No Such Thing As a Hopeless Case
by Origamidragons

Summary

The story of how Toshinori Yagi (not All Might, Toshinori Yagi) singlehandedly defeated his archenemy's League of Villains by accidentally adopting them all.

Or: Toshinori's gonna redemption arc everybody, just watch him.
It was a Wednesday, it was cloudy, and rain was falling over Musutafu while she waited for the bus. She wished she’d thought to wear a coat or bring an umbrella, but the rain had started just as she arrived at the bus stop. It was soaking into her sweater and chilling her down to her bones. She tucked her hands into her armpits, ducking her head and shifting impatiently from foot to foot.

Suddenly, the rain drumming against the back of her skull ceased. She looked up to see that the man standing next to her had extended his umbrella over her head.

“Oh! Thank you, sir!” she said, straightening up and looking him over, paying attention to him for the first time since she didn’t have to blink raindrops out of her eyes anymore.

It was the blood that caught Himiko’s attention. The man standing next to her was holding the umbrella over her head with one hand and a handkerchief painted red with splattered blood in the other. He was rake-thin and pale, with sunken eyes and a ratty, windblown nest of yellow hair.

“No problem,” the man was saying as she looked up at him. “I just-“

Because she was focused on the bloody handkerchief, she didn’t see the moment that the man’s bright blue gaze fell on her face, his eyes widening in recognition. She did, however, see the full-body start of surprise that jolted his frame, and the subsequent coughing fit that nearly bent him double.

“Are you okay, mister?” Himiko asked, surprised, tilting her head back to better see the man. He was really tall.

“I’m fi-“ the man started, before immediately contradicting himself with another wracking cough.

“You don’t sound fine.”

“I am, really,” the man said, still sounding decidedly Not Fine. His breath was wheezing hoarsely in his throat. “It’s this weather, I swear.”

“Are you sick?” Himiko pressed, wide-eyed and intrigued. He sure looked sick.

“Ah, not- not really,” the man said, grimacing. “I just have a… medical condition. I’m sorry, young lady, you look familiar to me. What’s your name?”

“I’m Himiko!” Himiko chirped happily. “I don’t think we’ve met! I think I’d remember somebody who looked like you.”

For some reason, that made the man smile a little. It was a bemused expression. “Yeah, I guess you’re right. I… must’ve been thinking about someone else. I’m Toshinori Yagi, by the way. So, are you… uh, where are you headed to, Himiko?”

“Just to go have fun with some friends!” she said. Technically, it wasn’t even a lie! Sure, her friends didn’t know she was going to spend time with them, and really they weren’t actually her friends, and really, she was going to be having a lot more fun than they were, but! It still counted! “What about you, Mr. Yagi?”
“Hm? Oh- I’m going to work.”

“Where do you work?” Himiko asked, wondering where he could be spending his time that wasn’t the hospital. He really did look unhealthy.

“Uh. I’m a secretary. At- um, at Sir Nighteye’s hero agency,” Mr. Yagi said, rubbing the back of his skeletal neck with one hand and looking down at the wet pavement.

“Oh.” Himiko’s voice went flat with disappointment before she made a forced effort to inject cheer and enthusiasm back into it. Boo. She liked Mr. Yagi. “So, you… must like heroes, then. What’s your quirk?”

Mr. Yagi inhaled slowly. Himiko wasn’t sure, but she thought he sounded almost embarrassed. “Actually… I’m quirkless.”

And just like that, interest entered Himiko’s voice once again.

“You are? But… then why do you work at a hero agency? Isn’t that, you know… dangerous?”

He shrugged, a movement that looked dramatic on his clotheshanger frame. “I just like helping people, and since I can’t… be a hero, I try to do that however I can.”

Toga nodded, chewing on a corner of her lip for a moment, mulling the words over before smiling up at her new friend. “Well, I think you’d be a great hero, Mr. Yagi!”

That startled a laugh out of him, which quickly turned into another cough, but when he wiped the blood away from his mouth, he was still smiling down at her. “…thanks, kid.”

They lapsed into a vaguely comfortable silence for a few minutes, broken only by Mr. Yagi’s coughs and the splattering of the rain against the sidewalk and their shared umbrella. There was still no sign of the bus and Toga was starting to suspect that the weather had ruined her fun day out anyways. Nobody was going to go to the outdoor mall when it was raining like this.

Mr. Yagi checked his phone and muttered something low and angry in English.

“What? What is it?” Himiko asked, straining as she tried to read the screen.

He shook his head. “They’re saying all the buses are gonna be at least a half hour delayed now, since the streets are so bad.”

