes. Izuku didn't tell them that it had already been taken care of. He was in charge of the cleaning duty in his house after all, so he would know.

Todoroki stopped when he saw All Might everywhere in Izuku's room, and he smiled, just quietly happy, which made Izuku smile in return.
Izuku knelt by his bed and grabbed the duffel bag under it. It already contained money, burner phones, passports, and clothes, and he added an All Might plushie and more clothes before walking to his desk and his notebooks.

Todoroki's eyes were wide. Izuku assumed if was because of the mountain of hero merch in his open closet, but it appeared he was focused on what Izuku was carrying.

"Why do you have a get-away bag under your bed?"

"In case I need to leave quickly." Obviously. "You don't?"

It was something Izuku had always done, ever since he was little. And there had always been at least an All Might plushie in his bag.

"I don't think anyone does, Midoriya," Todoroki mocked but suddenly, Izuku's attention was elsewhere.

Izuku looked at the notebooks on his desk. Touched them.

He had been studying them before going to the mall that day, trying to get his mind away from the future loss of Taser. He had selected five of them, placed them on a pile, and... it was untidy. Not that Izuku always made the pile perfect, but he tended to fuss on things when he was stressed and he had been nervous at the time.

_I left them like that, right?_

"Is there a problem?" Todoroki asked.

Izuku replaced the notebook 13 correctly on the pile.

"No, I don't think so..." he started before being interrupted by a squee of delight.

The two boys turned to see the two other Todoroki siblings peaking by the open door. Natsuo was completely focused on the mountain of merchandises in Izuku's room and he wasn't the only one to see the glint of mischief in his grey eyes.

"Don't you dare," Fuyumi said.

Endeavor returned home earlier than usual and was greeted by the sight of everyone of his children wearing an All Might hoodie.

Todoroki was wearing the blue, white, streaked with red Young Age hoodie, and seemed quite happy about it, like a cat who had just eaten the canary. Fuyumi hadn't planned on Endeavor returning so early, and froze in her Silver Age hoodie, mostly red and white. As for Natsuo, there was no way anything Izuku owned could fit him, so he had tied the sleeves of a Bronge age hoodie around his waist.

Endeavor, in front of this spectacle, froze like a man who had just found his church's sanctity defiled. He didn't say anything, but Izuku could almost hear him silently counting to ten, and he certainly wasn't breathing.
Finally, he glanced at Izuku, the only one not wearing a hoodie.

Only a Plus Ultra tee-shirt, with the colors of All Might's Golden Age costume.

The news of what had happened to his mom spread through the class and everyone asked how Izuku was doing, if he was fine, how he was coping.

And every time he received a message, he was brought back to the hospital, where his mother was waiting. He went there every day, stayed as long as he could, and fled when he couldn't bear it anymore. But it didn't matter, for his mind could always bring him back there every time his guard was down.

But since Izuku could hardly answer something like: I am pretending everything is fine and that I am not about to have a breakdown. Could you kindly stop reminding me I manage to lose both parents without being able to do anything? he did the next best thing.

He lied.

And distracted himself.

Now, he knew he couldn't find Mustard. Too many pro heroes were after him, and they would notice a vigilante on his track. Worse, there were simply no leads, and Izuku was aware of it because he shared a roof with the hero who had the most resolved cases in the country.

But there was something else. For Mustard wouldn't have been able to hurt so many people without Nectar.

And Endeavor had a lot of intel about those rings.

Shouta groaned, a monstrous headache trying to split his skull open as he was working at his kitchen table, surrounded by screens and reports. Criminals activity was on the rise.

A cup of coffee appeared in front of him, and he grabbed it with both hands. If he stopped being supplied in caffeine, he would probably fall into a coma.

"Thank you, Hizashi."

His friend looked above his shoulder. "Let me guess. A mysterious vigilante with no face?"

*If only.* Whoever they were, they had given up on quirk trafficking rings and were taking care of Nectar dealers, and just for this reason, Shouta was willing to let them work.

Especially when there was now someone worse.

"Whoever they are, there is now a bigger fish," Shouta sighed.
"Oh?"

"Someone is going through the quirk trafficking rings and isn't taking any prisoners. I am pretty sure the villain who did this painted the walls of a warehouse with their blood."

It was like Stain all over again. The criminal was never seen but killed with ease, the police didn't want to admit they had no idea of who it was, and the news weren't talking about it.

Hizashi grabbed a report and sat in front of Shouta, frowning. "Were there casualties among the victims?"

And there it was. The reason why the police might not inclined to find him : the criminal only targeted other criminals, and despicable ones at that.

"Not by whoever attacked. But they are in bad shape. Some of them are so traumatized they can't use their quirks anymore."

Izuku finished duct taping some dealers and was about to call it a night – especially since he slept soundly but less and less since he had started his activity- when one drug dealer who could turn into an enormous red creature and who wouldn't shut up despite being already tied up drew his attention.

"... Are you even listening to me, you stupid son of a bitch?"

Izuku tilted his head. Turned towards the dealer, his roll of duct tape still in hand.

"What did you say about my mom?" he asked calmly.

Shouta looked up to see a dealer entirely covered in duct tape. From his toes to his collarbone, there wasn't a inch of him that wasn't covered in gray tape, but the vigilante had mercifully left his head alone.

What was not so merciful was the fact he had been somehow duct taped to the ceiling, like a fat fly stuck in a spiderweb.

"Please, sir," the dealer asked very politely, "could you let me down?"

Izuku was living in a house full of early risers. Apart from the fact than before his arrival in the Todoroki household, he thought those strange creatures were only a thing of legend, he had no problem with those strange persons.
Except when they entered in his room at 7 in the morning and tried to wake him up.

Izuku categorically refused to leave Morpheus' sweet embrace, so Todoroki pulled out the big guns and put his hand on Izuku's naked shoulder.

Todoroki's right hand. The cold one.

Izuku jumped, now completely awake but not happy about it.

"Now, that's just cruel," he complained while grabbing the red shawl he was sleeping with these days to put it away.

But Todoroki had no mercy. He was already ready to start the day, in gym clothes, which wasn't surprising because he trained as soon as the sun rose, unlike Izuku who could stay awake late into the night but who was incapable of functioning before 10 am.

"Get dressed," Todoroki said, which earned him a pillow to the face. "I am going to train and I could use some help."

This made Izuku pause. He passed a hand on his face, trying to get rid of the remnant of sleep and wasn't quite successful but it would have to be enough.

"Why?"

He never needed Izuku before, and when they sparred, it was quirkless, and more of a fun activity than actual training.

Todoroki hesitated, but only for a moment.

"I need to relearn how to use my flames," he said quietly.

And with that, he got Izuku's complete attention.

Shouto had realized he was limiting himself and that he would one day need to use his full power, even before Midoriya started to live with them. The problem was that it was like yielding. Like admitting his old man was right.

However, using his flames was ineluctable. And the few times he had tried, they had been out of control. So he needed to train. But still, he had delayed his use of his left side for as long as possible.

He hadn't managed to get the necessary motivation because he kept imagining how happy the old bastard would get. But the occasion arrived in the form of Midoriya who one day left the house in the middle of the night, and disappeared before Shouto could follow him.

Shouto believed Midoriya when he said he had no attention to go after Mustard, but that didn't mean he actually trusted him on his own, so he decided to kill two birds with one stone: distract him with a quirk and outweigh the inconvenience of pleasing the old bastard with the benefice of keeping an eye on an uncontrollable and reckless force of nature who could disappear into the darkness like a ninja.
Shouto knew Midoriya loved quirks, but he didn't expect him to react to his proposal with such enthusiasm.

Midoriya started to stop waking up so late. He started to smile more.

He stopped pretending he was fine and just had fun training with Shouto.

And the fact he was looking at Shouto's flames the same way he looked at his ice -like it was something beautiful and wonderful- combined to the need they had to outdo each other, made Shouto start to forget his father's shadow.

It also added the bonus of not letting this moron out of his sight. He couldn't let him end up like Iida.

Fuyumi was glad to see that Shouto and Izuku were getting along so well. The two boys were spending all their time together, training, having fun, and she was relieved to know her little brother had a friend.

But it wasn't all. Izuku's arrival had brought a new balance to the house. The family had always been fragmented, every member apart. But now, they were on their best behavior, eating together, spending time together, talking and joking.

And in front of Izuku, Fuyumi's father was watching himself, not letting his temper transpire.

They were being the better version of themselves, and they finally looked like a real family.

And she couldn't help being apprehensive at the idea of Izuku leaving.

As he came home from work, Enji was surprised to find light in the kitchen, but only from the open fridge. Half hidden among the shadows, someone was moving without a sound as if he was perfectly at ease in the darkness.

He stopped, and even if Enji couldn't quite see him, his eyes not used yet to the obscurity, he knew he was being stared at.

The boy's fingers found the switch and white electrical light spread through the room, confirming what Enji already suspected : Midoriya wasn't only a night owl, he was nocturnal. For a moment, he wondered if it was because of his quirk. It wouldn't be the first time a human predator obtained strength and speed.

But like with his half-assumption that he might need sugar to sustain his strength, he put that thought away. It was just half guesses, so not worth much. And it might have been motivated by his horror at the amount of sugar this boy put in his coffee in the morning.

Enji would have taken Midoriya in even if Shouto and him didn't knew each other. He was a victim of a villain attack, he had the means to help him, and as soon as Principal Nedzu had asked,
his decision was taken even before All Might intervene and tried to say that his house would be better.

But since it was Midoriya Izuku, the boy who had showed so much promises during the Sport Festival, Enji had hoped that having a rival so close to Shouto would push his creation to go beyond. After all, competition made the best motivation.

Instead, the two boys trained together. And somehow, the green-haired-boy had coddled Shouto into using what Enji had gifted him.

"I am grateful that you convinced my son to stop his childish behavior," he thanked him sincerely.

Midoriya took a sip of the ice tea and, to Enji's horror, he added a cube of sugar to it.

"I assume you're talking about the flames," the boy asked flatly, fatigue probably getting to him as he twirled a spoon in his cup.

"Of course."

"Todoroki is my friend. I don't have a lot of them."

In Enji's experience, it wouldn't improve over the years. Those boys would grow more and more alone as they learned to put aside distractions, and... heroes weren't here to be coddled, but to do a job, and the competition was cut-throat.

"But there is little I wouldn't do for them."

For a moment, Enji saw something fierce and chilling, that went beyond protectiveness.

And then, it disappeared as soon as it had appeared, but Enji didn't make the mistake of thinking he had imagined it. It had been as real as the silence between them.

*This is what happens when a child loses his only family*. Midoriya was probably clinging to Shouto and Fuyumi because right now, they were the only thing he had.

"Iced tea?" the boy asked.

It's only then than Enji noticed in what he was drinking: an All Might cup, the stupid plastic face grinning stupidly at him, anger burning within him because this stupid man had managed to sneak into his house in this form.

*Not in front of him. Don't lose your temper in front of him.*

"No, thank you," Enji managed to say, not showing how annoyed he was.

Even when Midoriya sipped loudly on his way out.

Mashirao went to UA for the facility, or at least, that was what he pretended. He trained for an hour, incorporating his tail into his movements, using it to increase the power of his hits.

And when he was done, he passed in his classroom, his hand in his pocket, clutching a blue
inhaler.

He didn't even know why he had taken it. The vial had been offered, and though he hadn't used it... He had still taken it. Kept it.

For the day when he wouldn't want to be the boring one anymore.

Mashirao put the Nectar inhaler in the bin, then fled the empty classroom.

He had never used it. But he had been tempted, and that said something about it.

"... So, everything is fine. Todoroki, Fuyumi and Natsuo are good people. I don't see Endeavor much but he welcomed me into his home, so there is that."

Izuku was sitting in the comfortable chair of the private clinic. Next to him, his mother was laying on a bed, connected to machines that were beeping, monitoring, and kept her fed and hydrated.

It wasn't the hospital where Izuku had found her, but a new one, a better one, because they had been so many victims and not much to do for treatment, so they had been spread into long term establishments.

Of course, Izuku had been far less understanding when they had moved her without asking for his permission. But that was in the past.

It helped that this clinic was far better than the public hospital, with less patient and more caretakers. And even though Izuku had the means to pay, a really nice nurse had explained to him that the government was taking care of everything.

So maybe, just maybe, Izuku's mom was in good hands.

"Summer camp is approaching," he continued. You have no idea how grateful I am to not have failed, because Aizawa-Sensei said that the remedial training will be hell, and he is the king of euphemisms. But... that also means that I won't be here for a while."

Even though until now, he came here everyday. Talked to her. Made sure she wouldn't disappear.

"I love you, mom," he said and he kissed her on the cheek.

Izuku caught his reflection in the glass panel as he left. He looked tired and sad, and that just wouldn't do, so he paused. Forced himself to smile, with his face and his eyes, just like All Might.

Everything will be fine.
Hey! Let me tell you a story. Long ago, the BNHA writers who were working on retellings lived in harmony. Then, everything changed when the BNHA the movie Two heroes attacked. Now, there is a swimming pool episode and a whole movie to place during the Summer vacations, somehow.

That's why I am completely counting on you to imagine what happened there. You're in headcanon territory. Izuku went to I-Island, he met Dave, Melissa, and Wolfram. He wore an awful suit that Nagisa would have burned if she had seen it, and at the end of the crazy day, everyone ate barbecue. THE END.

I am passing to the Summer Camp right after this chapter. I love the Summer Camp. I will make the kids roast marshmallows, say spooky stories around a fire camp, and nothing horrible, traumatizing, or crippling will happen.

What do you mean, you don't trust me? How dare you?

Also, about this chapter, Izuku doesn't notice a ton of stuff because he is preoccupied.
Toshinori had spent a week going in and out of the hospital, pain and blood following him, his body failing him. The doctors and Recovery Girl were unanimous: he needed to rest, and to stop using his quirk so recklessly.

When he had asked what they meant by reckless, Recovery Girl had chewed him out and told him that using his quirk until his body just refused to be used that way anymore wasn't healthy and that he should know it.

As if he could stop when there was so much work to do. So many villains who kept targeting the innocents, so many catastrophes had to be narrowly avoided, and someone had to be here to prevent that.

And Young Watanabe Mamoru hadn't been found yet, and no one would feel safe until this boy was arrested. Everyone lived in fear of a next mass attack, and the victims of the gas attack were still not healed. And that included Young Midoriya's mother.

Toshinori sighed, not daring to imagine what Young Midoriya was enduring. He regularly had him on the phone, but the boy always changed subject when he tried to talk about it.

The Summer Camp was approaching. That meant he had two weeks to take care of the Mustard situation.

And as he looked at the file on his desk, he realized he had to stop delaying this choice.

---

The departure to the Summer Camp was at dawn, which almost murdered Izuku on the spot but Todoroki was nice enough to gently wake him up when they arrived at UA, and Fuyumi, who was the one dropping them in her car, gave him a thermos of her coffee, which was strong enough to wake up the dead.

So barely enough to wake up a green-haired-teenager who had spent the last decade getting used to near lethal amount of caffeine. But it was enough to make him greet everyone, to get into the bus, and to close his eyes, just for a tiny second.

He wasn't extremely surprised to see he had fallen asleep and only woken up when the bus had stopped, but several things made him pause.

Iida, who had been seating right next to him, was unnaturally still as Izuku was using his shoulder as a pillow, the same way every cat owner was too afraid to move once they were chosen as bed. The other thing out of the ordinary was the green blanket on him, and since all their bags where inside the belly of the bus, it was probably coming from Yaoyorozu's quirk. And last but not the least, there was a sign on his knees.

Frowning, Izuku turned it around to read what was written on it, which made Iida jump in surprise.
Izu blinked slowly, realizing he loved everyone of his classmates and would fight for them any day.

Ochako stretched as she got out of the bus. Spending time with everyone was great but not moving for so long did a number on her, and she wasn't the only one. Mina and Hakagure had started to jump up and down, Kaminari was complaining under his breath, and Sero was also stretching.

They were greeted by the sight of two members of the Wild Wild Pussycats, to Midori's bliss and he started to swoon about how incredible they were, the hero fanboy at his best, and the two women didn't seem to mind the admiration.

At least until one mistake.

"And they had been operating for the past twelve y..."

Pixie-Bob grabbed Midori's face in her gloved hand, her claws shining in the sunlight, her eyes burning with something crazy.

"We are eighteen in our heart!" she hissed.

No one moved, except for Midori, who slightly nodded.

"Now. Repeat. It."

Midoriya Izuku, the man who fought against the villains at the USJ like it was a common exercise, the man who had destroyed the arena of the Sport Festival, the man who had survived and neutralized Stain, took one look at those fiery eyes, and repeated: "You are eighteen in your hearts."

She let Midori go, and Ochako's friend went to her side with the look of a man who had just seen his life flash before his eyes. She watched him and he smiled with his eyes, then glanced at the Wild Wild Pussycats, as if saying: "They are so cool but also a little scary."

Midori smiled more than usual these days, because he didn't want people to worry about him. He didn't want to talk about anyone to what had happened to his mom, and of why he was living at the Todoroki house now.

But as long as he didn't want to talk, she would give him his space. Forcing him to talk would do more harm than anything else, especially when he seemed to be craving some semblance of normalcy.

So she stopped checking for signs that he would explode, or start trembling, or tear up, and she let her eyes wander, until she saw something strange and worrying.

Aizawa-Sensei had a hand in front of his mouth as he was talking with Mandalay, but the corner of his mouth was still visible and up. Well, it was trying to, but the Erasure hero was trying to control the expression.

Their teacher had three expressions at most: utterly exhausted, furious, and smiling like the cat
what had just eaten the canary. Him trying to suppress a smile... It just wasn't good.

"Doesn't Aizawa-Sensei look a little too happy?" she wondered out loud.

Midori looked at their teacher, frowning.

Then he took a step back. Another. Discreetly, he started to back down towards the bus. Ochako, not crazy, followed him.

It wasn't even a conscious decision. They just tranquilly walked away, passed behind the bus to be hidden from everyone's eyes, and right as they did, the rest of the class realized it had been a trap. They all tried to climb back into the bus, but they never made it, as one member of the Wild Wild Pussycat appeared in front of them, earth obeying her, and everyone was swept away, screaming as if they were precipitated in the depths of Hell.

"I feel guilty," she admitted as they scurried off in the entrails of the bus, crawling in order not to be seen through the windows.

"So do I," Midori admitted. "I should have grabbed Todoroki and Iida."

"And Momo." Since the Yaoyorozus had welcomed Ochako in their home, the two girls were rarely separated and she was hoping she wouldn't be mad at her. "And Tsuyu."

Midori paused and looked at her, hesitation and doubt all over his face.

"Do you feel guilty enough to step down the bus and follow them?" he finally asked.

"Don't be ridiculous," Ochako chided him and they both hid behind seats. A little too close to each other, by the way, but she was furiously refusing to acknowledge what Aoyama had asked her during their finals, so this would have to do.

The pro heroes and the child that was accompanying them, the blond member of the Wild Wild Pussycat actually laughing, quickly walked in and they didn't notice them. Soon, the bus started up, bringing the two clandestine teenagers closer to where they would live for the next two weeks.

But the sounds of footstep didn't stop.

Midori and Ochako both looked at each other as they drew closer.

Ochako passed both her thumb and her index under her eyes to indicate the dark circles linked to the lack of sleep, then signed an interrogation point. Her sign language was extremely rusty because she had only spoken it during classes, several years ago, but she could still asked basic things when silence was a matter of survival.

It wasn't the case for Midori who started to sign a whole conversation, and she vaguely understood that since the footsteps were so loud, it indicated a certain weight the two women and the child didn't have, so yes, it was certainly Aizawa-Sensei who had smelled fresh meat or something.

That's how Aizawa-Sensei found them: Midori signing something lyrical about their imminent doom, and Ochako silently asking him to freaking slow down and to repeat himself.

Their homeroom teacher had almost passed past them and blinked several times when he saw the two teenagers. He tilted his head, trying to understand when they had disappeared.

"How?" he finally asked.
They both shrugged.

Now, if only to encourage their wits, the pro heroes should have let Ochako stay on the bus. She had earned it, and so did Midori.

It was entirely unnecessary for Aizawa-Sensei to whip out his capture weapon, and to kick them out of the bus, but at least, he stopped the damn vehicle before he did. Ochako had been pushed from a moving car once, and she didn't want to repeat this experience.

She was about to use her quirk to jump from a cliff -because Plus Ultra, she guessed- without injuring herself, when Midori stopped her, his eyes shining with something wicked.

"Uraraka? How long can you carry someone with your quirk?"

A tricky question. It depended on a lot of factor, going to when was the last time she had eaten to what force would be used to push her upwards. If the floating was just because of her quirk and not because she had jumped before, the toll would be greater.

"That depends on how much you weight, what you need me to do, and if I am allowed to throw up," she summarized. "Why?"

Izuku grinned.

Shouta watched Midoriya kneeling so Uraraka could climb on his back, then getting to his feet without any sign of effort, as if he wasn't carrying a girl that was almost his size, but with this quirk of his, that wasn't surprising.

Uraraka took a second to get used to the piggyback ride, then touched Midoriya and herself. At the second she was done, Midoriya took a running start as the gravity girl was desperately hanging on. She managed to keep her composure until he took a inhumane leap, the cliff under his feet cracking in worrying lines, and they flew through the air as if they had just been catapulted, followed by Uraraka's scream.

Shouta would have screamed too.

They disappeared in the horizon, Midoriya using the crowns of the trees to run as if he was on a mere obstacle race. Shouta followed them with his eyes as long as he could, and at no point did the two high school students showed anything like doubts or fear at the idea of falling.

"His quirk looks like All Might's..." Pixie-Bob said, not managing to hide the awe in her voice. "If they continue like that, they might actually make it to lunch."

"What if the girl's quirk stop mid-air?" Mandalay asked.

No doubt that she was imagining a very long fall and a brutal stop, with no adult close enough to help the two reckless teenagers.

"Don't underestimate my students," Shouta answered. They control the situation."
It took Uraraka and Izuku one hour and half to arrive to where the Wild Wild Pussycat were waiting, ten of which spent because Uraraka had screamed at him to land so she could throw up. So they walked towards the Summer Camp, Uraraka a little green, Izuku with the start of a headache, notably ruffled because of the wind, but... they were smiling.

For they had flew, and there was nothing more exhilarating than that.

What was less pleasant was Mandalay's nephew trying to kick Izuku at a strategical place because he disliked heroes. *Slide and Glide* allowed Izuku to slide away from the little leg, avoiding an unfortunate fate, and he went and hid behind Uraraka, who was still slightly green.

They met the two other members of the Wild Wild Pussycats who had actually been retrieving pizzas for everyone, and they all ate together. The Wild Wild Pussycats answered to all of their questions and were incredibly cool and pleasant as long as no one mentioned for how long they had been in activity.

And when Uraraka and Izuku worried about the security, all the adults explained that the location of the camp was an absolute secret, and that between the Wild Wild Pussycats, Aizawa-Sensei and Vlad, they had taken all the measures to take care of forty teenagers so everyone could be safe.

Izuku looked at the huge zone to cover, all the hiding spots, and how there would be only six adults to monitor all this, and he decided not to say anything.

To say that 1-A was not happy that Midori and Ochako were fresh as daisies, while they looked like they had stumbled on every rock on the road, was an understatement. Awful words were thrown around. *Traitor. Sell out. Monsters. Soulless.*

"We help make you food," Ochako informed them.

And with that, all was immediately forgiven.

A grateful belly was not something to be underestimated.

Minoru was busy hiding his inhaler, whose content was about as expensive as water on the moon these days, when Kaminari sneaked up on him, all excited because there were hot springs here. Which was pretty cool, if the future hero had to admit it.

What was less cool was that Minoru absolutely couldn't go, because that meant taking off the bandage on his arm and what was hidden beneath it.

The rash had appeared when Minoru had started to slow down on his Nectar consumption. He
hadn't even tried to stop, just to slow down, because these days, the stuff was incredibly difficult to find. More expensive too. He simply didn't have the budget.

It had put his nerves through a grinder and it had ended with him attacking Sero because he had been really annoying at the time, but it had calmed, and he had thought he could deal with it. Deal with the aching in his bones, with the headaches, and the intermittent light sensitivity.

And then, something purple had started to appear on his forearm. He had thought this was dry skin mixed with whatever one could pick up in a school full of quirks, and when he had tried to get rid of it, it just spread. And it was a little sticky, not unlike the balls on the top of his head. And it had bled until he started to use his inhaler more often.

But Minoru still had the rash on his arm. It hadn't disappeared.

But he could hardly say that to Kaminari.

"Hot springs suck, dude. I am going to stay here. Excuse me for saying it but I am not interested into hanging out with a bunch of naked dudes."

Kaminari was a little disappointed, which saddened Minoru, but there wasn't anything he could do about that.

It's not like he could actually ask for help. Despite what Aizawa-Sensei had said, this was going to be in his file. There would be consequences.

It wouldn't be the first time their homeroom teacher had lied to them in order to have what he wanted. And if he had been ready to expel someone like freaking Midoriya just because he wasn't satisfied with his efforts, why would he be lenient with Minoru?

Their first evening at the Summer Camp had been animated, especially with one savage pillow fight that had almost killed Satou and send Aizawa-Sensei running at them, only to find all the boys pretending to sleep in their futons like the little angels they weren't, but the night was now awfully still.

The only one still awake was Dark Shadow, who was exploring the room as far as he dared, Tokoyami's pocket light under his blanket keeping him calm, and Izuku was just looking at the ceiling, unable to sleep.

Usually, he trained until exhaustion hit him like a hammer. Today had been fun but he hadn't approached his limits, still had energy to spare.

And time to think.

Which was just unacceptable.

Night vision.

Izuku got out of his covers, walked away, and he almost died because a Todoroki, who had probably been too hot, had iced the floor during his sleep. That boy never knew how close he had been to be smothered by a falling insomniac, and was only saved by Balance.
Dark Shadow raised his head to see what Izuku was doing, and Izuku raised his index to his lips, silently asking him not to wake up anyone. Dark Shadow seemed surprised for a moment, maybe because Izuku could perfectly see him in the dark, then he solemnly nodded.

Finally, Izuku sneaked into the kitchen, still in his pajamas, *Vanish* in tow.

He wasn't expecting to find a Mandalay in red nightclothes, silently drinking from a mug with a painted cat on it, checking on her phone.

Izuku hesitated for a moment, not wanting to bother her. But she was obviously reading on her phone, and smiling, so ultimately, he dropped *Vanish* and knocked to announce his presence.

Even with this precaution, her head whipped incredibly fast in his direction, her eyes scanning the one who had managed to sneak up on her, then she smiled, amused when she recognized him. It was different from the cat-smile she had in costume. It made her seem more approachable. Less like Mandalay and more like the woman with a real name under the hero shield.

"Hey? You're not sleeping? You realize you will have to be ready at 7.30 in a few hours?"

"If I could sleep, I would," Izuku apologized with a smile. "I have more energy during the evening than during the morning."

Her smile got sad. Or maybe tired.

"I know what it's like," she admitted. "Hot milk helps, if you're interested."

Izuku was indeed interested and quickly warmed up some milk in the microwave. He was about to drink the beverage when Mandalay stopped him, retrieved some honey, and told him to try it.

It changed his life forever, and from now on, he would always drink this when he would wake up in the middle of the night.

They both drank in a comfortable silence, with the easy companionship of two people fortuitously finding each other in the middle of the night while the rest of the world was still asleep. A comfortable silence that was broken by Mandalay.

"I'm sorry about what Kouta tried to do."

"Don't apologize." Someone apologizing for someone else was meaningless, but Izuku wasn't going to tell that to the pro hero. "He is just a kid."

"Still..."

Kouta was... an interesting child.

"Why does he hate heroes?" Izuku asked before he had the time to think about it, something that had been happening more and more these past few weeks.

Not that someone disliking heroes never happened. There were actually some rare souls that didn't like heroes, either because, like Stain - and Izuku gritted his teeth at the mere memory- they thought they were corrupted or not good enough, or because they were general detractors of the hero industry. It took a toll on the body, a lot of people targeted you and your loved ones... Not everything was good in this life, but it was surprising that a boy that young would be so virulent towards heroes when his own aunt was one.
Mandalay hesitated. Then she told him about Kouta's parents and how their loss had left the boys despising heroes to the point where he didn't even want to use his own quirk.

*Why didn't I guess? I should have guessed.*

The Water hose.

Izuku wasn't naive. He was perfectly aware that heroes died. That some villains actually sought out the killing blow, considering it a honor. Despite the training, despite the quirks, despite the sidekicks and justice on their side, not everyone was coming home.

Maybe... Maybe that wasn't so bad that Kouta was angry. At least, it meant he was feeling something.

---

Teenagers weren't built to wake up at 7 am and Denki whined and begged for five more minutes, but since he was a hero and a man, he manage to (technically) wake up and to prepare himself.

Though, for honesty's safe, he had to admit Iida had woken him up three times.

But for once, he wasn't the worse.

Their class rep was kneeling next to a futon whose owner was completely isolated from the outside world by a cocoon of blankets. Iida was gently talking to whoever was inside, a hand on where his shoulder probably was, and he was exhorting him to get out and get up because a bright day was waiting for them.

There was no response coming from the cocoon, and Denki was wondering if he could also go back to bed when Iida finally yanked the blanket to expose whoever was hiding inside to the sunlight.

Or at least, he tried to.

A hand grabbed the blue blanket right before Iida managed to get it away, mere fingers against Iida's whole upper body strength, but their class rep couldn't do anything against them. But still, the blanket had slipped enough to reveal a face that should have been familiar but wasn't.

At least, for Denki, who was refusing to acknowledge that whatever was coldly looking at Iida like he was planning to kill him slowly, with nothing personal but just to make everyone understand that what the class rep had just done was grave and could not be repeated, was their classmate who muttered about heroes and quirks and who was generally adorable.

"Midoriya!" Iida started to complain.

Midoriya growled at the class rep.

Now, when most people said someone growled, they meant that they were quietly angry and that it was time not to annoy them. But here, it was an actual growl that wasn't supposed to come from a human throat, and Denki couldn't blame Iida when he decided to slowly back down, while Midoriya hid again inside his blanket.

"Give up, Iida," Todoroki advised. "He is impossible to wake up before at least 7:30. And he is
scary before his first coffee."

*My time to shine.*

"But the training starts at 7:30! We can't leave Midoriya here! It's our responsibility to make sure everyone of us get to the training ground in time..." Iida said, his voice getting quieter as Denki left to grab a bowl and some water. Icy water.

He came back, a huge smile on his face, and started to walk towards the boy hidden inside his futon.

"Someone stops him before he gets killed."

"No one can stop stupidity."

No one made a move to prevent what was about to happen.

Until Midoriya's face emerged from his cocoon, his eyes cold as the heart of winter.

He looked at Denki, making him stop dead in his tracks. Something he didn't often listen to, maybe his survival instinct, was telling not move. Maybe if he didn't move, he wouldn't see him.

But he was out of luck.

Midoriya's gaze paused on the bowl of water in Denki's hands, and then, he moved so fast Denki's eyes weren't able to see what he did. He just felt something hitting him in the chest, chasing all the air from his lungs, and he would have been thrown through the room if Shouji hadn't caught him.

The little demon hid again inside his futon, and while Denki was trying to relearn how to breathe, he saw the weapon used against him, which had bounced on him before falling on the floor: a pillow.

This little green goblin had tried to murder him with a pillow.

Izuku woke up as his phone was beeping in his ear, insisting on waking him up despite the awfully early hour.

Ultimately, what allowed him to truly wake up wasn't the alarm he had specially set up to ring at the last possible minute so he could get ready in time while sleeping to the last second, but the sight of the room where they had all slept completely empty.

"Guys?" he weakly called.

Not even Todoroki and Iida were still here.

He jumped out of bed, ran under a shower, got dressed, grabbed some coffee from the kitchen, and ran out to the training ground where everyone was waiting for the Hell Camp to start.

*The advantage of being on private property is that I can use as many speed quirks as I want.*

He joined his classmates, not hurt that they didn't wait for him, because it wasn't their jobs to make
sure he was ready in time. But still, he was a little surprised.

"Why did none of you wake me up?" he couldn't help asking.

The look of utter disbelief and even fury for some of the students was a sight to behold.

Tiger screamed for anyone with an enhancer quirk to go with him, so when Izuku walked to him, he was surprised that the pro hero with a stretchy limb quirk just stared at him for a three full seconds and just say "No. Just no. You're not training with me." He sent him to Ragdoll, who was sitting on a crate or something, and holding a box of eggs in her hands.

Izuku's bad feeling was confirmed when she saw him coming, grinned like the Cheshire cat, and threw at egg at him, yelling "CATCH!" so loud the students around them turned their heads to see what was happening.

*Speed.*

Izuku catched the egg one-handed, not even using a coordination quirk, and grabbed it between three fingers, only for the thin shell to rupture and yolk splashed his palm.

Which was to be expected and which didn't warrant Ragdoll's laugh, as far as Izuku was concerned, but to each its own, he guessed.

"I know all about you. You have a lot of power, but you can't control it, right?"

Izuku nodded, swiping the goo on the leg of his gym uniform. He could feel he wasn't going to like this training. Not at all.

"It's okay, it's okay," Ragdoll laughed. "That's why we have training. You goal is to catch the egg without breaking it! Good luck!"

And she carefully selected another egg from its green box. A green Izuku could see through the spaces between the planks of the crate the Wild Wild Pussycat member was sitting on. He realized it was packed to the brim and that if they wanted, people could throw eggs at him for the whole week.

Izuku looked at the egg in Ragdoll's hand. The egg didn't look back.

It was strange to see Sir in UA but Mirio was strangely excited about it. Something was about to happen, something linked to All Might - *All Might*! - calling him and asking to meet him. Sir obviously knew what it was about because he had been in an excellent mood ever since and when he had asked if he could join Mirio, the Third Year had accepted even though his mentor was being all secretive.

Sir paused before they arrived, and looked at him, one of his rare smiles on his face.
"I know you can do it, Mirio. I have known it since the day I met you."

What?

Before he could ask what he meant, Sir opened the door, revealing the number 1 hero patiently waiting for them.

"Nighteye," All Might smiled, and Mirio could be wrong but there was something awkward in the air between them. "Young Togata. Thank you for meeting me."

Izuku was covered in yolk. Forearms, the front of his gym uniform, and in his hair. In his hair, because he had approached one of the egg so fast that the damn thing had exploded mid-air.

This might have been a little frustrating.

Izuku's usual technique of slowing before he rammed into something wasn't working with something so fragile. He needed to slowly decelerate the egg and himself, accompanying the movement in a fluid motion.

So now, he just needed to actually manage to do that while Ragdoll was throwing eggs left and right.

When she wasn't laughing at him.

All Might and Sir Nighteye were waiting for Mirio's answer and he had no idea of what to say. A thin All Might, by the way. An injured All Might.

The mere thought of someone managing to hurt the Symbol of Peace was something that had never crossed his mind until today, and that wasn't the craziest thing he had learned in the last twenty minutes.

But that was the scariest one. All Might had always been there. The Symbol of Peace, undefeated, absolute. To know that such a foundation of their country, of Mirio's world, was hurt... It made him realize how fragile things were.

Sir was looking at him expectantly, so proud. This pride meant the world to Mirio, because this man had believed in him, had taken him under his wing. He would never have been among the Big Three without his help.

But right now, words like One for All, and All for One, were echoing in his head, so many strange concepts. A new threat. A quirk unlike anything else, the possibility of receiving All Might's power. A shortcut to become the Symbol of Peace. The pride in Sir Nighteye's eyes. And having to stand against a man who had caused chaos and destruction since the rise of quirks.

Mirio had to say yes. He just had to.
Not because All Might asked or because Sir was obviously overjoyed at the idea of inheriting One for All. But because of All for One. Someone had to stand between him and everyone else, and he would have done that without the quirk.

It was what a hero did, after all.

*Can you really take on the man who almost killed All Might? Even with his quirk?*

There was only one way to find out.

*You have to accept.*

*They are counting on you.*

"I..." he started.

Just as All Might said: "I am not asking you to answer now, of course. This is a big decision and there is a lot to process. Take the week to think about it."

*Oh, thanks God.*

Not that he wanted to refuse but no one would accept this kind of proposition in the second, right?

"Okay, time for a break!"

Without exception, every students fell to a ground with a groan, no one wanting to move anymore. Unfortunately, Asui, whose training consisted in climbing, wasn't quite to the ground. Ashido and Jirou gasped when they saw her starting to fall, jumped to their feet, and ran to catch her.

Asui gracefully landed on her feet just as Jirou and Ashido collided in each other, and they all fell again in a tangle of limbs.

As for Todoroki, who was still in his barrel of water, he disappeared inside it.

Izuku and Iida made sure he wasn't drowning, but when they tried to drag him out, they realized he was simply too heavy and they were too tired to manage to extract him.

So they made the barrel fall, to Todoroki's indignation, and they called it a day.

By the time the training was over, Izuku was in actual pain.

He had been leisurely using his quirks all day long, taking advantage of the fact he was allowed to and didn't have to hide, and he was now paying it because Ragdoll's training hadn't allowed him to take breaks like he was used to. So now, even the declining daylight was hurting his sensitive eyes, and his brain was manifesting its displeasure with a vicious headache.
Nothing that a good night of sleep wouldn't fix, but he still had to cook dinner with everyone, before crawling into his futon, so Izuku, after coming back from a twenty minutes scrub to get rid of the raw eggs that had almost permanently fused with his skin, put himself on front of a pile of potatoes and tried not to move too much.

He was badly and slowly peeling potatoes when he saw Kouta disappear in the forest. He followed him with his eyes, using Zoom, as long as he could.

Yes, headaches weren't going to stop him from using his quirks. He usually stopped when he started bleeding.

And since he was looking at the kid and not at what he was doing, he almost lost his thumb to a peeler.

Todoroki, who had been lighting fires not far away from Izuku, hurried to his side and gave him a towel before he bled all over their food.

"Are you okay?"

Izuku thought about it, and Todoroki braced himself.

"I am wondering if I should respect someone's space or... talk with someone who didn't ask me anything."

Todoroki slowly blinked at him, probably stunned by the sheer hypocrisy of what Izuku just said.

"How unlike you... to ask for permission before meddling in someone's business."

_Probably because I learned from experience how uncomfortable it can be to have people worrying about me._

"Maybe I am getting wiser in my old age?" Izuku proposed instead.

"Allow me to doubt it."

They could have exchanged more pleasantries but Izuku was still bleeding, so he went back to the room to find the first aid kit -for the adults expected them to randomly hurt themselves so everything they would need was in reach- and was starting to take care of the cut when he paused as he watched the blood so _red._

There was one quirk he had never used in his arsenal. He had asked Nagisa afterwards to tell him about it because his holder didn't had the time to talk about it before he had slapped the quirk out of him. _Bloodcurdle_ was a complicated quirk to use when one didn't have an immunity to every diseases that could be transmitted by blood contamination, but Izuku knew where himself had been.

So he took a lick, activating Stain's quirk.

And when he promptly crumbled to the floor like the moron he was, he wondered what the hell he was expecting.

No one knew Kouta's hiding spot, so he wasn't especially pleased when the green-haired happy-go-
lucky moron from the day before appeared behind him. No, he didn't manage to startle Kouta. He definitely saw him arriving, he just didn't deign to acknowledge his presence at the time.

"I thought you would want something to eat, so I brought you a plate" the green-haired boy said.

Kouta could barely believe this guy and his curry had dared to invade his sanctuary.

"Nope, don't want it. I don't feel like fraternizing with you people, so get out of my secret base."

Midoriya put the plate on the ground, and started to leave.

Kouta remembered how he had jumped through the air, trying to impress his friends. How he had kept trying to catch eggs like an idiot all day.

He hated morons like him the most.

"Improving your quirks... Stretching them to their limits... It's just gross. To flaunt your powers like that."

Midoriya paused and looked at him, not showing any anger or anything, like all those adults who were thinking Kouta was just a child lashing out and who were never actually listening to him.

"You're all freaking crazy," Kouta continued. "Calling yourself heroes and villains and going around killing each other like idiots. And talking about your quirks all the time... all just to show off. Morons."

As far as he was concerned, villains and heroes were only separated by a licence, imbeciles who were fighting each other for no reason while everyone else was congratulating them for playing this stupid game.

Midoriya hesitated, as if he was still thinking about leaving and just letting Kouta's words ringing in the air, empty of meaning for someone who wouldn't listen to a kid.

But ultimately, he talked.

"You have every right to not want to use your quirk," he said softly, but there was a touch of iron in his voice that made Kouta listen. "But it's not your place to tell us what we should do with ours."

The older kid wasn't trying to intimidate Kouta, or to frighten him, or anything. When he said that, Kouta just sensed that he wasn't even trying to convince him.

He was just stating a fact.

Then, Midoriya sighed, hesitated, but still made the error of opening his mouth: "I know that the Water Hose were your parents. I don't think they were morons. They kept a villain from hurting a lot of people, they were protectors until the end..."

Mandalay told him?

Kouta was about to yell at him to shut his mouth when Midoriya said something that no one had ever told him.

"… but it doesn't mean that you don't have every right to be angry."

Those words stunned him. He was never told that. He was asked to understand his mom and dad's stupid sacrifice that had no point, he was asked to try to understand, but no one had ever said that.
"What is he trying to do?"

"You're just telling what I want to hear..." Kouta realized. "You don't know what it feels like!"

The smile Midoriya offered him next wasn't a nice one.

"It's the most frightening thing in the world. One day, you're safe, and the other, nothing is the same anymore. You realize people you love can disappear in a moment, just when you were looking elsewhere. At first, it doesn't feel real, and then, it feels like it's the world that is wrong."

That was... That was scarily accurate.

But Kouta wasn't about to admit it.

"Get out of my secret base," he simply repeated.

And Midoriya obeyed, leaving the plate of curry behind him.

The horror that spread through the 1-A and 1-B classes when they realized they weren't allowed to crawl to bed to heal from the horror inflicted by the training from Hell they were subjected to was a sight to behold. Instead, they had to participate in a courage test.

Some whined. Some screamed. Some promised vengeance. The six students who were stuck in remedial hell manifested their displeasure, but Aizawa-Sensei's scarf of doom had no interest in animosity, so they were dragged away without any mercy.

Kacchan was among them, the only one not fighting. He didn't quite seemed resigned to his fate, and Izuku was just not used to.

Especially when his childhood friend had seemed about to commit a gratuitous and violent murder every time Izuku was in his line of sight. One might wonder if he was still upset about what had happened during the finals.

1-B was the first to go into the forest, preparing themselves to scare 1-A, and Izuku waited with his eyes close, following with his mind the golden sparks of quirks being used. At least, until Yaoyorozu put a hand on his shoulder to tell him they were the one to go next.

"Kurogiri, about this child Tomura doesn't like... Tomura doesn't need to know but I would hate for such an interesting quirk to disappear. Make sure nothing happens to him."

From what Kurogiri remembered from the USI, Midoriya Izuku's safety was hardly a source of concern, but when Sensei asked something of him, he had his reasons.

Midoriya Izuku, a boy who had been unknown several months ago, but who had a quirk who might one day rival All Might's. Such quirks didn't come from nowhere, and Kurogiri was well placed to know that one's quirk didn't have to come from one's blood.
It made sense for Sensei to offer a quirk to someone who could help them later. Being offered a power was a mark of trust, and if Midoriya Izuku had one of Sensei’s quirks, it made sense that the boy had to be protected as an asset.

At least, that was what Kurogiri could guess from Sensei's interest.

But even if he was wrong, it didn't matter. Sensei’s orders were absolute, and as soon as Kurogiri would deliver the quirk his master had been coveting, he would be back to make sure Midoriya Izuku didn't make any unfortunate encounter.

But first, there was the one able to detect that something was wrong, and who had such an interesting quirk, to take care of.

Ragdoll never saw the rock that was warped right above her head.

"I am sorry, Ragdoll," Kurogiri apologized truthfully as he started warping them to where Sensei was waiting for them. He didn't like to employ such crude methods with the quirk Sensei had offered him. "But I simply don't have any time to waste."

Chapter End Notes

Sorry, this is a chapter of transition, so not much is happening.

Thank you so much for all your comments.
Blue flames appeared through Dabi's will, their heat licking his skin except in the places where he was too burnt to feel it, the death of his nerves a good thing in this case. The fire spread through the trees, running through the wood with gluttony, and he kept kindling it as he walked through the forest.

Soon, it would turn to ash, and so would anyone who didn't have the sense to run for their lives.

And this rotten society would realize that no one was ever safe.

In the meantime, the villains started to move through the darkness. Waiting for the little mouses who would soon flee the forest and who would run right onto their fangs.

They smelled the smoke before they even realized there was a fire, but soon, blue flames started to dance on the horizon, just as Yaoyorozu and Izuku were walking in the middle of a very flammable forest, full of very flammable students.

"Yaoyorozu, you who is friend with Kendo, tell me that someone in 1-B has an illusion quirk or a blue flame quirk."

He didn't wait for her answer and they both started to go back on their steps, strangely calm about it. Maybe because they were both tired because of the training. Maybe because of the sheer shock of witnessing the start of a catastrophe.

"No, but any flames can turn blue if heated enough. Though, it's unlikely that Todoroki could do that accidentally."

As she talked, she was raising her shirt, and she created two smoke masks

"Villains?" Izuku asked, already knowing the answer but that didn't mean he wanted to be right.

"Villains," Yaoyorozu confirmed as she created a new item: a metal baseball bat.

They put the smoke masks on and then, they both started to run.
"Holy fuck, what the fuck is that?" one of his students asked, and surprisingly enough, it wasn't Bakugou.

Shouta was about to tell Ashido to calm down when he saw what she was looking through the window.

His blood almost turned to ice in his veins.

Shouta barked at Vlad to stay here as he rushed out the classroom just in time to see half of the forest catching fire, with thirty four students inside.

"Hello, Eraserhead," a voice behind him greeted him.

Izuku wasn't using any quirks as he ran, not wanting to distance Yaoyorozu, but that didn't mean they weren't fast. There was nothing like actual fire to make someone go Plus Ultra.

At least, until he realized that students weren't the only ones outside this night, and he almost stumbled as he looked behind him, realizing he had no way to know if a defenseless boy was out there, trapped by the fire.

"What's happening?" Yaoyorozu had the time to say as Izuku was trying to calculate the probabilities of an upset child deciding to stay way too late outside.

"Kouta," he explained. "Kouta has a secret base on the mountain."

Behind the forest and the fire that was devouring it.

"Do you know where it is?"

"Yes, but I don't know if he is there."

They both knew he had to check anyway.

"You're the fastest," Yaoyorozu reluctantly admitted. "I would slow you down."

And she pulled up her tee-shirt right in front of Izuku, to his horror, at least until he realized she was using her belly to use her quirk and he kind of accidentally took a look at the quirk in action, and that was fascinating because there was something akin to transmutation going on that...

Yaoyorozu gave him a jacket and a second mask, a smaller one.

"Fire-resistant jacket, not fire proofed, so don't burn alive please. Don't worry about him. Just find Kouta, or confirm that he isn't there, and get back."

Well, Izuku didn't need her blessing but that was still a good thing to have.

"Stay safe," he asked even though he had no right to, and he started to run.

Speed. All of them.
And as soon as he started, a blinding flash of pain exploded through his skull, and he stopped, breathless, something starting to drip from his nose. He didn't need to check to know it was blood.

*How many quirks did I use today? And for how long?*

"Midoriya?" Yaoyorozu called, worry in her voice.