“Oh,” Himiko said, frowning. It wasn’t terrible news for her, just confirmation that she wouldn’t be able to go through with her original plans, like she’d already started to expect. She’d just have to go back to the bar and try another day, which wasn’t so bad. It was within walking distance. But…

But she felt bad at the idea of leaving Mr. Yagi standing alone in the rain for another half hour. Really bad. Even if he wasn’t sick, he definitely wasn’t well. And hadn’t he said that the weather was making it worse?

“My day out is probably ruined,” Toga decided out loud. “I’m just gonna go back to my friend’s place. Do you wanna come, Mr. Yagi?”

Mr. Yagi coughed another surprised mouthful of blood into his handkerchief. “What?”

“My friends have a place not far from here! If you want, you could wait for the bus there? You were so nice to let me use your umbrella! I feel bad about just leaving you in the rain.”
Mr. Yagi visibly wavered for a moment, then seemed to come to a decision, nodding to himself. “You know what? That would be great, kid.”

“Yay!” Himiko cheered. “Come on! This way!”

So her day out had been a bust. But at least she’d made a new friend! As she walked down the sidewalk with Mr. Yagi holding the umbrella over their heads, chatting away about her friends in response to his curious inquiries, jumping in puddles as he watched with what she was pretty sure was fondness, she couldn’t bring herself to regret the trade.

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You could have heard a pin drop when Toga pranced back into the hideout with Mr. Yagi trailing sheepishly behind her, ducking to get through the low doorway. Every pair of eyes in the room turned toward them while he struggled to close the sodden umbrella.

Luckily, Muscular wasn’t there. Toga didn’t like him much. Neither was Moonfish, but since he spent most of his time out ‘hunting’, that wasn’t surprising. She didn’t see Magne, Mustard, or Twice either. But Kurogiri was polishing glasses behind the bar while Shigaraki perched on one of the stools. Beside him, Compress was practicing card tricks on the lacquered wood. Dabi was leaning against one of the back walls and Spinner was sharpening one of his many swords. He fumbled it when they entered, nicking his thumb and swearing.

“I made a new friend!” Himiko exclaimed. Wilfully ignoring the sudden tension that had filled the air, she flapped her hands excitedly. “This is Mr. Yagi. He’s really nice!”

Toshinori was rubbing the back of his neck again. “Er. Hello. I’m sorry, am I… intruding?”

“Yes,” Shigaraki hissed.

Toga pouted. “Don’t be rude, Shiggy!” she whined.

At the same time, Kurogiri said, “Shigaraki Tomura, we have a guest.”

Shigaraki folded his arms sulkily and fell, grumbling, into silence, his chapped mouth twisting unpleasantly beneath the disembodied hand he wore on his face. Dabi’s disinterested gaze dropped back to his phone. Spinner pulled his bloody thumb out of his mouth and went back to sharpening his sword.

And then the entire room snapped back to high alert with Mr. Yagi’s next words.

“If you’re worried I’ll report you to the authorities, I won’t,” he said, his voice admirably even despite every gaze that had begun to drift away from him abruptly swinging back, wary and threatening.

Kurogiri was the one who took charge of the situation, his voice deceptively calm. “Why would we be worried about that?”

Mr. Yagi shrugged, leaning back against the wall a little. “I mean. You’re villains, right?” He didn’t look concerned. Himiko’s head was swiveling back and forth, following the thread of the conversation. Or was it a confrontation?

Kurogiri preemptively laid a restraining hand on Shigaraki’s shoulder, who looked like he was two seconds away from either lunging at him or lapsing into a shitfit. “We are,” he confirmed. “May I ask what brought you to that conclusion, and why you say you are willing to conceal us?”
Mr. Yagi shrugged again. “I watch the news. And… well, it’s like I told Himiko over there earlier,” he said, hooking a thumb towards Himiko, who perked up at being mentioned. “I like to help people. No matter what they do.”

“Yeah!” Himiko chimed in, trying to be helpful. “Mr. Yagi is really nice! He gave me his umbrella when we got caught in the rain.”

Kurogiri looked at Mr. Yagi through cautiously narrowed yellow eyes for what felt like a long time before he nodded once, inclining his misty head respectfully. “Very well.”

With that declaration, it was like a string was cut, allowing the tense silence to flee the room like air from a balloon. Toga could have sighed with relief. So she did. She might not have been a member of the League for long, but she knew that if Kurogiri said that Mr. Yagi was okay, then he had to be, and that was good because she really liked Mr. Yagi! And now they wouldn’t need to kill him!

Mr. Yagi checked his watch and jolted back to his feet. “Oh, my bus should be here soon. But… here.” He grabbed a napkin off the nearest table and scribbled a number onto it in sharp, messy handwriting. “If any of you ever need… medical care, or anything. Call me.”

Chapter End Notes

- Beta-ed by the fabulous Mistystarshine
- Toga is a SUPER unreliable narrator. We’ll be getting some of Toshi’s perspective on this whole mess properly in the next chapter.
- Toshi recognizes Toga from a wanted list pretty much immediately, but then starts second-guessing himself. And then realizes NOPE HE WAS RIGHT.
- This starts after Toga and the others are recruited by the League of Villains at the end of season two, but before the training camp.
- Working title: ‘a family can be a washed-up hero, a teleporting butler, and their seven villainous kids’
- Chapter title from the Scissor Sisters song ‘I Can’t Decide’
Chapter Summary

The inevitable consequences of giving your personal phone number to a bunch of assholes.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

**Unknown Number**

hey skeleton guy

**Toshinori Yagi**

Hello! Who is this?

**Unknown Number**

NOT THE POINT
what’s the difference between a dirty bus stop and a lobster with breast implants

**Toshinori Yagi**

I have no idea!

**Unknown Number**

one’s a crusty bus station
AND THE OTHER’S A BUSTY CRUSTACEAN

**Toshinori Yagi**

Oh!
Hahaha!
That’s a good joke :)

**Unknown Number**

WHOA REALLY?

**Toshinori Yagi**

Yes!
Here’s another one.
What did the pirate say when he turned eighty?

**Unknown Number**

i dunno, what?

**Toshinori Yagi**

Aye matey!

**Unknown Number**

FUCK THAT WAS BETTER THAN MINE
you have good jokes
I LIKE YOU!
i’m twice by the way

New Contact Saved: Twice

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Unknown Number
You’re Toga’s friend, right?

Toshinori Yagi
It seems so!

Unknown Number
Right. I don’t want to bother you, but I need a favor.

Toshinori Yagi
Er, is it illegal?

Unknown Number
No! Nothing like that.
I just
I need somebody who’s not on any watchlists to pick up my estrogen prescription for me
There’s a cop outside the pharmacy
Normally Toga does it but she’s busy today

Toshinori Yagi
I can do that!

Unknown Number
Great. Thank you. It’s waiting at the pharmacy at 1st and 23rd.

Toshinori Yagi
On my way!
Um, what name is it under?

Unknown Number
...Kenji Hikishi
But call me Masami. Or just Magne. Please.

New Contact Saved: Masami Hikishi

Masami Hikishi
You’re a fucking lifesaver.
Thanks.

Toshinori Yagi
Got it! I’ll drop it off at the bar.

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Unknown Number
hey Mr. Yagi!!
it’s me Himiko!! I wanted to ask you a question! it might be a little weird
New Contact Saved: Himiko Toga

Toshinori Yagi
Hello, Himiko! What is it?

Himiko Toga
do um
do you ever wish you had a quirk??

Toshinori Yagi
Huh. Well, I used to. All the time.
It was my biggest dream, when I was a kid.
Now, not as much. I’ve made my peace.

Himiko Toga
How???? :o

Toshinori Yagi
I made a friend.
I guess you could say she showed me how good I could be.

Himiko Toga
she sounds really amazing, mr. Yagi!!

Toshinori Yagi
Yeah, she really was.

Himiko Toga
sometimes i wish i didn’t have my quirk
is that ungrateful??
i feel kinda bad about it……

Toshinori Yagi
What is your quirk, kiddo?

Himiko Toga
it’s called Transform!! all i need is a taste of somebodys blood and i can be them
and its a cool quirk that lets me do so many cool things and meet so many nice friends but
sometimes i scare people??
and i dont try to be scary i try really hard to be nice but sometimes that makes it worse!!!

Toshinori Yagi
For what it’s worth, I don’t think you’re that scary.
Mostly I think you’re a good kid who got failed somewhere along the way.
If you want to avoid scaring people, though, maybe lose the knives.

Himiko Toga
but how am i supposed to make friends then??

Toshinori Yagi
Um

Himiko Toga
oh actually i have another question for you!!

Toshinori Yagi
Shoot.

Himiko Toga
if you had a quirk
Would you be a hero??

Toshinori Yagi
I suppose I probably would.

Himiko Toga
then i’m glad you don’t have one!
cause it means we can be friends!! <3 <3

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Incoming Call: Unknown Number

Hello?