He didn't look back so she wouldn't see the blood that he was removing from his face, and he showed her his thumb up, before leaving again, activating his *Speed* quirks one by one. It hurt, but nothing like what he had felt earlier.

It would have to be enough.

---

One moment there was darkness and the expectations of fear, then blue flames had claimed the night, forcing them to flee.

And then, everything happened so fast. Shouji's arm pushing him just as something white was about to pierce into Fumikage. Just when they thought they were safe now that they were away from the fire and protected by the shadows.

Shouji's arm cut away, a blood almost black flying through the air.

And for a moment, just a tiny moment where he wasn't watching himself, as horror and guilt crashed into Fumikage, Dark Shadow already at his side, he lost control.

A mere moment was enough.

---

People were still using their quirks, and Izuku had no time to stop as he was circling around the fire and running as fast as he could, the warning signs of his quirk being overused flashing in his head.

He didn't care. He couldn't afford to. He kept spreading his senses, using Transfer to keep an eye on what was happening.

Because either Kouta's quirk was surprisingly strong for a child, either he wasn't alone on this mountain.

---

Himiko was so excited at the idea of meeting new friends, maybe even cute boys. People to talk to, people to laugh with, people to mimic.

People to love.
She ran in the darkness, away from the fire summoned by Dabi -a little too much in her opinion- and she looked for students. She had to find at least three, but she wanted so many more than that.

And she stopped when she sensed something. A sixth sense born from her training was whispering to her that there was something else in the woods, something dangerous, and she hid behind a tree to make sure it was just one of her teammates.

Instead, she saw something enormous in the shadows, and she heard a beautiful scream.

*Maybe someone died. Maybe there is blood.*

But Himiko didn't want to take the risk of being killed, so she decided to find friends somewhere else.

---

Kouta took a step back, fear roaring in his veins.

"... You hear me, Kouta?" Mandalay's voice kept ringing inside his head. "You have to go back to the camp. I am so sorry, Kouta, I don't know where you are. I can't come to you, so you have to get back!"

Muscular, the man who had killed his parents, tranquilly followed him while complimenting him on his hat.

---


Izuku was running on the cliff, the same way Gran Torino was able to run on walls and any solid surfaces. The quickest way.

Around him, the darkness, and below him, the emptiness that wanted him to fall.

---

"Hey, Glasses," the man with a lizard quirk called Tenya, pointing his sword made of swords at him. "You're the one who precipitated Stain's fall!"

Mandalay and Tiger put themselves between the two villains and the students who hadn't gone in the forest yet, while Tenya was grabbing his remaining classmates and making them go towards the camp.
Kouta had tried to flee, but the villain appeared in front of him, jumping through the air, already raising his fist.

"Let's play together!" he laughed.

---

The quirk shined even more as their holder was preparing themselves to use a lot of power, and Izuku realized he wouldn't make it in time.

---

As death was coming for him, Kouta's mind was filled with his parents. His mom, his dad, how they had experienced exactly that, the sorrow and abominable pain their death had brought, how it was over.

While Muscular was laughing, because he was about to finish what he had started with the Water Hose.

And suddenly, Kouta's feet weren't touching the ground anymore, and something was holding him and hurling him through the air like the scariest roller coaster ever invented, and Kouta felt himself swirling, then gently brought to the ground. Miraculously, his legs accepted to carry him so he didn't drop to the ground and start crying or throwing up. One or the other.

And in front of him, Midoriya. Pale, blood on his face, and so small compared to the the villain in front of them who had an amused smile on his face, as if he had found something he would love breaking even more than Kouta.

But Midoriya's eyes were burning as they were looking at Muscular.

"Kouta," he called, not looking at him but this simple world rang trough the child. "Run."

---

Usually, confronted with a S-ranked villain with a muscle fibers quirk and with a very small child to protect, Izuku would have called every back-up he could think off. Heroes, his classmates, the police, the firemen, hell, even the scouts and tactical air support. But when he had grabbed Kouta, his phone had flown, and he had been too busy trying to use Shock Absorption -a last minute inspiration to act as a cushion so Kouta wouldn't break any bones- to save it.

So now, his phone was in pieces, and Transfer had been gently nudging at him to take a nap for a a while now.

Izuku glanced at Kouta only to see the child's huge eyes staring at Muscular, a deer in the headlights. No sign of intelligence here, only the freeze option of the Fight, Freeze, Flee response. Izuku could hardly blame him.
"It's going to be fine," he smiled despite the pain inside his skull. "I am here to save you."

It made Muscular laugh, his quirk keeping to tug at Transfer, pink fibers spreading on his arms. His quirk was strong, so interesting and terrible at the same time, because that was the kind of power one obtained by going beyond his limits again and again.

"Only a hero student would say something like that."

Izuku's fingers clawed, itching for a quick solution even though Kouta was here.

"You're Midoriya Izuku, aren't you? You're on my kill list but I think I can take my time. Tell me: will you bleed?"

Muscular ran at him, pink fibers all over his arms and hands, almost as fast as All Might, but Izuku was already in movement, meeting him halfway -away from Kouta- and he avoided a mean punch by dodging under his arm, and slapping his hand on the villain's forearm, Transfer moving to grab the quirk.

And nothing happened.

What?

Pure panic flooded him as his quirk wasn't working, the same way others might have panicked when it had been stolen from them, maybe. Muscular's quirk seemed too far away, or blocked by something, like almost but not exactly that. It doesn't make sense, I usually don't touch mutation quirks but I got Tsubasa's wings once, it should work, what is wrong this time....

Muscular took advantage of his confusion to swipe him off his feet, and he grabbed his ankle right above his red sneaker, only to smash Izuku into the ground, under Kouta's horrified scream. The shock rattled Izuku to the bones but that was what three Shock Absorption quirks were for, and still mid air as the villain was about to do that again but against the side of the mountain this time, Izuku flicked both his fingers at the villain's head, Air Blasts in tow.

The double Air Blast stunned Muscular but didn't make him go down, and his horrible steel-like fingers gripped at Izuku's leg, as if he wanted to break his ankle. Resistance, Durability, and Shock Absorptions laughed at this idea, and Strength fueled his next kick, his heel smashing into the almost unprotected -at least compared to the rest of the bio armor- fingers, forcing the villain to let him go.

Izuku fell, his hand finding the ground, and he did a flip to come back to his feet, Jump and Speed allowing to ram into Muscular, whose whole body was turning into a thick armor.

It didn't matter.

Izuku was at his limits, so this had to end here and now.

Red lines were dancing on his skin as he hit the villain, with all the quirks he had once used to destroy the zero pointer. To protect Uraraka. Because that was what it was about. Protecting Kouta, making sure they stayed alive and went home.

Muscular was smiling when the punch connected with his torso.
Kouta screamed as the shockwave of the fight was sending him flying above the cliff, his quirk useless, his hands desperately trying to reach out to something, anything, only for someone to grab his wrist at the last second.

He blinked, only to see a very ruffled Midoriya holding him, blood on his face, and dark circles under his eyes. Kouta was just as relieved that he was caught before falling to his death as he was to confirm this insane and incredible boy who had had been extremely mean to, had survived.

Midoriya brought him back on the ground, with one hand and without showing any sign that Kouta had any significant weight.

"You defeated him..." Kouta started, but didn't know how to finish his line of thought.

That had never been a man to him, but a monster. A symbol of everything wrong.

"I suppose," Midoriya nodded slowly, still watching where Muscular had landed, "but he probably heals quickly so there is no need to stay here longer than necessary ."

He took one step back and stumbled. Kouta was about to catch him, but the older kid found his balance again and pretended that nothing had happened. But he was horribly pale, and his nose was bleeding, and he looked sick.

"What's happening?"

They had to go back to the camp. Midoriya might have fought like All Might, but something was obviously wrong.

"It's nothing. I am just starting to get a little tired."

A mad laugh answered him.

"You're good," Muscular grinned as he got back to his feet, absolutely delighted. "I knew you would be, but damn!"

Izuku waited, letting him talk, and not because he wanted more information.

But because he needed to freaking breathe as his whole body was screaming at him to stop what he was doing.

"Now that I think about it, you wouldn't know someone named Bakugou?"

Next to him, Kouta froze, obviously thinking about Kacchan. He looked at Izuku, worried, probably wondering why the villains were targeting him -trying to find the student with an literal explosive temper didn't seem like a good idea- but Izuku wasn't about to confirm where he was.

"He left for the hospital this morning," he said to Muscular with a straight face. "Food poisoning."

Muscular stopped, frowning, before tilting his head, as if he was wondering if Izuku was serious. 
"Puking and everything. Awful," Kouta confirmed instead of listening to Izuku and running for his life.

It made Muscular laugh, and he changed his eye prosthesis like it was nothing, while Izuku was slowly backing down with Kouta. To the woods, to the exit.

Not that they could outrun him. He was fast, and with his back completely exposed, and Kouta in his arms, Izuku would be at his mercy. If anything went wrong, they would both be dead.

"Well, it's not like I care," Muscular added as Izuku was trying to control the pain. Even the light of the blue fire on the horizon was hurting his eyes. "I am here because I like strong people. And you could be one of them. But you tend to announce your punches. And worst of all, you lack the drive to fight."

He stopped. And he pointed at Kouta, smiling like a beast that had his first taste of blood in years, and who now wanted more, at least enough to bathe in it.

"This kid... I am going to kill him," he promised. "I am going to break him easily, and then, we will see if that puts you in a serious disposition."

Behind Izuku, Kouta made a sound that could have belonged to a scared kitten.

Izuku was weakened. His quirk was acting out. He was in pain.

But this simple sound, the delight it was bringing to Muscular... it unleashed something dark and screaming that he had caged all his life. It spread through him, making him light-headed, and even though it didn't diminish the pain and the exhaustion, he suddenly didn't care anymore.

The beginning of a smile started to bloom on Izuku's lips, but there was no joy in it. Fear had taken a hold of him, merciless because there was no way to circumvent this problem. He couldn't steal the quirk, the organic armor was smothering the force of his attacks, and he couldn't outrun him.

But fear wasn't the only dark emotion unleashed. For there was rage. Rage that Muscular thought this was a game, rage because he loved scaring a child and he would have loved to kill him too.

The world became glacial.

"Kouta, run," he said quietly. "I will stop him."

Kouta hesitated, obviously not wanting to leave him, but he finally obeyed, sobbing.

"Walk away," Izuku said to Muscular, and he barely recognized his own voice. "Just walk away or you will die."

Muscular's grin widened, probably because it was exactly what he wanted to hear. He wasn't looking at Kouta, couldn't when all he wanted was a strong foe and Izuku would be his last opponent even if it killed him.

"I knew you were going to be interesting," Muscular grinned, his skin bursting into a living armor, so much speed and power, and worse of all, unlimited energy.

That wouldn't save him. Because Izuku wasn't allowed to fail.

"MIDORIYA!" the villain roared.

Muscular went at him, literally a mountain of muscles, and as Izuku hit, he could only halt the
villain. It felt like trying to stop a tornado with his bare hands. He kept pushing, his power screaming through his veins, desperately blocking the villain's momentum, just holding on, second after second.

Izuku was the only rampart between Kouta and a certain death.

*Everything will be alright.*

His foothold was slipping. In term of weight, he just wasn't enough to cancel Muscular's momentum and by the time his hold broke, even with Shock Absorption, he would be crushed against any solid surface.

*I won't let him hurt anyone.*

Izuku shifted like water, flowing to Muscular's side and out of his way.

Letting him continue his mad charge towards Kouta.

Before Izuku kicked the blood beast in the back, putting all his strength, all his speed, all his fear and all his rage into the kick. Every chain he had placed upon himself, every fear of hurting someone, every fear of hurting himself, shattered.

Muscular was driven into the ground like he was hit by a train.

Izuku didn't wait to see in what state he was.

He punched him again and again, his quirks roaring inside him, driving Muscular further into the ground. Because as long as he could move, he was a threat.

*I won't let you kill us.*

He could feel things breaking under his fist, underneath all those muscles, but Muscular was still desperately trying to get up, screaming, trying to get up to murder him.

Izuku never let him. At one point, he changed the arm he was using, not because it hurt, but to keep the same amount of earth-shattering strength.

He stopped only when Muscular stopped moving.

And at this point, the villain was embedded into the mountain ground.

Izuku hadn't checked if Muscular was still alive. It didn't seem to really matter at the time, not when he knew the villain couldn't go after them for now.

He could feel the blood which had splashed on his hands and sneakers, horribly warm on his cold skin. He had tried to at least wipe his hands on his shorts, but he hadn't been especially successful.

Despite *Zoom* and *Night vision*, the teenager didn't manage to find Kouta until the child called him weakly, and he actually found him hidden under a bush. Not a hiding spot an adult or a teenager could use, and it was probably smarter than running.
Izuku knelt just as the exhaustion hit him. Truth to be told, he would have given anything to just drop on the ground, curl into a ball, and sleep. But he couldn't, not when they were in the middle of a villain attack.

Instead, he kept the anger close to the surface. Hidden, but it was the only thing giving him strength for now.

"It's over, Kouta," he called, aiming for a kind voice but only managing a flat one. "Everything is fine now."

Kouta crawled out of his hiding spot, and Izuku was about to give him his space when Kouta grabbed him by his shirt. He was shivering as he got to his feet, and he didn't let go.

"… You don't even know me. Why would you do that for me?"

Izuku draped the fireproofed jacket around Kouta's shoulders, with no idea of what to say. The clothes made in Momo entirely covered him.

"I knew you could have kicked any villain in the balls, so I took mercy on them," Izuku finally answered very seriously.

Kouta laughed or choked, definitely one or the other, he called him a moron, and he -oh miracle- gave him a quick hug. Maybe there was some warm feelings under all this spite and bitterness.

They walked back to the cliff, but nowhere near where Muscular was.

If he was that close to the fight, all he could hear were screams and something being punched with a lot of strength, so he wouldn't have been able to know who was winning between Muscular and I. It must have been terrifying.

"We need to go back to the camp," Kouta finally said while Izuku was pretending he wasn't seeing him wipe out his tears. "How did you arrive here?"

"I ran when I was about half way through the assigned road, in this direction," he explained while pointing to show him.

For a moment, they both looked at the forest that was a little too on fire for both of their tastes.

"Well, I have to admit that there was less fire when I passed through there, but I am sure it will be fine."

Chapter End Notes

I meant to take two weeks to write without worrying but *shrugs* I am blaming all of you for that.

You will have your answer about why Transfer didn't work.
Izuku was starting to have an idea of why the Christian hell was made of flames.

The heat was suffocating, devouring the oxygen, drying him up, and without the mask he was wearing, the smoke would have suffocated him. Even now, it was doing a number on his eyes.

Avoiding the flames wasn't enough, for they generated enough residual heat to be compared to a furnace, so he was running at full speed through the woods, passing from the shadows to the flames, Kouta curled up on his back. The child was covered from head to toe with the fire resistant fabric offered by Yaoyorozu, while Izuku had clothes that were as resistant as his hero costume, but also Resistance, Durability, Speed, and in the worse case scenario, Minor Healing.

"A Heat Resistance quirk would have been lovely," he complained under his breath.

"What?" Kouta asked, accidentally squeezing Izuku's throat to get closer and to try to hear the incriminating mumblings.

"Nothing."

Let's hope you can protect your students, Eraserhead, the villain had said.

And mere moments after he had started running, something incredibly loud had resonated from the mountains. Shouta couldn't afford to think about who might have been there. He couldn't afford to think that one of his students had been targeted. He had to focus on finding Mandalay so she could warn his students. Or Ragdoll, so he would find them one by one if he had to.

He sensed the presence before he could see it. Someone running through the woods, moving fast, and his hands were already on his scarf when a familiar voice called him.

"Sensei!"

Relief swept through him when he realized Midoriya and Kouta were here, a feeling that shattered as soon as he realized that Midoriya was covered in blood and that Kouta was clinging to the student like he was his personal safety blanket. He was wearing a dark fabric Shouta didn't recognize and a smoke mask, and since Midoriya had been paired up with Yaoyorozu when they had entered the forest, he could guess where they had obtained them. Midoriya's own mask was in his hand.

And the green-haired teenager looked like a ghost. Pale despite the traces of soot on his skin, dark lines under his feverish eyes, and the blood on him was fresh. On his face, on his clothes, on his hands, and even on his shoes. One must have been because of the intense use of his quirk - Shouta remembered that he had swept blood from his nose right after the match with Todoroki- but the rest... He must have had an encounter with a villain.
Most hero students were conditioned not to use their quirks, which served to save their files and to not have the Hero Commission breathing down their neck. But Midoriya was probably alive because he was one of the few who didn't hesitate to use his quirk in self-defense, and the others didn't have this advantage.

And whatever he had done, it was on Shouta's head because he had been responsible of the safety of the camp.

He would allow himself to be horrified later. Horrified that one of his students had to fight for his life, probably in front of Kouta to protect him.

They were almost in the worst case scenario. And it was because the situation could get worse that he managed not to immediately drag Midoriya back to safety.

"They are targeting Kacchan," Midoriya said quickly, the words stumbling into each other, "I don't know why, can you take care of Kouta?"

Before he had the time to wonder why Bakugou was targeted by the villains, the child was transferred into his arms, and this crazy teenager was already starting to leave.

"Wait!"

Midoria stopped and half turned toward him, not willing to waste any time by facing him completely. If Shouta didn't stop him, he would disappear in the forest in a blink and he would jump head first into the danger.

"I am faster than you," the teenager covered in blood reminded the teacher. But who, apart from the obvious exhaustion, didn't seem injured. Despite being the probable source of the explosion of strength he had heard earlier.

Shouta didn't want to do that.

He didn't want to rely on a student to do a hero job. But he had to.

"I need you to tell something to Mandalay..."

Mandalay clawed at Spinner's face and she tried to get between him and an unconscious Pixie-Bob, but Magne's magnetism took a hold of her and she starting to float in the air, pulled by an invisible force.

Tiger dropped on the magnetic villain with the wrath that her teammate was always showing every time one of them was targeted, and Mandalay fell down on her feet again.

While Spinner was bringing his ridiculous sword made of swords down on her.

She jumped to avoid it, bracing herself...

And her favorite teenage insomniac who really shouldn't be here appeared from nowhere and kicked the sword with both feet, shattering it upon impact before kicking Spinner in the chest so
hard he flew and his not-quite-flight was abruptly stopped by a tree.

"Kouta is safe!" Midoriya screamed, still running.

Relief flooded her.

_He went and retrieved him_, she realized. At that moment, she would have done anything for this kid out of sheer gratitude.

But he was also a boy on a battlefield. A kid with blood on him, so maybe hurt.

"Go back to the camp!" she ordered, already worrying about him and being distracted by his mere presence. "It's not safe!"

"Not now! They are targeting Kacchan! Everyone has to know!" Midoriya screamed from afar, circling around them to not implicate himself in their fight "And I have a message from Aizawa-Sensei!"

**Who is this? And what does Eraserhead want?**

Mandalay multitasked and ran at Magne, helping Tiger so no one would have their head bashed in again.

And before she could reach her, Magne stumbled back as an air blast hit her. Tiger didn't even question it and punched her in the face.

"To every students," Midoriya said, his hand raised as he ran in case he had to slow down Magne again, "in the name of the Pro Hero Eraserhead, you are allowed to fight!"

And he disappeared in the forest.

---

**Worst. Summer. Camp. Ever.**

Toru was surrounded by smoke, unable to see at two meters in front of her, and she was dragging Jirou with her. Her friend had started to slow down little by little as the smoke had gotten to her. The same way it was burning and darkening Toru's lungs, half smothering her, and it was destroying her eyes, but at this point, she didn't care. Plus ultra. Semper fi. Whatever.

They were getting out.

And then, she would bitch about this trip for the rest of the remaining year, with all her friends, and next year, they would laugh about this crazy trip.

Because they were all getting out unharmed of this mess.
Izuku had been stupid enough to pride himself into how he managed to never overuse his quirk, and he was now paying the price for it. He had no stamina for that, didn't know his limits, and his head was threatening to split open, but fortunately, only metaphorically.

Maybe.

It wasn't arranged by Mandalay's messages ringing in his head, but he couldn't deal with that now. Not when there were several quirks ahead, one of them extremely powerful and almost calling his name. He would rest once everyone was safe.

The noises of something huge and rampaging reached him before he could start to discern movements in the dark, Night Vision coming to him an instant later, and when he arrived where he was needed, he stayed still for moment.

Mesmerized by what he was seeing.

Dark Shadow had grown and gone berserk, power in his every movements, the quirk out of control for maybe the first time, especially as the darkness around them was awakening every bit of negative emotion this night had brought, and it was the most incredible thing Izuku had ever seen.

Trees and rocks were destroyed in the rampage, but what got Izuku out of his awe was the scream that escaped Tokoyami, something horrible full of despair and pain or frustration. It dragged him back to reality in an instant.

Just as someone was sneaking behind him, trying to grab him from behind.

Izuku grabbed the arm that was closing on him, Strength in tow, and he had the good idea to glance behind him, so he recognized Shouji in time not to break his arm like a toothpick.

His friend's eyes were wide, almost frightened, and Izuku let go, before seeing that one of his arm was bloody.

Because it was gone.

Shouji took advantage of his horror to drag him behind the safety of thick trees, where Tetsutetsu and Kendo were waiting. They were both ruffled and bruised, though Tetsutetstu wasn't wearing his iron skin anymore, but they had the audacity to look at him and asked at the same time: "What the hell happened to you?"

Izuku, a little too tired to talk, pointed at Tokoyami because that was the question that needed to be answered.

"A villain attacked us," Shouji whispered via the mouth of one of his remaining arms. "I was hurt protecting Tokoyami and that's why he lost control..." He saw Izuku's look. "Don't worry, it's a limb made by my quirk. It hurt but I can grow it back as long as it's my spare arm created by my quirk."

It was good to know that Izuku wouldn't have to ask All Might's help to break in wherever the noumu was to steal Regeneration and to slap it on Shouji long enough for him to heal.

"As long as it's my spare arm created by my quirk."

Izuku's mind went back to Muscular. To the moment he had tried and failed to take his quirk.

By touching the muscles fibers created by his quirk, instead of grabbing him by his throat like what
was his first reflex. He had almost no experience with mutation quirks, but if he had to compare with Nagisa, it was like trying to take her quirk by touching her web. No wonder it didn't work. What an idiot.

Kendo sneaked a look at Dark Shadow who was roaring, if a sound that reminded of primal rage and joy at the same time could be called that. Whatever she saw, she decided she didn't need to keep looking.

"We've been trying to lure him closer to the fire to weaken him enough for Tokoyami to regain control but Dark Shadow is smart," she told without raising her voice. "He attacks everything in sight but also rushes towards any loud noises."

"And he punches hard," the man of steel added like he intimately knew that. "And I don't want to be heartless, but I am wondering why we can't pick him up in the morning and help the others who are more vulnerable at the moment."

Izuku expected Shouji's glare but not Kendo's.

"Shouji told us Bakugou was targeted," she explained. "But it doesn't mean that the League will only target him when there are so many potential victims of opportunity, and at least one of them has a fire quirk that could neutralize Dark Shadow and leave Tokoyami exposed."

Izuku leaned on a tree, stopped using his quirks, and let them talk so he could rest discreetly. His brain sighed in relief and silently thanked him for it.

"What do you think will happen if a student is abducted from UA by villains?" Kendo continued.

"At best, a valued hostage," Izuku answered absentmindedly. "At worst, turned into whatever the noumu is to make an example."

The three of them paled, and Izuku remembered none of them had confronted the noumu and Shigaraki a the USJ.

"The noumu is a designed weapon. Shigaraki bragged about it."

And thanks to All Might, Izuku knew it was because someone had pumped it full of quirks until it turned into a puppet. People who didn't have Transfer didn't survive to that, and as a probable descendant of the original quirk user, he felt it was his duty to kick in the teeth anyone who would try to do that to his classmates.

"Apart from this nightmarish scenario that will haunt me for the rest of my life," Kendo started again after a long hesitation, "UA will have proven that they are unable to protect their students. This would mean that the villains are stronger than the heroes, would cause unrest, and the very existence of the hero classes would be in question. So we have to help Tokoyami as quickly as possible, to help all the others."

Izuku watched Dark Shadow who was berserk but who had also probably managed to drive away every villain present in this part of the woods by his sheer presence.

Is he in pain or freaked out?

Because if he was only freaked out, that would be a shame not to take advantage of it.

"I might have a plan," he finally announced.
Izuku explained the plan.

"You're insane," Shouji told him.

Why do people keep telling me that?

"That's not the point," he insisted before he jumped out of his hiding spot before his classmates could manage to drag him back, sauntered towards Dark Shadow to get his attention, dodged a powerful swipe when he got it, and put some distance between the birb of darkness and himself.

"Tokoyami?" he called. "Are you in pain?"

"Go away! I am going to hurt you!"

Izuku dodged the next swipe so fast he had to use all his quirks, and reappeared farther away.

"Are you in pain?" he repeated.

Tokoyami answered something that bluntly meant that Izuku was extremely annoying and that he wanted him to go away.

"I am going to take that as a no!" Izuku screamed back, adrenaline making him reckless but he wasn't about to stop the rush to fall back into fear. "Hang on and let Dark Shadow do his thing!"

Focus.

And with one quirk, suddenly, Dark Shadow couldn't see anything but him, and when Izuku started to run, it pursued him, destroying everything on his way and unable to notice the three freaked out students that were running right behind him.

Yuuga would never admit it, but he was extremely relieved when, as they were confronted by a villain who was salivating over a human arm and who was every orthodontists' nightmare, Todoroki threw an iceberg at him in what was a blatant violation of the quirk use laws and the interdiction of using excessive force in self defense.

The villain half disappeared under the ice, even more trapped than Serou had been at the Sport Festival, but he was still crying about how he had a job to do, how this flesh had smelled delicious and how much he wanted it.

There are other villains here, just like him, who want to murder us. There is someone who already lost an arm. Maybe more.

And Yuuga had barely finished the thought that a tree not too far away fell, startling both teenagers, but it didn't stop here. The sound of something being destroyed closed in little by little, as if the forest was crumbling on itself, but it was coming from a direction opposite to the fire and they couldn't see what was happening when it was hidden by the shadows.

Just that it was coming their way.

"Can you see what it is?" Todoroki asked.
Yuuga shot with his navel laser. Only once, just to see if it was a villain, a quirk, or if someone up there had decided a villain attack wasn't enough and to add a natural disaster to what was already a horrible night.

The lone shot illuminated the night for a moment, revealing a humanoid maelstrom of darkness who was furiously trying to murder someone who was running for his life.

Yuuga took a second to recognize Dark Shadow.

And to realize that the one being pursued was a bloody Midoriya who looked as bothered as if he was in the middle of his morning jog. He saw them. And he smiled.

Oh, bordel.

"Don't use your quirks!" Midoriya screamed, rushing towards them at an amazing speed.

Oh, double bordel.

"Not again," Todoroki sighed, and Yuuga didn't understand what he meant until Midoriya grabbed them by their respective hands and forced them to flee with him.

And being dragged by someone with super speed was far from enjoyable.

Ochako had just immobilized the villain that had tried to drink Tsuyu's blood when she distracted her by mentioning a subject she didn't care to elaborate on and stabbed her in the thight to suck her blood.

So she forgot everything Gunhead had ever told her and she dropped her fist on the villain's skull, making her yelp in pain. She raised her hand again, about to slap the back of her head with all fingers to make her float into space for all she cared... when Dark Shadow, the size of a tree, passed like a wrecking ball.

He was running after Midoriya who was dragging Todoroki and Aoyama with him.

None of those two boys seemed happy about their current predicament.

For a moment, Ochako, Toga and even Tsuyu still nailed by the hair to a tree just stared, incredulous. Midoriya and co kept running, bringing havoc and destruction in their wake, without noticing any of the girls.

However, that was not the case of the students from 1-A and 1-B who were running right behind Dark Shadow, hidden by his size, using him as a shield as they crossed the forest. Several of them saw Ochako and Tsuyu and started to run in their direction.

"Nope, I don't want to die," Toga Himiko mumbled, a blush on her cheeks.

Ochako thought she was ready. That she was holding Toga. But somehow, she managed to slip away, making her fall, and the villainous girl starting to flee. Ochako didn't try to catch her, running towards Tsuyu because she was defenseless.
And right before Toga disappeared in the forest, she turned towards Ochako, and waved her goodbye, smiling as if they were friends.

Katsuki had a very good reason for blasting a hole through the wall of their classroom and running through it, followed by all the other extras.

Aizawa-Sensei had been fighting clones of the same flamey guy, an even more emo version of Half-and-Half if that was possible, while Vlad-Sensei had been staying inside to protect them, refusing to allow them to get out there and to stop sitting on their asses, and Katsuki couldn't do anything without an authorization.

And as if it wasn't enough, those villains were targeting him, and it had been fucking Deku of all people who had managed to announce that via Mandalay.

And then, one of the same fuckers that had attacked them at the USJ and who had almost bashed their teacher's skull had decided to pay a visit to Aizawa-Sensei, except that this time, he had even more mutation quirks – a chainsaw quirk, as if he didn't look like a slasher enough- and it was something Erasure couldn't do anything against, so Vlad-Sensei had barricaded them in and ran to help Eraserhead.

And as soon as he was out, the scarred sucker had popped out from nowhere and he had set the building on fire with the same blue flames that were devouring the forest, trapping them in what soon be an inferno.

Katsuki had his fucking limits.

They literally escaped their remedial classes only for the villain to approach, blue flames starting to appear next to his hand.

Katsuki prepared himself to throw an explosion next to him, wanting him to knock him down without actually having a mention in his file about how he had killed someone without a licence...

… And Grapehair jumped in front of him, screaming, and he trew a bazillions of sticky balls at the villain.

No one was expecting it, not even Grapehair, judging from his expression.

In a second, the villain was covered in dozens and dozens of smothering purple spheres and he dropped to the ground, trying to breathe. Just as Katsuki was wondering if Grapehair had just murdered someone, the villain dissolved into strange mud, which meant he was a mere clone, and somewhere in the distance, UA's PR sighed in relief.

Now that this problem was taken care of, they all turned towards the two pro heroes still trying to handle the noumu, and Katsuki might have been biased but it really looked like they needed an explosion to definitely deal with him.

He took one step towards them.

And something roaring burst out of the forest, taking down several trees in his wake.
Everyone blinked at the sight of Dark Shadow, now the size of a small building, chasing Deku who was dragging Half and Half and Sparkle with him.

Deku took a brutal turn to get out of Dark Shadow's way, and with his size, the chicken under steroids didn't manage to follow him. Instead, pushed by his momentum, he continued in a straight line, saw the noumu, and had the excellent idea of crushing him in his fist before throwing him away.

Only after that, and Katsuki didn't fail to notice it, did Aizawa-Sensei used his quirk to make Dark Shadow disappear. Birdface fell to the ground and a fuck ton of other students he hadn't seen before swarmed him.

Izuku dropped Todoroki and Aoyama and he just stopped everything. He stopped using his quirks, he stopped running, stopped moving, and honestly, if he could allow himself to drop to the ground and to stop breathing, he would have done that too.

Instead, he leaned on the nearest support, who happened to be Todoroki's shoulder, and he waited for his brain to stopped being muddied by quirk overuse. He knew he had to go to Tokoyami, he knew he had to apologize for using him as a make-shift tank and ask him if he was okay, but he... he had trouble thinking.

This was a completely unknown place. There was one time where he was little where he had trained with his quirks, had wanted to imitate All Might even though he had not been used to the multi quirk use, and he had bled from his nose and his ears and freaked out his mother when he had came back. A night of sleep had healed him, but he had stopped as soon as he could. Right now, he didn't have this luxury.

"Are you okay?" Todoroki asked him. Izuku had just wanted to use him as a comfortable spot to rest but his friend passed a hand under his shoulders and his arm to half carry him, which was absolutely not necessary.

But he didn't step away. For reasons.

"Peachy," Izuku lied with a straight face.

"You're bleeding," Aoyama hesitated, obviously worried. "What's happening to you?"

Izuku started to grab his shirt to wipe his face, but Aoyama produced a fancy handkerchief that he immediately ruined by cleaning himself up.

"Every quirk has its limits," Todoroki reminded him.

_Okay, you rested enough._

Izuku took a step back, hold himself tight, and erased any trace of exhaustion in his expression. His eyes were wide opened, his face was relaxed, and with a little luck, he would be able to fake it until he made it.
"I will hold on for as long as needed. I just need to take a nap afterwards," Izuku declared, just as Aizawa-Sensei and Vlad King were rounding them up.

Dabi, who had been watching the students being evacuated from the safety of the shadows, almost jumped out of his skin when Kurogiri appeared next to him, but he would be damned if anyone would catch him being jumpy just because he was in the middle of a coordinate attack of UA's finest.

"Aren't you a little late for the fun?" he drawled.

Though it was still better than their boss. Shigaraki hadn't deigned leaving the bar, though he had at least the courtesy of giving Dabi the command of the Vanguard and his personal monster who only obeyed him, and who was already coming back from wherever this quirk had thrown him.

"I was making sure none of you were trapped in the middle of a fire, you ingrate," Kurogiri said, obviously ticked off.

Oh.

"Thank you..." Dabi started to say but Kurogiri wasn't listening to him and he took the binoculars from Dabi's hands before frantically looking for who was there.

The answer was all of the students minus four. Eraserhead was far from stupid and he had decided to start evacuating them under Vlad King's supervision while he looked for the remaining students and the Wild Wild Pussycats.

After a moment, Kurogiri gave the binoculars back, and he seemed less... twitchy, if that word could apply to the lieutenant of the League.

"Compress should arrive soon," Dabi informed him, "but if you can grab Bakugou, it would make us gain time."

He had sent back Twice to lend a hand to Magne and Spinner, but also because he wasn't the most subtle teammate to have. As for the rest, they had decided to stay away from whatever had haunted the woods and caused chaos and destruction in its wake until Eraserhead took care of it.

He took another look via the binoculars, only to see that Todoroki Shouto had slowed down. He was keeping an eye on Midoriya who was looking at the forest, and for a moment, Dabi wondered if he had heard them. The two kids were at the back of the pack, protecting the place most likely to be attacked.

They were both to be avoided at all costs, even if Shigaraki wanted Midoriya dead.

"I can but it would be preferable if they stopped moving for a moment," the barman admitted.

"That can be arranged," Dabi smiled.
A wall of fire appeared from nowhere, a blinding blue fire that made everyone freeze on instinct.

As for Izuku, who had been using Night Vision at the time, he almost got blind and groaned from the needles of pain that were stabbing his brain through his eyes.

And by the time he could vaguely differentiate shapes and difference in luminosity, everyone was running blindly, ready to use their quirks, to do everything to escape this exhausting nightmare that had ended with people trying to kill them and the adults supposed to protect them proving that they weren’t up to the task.

But Izuku had one advantage on them.

He had felt where the quirk had come from.

Zoom.

The villain was still hidden in the woods.

I can see you.

Izuku ran towards him, using all his Speed quirks, not caring anymore. He noted that some of his friends were trying to follow him but unless they were Iida, they wouldn't catch back with him.

A black portal opened right next to the villain but he had seen Izuku running towards him with the firm intention of trampling all over him until he beat the pyromaniac tendencies out of him. The fire quirk user hold out a hand towards him, ready to cover his exit with a new attack.

Izuku prepared himself to throw back his flames at him with Air Pressure. He had fought Todoroki. He knew exactly how fight a fire quirk, just not how not to neutralize the user without hurting him. Not something one would dared to attempt on a friend.

He didn't have as many scruples on someone trying to kill him.

Air Pressure.

Izuku saw the mist appearing around him too late, and it spread as he tried to escape.

The villain managed to reach the warp portal.

And not even a second later, cool ether-like fog swallowed Izuku, and when it spat him out, he was back in the mountains.

Shouta had just retrieved the four lost students and was carrying Jirou in a fireman carry when an explosion resonated through the woods, followed by a scream of rage. Bakugou's signature.

Away from the buses and the evacuation point, which meant that something had gone severely wrong, and knowing Vlad King, the villains would have to pass over him before they could snatch
a student.

He looked at the students he had just pulled out from danger. Jirou was unconscious. Yaoyorozu had a concussion and she was currently being carried by Awase who had a thousand-yard stare. As for Hakagure, she was still kicking and running, but only because at this point, she was being fueled by pure spite.

In the distance, another explosion resounded.

---

Katsuki was warped out in the middle of a demi-dozen of villains, just in time to see Tokoyami being turned into a marble, and he avoided the same fate by blowing the two-bits magician's face off. At least, he tried with a lot of enthusiasm. Sadly, he failed, but it at least put some distance between them.

"How violent for a hero..." Katsuki had the time to hear before a girl tried to stab him, then a quirk lifted him from the ground and made him fly towards one of the villain, who bashed him on the head with something that looked like a giant magnet.

Katsuki took fucking offense to that and made it known with another explosion, his ears still ringing.

He used two small explosions to propel himself through the air, used more to create a circular motion not unlike a tornado, which would build up oxygen to fuel the incoming explosion.

The villains started to take cover, realizing they were about to be blasted by Katsuki's most powerful attack.

*Howitzer Impact.*

And the villain who had almost set them on fire threw blue flames at him.

It missed Katsuki.

But the heat was enough to activate the nitroglycerin on his palm.

Which was the equivalent of shooting at a grenade he had been holding and couldn't drop.

---

Half of Muscular's body was hurting and he was almost giddy about it.

He had never cared about the League of villains. Attacking some hero kids could be fun, but it was only a warm-up, and what he had really been interested in were heroes. Strong heroes. They had told him All Might probably wouldn't be here, but he had to try. To have the chance to truly feel alive instead of just having superficial fun with breaking fragile people.
His superior quirk meant that every fight ended too quickly. Most people died as soon as he touched them. And when they tried to fight back, they could rarely bypass the protection his quirk offered. But Midoriya... Oh, he was strong. He got Muscular because he had tricked him and didn't allow him to get back on his feet once he was down, which was almost underhanded, especially for a hero, but next time... Next time, it would be even better. Now that he knew how merciless Midoriya could be once provoked, it promised a good, blood-pumping, blissful fight to the death.

Muscular starting to crawl out the hole where he had been almost buried, using his arms for he couldn't feel his legs for now. He had tried to move his toes, but they weren't responding since he had waken up with the worse headache of his life.

He wasn't worrying about that. Years ago, he had panicked when his eye had been taken, but his injury had taught him that nothing was as dramatic as it seemed on the moment. Maybe he would heal. If not, prosthesis were easy to come by when you knew the right guy, and he would find a way to accommodate his quirk around it.

He just needed to escape. Then rest. Maybe find someone with a healing quirk. You could find anything in the underground if you knew where to look and if you were willing to pay the price.

The mist guy had said he would come at the drop point but he didn't know how much time had passed and if he was still waiting.

Muscular dragged himself forwards.

Then he heard the sound of someone running with an enhancer quirk.

He dropped to the ground before he even have the time to think, in time to see Midoriya running to the cliff, took the slightest pause before he jumped in the void, but he ultimately decided to turn around and to climb downwards.

He didn't even look at Muscular. And Muscular made sure not to draw his attention.

They would fight again.

But not now. Just not now.

---

Dabi had just secured Bakugou who was half conscious after being knocked out by his own explosion, his right arm a mess of blood and burns, when Eraserhead appeared from nowhere, jumped in the air, and kicked Moonfish so hard in the face that his head crashed into a tree and he dropped to the ground, not moving anymore.

That would have been a perfect moment to be warped out, especially as Magne was grabbed by the capture weapon and hauled through the air, only to be thrown at Twice who protested and assured it was nothing almost at the same time.

"Noumu!" Dabi called.

His own personal monster jumped in front of Eraserhead, who kicked him with a scream of pure rage, only to stop him in his tracks instead of hurting him, Eraser's support item already swirling around his opponent.
But Dabi had never intended for the noumu to stop him, only for him to block Erasure's effect by standing in front of the pro hero.

And giving him time to throw flames at the two of them.

Only to be countered by a familiar wall of ice. The two opposite powers crashed into each other, steam rising in the air in response to the brutal change of temperatures, but where some could afford to use their powers for as long as they wanted, Dabi didn't have this luxury and he could only use his flames for a short amount of time before he literally caught on fire.

The ice spread towards them, just as black portals appeared where the members of the Vanguard were.

Finally.

The hero younglings and Eraserhead burst through the ice, running after them, now frantic. Ice was still trying to smother them as Todoroki Shouto knew he wouldn't be able to reach them in time, knew he couldn't afford to throw one of his massive attacks while there was a hostage.

"Too bad..." Dabi started...

… Only for something to appear from fucking nowhere and to snatch the target out of Dabi's fingers with an herculean strength. Dabi didn't think. His training took over as his fingers gripped a wrist, as he kicked a knee, not to stop someone with his own strength but to make him lose balance, and he used the momentum to make him fall.

He grabbed Midoriya by the back of his neck, pressing his face to the ground, just as Kurogiri was warping them out.

Todoroki Shouto screamed Midoriya's name.

And Bakugou, who had started to lean on his elbow to see what was happening, could only look at them disappearing, his eyes huge and afraid as he couldn't do anything to prevent them from escaping.

There were extremely cool fingers on the back of his neck, and a knee on his back. Someone wanted Izuku to stay on the ground and not to move, and since he didn't remember how that had happened, there was the real possibility that he had passed out for a couple of seconds, which was just disturbing.

But apart from that, the situation wasn't that bad. He wasn't using any quirks. He could finally rest. Think about a solution later. But more importantly, sleep and not using any more quirk for the time being.

"Where are we?" the villain who was holding Izuku asked.

"An intermediary location since you didn't secure our guests, Dabi," Kurogiri's familiar voice answered.
Guests? Plural?

Izuku opened one eye to see that they were in a forest, another one because it was definitely colder, and that the only source of light was coming from the villain with a lizard mutation quirk and a Stain cosplay. He was holding his phone and pointing the lamp towards the marble a villain looking like a magician was holding.

"Spinner," he was saying while Dabi and Kurogiri were talking timing when heroes were attacking to retrieve their friend and how a specific warper could sometimes hurry. "I understand why you want to be safe, but as long as I got him, I don't think this is necessary."

With the regret of someone who had seen something terrifying in the dark, Spinner put away his phone.

Izuku closed his eye and continued to pretend he was unconscious.

They have Tokoyami. I guess I will have to take care of that.

And how interesting that they knew that light was his weakness when Aizawa-Sensei had been the one to help him gain back control, but Izuku would worry about that later.

"Forgive me, Dabi," Kurogiri said. "I just didn't think all of you would have so much problems taking care of one teenager. That you didn't even manage to catch."

The villain standing over Izuku took a deep breath and probably bit his tongue in order not to answer.

"Where are Muscular and Moonfish?" the other villain who had been fighting the Wild Wild Pussycat with Spinner intervened.

And as she did, the magician approached.

Izuku could feel the effect of his quirk where Tokoyami's prison was.

"Moonfish was beaten by Eraserhead," Dabi answered as he moved to let the magician secure Izuku. "I don't know about Muscular."

Izuku called three quirks.

"Oh, yes," he said, as if he was talking about the weather. "No need to wait for him, I ran into him at the start of the attack and we had a chat."

For a second, everyone froze in surprise.

Maybe because they were convinced Izuku had been unconscious all this time.

Maybe because the words had hit them as they were realizing Muscular had been taken care of by Izuku himself.

The reason didn't matter. The only important thing was that the surprise made them pause, and this second was all that Izuku needed.

Strength. Speed. Jump.

Izuku threw Dabi at Kurogiri, jumped on his feet in the same movement, and punched the magician in the face.
The marble he had been holding disappeared as his concentration wavered, and Tokoyami appeared, his eyes wide.

Izuku grabbed him before his feet even touched the ground and threw an Air Pressure behind him as he ran like hell. It was like playing bowling with very befuddled villains as pins.

He looked back to see where was Kurogiri, the most serious threat, saw him under Dabi, but he didn't slow down. Distance was his friend right now.

But Izuku was dragging Tokoyami along, his friend was beyond freaked out, and he made the mistake of looking behind him, only to see the villains starting to get back on their feet and no help in sight. They weren't even at the Summer Camp anymore, and as if that wasn't enough, he stumbled as he tried to match Izuku's speed.

In the mountains. There were in other mountains.

"Kidnapped by the League," Izuku barked, hauling him back on his feet by the strength of his wrist. "Unknown location. Can you make Dark Shadow go berserk again?"

"What?"

Izuku didn't have the time for that. He was using as many speed quirks as he could but he wasn't managing to be as fast as usual. The run through the forest had been even more taxing than he had thought.

"You're untouchable when you do that. You need to do it again, then we need to separate."

Because soon enough, Izuku's body would revoke his permission for him to continue heaping abuse upon it. Dark Shadow wouldn't be incline to carry him, but Tokoyami would, and that would allow the League to catch them because he was carrying Izuku's dead weight.

But his friend didn't need to know that.

"Out of question!"

"You're like me," Izuku reminded him. "We are both very powerful as long as there is no one susceptible of being a collateral damage around us."

Tokoyami hesitated.

Long enough for a quirk to be used. Something took a hold of both of them, a force starting to pull them up, and dragging them backwards. Izuku whipped his arm behind him, glanced back, Aim, and flicked his finger, not looking back to see if the Air Blast had stopped the magnetic villain because he knew it would.

"Just trust me," Izuku dared to say. To lie.

Aizawa-Sensei would have called that a logical ruse.

"Do we have to run after them?" Compress asked, feeling incredibly stupid not to have taken care of the green-haired kid immediately.
For a moment, the remaining members of the Vanguard stared at the two overpowered students running in different directions, one of them having an out of control quirk that will haunt some nightmares after this night.

"I am bringing Shigaraki to help," Kurogiri sighed like someone who wasn't paid enough for this before warping away.

It was enough of an answer and they all ran after them.

---

Izuku stopped, panting, hidden behind a large tree, and tried to follow Dark Shadow with his mind. His head was echoing with pain and he was too tired to know if Tokoyami's quirk was used to its fullest, but he could feel it getting away, and that was what mattered.

He started walking, exhaustion dragging him down. He didn't run. He would tire out for nothing and the League would simply pick him up over there instead of here. Better to take his time, to heal from what he had inflicted to his organism, and fight if he needed to.

He needed to find a specific place. A place where he could see the sky.

Izuku kept an eye on the quirks around him. Someone using a quirk was after Tokoyami. There were others farther away from him, someone else present in these mountains, but there was no way to know if there were civilians, heroes, or villains.

And honestly, with his luck, it was probably three other villains.

Izuku dragged himself forwards. He would take care of one last thing, then he would use Vanish. Just one quirk to use for the rest of the night. He could do that.

So, of course, he was found a couple of minutes later, by the fire quirk user.

Pale, panting, and the proof that Izuku wasn't the only one to have overused his quirk tonight, Dabi tranquilly approached him, his arm away for his body for the moment where he would have to use his quirk.

"Give up," he told Izuku. "You look half-dead and no one is coming to rescue you."

Izuku looked at the sky. He was still in pain but that would have to do. *Plus ultra.*

"They will," Izuku promised.

It made Dabi smile and he started to raise his arm, not unlike the gesture Todoroki himself used to summon the flames of his left side.

Izuku smiled back, raised his hand to the sky, and called his quirk.

A pillar of blue fire rose to the sky. The same blue fire that had been used at the Summer Camp, that every hero had to know by now. It illuminated the sky, the kind of light that would be seen from everywhere.
A beacon in the darkness.