Hello, who is this?

I can hear you breathing, are you alright?

Ffffffff... flesh.

FLESH.

Call Ended

Number Blocked

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Unknown Number
Greetings! ♥

Unknown Number
Pick a card, any card. ♠
cards.png

Unknown Number
Pick a card and perhaps I’ll tell you! ♦

Unknown Number
Pick a card and perhaps I’ll tell you! ♦

Toshinori Yagi
Eight of hearts.
Unknown Number
Oho! An interesting choice! ♠
Thank you for participating in my game. For your sportsmanship, I’ll give my name. ♦
I’m called Mr. Compress. ♥

New Contact Saved: Mr. Compress

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Toshinori Yagi
What’s the tallest building in your city?

Twice
THAT NEW APARTMENT BUILDING DOWNTOWN!

Toshinori Yagi
Nope!

Twice
what

Toshinori Yagi
It’s the library, because it has the most stories!

Twice
GODDAMMIT
nice one, gramps
that was TERRIBLE

Toshinori Yagi
It’s a good thing I don’t have to worry about you placing me...
Punder arrest.

Twice
dude you are my new fucking favorite person

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Unknown Number
Thanks for signing up for CAT FACTS! You will now receive fun daily facts about CATS!
Cats use their tails to balance, and have nearly thirty bones in their tails alone!
You have a [1 year] subscription and will receive fun, unblockable CAT FACTS once a day!

Toshinori Yagi
Excellent! I have a friend who loves cats! These will make good conversation with him.

Unknown Number
what
no
you’re supposed to be annoyed

Toshinori Yagi
I’m sorry?
Incoming Call: Unknown Number

Hello?

Yagi. Are you there?

Oh- yes, I’m here. Who is this?

My name is Kurogiri. We spoke briefly before when one of my associates brought you to our headquarters. You offered assistance should we require medical aid, do you recall?

...yes, I do. What is this about? Is young Toga injured?

Himiko Toga is fine. But another of our coworkers requires aid. I dislike imposing on you like this nearly as much as I dislike involving a civilian in our business, but-

[rustling noises] Who is hurt, and how badly?

He goes by Twice.

The young man with the funny jokes?

You would be one of the first to think so. He was shot in the shoulder in an encounter with police.

[Coughing] What?! You need to get him to a hospital. If you could hide his identity-

I’m afraid that isn’t feasible. His quirk presents unique challenges when it comes to acquiring traditional care. It’s either you, or we’ll have Dabi burn the wound closed and hope for the best. I understand if you don’t wish to involve yourself.

Where is he?

We are currently at a hideout in Shikuha District. Time is of the essence.

I’m on my way.

Call Ended

New Contact Saved: Kurogiri

Toshinori had no idea how he had ended up in this situation. Really, he didn’t. Individually, he understood the series of events that had led him to his current point, heading to a villain hideaway at three in the morning with a backpack of bandages and disinfectants slung over one shoulder, but they didn’t make sense when put together. He wasn’t even really sure why he was doing this. Maybe it was because he had at least some knowledge on the topic. He wasn’t exactly a battlefield medic, but he wasn’t completely inexperienced in medicine either. He’d seen and treated too many injuries in his long career for that.

Maybe it was just because he knew no one else would.
He was going to owe Recovery Girl some of those expensive chocolates she liked for stealing some supplies from the infirmary, but that was the furthest thing from his mind at the moment. He swallowed and, once he was within a few blocks of the address Kurogiri had texted him, released his ever-weakening grip on his power and hurried the rest of the way to the nondescript door on foot, cursing his slow speed. Although he wished he could have changed back closer, he absolutely couldn’t risk any of the villains seeing him change.

He knocked on the door and was immediately greeted by the clattering sound of rapid footsteps before it was wrenched open in front of him. Himiko was looking up at him with a wide-eyed, slightly manic grin that seemed incongruous with the situation.

“Mr. Yagi! You came!” she squealed, throwing her arms around his middle and squeezing just a little too tight.

“Of course I did, kid,” he said, a little dumbfounded that it almost sounded like she’d thought he wouldn’t.

She took his hand and tugged him through the door. He was barely able to shoulder it closed behind him. “Twice-senpai is bleeding a lot,” she cooed with unsettling enthusiasm, leading him into the next room, which had been converted into an impromptu infirmary. An operating table was in the center.

Lying face-down on the table was a man wrapped almost head-to-toe in a skintight black and grey costume. The only opening was over his shoulder blade, where the bloodstained costume had been peeled back to expose the bullet wound and the area around it. He was rambling incoherently under his breath, a constant stream of muttering and cursing.