Dabi looked at him, mouth opened, the light of the blue flames perfectly showing the shock and the surprise on his face, then the horror as Izuku let his arm fall. He was already running when Izuku's new beautiful flames followed the movement and started to fall in his direction.
Blue flames were the hottest flames that could be produced by a fire quirk user. Their color were determined by their high-oxygen burn, while a yellow fire had this color due to a low-oxygen burn that would leave a lot of uncombusted particles.

Izuku knew this. Even if he hadn't, Dabi's scars should have been enough to realize that he didn't have the heat resistance necessary to use such a quirk, and usually, he would have never used so much power for a first use.

That was exactly the kind of stupid mistake with horrible consequences that one would do if he was so tired he wasn't quite thinking straight.

*Durability* and a circular *Air Pressure* were called half a second after Izuku started to use the stolen quirk, but it didn't completely save his arm and pain burst into his flesh. That probably saved Dabi's life as Izuku dropped the quirk as fast as he could.

Dabi kept running while Izuku made a point not to look at the damage on his arm. He could still move it, and that was the only thing he needed to know for now.

He needed to ignore the pain. To clear his mind from any worry. Because *Vanish* wouldn't work unless he was completely calm and if his mind was quiet and peaceful.

Only for a warp gate to appear, maybe twelve meters away from him.

"Seriously?" Izuku whined.

*Air Pressure*.

He raised his arm.

*If I aim well enough, can I throw them back through the warp gate?*

*Only one way to find out*, he decided as he flicked his middle finger.

Unfortunately, a warp gate appeared right in front of Shigaraki, swallowing Izuku's *Air Blast*, and the teenager immediately dodged when he realized where the attack would be transported next. It whistled right above his head, and he sensed the quirk again as Kurogiri tried to grab him.

*Not again.*

Izuku jumped back just in time, attacked again to give Kurogiri something to deal with, and he dodged the redirection only by listening to *Transfer*.

Warp Gate was an incredible quirk who could be used in a million of ways, but it also depended on
the coordination of the holder, and it had limits.

*Maybe I should take the quirk to know exactly what it does.*

The sky had been lightened by a pillar of flames, and Fumikage's heart dropped in his chest as he recognized the quirk that had been used in the forest. Because the only reason why one would use so much power was to smite someone in one powerful attack, and only someone as mighty as Midoriya could provoke such reaction.

Unleashed, Dark Shadow had become a protector and a destroyer, and he had covered an incredible distance as it hunted for light and sign of life, and Fumikage was trapped in the middle of the maelstrom of violence. Too far away.

Prisoner of the darkness that kept strengthening his quirk.

But in that moment, as Fumikage knew in his heart that Midoriya was the victim of this hellfire, he managed to do something. He didn't manage to stop Dark Shadow. Regaining control was impossible now that he had abandoned it, not without outside help, and the shadows of the trees had protected him from being weakened by the light of the flames.

But just for a moment, he regained something else. A need. A will.

And he redirected Dark Shadow to the desolated place he had once fled.

Izuku's world was pain, but he wasn't slowing down. He couldn't afford to when all the members of the League had converged on him as soon as he had managed not to be warped away by Kurogiri once again.

Any long-distance attack Izuku threw was intercepted by Kurogiri and redirected on him. Sometimes, *Transfer* managed to warn him in time. Sometimes, *Shock Absorption* was the only thing standing between him and being knocked down by his own attacks. It added to the pain echoing in his skull.

So much speed quirks. So much strain on his body that was begging him to stop, but listening to it meant to die.

*Acceleration.*

Izuku avoided the girl with the knives he never managed to see coming because she didn't seem to use any quirks, and he threw her at Twice so hard they both crashed into the dust. He was about to throw an air blast to keep them down but something pulled his whole body away, and he turned to see Magne.
And see the warp gate on his trajectory.

He kicked the ground with *Slide and Glide*, his food adhering to it like it was stuck and for a moment, his whole body felt like a piece of chewing gum being stretched. *Durability*. Just to give himself a second, and for a moment, white pain burst behind his eyes, blinding him.

No matter, he could feel where she was, and still used both *Aim* and *Air Pressure* to throw a twin *Air Blast* at her. His attack was interrupted by Kurogiri, who warped it away from Magne, protecting her, and as Izuku was spreading his senses, sight fully came back to him and he grabbed Spinner who had been sneaking up on him and who had thought he was being discreet.

He threw the Stain fan in front of him just in time for the redirected Air Blast to hit him.

Izuku still hanged on to Spinner, completely planning to use him as a hostage, but the golden sound of a quirk right next to him made him drop him and he dodged just in time for Mister Compress to not manage to compress his head. Without the rest of his body.

Izuku, snarling, kicked him in the chest with *Strength*, and he felt ribs cracking under the sole of his shoe as the magician flew away.

Only for Shigaraki to decay the ground under him, making him fall and allowing the villain to jump at him.

Izuku didn't even try not to fall. He embraced the call of gravity and crashed into the ground, but that was the simple part. The hard part was when he put his hands on the ground, pushed his body up, and spun, low to the ground, into what almost looked like a breakdance move, *Air Pressure* in tow and pushing away everyone around him with a circular *air blast*.

It bought him a couple of second, the satisfaction to see Kurogiri flat on his behind, the time to get back on his feet, and two seconds to breathe. It didn't buy him anything more because Shigaraki, despite being blasted away, ran back at him.

It wasn't the first time Izuku's attacks were basically brushed off by Shigaraki Tomura. He was ridiculously resistant and fast, and Izuku just let him come to him, watching him bridge the distant in seconds, his hands already reaching out to Izuku.

*Jump.*

His body begged him not to, but Izuku still did the flip, using Shigaraki's shoulders as a base and he landed right behind him. Shigaraki turned, not fast enough, and Izuku would have punched him in the head and sent him to sleep but Twice jumped at Izuku with the firm intention to cut his head off.

Izuku still quickly kicked Shigaraki into the side of the knee, sadly not enough to dislocate the articulation, but enough to hurt, then he shoulder-slammed Twice in the stomach because at this point, he was too tired to think of anything else.

*End the fight now. End the fight as soon as possible.*

He tried to run, and Kurogiri's warp gates blocked the way again, forcing him to run into another direction, and he took the occasion to flip Toga over his shoulder. Her knife grazed him but he barely felt it. Compared to the general pain he was in, a scratch wasn't even a distraction.

Or compared to the despair that was crashing into him in waves. Pure, undiluted despair at the idea of never seeing his mom again.
Or his right arm, the one who had been broken by the noumu an eternity ago, who was pulsing with pain. Not that it prevented him to use this same arm to elbow Spinner in the face.

Or the general feeling that his body was about to crash down, because he wasn't strong enough. 

*Just one last miracle*, he thought as he kept fighting on instinct, letting *Transfer* warn him when a quirk was being use, letting *Acceleration* save him when it wasn't the case. *One last trick so I can survive my mistakes.*

That was what heroes did, right? They somehow beat the odds.

Izuku delved within himself. Remembered a time where he wanted to be strong, so he wouldn't lose anything else. So he wouldn't lose anyone else.

He abandoned everything else to focus on all his *Strength* quirks, on *Air pressure*, and on *Resistance*.

Atsuhiro was in pain every time he breathed. The familiar sensation of broken ribs was burning through him, something that would slow him down, and getting back against the monster Dabi had brought was asking for death.

Midoriya was supposed to be a hero student. He was supposed to be at its limits. And yet, since they had caught back with him, no one had managed to hurt him. At times, he became a blur, avoiding their attacks, hitting in a flash before taking cover, and Atsuhiro was quite certain that if Kurogiri hadn't redirected most of his attacks, the Vanguard wouldn't have lasted long against him.

The showman that he was marveled at the display of strength and seemingly unlimited unforeseen developments. The man with broken ribs, and who had watched a teenage boy avoid attacks on attacks with what looked suspiciously like a preternatural sixth sense, wanted to cut his losses.

But their fearless leader was determined to end it. Atsuhiro hadn't thought much of Shigaraki, still had doubts, but he could recognize that he refused to be stopped by details like bone-crushing shockwaves.

For a moment, the villain and the hero looked at each other, both panting.

Midoriya's eyes were burning with something extremely cold.

Atsuhiro had noticed how he did that during the fight. The teenage boy sometimes looked at them like he wasn't seeing them, but at something hidden deep within, and that was incredibly disturbing.

"I hate you!" Shigaraki said as Twice, Toga, Spinner and him were closing on the boy.

For a moment, Midoriya just looked at him, expressing nothing.

Then, his face distorted in a feral grimace, something insane with rage revealing itself.

"I hate you too."
Midoriya lunged at them, his fist raised, impossibly fast.

Kurogiri spread himself between the vanguard and the hero student.

He didn't manage to warp all of the blow, and something still hit them. A fraction of what should have landed, but the shockwave still swept through the battlefield, drowning everything in it.

And when it was over, Midoriya was gone.

---

*Vanish.*

Izuku kept pushing on the quirk, not sure it was working. It had to or they would still be attacking him, right?

He couldn't think. Nothing made sense. He just wanted to sleep. The soft grass was calling his name, promising that this was a nightmare and that when he would wake up, everything would be over and he would be back to the Summer Camp. Hell, maybe his mom would be fine.

One look at his arm and to the darker lines of the skin was enough to make this idea pass.

He forced himself to walk, picking a direction that inspired him, and he put one foot in front of the other. He couldn't use quirks while he was hidden by *Vanish*, it would shatter the protection offered by the quirk, but that didn't mean he couldn't keep going.

The League wasn't far. He could hear them. One of them, the girl in an uniform, was laughing.

*Keep walking. One foot after another. You can do it.*

And he did. Shivering. Exhausted.

He leaned on a tree, a very comfortable oak, and he breathed for five seconds, just to stop panting, then started walking again.

Only to realize someone had appeared next to him. Maybe he had warped. Maybe he had simply found Izuku who had been too exhausted to notice it.

Whatever the reason was, Izuku only saw a tall figure, what looked like a bespoke suit, and a hand just in front of his eyes, then cool fingers and a warmer palm on the top of his head.

For a moment, Izuku sensed quirks. So many quirks that it seemed like stars in the sky.

And before he could react, he felt himself falling, darkness surrounding him and sleep finally claiming him.
Dabi tried to run after Midoriya, wherever he had disappeared, because he couldn't afford to lose him. He had stayed away from the fight, trying to understand what had happened, and he had to admit the impossible: the kid had his quirk.

He never managed to run after him as Magne grabbed him by his arm and managed to stop him dead in his tracks.

"What were you doing?" Magne asked him, still freaked out. "All the heroes are going to run here now that your flames were seen!"

Dabi realized that she was thinking he was the one who had thrown this pillar of flames through the sky. Everyone did.

When this kid had done it. Somehow.

"I..." he started, not sure how to explain. "I..."

Admitting that he was suddenly quirkless in the middle of a group of villains when he had no other ways to protect himself or to be of any use was not a good idea.

"You can't panic because of a kid, Dabi! Think about your reputation!" Twice interrupted him before changing his voice again. "It's okay! I panicked too. I have never seen anyone so scary. What the hell are they feeding those UA kids?"

They all looked at the forest.

They couldn't know where the student had disappeared, and in which direction to look for.

However, they could find the other one.

He wasn't exactly discreet, the quirk bulldozing its way through the forest in a mad run. With a little luck, they wouldn't even need Dabi. All they had to do was to lure him out. Or not. By ear, he seemed to be coming back.

But they were also all exhausted because of the fight. Spinner was still holding his face where he had been elbowed, and Kurogiri looked like he wanted to go back to his bar and have a drink.

"Tomura-kun, what are we doing?" Himiko asked as she stopped fussing over Spinner, fascinated by the blood. "I want to find Izuku-kun, but I don't want to die."

Their leader didn't answer, his expression hidden behind the hand he was wearing on his face.

But Dabi didn't have the time for that. He had already lost too much time and the longer he waited, the longer his quirk was disappearing in the wild.

And he couldn't let anyone kill Midoriya before he had his quirk back.

"I am going after him," Dabi declared, not asking for permission.

He managed to take two steps when something hit him. Not a physical impact but the absolute certitude that he had to freeze and not draw attention to himself.

"That won't be necessary," a deep voice resounded.
Someone walked towards them, unhurried. Tall, wearing a dark suit, his face was hidden by a black helmet, and Dabi could barely breathe in his presence. He wanted to take a step back, to do anything, really, but he couldn't move. He didn't dare to.

"Sensei..." Shigaraki called from behind Dabi. Not that it reassured him.

Because this Sensei was holding an unconscious Midoriya, by the back of his shirt and the arms and legs of the boy weren't even reaching the ground. He seemed tiny next to the new villain, a villain who had managed to neutralize the student who had hold out against the Vanguard.

The pressure of his mere presence dropped enough for Shigaraki to talk more.

"Did you catch him for us?" he asked, sounding unsure.

Shigaraki's Sensei stopped close to Dabi, horribly close as far as he was concerned, but he didn't dare to move. Fortunately, whoever this man was, he didn't pay attention to him, preferring to focus on his pupil.

"I am afraid this is not the case. You do know my love for interesting powers, and now that I hunted him, I have too much respect for you to hand out a prize when you still have a chance to seize another pawn yourself."

Shigaraki sighed exasperated, but he had the wisdom not to say anything.

As far as Dabi was concerned, the other student was the best option, if only because he wasn't in the hands of Sensei. His quirk was not as dangerous as their leader's teacher.

Who chose this moment to lay a hand on Dabi's shoulder, dangerously near his neck, forcing him to turn to face him. His grip didn't hurt but the strength in his fingers left no doubt that he was perfectly able to keep him from running.

"Dabi, aren't you?" he asked, his voice so pleasant and tranquil. "One piece of advice: subtlety and discretion are sometimes the only way to stay alive."

For a moment, nothing existed expect for the cold gaze hidden behind the black metal of the helmet.

"Think about it, won't you? I would hate for someone with such potential to meet a premature end."

Dabi knew when to recognize a threat.

"Now, if you will excuse me, one of my associates use this mountain as his home, and since you drew so much attention, I must warn him that he has to move before the heroes arrive. One is already on their way, so I would suggest to hurry."

And with that, some black fluid appeared around him, covering him and the hero student, before warping them away.

Right after that, the sound of someone letting themself fall on their asses echoed behind Dabi and he finally manage to turn and he noted that it was Magne who had a thousand year stare, as if she had seen her life flashing before her eyes.

A sentiment Dabi could empathize with.

"I just saw someone even scarier than Midoriya," Twice whispered loudly. "Seems like a friendly
guy!"

Dabi clicked his fingers, a blue spark appearing to confirm that his quirk was indeed back.

"Didn't you burn enough shit up today?" Shigaraki complained.

Dabi didn't answer, conscious that he would never be able to talk about this terrifying experience, unless he wanted to face the wrath of the scariest villain he had ever seen.

Finding the bird-headed kid wasn't difficult and that was why someone had beat them to it, stealing their prey and already circling around the manifestation of shadows summoned by the quirk.

Tomura clicked his tongue in annoyance.

The number 3 hero was flying around the brat, trying to calm him down and unable to because that wasn't one of those nice and flashy quirks heroes were fond of. It was a real one, power with a drawback, the kind that was too complex in a society which only wanted bright and simple quirks.

Then, the winged hero saw them, and Hawks did what heroes did best. Run -or in this case, fly- at the occasion to use violence.

"Shigaraki?" Spinner asked, a touch of urgency in his voice.

Choices. Always choices.

He would have liked to at least get one on his own. He wanted Sensei to be proud. To realize he was right to have chosen him.

But he also knew that Hawks would delay them until other heroes arrives. It just wasn't worth it.

"Kurogiri, get us out of here."

The warp gate took hold of them, but not before their local pyromaniac threw a blue flame at the hero to buy them some time.

Right before Tomura was warped away, he saw the number four hero dodge, while the mass of shadows behind him didn't have this chance.

Toshinori was relaxing in his bath, enjoying the delicious sensation of soaking into hot water after a long day of work. For now, he hadn't found anything better to get rid of the fatigue and the stress, and he was completely in the moment.
At least, until his phone rang, making him sigh.

Work had the unfortunate habit of calling him back as soon as he started to relax, and he started to get out of the bathtub which was made to accommodate his form when he was using One for All.

The Symbol of Peace almost met an unfortunate demise because he had slipped on water, managed to survive this dangerous enemy, grabbed a robe, and answered the phone, surprised to see that Aizawa-kun was calling him. Knowing the man, he didn't expect to have any news until they all came back to school.

Surprised, but still pleased.

He quickly lost his smile.

Powerlessness was being just a little too far away to rescue his friend before he was taken away. It was realizing that despite all the training, all the quirks, all the sacrifice, it was not enough.

Powerlessness was pain. A pain that had made Shouto scream Midoriya's name so loud that it had hurt his throat. He had no idea he could scream so loud before, then that had turned into a void, eating him from the inside because there was nothing else to do.

Powerlessness was looking up at their teacher, only to see that Aizawa-Sensei was frozen where he was, his eyes wide, something awful haunting his gaze. It was watching Bakugou trying to get back to his feet, not managing to because he had tried to lean on his injured arm, and him just crumbling to the ground and shutting down, though Shouto was close enough to see him trembling.

It was going back to the rest of the group, not knowing what to do, not knowing what to say because it was too late. They had lost. Because they never had as much power as they believed.

It was a wake-up call.

It was watching Uraraka crying, and Yaoyorozu trying to stay calm, to help, and failing because her anxiety now had been proven right. It was watching Iida shut down, and Shouji being extremely quiet next to him.

And it was realizing that the pro heroes were as powerless as the students were.

Izuku was laying on a hard floor when he woke up, in a gray room devoid of windows and with a door that had no handle, at least not on the inside of the room.

He had never felt so cold in his entire like.
Slowly, he sat down. Shivering, nausea was threatening to spill from his lips, but he wasn't in any pain. Not even from the arm burnt with blue flames as white bandages were covering it. Remembering Dabi's scars, he decided that he had a clear idea of what was underneath and that he didn't need to check when he couldn't do anything about it for now.

Instead, he listened, muffled sound reaching him through the walls but it wasn't enough for him to discern any words or to know what was making those noises. But where his ears weren't enough, *Transfer* sensed several quirks being used. Lightly, the same way UA was never quiet to him.

He slowly got back to his feet, relieved to see he wasn't in any pain. Not even a headache remained, so he reached for his quirks, not even to use Strength and Durability yet to bust through the door, but just to take comfort in their strength as he thought of an escape plan.

Only to find nothing.

Izuku took a sharp intake of air, but he could have been holding his breath for all the good it did to him.

Among all the quirks he had accumulated through the years, the powerful ones, the weak ones, those he had taken only to help, those he had yearned for, those he had polished, only Minor Healing remained.

One quirk.

Enough for any other person.

Izuku was breathing but no air seemed to arrive to his lungs. Cold had seized him, slipping under his skin, seeping inside his bones, freezing his thoughts, his mind, and killing him while maintaining alive.

"Let me out," he whispered, not to any member of the League, not to be heard by anyone, but because this was what explained the feeling that was passing through him.

Being completely trapped, with no way out. No option.

Defenseless.

"Let me out," he said, this time to be heard.

His heart was beating so loud in his chest it was starting to hurt.

An animal sound was heard, saturated with rage, loud enough to bring goosebumps to anyone listening. Something horrible, barely human.

Izuku only realized he was the one screaming as he kicked the door, with all his strength.

Anything to get out of here, to get back to his quirks.

The door, covered in scratch marks, didn't bulge of course. He was a fifteen-year-old teenager trying to escape a vault conceived to hold prime quirk owners.

He didn't stop kicking.

He didn't stop screaming either.
Enji was surprised to see Fuyumi up and dressed as he was leaving the house in the middle of the night. His daughter was already drinking her first cup of coffee, her face blank as she was checking her phone. No doubt that she was meticulously checking any news about Midoriya and Tokoyami Fumikage.

"I will go and meet Shouto," she announced tranquilly.

"I was going to do that," Enji said as he was making his way towards the exit.

He needed to go to the Wild Wild Pussycats base in order to know exactly what had happened in order to investigate. Getting Shouto back in the same time would allow him not to waste time and to make sure that his son wasn't injured.

"No need. You have to focus."

Enji stopped and looked at her, frowning because Fuyumi wasn't usually this assertive.

"You have to find Izuku and bring him back," his daughter told him, and she wasn't asking.

In a forest deep in the mountains, Shouta was looking at a crater where someone with an especially powerful enhancer quirk had lashed out with all his strength. This feat, especially when one could see the signs of several other quirks, including Cremation and Decay, being used, would remind anyone of All Might, and of how, with one powerful attack, he would always manage to defeat his opponents and to be victorious.

However, instead of a pro hero, it had been an exhausted student against several members of the League of villains, and children didn't fare well against killers.

Especially as a pillar of blue flames had been seen in the night. It was what had drawn the attention of every hero in the area, a stupid move for criminals on the run. Unless it had been necessary, and the overkill was what the villain with a blue fire quirk had judged necessary in order to take care of a student who shouldn't have been here, but who was powerful enough to refuse to go down
without a fight. After all, Midoriya had once fought despite a broken arm, going toe to toe with someone designed to fight All Might himself. Several weeks later, he had survived an explosion provoked by Todoroki as he was using his flames for the first time since the start of the school year.

How long had the villains waited before fighting without holding back?

*And at the temperature necessary to create blue flames, a human body will turn to ashes, without leaving any trace of its existence.*

Shouta didn't want to think about that. Midoriya had been declared kidnapped, but not missing or any other alternative. They had to think that the League was using him as a hostage, because if he wasn't...

The memory of Midoriya screaming as the noumu was snapping his arm like a toothpick hit him like a train. This scream, the sound of a child realizing he was about to die, haunted Shouta's nightmares.

"The students were already exhausted when the evening started," the detective Tsukauchi said as he kept inspecting the remnants of the fight, "And Midoriya then fought Muscular. It's not impossible that the League hounded him until he dropped from exhaustion. They would only have to pick him up, and there would have their hostage."

But the problem was that Kouta had told them that Midoriya was on Muscular's kill list. And since they didn't know each other before, this had to be the League's.

"We will find him," Shouta said instead, and glanced at the man who hadn't said a word since they had arrived.

All Might was standing there, looking at the crater without moving.

And his perpetual smile was gone.

---

Nagisa was in her family home, surrounded by aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, and probably some strangers who had one day wandered into the house and promptly been adopted in the family for all she knew. Usually, she avoided being in the middle of the swarm of siblings, because they couldn't help to put their faces in front of her screens, and there was always some well-meaning and annoying aunt or uncle to ask her if she had a boyfriend, and when she would get married.

But right now, she couldn't stand the silence of her home.

Midoriya Izuku had been missing since the day before, and the whole country was losing its mind over it. Not only had 1-A been attacked again, proving that UA's security was a joke, but a student had been kidnapped as he was trying to protect a classmate. And not any student, but the boy who had showed at the Sport Festival that he could withstand an incredible amount of power. That put the League into a whole new category.

The reputation of UA was plummeting. How could it not? Most of the forty students had been lightly injured, be it because of the fire or the inhaled smoke, when it wasn't because of the
villains. Eight were at the hospital. The target of the attack, Bakugou Katsuki, was injured. And one pro hero was reported missing.

But one of the two abducted students had been recovered. Nagisa had learned that before it was announced to the public, because she was pretty much spying on the police.

And she wasn't impressed by what they were doing.

No, it wasn't that. One part of her was aware that they were doing everything they could. But another, the one silently screaming, was pissed off beyond measure that this had somehow happened.

They were children. They were supposed to be safe. And the heroes had failed to protect them. To protect her friend.

Two arms passed around her as her mom had visibly detected that her favorite daughter needed a hug. Nagisa automatically leaned into the embrace and rubbed her face against her mom's shoulder.

"It's going to be okay," she assured, and Nagisa almost believed her.

Almost.

Her mom sat next to her, putting her hand on Nagisa's arm. The sensation had changed since Midoriya had come into their life, as her mother now didn't have the biological features allowing her to create a web anymore. Of course, she never had the thick hair that allowed members of her family to not get stuck to it.

It had handicapped her all her life. Every time she used her quirk, she had to call someone to get disentangled. And since it was sometimes activated by strong emotions, it was more than a minor inconvenience.

Now, Nagisa was the one who had her quirk.

"We both know what he is able to do," her mother reminded her as if she could read Nagisa's thoughts. "If there is one person who can come back from that, it's him. And if you think for one moment that the heroes aren't doing their best to bring him back, you tell me and every Shirubakumo will make their displeasure known."

And as they were the people creating the outfits required to protect the powerful of this world, be it most of the heroes with a high ranking or simply the wealthy, this was no small threat.

"Thank you, mom."

Shouto was in Midoriya's room and he wasn't sure of what he was looking for. He obviously knew his friend wasn't here. After all, unlike Tokoyami, he hadn't come back.

Because Shouto hadn't managed to save him. He had been just a little too far away.

No, he hadn't been fast enough.

Shouto sat on the bed, the weight of everything that had happened pressing on him. He could feel it
on his shoulders and on his neck, as if he was carrying something that kept getting heavier and heavier. He probably needed to sleep, but he had tried earlier and he had miserably failed. Shifting his weight, he tried to convince himself that if there was one man able to survive anything, it was Midoriya.

The movement sent his foot a little backwards, enough to touch something under the bed. Frowning, he took a look and found the getaway bag that seemed to be a common item in Midoriya's world.

Since the bag was half opened, Shouto didn't strictly look inside it. Its content was just there, for anyone to see, and the notebooks were on top of all the other stuff.

On one hand, he knew Midoriya liked his secrets and his privacy. On the other, he was certain he had seen him letting Uraraka look at those notes and he hadn't seemed to mind.

Somehow, one of the notebooks landed in his hand. Shouto wanted reassurance that Midoriya's quirk was as powerful as it seemed to be, that he would be alright. The questions he had about Midoriya's past, how he had managed to train his quirk to compete with pros, and why he was so careful and reacted so strangely at times, were secondary.

He started quickly reading through it, realizing that Midoriya must have started young because his handwriting started polished and clean, then progressively got worse, and by the last journal, Shouto was wondering if he wasn't writing in code.

Shouto found his page, with him wearing the first version of his costume. There was a note saying that it had been changed, and how he had to rewrite the page to add the new design and new theories about Shouto's fire side.

The notes concerning All Might were born from something between admiration and obsession, theories and observations scrambled across the pages. Some of them crossed, some of them with interrogation points, and in the last notebook, several pages had been ripped off, which made Shouto pause.

But there weren't only notes about heroes. Or more exactly, about heroes' quirks, because that was what was obviously interesting Midoriya. Their quirks, their activities, their fights. There were other quirks, only their names, and the people to whom they belonged weren't mentioned, but it had to be people Midoriya had met, because there were quotes.

Shouto read more, completely forgetting how he was supposed to be uncomfortable with reading what was pretty much Midoriya's diaries.

He found more notes about his classmates' quirks. Only I-A. Also the teachers.

But there was absolutely nothing about Midoriya's quirk.

---

Momo woke up in her hospital bed to see Ochako half asleep on her legs. For a moment, she just watched her, not daring to move because her friend looked so tired and she didn't want to wake her up.

Then she remembered everything that had happened at the summer camp and she -well, there was
no easy way to describe it- sprung from where she was like a devil out of the box, ejecting Ochako from where she was and as if it wasn't enough, the world started spinning around Momo because she had risen too quickly.

"Where is Aizawa-Sensei? I need to speak to a hero!"

"Momo?"

But Momo wasn't listening, because she had to find the nearest hero or police officer, or anyone in uniform.

"If the villains took the noumu back with them, I can track them," she explained as she was waiting for the world to stop spinning madly. "I created an emitter that was fused to him. I can find them!"

Ochako stared at her for a second, something on her face making Momo freeze as something coiled inside her. Her friend didn't move for a moment, but her eyes slowly started to be filled with tears.

That's how Momo realized something terrible had happened. Because Ochako didn't cry for nothing.

"What... what happened?"

Toshinori wanted to run as fast as he could, to not waste any time, to find Young Midoriyanow, but it was panic talking. It was him wanting to rush towards a problem to fix it with overwhelming power, but life wasn't that simple and he knew that wasting the precious time he had with One for All would be a mistake.

So he was driving to the police station, Gran Torino in the seat next to him, a wall of silence between them. The two men had somehow silently agreed not to ask the terrifying question. After all, worrying themselves sick wouldn't do them any good. They just had to do their job, and focus on nothing else.

"What if All for One found him?" someone blurted out, and Toshinori realized it had been him.

Gran Torino just stared at him, but it was a very real possibility.

The League was connected to him.

"You can't torture yourself like that," Gran Torino quietly said, the exhaustion in his voice so unlike him.

He was as worried as Toshinori. He just didn't want to admit it.

"Oh, I shouldn't torture myself," Toshinori corrected, "but I definitely can."

He had never wanted for Young Midoriya to be confronted to him. Even when the boy had claimed he would help, even though Toshinori had been moved that this child would so readily help him, he had wanted for them to never meet. For All for One to never be aware of the existence of this boy.

Because Midoriya was certainly a descendant of this thing of evil, while being someone fundamentally good. And knowing that good could be born from evil had always been a comfort,
and evil should not be allowed to destroy those kind of miracles.

"Midoriya is unique," Gran Torino tempered. "He is the only person similar to this bastard. He wouldn't want to kill him. He is narcissistic enough to give us time to rescue the kid."

And what will he do to Young Midoriya in the meantime?

"Yeah, goodbye," Katsuki said to his father as he was leaving to follow his wife who was currently being escorted out of the hospital because she wouldn't shut up. He could have kept listening to her screaming about what the hell was wrong with them and so on, but even though he was reduced to wait and to stare at the ceiling, he still didn't have enough time to deal with this bullshit.

He picked up his phone, put on some music, and savored the peace that came with people leaving him the fuck alone. That was all he was asking for. Some damn peace and quiet, and no one treating him like a weakling or telling him how he should feel.

Of course, he picked up his phone with his right arm. Thanks to Recovery Girl, it wasn't a mess of broken bones and burns anymore, but it still felt a little raw and Katsuki was under strict order not to use his quirk. Any fracture in his upper limbs meant weakening his bones which already had to withstand the impact of his explosions. And to add insult to the injury, Katsuki's wound had been the result of his own quirk fucking him over, the villain's fire just a detail in a sea of irony.

Katsuki raised the volume, then made the mistake of closing his eyes, and immediately, images slammed into him. The warped gate. The scarred motherfucker. Deku, so close, before he was transported away.

And Katsuki, on the ground, right fucking there because Deku had just saved him, but to out of it to react and to grab the reckless idiot. To save him back.

He gritted his teeth, unable to escape the memories because if there was one emotion that could recall every detail with an uncanny precision, it was shame.

This is fucking ridiculous.

He did something he had swore he wouldn't do and checked the news again, to see if there was anything new. He was already aware that Birdface was back, but Deku was still missing. Not only did the media knew squat, which should have been expected, but people in the comments were still talking about how violent Katsuki could be and that the League had probably been trying to recruit him.

Because Katsuki was calm and reasonable, despite what everyone else said, he didn't throw his phone against a wall. He also didn't put it in his left palm to destroy it with satisfying little explosions, this time because he knew he was in public space and the fire alarm would probably snitch.

But even anger wasn't enough to completely snuff out the shame. That wasn't something he was used to. And it didn't make any sense because he certainly wasn't the one to ask Deku to fucking appear and rescue him. He hadn't wanted anything from this guy.

And yet, the same thought kept swirling in his mind.
Kurogiri opened a warp gate and checked inside the cell holding the UA student, not understanding what was happening. Sensei worked in mysterious ways.

Several items had been dropped into the cell, from the ceiling, so Midoriya wouldn't be able to jump through it. A mattress and blankets. Cleaning swipes. Clothes. A medical kit. Food and water.

But the boy had used none of it. He had been lying on the ground, and didn't interact with his environment in any way.

Actually, Kurogiri was starting to worry because it seemed that Midoriya Izuku hadn't moved or reacted in any way for twelve hours.

Chapter End Notes

... I am sorry?

This is really a chapter of transition, but this will set up the Kamino arc, so it was necessary.

I want to thank everyone who ever left a comment on my fic. There are so many of you, and I adore hearing your thoughts. Thank you so much for this support.
When the class had decided to come and visit him, Katsuki had done his best to kick them out because there was no way in hell he would be okay with them seeing him in a hospital bed. But those idiots were fucking stubborn and they had also bought him a watermelon, which was something Katsuki actually liked.

Five minutes later, he realized that the watermelon had been a trap.

“Your hands can still reach him!” Kirishima dramatically declared after exposing his plan of going to wherever the noumu from the Summer Camp was, in order to rescue Deku.

Katsuki just stared at this moron, not having the words to describe how stupid his idea was. Actually, stupid wasn't the word. Fucking moronic was closer. The stupidest thing that had ever left a mouth since the beginning of the humanity.

A very dumb form of social suicide in any case.

Katsuki knew that Kirishima could be a fucking moron when he wanted. But it couldn’t be the only one in this insane plan. The vice prez had to be in it since it was her emitter. And one glance at the rest of the class allowed him to guess that Half and Half and Round Face were also in it, just by the look of determination in their eyes.

But the rest of the class was obviously uncomfortable with the very idea.

“This… This is nonsense,” Glasses stuttered, and he almost looked scared as he was staring at Kirishima. “This is against the law!”

_Ah, he might be smarter than he seems._

Katsuki sighed. He couldn’t believe he had to be the voice of reason.

“You bunch of extras are aware that we are not allowed to use our quirks, in any case since we are hero students, unless we have a pro hero’s permission?” he asked the whole class. “That means that if we are caught on a rescue mission, we can say goodbye to any hope of a career.”

Some of them nodded, all too aware of what they were risking. But Half and Half, Round Face, and Kirishima didn’t react.

Not because they didn’t know or didn’t care. Just because they were going to do it anyway.
“However,” he explained Kirishima, “The quirk law is a fucking detail compared to what will happen if I escape this hospital to run towards the bastards who were specifically targeting me. This would create a shit storm of biblical proportions.”

Kirishima hesitated, because this was obviously not the answer he was expecting.

“Are you saying…”

“That’s the right thing to do,” Glasses said. “Actually, I can hardly believe you would ask something like that!”

The relief spread through the class, everyone willing to let the heroes handle this. Glasses, in particular, was almost hysterical at the idea of them taking matters into their own hands. Which was fucking IRONIC since one of the reasons his brand had improved so much was because of a fight without a license against a villain.

But Kirishima was still looking at Katsuki, fighting a smile. The only one who had noticed he hadn’t outright refused. Just explained how this was a bad idea. *Fuck. How can this bastard know me so well?*

Those fuckers of villains had attacked the camp to get at Katsuki. They had targeted him. They had hurt a lot of people trying to get to him.

Even Birdface was still out of commission since Dark Shadow had been hit with flames.

And now, Deku was fucking gone because he had the audacity to think his help had been needed.

Katsuki had to prove him wrong.

Especially as the pros didn’t seem to be doing anything.

---

One by one, all the heroes who had ever studied in UA were called.

All of them answered Nedzu’s plea.

---

Toshinori was just leaving a reunion with the rest of the teachers when he received a phone call from Nighteye. Before he even answered it, he knew what it would be about.

He was going to rescue Young Midoriya tonight. And he would probably face All for One himself.

And if he fell, One for All would be lost.

He knew where his duty was. Each one of his predecessors had sacrificed themselves to make sure that the line would continue.

“We have to tell Mirio who you’re going to face,” Nighteye said as a greeting.
This would immediately make Young Togata agree to take the quirk. Because he was a good child and he would want to help.

This was cold and probably manipulative, but it was necessary to ensure a bright future.

And despite that…

“Don't tell anything to Young Togata. Please.”

_Don't do it now._

That was the thought punching Toshinori in his remaining guts every time he even considered the question, and he was the first one surprised by it. Even if his time was decreasing, even if he had some important organs missing, and even if there was a good probability that he would be facing All for One.

Despite all those excellent reasons, everything in Toshinori refused it. It was like giving up. It was like accepting that he was already done.

“Why?” Nighteye asked, dumbfounded.

“Because I am not going there to die,” Toshinori explained. “I will save Young Midoriya and Ragdoll.”

And that wasn’t the only reason.

“This is reckless,” his former sidekick said, a note of disapproval he wasn’t even trying to hide in his voice.

Toshinori was aware of that.

“Don't tell him,” he repeated, and this time, there was iron in his voice. “I want it to be his choice. No one should have this kind of burden placed upon them without a real choice.”

Hawks, in the building containing the offices of the Hero Commission, almost laughed when at the high-ranked members’ words, but the flying hero stopped as he realized they weren’t joking and where actually dead serious about their intentions.

“What do you mean, I am not going?” he still asked.

Because even though UA was trying to be discreet, right now, an enormous operation was being prepared to crush the League of Villains.

“UA is dealing with it,” a high-ranked member of the commission explained. “Nedzu called all his alumni. They have the situation handled.”

“The League attacked hero students. They almost killed my intern. Don't you think this is a situation where it's all hands on deck?”

The members of the Commission all looked at each other while Hawks was standing there, not understanding why he had to ask their permission to go help and save someone, but deeply aware
that he would have to listen to them. The Commission was obviously aware of something Hawks
didn’t know despite keeping his ears low to the ground, and it was unnerving.

They seemed to realize that despite his absolute loyalty, he needed a reason.

And they gave him the one he could have never suspected.

“Hawks, you don’t understand the situation. No one here is worried about the League. We are
worried about the villain who crippled All Might. If something goes wrong, we need you to be the
last rampart.”

Katsuki’s arm was a mess of burns and cuts, all of them healed but the scars would be a lasting
reminder of how mangled it had been. And despite the various treatments, since he had removed
the splint, he could feel how pain was never far when he moved it.

A splint the doctor had told him not to remove. He had also told Katsuki not to do anything
strenuous with this arm, but what would he know about it anyway?

The teenage boy finished drying his hair, put his shirt back on, and made a bandage on his arm. He
got rid of the box of hair coloring, put a jacket on, and he left the hospital.

The others were already waiting for him outside, being conspicuous as fuck. Round Face actually
didn’t recognize him now that his hair was black, and if he had cared about someone else’s
opinion, it would have comforted him in his decision to change his description in order not to draw
attention.

And Katsuki was just about to tell them they didn’t have any more time to waste when Glasses
popped out from nowhere like a fucking mushroom.

“You said this was a stupid idea!” he screeched at Katsuki.

Ochako would have been impressed by Iida’s stealth skills or by how well he knew them if she
wasn’t horrified at the idea he would be able to convince Momo to renounce their plan. It had
taken hours and hours of discussion for her friend to finally relent and create a second way to find
the emitter she had put on the noumu.

“I can’t let you do that,” Iida muttered, almost for himself, until he turned towards Todoroki. “You
of all people should realize what mistake you are about to make! Because I got swayed by my
emotions, I put you in danger, both you and Midoriya!”

He had almost choked on the last word.

“Midori is already in danger,” Ochako reminded him.

And she couldn’t let her friend in the hands of people who would hurt him. It was beyond her.
“Don’t you think I know that? Don’t you think I am sick of worry for him? But I learned the hard way what happened when you but in hero’s business!” he screamed, his hand slapping on his chest, where his lung had been touched by Stain’s attack. “And I was lucky. This could have been worse. So much worse. How do you think I would react if one of you is injured like my brother?”

It was like someone had squeezed Ochako’s heart, and then, guilt stabbed her because Iida was probably constantly reliving the trauma of what had happened to Ingenium since Midori had been taken.

But one of them didn’t have as much heart, or at least had buried it under layers of anger and spite.

“We are not your brother,” Bakugou reminded Iida. “And you are not responsible for us.”

“Of course I am! I am your class president!”

A position that was supposed to me Midori’s job until he refused it, now that Ochako was thinking about it. No doubt that it had never left Iida’s mind.

“And you shouldn’t even think of approaching the League!” Iida continued. “You said it yourself! You were the target!”

“So what? A class president job stops when we aren’t in school. And they attacked UA,” Bakugou said. “It’s not like I am safe anywhere.”

*Wow. Even Bakugou lost a lot of faith in UA.*

“Even if you disagree with us, you can’t stop us,” Bakugou concluded.

Actually, all he had to do was to yell “VIGILANTISM!” and the police or a nearby hero might fall from the sky to drop kick them.

But Iida seemed to have another idea as he glared at Bakugou, his clenched fist started to be raised, and Ochako had the dubious honor to stand between the two boys before their class president would punch the attitude out of Bakugou.

It wasn’t as if he would manage too anyway.

“Iida,” Todoroki intervened, “We are not planning to fight.”

“Yes!” Kirishima added. “We aren’t even planning to use our quirks. This is an infiltration operation. Get in and get out without being seen.”

“And I wouldn’t condone vigilantism,” Momo said. “The only reason why I am going is to stop them if they ever think about breaking the law.”

This last intervention seemed to be what calmed Iida. Probably because he trusted Momo to be the voice of reason.

And while they all explained what they were planning to do, Ochako refrained to mention that plans rarely survived first contact with reality and that if someone attacked her or someone else, she would fight with everything she had, quirk included.

“Then, I am coming with you,” Iida said after a long moment of reflection where he had probably cursed them all for being so stubborn.
A hero’s job was to fight villains and to protect people. This last condition was sometimes difficult to apply because most of the time, civilians were a pain in the side. They never backed off when heroes asked them. They tended to stay in the middle of the danger, often with a phone in their hand, when logic dictated to run and to take cover. And worst of all: they complained about rescue they didn’t like.

Because they didn’t only want to be saved. They wanted the best treatment. Pro heroes had to be perfect instead of just doing their jobs.

Shouta was used to this fact. So yes, he tended to avoid people as much as he could, but when he was confronted with some annoying members of humanity, he didn’t take it personally.

However, there was one exception. People so insufferable that they made every hero’s skin crawl. Bloodsuckers who didn’t even have the excuse of a quirk for their behavior.

The journalists.

“Mr. Eraserhead,” one of those buffoons asked, “Even if you claim that this was for the student’s safety, you still urged them to fight in the middle of a villain attack. What were your intentions at that point?”

Not dying and keeping my students alive.

This press conference was necessary, both for UA, and for the operation currently going on. That was why Shouta and Vlad King, as the homeroom teachers, were stuck here instead of doing something useful. So Shouta pointedly didn’t ask this man if he would have used his quirk as villains were trying to kill him, and he answered calmly and politely.

“Since we had no way to grasp the full nature of the situation, I made a decision in an attempt to avoid the worst-case scenario.”

“Worst-case scenario?” the journalist repeated. “How else would you describe a situation with twenty six students wounded and one who is missing?”

This seemed like a stupid question to Shouta, but maybe one had to be watching a forest catching fire during a villain attack with all their students spread out to fully understand the situation.

So he leaned towards his mic and he looked at the journalist in the eyes: “At this moment, the worst case scenario involved the deaths of my students.”

The principal must have noticed that Shouta was annoyed by how he was so obviously baited because he decided to intervene.

“Our students showed quick thinking and stayed cool-headed in an incredibly tense situation,” Nedzu praised them. “They also have all received psychological evaluations, and none of them seemed to have suffered emotional trauma.”

“Is that meant to be a silver lining?”

Keep calm. If you lose your temper here, you won’t be the only one affected.

“We believe that the worst has been avoided as long as the students still have their futures,” the
principal answered.

“And can you say for the same thing for Midoriya Izuku?”

The three men (well, two men and someone whose race was still unidentified) didn’t freeze or flinch. They had prepared themselves for the eventuality to hear something like that. But it still hurt.

“A student who showed a real gift for heroism during the Sport Festival and that you have now declared missing. But it wasn’t the first time he had a run-in with the League. Worse, he was the one to neutralize the S-ranked villain Muscular, and there are rumors that he almost killed him. Why would the League keep him alive after he was responsible for so many of their setbacks?”

*Did he just…*

That was a thought Shouta had been careful not to think about since he had learned that a large amount of blue fire had been used in a spectacular fight against Midoriya. Largely enough to cremate a teenage boy.

“And worse,” the journalist continued. “A child who was going to have a brilliant future on the heroic path was taken as he was saving Bakugou Katsuki.”

Shouta knew exactly where this was going. Midoriya was the one who had defeated Stain and his reputation was impressive since the Sport Festival. Even if they had known he had broken Muscular’s spine, no one would bat an eye at him because he was currently the golden child of UA, something whose loss would be blamed on the shortcomings of the school.

But there was someone else to crucify.

“Despite an impressive record and winning the Sport Festival, Bakugou Katsuki showed a rather violent side of himself after his victory. An attitude that persisted through the award ceremony. We’ve already caught glimpse of his temper and of his mental stability. And since he was targeted by the League, they also noticed it. And yet, Midoriya Izuku didn’t hesitate to sacrifice himself for him. Do you think there is still a future for both those students?”

A kid. Just a kid who was hiding it but who had to be traumatized what what had happened. Someone who was already blaming himself for Midoriya being taken.

And those adults didn’t hesitate to throw him under a bus.

*How dare they?*

Shouta got to his feet.

Vlad freaked out.

The journalist smirked.

And Shouta bowed with deference.

“And Shouta bowed with deference.

“Any lapse in Bakugou’s behavior is my failing. He behaved that way at the Sport Festival because he has strong convictions and ideals. More than anyone, he pursues the title of top hero with everything he’s got. If the villains have mistaken that for a mistake, then their thought process is superficial.”
The journalist was about to ask something else, but Shouta wasn’t done.

“As for Midoriya… At his core, he is someone who never gives up. I have faith that he is still alive and that he can’t be kept down for long.”

And as he said those words, Shouta realized that despite all the evidences to the contrary, he believed it. Midoriya was more than his quirk, for he was also pure determination. If someone could survive being kidnapped by a hostile League of Villains, it was him.

Afterwards, Nedzu started answering, letting Shouta the time to calm down. And to think.

*How do they know?*

Because yes, Muscular had been captured while screaming Midoriya's name as he was carried away, but for the rest... How could the journalists know Bakugou had been the one targeted, and that Midoriya had been taken trying to rescue him?

The answer was simple, of course : there was a traitor. Probably the same one who had informed the League of villains about the USJ.

And all that had happened to his student was on this traitor’s head.

All of them, disguised and determined, where looking at the screen while Shouto was looking at Bakugou’s face. He hadn’t reacted when the journalist had started to accuse him of being a bad seed and responsible for Midoriya’s disappearance. Maybe because he didn’t care, or maybe because he had the time to get used to it.

But when Aizawa had taken his side? Surprise and relief had passed on his face.

In any other circumstances, it would have made Shouto smile. But he was also paying attention to the people around them in Kamino, as they were openly blaming UA for what had happened.

The trust in the whole hero system was at stake.

Tomura rarely felt anything.

No, that wasn’t quite true. Mostly, he felt annoyance. Sometimes, hatred. There were things he liked to do, but it didn’t really register in him. But seeing that his plan had worked so well was dangerously close to put him in a good mood.

At least, until *someone* opened his mouth.

“Wasn’t the plan to convince Bakugou or Tokoyami to join us?” Spinner asked even if no one had asked him anything.

Tomura pointedly didn’t turn to glare at him, and finished his drink. Soda, nothing more.
The rest of his League preferred Kurogiri’s cocktails, be they alcohol-free or not, and those were probably the reason why none of them wanted to leave the bar.

“It was,” Tomura admitted as he kept watching the screen and UA squirming around to justify how inept they were, “But our action served our purpose well enough. Look at them: they are just realizing how full of shit heroes are. They can't protect them. They can't even protect their own students. People are only realizing how fragile their precious peace is.”

“And how they need real heroes, not fakes,” Spinner nodded.

Most of the members of the League were Stain followers, which was just ironic at this point, but Tomura had learned to be philosophical about it. He didn’t tell them that their great martyr was nothing more than a serial killer, the same way he didn’t remind them that his noumu had done a lot more damage at Hosu that a villain who had been beaten half to death by three teenagers.

But of course, one of them had been…

*No, don’t think about him.*

But it was too late.

Toga, who was sitting on a stool bar, her legs dangling, turned towards Tomura. He knew what she was going to ask before she even opened her mouth.

“Where is Izuku-kun now?”

Tomura shrugged, not acknowledging that she had asked several times. The truth was that he didn’t want to tell her that the brat was either dead or wishing he was. Sensei didn’t care about his preys after their quirks were taken.

Toga sighed. “It’s just that I miss him.”

Dabi groaned in his drink, and a wave of agreements silently answered him as they all thought about this pain in their side.

"Toga-chan, he kicked our asses,” Magne gently reminded her.

“So what? He is still cute.”

Magne didn’t quite agree with that.

“By cute, I hope you mean terrifying...”

“Or nightmare-inducing.” Twice proposed, fear in his voice until it changed for enthusiasm.

“Seems like a nice enough guy!”

“A hero worthy of Stain,” Spinner added. “But a very scary hero worthy of Stain.”

Tomura didn’t join in because they didn’t need to know he agreed on how kids shouldn’t be so violent these days.

“I can't even blame Dabi for announcing our position because I also would have tried to throw as much fire at this monster, hoping that it works,” Mister Compres chuckled in his drink.

Dabi took a deep breath, like every time he was reminded of his brilliant idea to warn every hero of this country of his position by summoning a pillar of blue flames that had reached the sky. He
opened his mouth to say something, closed it, and breathed again.

“Fuck all of you,” he finally articulated, his back to them.

Behind Father, Tomura frowned, but he was promptly distracted by Toga.

“Yes, I know, and despite that, Izuku-kun is still cute! Or maybe because of that…” she blushed.

“Don’t try to reason with crazy,” Tomura warned his League.

Before he could see if they understood his wisdom, someone knocked at the door.

Two knocks. At the door of their secret base. That no one was supposed to know about.

“Kamino Pizza!” a cheerful voiced announced.

Everyone looked at Twice.

"That's not me! At least, I thin..." he started just as All Might hurled himself through the wall like a human wrecking ball.

__________________________________________

Five kilometers away from the bar, Mount Lady grinned because it was not every day she had the permission to destroy a building, and wearing a truck as a shoe to do so was definitely a first time.

With a child-like glee, she stomped on the hangar.

__________________________________________

From somewhere deep underground, Izuku’s head whipped as he sensed a massive use of a quirk all around him.

__________________________________________

“Where is Young Midoriya?” the man Tomura hated the most asked as his comrades and himself were trapped.

“No one came to save you. That must have hurt, right, Shimura Tenko? Everyone just passed by, pretending not to see, thinking that some hero would save the day. Who decided to make the world this way?”

This man who represented everything Tomura hated in this fucked up society.

The one who had hurt Sensei.

“I HATE YOU!” he screamed with all his heart, wanting only one thing: to kill the Symbol of Peace.
And as if Sensei had managed to hear his plea, more noumu that Tomura had ever seen appeared around him.

Tiger had just retrieved Ragdoll, naked and catatonic, when a deep voice was heard from somewhere in the shadows.

“Sorry Tiger,” he greeted him like they knew each other, “But I had my eyes on her quirk for quite a while. It was just too good. I had to have it.”

Tiger stepped back, half turned to shield Ragdoll with his body. A pure reflex, devoid of any thoughts.

But Best Jeanist didn’t lose his calm and reacted immediately to neutralize the masked man in a suit who was tranquilly walking towards them.

It wasn’t enough to save them.

The attack flattened the whole area.

And unbeknownst to them, six teenagers hidden behind a wall were not spared despite one of them summoning a wall of ice and another hardening his skin, at the last second.

Chapter End Notes

*arrives late with a Starbuck and a chapter* Hi!

So... I was absolutely not planning on not posting for a month. I didn't have the time to write for three weeks, barely slept for two, and I just want to say that your comments were read and reread, and were really good for me.
Don't worry, you will soon see Izuku again.
Chapter 33

After Izuku had to resign himself to the fact he wasn't getting out of this cold cell, supplies had quickly dropped from a warp gate, at ceiling level so Izuku couldn't reach it.

Not that he had tried.


He didn't use any of those. He didn't even give them more than a glance.

Izuku simply stayed on the ground, unable to find the motivation to move. To do anything, really. Even if he had entertained the thought of a daring escape, there were other people here with quirks. He could feel them around him, the sensations relayed by Transfer being the only thing that kept him from being overwhelmed by the darkness calling his name.

A complete apathy was the merciful road, for the alternative was to completely feel the full weight of his imminent doom. Knowing at an intimate level that horrible things would happen, and that he was powerless to stop it.

Izuku preferred to stay where his quirks used to be. It hurt to see how empty his hoard was. It was also terrifying. But holding his last quirk was better than waiting for the sword of Damocles to fall upon his head.

It didn't always work. Sometimes, the void of where his quirks, all his quirks, should have been was gnawing at him, and he could only breathe, counting his quirk by reflex and being hit by how there was only one left. Transfer didn't count. Transfer was a holder, and it needed quirks.

He knew he was being pathetic. That he was supposed to never give up, to keep fighting. He was aware that there was always something to do.

But a stronger part of him didn't see the point. Couldn't move, couldn't react.

He had nothing more to give.

The only way for Izuku to know how much time was passing was the food being dropped from the warp gates. It was always something sealed one could have bought in a supermarket, and that couldn't have been opened before.

Sometimes, Kurogiri himself would peak a look inside. Probably checking if Izuku was still breathing.

Izuku eyed him from the ground, all his senses focused on this beautiful quirk.

Warp Gate was sometimes the only thing that could bring Izuku back to reality.
At other times, he was trapped inside his own head.

Haunting the desolate place that his hoard had become.

At some point, he couldn't bear to wear his bloodied clothes anymore, so he changed into the black pants and the formal shirt that had been left for him. Moving, unsurprisingly, did him some good. He cleaned himself, changed clothes, and took a look at his arm.

It was covered in red marks, as if fire had clawed at him. From what he had seen, it could have so much worse. Durability and Air Pressure had probably saved him from needing a skin graft.

After a moment, Izuku wiped his eyes, cleaned the wounds, and made a new bandage.

Izuku was looking at the ceiling and at the black warp gate. Kurogiri randomly checked on him, and he lingered longer and longer.

If only he got close. Izuku was certain he could muster the strength to move if there was a quirk in reach.

But Kurogiri was always too high, on the ceiling, and as soon as he left, Izuku’s imagination stopped thinking about quirks and it took a look at his predicament.

At what would happen to him.

The noumu were puppets full of quirks, refined and created so they would make perfect weapons, but for that, whoever created them had to make sure the surcharge of quirks wouldn't turn their brain into mush.

Izuku didn't have this problem. He had never found the limits of how many quirks he could hold.

Technically, he was the perfect test subject, and that was the only reason that came to mind as for why he was not lying in a ditch yet.

The more Izuku thought about it, and the more perfect this explanation was.

All for One letting his descendants into the world. He let them accumulate quirks, polishing them, and one day, he could come and harvest new quirks.
Of course, that let one question. Something he had made sure not to think about until now, but being trapped here with no way to distract himself brought him to the dark places he usually made sure to avoid.

His father also had Transfer. And he had disappeared despite being the most powerful man Izuku had known, at least before meeting All Might. And he had never known what had happened to him.

You have to fight. Find a way to escape, to fight, even to get your quirks back.

Izuku knew that, but still, he didn't move.

But Izuku had already tried that, didn't he? He had fought with all he had and he had lost. He had given everything, not understanding that it mean to give up on the power that had allowed him to face anything until now.

Are you scared of facing whatever is outside?

Those quirks Izuku could feel with Transfer.

If it was a noumu like the one he had faced at the USJ, it would paint the walls with the blood of a very depowered teenager. Maybe one chance on twenty to touch one before Izuku was turned into red paste.

But it could be his only way to gain new quirks.

It wasn't like Izuku was scared. Strangely, he wasn't even frightened by what would happen to him once the League remembered their noumu ingredients that they had stashed in a closet for when they would need to use him. Just numb.

Still, Izuku didn't manage to move.

Izuku felt him before he recognized who he was. Several quirks moving at the same rhythm, all together the same way Izuku was juggling... used to juggle with them in a delicate balance.

The teenage boy sat on the ground, following those quirks with his mind. Wondering if Night Vision was activated. Or Zoom. Certainly not Silencer, for he could hear footsteps.

All for One stopped on the other side of the door.

"I can sense you," Izuku said, his void incredibly flat. "You know I can."
They had a similar quirk, after all.

Izuku could only feel quirks that were being used, unless he was actually touching the person, and he still remembered the multitude of quirks he had felt with All for One's hand on his face. A number improved by Izuku's own quirks.

Izuku was in pain every second the quirks he had cherished were not with him. But if All for One was hoping for him to beg to have them back, he was out of luck.

"Did you kill my father?" Izuku asked instead.

Some part of Izuku wanted to hear him say he did. He wanted the uncertainty to be over, to be able to mourn, to be able to think about his father instead of repressing every memory because the uncertainty was too painful.

And maybe that would make him angry. Like he had been in the forest, this wrath that had allowed him to push beyond his limits.

But there was no answer.

Then, only the sounds of footsteps as All for One was leaving.

And right afterwards, something made the whole infrastructure shook, the shock startling the teenage boy and rattling his bones, but the cell completely protected him.

*Earthquakes*, Izuku immediately thought but it was done almost as soon as it started. It couldn’t be that.

Then, *Transfer* flared out as he sensed a quirk, only one, but used on a massive scale all around him. Being trapped here for an indeterminate amount of time had heightened his senses, and his internal quirk radar was more powerful than ever.

And as soon as the quirks stopped acting, he felt a giant nothing around him. All those quirks activated were gone.

Which meant someone had just warped a lot of people out of the place, leaving Izuku behind.

Now, if those were prisoners/test subjects, Izuku would be among them. And since the image of the noumu from the USJ immediately came to mind, it wasn’t an escape. It was someone moving troops.

That was going to be like Hosu. Noumu unleashed in a populated area.

Izuku’s body moved without thinking.

The door was impossible to open. This cell was designed as a safe, and even with his strength
quirks, he would have needed several minutes to break through. But there was one option one might use if they were desperate enough.

There was an air vent about two meters and half above the ground. There were metal railings in front of it but one thing at a time.

His legs crumbled under him after three steps, which wasn’t a good start. It wasn’t surprising either. Izuku had at least spent a day not moving. But it also meant that things could only get better.

The air vent was too high to reach without Jump. Or at least, Strength. But Izuku’s body had adapted around a lot of enhancer strength instead of completely depending on them, so he was still fit.

He took a running start, used the wall as a launching pad and completely failed to even get near the air vent.

At least, he landed on his feet.

He kept going. No one needed a quirk to do that. Aizawa-Sensei was practically a ninja with a non physical quirk. *But with a support item.* Though it didn’t matter. Before the rise of quirks, human beings were already doing physical feats.

Izuku kept jumping and running on the wall.

At the fourth attempt, his fingers touched the metal railing. He tried to get hold of it but he only manage to almost turn out one of his nails and he fell. This time, he didn’t manage to land on his feet but only his pride was hurt.

It didn’t matter. He could do it once, so he could do it again.

And he did. His arms were screaming as he hanged on by the metal railing that was also hurting his palms. He ignored the pain. He ignored everything. He just put his feet on the wall, and pushed on his legs to have some leverage.

This was pure physics. Izuku’s lower strength had to be stronger than a metal grate.

And it was.

Izuku and the metal gate both fell, and climbing back up and using all his upper strength to haul himself up was the hardest thing he had ever done, because it would have been so easy with the right quirks but he didn’t have those anymore, and Izuku was weak without them.

But he didn’t have a choice, so he did it.

The air vent was a tight fit. Izuku knew it would be. In movies, they were large enough to fit an adult, clean, and a nice way to circulate in a building.

In reality, those were so narrow Izuku had couldn’t even be on his hands and knees. He was lying on his stomach, his arms in front of him, and crawling like a snake. Taking corners was absolute hell, and there was several instances where the vents were going up or down.

In reality, air vents were so full of dust that Izuku was half choking but there just wasn’t enough place for him to reach his shirt and to raise the collar to protect his nose and his mouth.

In reality, crawling through an air vent was so loud that anyone with half functioning ears would
have noticed it. They also weren’t conceived to sustain a full human weight, so it was probably an excellent thing that Izuku had skipped several meals. There were moments where he could just feel this never ending metal coffin groaning and threatening to break under him.

Izuku had known all that before he got in. He used to have an exploratory phase when he was younger, and he had done some researches.

And yet, nothing could have prepared him for this feeling that he was going to die here. That the walls were going to crush him alive.

Like, he always knew this was a risk. He hadn’t tried it before because of how dangerous it was. He could have easily be found out or encountering a villain face to face. But there was a difference between knowing the risks and being intimately aware of this feeling of impending doom.

Then, Izuku, as he had crawled for God knew how long, realized one tiny detail: there was a very real probability that there was going to be another metal grate at the other end of this air vent. And unless there was some miracle, Izuku couldn’t break through it. Not when he didn’t have any momentum, or way to have some leverage.

He hadn’t thought about it. No, he had barely considered the possibility because he had automatically counted on Breakdown to open anything that would need to be dismantled.

One option was to crawl back from where he came from, somehow, and to have faith that the heroes would come and rescue him.

But Izuku chose the other option and started to raise himself as much as he could –not much- and let himself abruptly fall, making the air vent protest.

As he had already noticed, those weren’t created to support the weight of a student in the heroic course.

His plan worked. It broke. The “second earthquake” might have helped. The only problem was that he had completely underestimated how high he was.

The wind screamed in his ears as he fell, still trapped in a full tube of thin metal, which wasn’t in the plan either.

Wind turned into water and Izuku tried to kick it away but he was still trapped and there was suddenly water everywhere. He raised his arms, put his hands on the extremity of the metal tube- which was actually three metal tubes around him like a boa constrictor- and he pulled himself out.

*The only good thing about trauma is that I am too numb to panic, no matter the situation.*

He was instantly proven wrong when the sole of his sneaker touched something squishy.

Izuku managed to almost jump out of the saline water, only to realize that he had landed into a vat of water, and that he wasn’t alone. Once he hanged on to the walls of the vat, half of the body above the surface, he saw the person with skin as dark as a bruise, but weird. His proportions were off, his left side bigger and more muscular than his right side, his head too small for someone his size.
And he was moving a little. Squirming.

_Drowning_, he realized. Even though there a tube in his mouth to allow him to breathe.

While repressing his memories from the USJ and how he had so many quirks at the time, Izuku took a deep breathe, and went under the surface again.

There wasn’t enough space for him to put on his feet, and the noumu was too heavy for Izuku to haul him out of the water without that. But Izuku felt the quirks, two of them, as soon as he put his hands on him.

Fluttering. Barely there, as there were about to disappear with the life of their host.

It happened in a second, maybe.

_I am sorry. I am so sorry._

He only had the time to take one quirk. The noumu died before he could take the other.

Pure relief filled him as a quirk was added to his hoard, but it didn’t last as it managed to make his former treasure box feel almost just as horribly empty.

And then, shame hit him because he had made a choice between quirks and rescuing someone. Because he had only seen the quirks, and he _had to_ have them.

“_I am sorry,”_ Izuku said as he hauled himself out of the vat. His hands were trembling so much that he slipped inside and almost landed on the body. “_I am so sorry.”_

He climbed out, breathing loudly.

It’s when he jumped out that he realized what quirk he had.

As the shock of landing roughly didn’t even begin to rattle him.

_Shock Absorption._

Better than nothing.

The room were he had landed was large and full of similar vats, but most of them were empty, probably emptied with the quirk he had failed earlier, after the first false earthquake. They had probably been full of noumu.

Izuku found three vats that were still inhabited.

He checked each one of them, only to confirm that the noumu still here were as dead as they were out of proportions. Maybe failed experiments, and that was why they had been abandoned here.

And as he did, he was breathing so quickly that he felt dizzy.

---

As soon as Izuku was out of this room and that he manage to get his breathing back under control, he punched the wall. Stronger than what he had expected, which proved that Strength and Speed
weren’t always needed when someone had a very bad day, but the punch still hurt his knuckles.

Which confirmed his suspicions: this Shock Absorption was weaker than the ones he used to have.

This wasn’t surprising. Izuku worked on his quirk to make them stronger.

But that also meant that this wasn’t enough as a measure of protection. Just enough to keep someone naturally weaker than most in one piece, in normal circumstances.

There was a ladder to access the higher level. Actually, there was also an elevator but Izuku was going to walk willingly into a metal box, so he chose the ladder.

His fingers were still trembling.

And Shock Absorption was constantly activated.

Izuku had been underground when the earthquakes had shaken the construction, and it had obviously protected him because the first floor was a mess of broken glass, broken pipes, and the building had been gutted.

It was nothing compared to outside.

It looked like some giant had slammed in his fist on wherever they were, flattening any constructions. There were fires, and buildings had collapsed. People were screaming in the distance. Some of them were calling for help, but others were just sobbing.

It looked like the site of a cataclysm.

And it was due to a quirk.

Izuku crouched from behind what was left of the gutted wall of the building, and peeked through it, to see a man standing in the middle of the quiet chaos. His back to Izuku, he was facing a hero dressed in jeans. Best Jeanist. And the pro hero was in the middle of a puddle of blood.

But Izuku could barely focus on him. Could barely be horrified, when everything in the air was filled with bloodlust.

His body wouldn’t move any further.

Because All for One didn’t only bring death on his wake. He brought inevitability.

How am I supposed to help All Might take down this man?
Katsuki slowly came to his senses, all his body petrified without him understand why.

He wasn’t hurt, except for his arm that was not liking how he had half landed on it. The attack had been brutal, but because of his quirk, Katsuki had more resistance than the common extra when it came to shockwaves. The ice wall Half and Half had created in a blink hadn’t hurt either.

But there was something else.

The intimate conviction that if he made any move, something would rip him apart, piece by piece, and not even staying still was an assurance he would survive.

Slowly, he started to move anyway. Tried to, at least.

If he was going to die, it would be on his feet.

---

Izuku was so focused on All for One that he noticed the quirk before he saw the movement not far away from him.

_Transfer_ chimed, and for a second, as All for One was using another quirk, he was so annoyed at the idea that that man might be about to use one of Izuku’s quirk that it cut through the abject fear, allowing his brain to function again.

That’s how he saw someone moving among the rubble, not that far away from him.

His heart skipped a beat when he recognized Kacchan despite his dark hair.

Just as the whole League was spat out from several warp gates that weren’t Kurogiri’s. All of them, including Shigaraki who fell to his knees in front of All for One.

Slowly, Kacchan reached out for something. Someone. With red hair, starting to move as if he was waking up. And he wasn’t the only one in the rubble. Limp forms. Unmoving.

Izuku recognized them and it was like he had just been dropped into a frozen lake.

_What are they doing here?_

“You failed again, Tomura,” the villain said farther away, and both Kirishima and Kacchan froze.

The voice was strange. Deep, flat, _uncaring_, it sounded exactly like the voice a villain should have.

“But don’t be discouraged,” he continued. There will be more chances to set things right. That’s why I brought along your comrades.”

Izuku felt the quirk.

He started to move.
But once again, he wasn’t fast enough as a black substance appeared around Kacchan, startling and spreading around him and in him before anyone had the time to do anything.

“And since I want to help you, let me offer you something else. Remember…”

Kacchan reappeared in the middle of the League, choking on the black goo.

“... Everything I do is for you.”
“I knew you’d come,” the villain in a helmet said, a hint of a snarl in his amused voice.

That was the only warning Katsuki got before something rocketed to the villain, with enough strength for the shockwave to send him to the ground and the only thing that allowed him to stay where he was and not to be blown through the field was him desperately hanging on.

“You’re gonna give it all back, All for One,” All Might growled, his smile gone.

That would have been enough to indicate that shit had hit the fan.

But the fact All for One had just blocked All Might’s attack with his bare hands meant that they were well past that point.

“Here to kill me again, All Might?” the villain laughed, something absolutely vicious between the words. “What took you so long?”

All Might was about to answer.

Then he saw Katsuki.

His eyes widened in horror.

Ochako woke up confused and freaked out only to see Midori above her. It startled her, which startled him in turn and he yelped, almost falling backwards, but he managed not to because he was holding her wrist.

“What… What happened?” she asked, noting how they were now in a building, protected from villains in suit who could fight several high ranked heroes at once, and how the others were here too, some of them already waking up.

She remembered how Todoroki had created a wall of ice right before the impact.

This had probably saved them.

The shockwave that made the building shiver revealed that they weren’t as safe as she had thought. The villain is still outside. Buildings had been flattened like it was nothing. Their refuge wouldn’t stand a chance if he realized they were here.

But Midori didn’t even seem worried, simply throwing an annoyed glance behind him as if the villain’s quirk had personally offended him.

Ochako sat back, swiping her hands on the legs of the black suit Momo had bought for her, and she tried to make sense of the situation. So far, their plan to sneak in and get out without being injured had been a major flop.

And she wasn’t seeing Bakugou in the pile of classmates who were slowly waking up.
She looked at Midori, who looked like hell. He was soaked, his skin had an ashen tint, his eyes were underlined by dark circles, and there was something just wrong in this whole demeanor, as if this buzzing energy he always seemed to have was missing.

He looked haunted.

And extremely free.

“Were you rescued?” Ochako asked, wondering just how long she had been asleep. Had Bakugou dragged him out from wherever Midori had been imprisoned?

“Yes,” Midori confirmed. “By myself. And now, Kacchan was taken by the villains and I need help to get him back.”

The attack hit All Might like a trainwreck, propelling him through the air and through several buildings, under Katsuki’s horrified eyes.

*I am going to die here.*

But the villain was barely paying attention to him. No, actually, he was aware of Katsuki, and he could swat him like a fly anytime he wanted, but he wasn’t his priority. For obsessing about his quirk and what he could do with it seemed more interesting.

“Air cannon, combined with springlike limbs, strength by five and kinetic booster per three,” he pondered, almost mumbling. “It’s a fun combination but I would like to add more enhancers quirks…”

Quirks. Plural.

Like the noumu back in the USJ.

Far away, All Might finally stopped his course, and that was even more frightening that when he had been thrown away because there were no more movements, no more proof that he would come back. Katsuki would be on his own, with a villain who… there was no words.

He hadn’t realized he had called the number 1 hero out loud until All for One answered instead.

“Don’t worry. He won’t die from a lovetap like that.”

As soon as he was sure his friends were in one piece and vaguely awake, Izuku focused back on the battlefield, aware of how powerless he was right now.

His quirks were right there. How long to run? He wasn’t sure of distances anymore, not since all his speed quirks had been taken. But he was vaguely traumatized and there was some unholy spite saturating his body, so maybe he would have the time to get close. He just needed to touch bare skin, and he could grab some of them.
It was suicide. Izuku was aware of it.

But he was still tempted because of this screaming void inside him.

As if on cue, Iida put his hand on his shoulder, probably because he could sense when Izuku was thinking about doing something crazy. His fingers were separated from Transfer by a thin layer of cotton.

Izuku only had to put his hand on Iida’s. Maybe squeeze his fingers, as if he was looking for some reassurance and his friend would understand because Izuku had just spend some time trapped in a concrete box. And before he realized it—and he would realize it quickly because Engine was a mutation- Izuku would have the speed he wanted.

But he wouldn’t do that. He couldn’t.

_Not again, you mean_, a voice he hadn’t heard in a quite a while mocked him.

Later. He would come to term with that later.

For now, Kacchan was in the middle of the League of villains, and Izuku wasn’t about to let him be taken prisoner. It wasn’t happening to anyone else.

_Think. Stay alive._

Izuku barely had an idea of a plan. Instead, he had five quirks that didn’t belong to him and the shadow of one that he used to possess.

Engine, Creation, Half Cold Half Hot, Gravity, Hardening, Focus.

All for One obviously wasn’t using Izuku’s quirk or he wouldn’t have been able to pay attention to Kacchan dodging the League of villains, but his sheer presence and the malice he was exuding were doing almost the same thing. Everyone was so focused on him that they hadn’t noticed when Izuku had evacuated five unconscious teenagers.

And just like All for One was grabbing their attention, All Might was the villains’ main concern.

Two giant distractions that Izuku could use.

He turned towards his friends. Five of them, who had decided to take the matter in their own hands and to rescue him. They had no idea but their dedication, the utter goodness they possessed, was probably the only reason why Izuku hadn’t fell down in exhaustion by now.

They had come for him. He had been so convinced that no one was coming, but here they were.

They were no words to make them understand the depths of his gratitude. To make them understand that the realization that he wasn’t on his own meant the world to him.

And right now, there was no time.

Because the sixth member of this rescue team was in danger.

“I have an idea. But I am going to need your help.”
The good news was that All Might was back. The bad one was that the whole League tried to grab Katsuki like he was the last melon bread at lunch break.

Katsuki ran as far as he could because he was aware that All Might couldn’t use all his strength while he was nearby, but he didn’t go far as all of those villainous fuckers jumped at him.

He tried. He avoided, and kicked and tried to punch, desperate not to use his quirk, not because of his right arm but because he knew this could mean the end of everything. Not using a quirk without a license was an absolute rule for a student.

But the masked fucker got too close from him, and his arm whipped out, an explosion in tow, and that gave him just a moment to breathe while the other morons paused. Then, they attacked again, and Katsuki had burned this bridge so he might as well explode it to smithereens.

Explode, avoid, attack. Try to make a break for it. Fail. Rinse and repeat.

Did he have everyone killed by agreeing to this plan?

All Might tried to reach him. He screamed that he was coming for him, but as he did, black tendrils spread for All for One’s fingers, the same ones who had activated the misty bastard’s quirk earlier, and they stabbed at All Might’s legs, making him stumble, but he still carried on.

And then, All for One planted his feet in the ground, grunted, and as if he was suddenly gaining in strength, he twisted himself and threw All Might away again as the number 1 hero couldn’t do anything to prevent it.

“Not so fast,” the villain mocked as All might went airborne once again, something vicious and joyful in his voice. “That’s why I am here.”

In all his life, Katsuki had never thought someone could be stronger than All Might. When he had wanted to surpass someone, to always win, the number 1 hero had always been at the end of the road. But now… Now, he was seeing something else.

He wasn’t sure he was going to get out of this alive.

Worse, he was afraid that his presence, the deadweight that he represented, would manage to end All Might.

Momo wanted to throw up as she handled the rifle, maintaining her balance half crouching on high heels and with two power houses fighting not far away from her and definitely too close from the classmates she was supposed to protect. At first, each of All Might’s blows and the other villain’s had shaken the area, sending the other members of the League and Bakugou flying—fortunately, somehow, they weren’t in the blast zone. Midoriya had theorized that it was because they were behind the villain as he was using a shock absorption quirk. But now, it had calmed down, just a little, as All Might and the villain were holding back in order not to hurt their respective allies.

Even without that, what she had to make would work. She had made sure of it.
Momo aimed in the scope of her rifle, Iida right behind her. Because if there was a problem, they couldn’t be alone. That was what Midoriya had said and Momo had no doubt he was speaking from experience.

And now that the other were gone, carried by Ochako’s quirk, Momo was also almost certain that somehow, despite not being there, Midoriya had known that Iida and herself were the one supposed to monitor them so they wouldn’t do any act of vigilantism.

Momo was still nauseous when she pulled the trigger, anxiety and doubts eating her from the inside even though she had considered every possibility. She had taken the wind into account, she knew that her aim didn’t even need to be accurate, that it wouldn’t hurt anyone. And yet, she was terrified and half convinced that she was going to screw up, that she should have stopped them before they even arrived at Kamino.

The first smoke bomb landed at the feet of the girl in a high school uniform and she jumped back like a frightened cat, her knife in front of her. The smoke spread through the air as soon as it touched the ground, thick and white.

Impossible to see through.

Momo shot two more.

---

First, we need to get close.

Izuku ran, letting the absence of gravity produced by Uraraka’s quirk give him speed. Uraraka was right next to him, propelling herself as if they were under water. She was more gracious while Izuku just got the job done. Both of them were the vanguard because they had been the one testing the not-quite-flight above the trees at the start of the Summer Camp, an eternity ago, and they both had carried the quirk at some point, but Uraraka didn’t need to know that.

Todoroki and Kirishima were right behind them, struggling to adapt to the zero gravity but still following, respectively helped by ice and pure perseverance when the air pressures of the fight threatened to send them away. That had always been a risk.

We will be covered by the smoke.

And as expected, Yaoyorozu’s timing was impeccable. By the time they reached the League, the smoke had spread, not enough time having passed for it to be dispelled by an air pressure.

And Kacchan will have the advantage.

Fighting in a group was always complicated, especially when one wasn’t trained for it. More often than not, the fighters were hindering each other. So now that the remaining members of the League couldn’t see around them, they had to be careful.

Kacchan didn’t have this handicap.

Explosions started to shake the screen smoke, indicating Kacchan’s position, and in a rare stroke of luck he was even closer to them than expected.
“Bakugou! Come out!” Kirishima screamed, this idiot having the brilliant idea of just walking into a villain fight.

As if one hostage wasn’t enough for them, but Katsuki still followed his voice, creating explosion on explosion so whoever was right behind him wouldn’t be able to approach.

But as he ran, a gust of wind almost made him stumble. Maybe it was All Might’s work. Maybe All for One’s. It didn’t matter because in a second, all the cover that had been created got thinner to the point it almost disappeared.

And someone was waiting for him. Someone who wasn’t Kirishima.

For a moment, Katsuki’s heart skipped a beat, a freeze response hitting him the same way it had when he had been warped in this mess.

Right before he recognized Deku.

Izuku had been ready for anyone. That was why he was in the vanguard despite not having any offensive quirks. If a villain had appeared, no matter who they were, they would have tasted the full attack of their own quirk a moment after Izuku would have put his hands on them.

But ultimately, he had faith in Kacchan and hadn’t been surprised when he had appeared just as the smoke disappeared, something like fear passing on his face, then the most intense relief ever witnessed. He was so focused on Izuku that he didn’t notice Uraraka slapping his arm, activating her quirk.

And maybe he hadn’t noticed how Shigaraki had been running after him, his right hand, wearing a brace on the arm Izuku had broken an eternity or two weeks ago, hold out as he tried to grab Kacchan or to use his quirk to disintegrate him.

Izuku threw the container he had been holding.

Shigaraki tried to catch it and to destroy it but Izuku had aimed for the ground and the massive amount of dust that had been hold in it spread through the air. A dust bomb, in some way.

Izuku saw the exact moment where Shigaraki realized what was going to happen despite the hand on his face hiding his expression. Just as he had had faith in Kacchan to find a way to stay alive, he had faith in Shigaraki to understand what was going to happen.

Shigaraki jumped back, then scrambled away.

Someone, probably Todoroki, grabbed Izuku by the back of his shirt.

“Kacchan,” Izuku called, ignoring the lighter in his pocket.

Kacchan immediately understood what he meant and he whipped out his arm, throwing an
explosion behind him.

It did two things.

For one, it propelled all the students who were under Zero Gravity like they had their own personal
and rocket with a bad temper that threw them to safety at a terrifying and thrilling speed.

And it triggered a spectacular chain reaction where each grain of the dust Izuku had spread through
the air caught on fire in one impressive and massive wave of flames.

It was as if time had slowed down for Magne, and in less than a second, she saw her comrades
being swallowed by flames if she didn’t do anything to prevent that.

She was right out of reach, the closest to Kurogiri and Dabi when she activated her quirk.
Polarizing, but never like that. She put everything she had in it as she grabbed Shigaraki, Spinner,
and Mister Compress, making them fly at high speed in Dabi’s direction.

Spinner rammed into Toga, bringing her with him.

And by the time whatever had spread through the air caught fire, they were out of reach, safe, and
Magne was absolutely exhausted. Flames spread in every direction for a second, then stopped right
before burning her teammates who had landed –hard- on the ground.

And once the fire was gone, Magne, her head just a little too light, saw the massive ice wall that
had protected whoever had decided to almost set on fire the League, hiding their escape. Between
the ice and the general chaos, they wouldn’t be able to find them again.

Bakugou Katsuki was well and truly gone.

She didn’t care anymore. If I never see another UA student in my life, it will be too soon.

She had barely finished that something flashed at the edge of her vision, right before someone
kicked her in the head.

Sorahiko’s bones were creaking when he arrived at the noumu hangar, reminding him that there
was a reason why he had retired, but he wasn’t listening to them anymore as he was distracted by
what appeared to be his former intern creating an explosion that almost engulfed half of the
League.

Almost was the key word, but that didn’t keep Sorahiko from feeling some burst of pride for this
little menace, and he promptly took care of Magne, the one who had a long range quirk. Midoriya
had made sure to cover his exit but Sorahiko preferred to be careful.

“You’re late,” Toshinori complained. He made a step, testing his leg. He didn’t even limp, but
blood was flowing freely from an ugly wound.
“It’s because you’re too fast!” Sorahiko barked, keeping an eye on All for One.

Toshinori had managed to land a good hit because the son of a bitch was sitting in the rumbles, taking five minutes to find his breath again, maybe. And he was looking in the direction of where Midoriya and the rest of the hooligans had disappeared.

And then, he reported his attention on Sorahiko.

“Shimura’s friend…” All for One noted, and just hearing her name in this mouth of his made something in Sorahiko’s chest burn with a cold rage.

*Oh, you remember me. Good.*

He checked the warp gate that was activated despite Kurogiri being still a limp form on the ground. It had to be one of the bastard’s tricks.

And if the warper was still unconscious, it meant Sorahiko could take care of Shigaraki and Toga Himiko without being interrupted or cut in half in the middle of an attack.

“That damned Midoriya,” he pestered, giving himself time. “He can’t even let himself be rescued in peace.


The two men moved at the same time.

And All for One followed them almost immediately.

____________________________

Just as the old man was about to kick Tomura in the face and be promptly disintegrated in return, he was thrown away, exactly like when Magne had dragged him away from the explosion.

As his Sensei was throwing him to safety with the rest of the League, staying behind to protect him.

For the first time in his life, Tomura fought against Sensei, against this quirk, because he couldn’t leave him. He couldn’t abandon him and he couldn’t be abandoned by him.

“Tomura…” Sensei called him as he kept trying to bring him to safety even though Tomura didn’t want to. He *had to* stay with him. To fight at his side. For both of them to escape. “… You will continue this war.”

Tomura was still trying to reach him when he was warped away.

____________________________

They fled into the night, followed by the echoes of All for One’s and All Might’s attacks, and Izuku was starting to lag behind because Uraraka has stopped using her quirk, and he had managed to keep running at their speed for a while, but now, he couldn’t.
Because Stamina, Strength, Speed, any of his enhancers quirks were gone. Even Air Pressure, something created with the last quirk his dad had ever offered him. It had been special.

And he had chosen that.

Because Izuku had had two plans. One where Kacchan was rescued without anyone using their quirks to fight.

And another where he could try to get his quirks back. Go through the League, take their quirk. A high probability of dying, but he was still willing to take the chance, because his quirks were powering All for One.

But Todoroki, Uraraka, Iida, Kirishima and Yaoyorozu would have followed him as soon as they had realized what he was doing. Kacchan would have joined him too.

Izuku was not willing to risk their lives.

Especially as he also wasn’t willing to give All for One another hostage to use against All Might right after they had helped Kacchan.

Izuku stumbled and suddenly, he wasn’t upright anymore and the ground was coming to meet him.

He never had the occasion to land on his face. Strong arms caught him –Kirishima- and suddenly, he was back in the middle of the pack. Surrounded. Protected.

Unable to help All Might against a threat he had contributed to.

“"If it’s a fight you want, All Might, I will humor you.”"
Chapter 35

Seeing Young Bakugou in the midst of the viper nest had probably reduced Toshinori’s lifespan by a couple of years. Seeing Young Midoriya suddenly free and rescuing his classmates had done something to his heart, something that could have been good or bad but Toshinori never had the occasion to dwell on it because All for One was begging for his undivided attention.

“I only came here to rescue Tomura, but…” the bastard started but Toshinori had no intention of listening to him and he attacked, his fist raised, his momentum carrying him to flatten All for One’s face once again.

Only for Gran Torino to appear in the middle of some black matter, in Toshinori’s exact trajectory.

He tried to slow down.

It was barely enough not to maim his teacher.

“Sorry!”

Gran Torino, half knocked out, managed a glare, which meant he would be fine.

The villain chuckled, the sound low and betraying true amusement. “... Honestly? It’s because above all, I detest you.”

His arm moved, accumulating power for a next attack, and Toshinori grabbed his teacher before All for One managed to destroy him while using Gran Torino as a human shield.

But the warp gate held, as if it was possessive of its prisoner.

“There was a time where you went around crushing my allies left and right and you were called a symbol of peace for it.”

Toshinori put more strength and yanked Gran Torino out of the trap just as a shockwave hit the place where they had been a second earlier.

“You stood so tall atop our remains. How was the view from up there?” All for One snarled, as if he had actual empathy for his men.

He raised his arm, ready to throw another attack, thinking that Toshinori was an easy prey now that he was up in the air, but he was the Symbol of Peace and he twisted his body mid-air, his fist raised.

Delaware Smash.

Weaker than what it could have been but fast enough to surprise All for One.

And by the time Toshinori’s feet were touching the ground again, All for One had barely bulged despite being hit by a Smash.

How many of Young Midoriya’s quirks are preventing him from taking damage?
Downtown was crowded.

It was full of people who had taken the dubious decision of not fleeing even if there was an ongoing disaster in their town, and Izuku could hardly blame them. Not when he had stopped in front of the first screen available, barely able to stand, but still he had to see what was about to happen.

All Might and the villain who had Izuku’s quirks were moving so fast the cameras had trouble following them. They were fighting with so much strength than whoever was filming, probably a helicopter, was being rocked by the shockwaves of their attacks.

Someone tried to make Izuku move along. Yaaoyorozu Whom had been found again with Iida because Izuku had been terrified at the idea of one of them getting isolated and tracked down by the League, or becoming a collateral damage in a city where buildings tended to drop like flies. Literally.

One glance at her made Yaoyorozu stop trying to bring him to safety.

He couldn’t leave. He just couldn’t.

Toshinori wasn’t surprised to find All for One strong, fast, and durable. His powers came in bursts, with a distinct lack of fluidity, but still, there was something reminding him of Young Midoriya in the way he was juggling with quirks.

However, the same way time had blurred some of Toshinori’s most painful memories, it had made him forgot how fucking annoying All for One could get when he had the occasion to talk.

“Shut up!” Toshinori snarled after one too many word mocking people being good. “That’s what you do… You toy with people’s very lives. You break them! You steal from them! You take advantage and manipulate them! You sneer at them, when they are just trying to live their everyday lives! And for that… I can’t forgive you!”

On the screen, Izuku watched as All for One used the black tendrils to whip at All Might, probably using Speed and Acceleration to strike, and every time it touched All Might, his hero flinched.

At this speed, every contact point had to at least draw blood. And it probably tore off flesh.

Until All Might grabbed one of the black tendrils and yanked it back to him.

All for One flew like a fishing fly at the end of a line, everything happening too fast for him to stop using the quirk in time, and All Might stopped his flight with the most vicious California Smash ever witnessed.
All for One was a shadow of his former self. His head was a mass of scar tissue that had robbed him of his eyes, there was a tube in his throat so he could breathe, but even with Toshinori’s fist almost nailing his skull to the ground, he was still unbothered. The shock of Toshinori’s attacks absorbed.

But still, he was panting, unable to completely catch his breath. And he had started favoring his left arm at some point during the fight.

He was getting tired. Like Toshinori, his quirk was still powerful but he just didn’t have the health to use it to its full potential.

“You’re getting awfully emotional, aren’t you, All Might?” All for One asked, his voice almost perfectly controlled. Almost, as a hint of exhaustion slipped through and he was still not making any attempt to move. “I seem to remember hearing those exact words once before. From the previous person to inherit One for All: Shimura Nana.”

Black and suffocating anger took a hold of All Might. Something poisonous and toxic he generally didn’t allow himself to feel.

Hatred.

Pure hatred born of pain and anguish and grief.

*How dare he?*

Sir Nighteye was in the sanctity of his home, watching his screen as All Might had just pinned down All for One, the man who had almost snuffed out the light of the Symbol of Peace six years ago, only for this human nightmare to make him pause and to take the occasion to throw him through the air.

For a moment, All Might actually disappeared from the field of the cameras, and so did All for One as the two men ran to each other again and again, throwing themselves through anything that looked like concrete, with enough strength to break someone normal in half.

Sir Nighteye had known this was going to happen. He had almost seen it but never had the nerve to confirm it.

All Might would die.

Because Sir Nighteye had been too weak to prevent him from walking the road that would get him killed.
Toshinori took some distance and spat some blood. One for All had never burnt so bright inside him, the quirk giving everything it had.

“Never speak my master’s name…” he growled, still pissed about that. “From that filthy mouth of yours!”

They were hurt. Both of them. All Might was slower. All for One was taking more and more breaks and used long ranged attacks to give himself some breathing room. Their clothes were hiding it, but they were probably bleeding.

*All for One is winning*, Izuku thought, something glacial curling inside his stomach.

“All Might will win,” Kirishima muttered next to him, but not really talking to anyone. “All Might always wins.”

Izuku’s friends nodded along, having a desperate faith in All Might’s ability to win, and they weren’t the only one. Around them, the crowd was watching, knowing that All Might didn’t have any other choices but to win, or nothing would be the same anymore.

But Izuku couldn’t be the only one to have noticed how All Might had the disadvantage of having to watch out for collateral damages.

“Hey, All Might,” All for One called. “Just as you hate me… I, too, despise you.”

That was nothing new under the sun.

“It’s true, I may have killed your master but… You took something from me,” the dramatic son of a bitch declared, a hand on his heart. *Or at least the gaping home where his heart should be.*

As he was looking at him, Toshinori could barely believe he had been so uncomfortable at times in front of Young Midoriya. This man was a monster, every breath he took exuding malice.

Young Midoriya could never become like that.

“And that’s why I hope to see you die an ugly, brutal death.”

All Might, dodged, or at least started to. Then, he realized that he couldn’t afford to. Not when there were still so many people in the wrecks of Kamino, *right behind him.*

*This is going to hurt.*
Sorahiko was out of reach, having realized that the more he stayed near Toshinori, the more he was hindering him. His dear friend’s student couldn’t die because he was too busy protecting an old man like him.

And accidentally, that meant he was in the front row to see All for One using the remaining population of Kamino as hostage to turn the Symbol of Peace in a perfect practice target.

---

“I’ll take everything you’ve come to protect.”

---

Mirio, back in the safety of his home, watched as All Might was hit by several air cannons. Every time, the symbol of peace countered it with one of his Smashes to mitigate the impact.

But All for One, the villain Sir and All Might had warned him against, kept going.

Step by step, All Might advanced, breaching the distance between them as All for One kept attacking, unhurried.

One of All for One’s attacks would have turned Mirio into a pancake unless he had used his quirk, and he wouldn’t have been able to, not if he was the last line of defenses between several innocents and a certain death.

But All Might still stood. Not because of his quirk. Or at least, not only because of that. It was thanks to some a determination Mirio couldn’t rival with.

*He can’t die,* Mirio thought, prayed, just as the two men both unleashed one of their most powerful attacks.

By the time the dust settled in, All for One was flat on his ass.

It would have been a rejoicing sight if All Might, bloody, hurt, still standing, hadn’t changed back to his thin form.

---

“First, your image, which you maintained despite your wound. Then your pride. The world will see you for the pathetic man you are. Their symbol of peace.”
Disbelief rippled through the crowd, no one really understanding what was happening. How could they? The number 1 hero and All Might in his true form were antitheses of each other for those people.

_He should still have time_, Izuku thought. But of course, this had never been about One for All running out, but about All Might’s body not being able to use the quirk anymore. The same way Izuku, even with all his quirks, had to stop using them because exhaustion had caught to him.

_Go back. Go back and do something. It’s because All for One has your quirks that he was able to run him down that much._

But even if he ran back, taking quirks on his way out, he didn’t know what he could use and if it would do anything against All for One. Taking his quirks’ friend wouldn’t be enough.

_You had a chance. Back in the mountains. You had every quirks you needed. And you blew it._

“What did you know?” Kacchan asked, a hand appearing at the edge of his vision, making Izuku flinch. Immediately, his childhood friend withdrew.

And Izuku didn’t pay him more attention as something happened.

On the screen, the two men hadn’t moved. The camera was too far away to see their faces, but All Might… All Might got really still, his entire body language screaming something Izuku didn’t recognize but that was bad. That was very bad.

____________________

_My Master’s… family?_

“What’s the matter, All Might?” All for One mocked, his thumbs touching each side of his ruined face to mimic a grin. “Where is that smile of yours?”

____________________

There were hundreds of people on the place, watching the battle on giant screens. Men, women, others, from any age and from any background. People who didn’t know each other, and whom, to be honest, were trapped, be it because all the trains were blocked by the disaster or by the spectacle of All Might fighting what could be his last battle.

Such a though had never occurred to most of them until now.

But that didn’t mean their faith in him was diminished.

There were hundreds on the place, screaming, pleading, begging, asking for All Might to win.

There was power in so many people wishing for the same thing at the same time, a frantic energy shared until all of those people were one.
In the end, none of this mattered. Toshinori’s body failing him, his health catching back to him and limiting what he could do with One for All, only for his true form to be revealed. The fact that Shigaraki Tomura, or Shimura Tenko, had been stolen in the night by this monster. That All Might had beaten his master’s blood. His exhaustion. The various wounds on his body.

The only thing that he had to pay attention to was that there were innocents to protect and that if he stopped now, he was betraying everything he was and the legacy he was representing.


His colleagues arrived. He had completely forgotten they were on their way, but of course they were. They were heroes.

They immediately took care of the civilians. Taking away All for One’s advantage. Some of them even attacked the fiend. None of them managed to even touch him and Endeavor earned himself an annoyed attack that actually hit him but All Might was reassured as soon as the number 2 hero started shouting again. In his experience, you needed especially healthy lungs to yell that loud.

Toshinori regained his All Might form.

Prepared himself to give his all.

And then, All for One mentioned Young Midoriya. Mocked Toshinori because despite what he had thought, Young Midoriya didn’t have One for All so this quirk would die with him. Snarled that Toshinori couldn’t control him and how he would die full of regrets.

But of course, he was wrong. Even if One for All didn’t exist anymore, that didn’t mean this fight couldn’t continue.

Young Midoriya was free. He was the only one who could one day be able to compete with All for One. Gran Torino would understand it. He would protect him, and he would help him walk on the hero road until he was strong enough to survive All for One.

But Toshinori had been in this position. Forced to watch the previous One for All holder being killed while he was powerless to prevent it. It had shaped him, had shaped his life, and by God, it had scarred him.

He wouldn’t throw this burden on Young Midoriya’s shoulders.

He wouldn’t abandon him.

And Toshinori wouldn’t die.

“It ends now.”