“Shit,” Toshinori said, drawing the attention of the others in the room. Sure, this was a villain, but he was still a person. A person who sent him stupid jokes and couldn’t have been out of his twenties, judging by his voice.

“Yagi-san,” the purple-black form at his side-Kurogiri- said, bowing his head. “Thank you for coming on such short notice.”

Toshinori nodded once, hurrying to Twice’s side and unzipping the backpack. It was easy to forget that he was surrounded by villains at that moment. He was just helping someone who needed it.

Wasn’t that what heroes did, when it came down to it? The only thing they did that really mattered?

He swallowed, pulled out tweezers and a bottle of disinfectant, and got to work.

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By the time Toshinori was leaving the hideout, his shirt had accumulated a number of new bloodstains and the rising sun was beginning to color the sky, but Twice was going to be alright. He stretched as the unmarked iron door swung shut behind him. His back popped with a satisfying crack.

God, he was old.

A slow, drawling voice, directly behind him and too close for comfort, said, “You know, I don’t like you,” and Toshinori nearly jumped out of his skin. The shadows were deep around the building and for the moment it took his eyes to adjust, the only thing he could see was the glowing orange tip of a cigarette. Once they did, he could make out the outline of a young man, dark-haired and skinny, leaning up against the wall beside the door and leveling a flat, lifeless blue gaze at him.
“I’m sorry?” Toshinori said, scrubbing the blood away from his mouth with the back of one hand, immensely glad that he hadn’t activated One for All out of pure reflex.

“I don’t like you,” the man repeated. “And I sure as shit don’t trust you. You come out of nowhere to help us out just because you’re such a good fucking person? Bullshit. People like that don’t really exist.”

Maybe he shouldn’t have been surprised to garner such a response. It was dangerously easy to forget, at times, that these people were still villains. “Is there a reason you’re telling me this?”

A shrug. “Just want you to know that just because Toga thinks you’re friends or whatever, doesn’t mean you’re in the clear. I got my eyes on you. And if I think you’re going to fuck us over…”

He snapped his fingers and a blue flame roared to life above his hand, illuminating his face and letting Toshinori see him properly for the first time. It was a horrific sight, burned skin only just held together by haphazard staples. Toshinori knew his horror must have shown on his face, because Dabi grinned a little, the expression utterly devoid of joy, pulling on the staples in a way that had to be painful. The fire’s reflection danced in dead blue eyes, causing Toshinori to feel a twinge of recognition in the back of his mind.

“Thank you for the warning, but I don’t have any intention of doing that,” Toshinori said. He was surprised to realize that he really didn’t. Not immediately, at least. He had a perfect vector to gather information on the League, here, perhaps to figure out if his suspicions about their mastermind were correct. Toga, at least, was definitely underage, and judging by Shigaraki’s voice and mannerisms, Toshinori thought he might be as well.

Minors. Kids who needed help. He just needed to figure out how. And in the meantime, he would keep an eye on them.

Dabi snorted, skepticism written blatantly across his ruined face, and didn’t respond as Toshinori turned to leave.

He could feel that piercing blue-eyed stare on his back long after he was out of sight.

Chapter End Notes

- As before, beta-ed by Mistystarshine!
- Dabi’s canon tactic for dealing with people he doesn’t trust is to straight-up tell them he doesn't trust them, which is so stupidly backwards. I love him.
- Chapter title from I Can't Decide by the Scissor Sisters. Not all the chapter titles will be from this one song, but... lots of them probably will. It's a perfect song for this story.
maybe that can be my goal

Chapter Summary

Toshinori doesn't like bullies. Interestingly, most of the League doesn't seem to like them either.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Toshinori Yagi
Did you hear about the man who had to have his whole left side cut off?

Twice
IS HE OKAY?

Toshinori Yagi
Yes! He’s all right now. :)

Twice
holy shit gramps
I HEARD ABOUT THIS ONE GUY, IT TOOK HIM FOREVER TO DECIDE WHETHER TO GET SURGERY
they rolled him into the operating room and then he had
A CHANGE OF HEART!

Toshinori Yagi
Statistically speaking, nine out of ten injections are in vein.

Twice
do you have a sore back??

Toshinori Yagi
Actually, yes.

Twice
CAUSE YOU’RE ACTING PRETTY DISC-HURTEOUS!

Toshinori Yagi
Heh.
I’m glad you’re alright, my boy.

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Himiko Toga
what’s your favorite color!!!