Among the multitude of quirks near the place where Izuku had been imprisoned, One for All was easy to isolate. Transfer was following it the same way it was following the many quirks that All for One was using.
So Izuku felt One for All dying little by little as there was not enough to kindle it.

Then something akin to a blaze.

Toshinori has been prepared to give his all.

Instead, he used misdirection and went further beyond.

“UNITED STATES OF SMASH!”

Izuku had very few memories of what happened after All Might didn’t die.

Someone had half carried him when exhaustion had finally caught back to him. Since one side was hot and the other cold, with the hindsight, he had a sneaking suspicion of who it had been.

He remembered hugging everyone, even Bakugou who didn’t even protest as he bore a striking resemblance to a deer in the headlights, before going to the police.

By the time he was brought to the hospital by the police, things became even more blurry. He could barely pay attention to anything. Someone had draped a blanket around him in the car. Some nice police officer talked to him, and Izuku only answered by nodding or shaking his head.

If he could, he would have slept. He would have slept like a baby, like when he was safe and couldn’t imagine something could ever harm him. But he wasn’t done.

"I can't use my quirk,” he announced.

Which triggered a wind of panic, at least until the nurses and the doctors assured him that sometimes, because of a traumatic event, quirks could be disturbed.

That it was probably nothing and how he shouldn’t worry about it.
Katsuki was still shivering when Deku was escorted away, the cops surrounding him like a bunch of mother ducks protecting their duckling.

The shivers had started when this psychopath in a suit had appeared, they had become worse when he had been warped right next to him, but between the daring escape –thanks to Deku, again, this was starting to be a fucking habit- and All Might proving he was the living embodiment of Plus Ultra, he had actually forgotten about it.

Kirishima glanced at him and Katsuki immediately crossed his arms and clenched his fists to hide the reaction. The last thing he needed was an aggressive caretaker noticing something that didn’t mean anything.

But it wasn’t what had drawn his attention.

“Your pocket is vibrating,” he told him.

Another thing Katsuki hadn’t noticed.

Several missed calls greeted him when he looked at the cracked screen of the phone. A crack that wasn’t here before.

Round Face glanced at it and stopped breathing.

And Katsuki called Aizawa-Sensei back.

“… Sensei,” he greeted him after a pause. His mouth was strangely dry, but it was nothing compared to how pale the others had become. Katsuki was amazed to see them panicking right after being introduced to All for One. He would have thought nothing could scare them anymore after that.

“Is one of you injured?” his homeroom teacher asked.

Bruises and cuts. Nothing worth mentioning.

Especially compared to Deku, who had looked like a fucking ghost, his arm hidden by thick bandages and whatever was hidden underneath, it had happened because Katsuki had been too weak to protect himself. Twice.

Katsuki could have lied. Deny the whole thing, deny ever approaching this fucking place.

But he had fucked up despite knowing what he was risking, and now, he had to own it.

“No, we are fine. All of us.”

A sigh at the other end of the line. Exhaustion? Relief? Barely contained anger?

“This doesn’t excuse anything,” Aizawa-Sensei warned him, his voice refusing to betray anything. “We need to talk.”
Izuku woke up because he was having a nightmare. The nature of the nightmare wasn’t important. What mattered was that Izuku had fallen asleep not for two days, two months, or two weeks, like he deserved, but for two hours.

And now, he was wide awake.

Transfer.

It took one second to find One for All. Even when All Might wasn’t using it, he could still feel the quirk, and today was no exception, except that the light of the quirk was flickering. Like a flame in the wind, fighting to stay lit.

Izuku was on his feet before he realized what he was doing and out of the door half a second later, this time consciously.

It was so late it was almost early but the hospital was still full of activity. Some people glanced at the green-haired-boy in white pajamas and hospital sleepers who was roaming the hallways, but Izuku walked unhurried as if he belonged there, and no one blinked at that.

Izuku got lost, turned back, and finally found All Might’s room. A closed door, it was impossible to see who was inside but Izuku could hear Gran Torino being grumpy about something.

Grumpy in general, not grumpy because All Might, who was definitely in there, was having a heart attack. It was enough for Izuku to accept that his dream hadn’t been prophetic and he started to leave when the door opened, revealing Detective Tsukauchi.

And All Might behind him.

Laying on a hospital bed, with his arm and his ankle in a cast. The rest of his body was covered in thick white bandages, and he looked like he had been through hell and back. Dark circles were underlining his eyes but they were clear and warm despite that.

“Of course,” All Might smiled. “I should have known you would find me.”

Izuku didn’t answer, suddenly overwhelmed.

He was so tired.

He wanted to cry.

It was so stupid but he wanted someone to tell him he had been brave enough and that everything was okay now.

Gran Torino said something about him having nine lives and how he was happy to see him alive. Izuku answered something dumb about being also happy to see himself alive, and Gran Torino dragged the police officer outside for a coffee.

Before he left, the detective put a hand on his shoulder and squeezed it.

All Might opened his arms (yes, even the one in a cast, somehow), and Izuku rushed to him, before slowing down because his hero had just survived the Kamino disaster, so he kind of hovered in front of him, not daring to take the risk to hurt him.

At least, until All Might passed an arm around him and hugged him.
Chapter 36

The cell was large, clean, and there were signs that it had held a very aggressive noumu at some point because there were marks of claws and bumps on the walls.

The grate which had been in front of the air vent was still on the ground, though at the other side of the room, as if someone had kicked it across the cell before somehow climbing the wall and crawling through every claustrophobic persons’ worst nightmare.

“Most adult can’t fit in an air vent,” Eraserhead noticed. “That’s probably why they didn’t realize it was a security breach.”

Also because there was no way out of this airway unless someone was desperate enough to break through it, several meters above the ground.

The Detective watched the erasing hero as he walked through the cell, examining things without touching them. His face wasn’t showing anything except cool detachment and he moved like a big cat. Everything in his attitude showed that he was unaffected by what he was seeing.

It must have taken mountains of self-control in order not to show how monumentally furious he was.

“People aren’t built for isolation,” Eraserhead explained as if Naomasa didn’t know that. “If the brain doesn’t have any external stimuli, the mind just starts to go crazy. It’s already hard for adults. But for children…” Something vicious sipped through his voice, just for a second. “For children, it can have lasting consequences.”

“Have you talked to Midoriya yet?”

Eraserhead shook his head.

“I saw him yesterday and this morning,” Naomasa told him. “His arm is burned but it’s superficial. Apart from that, he is not injured. He was fed and hydrated. So physically, he is fine. Mentally… He is still standing.”

Midoriya was still in the hospital even though there was nothing wrong with him, except exhaustion, and everyone was relieved about it.

The boy had also refused any invasive exams, which was probably a good thing because his blood work would reveal something interesting. It could go from various bits of DNA that didn’t belong to him to a connection to All for One.

Though, by definition, All for One was contaminated, so it might be complicated to prove they were related. It could be his DNA or the DNA of another victim, so technically, Midoriya was covered. And if he wasn’t, Naomasa would make sure of it anyway.

However, to still be able to stand for now didn’t mean that he would simply be okay with all that had happened the last few days. There were heroes who hadn’t been confronted to half of that and who had crumbled under this kind of stress.

Eraserhead nodded so he didn’t have to answer. To point out that there were many problems and that adults had failed UA children.
“I learned about his quirk.”

It was Naomasa’s turn to nod so he didn’t have to answer.

What was revealed was close to the truth. Midoriya had been captured by All for One after fighting the League and when he woke up in this cell, he couldn’t use his quirk anymore. Doctors were cautiously hopeful that it was just the trauma coupled with some quirk overuse. Anyone knowing about All for One’s quirk knew it wasn’t that simple. And four people knew that more than one quirk had been stolen from Midoriya.

Eraserhead didn’t comment on the monumental loss the fifteen-years-old hero was going through. Instead, he knocked on the wall, unimpressed by the state of the cell.

“He was lucky Mount Lady didn’t crush him when she attacked,” he groaned, a hint of anger in his voice, but none of it directed at Mount Lady.

However, if the Erasure hero needed to change subject in order not to explode, Naomasa was happy to help him.

“The whole floor is completely intact because everything is reinforced. It was probably the safest place to be during the disaster of Kamino.”

Everyone was full of advices.

_You should rest. You need to sleep. Everything will be fine now, why don’t you lie down?_

And Izuku would have loved that, but despite being exhausted, cranky, and wishing for nothing but the sweet embrace of Morpheus, sleep was eluding him. Or to be more precise, he could catch one or two minutes of sleep every five minutes.

This was the consequences of those two days without doing anything. He had woken up without his quirk so he had unconsciously taken the habit of not falling unconscious anymore, even when he needed it.

So, at eight am and after drinking a healthy amount of caffeine (three iced coffees, not sweetened enough), he came knocking at Tokoyami’s hospital door.

The door slowly opened on a room submerged in darkness.

Izuku tugged at a familiar quirk, before remembering that he didn’t have Night Vision anymore and it was like some hole had opened under his feet, swallowing him whole. A feeling that was starting to get familiar since he went through it every time he forgot his quirks were gone.

He killed the feeling swiftly, before burying its remains at the edge of his mind. _There. With enough time, it would get used to it and wouldn’t have to do it so consciously._

A form moved among the shadows. If Izuku had his phone, he would have used the light on it, but the fight with Muscular had destroyed it.

His hand was still on the door. If there was even a hint of a brusque movement, he would slam it shut, gaining several seconds before the door was destroyed, and he would pick a sprint. Better
safe than sorry.

“Tokoyami?” he called instead, softly, in order not to wake him up in case he had decided to sleep in. He had seen during the Summer Camp that Dark Shadow didn’t need Tokoyami awake to roam free.

Noises and movements in the dark. Someone was fumbling in the obscurity. Tokoyami probably didn’t have a night vision either.

A soft purple light brought some clarity, the kind of night light little ones used, except that this one was skull-shaped, so it probably belonged to Izuku’s classmate.

Tokoyami was on the hospital bed, his feather ruffled and bearing the mark of the pillow, while Dark Shadow was roaming around, big but it was nothing compared to what Izuku had seen at the Summer Camp. He waved at Izuku, and Izuku waved back at him, smiling.

And there was a Hawks plushie at the end of the bed.

“It is not mine,” Tokoyami immediately said. “Hawks dropped that. For Dark Shadow.”

Dark Shadow tilted his head like a surprised golden retriever but didn’t add anything.

A wave of emotions passed over Izuku.

“I am so happy to see you,” he said, his voice strangled as he was trying not to cry in relief. “How are you? I heard you were injured?”

“Dark Shadow was. He protected me from the villain’s blue flames and it made me drift into unconsciousness but we are better now that the darkness restored our strength.”

“That’s good to hear,” Izuku said before he sat in the chair next to Tokoyami’s bed.

His friend pushed the blanket away and sat so he would face him.

“We went through many trials that night but you walked longer in the valley of death.”

Izuku was about to call him out on the exaggeration before remembering that the Kamino disaster was named like that for a reason.

“How are you?” Tokoyami asked.

Noises are stressing me out. Silence fuels my panic. I have to pay attention to everything, every detail, and that exhausts me.

“Fine,” Izuku smiled.

Dark Shadow approached and nudged Izuku’s arm, covered in white bandages with All Might-themed-adhesives. The latter was supposed to be for children but when Izuku had learned heroes-themed-bandages were an option, he had jumped on the occasion. He had earned it.

The burns underneath were completely hidden. Even though Izuku had been assured it would scar, it barely hurt now and he could perfectly move his arm, so he wasn’t bothered by it.

“It looks impressive but it’s nothing more than scratches,” he explained.

Tokoyami didn’t seem convinced.
Then he sighed, and Izuku prepared himself.

“Midoriya… You didn’t flee, did you? You stayed and you refused for them to pass and to go after me.”

It would have been so easy to lie. To say that he had tried, but Dabi had found him and called the rest of the League with a pillar of flames.

“No, I didn’t,” Izuku said instead.

He had lied to his classmate’s face, that night. The least he could do was to be truthful now.

“Was that because you didn’t trust me to fight by your side?” Tokoyami asked. “You were already overusing your quirk when you rescued me, but that meant you had also seen my lack of control…”

Izuku raised his hand, asking him to stop.

“I am sorry for lying to you. As for why I did it, it had nothing to do with you and everything to do with me. Because despite what I said during this night, for me, the worst case scenario was never someone being abducted. It was watching one of my friends being hurt. I couldn’t risk it. I couldn’t risk you. Not because I don’t trust you. But because I know myself and if a member of my family or one of my friends is taken away from me, it would destroy me.”

Tokoyami got really still. Dark Shadow, who had been next to Izuku this whole time, left to take the Hawks plushie and gave him to the feathered boy.

“And what did you think I felt when I learned you were lost for us?” Tokoyami asked.

“I never said I wasn’t selfish.”

Ultimately, Izuku didn’t regret it. If Tokoyami had been the one to be targeted, Izuku would have had to come back for him, and while worrying about collateral damages, they would have both been in a pinch.

It was easier to live with the consequences when he was the one to bear the brunt of them.

The memory of someone putting a hand on his face, someone with a multitude of quirks, came to his mind.

If Dark Shadow had been taken… He just wasn’t replaceable.

For a moment, Tokoyami and Dark Shadow didn’t say anything. They just stared at Izuku without a word, a storm hiding under the silence.

That was absolutely nerve-wracking.

“Are you sure you’re not harmed?” Tokoyami finally asked.

Izuku nodded.

And then, all air was expelled from his lungs as the Hawks plushie was thrown at his chest at Mach speed.

Izuku bravely managed not to cough up a lung. And Tokoyami hugged him. Then so did Dark Shadow.
“I now know that you are not to be trusted with your own safety,” his friend declared.

*Why does that sound like a threat?*

---

All the Todoroki siblings came to pick up Izuku, all of them fussing over him. Natsuo had brought him every All Might themed clothes he had managed to find, underwear and socks included. Fuyumi hugged him like there was no tomorrow and she cried. As for Todoroki, he kept nudging him, as if he wanted to be sure Izuku wasn’t about to vanish.

The car trip that ensued was one interesting experience because the three Todoroki siblings were trying to make sure he didn’t need anything. That’s how Izuku wore Natsuo’s jacket for a full second because he had looked chilly, whatever that meant, how Shouto had decided to give him several All Might ice sculptures because he had taken off that same jacket and that must have meant he felt too hot—and Izuku was completely willing to fake a fever as many times as needed to have more of those- and how Fuyumi had pulled a stunt that only happened in movies, when cool criminals needed to escape the police during a car chase, because Izuku had commented about the hospital food, so they had driven at full speed to a MacDonald.

Was Izuku sorry and even guilty to see how much they had worried about him?

Absolutely.

Did Izuku take advantage of their fussing?

Completely.

They ate junk food until they were full and a little sleepy. They watched movies. They played games where Fuyumi and Natsuo absolutely destroyed the two UA students but it was okay. They all pretended this terrifying giant mess hadn’t happened, they had fun, and Izuku wasn’t alone.

That was everything he needed.

---

At some point, Izuku, his arms full of snacks as he was helping to refill, passed near the gym and he saw through the opened door that it had been scorched.

He didn’t even slow down but he still asked the question: “Todoroki, why is your gym on fire?”

“My father became the number 1 hero.”

“That makes sense.”

And they went back to the media room.
And then, the night came.

Izuku, alone in this big room.

The silence everywhere, threatening to smother him.

The bed was high, unlike the mattress Izuku had slept on for two days. Two whole days. I was so sure it was less than one. The room had furniture, Izuku’s clothes and stuff were everywhere, merging with the personality of the previous owner.

*It has nothing in common with my cell.*

It was so quiet Izuku could hear his heartbeat.

Usually, Izuku could stay awake for a long time without feeling any side-effects, but it was different today. He was restless. His eyes were burning. He longed for Morpheus’ embrace, and instead, he was just low-key miserable and tired.

A couple of hours later, he gave up and wandered in the hallways, without any Night Vision to see or Silencer to smother the sound of his footsteps.

Yes, he was aware he was whining.

By the time he had reached Todoroki’s door, he had half realized that this was a bad idea. Todoroki was probably already asleep and even if he wasn’t, he didn’t deserve to be bothered by Izuku’s insomnia and general antics.

“Midoriya,” his friend suddenly called, startling him, “Is that you?”

“Maybe?” Izuku answered once his feet touched the ground again.

“Is there a reason why you are pacing in front of my door instead of coming in?”

After a beat, Izuku knocked and came in. Shouto was sitting on his futon, his phone in his hand so knowing that Izuku wasn’t the one to wake him up.

Izuku didn’t waste time. He admitted he had trouble sleeping and asked if he could stay here for the night, and Todoroki accepted in a heartbeat.

The green-haired-boy grabbed a spare futon from the closet, and by the time he had put it next to Todoroki’s, he knew he had made the right choice. The atmosphere of the room was completely different, he could feel Todoroki’s presence and hear him breathing, and the pernicious isolation wasn’t haunting him anymore.

He has started to curl up on himself, finally resting even though he wasn’t sleeping yet, when Todoroki broke the silence.

“Midoriya, when you were gone, I read your notebooks.”

Izuku froze.

“Now, I realize it was wrong,” Todoroki continued while Izuku was furiously thinking. “And I apologize for it.”
A quirk mental inventory confirmed that there was nothing about Transfer in his notes, and even though the quirks—his former quirks—he had taken were there, there were no name and no personal anecdotes, nothing that would lead to his donors.

“It’s okay,” he assured his friend. “It’s just a hobby of mine. It’s not like a diary.”

Todoroki expired quietly but Izuku could still recognize the sigh of relief, especially with how sound sensitive he was now.

“That’s good to hear… I noticed that there was no page dedicated to you but a lot to All Might.”

“Mmm,” Izuku eloquently answered.

His All Might fanboy badge of honor was no secret. He had started analyzing his quirk as soon as he had been able to write.

“Can I ask you something?”

“Not if it’s about my quirk,” Izuku immediately said.

That cut the conversation short and Izuku pretended to fall asleep to escape any questions about why he couldn’t use his quirk anymore and if what his plans were for later.

For a moment, Todoroki remained silent, then he quietly called Izuku to check he was asleep, so the green-haired boy made his best imitation of someone impossible to wake up.

Nothing could have prepared Izuku for what Todoroki next said to himself.

“Would you even tell me if you were All Might’s son?”

Something suspiciously similar to a pterodactyl screech spawned in Izuku’s throat but he managed to kill it before it escaped his lips, and for a moment, he just stop breathing, fighting not to burst out in hysterical laughter.

He knew he should have been horrified but right now, he was just holding up a ribs-breaking-laugh, while being extremely focused on what he would do best to troll his friend.

*The only reason you manage to remain so calm is because your nerves are shot thanks to the ordeal you went through.*

*But that’s not important right now.*


Todoroki breathed sharply, the sound revealing his sheer outrage, which only made Izuku’s smile wider.

“Midoriya… Don’t pretend you’re asleep… What do you mean by probably not… Midoriya!”

Shouto overslept, probably because his night had been haunted by thoughts about similar quirks and the familiarity between the Symbol of Peace and his friend, and when he woke up, it was
already seven in the morning.

And Midoriya wasn’t next to him.

For a crazy second, Shouto seriously wondered if Midoriya had been abducted once again.

Shouto immediately scrambled to his feet to go and look for him. He might be overreacting but Midoriya was someone who turned into a demon if someone tried to wake him up before 7:30, and nothing short of the apocalypse could get him out of bed before that.

The kitchen was empty but the smell of coffee was everywhere and an All Might mug was Shouto’s first clue. It had been rinsed and put on the counter to dry. Only one person used this cup and he had taken the habit of leaving it in sight so Endeavor could see it and fume about it.

Shouto finally found Midoriya in the garden.

Training.

Punching, blocking, kicking, as if he was fighting an invisible enemy.

After training until his whole body complained, Izuku borrowed Todoroki’s phone because his own had met an unfortunate fate while he was fighting Muscular. He had asked her if she was at home and if he could visit, but he hadn’t expecting the door to immediately open and Nagisa, wearing a beautiful navy suit, dragging him inside before squeezing him into a one-arm-hug.

“Did you miss me?” Izuku joked.

“Don’t push your luck,” Izuku’s favorite spider lady warned him. “And come in.”

Izuku followed her while avoiding the trail of webs threatening to trap him until Nagisa took mercy of him and once he reached the living room, he sought asylum on the couch, this island of protection in a sea of sticky threads.

And Nagisa put a shoe box in his hands.

“Your first gift. Consider it a bribe so you won’t ever scare my family like that.”

Izuku didn’t promise anything and opened it. He discovered red sneakers, almost the same as the ones he usually wore, except that they had been confiscated with his clothes at the hospital because they were covered in blood. He had been wearing his Ingenium pair instead.

Slowly, he touched them. He had meant to shop for a new pair.

“How did you know?” he quietly asked.

“You mentioned the loss of your beloved sneakers when you texted me after Kamino.”

Izuku had a very vague memory of borrowing All Might’s phone to contact Nagisa, but she didn’t hesitate to refresh his memories by showing her the messages.

He read while she was quietly judging him for his strange sense of priorities.
And she was right to do so.

[ *I am alive. My phone is dead, so this one isn’t mine*
  
  *so don’t try to reach me at this number.*]

[ *I am fine, except that they told me I probably wouldn’t get*
  
  *my clothes back, not even my red sneakers. That sucks.*]

[ *Love you!*]

“I might have been tired when I texted you.”

“I guessed as much. Did you notice you didn’t even introduce yourself?”

Izuku nodded.

“Did you notice that you said *Love you!* at the end?”

Izuku nodded again but, this time, he was blushing. “But you recognized me and you know I was sleep-deprived so can we forget that?”

“Well, I do have a superior intelligence and I am known to be merciful so why not?”

Then, she asked him how he was.

And she wasn’t convinced by his answer.

“You’re fine?” she repeated, doubtful.

“Yes.”

“You were attacked while you were at school, you had to fight the villain Muscular, you were abducted and held hostage for two days, then you had to find your way out of Kamino while some maniac was leveling the neighborhood. Only to come back to a house where your mom isn’t here. And you’re fine?”

“Exactly, Nagisa. I am so glad we are on the same page.”

Izuku didn’t manage to convince her but she knew he was secretive by nature, so she didn’t push.

Nagisa’s second gift was a new phone, impossible to track.

The third gift created a fantastic wave of unease though Izuku and for a moment, he just stopped thinking, all his strength devoted to hide that something was wrong. Thankfully, Nagisa was too proud of what she had found to see the cracks in the mask before they vanished.

It was a file.

On someone who had a heat resistance quirk.

Izuku thanked her and started to put it in his All Might backpack.

“You’re not reading it?” Nagisa asked, seeming unsure for the first time Izuku had known her.
“I will read it later.”

She tilted her head. “Since when are you not reading everything about a new potential quirk?”

Izuku immediately opened the file and started to read.

The quirk wasn’t only resistant to heat but also to cold. His holder had used it all his life so it was already well developed and he wouldn’t need to work on it too much. Honestly, that was a pearl as far as donated quirks were.

And every time Izuku thought about it, he just couldn’t see himself taking it. Not after the Summer Camp.

He used to have so many quirks. What would he do if someone asked them back? What would he say?

*Sorry, I wasn’t strong enough to hold on to them?*

When he looked up, Nagisa was still looking at him, but this time, she seemed scared.

“Bug, what happened?”

Izuku looked at her, trying to shrug because he didn’t want to talk about it but Nagisa was looking at him with so much worry that he just didn’t managed to.

So he told her everything except for One for All and how he thought his father had met All for One.

And at the end, even though he didn’t manage to cry, he clung to Nagisa’s arms as she was holding him as if he could finally lean on someone.

The six students who had gone to Kamino were called to school the following day.

Ochako had expected Aizawa-Sensei, Nedzu, all the teachers, a disciplinary committee, and so on. Instead, it was only their homeroom teacher, still wearing his suit from the press conference.

It barely made things better.

“Not only did you willingly put yourselves in danger and not only could you have been killed, but you endangered every pro heroes present,” Aizawa-Sensei said without even raising his voice. “All Might would have given his life to protect you, and the villains were perfectly aware of it.”

He didn’t look at anyone in particular but they all knew for whom this last sentence was addressed to.

Bakugou, his hair still black, didn’t say anything.

Ochako would have preferred to see him fuming or screaming. A calm Bakugou was just disturbing.

“I don’t care about your reasons,” their teacher said. “As far as I am concerned, you betrayed our
trust. If it wasn’t for the Kamino accident being classified as a disaster, you would have been arrested for unlawful quirk usage.”

Honestly, as soon as she realized they weren’t about to be expelled or arrested, Ochako didn’t quite pay attention to the rest. She listened to her teacher being disappointed in them and…

… Somehow, she didn’t manage to find one ounce of guilt.

During the Summer Camp, and especially during the USJ attack, Aizawa-Sensei had done everything he could to protect them.

But still, there were supposed to be safe at this camp. UA was supposed to have taken precautions. And yet, the villains had still managed to find them.

Midori had been taken.

And the heroes weren’t even the one to rescue him.

This whole rescue mission might have been a mistake but the blame wasn’t entirely on them. UA had broken their trust first.

They left depressed and in hurry in case their homeroom teacher would change his mind and throw them in jail, but as far as Ochako was concerned, her conscience was clear.

Katsuki didn’t ask Half and Half how Deku was doing. He didn’t have the right and to be honest, he was still pissed that he had decided to save him.

How he had rubbed Katsuki’s face into his weakness, and worse, for everyone to see.

And for other reasons.

So he waited for Glasses and the Vice Prez to ask, expecting to learn that this nerd was already kicking and away from him on the heroic road.

Instead, he learned that he hadn’t managed to use his quirk since he had been taken by the masked bastard.

After visiting Nagisa, Izuku plastered a smile on his face, repressed anything unsightly, and since he had a brand new phone, he called Todoroki to ask if he wanted to eat outside. He had left before him this morning, probably to see his mom, but he was done and quite enthusiastic to accept Izuku’s proposition.

They were eating their weight in burgers when things got weird.

Todoroki’s phone almost exploded under an avalanche of messages, all of them from Mineta, asking for Izuku, and saying that they needed to talk, that it was urgent, but without going into
“Midoriya, I need your help right now!” Mineta shrieked when Izuku called him on Todoroki’s phone. “I am freaking out. Can you come to my house? Please?”

There was only one thing to answer, so Todoroki and Izuku left for Mineta’s house.

On the way there, Izuku realized that Mineta couldn’t know that he didn’t have his quirks anymore, so if he had called expecting Izuku to carry something heavy or to fight a villain, he was going to be surprised.

With two GPSs and the inquisitive minds of two hero students, they manage to get completely lost and arrived twenty minutes late but finally found the nice house with Mineta’s name on the mailbox.

A man with a mutation quirk answered the door, only wearing gym shorts and a beach towel wrapped around his shoulder. Taller than Todoroki and Izuku, his build was a little larger than Shouji and his arms were longer than usual, easily reaching his knees. His skin has a pretty purple color, and his head wasn’t human, with a muzzle that reminded Izuku of a porcupine but it might have been because of the glorious mane spreading from his head to his shoulders and the beginning of his back, except that instead of hair, it was darker purple balls.

Both boys didn’t even blink.

“Hi, is Mineta home?” they both asked with the same voice countless of children had used through centuries or even millennia in order to bypass the adult/stranger to access the potential playmate in the house.

The young adult who shared Mineta’s quirk but who had obviously picked up more of the mutation burst out in tears, in an oddly familiar way.

“It’s me!” he cried.

Todoroki and Izuku looked at each other.

“I am Mineta!”

Izuku was panicking so he made tea and found some cookies, put all of that on a plate and brought it to the living room where Mineta and Todoroki were waiting. In his experience, sweet things helped to deal with changes. Then, once Mineta would be calmer, they could start asking him questions.

“When did you start taking Nectar?” Todoroki asked.

Or one could go straight for the throat.

Izuku let Todoroki ask the awful questions and brought the plate to them and sat on Mineta’s left. Their classmate had went from tears to laugh to tears to unsettling calm since they had arrived, and he was currently stuck to his couch but he hadn’t noticed yet, so Izuku gave him his cup of tea before he could lean in and realize it.
“Thank you, Midoriya. You’re always so nice. It was after the third day at UA. I bought some but I didn’t take it until the USJ.”

This explains that.

From what he remembered, the Nectar Girl’s selling strategy was aimed at people who were desperate to have a stronger quirk and she had even mentioned the hero students as regular clients.

“I understand a little from where you’re coming from,” Izuku admitted.

Of course, it was still dumb, but Mineta didn’t need to hear that. Right now, he needed to be told that everything would be okay.

“I don’t,” Todoroki said.

“On our first day, our homeroom teacher threatened to expel us if we weren’t good enough!” Mienta reminded him. “Midoriya almost got kicked out of UA and he’s the strongest in our year! So yes, I was never nervous. But I didn’t try until after the USJ…”

His shoulders hunched over and the calm that had lasted for five blessed minutes disappeared, shattered by Todoroki’s lack of tact, only to be replaced by unadulterated sadness.

“I just needed something to be strong enough to survive villains who keep trying to murder us,” Mineta whispered as he teared up.

Todoroki and Izuku looked at each other, not sure of what to do. The silence stretched between them, full of unsaid things and horrible things conjured by their imagination.

So Izuku took his cup, hold it with both hands and waited for Mineta to do the same. Then, he drank and Mineta followed his lead. People tended to do that to avoid embarrassed silence. They were taking the cue on the one facing them in order to do anything except bearing the awkwardness.

Izuku had wanted Mineta to be soothed by a hot beverage.

He didn’t expect his muzzle to wrinkle as he tasted the tea.

“Did my taste buds become more sensitive or is this tea abominably sweet?”

Todoroki put a hand in front of his face to hide his smile.

“Drink your tea,” Izuku caringly growled.

Mineta immediately gulped down the reasonably sweetened content of his cup.

“What will I do now?”

“You stop taking Nectar before it kills you,” Izuku told him.

“I already tried that. How do you think that happened? I was expecting the pain. I thought I only had to hold on a day. At one point, I passed out for ten hours and I had one hell of a surprise.”

“It’s because the mutations don’t appear unless you stop taking it,” Todoroki explained.

Mineta turned towards Todoroki and gave him a glare that could have rivalled Hellfire.
So Izuku poured him another cup of tea, which distracted their purple classmate.

“No, really, that’s not necessary. I am not thirsty anymore…”

“Why didn’t you call Eraserhead?” Todoroki interrupted him. “He told us he would help for that.”

“Because he doesn’t trust Aizawa,” Izuku immediately explained.

“Because our teacher loves logical ruses, which means he loves lying, which means that I am certainly going to get kicked out,” Mineta explained at the same time.

“You don’t have to call Aizawa-Sensei if you don’t want to but you need to be cured by people who know what they are doing because the side effects when you stop are hellish.” Mineta flinched. Maybe Izuku shouldn’t have used that last word. “Where are your parents?”

“They come back in three days. Gone for the week.”

“Oh… Well, then, we have to call Aizawa.”

They needed an adult here.

“No!” Mineta screamed, lunging at him but the sticky ball that was nailing him to the couch made a fantastic job at keeping him in place “You’re supposed to be the nicest one of our class!”

“No, that’s Kirishima,” Izuku corrected him

“No, it’s you! You’re cool and nice!”

“I used to be nice but that was before I was kidnapped. Now, I am just tired.”

The deafening silence this brought allowed Izuku to call their teacher in peace while Todoroki was taking care of Mineta and assuring him that his new appearance wasn’t that bad.

He had just found the right number when Todoroki bluntly said to Mineta that he looked really cool like that and that girls would probably agree.

It did wonders to pacify their mutated friend.

“Midoriya?” Aizawa answered a second later with the voice of someone who hadn’t slept for far too long. “What’s happening?”

Now, if it had been Nagisa or another friend, Izuku would have said something about how he could call just to check on someone, or because he wanted to talk, and that it wasn’t because he never called that it meant something had happened.

“In theory, what would happen if I had taken some Nectar and needed to be treated for it?” he asked as if he was talking about the weather. “I am talking about the consequences on my hero career, not on how I will be cured.”

A long silence saturated with pure distress answered him.

“Midoriya, did you take some Nectar?”

Izuku didn’t answer. He was very interested by what Aizawa had to say before he revealed anything else.
From the living room, Mineta was looking at him expectantly as if he wholeheartedly trusted Izuku.

Izuku put Aizawa on speaker and the three of them waited.

“You will have to go to a cure center and follow a program,” Aizawa finally explained. “Your homework will be sent to you and you will have to maintain your grades. But apart from that, as long as you didn’t endanger anyone while using your quirk, UA keeps his jurisdiction over you and you won’t be expelled.”

“That’s a promise?” Izuku asked.

He needed to hear it.

“Yes.”

Izuku trusted this.

But he wasn’t his choice.

So he waited until Mineta nodded before he explained the situation to their homeroom teacher.

After Young Mineta asking for Aizawa-kun’s help, UA announced his projects of locating students in dorms inside the campus in order to protect them from the villains.

Toshinori accompanied his colleague to talk to the parents and convince them to entrust their children to them.

But when it was time to visit Endeavor, he asked to go alone.

The fact the erasure hero patted his shoulder before leaving him without a word wasn’t reassuring.

Todoroki Enji was a very busy man but he had always made time when it came to Shouto’s education. However, when he realized that the former number 1 was the one who had come to talk about the new initiative of UA, he immediately regretted taking a day off.

A letter would have been more than enough to take care of this annoying dorm business.

But Enji didn’t have a choice so the number 1 by default let the Symbol of Peace enter into his house.

There were some attempts at small talks where All Might complimented his house, then tried to congratulate him on his new position as a number 1 hero but Enji just couldn’t hear that and he immediately cut to the chase so they could talk about Shouto’s future. And by that, it meant that Enji told him in a second that he trusted Nedzu’s judgement.
As for Midoriya…

“This boy isn’t my ward. From a legal standpoint, I have no authority on him so it will be his decision.”

Strangely, it made All Might smile with something akin to melancholy.

“Indeed. Young Midoriya is always the master of his fate.”

Reluctantly, Enji stopped glaring at the Symbol of Peace and he actually looked at him for the first time in several decades.

All Might still carried the traces of his fight. His arm was broken, and though he was careful, he had a limp because one of his legs had been slashed by black tendrils.

And of course, there was his emaciated state. Enji had once thought that such a shadow of his former self wasn’t apt anymore to carry his heavy burden. But then, a monster who had destroyed a city had underestimated All Might and the man Enji could barely look at without getting annoyed had proved that a blaze was still burning within him when the situation called for it.

But still. He looked weary. He had given everything. And now, even if he didn’t seem at peace, something tranquil emanated from him.

Your turn indeed. All Might had given his all, and now, it was Enji’s turn to fight while All Might was free of the burden of holding up an entire society.

As for their rivalry… It wasn’t that it hadn’t been acknowledged. He had just never noticed and he was that oblivious.

He had never looked down on Enji.

All of that work… All of those sacrifices… For nothing.

All Might thanked him for his hospitality and as he started leaving, things started to get strange.

As soon as the conversation was over, Shouto and Midoriya appeared, greeted All Might, and Midoriya actually escorted All Might out. As they exited the house, Shouto didn’t immediately left—something that almost always happened when he was left with Enji for no reason—and he watched them go with a thoughtful look on his face.

Enji followed his gaze, watching All Might and Midoriya walking side by side, talking and smiling with each other.

It took him a second but when he realized how at ease they seemed to be with each other, it hit Enji like a freight train.

Midoriya had an enhancer quirk that had allowed him to rival with Shouto and that looked so much like All Might’s. He had received some obvious training that had allowed him to face several villains at once.

How, when Nedzu had called Endeavor to ask him to house the child, All Might had kept insisting that he could take Midoriya with him.

The obvious familiarity between the student and the hero.

As of why All Might would hide this… Well, he obviously had a history with All for One.
Someone who had been dangerous enough to almost kill him several times.

*From the reports, Midoriya wasn’t specifically targeted.*

But the boy also hadn’t managed to use his quirk since he had been captured. And he hadn’t been with the League during his imprisonment but under the noumu hanger. All for One’s playfield.

*It… It would oddly make sense.*

---

Izuku left the Todoroki house before he even had the time to think about it. He crossed the threshold and walked with All Might, adapting his pace to a man who was two meters tall.

Because his arm was still in a cast, the Symbol of Peace couldn’t drive and Izuku expected to just walk to the car and the driver waiting for him, but All Might asked him if he wouldn’t mind walking a little, to stretch his legs after staying so long in the hospital.

Since All Might had his leg almost ripped off, Izuku doubted he needed the exercise that much, but he wouldn’t pass on a chance of hanging out with his hero.

“So… What do you think of the idea of moving in the dorms?”

Of course, dodging the questions of his hero was something he hadn’t been prepared for. But Plus Ultra.

“I think it will be fun to live with everyone,” Izuku answered truthfully. ‘I was a little worried at the idea of not being able to leave when I want but I will talk about that with Aizawa-Sensei.’

All Might immediately understood why Izuku needed to secure as many ways out as possible.

“How is your mother?”

“Stable.”

Izuku had visited her yesterday. He had stayed at her side without saying a word until he had to leave.

“The staff is really good and nice,” he continued. “And the doctors are cautiously hopeful.” *Whatever that means. Actually, let’s change subjects.* “Will the general department also move in the dorms?”

“It will,” the pro hero immediately assured. “We are worried about every student’s safety. Why?”

“No reason.” *Liar.* “And how are you?”

All Might did this thing when he was about to shrug but remembered at the last second a lot of his bones wouldn’t agree so he conveyed it with his body language.

“I have always healed quickly so I should make a quick recovery but I am still going to have to retire,” he announced like he was talking about the weather.

It was a very good thing Izuku had snatched *Shock Absorption* because he walked into a wall. The quirk protected him from the worst of the physical impact but it did nothing against the shock of
“Now?” he croaked. “But you still have One for All and it’s never been brighter!”

He had managed to sense All Might from across the street when he had arrived!

It made All Might smile, but it was not his patented *I am here* smile or even a happy smile. “One for All isn’t the problem. My body just can’t withstand this kind of power anymore. I tried to use it again and I only have it for a couple of seconds before my body shut off the quirk to keep me uninjured.”

Quirks that were ill-suited for bodies weren’t rare and one could either take another quirk or use support items. Izuku didn’t know enough about the latter, he would have to call Melissa—but her father had been arrested precisely because he had been trying to help All Might so that might not be a good idea. As for another quirk… Izuku was almost certain a Shock Absorption could take care of the recoil a quirk like One for All unleashed but would All Might be able to handle a second quirk.

Could he get rid of another one?

All Might put a hand on his shoulder, cutting his internal rambling.

“I am fine with that,” the hero assured. “Still being here with you is already a blessing.”

Izuku nodded. A world without the Symbol of Peace would be a challenge. A world without All Might was unthinkable.

They stayed a few seconds standing here in the street, just relieved that All Might was still there, that they have survived Kamino. Then All Might took back his hand, passing it through his hair, suddenly nervous. He hesitated for a moment only, before saying the last thing Izuku wanted to hear.

“So… I heard you’ve been busy since you’ve left the hospital… I suppose that you must already have a few quirks.”

What Izuku wouldn’t have given to have Vanish at this moment…

He took a deep breath.

Then, he admitted it.

“I don’t want to take any new quirks for now. I could… It’s not like he took Tranfer.” That would have probably killed Izuku. The idea of living without his quirk was making his insides grow cold. And that was the problem. Why he didn’t manage to see himself take any other quirks, in fear of inflicting that to someone else. “But I am not planning on taking any new quirks for now.”

He just couldn’t.

“You’re not *him*,” All Might told him, his eyes wide, as if he was horrified at the idea Izuku could think such a thing. “You always ask for people’s consent. You’re a hero. You couldn’t be farther away from him.”

“Not all my quirks were freely given,” Izuku noticed out loud. “I took some from villains attacking me.”
He didn’t even know why he was saying that. Those, he didn’t regret. He would have died. They had forfeited their quirks as soon as they had decided to kill him.

“It was self-defense,” All Might reminded him as if Izuku didn’t know that. The teenager had been there. He knew what had happened every time. “As for what happened in the hangar… You didn’t have a choice. You did what you had to in order to survive. What happened is All for One’s fault.”

Shock Absorption shone brighter inside Izuku.

He wasn’t like All for One.

Becoming like him would be a long road he could avoid as long as he kept caring about people.

But that didn’t change how he felt.

And he didn’t want to take any new quirks for now.

“Don’t worry about me, All Might. I know my quirk isn’t bad in itself. But now that I met All for One…” He just wasn’t managing to explain what he was feeling. “I can't.”

Shock Absorption would have to be enough.

Toshinori had come with the intention to give One for All to Young Midoriya if he accepted it. An intention cemented by the revelation that the boy didn’t have any additional quirks.

It seemed like the perfect thing to do. Toshinori needed a successor. While Young Midoriya needed to replenish his stock.

And he would make an incredible number 1 hero.

And better, no one would be able to steal his quirk again.

And yet, reality mercilessly shattered this perfect plan.

Toshinori realized that even though Young Midoriya was smiling and putting on a brave face, Kamino had broken something in him. Something that could be repaired with time and attention, but not if Toshinori did what he had come to do.

Young Midoriya didn’t want any quirk but if Toshinori asked him to take One for All, he would accept. He wouldn't have a choice. He was All Might’s fan and he wouldn’t do anything that could disappoint him.

He would put on a brave face. He would keep smiling so no one would see how hurt he was.

And he would probably become the greatest hero who had ever existed, sacrificing everything for his mission, until it killed him.

Toshinori couldn’t condemn a child that was doing his best to hold on and not to crumble to such a fate.

And he couldn’t force Young Midoriya to fight villains again.
It had to be his choice.

Toshinori got closer and hugged the high schooler.

“Please, never doubt that you’re a hero,”

The boy didn’t answer.

But he did hug back.
Chapter 37

Chapter Summary

Izuku is FINE.

Chapter Notes

The chapter happens over five days/a week.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku was running through the forest, as fast as he could because Vanish wasn’t enough. He could still see him. He could sense his presence.

His feet hurt and his lungs were threatening to burst. Branches and bushes were scratching him as he passed through them, too terrified to slow down and to avoid them. He was so afraid terror had obliterated any chance of higher thinking. Only speed mattered for now.

And despite all Izuku’s efforts, all his despair and everything he had invested, he caught up with him.

Amusement slipped through the air just before Izuku was hit, his back hitting in turn a tree so hard that all air was chased from his lungs. Izuku immediately got back to his feet, or at least tried to, because to stop was to die.

He didn’t know why he fell again. Maybe a quirk. Maybe exhaustion claiming him or terror preventing him from standing.

Tranquil footsteps drew closer to him. There was no reason to hurry when the prey couldn’t escape.

Izuku was still on the ground, his chest brimming with pain, when red sneakers appeared in his field of vision.

The other Izuku, the one who had been chasing him, looked at the fallen hero student. He was still covered in Muscular’s blood but also his own as his quirk had been pushed beyond its limits.

They were so many things to notice about him. The foolish bravery that had made him fight the League of Villains in his hubris. The shameful fear on his face. The scent of failure.

Because in the end, he hadn’t been enough.

But really, only one thing interested him.

Izuku grabbed the hero’s face and he harvested all the golden treasures Ariel was too weak to protect.
Izuku woke up in Todoroki’s room, so still he was barely breathing. Not a movement, not even a sharp intake of breath that could have woken up his friend.

For a moment, he just stayed there, lying on his side as he lived through the last remnants of his dream. It had been just that: a dream born from the stress of that night. Even if his legs were begging to move, the adrenaline and anxiety begging for a run. Even if his chest indeed hurt because his heart was beating so fast.

Just a dream.

*Thanks, subconscious. That was subtle.*

Toshinori jumped on his phone as soon as it rang, convinced that it was Young Midoriya.

“So, have you asked the kid yet?” Gran Torino greeted him instead.

The former Symbol of Peace sighed, not really disappointed that this wasn’t Young Midoriya calling him to announce that he had new quirks, to talk about his abduction so he could free himself from the trauma, or to propose him to hang out but… Actually, yes, it was disappointment but his teacher didn’t need to know that.

“Asked him what?” he asked, rummaging through his memories to try to remember if Gran Torino had asked him to say anything to the boy on his behalf.

“Did you ask him to be your successor?” the Jet hero clarified.

Toshinori looked at the phone, frowning, then around him, wondering if he had been bugged by his teacher. It was either that or the retired hero had been hiding in a bush when he had gone and seen Young Midoriya.

“How do you even know that?” he asked, more impressed than anything else.

His teacher rolled his eyes. Toshinori couldn’t see him but he could somehow *hear* it at the other end of the line.

“He is missing a quirk and you have one that needs to be passed on. Though, if you want to know the whole truth, I was wondering if you would choose him long before Kamino.”

*Really?*

Now that he thought about it, Gran Torino had indeed asked Young Midoriya what he would think of having One for All a little after the Stain accident. But that didn’t make sense, because there was no way Toshinori had considered it so early. *Right?*

“How is he?” Gran Torino interrupted his thoughts. “I know you’ve seen him.”
“Again, how does he even know that?”

“He said he’s fine,” Toshinori carefully answered.

Which was the proof that he wasn’t fine, of course. No one could be after such an ordeal. But there wasn’t much he could do except telling the boy that if he needed to talk, he was there for him.

“I considered asking him but… He isn’t in a good place. He confided that he just didn’t feel like he could take any new quirks for now, and I think seeing All for One, someone who has the same power… It did something to him. If I asked him now, he would feel compelled to say yes because I am the one asking,” Toshinori sighed.

A long silence answered him for a time.

No judgement. Gran Torino never judge him on important things –but he always complained about Toshinori not calling him enough- and he always took his time to consider all options.

“I don’t know, Toshinori,” the retired hero finally said. “Do you really think any kid you ask won’t feel like this is the most amazing thing that could ever happen to them? Do you think anyone of them would refuse?”

... Good point.

“Becoming your successor is a choice he has to make for himself,” Gran Torino continued. “And for that, he has to know it’s a possibility. And honestly, he met All for One. He is uniquely qualified to appreciate the risks.”

The image of Young Midoriya, dark circles under his eyes, still pale, and telling him he didn’t have his quirks any more came back to Toshinori.

Had Toshinori underestimated him?

“Can you wait for him to get better?” Gran Torino added.

“No,” Toshinori admitted.

On her bed, completely still, Izuku’s mom looked like a doll that could be broken by any touches. The green-haired-teenager didn’t even dare to sit on the mattress like he used to when she had first been brought in this clinic.

Instead, he stood straight in the room, hands in his pocket. His right arm was still covered in bandages because he hadn’t wanted the Todorokis to get worried every time they looked at the scars running on it. He would never forget how Fuyumi had paled the first time she had seen them.

But he wasn’t here to think about the Summer Camp and Kamino. Instead, he told her about the dorms. How he had gone back to their apartment, cleaned it up because dust was starting to settle in there, and sent as many All Might merchandises as he could find for his new room.

He also told her about Kouta.

On the same day where he had received a Hawks plushie, the same as Tokoyami… Dark
Shadow’s, he meant, he had received a letter from the five-years-old. In there, he apologized for trying to kick him in the balls and thanked him for saving him.

His first hero fan mail.

When he was done talking, he kissed her on the cheek and promised her that he would come back soon.

The next time Izuku went into UA, he was greeted by the sight of brand new dorms that had, according to All Might, been built in three days with Cementoss’ help. It was the proof that the interdiction to use quirks and how difficult it was for civilians to obtain licenses both were a very stupid thing.