Toshinori Yagi
I’m not sure! For a long time it was yellow, but now I’m finding myself rather partial to green.
Why do you ask?

_Himiko Toga_
No reason!! <3
but!! Also for no reason, you should come by the bar today!

_Toshinori Yagi_

Is the no reason I should come to the bar related to the no reason you wanted to know my favorite color?

_Himiko Toga_
maybe! :D

_Toshinori Yagi_

Sure, I'll head over when I get off work. I just have some errands I need to run first.

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There were a few benefits of being a pro-hero that had nothing to do with the fame or acclaim or even the satisfaction of helping those in need, benefits that were entirely practical in nature. For example, full access to the database of accused and convicted villains and criminals.

Toshinori pulled out a chair, sat down, logged into the computer, pulled up the database, and started running names. It didn’t take long- he only had three to work with. The rest had given aliases.

‘Shigaraki Tomura’ gave no results, which truthfully didn’t surprise him. Naomasa had already checked both his name and Kurogiri’s in the aftermath of the USJ incident and come up empty. Toshinori was now certain that meant the name was an alias. Shigaraki didn’t exactly seem the type to escape crime scenes with no clues left behind, and in his experience, most villains had at least a few juvenile notes on their record, either as an offender or, often, as a victim or a witness. Many villains came from chaotic childhoods or otherwise tragic circumstances.

‘Hikishi Masami’, too, returned no results, but ‘Hikishi Kenji’ had several. First as a teenaged criminal guilty of petty theft- magnetizing coins and keys out of people’s pockets, apparently- then as the victim in a hate crime where the three perpetrators were acquitted. Then as a suspect, escaped custody and currently wanted, in the murders of those same three attackers. Everything else was assaults and muggings of varying degrees of severity.

Finally, ‘Toga Himiko’. There was a reason he’d recognized her when they’d met at the train station. A chaotic mess of runaway instances marked her childhood up until fourteen. Missing person as of two years ago, wanted for a chain of stabbings and murders spanning years now. Quirk marked as unknown.

It occurred to him, briefly, that he was about to go meet this serial killer for an unknown reason without telling anyone where he was going. Then he put it out of his mind. Toga was a troubled girl, certainly, and she’d done many terrible things, but she didn’t seem hostile towards him in the slightest. Besides, any information he could gather on the League of Villains could be critical, especially now that their numbers seemed to be swelling exponentially in the wake of the Hero Killer video.

So he fumbled his way through clearing the search history on the school computer (he wound up needing to ask one of the business students for help) and set off for the bar when the bell rang. Since he’d already used up the majority of his time for the day teaching and wanted to keep the few minutes of power he had left in reserve in case of emergency, he took the bus.
He’d toyed with the idea of telling some of his fellow teachers what he was doing, but decided against it. He knew they would either try to dissuade him or try to act on his information immediately and he couldn’t allow either. He had suspicions and a chance to confirm them. He needed to take it.

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Toshinori wasn’t sure what to expect when he re-entered the bar for the first time since Toga had led him there about a week ago. He couldn’t forget that he was walking into a villain lair. For all he knew, he could be walking in on a crime scene.

He did not walk in on a crime scene.

He did walk in on Toga, Dabi, and a person he had yet to meet sitting on the floor. Dabi was shaking his hands in the air like he was trying to shake water off of them. It took a moment for Toshinori to register that it was because his nails were covered in a drying layer of black nail polish. Toga, her tongue between her teeth in concentration, was in the midst of painting the third person’s nails alternating red and blue. All three of them looked up when Toshinori entered, to which he paused in the doorway, somewhat self-consciously.

Toga, in what he was coming to realize was the norm, was the first to respond with a massive grin. The girl seemed capable of infusing every single thing she did with boundless enthusiasm. “Mr. Yagi! Sit down!!”

Dabi fixed him with an expression that could only be called a glower, his blue eyes narrowed slightly in a look that very neatly conveyed the sentiment ‘not a fucking word.’

The third person looked up at him as he took his seat. “So you’re the lifesaver, huh?”

Toshinori blinked before he remembered. “Oh! You must be Magne.”

“Damn right,” Magne agreed lazily, nodding. “Thanks for the save last week, by the way.”

“I’m glad I could help,” he said, rubbing the back of his neck. “It wasn’t any trouble.”

“Still,” Magne said decisively. “I owe you one.”

“Oh, well—” he started awkwardly. He wasn’t entirely comfortable with the idea of having a villain in debt to him, especially for something that had really not been that big of a deal. Then something clicked into place- it might not have been a big deal for him, but it was for her. So he nodded and Magne settled down, apparently satisfied, as Toga finished painting her nails.