That didn’t prevent Izuku from dying from curiosity, wondering just how much Cementoss had done. And how. What were the characteristics of his quirk? What about his limits?

To Izuku’s surprise, Aizawa didn’t say anything about several students being present at Kamino, and when Izuku commented about that under his breath, Todoroki made the most unconvincing surprised sound one could muster. Something must have happened while Izuku wasn’t paying attention.

However, Aizawa did mention the fact Mineta had to take time away from school for personal reasons and glared at the class when they tried to ask what was happening. Iida tried to call Mineta’s phone as soon as Aizawa left but phones were forbidden where Mineta was.

Not that Todoroki or Izuku told him that. It was Mineta’s personal life.

They were entering the dorms when Izuku noticed Kacchan looking at him. His own right arm was also covered in scars, the kind made by explosions and light burns.

Izuku smiled at him. He had learned to smile with his eyes, the kind of thing that assured your interlocutor that you were happy to see them.

Katsuki stared for a second, then ignored him.

Such familiar behavior was reassuring in this new environment.

To be honest, Izuku wasn’t quite sure what to think of the dorms. He had accepted to go there because he wasn’t going to stay in the Todoroki house if Todoroki was gone, but it was so… public. No way to disappear. He could forget his night strolls in town, especially since he certainly didn’t have the quirks anymore to escape UA security system.

He was still studying the common room when he realized someone was looking at him with insistence. He spun lightly on his toes, his right hand now out of his pocket, only to see that most of his classmates were staring at him.

Izuku blinked.

Uraraka was the first to walk to him, tears already on her face, but Iida was a close second and Izuku was sandwiched by the both of them. Todoroki and Asui immediately followed in the group
hug, then the rest of the class, Dark Shadow included.

Izuku fell under almost twenty students but he took it well and laughing.

Taking care of his room was done in no time so Izuku quickly went up and visited Todoroki, only to find him in the middle of a construction site, a hammer in hand. It seemed that his friend was planning on remodeling his whole room because he was used to the Japanese style, so of course, Izuku proposed to help him. Todoroki accepted with enthusiasm.

The enthusiasm didn’t last.

At first, it was pointed looks. Then, Todoroki passing behind him to rectify what Izuku had done. Finally, he asked Izuku if he didn’t want to take a break in the common room, really, he should go first and Todoroki would definitely join him later.

“Are you telling me I suck at remodeling?” Izuku asked.

“Yes,” Todoroki answered without even hesitating. “Please, get out of my room.”

Izuku left with his head high, followed by the sound of Todoroki furiously working twice as fast now that he wasn’t here anymore.

He passed in front of his room but continued until he had reached Mineta’s. He opened the door, pulled out his phone, and took a photo of the empty room before sending him to the graped-haired boy.

Me: [Your room is right next to mine! We’re going to be neighbors once you’re back!]

Mineta would find it once he had his phone back. Maybe that would make him smile.

In the middle of the King of the Dorms competition, Izuku was able to see in person that Todoroki has indeed managed to remodel his room into a smaller version of what he had in this house. The green-haired-boy would never admit but he was impressed.

He wasn’t the only one.

“How did you manage to do all that in one day?” Iida yelled.

Todoroki glanced at Midoriya.

“I worked extremely hard,” he answered.
The king of the dorms title was won by Satou, with eight votes, because his cake had been the sweetest and fluffiest thing ever cooked between those walls. Kaminari accused him of corrupting the girls, unaware Izuku had also voted for him.

His vote had almost went to Tokoyami’s room but his weakness for sweets had been stronger.

The noises of the extras talking and laughing were reaching Katsuki despite his room being on the fourth floor, because none of the windows were closed for now and the blond boy was too busy thinking to close his. Despite what he had said to the rest of the class, he had known sleep would elude him, and now, he was reduced to sit on his bed, trying to figure what the fuck to do.

The scars on his arm were itching.

Deku had almost the same, except that he didn’t make those by having his own quirk backfiring on him, but by taking on the whole League.

Deku, who had lost his quirk because of him.

There was absolutely nothing Katsuki could do to make it right.

The first night in the dorms was hard on Izuku. He had thought that in such a crowded building, he would have no problems sleeping, but once again, he didn’t manage to calm down.

It quickly appeared that the second day was going to be worse.

The provisional hero license was something Izuku had waited for expectantly. The possibility to use his quirks any time he wanted, without being annoyed by those pesky anti quirk laws. To be finally able to help people without the police and the heroes being on his back.

But of course, this had been when he still had all his quirks.

He still followed the class into Gym Gamma. The lack of any enhancer quirks wasn’t going to prevent him from trying and passing the exam. He would just have to be smart and go PLUS ULTRA.

He paused when Aizawa explained the concept of a place where they could train their quirks as much as they wanted. With Ectoplasm as an instructor for all of them.

Izuku admired those facilities and a part of him just wondered what was the point of going into a secluded location far away from any help when they could just have stayed in UA. If they had really wanted to offer them the school trip experience, Izuku would have been far more willing to camp into his class with his friends than to run around in a forest on fire.

But he ignored it. Climbed on a rocky high spot with ease, but with less ease than what he would
have showed with his lost quirks. Explained to Ectoplasm that he wanted to focus on hand-to-hand combat, and his teacher nodded, noting that this was the best course of actions since he couldn’t use his quirk yet.

*Does he know what All for One can do? Does he realize I am not supposed to be able to use my quirk again?*

Izuku put himself in position, a light smile on his face because it had been so long since he had trained that way.

And then, it hit him. Something he had never felt, or maybe he had, but not as such strength.

All his classmates using their quirks around him.

Gravity was the first one he noticed. Then Explosion. Half Cold, Half Hot. Dark Shadow.

All those lights. Golden and warm treasures all around him.

While he was cold and empty.

Longing… No, **hunger**, swept through Izuku.

In this moment, he desperately wanted to cherish one of them. To have it in his hands, to use it, because in the end, he knew he could make a better use of those quirks. He could see what could be done with them.

He had fought the League on his own. He had saved Kouta, Tokoyami. He had rescued so many people, fought when the heroes weren’t here to do their job. He didn’t deserve to be left with nothing.

That last thought disturbed him so much that Transfer stopped screaming about all the quirks around him for a moment.

“Midoriya?” someone called him.

He couldn’t recognize the voice.

He usually always did but not now, not when his heartbeat was so loud and his mind so noisy as it was watching all those quirks.

“You know what?” Izuku heard himself say. “I am not doing that.”

And he left.

He didn’t go far, of course. Even if he hadn’t been stuck in UA, he just couldn’t dramatically run out of the gym. This would only have made twenty hero students and several pro heroes follow him because the drive to help was written in red ink unto their very souls. So he tranquilly walked out in order not to worry anyone and Ectoplasm was right behind him.

They walked in silence for a moment.
The green-haired-boy had decided to stop as soon as he wouldn’t be able to sense the quirks with Transfer anymore but he quickly realized that this just wouldn’t happen. His quirk had been sharpened by those two days with nothing to do except spying on the abilities around him.

“I’m fine,” Izuku told his teacher.

He might not have been at its most convincing.

“I can see that…” Ectoplasm answered, with almost no trace of sarcasm in his voice.

Izuku didn’t expect anything less from a pro.

“Do you want me to call All Might?” Ectoplasm asked.

“Please, don’t,” Izuku answered a little too quickly, a little too desperately.

“What about Eraserhead?” Izuku’s expression must have been telling. “I see. Sometimes, it’s harder to confide into people who are close to you. However, if you’re interested in sharing, I was told I’m a good listener.”

Izuku just looked at him.

He realized he wanted to tell him, to explain him that he just couldn’t, but he didn’t have the words.

Everything is too bright and distracting and they are all using their quirks and that’s angering me and distressing me at the same time.

His mouth opened and closed on his own, then he looked at his feet. He suddenly felt ridiculous in his hero costume.

He looked up again when Ectoplasm put his hand on his shoulder. The fingers were cold, even though the fabric of his jacket, but the weight was strangely comforting.

“Midoriya, I don’t think you realize it but if everything is too confusing now, nothing prevents you from taking a break,” Ectoplasm told him. “Take the time to heal, then take the provisional hero license exam in December.”

“I… I can do that?”

He had never considered it. Not once. He was still able to stand upright, so didn’t he have to keep going no matter what?

“Of course. You can’t help others if you can’t take care of yourself, in every sense of the word. Knowing when you need to take a break and heal is something every hero worth the name must learn.”

Izuku almost asked him a question about that.

A question he finally didn’t dare to say out loud.

Instead, he thanked his teacher. Told him he would consider it.

Ectoplasm went back inside to warn Aizawa that Izuku wouldn’t train with the others for a while and Izuku kept walking. He entered one of UA’s buildings. Not the dorms. He didn’t want to be alone in there.
Instead, he instinctively walked to the Support department’s lab. Hatsume seemed to spend her life there, so with a little luck, he could hang out with her and avoid being alone.

He wasn’t in the lab when he regretted his decision. He was actually still in the hallway, his hands in his pockets, and it was when the reinforced metal door exploded out of his hinges, almost killing him, then the explosion did its best to finish the job.

*Shock Absorption.*

The quirk not only protected him from the shockwave but also from the sixty kilos that landed on him. Something heavy and soft knocked him down and he was about to push it away when he realized that it was Hatsume and that there wasn’t anything he could touch to move her away.

Izuku just let his arms fall and decided not to move, and to preferably pretend he was a plant or something else inanimate.

Hatsume didn’t give him the same courtesy.

“Hello, Mister number 1!”

Izuku was still on the ground when Power Loader and Shinsou came out to see if Hatsume was alive. Power Loader was none for the worse and picked up Hatsume like she was an especially annoying cat who should know better. Shinsou, holding some Plexiglass shield, tried to give Izuku a hand but the green-haired-boy saw him too late and he was already on his feet by the time he noticed it.

“So,” Izuku started, determined to pretend nothing had happened, “Can I camp with you? I probably won’t go to the Provisional License Exam and I need something to do.”

Now, they were a lot of things to say in such occasions. Especially as the rumor of Izuku not being able to use his quirk had spread like wildfire through UA, and a little outside, to be honest. But that was the first time Izuku acknowledged that yes, he had lost a lot at Kamino.

So of course, Shinsou and Power Loader carefully considered their words. Maybe it was going to be encouragements. Maybe an invitation to stay for as long as he needed and nothing more, because really, what was there to say?

Hatsume was faster.

“Of course!” Hatsume screamed. “Stay as much as you want! Try all my babies!”

They all turned towards her, surprised that she would be so enthusiastic and… nice.

She didn’t disappoint.

“Everyone has their eyes on you,” she continued. “If the hope of UA uses my cute babies, the sponsors will come running! Even more now that you’re fallen! It makes for an even better story!”

Shinsou had his back to Izuku and Power Loader his face covered so the now *fallen* teenager couldn’t see their expressions. But it was okay, for their winces were audible.
As for Izuku, he couldn’t help himself and laughed.

_Hatsume might be the perfect person to be around right now._

He wouldn’t be able to handle people walking on eggs around him.

An hour after testing varied prototypes while Hatsume was taking notes, Izuku realized the fundamental problems of everything the inventor tinkered with.

“Everything you create can be used as a bomb if you shake it hard enough,” Izuku accused her after almost losing his eyebrows once again.

“I fail to understand how this is a problem,” she dared to say to him while fixing the last thing that had gone kaboom.

It happened to be an extinguisher.

Since Toshinori had been injured by All for One, checks-ups, hospitals, and visit to Recovery girl had been usual in his life. Having most of his guts hanging out from his open stomach and continuing to fight had had some interesting consequences on his health, but it was better than the alternative. However, he had never managed to get used to Recovery Girl’s glares.

The last one might have a link with how he had announced that he was still throwing up blood from time to time despite not using One for All anymore but how he was sure it wouldn’t prevent him from working as a teacher.

The short lady stared at him for a moment, absolutely not amused, then she wrote something on her pad. Toshinori coyly took the piece of paper, expecting to see the name of some treatment.

_Vacations_, he read instead.

“I don’t understand,” the former number 1 hero admitted.

“It’s this strange activity where you stop working, All Might.”

“But I am retired,” Toshinori insisted. “I already stopped working”

He knew that because he had just thanked the whole country and explained that he couldn’t be the Symbol of Peace anymore. It had been on every channel.

Something cold passed in Recovery Girl’s eyes and Toshinori leaned back just in case.

“No, you’re retired as a hero,” she corrected him. “After you survived a very traumatic experience. A near-death experience, actually. But you’re still teaching. You’re still running around with a broken arm and a leg that looked like it was mauled by an especially ticked off bladed octopus. You’re still stressing and refusing to stop and to just relax. But you’re also All Might. No one will
tell you what to do, except me, so here we are.”

The eighth holder of One for All braced himself.

“I want you to go somewhere with almost no villain activity and sunny so you can do absolutely nothing,” the calm and sweet nurse ordered, her teeth bared. “Just go there. Enjoy living. Drink fruity drinks. Relearn the concept of chilling.”

At that point, Toshinori’s mouth was wide opened and he thought this meeting couldn’t get worst, but he had been optimistic.

“Or I won’t declare you apt to go back to work. Good luck teaching without my authorization,” she finished.

Even Nedzu wouldn’t go against Recovery Girl. He was just too smart for that.

“This is blackmail!” he still screamed, horrified.

“And?”

She isn’t even trying to deny it.

Izuku started to split his time between Hatsume’s lab, the cafeteria, and the dorms.

At no point did anyone try to talk to him about why he preferred to avoid the training ground, and it was exactly what Izuku wanted.

From the day Izuku had returned to UA, whispers had followed him. No one in his class, of course. No, his friends had sad eyes and pensive expressions at most, and when they mentioned his missing quirk, there were always words of encouragement.

But the other classes weren’t as mindful.

Poor thing. It’s so sad. It’s scary how he suddenly can’t use his quirk.

Izuku had become the scary story told around campfires. I knew this hero who lost everything with no explanation. Spooky. And it wasn’t like those people were discreet. They seemed to have to cry over his lost quirk as soon as he spent more than thirty seconds in a room.

Those whispers were wearing Izuku down. He had to listen to them, the same way he had to pay attention to every noise and every movement because his mind refused to let him rest. Because what if he was taken by surprise again? And once his brain picked them up, those words stayed with him, feeding his anxiety, and worse, his anger.

Because anger had become a familiar companion. He wanted to snipe at those gossipers. He wanted to remind them that they had quirks that they were almost never allowed to use. To remind
them that Izuku still had a functionary set of ears, so if they wanted to talk about him, it had to be to his face and not at his back.

That was the same kind of anger that had allowed him to survive while fighting Muscular, then the League. What had allowed him to go beyond his limits. That was a liberating feeling. The kind that made him forget the sleepless nights, the exhaustion, the screaming void inside him, and the doubts, so many doubts.

But Izuku hold his tongue because he didn’t want to be that. He didn’t want to let himself be changed by what had happened.

However, Uraraka, Iida, and Todoroki weren’t as merciful when they heard someone talking about Izuku. His very own praetorian guard had become masters at giving death glares to anyone foolish enough to sob about Izuku’s tragic fate within earshot.

But it was another cause of doubt.

Are my friends being so protective because I was captured or because they think I can't defend myself anymore?

Toshinori talked with Aizawa-kun about Recovery Girl forcing him to go on a vacation even though it was absolutely unnecessary and the ensuing glare he received almost gave him white hair. In return, his colleague asked him to talk to Young Midoriya about seeing someone because when he had mentioned that, the teenager had apparently very politely told him this would never happen.

He was just getting out of a very awkward situation in the teacher room when he almost ran into Young Togata in the hallways. The young man’s smile illuminated the place and Toshinori couldn’t help but to smile back.

They shared a pleasant conversation where Young Togata asked him how he was recovering and thanked him for Kamino. When he talked about All for One, some notes of apprehension slipped into his voice, but it was more than understandable.

More pleasantries were exchanged as they walked together, but Young Togata started to get… not fidgety but hesitant. Or maybe pensive. No, none of those seemed to be the right word for that.

“Can I… Is there anything I can do?” the hero student asked, a little awkwardly.

“Oh, that’s very nice of you to ask but don’t worry about me. Between Recovery Girl and Nedzu, I will be back to health in no time,” Toshinori assured, touched, though a little perplexed.

Young Togata had the most curious expression on his face. It strangely looked like Gran Torino’s when he was waiting for his tayaki to heat up. Toshinori tilted his head, wondering what was happening to Sir Nighteye’s intern, but Young Togata simply smiled and wished him to have a good day.

Five minutes later, Toshinori realized that Young Togata had probably been trying to reach him about One for All without trespassing on his boundaries by asking for the quirk. The rules of politeness probably dictated All Might to ask him if he had made his choice, and not the opposite.
Toshinori was one of the most experienced pro hero in the world so how could he be so dumb sometimes?

Honestly, between the attack on the Summer Camp, Kamino, Young Midoriya being traumatized, Toshinori coming to the disturbing realization that his body simply wasn’t able to keep up with One for All anymore and his retirement, Toshinori hadn’t forgotten Young Togata but everything about him had passed at the bottom of the pile of tasks he was supposed to be taking care of.

Maybe I really need some vacations.

As the provisional license exam was approaching, more and more students visited the Support department in order to change their costumes. It wasn’t surprising since they were learning more about their quirks and how to optimize them, and it might have been Izuku’s favorite activity to observe. Watching the quirks, finding the way to complement them… Exactly what he used to do with his hoard.

He would still prefer quirks over support items, of course. Not that he had anything against them, not when they were so useful. It was just that… Izuku was always going to prefer quirks.

All that to say that Izuku was here when Yaoyorozu and Jirou came by. More precisely, Shinsou and him were here and Izuku was helping Shinsou preparing for a History quiz. The day before, Izuku had asked Power Loader if he was really okay with them just hanging around here without testing prototypes or anything but the pro hero had assured them he didn’t mind because their presence was calming Hatsume.

Which was frankly a terrifying to say since explosions still shook the workshop several times a day. Izuku had started wearing his helmet every time she squealed because of a groundbreaking innovation that will attract many sponsors.

Jirou was immediately taken care of by Power Loader who immediately rebuilt her speakers from scratch, while Yaoyorozu assured that she didn’t need anything, especially since her quirk could allow her to recreate her costume any time she wanted.

That wasn’t the thing to say in front of Hatsume Mei, devoted worshipper of the support items who followed the doctrine of Everything Can Be Improved, Thank You Very Much.

“There are so many things that can be done! I see here that your quirk feeds on calories. What about more pockets so you can carry snacks…” Then her voice died, along with her soul, judging from her expression.

“Oh, yes,” Yaoyorozu nodded as she was looking at the screen, over Hatsume’s shoulder, “That’s my prototype costume. I asked to have a lot of skin exposed for my quirk but they changed the design.”

Izuku, who had actually seen Midnight’s very first costume, immediately averted his eyes. And he wasn’t talking about the costume that had been at the origin of the Skin Exposure act, but the one she had been wearing as a student: an opened trench coat and a strategically placed belt with two Band-Aids.

Hatsume produced a sound that gave him goosebumps.
When she talked again, her voice could have frozen over the Sport Festival stadium just like Todoroki’s quirk had.

“There are several sins people in the support department can do and ignoring the client’s wishes in order to do whatever they want is one of them. It’s unforgivable, an insult to my profession, and I will find them.”

This was coming from someone who had once put Shinsou into an armor that had almost snapped his spine like one of those torture devices in some gory horror movies, so the boys had to see what had put her in such an awful mood.

It quickly appeared it was a sketch of some shorts and a sport bra. With flat shoes. Nothing more, nothing else.

Izuku didn’t fail to notice that the first prototype technically allowed for more skin access and seemed to be more comfortable.

A heavy silence fell on the room.

“I am sure they just wanted to improve my image,” Yaoyorozu tried to pacify them. “They are professional, after all.”

“You are too good for this sinful earth,” Shinsou realized and that was the nicest thing Izuku had ever heard him say.

“It’s worse. You’re a doormat,” Hatsume lamented. Before taking Yaoyorozu’s hands, and she seemed to be about to cry. “Please, I beg of you, let me redesign your costume.”

Shouto would never get used to see Midoriya up at six am.

This was a common occurrence since he had left the hospital. He would leave his room or Shouto’s room, make a beeline to the coffee machine, down some abominable potion, and then he would leave to train. Always quirkless. Never trying to activate his quirk and never showing any frustration.

Calm despite the unfairness of what was happening to him.

They were the only one in the little kitchen of the dorms, not bothering to talk because Shouto didn’t feel the need to fill the silence and because before seven AM Midoriya, channeled the evil of a goose.

Worse, his friend was drinking his third cup of expensive coffee that was probably gifted to him by Fuyumi and the fact he was still half sleeping despite that made him doubt that Midoriya was actually human.

“Uraraka and the others want to go on a picnic today,” he suddenly remembered. “Will you be there?’”

Midoriya’s schedule was hard to predict since he had stopped going to class with them.

At the moment the night owl raised an eyebrow at Shouto, he knew that opening his mouth had
been a mistake.

“I may have lunch with my d… I mean All Might, today, so I don’t know.”

Shouto knew he kept doing that on purpose, and yet, he could never be sure he was completely messing with him. It was slowly driving him crazy.

“Midoriya, don’t play with my heart like that,” he begged.

Midoriya snickered and kept drinking coffee in silence. For once, his right arm was exposed, the bandage forgotten, exposing the strange scares marring the skin, as if fire had clawed at him. In term of patterns, it didn’t make sense. If was as if there had been several level of heat pressed against his skin, and it didn’t look like anything a fire quirk could produce.

Izuku quickly noticed that Shinsou tended to sneak out of the lab, trying not to get noticed by anyone, if only because he was doing a pitiful job at being discreet, especially as he took his combat scarf with him.

The third time, Izuku waited fifteen seconds before asking Hatsume if she wanted to come with him to discover what the hell Shinsou was doing.

She didn’t even look up from the voice changer prototype she was working on.

“No, I’m probably not a very good friend.

When one didn’t have a beautiful Vanish quirk anymore, the trick in following someone was to not care too much. Staring put anyone’s nerves on edge, an atavistic instinct of when human beings were monkeys with no tool to protect themselves.

Avoid being accompanied by someone who didn’t know the sense of the word discreet.

Because not only was Hatsume naturally loud and intense but the real problem was that she thought so loudly that she was impossible to ignore, even when she was out of sight.

Fortunately, none of those precautions were necessary because Shinsou was in such a rush that he somehow managed not to notice them.
But Aizawa, who was waiting in the woods behind the building, did.

Izuku might have squealed when he realized Shinsou was being taught by Eraserhead in person how to use the combat scarf.

Hitoshi hesitated the day when Midoriya asked if he wanted to spar with him. It didn’t seem fair since he hadn’t been able to use his quirk since the Summer Camp -most people were convinced that he had gone beyond his limits and that his quirk was now blocked because of it.

But Midoriya was trying to help because he had noticed that Shinsou’s attempt to control his support items were… complicated.

All that to say that when Hitoshi accepted, it was more to be nice to a friend than because he was expecting anything from it. They abandoned Hatsume and went to the room where they usually tested her prototypes.

If walls could talk, those ones would be constantly screaming in terror.

“Don’t worry,” Hitoshi assured him before they started. “It’s just a friendly match.”

“Thank you,” Izuku politely answered.

Hitoshi put himself in position but Midoriya didn’t. He simply walked to him, smiling… before swiping Hitoshi’s foot with one low kick, making him fall. Hitoshi pushed back to try to land away from him but before he could do anything, Midoriya punched him in the plexus and pain exploded inside his chest.

The fight couldn’t have lasted more than two seconds.

There was probably a lesson to be learned here.

Slowly, Hitoshi went back to his feet. Found his fighting stance again.

And he stopped underestimating the actual hero student who had fought the League by himself and rescued Tokoyaki Fumikage.

“Point taken,” Hitoshi admitted. “Let’s try again.”

Midoriya smiled.

Being alone was complicated for Izuku. It had never bothered him before Kamino but now, it just wasn’t good for him to be alone with his thoughts. However, being around people for too long put him on edge.

Training should have brought him some relief. He needed it now that he was almost quirkless and forcing himself to push his limits has always brought him some kind of serenity.
It wasn’t the case anymore.

Izuku was acutely aware of how empty he was when he couldn’t run as fast as before, for as long as before, and when he kept tugging on Cooldown before being forced to remember that he had to bear the pain and the discomfort.

He was walking back to the dorms where he crossed All Might’s path. His hero was sitting on a bench, obviously waiting for him since Izuku used the same path every day since he had integrated Heights Alliance.

“Can I talk to you?” All Might asked him with a smile that warmed Izuku’s heart.

“Of course,” the hero student smiled back and he walked to him.

Technically, there was enough place for both of them to sit on the bench but Izuku chose to remain standing, in front of All Might. This way, their eyes were at the same level. Still burning with an inextinguishable will, it was one of the only things that hadn’t changed since the number 1 hero’s retirement. As for the rest… He was still injured. His clothes fitted him. And there was something about him… He wasn’t quite relaxed but he didn’t seem like he was carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders anymore.

_All Might isn’t the number 1 hero anymore_, Izuku realized.

Of course, he had known it, but it was the first time he acknowledged it.

“I currently have two candidates for One for All,” All Might explained, surprising Izuku.

“All Might, someone else than Togata?”

All Might originally had three choices among UA Big Three but that didn’t mean someone else hadn’t caught his eye, especially since the disaster of Kamino. All Might might have been the one to fight and defeat All for One but many heroes had proved themselves at the time, helping and protecting civilians.

“One is indeed Togata Mirio,” All Might confirmed. “The other would be you.”

Izuku wasn’t moving but he was still hit with the sensation of accidentally walking into a wall.

There were many things to say in such occasion. Or even to think.

Instead, he stayed speechless, his brain rebooting.

“I’m aware you do not wish to take another quirk for now,” All Might continued. “I would have preferred to give you the time to rest. But I don’t think I can keep One for All for much longer while refusing to deprive yourself of a choice.”

It had never been an option for Izuku.

Even when he had learned about One for All, even when he had been there as All Might was trying to choose a successor, he had never considered taking the quirk for himself.

Even now, Transfer was still attuned to the glorious light of All Might’s quirk, reaching for it the same way flowers turned towards the sun.

“When I sought you out, it was because I thought I had noticed something connecting you to All for One.” Izuku didn’t flinch but it was a close-call. “How ironic that this man’s bloodline
somehow managed to create one of the most honorable, heroic, and truly good person I ever had the occasion to meet."

One for All.

It was a dream Izuku had never dared to think of.

“Would you accept my quirk?” All Might asked, ready to donate his quirk to Izuku.

Knowing that All Might existed in this world had always given strength to Izuku. Knowing that no matter what, the Symbol of Peace would come to the rescue.

Izuku wanted the quirk.

But it was greed talking. It was the familiar urge of possessing a new treasure, of cherishing it forever.

One for All was something to be shared. It was something that needed to shine though society. Izuku would smother it as he was trying to heal, and in the end, he would be found with nothing because this external source of strength would be gone.

Izuku didn’t believe in himself right now so how could he believe in him as the new Symbol of Peace?

“This is an honor,” Izuku said, tears begging to flow on his face. “That you would even consider me… I don’t have the words. But I can’t. I can’t explain you why, but I just know that I won’t be able to handle it.”

There were a dozen of reasons why Izuku couldn’t accept. The anger that kept growing inside him. The suspicion that All Might was asking him because he didn’t have his quirks anymore. The doubts he hadn’t dared to formulate out loud for now.

But in the end, it was just his general instinct talking.

The certitude he was too damaged, maybe.

“It’s okay, Young Midoriya,” All Might smiled. “I simply needed to ask.”

Despite All Might’s reassurance, Izuku still felt pathetic and ungrateful.

Toshinori would have been lying if he had pretended he wasn’t disappointed by Young Midoriya’s answer. But that might not be such a bad thing. Toshinori had expected him to jump on the occasion to follow his hero’s wish and instead, the boy had showed maturity and taken the best decision for himself.

*Then, it’s settled. I go on vacations, and when I go back, Young Togata will inherit the quirk.*
That was for the best.

After all, one had to choose to carry such a burden and blessing.

Then, All Might realized something.

The next day, Izuku was in a pitiful state, haunted by nightmares than didn’t need to be remembered who which were undoubtedly the result of All Might’s too generous proposition.

Nonetheless, he still dragged himself to the kitchen, consumed a healthy amount of caffeine, then changed into his Ingenium sportswear. Running without speed quirks, even with music, was a horrible way to start the day but it also meant it could only get better from now on.

The light of One for All was waiting for him outside. Flickering, not as radiant as ever, but Izuku could still felt it perfectly and he ran to it like a butterfly drawn to a flame.

All Might himself was waiting for him by the trees, panting. He was wearing jeans and a tee-shirt, definitely not what he would wear to teach.

“Young Midoriya!” All Might greeted him. “I came to tell you that I am going on a vacation. On I-Island.”

“Oh,” Izuku said, brilliant wordsmith that he was, especially at such early hour.

To be honest, he was a little sad that All Might was leaving, even for a week or two. They had started seeing each other every day since Izuku had moved in UA. But of course, if anyone deserved a break, it was the Symbol of Peace post-retirement.

“Honestly, I need time to organize everything, be it my new teaching position or… other things. I was planning on taking a week with Dave to think about it, and since you’re already taking a break… Would you come with me?”

Despite Izuku’s mind being completely blank, his mouth still managed to produce a noise that could have been mistaken for a pterodactyl’s dying screech.

"Of course, if you don't want to, there is absolutely no problem."

Honestly, it was almost cute how All Might could think Izuku could pass an opportunity to hang out with his favorite hero.

Of course, it was possible that at a decent hour, he would have realized how awkward it could be to take advantage of All Might’s kindness right after he had refused his quirk.

Chapter End Notes
To anyone who wondered why I had been so careful to tell you in the notes that Izuku had indeed gone to I-Island like in the movie before the Summer camp: here is why.

EDIT because the summer camp was so long ago a lot of you forgot the notes I posted right before it:
[Hey ! Let me tell you a story. Long ago, the BNHA writers who were working on retellings lived in harmony. Then, everything changed when the BNHA the movie Two heroes attacked. Now, there is a swimming pool episode and a whole movie to place during the Summer vacations, somehow.
That's why I am completely counting on you to imagine what happened there. You're in headcanon territory. Izuku went to I-Island, he met Dave, Melissa, and Wolfram. He wore an awful suit that Nagisa would have burned if she had seen it, and at the end of the crazy day, everyone ate barbecue. THE END.
I am passing to the Summer Camp right after this chapter. I love the Summer Camp. I will make the kids roast marshmallows, say spooky stories around a fire camp, and nothing horrible, traumatizing, or crippling will happen.
What do you mean, you don't trust me? How dare you?]
Izuku and co already went to I-Island. Izuku is going BACK.

Also, about this chapter, Izuku doesn't notice a ton of stuff because he is preoccupied.

I am going to ask you not to say a word about my update schedule because anytime someone mentions it, the chapter refuses to be written for a week.

To help you wait, here are two alternate snippets I gave my friends a little after the Kamino fight:

[Toshinori looks left and right, making sure no one is in sight, then he squirrels Young Midoriya into the van and to the defeated villain still in chains. "Quick, quick, quick!" he says, deeply conscious that in about two seconds, police officers and members of the Hero Commission will scream about the breach of security. Aizawa-kun himself might materialize to drop kick Toshinori from the sky if he learns he exposed a traumatized student to the devil himself. Young Midoriya doesn't waste time and put his hand on the potato face... Only for All for One to start to move. Young Midoriya pales, Toshinori squeaks, though he would deny it, and just as the fiend wakes up, muttering a weak "What is happening?", both student and number 1 hero punch him in the face. All for One immediately goes limp again.]

[Five minutes later, Toshinori and Young Midoriya are out. "Did you get everything?" Young Midoriya nods, but avoids his eyes. Toshinori thinks about the trauma, about the days where God knows what had happened to him. Then, he sees the hint of smugness on Young Midoriya's face. "You took back all your quirks, right?" "Yes... And also all of his." Toshinori's mouth hangs open. "Karma is a bitch," his sweet student says with a satisfied smile.]
Chapter 38

Chapter Summary

Will someone let this poor child rest?

Chapter Notes

I rewatched the movie and discovered that there was no criminality in I-Island.

... I think not.

A great thank you for the beautiful fanart!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku’s bag was ready. Of course it was. Having a bag one could grab in a second in order to leave and never look back was something that had been drilled into him since he was a child, and it had been the second thing that had entered his room. The first being his bed, so he could put his bag under it.

However, he hadn’t planned to go on a trip with All Might, so right now, every All Might merchandises were put away while Todoroki was watching him, sitting on his bed.

“I meant to ask you questions about that but let’s focus on the fact you’re going on a vacation with All Might on I-Island,” the teenager, who was observing him with something almost cat-like, decided.

Izuku didn’t even look up, replacing the All Might stuff by the clothes Nagisa had gifted him and which were as resistant as any hero costume. And potentially an upgrade in term of fashion compared to his usual clothes. Nagisa didn’t have an ounce of respect for his tee-shirts. And the costume he had worn on I-Island… He could still hear her screams of pure outrage when he closed his eyes.

“Is it about All Might, about the vacation, or about I-Island?” Izuku asked.

Todoroki made a vague gesture which meant All of that.

“Because you’re all busy training for the pro hero license exam while I’m busy doing nothing. So I, unlike you, have the time to take a break. Which means I finally have the occasion to visit I-Island with no catastrophe interrupting me…” Todoroki took a deep breath, probably about to say something mean, but he stopped when Izuku looked at him. Smart choice, because I-Island didn’t know any criminality. It was written in the brochure. “… and I am happy to see Melissa again,” he smiled.
“You got along that well?”

The get along gave war flashbacks to Izuku as he remembered Uraraka, Yaoyorozu, and Jirou when they had seen Melissa and him watching the support equipment.

“Get along? That’s not really the word…”

Todoroki tilted his head, not understanding what Izuku was trying to say.

That was just too easy.

“I mean, you saw Melissa, right?” Izuku insisted. “Doesn’t she remind you of someone?”

Todoroki’s head tilted as he tried to remember what Melissa looked like and Izuku managed to see his brain connecting the blue eyes, blond hair, and smile to All Might. Somehow, he managed to keep a straight face as his friend was observing him, trying to see if he was messing with him or not.

Suppressed laughter threatened to break two of Izuku’s ribs when the fire and ice user came to a decision.

“Melisa can’t be All Might’s child…” he finally said.

“Is that doubt I’m hearing in your voice, Todoroki?”

On the plane taking them to I-Island, Izuku was holding the brochure like a bible, unable to suppress how excited he was. The first time had already been wonderful, but now, Izuku knew that this island had everything he could wish to see and this time, he wouldn’t be interrupted by anything.

“… And I also would love to visit the Institute,” he was explaining to All Might, his head pressed to the window. He had been going through his planning out loud for the past ten or twenty or thirty minutes. “I know the first floor is opened to visitors.”

A snore answered him.

Izuku looked back only to see that All Might had fallen asleep sitting, arms crossed, his head raised and his mouth opening and closing like a fish. A very exhausted fish.

The teenager let him sleep and continued geeking out, but in silence.

The warm light of One for All was putting him as much as ease as All Might’s presence, and at some point, he let himself be calmed by it, the same way some people listened to the sound of waves to fall asleep.

One for All. A quirk All Might had offered him.

In the end, Izuku (almost) didn’t regret refusing the quirk. The anxiety reaction he had at the idea of fully using Transfer was slowly starting to calm down but the more he thought about it, the more he was convinced that All Might had offered him this chance because he was a sad boy who had lost his quirks.
Those could be regained. But All Might’s successor needed to be chosen, not picked because he pitied him.

Izuku was so focused on the quirk that he noticed in the second when All Might woke up. Every shift of his emotions oscillated the light of the quirk. The Symbol of Peace opened his eyes and was immediately alert, the mist of his slumber pushed away as he reminded himself where he was and why.

He asked Izuku if he had snored, and Izuku lied badly about it, making him smile.

“Can I ask you a question?” he asked once All Might was completely awake, and not awake like Izuku before his first coffee. “About David Shield?”

“You’re wondering why he isn’t in prison, aren’t you?” All Might smiled.

Izuku nodded. It wasn’t that he wanted him there, but they had all been on I-Island when Wolfram had turned into a walking metal fortress, displaying a beautiful Magnetism quirk Izuku didn’t manage to steal at the time, leaving him a little disappointed.

His mood immediately soured when he realized that Magnetism would be in All for One’s hoard if Izuku had managed to take it.

“Well, of course, Dave was arrested,” All Might immediately confirmed. “However, the fact he had tried to engage actors and not villains was considered. And the police… Well, let’s say they chose to focus on the fact Abraham, Dave’s assistant, had orchestrated most of what happened.”

Izuku suddenly had a brief flashback of what had almost happened in Hosu when the police had tried to do some damage control because they didn’t want to admit three teenagers had taken care of a serial killer.

David Shield must have made a lot of money for I-Island. Enough to excuse the accidental villain attack he had been complicit of.

“But of course, he was still sentenced to five years… of house arrest.”

“Oh, so he can’t leave his house?” Izuku asked.

As long as he wasn’t separated from Melissa, it was good. It hurts to be separated from your parents.

“No…” the Symbol of Peace shook his head, a little embarrassed. “He is actually confined to I-Island.”

Izuku blinked.

The scientists of I-Island were already forced to remain on this island for security reasons, so at this level, one couldn’t even call that a slap on the wrist.

“It’s good that Melissa and her father can stay together,” he smiled, deciding not to think too much about ethics on this one.

All Might only nodded at that. Then, since they were about to land, he informed Izuku that they had to change. A brief moment of panic ensured because Izuku hadn’t packed his hero costume, but All Might reassured him by giving him a yellow tee-shirt, a mischievous grin on his face.
All Might and Izuku had thought they could be incognito, especially as they weren’t wearing their costumes. Izuku’s face had been shown after his abduction but it was pictures and footages from the Sport Festival, and he had been told that he wasn’t easy to recognize because he was a little intense when he fought, while All Might was in his thin form.

They were half right about not being recognized.

All Might was identified in an instant and almost lost, body and soul, as a tidal wave of crying fans almost sent him away forever. Izuku was literally pushed back by the crowd, but that didn’t keep him from trying to run after his hero.

However, he had underestimated the Symbol of Peace, because he somehow managed to escape and, even more impressing, to find Izuku again.

They were holding each other’s arms when Melissa and David found them, the two scientists smiling.

A smile that dropped when they saw what All Might and Izuku were wearing.

A yellow tee-shirt, with one caption in white letters written on it.

*I survived Kamino and all I got was this lousy tee-shirt.*

Strangely, neither of them was amused.

Melissa hugged her uncle Might with all her strength, then she also hugged Ariel because if she couldn’t embrace a friend after he had been captured by villains then somehow escaped them, it meant something was really wrong in this world.

Ariel tensed, then relaxed into the embrace, smiling, but she could see the dark circles under his eyes and how he had changed compared to the last time. He had been anxious and constantly blushing, but now, his expression barely changed, his polite smile always in place.

Faking.

Melissa knew about that. When her mom had died, she had done her best to put on a brave face in order not to worry her dad. She thought she had to be strong for him, and as she forced herself to be upbeat, she had almost convinced herself she had managed to avoid the pain.

She had been wrong, of course.
The morning after their arrival on I-Island, Toshi and David were tranquilly taking their breakfast together in the kitchen, while the house was blissfully quiet. David’s assistants, specially chosen by I-Island to – watch him - help him, didn’t arrive this early, unless they had fallen asleep in the lab.

David never realized how much he missed Toshi until he was with him. His friend. His hero. And two weeks ago, he had been glued to his screen, watching the Kamino fight unfold, terrified at the idea he wouldn’t see him anymore. But none of them wanted to remember Toshi’s brush with death or David’s mistakes, so they preferred to reminisce about their time together.

The conversation veered onto Melissa’s projects, as she had taken several at a time. Multitasking would be the end of the Shields but it was a hill they were willing to die on.

“… There isn’t enough place in her workspace at the Institute, so she is bringing her work here and she refuses to let me see it before it’s finished,” David complained but the heart wasn’t in it. “Ariel, however, was immediately admitted in her lab.”

It brought a smile to Toshi’s lips.

“Young Midoriya tends to have this effect on most people.”

“That’s a fine student you have here, Toshi,” David teased him.

“I know. He is an amazing boy”, Toshi continued, completely unprompted. “Strong, kind, brave, and always willing to help. But Kamino affected him and some distance will probably be good for him…”

David tilted his head as his best friend paused, but he immediately understood when the strong, kind, always-willing-to-help-boy arrived in the kitchen, already dressed and looking like a man on a mission. The bloody kind that would end up with a lot of casualties if anyone tried to put themselves between his goal and him.

At the very start of the summer, Wolfram had infiltrated the island because of David’s stupidity and Ariel and All Might had taken care of the problem with two eerily similar quirks.

And yet, the young man hadn’t been as intense as he was now.

The hero student nodded at them and he looked around, obviously looking for something. He stared at their breakfast, then stalked through the kitchen like a predator determined to find his prey. And then, he stopped.

“David,” he called, unnaturally still. “Where is the coffee? Please?”

It was said on a deceptively calm tone.

“Oh, sorry, we don’t have coffee here,” David apologized. “I’ve never been much of a fan and Melissa’s coffee machine broke down two weeks ago.”

Ariel turned towards him, green burning eyes staring into his very soul.

It didn’t quite give him goosebumps but it was very close.

*Say something.*

“Would you like tea instead?”

Ariel looked at him like David had insulted his religion and danced on his ancestors’ graves.
His saving grace came in the form of his beautiful daughter who arrived in the kitchen, already wearing shoes, not smiling or being the being of sunshine and warmth she usually was because it was quite early and she had inherited her mother’s temper when it came to morning.

One look at Ariel was enough for her to recognize him as a fellow morning-hater.

“Coffee shop,” she reassured him on a completely flat tone. “Down the street.”

Ariel put on his red sneakers and both young people left the house without even a glance at the adults.

“Yours is also a coffee zombie?” David quietly asked.

“Yep,” Yagi Toshinori, All Might, Symbol of Peace, nodded with fear in his eyes.

A week wasn’t enough to explore I-Island but it was perfect if one wanted to lose himself in distractions.

When Izuku wasn’t eating out or sightseeing with All Might and going through activities with Melissa, he was exploring on his own, losing himself in the crowd. He also found a giant swimming pool that was put to use as he wasn’t training anymore and his consumption of sweets and junk food had suddenly doubled.

Despite accepting with enthusiasm All Might’s proposition to travel, he actually hadn’t thought he would have so much fun.

And he didn’t have to worry about anything because I-Island was known for not knowing any crime rate, minus the incident with Wolfram. It was even written in the brochure.

Every day, Melissa went to the Institute. Once she was done, she either hanged out with Izuku outside, or she went back to her lab to work on her latest project. It was something completely personal so her schedule was quite packed, but her manic energy competed with Hatsume’s.

The armor she tinkering with was pink and calibrated for someone taller than Melissa, and it was honed, forged, and pampered with love. As the Shield prodigy was working on it, throwing hours and hours into it, she started explaining to Izuku what it could do for now and how she hoped to use it later. It could be used as a survival suit in any situation, be it under water, during a fire, etc. There were also features that could rival with quirks, like enhanced protection and so on.

“Sorry, I must be boring you…” Melissa apologized at some point.

That didn’t only surprise Izuku.

That scandalized him.

“How can you even think that?” Izuku asked, simply stupefied. “This is an armor that can compete
with most quirks. Actually, it will be better than quirks because most people only have one. How could this be boring?”

He hadn’t been called a nerd times and times again for someone to doubt how much he loved new things, especially if it could be used for heroism.

Melissa’s smile was blinding, and she started showing more to Izuku, to his delight.

THE END OF A BRIGHT FUTURE!

A hope of UA unable to use his quirk anymore.

Izuku quickly read the article. Nothing impressive, no more than gossip put on paper, but it was the truth nonetheless and UA was going to have a field day dealing with that.

He was very glad it wasn’t his problem.

Night had fallen and most of the lights around them had been shut off in order for people to enjoy the open-air cinema. Instead of seats, the giant stairs had been put to use, and most people had brought a picnic with them.

Izuku, sitting on the highest stair, was holding his iced tea with both hands, his eyes staring at the giant screen even though the movie wouldn’t start for another ten minutes. Next to him, Melissa was on her phone, finishing the last details of the project she was working on. The armor project. Not the other one from the Institute.

From the moment Izuku had arrived on I-Island, Melissa had found time in her busy schedule in order to spend time with All Might and him, every moment having to be efficient. Izuku had told her that even though he greatly appreciated her company, he wouldn’t like to see her exhaust herself.

She had looked at him, a dangerous edge in those blue eyes of her and she had asked him if he dared to prevent her from relaxing with a friend. If he wanted to be responsible of her brain imploding for studying all the time without ever having fun.

So now, the hero student enjoyed spending time with her, without worrying.

“What do you think about that?” she asked, showing him her phone.

One glance revealed magnetic boots and gloves, perfect to adhere to most buildings. Exactly what Slide and Glide had allowed him to do, once upon a time.

“Perfect for climbing discreetly,” Izuku nodded. “And also to go down without jumping and hurting your legs.”

She thought about it, wondering if she should add it to her armor, but Izuku couldn’t help her. He
didn’t know enough about her side-project to guess what she might need.

He was slightly zoning out when she touched his arm, skin against skin, Transfer immediately spreading to sense a quirk, only to kind nothing.

“You know that if you want, you can have any of my inventions, right?” she said. “I actually would love to offer you one.”

Izuku kept staring at the screen.

He had been on I-Island for three days now.

He had finally started to rest, his screaming mind coming to a halt as it slowly left behind everything that had happened.

Maybe that was why, at this precise moment, despite having declined talking to anyone else until now, that he found himself wanting to confide. Especially if it was someone whom he liked but who… He wasn’t especially close to her.

She was safe.

“Thank you, Melissa,” he first said. It was important. She had to know her offer meant a lot. “But… Can I tell you something? Something All Might can’t know?”

From the corner of his eye, he saw Melissa leaning forwards. Izuku was still looking right in front of him, because confiding in what he had been unable to tell Ectoplasm then All Might was one thing. Looking into his interlocutor’s very eyes was another.

“Of course,” Melissa assured. “I won’t tell a soul.”

Izuku nodded. Took another gulp from his iced tea.

“I’m having doubts when it comes to my future as a hero.”

Melissa froze, her shoulders sinking slightly, but in an instant, she was focusing all her attention on him.

“Ariel, I know you can’t use your quirk for now, but that doesn’t mean you can’t help people…”

“No, that’s not it,” Izuku cut her because that had nothing do to with his quirk. “Sorry, I’m not explaining myself clearly.” Words were a horrible way of communication. Telepathy and idea transmission would have made everything so much simpler. “I know I can be a hero. Even quirkless. That’s not the problem. But I don’t know if I still want to be one.”

His friend paused. Literally paused. For a moment, she completely stopped moving as she was trying to deal with the information.

“It’s your choice,” she finally nodded, her face a mask of comprehension and calm, though her eyes were a little wide. “You have every right to stop wanting to be a hero. But wasn’t that your dream?”

It was. It still was. But dream had crashed into reality, and Izuku was having trouble with dealing with that.

He had lost so many quirks in Kamino. He would never be able to replace some of them. But going back to collect quirks seemed less daunting than actually trusting UA again.
“We were supposed to be safe,” he explained, and once again, words failed him because how do you explain a visceral feeling with mere words? “Heroes, UA, they were supposed to protect their students, and yet, they just…” Fucked up. That was the word Izuku was looking for. UA had made an incredible mistake and the students had paid the price. “My friends and I had to fight for our lives that night.” He didn’t bother which night he was talking about.

Izuku had paralyzed Muscular.

He had heard the rumors, even though the media had been discreet about it, and he had asked Aizawa for a confirmation. The Erasure Hero’s heavy silence had been enough of an answer.

The worst was that Izuku wasn’t even bothered by it. At the time, he had been completely prepared to kill the villain. What angered him was how unnecessary it had been.

If UA hadn’t thrown forty students in the middle of a forest without enough adults to protect them…

If they hadn’t underestimated the threat…

If Izuku hadn’t trusted them, maybe he wouldn’t have so thoroughly exhausted himself during the day, and Tokoyami and him wouldn’t have been captured.

“When I was in this cell…,” Izuku continued, and when he closed his eyes, he could imagine being back. Hear the noises, feel the cold. “I wasn’t waiting for someone to save me. I could barely think at the time. But when I escaped, I think it was because I had realized no one would come for me. No one would save me. I was on my own.”

_I had to do something because no one else would._

Of course, it was unfair. His friends had come for him. And that had done a lot more of what they suspected.

But those friends were students. Children. They weren’t supposed to do a better job than adults.

“I didn’t decide anything yet.” He didn’t want to. He just wanted to forget the unease that had infiltrated the very marrow of his bones. “But, for now, I just found it hard to join something when I don’t have much faith into it,” he finished.

For a moment, Melissa just looked at him, struggling with what to say. It was okay. Izuku didn’t need to hear anything. He just needed the words to leave him so he could be free of their weights.

In the end, she hugged him.

---

_“Don’t worry, Katsuki. He won’t die from a love tap like that.”_

Katsuki woke up, his heart beating so fast it threatened to escape his ribs and the start of an explosion threatening to burst from his palm, as if it could do anything against someone like All for One who had punched All Might through several buildings.

Hell, if All for One had wanted, Katsuki wouldn’t even have a quirk anymore. Just nothing, his future as a hero gone.
Just like Deku.

He sat up in his bed, a familiar but still strange sensation in his stomach. If he could have dug up his guts to find it and destroy it, he would have done just that.

He stood up and got dressed. The night was over for him anyway and with the Provisional License exam coming, training couldn’t hurt.

No doubt that tomorrow, Kirishima would ask about the dark circles under his eyes, and he would have to remind him yet again to mind his business.

The Institute was a college program where every scientist of I-Island went, be it to learn, to teach, or to experiment. The first floor was opened to everyone, so the investors could take a look and find new projects to throw money at.

When someone was accompanied by one of the students and if they were All Might’s +1 on Island, it was possible to access to the rest of the Institute, minus the places where they were probably inventing evil IAs or other very dangerous things. However, Izuku saw a lot of robots and brief fires out there. There were extinguishers everywhere and robots that sprouted foam for a reason.

Melissa and another young woman who had red skin, long dark hair, and fangs, were both working on a project they were more than happy to explain. Inventors adored talking about their invention.

“It will be a more efficient model of prosthesis,” Hana explained, her whole face lit up while Melissa kept working, an indulgent smile on her face. “Actually, we aren’t that interested into giving it to heroes. I mean… Of course, it’s good for them. They should enjoy it. But our main goal is to spread it to civilian use.”

That’s interesting.

A lot of people acknowledged that quirks had slowed down the technological advance of humanity. However, Izuku had always thought this was more linked to the fact support scientists, the one who had more investors, could only use their inventions for heroic activities.

“I have this teacher, Ectoplasm, who lost both legs,” Izuku thought out loud. “He has special prosthesis when he is doing hero work and normal ones when he isn’t working.”

“You see, that’s the exact bullshit the support equipment laws would pull.”

Izuku knew a rant about to be unleashed when he saw one. He usually would have loved to complain about anti-quirk law and specialized utilization of the support equipment, but he was supposed to have lunch with All Might and he couldn’t afford to be late. His inner’s fanboy wouldn’t bear it.

“You have to finish it by the end of the year?” he asked instead to change subject.

Their sudden outburst of laughter reeked of desperation.

“No, we just have to work on it and do our best,” Melissa answered with a smile that wasn’t quite happy. More of a grin of audacity. “But yes, the closer it is to be finished, the higher the grade.”
“And the higher the subvention. Which would be easier to obtain if Aomine deigned to come to work,” Hana snarled. Literally.

Melissa was the inventor, Hana was the engineer/designer, and Aomine was a healer who, according to Hana, wasn’t the best person to work with. As if the fact they were calling her by her last name wasn’t enough of a clue that they didn’t especially get along.

Melissa immediately countered Hana’s frustration by reminding her that the healer might often arrive late but she also didn’t hesitate to work late into the night and always send her progress on the assignment on time.

“It’s strange that she didn’t send a text by now,” Melissa pondered.

Alex, a waiter in restaurant that specialized in seafood, was starting to get used to their two new customers. New faces on I-Island were already surprising enough since there wasn’t a festival, but what delighted the staff were their shenanigans.

In order to pay, one had to go to the counter, at the entrance. It shouldn’t have been a problem if both the green-haired-boy who ate like an ogre and the emaciated blond man who ate really slowly weren’t determined to pay for the other.

The first time, the adult had been faster than the teenager. The second, the adult had excused himself to wash his hands and he had paid right after they had ordered, which had led to the most offended expression ever seen on a teenager’s face, and Alex had two siblings who were known to be dramatic so this wasn’t said lightly.

On the third time, the green-haired-teenager arrived thirty minutes before his usual time and he walked straight to the counter, with the firm intention to pay in advance. A good idea. Elegant in its simplicity.

But alas…

Lucia, behind the counter, addressed him a sorry smiled and pointed at the room to indicate a blond man already sitting at their usual table.

“Oh, Young Midoriya,” the adult who suspiciously looked like Post Kamino All Might greeted him. His credit card was still in his hand. “I see we had the same idea!”

Izuku had just woken from a nap, groggy and not sure of where he was, when Melissa called. That was the first time he had been able to sleep amidst a complete silence since Kamino. A victory of a sort.

I-Island was good for him.

His friend – and his sister as far as Todoroki was concerned - seemed busy and she asked him if he
didn’t mind bringing one of her prototypes to her. It wasn’t a problem, so he went into the lab, empty of All Might and of David Shield, more or less ripped the glove out of the armor Melissa was working on, put it in an Ingenium messenger bag, then left the house.

It wasn’t nightfall yet but the address Melissa had given him seemed to do its best to remain in the shadows. The bright and colorful colors of I-Island were muted, the buildings weren’t as well maintained, and it looked like a place that the officials didn’t want tourists to see.

Izuku was getting suspicious about why this wasn’t mentioned in the brochure and was about to call Melissa when he heard her scream.

He didn’t hear the words. He just recognized her voice, anger in the sound instead of fear, and in the next moment, he was in movement, running so fast it was almost as if he had used a speed quirk.

He didn’t pause when he saw them. He just appreciated the situation while he was still in movement. A man, looming over Melissa, holding her arm. No quirk.

It didn’t matter.

Punching someone in the skull without a durability quirk or a shock absorption quirk wasn’t worth it most of the time. It bruised the hand and it didn’t faze people that much. However, punching someone with a pink gauntlet created by Melissa was different.

Izuku’s punch hit the guy right under the chin and once he fell, he stayed down, while Melissa was looking at him with wide eyes.

“Thank… You?” she said, a little surprised. “He was just a drunkard who couldn’t keep his hands to himself, not a villain, but still, that’s nice of you to… drop him?”

Izuku, whose heart was still beating madly in his chest and who had been ready to do much worse, realized that he might have potentially overreacted. He looked at the man sleeping on the ground, trying to find some guilt for knocking him out first without properly assessing the situation..

Nah.

*When you put your hands on someone without their consent, you have to expect consequences.*

“Well, you did call asking me to bring you a combat gauntlet,” Izuku deflected. “Is there a reason for that, by the way?”

Melissa hesitated.

Izuku had all the time in the world.

“I am worried about Aomine,” she admitted. “It’s really not like her to at least call and I can’t reach her phone. And we actually can’t call the police before two days, because she is an adult. I tracked her last known position thanks to her phone, and it was in this street, but as you see…” She outstretched both arms, showing how there was no one in sight. “And since I am not trusting anyone as far as I can throw them around here.”

That was a lot of information to deal with but sometimes, the brain focused on strange things.

“I thought there was no criminality in I-Island,” Izuku muttered. “It’s even written in the brochure.”
“Ariel… Not everything written in the brochure is true.”

Izuku made a sad sound.

Since Aomine or Aomine’s phone wasn’t in the street, Melissa and Izuku went to the last location where she had spent a lot of time before her phone signal disappeared. It happened to be a bar, with a cranky bartender who was the size of All Might and who apparently hated questions.

Melissa kept insisting, showing a picture of Aomine on her phone, while Izuku was sitting at one of the tables behind her to keep an eye on the three customers who were giving them the stink eye. One was a red-haired Frenchman who looked at Melissa and Dale the bartender like they were the most amusing show in the world. Another was a handsome dark-haired man who kept playing on his phone. And the last was a man with beautiful white angel wings.

“She’s gone. I’m worried about her.”

“I told you I don’t know her,” he repeated, the little patience he had now evaporated. “Go. Home.”

And as he ordered it, his veins glowed red as if hot magma was running in them, and heat started to spread into the air despite the air conditioning.

Melissa didn’t even blink.

Unlike her, Izuku didn’t remain so calm.

Japan didn’t allow the use of quirks in public places and it had shaped the way people interacted with them. People actively using their quirks were immediately seen as troublemakers at best and villains at worst.

And so, when a person used their quirks to intimidate someone, it didn’t have the same impact for Izuku as for Melissa. For Melissa, it was just a warning. For Izuku, it meant the situation had just turned dangerous and he would have to act accordingly.

So, while all those gentlemen were posturing, and even though he knew that this probably wasn’t as bad as what years in Japan had taught him, Izuku paid attention to the most obvious threat. Fire was always complicated to fight, and he didn’t have Speed or Air Pressure to avoid being burned. However, there were several metal stools that could take care of the problem, and he was reasonably sure Melissa and him could get out before the fire became too bothersome.

He must have been thinking too loud because the barman stopped glaring at Melissa and he started to stare Izuku down.

That should have been the moment where Izuku softened his eyes and smiled in order not to draw attention to himself.

He did nothing of the sort.

Instead, he looked at the bartender, Dale, and he let him see him in return.

Go ahead. Touch her. See what happens.
The large man got really still, before slowly leaning back. Backing down. His quirk died down, beautiful flames smothered, or maybe just going back within him.

And for a moment, Izuku wondered if this man could ever imagine the cold living within the holder of Transfer.

Dale’s reaction didn’t escape Melissa and she turned back to Izuku, but by now, the teenager was controlling his expression again and he smiled sweetly at her. The bartender did a double check.

“I am not going to give you anything,” Dale said firmly. “This is my home, and my guests come here in order not to be constantly spied on by I-Island. And I don’t even know if you really know her or if you’re stalking her.”

Well, since they had tracked her phone just because she hadn’t showed up in time for a group project, he might have a point.

“Oh, you can’t be serious!” the winged man protested. “You don’t know her!”

In other circumstances, Izuku would have thought long and hard about why those men were so annoyed at the idea of someone barging in to ask information. Why there wasn’t as much technology in this neighborhood. And how Melissa had probably tracked Aomine’s phone thanks to information I-Island system was stocking. But right now, he was focused on the man still playing with his phone. Not using him per se, but he blatantly avoided to be included in any way in the situation.

UA didn’t only teach them how to fight. They taught them to think in stressful situation. Aizawa had drilled into them how to notice change of expressions, guilt, and fear.

How to recognize threats and suspects.

And that man was scared.

Not of Izuku or Melissa. No. He was doing his best not to throw nervous glances at his friends.

It was a hunch, nothing more. He needed to confirm it.

“I know she was with you,” Izuku accused him. “Did you really think we wouldn’t know who was the last one to see her?”

It was a complete bluff, and yet, he gobbled it, hook, line, and sinker.

In a second, he was on his feet and running.

His blond friend put himself between Izuku and him, scales starting to form on his skin, but confusion on his face as he was trying to understand what was going on. Izuku, who had been thinking nothing grave had happened until he had seen someone running for his life, was fully
ready to go through the French man to reach his friend.

He didn’t have to.

Something whipped past his ear, similar to his Air Blast except he didn’t have that anymore, and the man who had been blocking his way made the familiar sound of someone whose air had just been violently ejected from his lungs. Izuku gently pushed him away and the poor guy dropped to the ground, fighting to breathe.

One glance behind him confirmed that Melissa’s hand was raised, the palm of her gauntlet glowing. Sadly, he didn’t have the time to be impressed since the other was almost at the exit.

Izuku wasn’t about to run after him. There were a lot of tables to avoid, the other guy had longer legs, and it seemed to be a bother. So he grabbed his chair and threw it. The piece of furniture in wood and metal went through the air like it was a beautiful bird taking its first flight and it whacked the runaway in the back with the fury of a goose.

However, the dark-haired man didn’t dramatically fall like Izuku was hoping. He just stumbled, somehow found his balance again, and was about to start running again, but by the time, Izuku had had the time to walk to him and he hit him with another chair.

This time, he fell, and Izuku put the chair on him so he wouldn’t do anything silly.

Melissa picked up his phone while the guy was screaming bloody murder, and his friends were about to jump on Izuku and to be beaten by the very chair Izuku was holding, but Dale intervened.

“Wait.” The word rang into the bar, holding as much authority as Aizawa. And his glare was almost as convincing. “If you just aggressed one of my regulars without a very good reason, things won’t end well for you.”

“Oh, there is a reason,” Melissa assured, her voice odd, holding the phone so tight her knuckles were white.

Melissa’s armor was also a great helping device when it came to crack anything technological, so it took her less than a minute to find everything about Regan Anderson. He was English, his quirk was Poison Resistance, and he was a quirk trafficker. More exactly, he found targets with interesting quirks, gained their trust, and delivered them to actual quirk traffickers.

Yesterday, he had delivered a Woman, pretty, older than you like, Healer. His words.

He tried to explain the texts Melissa found. To convince Dale that it wasn’t what he thought. But who could blame him? There was suddenly so much hostility in this bar that it could have been cut with a knife and put on some bread.

No one liked quirk traffickers. More precisely, the only ones who didn’t despise them where young children who didn’t know who they were and people who had benefited from their work.

And no cared about his excuses.

“Regan, what the fuck?” one of his friends said really quietly.
“You used my bar to find targets,” the bartender said in the tone someone would take to explain the cause of his anger was about to get bloody eagled.

Now that they have confirmed that Aomine Nao was indeed in danger, Izuku did the reasonable thing and called the police. Well, he was urged to it by Melissa, but he was still proud of how wise he was becoming with age.

Except that the line was saturated.

They waited a moment, not understanding, until they both decided that they didn’t have to wait for the police to actually check the location where Regan had dropped her. Thankfully, Dale and co, slightly foaming at the mouth by that time, proposed really politely to keep trying to reach the police while keeping Regan safe.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was supposed to be longer... But I don't do 30 pages chapter. Ever.

EDIT: The Iron Man reference was completely intended but I didn't expect the Ba Sing Se comments, and I am delighted.
Chapter 39

Chapter Summary

Someone didn't let this poor child rest.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was strangely easy to locate a phone call when one had Melissa at his side. And by strangely, Izuku meant *worryingly*, and that was the exact reason why he had paid a fortune for his phone that couldn’t be traced.

They arrived in a pretty nice neighborhood of I-Island (Izuku would have imagined the docks or something but just houses and houses where nothing interesting should ever happen) and they confirmed that the address given by Regan was the one corresponding to the phone number he had been sending messages to.

The house in question was a two-stories building. One window on the second floor was opened and easy to access if it was needed, and according to Melissa, it wasn’t a Smart House, a term Izuku wasn’t familiar with.

“Oh, it’s basically a residence where everything is robotized and connected to I-Island,” Melissa explained. “The central system registers anything out of the ordinary so it would be difficult to have criminal activities. However, it’s extremely safe.”

Apparently, a smart house was a house that would spy on the people living under its roof.

*Why would someone want to live in such a thing?*

But they had more pressing matters to take care of.

They didn’t know if Aomine was still inside the house. A lot could happen in a day. But the idea of someone prisoner in a cell, with no one knowing where she was, was giving a cold sweat to Izuku.

Izuku wasn’t keen on waiting, and neither was Melissa, her phone already in her hand. He expected her to try calling the police again, but instead she waved it around, then focused back on it, obviously doing the kind of dark hacking magic Nagisa would do in such situation.

“Five phones used the Wi-Fi of this house, and only one is connected to it right now. That means there is only one person inside, and not the one who communicated with Regan,” she quickly found out.

“What if someone’s phone just isn’t connected to the Wi-Fi?”

“It’s I-Island, Ariel. People always have their phone on them to use the services and the central system immediately recognizes them.”

Izuku didn’t shudder but that was a close-call. “Could you try calling the police again, please?”
“What do I tell them?”

“The truth?” Izuku answered, surprised. “We don’t have to worry about the anti-quirk laws here… Oh!”

In Japan, vigilantism was punished only when a quirk was used. However, if they hadn’t done vigilantism yet, some of the actions used to find this place… Well, they couldn’t be considered legal.

“That’s right,” Melissa nodded. “You all can use quirks but roughing up someone or hacking anything is still illegal.”

Izuku thought about it.

The problem here wasn’t even the legal consequences. It was that if they learned how Melissa and Izuku had obtained their information, the police would be distrustful and waste time. They wanted them to intervene now, without wasting time.

“An anonymous tip about someone who is violent, with their quirk acting out of control, then. They will think it’s Trigger and come as soon as possible.”

“Ariel, I don’t know if there are any cases of Trigger here.”

“That’s the beauty of the thing,” Izuku smiled. “They don’t know either. But they only have to believe it might be the case to show up.”

---

The call was picked up after five minutes. An eternity in an emergency, especially on I-Island, but the usual software that would answer in a second wasn’t to be trusted today. Not when a thousand of crimes had been reported on I-Island today, all of them fake, but they had to check every single one of them. Especially as whatever affected the police center also affected I-Island ways to check the threats.

A violent incident inside a house, and the caller described all the symptoms of Trigger consumption, which shouldn’t have happened on I-Island and that made the claim go under the pile of things to verify. But still, the desk worker immediately warned the caller to seek refuge elsewhere and to describe what she was seeing if she could.

Then, when the caller asked how long the police would take, the operator didn’t have any other choice but to say it might take an hour.

---

The metal door was so thick it muffled any sound from the outside (and probably from the inside) and there was no way to open it from the inside. Combined with the brick walls, this turned this room into the cheap version of a vault. Impossible to escape and perfect to keep captives for who knew how long.
It didn’t prevent Aomine Nao from kicking this damn door as if it had personally offended her. Her bare feet kept stomping on it with all the strength she could muster, and magnified by her fury, it was a lot, but it still didn’t move.

It didn’t matter.

She kept hitting the damn thing as if it was Regan’s fucking head that she was personally going to reduce to a bloody mist once she got out. Because she would get out. She didn’t even allow herself to think otherwise.

The next kick hurt her foot. Badly.

Nao cursed and crouched, examining it.

It wasn’t surprising. An unprotected human foot wasn’t strong enough to keep hitting a solid surface like this, but yesterday had been one of the rare occasions where she had worn heels, which might be worse. She was however hoping that the shoes would redeem themselves when someone would open the door so the bastard who was holding her prisoner would be stabbed. Repeatedly.

Her quirk analyzed the damage, immediately offering a diagnostic. It was its passive form, the one that didn’t cost anything. Then, she had to push a little, letting her power heal the bruised skin and wounded flesh and bones underneath, the same way she had healed herself as soon as she had managed to open her eyes and realized someone had drugged her.

And then, fatigue claimed its price.

She still got up. And she started kicking the door again.

__________________________________________________________________________

Transfer sensed the brief flash of delicious light and locked on it like an eagle that had seen a mouse. Under the house. A basement.

*Trapped underground, *his instinct whispered.

“We’re going in,” Izuku decided.

__________________________________________________________________________

Melissa went in first because she was the one with the support equipment that could allow her to break a lock, and she had to admit she wasn’t especially reassured. She would do it and rescue her friend if she found her, of course, but unlike Ariel who remained calm and unbothered despite not having anything to protect himself, she simply couldn’t do anything against the knots in her stomach.

They closed behind them, not wanting to draw attention in case someone came back from outside.

The house wasn’t what she would expect from criminals. It was clean, ordered, the colors were well-arranged, and there were paintings on the wall. There wasn’t quite a soul to the house, but it was obvious people lived here. That they had left their imprints.
A short hallway, then the living room. Her footsteps seemed horribly loud in the silence but she didn’t know if it was the light anxiety coursing through her or if she was actually that loud. Ariel wasn’t, at least. She was wearing sneakers just like him – she almost shuddered at the idea of the noise her short heels would have made – but he barely made a sound and Melissa had to glance at him to make sure he was still here.

The kitchen was half hidden behind a counter, the same thing that was in Melissa’s own house. Two doors there, closets maybe, but she did lean above the counter to check. This was revealed to be a good initiative because there was a locket on one of them, near the floor so it wouldn’t be too noticeable.

*There. If Aomine is in this house, she is there.*

Melissa was about to rush in there when she heard footsteps coming from the opposite direction. She immediately primed her gauntlet, readying the kinetic blast, and a white-haired man appeared.

Tall and lean, he was wearing sportswear as if he was about to go out for a jogging. Surprise passed in his blue eyes, but he recovered in an instant, though he didn’t try to approach.

“Well, hello pretty girl,” he smiled instead.

The four words became the most important thing in the world, channeling her interlocutor’s intent and hooking themselves into her brain. That was a quirk. That much was obvious, and she should have shot him, since she was the one who had the only way to attack from a distance, but she didn’t.

Hesitation took hold of her, and she glanced around nervously.

A hesitation that doubled when she realized her friend wasn’t next to her anymore.

“I don’t think you are going to shoot me,” the man kept *whispering*, a predatory smile on his face as he started walking to her, something graceful in the way he moved, just like Ariel and Uncle Might. “You are in my house. You would go to prison.”

Melissa had steeled herself when she had entered this house, aware that hesitation wasn’t an option. Even better, she knew there was a dozen of ways for her to get away with the breaking and entering, especially since Regan’s phone had been full of juicy details.

And despite knowing that, doubt saturated every cell of her body. She had entered without authorization. Even if she attacked in self-defense, she wasn’t sure suspicion would be enough to protect her.

But worse. What if she had been wrong? What if it was a waste of time? Maybe Aomine was at home or with a friend? Maybe she had overreacted and dragged a vulnerable friend on a wild goose chase?

“I think you’re a *good* person,” he continued, words scrambling Melissa’s brain but she still recognized the mockery. “I think you never hurt anyone in your life. And that you won’t start now.”

Melissa knew her own mind so she was completely aware it was a quirk.

And yet, she still lowered her arm, suddenly scared her gauntlet would discharge accidentally and worsen the situation.
“Goodbye, pretty girl,” the whisperer mocked.

Inside her mind, Melissa was clawing at the veil of doubts that didn’t belong to her, desperately trying to get out, frozen where she was while the whisperer rushed at her.

Ariel appeared from nowhere and crashed into the white-haired man before he reached her.

Once the effect of the quirk would start to disappear, Melissa would realize her friend had simply circled around them and behind the kitchen counter in order not to be noticed. He had probably crawled not to be seen, taking advantage of how focused on each other Melissa and the other person were. But at this moment, it was as if he had disappeared and reappeared from nowhere, and the other man must have felt the same because he didn’t have the time to do anything.

They should have crashed to the ground but somehow, Ariel managed to slow down their fall and both men started to struggle on the floor. Ariel’s arm was pressed on the other man’s throat and there was a hand on his mouth to keep him from talking again, while the whisperer still had the rest of his body free. He tried to stand up but despite Ariel being far smaller, he managed to anchor himself, and kept him down, but not to avoid his fist as it was raised and rammed into his knee, so fast that the whisperer’s arm almost blurred.

Ariel didn’t even react, as if he couldn’t feel it.

That should have been the moment when Melissa used the support equipment she had actually built with her own hands but Ariel was right behind the man and he would be hit too. Still, he had proved in the past that he was more resistant than most people, so she still raised her hand, silently asking the question.

Ariel shook his head, still struggling because without his quirk, the whisperer had size and strength on his side.

And yet, Melissa had no doubt he wouldn’t escape. Ariel simply wouldn’t let him.

A sleeper hold had never been one of Izuku’s techniques until he had trained with Shinsou. His friend had showed him the choker hold, where one interrupted the blood flow but that was dangerous if done not correctly, and the sleeper hold, which, when done efficiently, was only a matter of seconds.

What Izuku did was the opposite of efficient. It was sloppy and terrifying. He was afraid of accidentally breaking this man’s neck, while keeping him from screaming. If he screwed up, he didn’t have the quirks to fix it before someone was hurt. He couldn’t take the chance.

It couldn’t have lasted more than ten seconds but when the man went limp in Izuku’s arms, it felt like a small eternity had passed. But he didn’t move, still holding the man’s neck.

“Melissa,” he called his friend who was looking at him, very still, a little like a civilian who didn’t have her freeze response trained out of her, “Can you look for anything to tie him up?”

She ran to the kitchen, rummaging through drawers and closets with the same calm efficiency as when she was hacking things belonging to I-Island. Izuku only half paid attention to her, spreading his senses to make sure that the man he had just attacked was still breathing, and that Izuku would
know when he’d woke up.

“Is that okay?” Melissa asked, holding a roll of duct tape, before tilting her head when she saw Izuku’s grin.

Thankfully, she didn’t ask anything.

“Take care of him, please,” she demanded instead. “I am going to go downstairs, if something tries to kill me, I will scream and I expect you to come helping me.”

“Only if you do the same for me,” Izuku muttered as he was duct taping the white-haired man like there was no tomorrow.

---

There was a door with a code in the basement. Sturdy, the kind that would be hard to break through for anyone who didn’t have the right equipment or a good enhancer quirk, maybe.

Melissa readjusted the gauntlet on her arm, quickly checking her reserves. When she had started working on her armor, she had thought of kinetic absorption and release. The more she was hit, the more she could hit back. But such a narrow way of thinking was unfit of a scientist, so she had decided that just waiting for someone to hit her to gain kinetic wouldn’t do.

So, she had modified the receiver in order for every moment, every gesture she made while wearing the gauntlet, accumulate energy.

Breaking through wasn’t a possibility at this point: it was certitude. The only thing keeping her from blasting the door from its hinges was caution as she couldn’t risk hurting the person inside.

*Break it little by little, then.*

---

The white-haired man was conscious again but he was covered in so many layers of duct tape that he didn’t manage to make more than a muffled sound as Izuku dragged him into the nearest supply closet he could find. Of course, even if those words were unintelligible, the hero student could guess most of it.

The man with the voice-based quirk had his phone on him, but also keys, and a lighter. Izuku grabbed the three of them before locking him up, and tried to crack the code of the phone twice before giving up. Melissa was better at this and he was certain she would find proofs of wrongdoings that would keep the police off their backs.

Izuku was about to go down the stairs to find Melissa when he saw another phone in the living room, charging.

Numb, he approached it. Touched the screen. But the phone was off.

Months before Izuku had changed his phone for one of those used by Nagisa, the hacker had explained to him that phones were ridiculously easy to track if they passed near anything collecting
data without being protected and she had mocked him, saying that the only way for Izuku’s current phone to never divulge his location or any other compromising information was to always leave it off.

Melissa couldn’t have seen that phone.

It meant that someone else was in the house.

Footsteps echoed in the house, coming from the stairs. Someone was coming down to see what all the noise Melissa and Izuku had made was about.

Izuku had maybe two seconds to decide what to do.

He could warn Melissa. He could call her and run down the stairs, but if he did that, he would be stuck in a place with no real exit because he would have to go through whoever was coming down. Maybe Melissa’s piece of armor would be enough. It looked powerful. But there were potentially several people down there. He didn’t know in which state they were. And Izuku had found out that the greatest way for villains to fight more powerful heroes were to use civilians against them.

Give her the time to rescue the civilian. Move the fight away from here.

Izuku really should have grabbed some support equipment in Melissa’s lab before leaving the house, but regrets wouldn’t do anything now. Instead, he paused near a bottle of scotch on the mantle piece and poured himself a drink, before leaving with the glass in hand.

“Kyle?” a masculine voice called, and Izuku wasn’t sure if he was imagining the muffled sound that answered him or not.

In the living room, there was a French door leading to the garden. If Izuku reached it, he could make whoever was arriving chase him outside, where one didn’t want to draw too much attention so destructive abilities would have to be limited.

Izuku started to tranquilly walk in this direction, his weight on his toes and only putting his feet near the walls or the furniture so the wood board wouldn’t creak. Even with those precautions, it was nowhere near the level of stealth Vanish or Silencer would have granted.

The quiet footsteps of the other man in the room stopped as a heavy sound was heard, a little like someone trying to breach a door with a kinetic-charged-gauntlet.

Instinct took over.

Izuku took a sip from the glass he was holding, the disgusting taste of alcohol spreading on his tongue, right before he threw the glass on the floor so fast it was pulverized upon impact, which immediately brought a man in a suit with dark blue hair, just like Iida.

He looked at the shards of the glass on the floor before he looked at Izuku, cold red eyes calmly
sizing him up.

“What are you doing here?” he asked, his attention both on the blatant intruder in front of him and the door behind him, all the way back into the kitchen, leading to Melissa and maybe Aomine.

Izuku looked behind him and made a Me? gesture, but that sadly didn’t fool the quirk trafficker.

Usually, there was a brief moment before the proverbial shit hit the fan. A floating second where surprise let place to the next decision, and Izuku was very good at taking advantage of it.

The quirk trafficker didn’t let him that time.

Something emerged from the quirk trafficker, the civilized human being violently pushed away as something else replaced him. Crimson leathery skin strung out on monstrous muscles that put Muscular to shame. A head that had dropped any pretense that it belonged to something from this era, looking like what a mix between something feline and the most vicious velociraptor Izuku could have imagined. Impressive talons finished his fingers, the kind that belonged less to a hawk and more to something from a horror movie.

Pure fear crashed through Izuku, threatening to overhaul his mind. He couldn’t help the reaction, not when he was so acutely aware that whoever was in front of him was a pure predator while he was a child who couldn’t run faster than him and couldn’t hit stronger than him.

He should have frozen.

But he had stopped once, back in a forest, out of his mind with fear. He had hesitated, and paid the price for it.

So Izuku was moving before the beast had made a step in his direction but after he had smiled at him, revealing several rows of sharp fangs.

The hero student grabbed the lighter from his pocket - taken from the whisperer –and put it in front of his mouth, flicked it, then sprayed the strong alcohol from his mouth to the air.

Fire ran through the air into a blinding wave.

Before the apparition of tricks, flame-breathers used this simple technique to impress people. Judging from the jump the Beast made in the opposite direction, Izuku did an okay job for a simple trick he had learned in order to imitate his father’s official quirk.

Fire made the Beast that Akira had become scramble to safety. No matter how tough he was, the fear taught by his ancestors was still here, impossible to control for something so primal.

However, Akira was no simple animal. He pushed through the wave of instinctive fear (So much easier than the bloodlust. This one was impossible to refrain once it set in.) and with a tremendous effort of will, he revealed the truth.
He couldn’t be hurt.

And the already fleeing boy was prey.

Izuku realized he wouldn’t make it to outside the house right as the Beast decided he wasn’t scared of fire anymore. He just didn’t have the Speed, the Strength. He couldn’t Vanish. Thinking smart was enough most of the time, but when one’s opponent was a three meters tall monster who looked like he ate hero students for breakfast, things suddenly become more complicated.

*Shock Absorption.*

Still running, Izuku grabbed his keys. It wasn’t worth the taser he had seen in Melissa’s lab, that support item he had actually noticed as he had grabbed the glove and that he had somehow didn’t decide to pick, but that would have to do.

He took one step to the left and stopped, while the Beast was taken by his momentum but that didn’t prevent his hand from swiping near Izuku’s torso, the claws thankfully slipping on the fabric of the shirt Nagisa had gifted him, though that did nothing to protect him from the hit.

Pain spread through his chest, his lungs ribs protesting.

It was okay.

Izuku had survived worse.

And he stabbed the beast with his key, the cold metal plunging into the steel-like flesh. The beast, quirk trafficker, monster with a human mask, flinched, not taking his chance to neutralize Izuku for good, because unlike the teenager, he had forgotten what pain felt like. He couldn’t push through it.

Izuku’s fingers clawed, brushing the beast’s forearm. Enough for Transfer to come to life, desperate to grab a new treasure, but not long enough to offer what Izuku’s quirk desperately wanted.

The keys, still in the beast’s arm, jingled as he smacked Izuku’s head against the wall. *Shock Absorption* flared, keeping his skull from cracking open, and he let himself fall to the ground.

The boy fell down, unmoving, his head leaving a crack on the wall. For a moment, Akira wondered (no worry, for any kind of fear was unknown to him in this form) if he hadn’t killed him, if he hadn’t lost the chance of being granted some easy money with a fly that had deliberately come into his web, but judging from the lighter that had fallen to the ground among the glass shards, the fire quirk he had shown didn’t exist.

If he hadn’t used his quirk against Akira, it meant he wasn’t worth much anyway.

A voice echoed from the basement, young, feminine, calling the boy at Akira’s feet.
They would need to be interrogated. How had they found them? What was their quirk? How much were they worth?

Then, the harbor. Akira’s job allowed him to inspect the shipment, making sure nothing unauthorized left I-Island, putting him in the perfect position to smuggle anything he wanted, be it people, support gear, anything that could interest the black market.

Five years of this and he could leave this place. Retire on the mainland.

Finally hunt to his heart content.

He was still turned towards the door leading to the basement when something touched his bare ankle. Cold fingers with a steel-like determination hidden behind the fingertips.

The Beast disappeared, leaving Akira behind. Smaller, weaker, his senses dull. Abandoning him, not even the comforting presence of the predator left behind.

Goosebumps spread on his skin as something enormous was watching him, standing right behind him as he was defenseless.

He turned in the second. A small eternity in which he could have died many times, his blood splattering the wall.

Another Beast smiled at him, showing a row of teeth that belonged to species that had been annihilated by a meteor a long time ago, before men walked the Earth.

The roar was heard in the whole street, people freezing then scrambling for safety.

No one noticed how this was a sound of unadulterated joy.

Melissa and Nao, after having heard a roar that reminded the squishy ape in their brains that there were both really soft and not very high on the food chain, had a divergence of opinion.

Melissa, who knew her friend was in the house and had a knack for finding trouble, wanted to immediately find him and protect him. However, fear made her freeze, as her brain was calculating the odds against what sounded like a pissed-off bear on steroids.

It was as if she couldn’t think while thinking too much at the same time.

Nao, who was in intern in a hospital and who had freeze responses trained out of her, reacted faster. She grabbed her friend (because after she had risked her skin to find her, she was now her friend, thank you very much) and dragged her out of the house of horrors to call people whose job was to deal with this kind of nightmare.

They had the time to see something running in the street. Something of scales and fangs.
And Melissa’s friend was nowhere to be seen.

The police was already on their way when the Beast was seen, rampaging outside what should have been a calm neighborhood. It was as if all predatory features made by evolution had been given to one man, changing him until he became unrecognizable.

Cars were trashed with the talons at the end of his fingers and walls were smashed as he jumped through them, in an almost childish giddiness as he was obviously having fun.

Fortunately for everyone involved, the terrifying display of violence was limited to inanimate objects. Afterwards, the simple thought of what this overwhelming strength, those fangs and claws, could have done to a human being left the thinkers staring at the void for quite some time. It was later discussed that such display of power without the usual aggression the police had learned to connect to Trigger actually came from a strange reaction to the Nectar drug.

The Beast had jumped inside the house as soon as the police had arrived and heroes were immediately called in order to neutralize him, but by an incredible stroke of luck, it wasn’t necessary. They found the villain knocked out in the house, a comically large lump on his head. The same experts could only supposed that for some reason, he had shifted back into his more fragile form in order to think but without realizing he was still carried by his momentum.

The people who had called weren’t found, but the police officers quickly concluded that whoever witnessed someone with such impressive transformation quirk hadn’t wanted to stay around for long.

Melissa, unknowingly one of the witnesses in question, was about to make herself known to the police in an especially loud and hysterical way because Ariel hadn’t been in the house, might have been chased by that mutation-type quirk user that they had seen for a mere moment, but still enough to give her nightmares, when Ariel appeared right behind her, none for the worse, the hint of a tranquil smile on his face.

“I got lucky,” was his only explanation.

Nao looked at the strangely familiar green-haired-boy with the certitude that she knew him from somewhere but she was unable to remember where or when or why. The fact that Melissa was calling him by a hero name probably meant he had been around during the first villain attack I-Island had known, but the details could be asked later.

All that mattered was that Ariel was obviously in a good mood. He didn’t explain anything, just stayed silent with a Cheshire cat grin on his face, and it was obvious he had done something, but he
never explained himself.

Technically, that should have been the moment where they went to the police to explain what had happened. However, neither Ariel nor Melissa seemed very eager to talk to them now, and Nao herself… Well, she had a headache and she would also like some time to find a version of the events that glossed over her association with people who wanted their privacy protected on an island who felt the need to spy on them. No need to needlessly draw attention on Dale’s bar.

Also, she had to find Regan. To have a word with him.

So they all decided that explaining the whole story to the police could wait.

Unbeknownst to Melissa and Izuku, David was trying to see what was happening and if he could reach the door when Toshi’s hand grabbed his shirt and dragged him back behind the table, just as one of the villains was shooting needles everywhere in the room.

David’s brain went into every direction. He was freaking out. He was cursing them. He wanted to run like hell. He wanted to never move again. He thanked God that his daughter wasn’t anywhere near the Tower and he was praying that she wouldn’t approach.

While Toshi, still in his thin form, unable to use his quirk, was calmly waiting for the attack to stop. He was cool as a cucumber while David was sweating buckets.

And when it stopped (How did Toshi know it would stop?), Toshi took what suspiciously looked like a flash grenade, that had been in David’s lab for research purposes, from his jacket and he threw it behind him before hiding his eyes.

By the time the three young people dragged themselves back to the Institute, Aomine Nao had started to shiver despite the high temperatures. She accepted Izuku’s jacket with a grateful nod, and Melissa stayed with her as he searched for the nearest vending machine and brought enough hot chocolate for everyone.

Izuku wasn’t quite dancing but there was definitely something off with the way he was walking. Sauntering maybe? Nah, not really. But whatever it was, his footstep was weightless and he hadn’t been that happy in weeks. He wanted to hug someone. To share his joy. To talk to someone, anyone about it, but some sane part of his brain had thankfully german supplexed the endorphin-producing-one to keep him from accidentally revealing anything about Transfer.

He had used a quirk. Beautiful shining quirk, made him so strong and so fast, and yes, it hurt when he gave it back, but he had lived through worst and the exhilaration of being filled with such beautiful golden warmth had numbed most of his discomfort.

Some part of him recognized that being on the quirk equivalent of a sugar high wasn’t a good thing, but mostly, he didn’t care and he intended to cherish the memory for the rest of the day.
“Hey, Melissa?” Aomine was saying just as Izuku was coming back. She nodded at him with a smile when he put a cup of hot chocolate in front of her. “Let’s agree to do nothing tomorrow.”

“Deal,” Melissa agreed with a tired smile, adrenaline leaving her system as it was replaced with exhaustion.

“I wouldn’t bet on that,” Izuku mocked. “I have been twice on I-Island and both times, I had to deal with criminals.”

Despite what the brochure said.

“With all due respect, Ariel, I lived here my whole life without any problem. It’s only when you’re here that people are trying to kill us,” Melissa noticed. “You’re sure you don’t have a trouble magnet quirk?”

Izuku laughed. A fake laugh hiding real pain.

Izuku had barely finished laughing and was about to grab his cup when all the lights in I-Island switched off at once.

Chapter End Notes

If you’re wondering why the police arrived so fast right after Izuku took the quirk, it’s because the roar + the Beast rampaging in the street is way more important than an anonymous phone call about someone who may be or not be on drugs in his house. A lot of people called at once, and there was a lot of screaming.

Now, onto the next chapter, which will be hell to write because it’s about what All Might and David are doing while the kids are having fun. POV that aren’t Izuku's are always complicated, so wish me luck.
Chapter 40

Chapter Summary

Will someone let poor All Might rest?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The day had started so well. Toshinori had spent time with his best friend. He had eaten delicious food. He had reminisced about their college years. He had told David stories about funny rescues that he had done over the years and anecdotes about his teaching experience.

Until Dave had mentioned that he was starting to think a villain group had invaded I-Island again.

“The data simply doesn’t match,” Dave explained as Toshinori was chewing on a hamburger while mentally waving goodbye at his vacations. “I don’t know who they are but even if they think they are covering their tracks, they are replacing the activities with a perfect prevision, and if I know one thing about I-Island, it’s that there is nothing perfect about it.”

Toshinori swallowed his hamburger. It was delicious but the quantity was a little too much for him. He would have to ask for a doggy bag. No doubt that, tonight, he would once again meet Young Melissa for their usual midnight snacks.

“People just aren’t regular so those activities don’t make sense,” Dave continued. “However, it would be a perfect way to trick the programs keeping an eye on the security.”

“Dave, why are you keeping an eye on the system?” the former number one hero asked the friend who already had problems related to him messing with I-Island’s security system.

“To make sure they don’t use my confiscated inventions for their own gain,” Dave answered with one raised eyebrow, as if it was obvious.

As it turned out, Dave was right about the villains.

Technology made people lazy. They couldn’t help but to rely on machines and gears whose very essence was synonym with imperfection, but today, it suited Mercury just fine. The arrogance of I-Island allowed her team to enter the building containing all the treasures of the island, without anyone blinking at them, for they have the right accreditations and a corrupted central system that wasn’t seeing anything wrong with them.
Livewire was leading the way. A tall and lanky man with black hair and blue eyes. Obviously nervous, but that was because he was only a sympathizer of the Defense Society for Natural Human Progression and not a trained warrior like the rest of them. Her second in command, Voron, was accompanying him. He would protect the hacker until they reached their goal. Society knew Voron as a long-haired man with a smile that could illuminate the bleakest night, but when he unleashed his quirk, his body turned into a hybrid of man and dark bird of prey.

Mercury preferred him that way.

But of course, no plan survived its first confrontation with reality.

“There is one thing you need to know,” Livewire informed them as he had his eyes glued to his phone, monitoring the security cameras. “All Might is here. In the building.”

Mercury clicked her tongue in annoyance. “I wish you had told me that sooner, Livewire.”

He was a member of the security team of I-Island. He should have known.

“He’s no threat,” Black Out, their youngest member, the one most eager to prove his worth, scoffed. “He doesn’t have a quirk anymore.”

Indeed. The whole world had witnessed All Might’s final battle. A thrilling fight that had showed how people who honed their quirks could become demi-gods. Sadly, as he vanquished his opponent, All Might had paid the ultimate price as he was condemned to a life without his quirk.

Mercury would have chosen death in his place.

“Hey, I told you as soon as I saw him in the lobby,” Livewire protested, reeking of fear.

Mercury didn’t have the time to listen for excuses, so she left. Everyone knew what they had to do and the only reason why she was so high up in the tower and not in the lobby with Needles was to take care of the unpredictable.

The liquid that was her namesake started to slowly form from her skin, tears of the metallic liquid dripping on her body and forming trails behind her that reunited to form a mercury sphere, bigger and bigger as she kept walking.

An elegant quirk, born from her parent and grand-parents understanding the need to grow the potential that had been granted to them. Her father had thought he was cursed before being taken in by their group as he could only produce a toxic substance he had no control over, while her mother had the ability to control mercury without being able to create it.

Their union had created a quirk that was a combination of their abilities, just as planned. Well, except for one detail.

The first person she met on her stroll was a scientist who smiled at her, probably thinking that the badge around Mercury’s neck was an irrefutable proof she had her place here, then frowned when she saw the little sphere of mercury following her.

Mercury smiled back at her and the mercury lunged at the scientist’s head, hugging it whole before breaking her neck, without making her suffer. She wasn’t a sadist after all. Just pragmatic.

Soon, the body was gone.

And the sphere advanced with Mercury, now bigger than before.
A little more of that and nothing would be able to prevent her from destroying this island.

Most of the control panels and anything storing secrets had been transferred into a slightly more inconspicuous building after the tower that used to welcome them had met a series of unfortunate events, because of fight between mercenaries and hero students, Wolfram’s superpowered quirk. And then Ariel. And then Toshinori. And to finish, both Toshinori and Ariel.

David had barely put one foot in that building and was trying to explain he needed to talk to a member of the Council when a woman took one look at Toshi next to him, touched her ear, and started to mumble something, too low to be heard by anyone but herself.

The next thing he knew, Toshi had grabbed him and thrown him behind the nearest table while needles were flying everywhere.

An alert was emitted from the tower, signaling a violent incident and calling for back-ups. However, the security system that was reigning I-Island had been submerged with false alarms for a few hours already, stretching the island’s resources thin in order to check all of them.

Nonetheless, they were guards in the tower itself, I-Island not foolish enough to be only protected by softwares. Some ran to the first floor, where Needles had started a fight because she knew that the security measures that could help restrain her would be deactivated.

As for those who rushed to Mercury’s floor, they met something that could turn into a wall absorbing any bullet, that could become into many blades, and that could poison anyone it touched.

When it didn’t devour them in order to multiply.

The flash grenade Toshinori had borrowed from Dave’s lab blinded many peacekeepers but also the villain who thankfully stopped throwing poisoned needles around long enough for Dave, another peacekeeper, and Toshinori to jump on her and hit her with a rapid solidification foam contained in the extinguisher-lookalike that were biometrically locked on the peacekeeper’s fingerprints.

In an instant, the villain was prisoner of pink bubblegum colored amber, unable to use her needles anymore, and Dave was in her face, which wasn’t the wisest course of action.

“The patents? You’re here for the patents?” Toshinori’s friend was asking as he was dragged away so he wouldn’t get viciously headbutted by a villain.

“Support gears?” she sneered, disgust saturating every word as she was baring her teeth. “You
think I’m here to steal those?”

Please, give me a villain monologue so I don’t have to guess what you want and also obtain the confirmation that Melissa and Young Midoriya are far away from this mess.

And oh, sweet mercy, she actually obliged, proving that the universe didn’t completely hate what was left of Toshinori’s guts:

“This place represents everything wrong with our society. Nature granted us quirks so we could use them and only them. Those? Those support items? They unbalance the natural order.”

This was eerily familiar to Toshinori and a glance at Dave confirmed that he was also recognizing this specific spiel.

“They are the very essence of cheating,” she continued, “advantaging lazy people over the hard working ones who actually took the time to train their quirks...”

The Defense Society for Natural Human Progression was a group that fancied itself as something to help people understand, control and hone their quirks, at the opposite of the Japanese policy to simply learn how to not hurt oneself and others without offering more unless one decided to enter the heroic path. The other side of the coin was that they were known to encourage eugenics and to have elite members who were encouraged to take mercenary missions to finance their other activities.