“Let the first layer dry for a little while, then I’ll do the second one!!” Toga instructed cheerfully. She turned to Toshinori and started sifting through a bag of nail polishes at her side. “You said you like green, right, Mr. Yagi?”

“That’s right,” Toshinori confirmed, slightly bemused. Toga pulled a slightly shimmery bottle of green paint from her bag and without any further ado, grabbed his right hand and set to work painting his nails. She wasn’t particularly good at it, regularly spilling the brightly colored polish outside the boundaries of the nails, a tendency not helped by her habit of gesticulating as she talked, even when holding a paint-covered brush in one hand. Something about her bouncy expressiveness reminded him of a few of his students, young Ashido in particular.

“Things have been really exciting around here lately, Mr. Yagi!” she said without prompting. “You should come here more often. You can come hang out anytime!”
Dabi snorted from where he was leaned up against the wall. “Don’t think handfucker would agree with you on that one, Toga.”

Toga’s face scrunched up into a parody of annoyance. “Who cares what he thinks?” she asked rhetorically, finishing the messy first layer of green paint and pulling out the red and blue to start on the second coat on Magne’s nails.

“He is the boss,” Magne pointed out mildly.

Dabi rolled his eyes. “Then he could, I dunno, act like it for once.”

Toshinori raised his eyebrows in intrigue, glancing between the three villains. They seemed to have largely forgotten he was there. “He, uh, I gather he’s always... like that, then.”

“Like a whiny little bitch?” Dabi asked flatly. “Yeah.”

“He’s no fun at all,” Toga chimed in, a distinctly pouty expression on her face. “Doesn’t listen to me ever. He didn’t even have Giran make my costume cute. I asked him to make it cute.”

“Costume?” Toshinori asked.

“Yeah! For our m-mmmph!”

Magne’s hand covered almost all of Toga’s face, cutting off her words before she could say anything more, before she muttered something in the struggling younger girl’s ear. After a moment, Toga nodded and Magne took her hand back, still holding her fingers carefully apart to avoid ruining the fresh paint on her nails.

“Sorry, Yagi,” she said. “That’s for Vanguard Action Squad ears only. Himiko here hasn’t quite got the hang of ‘privileged information’ yet.”

“Oh- it’s no trouble,” Toshinori said quickly, shaking his head, making a mental note even as he did. Vanguard Action Squad. “I mean- it’s not like- I get it.”

She nodded, then leaned back again and started fanning her hands in the air to dry them. “Anyways. Shigaraki’s usually tolerable after he gets off the phone with that Sensei of his. Or at least he screams less.”

Toshinori’s heart stuttered in his chest, and he had to take a moment to make sure his voice was under control before he spoke again. Suspicion, rage, and terror mixed with the sick kind of dread that came from having a nightmare thought long-dead dragged back into the waking world.

“I thought Shigaraki was the one in charge.” He was sure his voice was uneven, miles from the nonchalant tone he’d been trying for, but luckily, it seemed like none of the villains noticed.

“He is!” Toga said immediately, before frowning. “Well, kind of. Not really. I’m not sure!”


“What I mean is,” Toga continued, shooting Dabi a petulant glare, “Shiggy doesn’t tell us much! So he’s our boss, and he kind of put Dabi in charge too, but also he gets a lot of his missions and stuff from somebody else! And he won’t tell us who!”

Toshinori had never been so dismayed to be right in his life. Of course, he couldn’t be sure it was who he thought it was - not yet, not without pushing his luck further than he was willing to - but
there was an ugly certainty curling in his damaged insides all the same. One of his hands tightened into an unconscious fist at his side.

All for One always had delighted in manipulating broken people for his own uses. If it truly was him puppeteering this whole show from behind the scenes, this would be precisely his style. He glanced around the room, from the too-bright frantic light in Toga’s eyes to Dabi’s scars to the crookedness of Magne’s nose, like it had once been badly broken and never healed properly.

Damaged, all of them, but still people.

It was probably good that the door slammed open, drawing everyone’s attention and effectively ending the conversation, for he had no idea what to say next. Even if he had, the sight of the man who walked into the room, footsteps heavy and muscles bulging through his skin, would have stolen his speech anyway.

Muscular.

He stood slowly, bracing one hand on one of the bar tables to pull himself to his feet and thanking every god that he at least retained his height when he lost his power and his body withered away.

Muscular might have been able to kill him with one hit these days, but he’d need to look up to do it, and Toshinori wasn’t too mature to take some petty satisfaction in that.