Heroes had to be aware of extremist groups in order not to be taken by surprise. But Toshinori knew them because he had been quirkless once, while David was recognizing them as the father of a quirkless daughter.

For those people thought people without quirks were pitiful existence who had no place in society.

“Toshi?”

Fanatics couldn’t be reasoned with. One could talk to them, see them, touch them, interact with them from a human being to another, even laugh with them, but God helped anyone starting to disagree with them. Suddenly, one became the other, the them to their us. Fanatics lived in a world where they were persecuted, answering to a calling higher than anyone else, so everything they did was justified and already forgiven.

Dave was still looking at him, expecting an answer, a plan, anything.

I survived All for One. I refuse to be done by a bunch of nutjobs.

As the heroes and the police were running around like headless chickens, trying to deal with a bunch of moronic quirk supremacists, the real work was done in the patent room. All the inventions created on I-Island, everything their overpaid pet scientists had ever worked on, were there.

Sitting on the floor, Micah Wainwright was furiously typing on his laptop as he passed through every layer of security as if they had never existed. He had started by throwing a virus at the system, making sure that I-Island security system would be overwhelmed with false alarms, the
limited human resources of the island stretched thin so it would be easier to infiltrate the tower. Then, thanks to David Shield and his brilliant idea, he just had to invite people able to handle the peacekeepers and the security. Highly motivated people who would make such a mess that no one would realize a member of I-Island’s security team was gone until he had sold the inventions and become so rich that even God wouldn’t be able to touch him anymore.

For this wasn’t an attack.

It was a heist.

“How long will it take?” Voron asked next to him, looking like an especially annoyed demonic raven. Annoyed because he was babysitting someone who was supposed to have a hacking quirk and who couldn’t defend himself if the guards found him.

“As long as necessary,” Micah answered without looking up, too busy to steal the data instead of destroying it forever like he was supposed to. “But go ahead. The whole room is a Faraday cage to keep it safe from hackers. Even on trigger, I doubt Black Out could do anything against it.”

Voron gave him a look that could have been Okay, I Trust Your Judgement or I Will Leave Your Lifeless Corpse Behind As Soon As You’re Done, then made the call.

Black Out took a deep breath, taking the syringe into his hand and trying to calm down.

Don’t screw this up. His quirk was far from impressive, not what the Defenders were usually looking for, but they had chosen him for this mission. They trust you.

The young man injected himself with the Trigger, ignoring the terrifying sensation of the needle in his neck, of the substance invading his veins… only for something else to replace the twinge of pain and the unease.


His quirk flared, pulsing through the room as it shut down all the fancy technology I-Island was so proud of. Then his power coursed through the building, the whole area, and beyond.

Until the whole island was in the dark.

Every door of the tower shut down as the automatic lockdown was activated because of the last convulsion of a dying system maimed by an electromagnetic pulse, trapping everyone where they were.

Only ten people managed to access the higher floors in time.

All Might, David Shield, and a demi-dozen of peacekeepers who had told them to stay downstairs but who had been ignored were among them.
Sounds of the fight and especially of people screaming were reaching them as Micah was finished the biggest heist of the History. Once that he had all the files, worth a fortune, he looked up at Voron who was holding out his hand.

“"The laptop," he simply said.

A wave of cold fear crashed through Micah.

There had always been a risk, of course. Bringing in a bunch of fanatic mercenaries while expecting to double-cross them was dangerous, but the price was worth it.

That was why he was prepared.

“Why?” he asked, his gloved fingers slipping inside the pocket of his jacket and touching one of the little round objects inside it.

He picked up one.

Voron was faster, stronger, and his talons could have cut his flesh like butter. A fair fight was out of question, but he barely noticed what Micah did, his head moving slightly as he recognized something strange had happened but since he was unable to realize what it was, he barely paused. Instead, he kept an eye on Micah’s hand, and continued.

“Mercury isn’t as kind hearted as I am. She would kill you for what you tried to pull. But I am grateful for the access you granted us. Just give me the laptop and she doesn’t have to know. You still have a way out of it.”

Maybe he was telling the truth.

From what Micah had seen, Voron was actually the soothing presence of the team, calming down the more insane members.

But he hadn’t burned out his job on I-Island and his life in the light just to join a bunch of quirk-worshiping fanatics.

Voron got still as he realized something was wrong, but by now, it was far too late. He still tried to reach Micah, to make him join him on his way to the afterlife, but his legs betrayed him and he crashed into the ground. Micah barely avoided the nineteen kilos of raven but managed to get back to his feet, his laptop under one arm, his hand holding an earpiece in the other.

Voron’s earpiece, the one he had warped from the mercenary’s ear.

When he had contacted them, they hadn’t questioned his hacking quirk. It made too much sense considering his job. However, Micah was simply good with computers. Better, he constantly studied and trained to be good at his job.

His real quirk was Exchange. Not a strong quirk, but an interesting one, allowing him to exchange small objects. For example, an earpiece for another, with enough finesse for people to barely notice it.

Dipping the extra earpiece in the right poison, the kind that could kill in seconds as long as it was
in contact with the mucous membrane, like the ear, for example, allowed a David like him to win against any Goliath.

He left the dead body behind. The archive room was a Faraday cage, blocking any signal, coming from inside like outside, so Mercury couldn’t have heard them. That was the reason why Voron had to leave the room to learn about Needles and give the order to Black Out.

*Time to show your acting skills.*

He absentmindedly brushed his hand against his pocket and the five other poisoned earbuds. One for each remaining member of the team if things went wrong.

Micah’s earpiece was the only one still working, forcing him to seek the team leader in a building infested with peacekeepers and without his bodyguard to protect him. But he shouldn’t have worried.

When he found Mercury, she had his back to him, the entire hallway covered in her namesake as she was holding back what was left of the peacekeepers.

“Mercury!” he called, putting enough emotion to be believed. “It’s Voron! One of the guards had a powerful quirk…”

“Where is he?” she asked, not even looking back at him. All the better.

Micah took a deep breath, making it shaky, like a civilian who was scared of violence.

“He died,” he admitted, a pain he wasn’t feeling on his face even if she wasn’t looking at him. “I’m so sorry. He died taking him down.”

A pause.

A silence charged with violence and something terrifying, something that didn’t need words to be conveyed.

“Go to the helicopter. I will catch up with you.”

I-Island was so much more enjoyable when everything worked. Unfortunately, when an electromagnetic pulse coursed through the whole island, everything shut down and one had to escape by the window of the third floor because every door had shut down and couldn’t be opened without an adamantine axe or anything that could rip off metal doors from their hinges.

By the time Izuku had landed on the street then caught Melissa who had jumped after him, people were running in the street, trying to help as any kind of transport had come to an abrupt halt, the robots and other devices had shorted out, and the usually beautiful and calm city devolving into chaos.
“I can’t find my dad and Uncle Might if nothing works,” Melissa said as she looked around, her face distorted by worry, her useless phone in her hands.

“Well, All Might is this way,” Izuku indicated.

“How do you even know that?”

Izuku paused, wondering how to explain that he could always locate All Might without revealing anything about Transfer and how it was incredibly attuned to One for All.

Thankfully for Izuku and unfortunately for All Might, a second later, some stuff exploded in the direction Izuku had pointed to.

____________________________________________________________________

Aegis was waiting on the roof of a nearby building, her back to a helicopter, and the dome created by her quirk around them. If one had a good eye, a blue shimmer could have been perceived, but most people never did until it was too late.

The young woman stretched, trying to keep her mind both busy and active so she wouldn’t be surprised. Her quirk, Perfect Shield, didn’t only block anything physical but could stop anything more subtle, be it sound, microwave, electromagnetic wave, and so on.

A part of her didn’t appreciate to be relegated to the sideline, but making sure everyone got away alive, especially as Black Out was used on the field for the first time, was nothing to scoff at. Still, she had a bad feeling about this.

Aegis was the perfect shield. Her pride laid on the fact she was the one to protect her comrades.

Her bad feeling was confirmed as she saw an explosion of mercury destroying a wall, throwing many people into the emptiness, but one was cast away in her direction. Fast, too fast for someone without the adequate quirk to land without hurting himself, but the mercury that was surrounding him peeled off his body, expanding into a bubble mid-air, before making him bounce harmlessly on the roof.

Livewire still landed face first into a pool of liquid mercury. But at least, both his legs were intact. Still, she considered reminding him that the toxicity of Mercury’s quirk was one of her best weapon, but considering how pale he was, he was probably aware of it.

She lost her amused smile when she dropped her shield and he told her what had happened while she was stuck babysitting their way out.

Needles and Black Out apprehended.

Voron was dead.

She had known Needles since they were twelve. She had been the first one to know her shield didn’t only block visible things, even before Aegis’ parents. As for Voron… He had been the one anyone could go to. Always.

“Get in,” she ordered Livewire, trying not to think of Voron, Black Out, and Needles. If she had been there… She shook her head, for she didn’t have the time to dwell of the if. Instead, she turned
towards the pilot. “Take altitude but don’t get away from the tower. Mercury will jump in when she’s done.”

As Livewire scrambled behind her and gracelessly climbed into the helicopter, already scrubbing the skin that had been splashed by the mercury, Aegis didn’t mention that Mercury could control the toxicity of her quirk in order not to harm an ally.

Any of her comrades would have been happy to sacrifice themselves for a mission but that didn’t mean Mercury could tolerate such a thing. They were her team, her people, and since she had learned that Voron was gone forever, she was now possessed by two goals: protect the remnants of her team and to make sure whoever had provoked that was gone for good.

Throwing those guards through a wall should have been enough, especially as she had taken the occasion to evacuate Livewire, but someone must have had a very useful quirk because most of them had landed on their feet.

She walked to the opening she had helped creating, a hand on the wall to stabilize herself despite the strong wind screaming around her. The helicopter Aegis was protecting was already taking off, and she was one splash away from leaving this island.

Sinking it had always been her personal goal. As long as she had destroyed their researches and damaged the infrastructures, her mission was a success.

As for Needles and Black Out… They knew what waited for those who let themselves be captured. Their evacuation would have to happen at a later date.

But she couldn’t let Voron’s murder stay unpunished.

Almost all the mercury she had grown and nurtured since her first kill on this floor purred as it fled outside, high enough for the gravity to make the metal pierce anything once it fell. She left just enough to assure her escape.

With an effort of will, she upped the toxicity, before turning the metal into a multitude of blades.

She spared one last look at what remained of the guards, but she didn’t focus on them, even though one among them had killed her Second.

Instead, she looked at the scrawny form down below, a shadow of his former self.

“Farewell, All Might,” she said without any animosity as she let the blades strike the last protectors of this island.

Melissa’s lungs were on fire and her feet hurt as they were both running towards the tower when she realized that Ariel was slowing down in order not to lose her.

*He could be faster. I’m slowing him down.*
“Stop waiting for me! Go find them!”

Toshinori saw the blades about to rain down on them and there was nothing he could do about it. He had barely survived the landing, saved only by one of the peacekeepers’ quirks that had made the air just viscous enough to slow down their fall.

Many thoughts passed through his mind. How relieved he was that Young Melissa and Young Midoriya weren’t here. How the helicopter that had survived the villain attack meant that more of them had escaped the building and would get away. How happy he was that he had asked Dave to stay in the machine room in the hope of fixing this mess after he had brained the young villain with an extinguisher. How someone must have had a quirk, anything, be it to protect them or to stop the last villain.

How he wanted someone to prevent what was going to happen.

How he was aware that if there was a hero, pro or not, able to do that, they would already have made themselves known.

How One for All was still with him.

Toshinori was feeling his body trying to keep up and failing. It had been the case since Kamino, where his body had started automatically shutting down the quirk to protect himself. One for All was unreachable for someone who had almost burned all his health protecting the peace.

And yet, every cell of his body revolted at the idea that it would end this way. That he would watch those people die, powerless, unable to do anything.

Toshinori’s body didn’t move on its own.

He was the one who pushed it.

Yagi Toshinori was human. A being whose power was limited in order not to destroy his body, unless he was in a situation so dire that the risk was worth it. Human beings hadn’t waited for the rise of quirks to raise cars with their bare hands or to run until their legs gave off.

And at that moment, the kind of miracle only a human being could summon happened.

“DETROIT SMASH!”

The wind pressure created by the retired Symbol of Peace hit Mercury at full power, not even her mercury shield preventing her throw being sent air borne inside the building. As she lost control
over her quirk, the mercury blades that hadn’t flown away under the power of All Might’s punch lost their forms, and the little quantity that literally rained down outside did far less damage than what was intended.

But at that moment, people barely paid attention to the villain, to the island in the dark, or to what it meant for the island to known its second villain attack in a month.

They saw the Symbol of Peace. They saw All Might, whom they had thought lost at Kamino, reappear and protect them from the villains.

For a moment, they hoped. Hoped that he was out of retirement, that he had realized that they still needed him and that his story wasn’t over.

That maybe, the night wasn’t as dark as they had thought.

At least, until All Might fell down to his knees, throwing up blood without stopping and looking like any additional shock would shatter him.

Shame came with the realization that that man, who had singlehandedly brought peace to Japan and hope to the rest of the world, couldn’t give anything more.

All Might was on his knees, the hand in front of his mouth unable to hide the blood he was throwing up.

A couple of people in uniform were around him, shielding him from the eyes of the panicked civilians and trying to help him as Izuku’s hero looked like he was about to cough up his lungs, the light of his quirk erratic.

But as long as it shone, it meant All Might was alive.

Izuku would have wanted to get closer but the police was everywhere, keeping the civilian at bay, calming people down and helping those who had been injured or poisoned by the mercury projections. Their faces were pale and even though they were making their best to stay calm, whatever had happened in the tower had marked them.

Izuku crossed the crowd nonetheless, trying to ignore how the last time he had to be in such a dense amount of people who had no idea of what was happening, it wasn’t even during Kamino, but in the aftermaths of the villain attack that had put his mom into a coma.

He stopped near a woman ticking with a panel hidden in the wall of the building, connecting some wires and disconnecting others without anything happening while a very nervous person in uniform that wasn’t a policeman was anxiously watching at the panel, then at the sky.

“‘You have to fix that,’” he was saying. “‘They have the plans of every project ever made! We can’t let them get away.’”

Near the horizon, a helicopter was flying. The only thing with electricity that was still working in the whole city, too high for anyone to reach it, and already fleeing in direction of the high wall surrounding the island.
Villains getting away with something that could change the balance between heroes and villains if any of those inventions hit the black market.

The woman, someone who bore a striking resemblance to Nagisa despite not having anything spider-like in her appearance, looked up and her glare stopped the policeman dead in his tracks.

“You think that’s the main problem? We’re standing on a floating island whose navigating system just got screwed up by an EMP. If someone doesn’t fix that, we’re dead.” She threw her hands down as if the panel had personally insulted her. “And I can’t do anything from here.”

The helicopter was getting away.

No technology to catch it or to stop it.

No hero to intervene because there were almost none of them since the I-Expo had ended.

And Izuku was standing here, just watching it.

The void inside Izuku and the light All Might carried reached out for each other.

Izuku and All Might looked at each other at the same time, their eyes meeting from across the place.

It was if time was standing still.

All Might smiled at him, his patented *Everything Will Be Alright* smile, as the hero was surrounded by the golden light only Transfer could sense.

Everything became limpid.

*Will you accept?*

From across the place, All Might nodded.
Toshinori got back to his feet, under the alarmed exclamations of one of the peacekeepers, but none of them had any idea of what was happening. He took one step, then another, his whole body protesting because One for All’s power was now too strong for his frail body, burning him from within.

*And here I thought I was used to pain.*

When Toshinori had started to look for a successor, he had been waiting for a sign. Clouds parting so a ray of light could touch the chosen one, giving him an obvious choice. At least a hunch. He had then realized life had never been so simple for him, and he was the one who needed to make the decision and hope for the best.

But when he saw Young Midoriya looking at the villains getting away, the cold determination in his eyes, then the silent question, he *knew*. He had his sign. He had his successor.

A successor who had decided to just cross the barrier of policemen as if he had every right to do so and anyone doubting him was a fool and who was now power walking faster and faster as one of the police officer had realized a teenager wasn’t supposed to be there, already calling him.

Toshinori plucked a hair from the back of his head. One for All needed a moment before completely entering one’s system and being ready to be used, and even then, the first recoil tended to be spectacular. They wouldn’t be able to catch the remaining members of the villain team, but Young Midoriya would never forget that and he wouldn’t let anyone else escape.

He frowned as Young Midoriya raised his hand, as if he was about to wave it at him and he mirrored the gesture. As he did, the police officer who seemed to consider tackling the teenager stopped as he realized they knew each other.

Young Midoriya high-fived him.

Immediately, it was as if a great burden was lifted from his shoulders. Suddenly, he could breathe better, he was less tired, and it was as if his whole body was making a huge sigh of relief.

*Oh.*

Because of course, Toshinori’s successor didn’t need any genetic intake to take One for All.

He awkwardly threw the hair away as Young Midoriya paused next to him.

One for All settled within him as if it had always belonged here. Warm, comforting, nicely fitting in his impoverished hoard, almost enough, actually. But it was nothing more than a candlelight for now, barely a flame. Just enough to be known.

That simply wouldn’t do.

Izuku coaxed the flames out, encouraging it to expand. To burn hotter and stronger.

It was unlike any enhancer quirk he had ever used.
“Young Midoriya?”

Izuku looked up and saw All Might’s worried face. His worried and blurry face, which didn’t make any sense until he held out a hand to his face and he realized he was crying.

*That’s embarrassing.* He wiped away the tears.

Quirks got more destructive with time and Izuku knew his weak body wouldn’t be able to handle the recoil of a ninth generation quirk, especially one honed by All Might of all people.

*Shock Absorption.*

Immediately, *One for All* reached for it, trying to take the quirk for itself but Izuku mentally kept it away, before doing the same for *Minor Healing*, not able to surrender even one of his quirks, even to one of his treasures. He kept his new quirk away from the others, and made *Shock Absorption* handle the power threatening to break him.

Even with that, it wasn’t enough. The quirk was too weak to handle Izuku’s new treasure, but maybe by spreading it out... *Yes.* Being enveloped by it, protected by the best armor imaginable.

Not an armor. Something more supple, closer to him, but still acting as a protection between him and the outside... Like a cowl?

*Full Cowl.*

Izuku nodded, finally understanding the quirk. And he took off.

---

Aegis was the first one to notice they were followed. One of the island’s citizens had decided to catch up with them on foot, and he was actually going a decent job at chasing them, if not for the detail of him being far below them, on the ground, and about to have his run cut short by the wall surrounding I-Island. Even if he managed to open one of the doors, they would be long gone.

At least, that was why Micah was thinking until he remembered that the last time All Might had been on the island, he had been accompanied by someone who had helped the Symbol of Peace throw Wolfram into the horizon.

Someone who was supposed not to have a quirk anymore but one could never be too careful.

“Aegis, create a shield around the helicopter, please.”

“I can’t.”

That wasn’t the kind of answer Micah wanted to hear with secrets worth millions of dollars in his hand and an island full of very angry people asking for their heads now that Mercury had decided to turn to kill people indiscriminately.

“What do you mean: *You Can’t*?”

“I don’t have enough control to create a complete shield around a moving target I’m not familiar with,” she growled, and something in her whole demeanor made Micah realize that she was about to snap. “We will crash into my own quirk when I misjudged our movements, and even if we don't,
Micah nodded. The mission might be the first priority of this kind of mercenaries but that didn’t mean the loss of their comrades wouldn’t un hinge them.

“We are crossing the wall,” the pilot told them, probably wanting to avoid two quirked people who had successfully escaped All Might to fight in his helicopter. There would be nowhere to escape and the fall would kill them, even Aegis.

But they weren’t the ones he had to worry about.

Not when the wall that the helicopter was leaving behind exploded.
Sergeant Adam Vasquez managed to climb the wall by ignoring common sense and by using his quirk to run on the wall. He was horribly aware that the only protection between the gravity and a horrible death down below was the quirk he avoided using because he was scared of high places.

By the time he reached the gaping hole in the wall of his island, the helicopter had started sinking into the ocean.

By the time he was back at a reasonable altitude on the other side of the wall, the ocean at only twelve feet from him, he could see the shimmering of what appeared to be a sphere in the water, people inside it.

And a teenager standing straight on the edge of the island. He was breathing heavily, watching the villains he had somehow stopped, and his right arm was trembling. There was also a huge chunk of metal in his other hand, something that dangerously looked like a piece of helicopter ripped by bare hands.

The metal fell to the ground with a clang sound when Adam was noticed. The teenager awkwardly put himself in front of it, pushing it away with one foot, exactly like Adam’s nephew when he had broken a vase last Christmas and tried to hide the proof of his clumsiness.

Chapter End Notes

I-Island, at least in my fic, doesn't have heroes unless they are invited from outside. They have a police force, robots, and people known as peacekeepers when valuable stuff needs to be protected. The mercenaries call them guards because they aren't aware of some of I-Island's ways.

Unfortunately, there will be no Izuku becoming Batman in this fic.

The chapter is a blur but know that a lot of questions and clarifications will be brought next chapter.
The rest of the night was a blur.

The hospital was still in the dark because of the villains and there was no efficient way to transport the injured to the other side of the island, so every doctor, nurses, and anyone that looked like a medic, were brought near the site to treat them. Aomine Nao was one of them, because she obviously didn’t feel the need to rest from her abduction, and when she met Izuku again, her first word were “You were gone for half an hour. How did you even break that arm?” then she got quiet when Izuku answered that he had fought a helicopter and won.

She healed Izuku and ordered him not to move for the rest of the night. Then, she healed All Might, thanked him for what he had done, and politely asked him to rest because he was weakened and she couldn’t heal him completely.

Anyone who had a scientific background was sent under I-Island, in the belly of the beast, so to speak, to fix the compromised system and it would be later said that if someone listened closely, they could hear the growling made by a bunch of very irate scientists.

The villains had been directly warped to a detention cell by the same warper who was then volunteered for rescue missions all over the island as the automatic lockdown created by the blackout had imprisoned people in a lot of buildings, the smart houses, and every high places that could be imagined.

During this night, all of I-Island sprang into action.

Shouta was dealing with eighteen teenagers who were extremely stressed about: the provisional license exam, two classmates who weren’t in the dorms anymore, All Might’s retirement, the media just jumping on the fact that Midoriya couldn’t use his quirk anymore and the journalists who kept making a connection between Bakugou and how he had been specifically targeted by villains. To say that his days were busy would be an understatement and he was taking full advantage of his nights, so he was awake when a post went viral.

Pictures from I-Island were always popular. Pictures from All Might had an insane following.

And pictures from All Might on I-Island were coveted, so Shouta hadn’t been surprised to see pictures of his colleague trending, especially now that his real appearance had been exposed in Kamino and that people were desperate to know he was doing okay. At least, Midoriya had the good sense not to appear on any of those stolen moments. But the now viral post exploded as someone had made an analysis on All Might’s shirt. In the defense of the symbol of peace, the text wasn’t decipherable but dedicated fans had recognized the color and the number of lines, and linked it to a specific type of clothes that been appeared after Kamino. A shirt with the caption I survived Kamino and all I got was this lousy tee-shirt.

Most people saw some derisive humor and were amused by it, probably because everyone always
agreed with All Might, so Shouta didn’t pay attention… until people went too deep, which, with the hindsight, was expected from people who haunted Tumblr in the dark of the night instead of sleeping.

Was All Might disappointed with them? Was that some criticism against the heroes or the civilians or both in Kamino? Against society?

Anyway, it was the kind of little thing that was going to be blown over again and again. Shouta was certain that the Might Tower would be submerged by phone calls in the morning.

Shouta kept working, keeping an eye on the tee-shirt scandal every hour, and he generally ignored his need for sleep. A continued rest period was overrated anyway, especially with the training for the incoming exam and how Ectoplasm was keeping an eye on all of them in his stead for the self-study. As for emergencies, Shouta has conditioned his sleeping body to react to Ectoplasm’s panicked sharp intake of breath so he would catapult himself from his sleeping bag and use his quirk on anyone who had started a fire.

Fire that could be somehow started by anyone, not only Bakugou or Todoroki, somehow.

The only silver lining was that Midoriya hadn't trained with the rest of the class, so the explosions and/or flames he created had been the problem of the support department.

Speaking of Midoriya… No need for the student to be splashed by All Might’s faux pas.

In the morning, he called All Might in order to inform him that he might have a situation and to make sure Midoriya was out of it.

But his colleague never answered.

When Izuku had been younger, he had once played too much with his quirks. Chiyo, his nanny, had been keeping an eye on him as he jumped and ran, chased by paperclips strategically brought beforehand so he could play with them outside, but only people with multiple quirks could realize the kind of strain Jump, Magnetism, and Low Level Gravity, a new favorite borrowed from his dad for the day, could do to his young brain.

The headache had started quickly, but Izuku had taken multiple breaks. He had only stopped when his nose had started to bleed (nothing, barely a drop) but that had frightened him into hiding it and immediately stopping the game.

By the time they had gone home, Izuku had a fever. He hadn’t realized at the time, but it was the kind of bad fever that children really shouldn’t have.

The rest of the day was blurry, but he remembered his mom giving him a cold shower then putting a cold rag on his forehead, again and again because the temperature of Izuku’s skin kept warming it. He also remembered how Chiyo, always calm and unfazed, had been worried for the first time Izuku had known her. She hid it well, but her words were a little too fast, her movements a little too sharp, and Izuku could sense her panic the same way he could sense any emotional change in the people close to him.

And he remembered how tired he had been. How exhausted the fever had made him, but he had
never managed to find sleep more than a couple of minutes because his mother’s worry and his nanny’s fear kept bringing him back to reality. He had been so frustrated at the time that he had started to cry.

That should have been a miserable memory. The kind that would have prevented him from overusing Transfer. But at nightfall, something had happened that had turned the feverish episode into a good one.

His father had arrived.

Izuku had been too tired to react but when his father had climbed in Izuku’s bed (thankfully large enough for an adult as big as his dad), he had curled up into his father’s arms, clinging to him, skin touching skin so Transfer could feel his presence too. A multitude of quirks, warm and golden, as if some large light was cloaking him against the fatigue and the unease, making him feel safe once again.

They had spent the night clinging to each other, Izuku finally sleeping because he knew he was protected and that his dad wouldn’t let anything bad happen.

Izuku woke up with this same feeling of being safe. A half-forgotten memory that filled him full of warmth. He blinked several times, the daylight hurting his eyes, and he had no idea of what time it was but judging by the fact he wasn’t in need of coffee yet, no more than a couple hours could have passed.

In the end, it was too early to be awake, especially as they had returned to the Shield house around 5 AM, after they had freed David from the building only to see him disappear under the surface of I-Island to turn it off then on, according to him. So Izuku rolled over and put the blanket over him, because he had actually let himself fall on the bed, over the blanket, and the only concession to a real night preparation was him kicking his shoes off. And as he did go back into Morpheus’ embrace, he absentmindedly spread his senses, searching for the usual presences.

The lack of All Might woke him up for good. No golden warmth, not here, not in the house, and he kept mentally looking for him, but he simply wasn’t here. Immediately, his bare foot were on the cold tile and he was running in the house, searching.

He passed in front of Mellissa’s room whose door was opened, allowing anyone to hear her snoring, but he didn’t wake her up. Not yet.

Izuku jumped down the stairs, Full Cowl helping him, and he landed on the tip of his toes so he wouldn’t make a noise, then stalked to All Might’s room, only to see a very still form under two blankets. Unmoving. Not even a little.

Terrifyingly still.

Toshinori woke up because he felt, from under the fortress of blankets he had sought refuge in, someone touching his shoulder, making him immediately go from unconsciousness to alertness. His head emerged from the yellow blankets as he expected to see Dave, back from the inner working of the island, but instead, two bright green eyes were looking at him as if they could see his very soul.
“Young… Young Midoriya?” Awake so early? Without even taking his coffee? For a moment, Toshinori actually feared for another villain attack. “What’s wrong?”

Unblinking eyes kept staring.

"Nothing,” he said. “I just wanted to be sure you were still breathing."

Toshinori blinked as he was mentally transported to the start of the school year, right after the USJ attack, when Young Midoriya had fought the noumu with a broken arm and a certain disdain towards the concept of safety and strategical retreat, and how he had just stopped moving afterwards. It had worried Toshinori enough for him to make sure his chest was still moving.

“I don't intend to stop,” he assured the young student who probably had Kamino flashbacks because of last night.

“Good,” the teenager nodded before leaving.

Neither All Might nor Midoriya were answering their phones and Shouta was really close to walk into Nedzu’s office and ask him to call his contact on I-Island because a student not picking up was one thing, but every pro hero lived with a hand on their phones. Retirement couldn’t change a man so quickly.

*What the hell is happening?*

Shouta sent a message to Nedzu.

David dragged himself back to his home, expecting his daughter, Toshi and Ariel to be fast asleep, but the boy was wide awake, sitting at the kitchen table with a book in his hand and a glass of orange juice in front of him.

The young hero who had finished what Toshi had started with the villains greeted him with enthusiasm, which was extremely uncharacteristic coming from someone who loathed mornings.

“How is I-Island?” Ariel asked.

A legitimate concern since they had been drifting aimlessly for several hours because of the EMP attack.

David grabbed a glass on his own and poured himself some orange juice.

“Thankfully, the vital components are protected from pesky things like electromagnetic pulses and other quirks, so we manage to jump start the beast. As for the rest… A lot of what was near the center of the pulse simply fried so fixing it will be a mess but a lot of sectors just stopped working and people who luckily won’t be me for at least the time of a nap should start fixing that and we might have powers again in the houses today.”
Which was a very good thing because that orange juice was warm, an abomination in itself.

“And how are you?” Ariel asked, a little concerned, but really, pot and kettle at this point.

“Thank you for asking. I am running on the unholy adrenaline of having shoulder-slammed the kid who caused the black-out and I didn’t have tea in twelve hours. I am going to go to bed and not move for a while. But first, I have questions. Did you really break the wall?”

Do you have your quirk back?

Ariel didn’t seem to realize what he was asking and appeared to be embarrassed, but he still answered, exposing the choices that had led him to be the main subject of conversation of a hundred of scientists trapped into the entrails on I-Island.

“At first, I just started to climb on it like Gran Torino, a really cool hero I interned with, but I realized I simply didn’t have enough speed to reach the end of the wall, jump and catch up with them. I usually try not to provoke too much collateral damage because it’s not a good habit to have, but since they had I-Island’s projects, I decided a little bit of wall was a fair price to pay.”

“… So that’s a yes.”

David shouldn’t have to be surprised. He had done something similar with Wolfram, not hesitating to run after them then to fight someone enhanced by his equipment. But at the time, he had seen someone fired up by All Might’s example.

But no. Ariel didn’t need anyone to do incredible things.

“What happened exactly to that helicopter?”

Because there were insane rumors about it.

“The wall broke the helicopter,” the boy soberly answered. “The helicopter then crashed into the wall.”

That thing certainly didn’t crash on its own. It received some help.

“Third and last question: I know there is no coffee in this house and that the coffee shop is closed, so how come you’re awake and acting like a normal human being?”

That had been asked playfully, because David had always been amused by how Ariel looked like Melissa when it came to their caffeine addiction and their hatred towards mornings. But something in the young man changed, revealing how serene he was.

“Well, it’s a brand new day,” Ariel smiled, the corner of his eyes wrinkling to show it was genuine.

A detail David noticed because since he had arrived, Ariel’s smile hadn’t quite reached his eyes.

Ochako spent most of her lunch break on her phone, trying to see if there was any news about All Might or I-Island. There was no response from the retired Symbol of Peace and nothing from the official feeds of the damn island.
As for Midori himself, he didn’t answer his phone. Worse, it didn’t even ring.

Around the table, Todoroki, Momo, Tsuyu and Iida were also on their phones.

Robin Drake hadn’t been the chief of security of I-Island for long. Her predecessor last day had actually been at the end of the I-Expo, not because the authorities had taken umbrage with the first villain attack this island had ever known, but because he was scheduled to retire this day. They had been all eating an excellent chocolate cake when shit had hit the fan thanks to David Shield and his brilliant ideas.

She remembered trembling with rage and exhaustion when she had discovered Shield had just been planning to hire *actors*. And of course, hiding this mess had been impossible. Not when it had been during I-Expo, with so many guests present for the event. Wolfram and his croons had been far from subtle.

As soon as she had the semi-certitude that the island they were all living on wasn’t about to drift aimlessly on the ocean and after the communication had been repaired to ask a discreet help from the nearest country, Robin put on a clean suit, fixed her short feathery hair, grabbed a bunch of non-disclosure agreements, and walked to the Shield house.

All Might, Symbol of Peace, universally respected man, and beloved hero, opened the door. Emaciated, dark circles under his eyes, and his arm was back into a sleeve. His eyes were sunken, he didn’t like he had slept much, but his smile was gentle.


“The pleasure is all mine,” she smiled before following him in. The house was quiet and there was a strange feeling to it, as if it had been left untouched by the chaos of last night. An oasis in the mess that had become this island.

Of course, as the one responsible to clean up said mess, Robin might have been slightly biased.

She asked if Midoriya Izuku was here and the Symbol of Peace, the savior of Kamino, the one who had kept Wolfram from stealing an all-powerful quirk-boosting-device opened a window and called him like one would do with a child when dinner was ready.

Ariel, aka Midoriya Izuku appeared maybe twenty seconds later, using the same quirk that had prevented a catastrophe yesterday. He… He didn’t look like what one would expect from someone with such a reputation. Cute kid with freckles and everything. Some nervous energy, and wearing an All Might tee-shirt and shorts one could use as a nightwear.

“First, I want to thank you for what you did. You saved many people and if those data had spread… A lot of people would have been hurt.”

Ariel seemed surprised that she would thank them from the start, which told her anything she needed about her previous interactions with law enforcement.

Robin was many things but not ungrateful.

“I would like to ask your help once again in order to secure the safety of this island.”
She put the NDAs on the table, which made All Might smile—not a nice smile, which was disturbing— and Midoriya adopted a carefully neutral expression.

“Please, don’t worry. I don’t want to sweep this new attack under the rug. Well, not all of it. I-Island won’t try to hide the new attack.” They would spin the hell out of it to make people believe that All Might was the one targeted, just like for the first attack. And at this point, it wasn’t a bad thing to show that any act of villainy on the island ended with said villains send far away into the horizon. “But for security reasons, we absolutely do not want people to know it was for the patents. Without Mr. Wainwright or an insider, no one would have found out. I want it to stay this way.”

No need to give people ideas and those scientists didn’t need to have their virtue tested against thousands of propositions of bribes.

All Might leaned in, thinking about it. Of course, he would realize how dangerous it would be. Some things had to stay secret for a reason.

“I understand the need to be discreet,” Ariel carefully said. “But I don’t feel comfortable signing anything without my guardian present.”

A guardian that would be in Japan. But concessions could be made for hero students.

“I am sure All Might can act as such for the occasion.”

“No, he can’t.”

Robin looked at All Might, hoping that he would have the influence to convince a hero student from his country, who would undoubtedly worship him. Instead, the retired hero gave her a derisive look that clearly meant he couldn’t control Ariel and anyone trying to was a fool.

“I am surprised by such lack of initiative when I know what you were doing yesterday, before the attack.”

All Might raised an eyebrow but pointedly didn’t ask what had happened while Ariel pretended that he was just a part of the décor, nothing to see, thank you very much.

*Interesting.*

“Yesterday, Ariel and Melissa Shield looked for a young woman named Aomine Nao. It quickly appeared that she had been the victim of quirk traffickers and they sneaked into the criminals' house, neutralized one of them, and escaped another with an impressive mutation quirk who fortunately drew everyone’s attention when he tried to chase them outside.”

All Might had been the number 1 hero for decades, so he knew how to control his expression to hide what he was feeling. But for a tiny moment, a flash of something between pain and astonishment passed in his eyes.

“Was anyone hurt when the villain burst out of the house?” he calmly asked.

“Fortunately, no.”

An incredible stroke of luck because the quirk was accompanied by a certain dose of bloodlust. She still had to work on the case and find out if it was a consequence of some Nectar.

“What a surprise,” All Might quipped. “And here I thought there was no crime on I-Island.”
“It’s even written in the brochure,” Ariel added.

Robin smiled – showed her teeth. Same thing, really.

They talked more after that. She didn’t manage to make them sign the non-disclosure agreements, which had always been an acceptable risk, but she had insisted on the fact that there were public security risks involved if anyone realized the treasures that could be exploited on I-Island. She also insisted on the fact they were tracking down the group that had used I-Island has a quirk trafficking hunting ground, and admitted that there had some lead in Europe, France and Spain.

They were heroes. They knew the importance of staying quiet to protect on-going investigations. And if not, she could handle it.

She thanked them again for what they had done. And gave them a commission for their heroic deeds, because she had a policy of encouraging people saving her home. Her peacekeepers would have received an equivalent bonus.

Ariel’s eyes comically widened when he saw the amount while All Might simply told Robin to give his own reward to the scholarship program of the Institute.

Izuku stayed still until the chief of security of I-Island, whom he liked better than the Hosu police chief, left him to his fate.

All Might, just as immobile, took a moment. He kind of nodded, then took a deep breath, and finally, he turned towards Izuku.

“You did WHAT?”

[Image of All Might, post retirement, wearing a “I survived Kamino and all I got was this lousy tee-shirt.” shirt.]

Gran Torino: [Toshinori! Where is my tee-shirt?]

Gran Torino: [Toshinori?]

Izuku spent the rest of the day training.

One for All wasn’t like his other quirks. More powerful, of course. Far more destructive, something Izuku hadn’t anticipated but he had thankfully avoided breaking any more bones. But there was something more. Wilder, maybe.
He could feel the flame of the quirk inside him, fighting to spread, to take his other quirks, *Shock Absorption* among them. But stopping it was as easy as breathing, something he didn’t need to put thoughts into. Still, it made him wonder.

*How can a quirk be so gluttonous?*

He jumped in the air, *Full Cowl* threatening to hurt him but *Shock Absorption* held on. Barely.

*Maybe it’s a mutation that we’re only finding out because I’m the only holder who has several quirks.*

He spun, high kicked, and landed on the ground, a little too abruptly. Since *Shock Absorption* was busy protecting him from the incredible recoil of this beautiful quirk, it was hard to use it for the rest.

A far cry from what he used to be.

Izuku wasn’t quite hit by melancholy in this moment. He didn’t feel like he was able to feel sad, not when he had lived in absolute happiness ever since he had received One for All. What happened next… It was more of a conscious acknowledgement.

He had to do better than that.

He had to progress fast.

He didn’t have a choice anymore about becoming a hero. He had taken the quirk. It meant he had taken the responsibility that went with it. The light of One for All couldn’t be hidden because he was having doubts.

For the alternative was to give back the quirk to the rightful successor, to Mirio, and Izuku wasn’t sure he could survive that.

So Midoriya Izuku, ninth holder of One for All, let the shining warmth of One for All erase any doubts and fears and he kept training because as soon as he would leave I-Island, he would have to show himself worthy of this quirk.

*It’s alright.*

He threw a punch, precise, controlled, and a perfect *Delaware Smash* moved the air and made the trees around him violently swing.

*I build my power from the ground up once. I will do it again.*

The wi-fi was one of the first things to be repaired so the next morning, All Might and Izuku respectively borrowed Melissa and David’s laptops so they could access their emails. The Shield house had mercifully been far away enough from the epicenter of the tower not to suffer too many ill-effects caused by the EMP, but that wasn’t the case of their phones, which had fried.

Incidentally, the Institute had been at the edge of the frying range. The unholy shrieks of pure wrath that Melissa and several of her classmates had produced would give nightmares to the rest of the island for the following months.
Izuku, after he remembered the password (he had several, all related to All Might) for the email he had given UA, expected one or two new messages, from Todoroki or Uraraka. Maybe Kirishima.

He opened his inbox to see 76 new messages. From his classmates, Aizawa-Sensei, and Nagisa.

He opened the last one, from Todoroki.

**[If you’re not dead, I will kill you myself.]**

After five seconds of staring blankly at it, Izuku scrolled down to have some context.

It quickly appeared that since I-Island had stopped emitting anything for two days, the world had noticed and freaked out about it. Everyone in 1-A had called him but of course, his phone— that wasn’t even two-weeks-old and he would need to replace it— had died.

Just as he was wondering if Todoroki was serious with his threat, he was interrupted by All Might violently swearing in English.

Some people respected others’ privacy. Melissa and David weren’t like that and immediately looked over All Might’s shoulder and their reaction was even more impressive. Melissa gasped. David started laughing uncontrollably.

“I told you! I told you it wasn’t funny!”

The table was in the way so Izuku jumped above it and looked at the screen.

He saw All Might wearing the tee-shirt he had on his arrival on I-Island, the twin of the shirt Izuku had in his bag. And how the internet had grabbed the photo, freaked out about what All Might meant by that and asked where the hell he was.

*Uh oh.*

His hand moved so fast it almost became a blur and All Might’s fingers dashed away from the mouse just in time as Izuku was furiously scrolling down, looking at the pictures, until he allowed himself to be relieved.

“Oh, thank God, I’m not there.”

“Good for you but what about me?” All Might whined.

Izuku blushed, awkwardly moving his arms, trying to convey that he was sorry but also extremely relieved that he wasn’t involved in this mess.

“You deserve it,” David mercilessly answered.

After two days spent worrying because their friend and All Might had been involved with something on I-Island that had provoked enough chaos for the whole island to be on lockdown, no one knowing what was happening, Midoriya finally answered to the plight of his concerned friends.

Sixteen words, in a group email.
Sixteen words that Shouto would remember until the day he died.

[Sorry, my phone got permanently fried by the EMP attack. We are all fine. Don’t worry.]

And that was it. No context, no explanation, just the most alarming and most vague message he could have found.

At first, he didn’t react, his brain waiting for the adequate level of utter annoyance to build up before it would explode. But Bakugou, who, just like the rest of the class, had been in the common space, took less time to charge up.

His phone detonated in his hand, a smell of burning metal spreading through the air.

“This fucking nerd…” he breathed between his gritted teeth.

“Aww, you were worried about him…” Kaminari had the time to say right before Bakugou turned towards him and gave him the most demonic look he had ever showed so far, which was saying a lot.

[The short video is posted on the Might Tower official site, obviously sent from a smartphone. It starts with All Might, looking apologetic as he explains that the tee-shirt was worn exclusively to make fun of an old and very dear friend. Said friend, from outside the frame, says in English that he isn’t that old. All Might ignores him, assures his fans that he was having excellent vacations and he apologizes for worrying everyone. He finishes by asking for their forgiveness. The same friend asks everyone not to forgive him too soon. And the phone, hold by a third person, shakes as the cameraman is laughing.]

Toshinori thought that their vacations on I-Island would have to last longer because no transport could be arranged back to Japan until everything was fixed but he received a call from Miss Drake announcing with some insistence that a plane was ready to bring them back home if they needed to take care of urgent business.

At this point, Toshinori didn’t have to protect the reputation of the number 1 hero so he was completely willing to bluntly ask the security chief if she was eager to get rid of them. They did tend to attract a lot of trouble on this island.

However, Young Midoriya, right next to him, heard her.

“Do you think we could arrive in time for the exam?” Toshinori’s successor asked in a tiny voice.

“…”
On the day of the provisional license exam, every 1-A student was focused and nervous, aware that this day would affect their future and that it was the rite of passage to become more than mere guests in an agency. Despite the absence of both Mineta and Midoriya, despite the permanent scars on Bakugou’s arms, reminders of what had happened in Kamino, they couldn’t afford to be distracted, so they focused on the day to come, not allowing themselves to doubt or think about anything but the exam.

At least, until Aizawa-Sensei decided to stop the bus.

To their consternation, their homeroom teacher left for ten, fifteen, twenty whole minutes, and when he came back, he was holding a large plastic bag impossible to see through.

He offered no explanation, to the indignation of Class 1-A, before making the bus start again.

Several hours later, as Mera Yokumiru, a member of the Hero Commission who seemed desperate to lie down on the floor and take a nap, was explaining the rules of the first part of the provisional license exam, a car was doing a perfectly illegal maneuver in front of the building. No one in the car commented on it, because one of the passengers was the former number 1 hero and his mere presence offered immunity for a lot of things, and because the second passenger jumped out of the car before the vehicle completely stopped.

Ten minutes later, the costume box Shouta had dug from one of his students’ closet (risking his life when a ton of clothes and hero merchandise had fallen on his head and almost buried him alive) was snatched from his hand by a green blur, only leaving a “Thanks, Sensei!” behind him.

Said blur jumped into the changing room, jumped out of it thirty seconds later, the jacket of his hero costume opened on his “Hero Costume” tee-shirt, generally disheveled, but the three targets were here, and he propelled himself through the doors.

Forgetting one thing behind.

“You forgot your helmet!” All Might called as a very anxious teenager disappeared through the doors.

“No time!” screamed a very exhausted member of the Hero Commission.

Izuku hadn’t even started using his quirk, his stress fueling him as well as a medium speed quirk, when he jumped out of the doors, desperate to find someone, anyone, whom he could fight, for only one hundred candidates would be admitted and he was already late.

That said, he absolutely didn’t expect to come face to face with ten hero students who had lingered
near the gates.

Izuku didn’t pause as much as he braked so he wouldn’t crash into several rivals who were looking at him like a piece of meat.

“It’s Midoriya…” one of them recognized him, a girl wearing a kimono.

“The guy of the Sport Festival!”

“He doesn’t have his quirk anymore!”

Izuku blinked.

He saw it on their faces. The hesitation, because they were ten to one and beating on someone who didn’t have a quirk anymore was far from heroic.

Then, the fear. Fear of failing, fear of coming home empty-handed, especially as they were Third Years. They only had two chances before high school was over.

And finally, acceptation. For many reasons. Izuku was a freshman who would have many other occasions. If it wasn’t them, someone else would defeat him. After all, he was quirkless. And if he had come here, he was aware of the risks.

They attacked their quirks tugging at Transfer, their faces masks of determination.

Izuku grinned.

*Shock Absorption. Full Cowl: 20%.*

Coincidentally, a video was released on the same day the Symbol of Peace returned to Japan. A video that would become viral a couple hours after the end of the Provisional License Exam, not early enough for the students to watch it before their trials.

---

[The video goes dark several times for a fraction of second, showing that the camera is the result of the quirk and that whoever is filming still needs to blink.]

[“First hour being stuck here because someone decided we needed a late study session,” a young male voice complains in English.]

[The someone in question is shown, a teenage girl waving her hand at him without looking up from her book. The cameraman starts to say something, only to be interrupted by a loud continuous noise.]

[He looks at the window only to see a helicopter passing through the sky of I-Island, the only thing lit up in the city. The helicopter kept its course while the camera is practically crushed against the window as the cameraman tries to see what is happening.]
[Before looking down.]

[A blur can be guessed, someone trying to catch up with a helicopter, on foot. Someone who is doing a pretty good job at it and who climbs on the wall like the concept of gravity doesn’t hold any power over him.]

[A moment later, the wall explodes, rubbles and dust flying everywhere, but among them, the same blur jumps into the emptiness and grabs the helicopters.]

[The last thing the video shows is the helicopter being dragged out of frame, the wall hiding what happens to it from the viewer.]

Chapter End Notes

A great of you to all of you who leave comments. Those are read and reread, cherished, and your support is what made me into the writer I am today.

End Notes

Thank you for reading the story. ^^

You can find me at https://gentrychild.tumblr.com/
I answer asks but beware of spoilers.

Now has a TVTropes page here.

Works inspired by this Antithesis by namelesscj

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