“Hello,” Toshinori said, as calmly as he could manage.

Muscular looked him over for a moment, then turned towards Dabi and Magne. “Who’s this?”

“Toshinori Yagi,” Toshinori introduced himself before either of them could say anything, forcing the villain’s attention back to him and meeting his one intact eye without wavering. “I’ve heard of you.”

Muscular folded his arms, tendons writhing beneath his skin. “Yeah?”

Toshinori nodded. “I heard about what you did to Water Hose.”

He’d known them. Not well, but he’d met them several times over the course of their unfairly short career. They’d been good heroes, kind and compassionate, the kind of truly heroic attitudes that he had always thought the world needed more of.

“Do you have a problem with it?” Muscular asked, the threat clear in his voice.

He was suddenly aware that the room had gone very quiet. All three of the other villains were watching them warily. One of Magne’s hands was inching towards the cloth-wrapped weapon leaned up against the wall. Toshinori honestly wasn’t sure who she was intending to attack if it came to blows. Muscular himself was staring up at him with a hostile light in his intact eye, muscle fibers wriggling like worms, piercing through his skin.

They were expecting a fight, and for one reckless moment, he was tempted to give them one, to activate One for All and smash Muscular clean through the floor. He could do it.

But, as much as it pained him to acknowledge it… he couldn’t be certain he’d win. Muscular had a deadly powerful quirk and he’d killed heroes with no hesitation before. Between that and Toshinori’s own quickly-diminishing power, his chances weren’t good. Even if he did win, he would have to reveal himself first. The careful trust he’d been developing with the villains would be shattered in an instant with no chance of repair.

“No,” he said, though it tasted bitter on his tongue. “I don’t.”
Muscular scowled at him for a moment longer before appearing to dismiss him, shouldering past him to get to the back of the bar. “It’s not like I care. I have business to get to in Hanzai later anyways. I just needed to get some supplies.”

He grabbed a duffel bag from behind the bar, hefted it over one shoulder, and left without another word. Toshinori exhaled as soon as the door swung shut, which made him realize that he’d barely breathed since the villain had entered. Cons of only having one lung, your head started swimming a lot sooner. He gripped the edge of the table to steady himself as the room wavered around him.

He hated when his body reminded him of just how weak it had gotten.

Once his breaths had even out again, he turned around and found three villains staring at him. Magne was giving him a careful, watchful look from behind her sunglasses.

“Aww, I thought you were gonna fight him!” Toga said, breaking the silence and the tension both. “I can’t believe you did that, Mr. Yagi! That was so cool!”

Toshinori grimaced as he sat again. “You think I’m insane? He’d rip me in half.”

Dabi muttered something under his breath. It wasn’t loud enough for Toshinori to hear but he was certain it was insulting.

“What was up with that, Yagi?” Magne asked.

Toshinori shrugged a little. This was a question that there really wasn’t any harm in answering honestly. “I’ve never liked bullies.”

Magne grinned at that, wide and satisfied, and Dabi’s gaze sharpened with something that Toshinori couldn’t quite place, but that didn’t look hostile. Approval, maybe, though that seemed rather optimistic.

Toshinori wished, not for the first time, that he could see through time and find out just what had damaged these people until villainy seemed their best and only option.

Toga was wrestling the cap off a bottle of dark red- Toshinori had to squint for a moment. “That’s paint, right?”

“Huh? Oh!” Toga blinked. “Yep! Don’t worry, Mr. Yagi. Real blood isn’t as shiny when it dries, so it doesn’t make good nail polish.”

Toshinori did not want to know why she sounded so certain about that.

“Will you paint mine?” she asked hopefully, holding out the little red bottle like an offering. He winced.

“Sorry, kiddo, my hands can get pretty shaky,” he said. He felt guilty at the disappointed look on her face, but it only lasted for a moment before a black-coated shape moved from its place against the wall to drop down and sit on the floor next to her.

Dabi grabbed the opened bottle of polish in one hand, dragged her hand into his lap with the other, and set about painting her nails with practiced, wordless ease.

Toshinori stared. Magne stared. Toga stared.

Dabi looked up and scowled defensively. “What?”
“You’re really good at this, Dabi!” Toga said enthusiastically.

“Yeah, I think we’re all a little surprised,” Magne said. “You don’t seem like the type.”

“I’m not,” Dabi snapped, pausing for a moment before switching to Toga’s other hand. “I’ve just got a lot of practice.”

That statement hung in the air for a moment, tempting, before Toshinori took the bait. “How?”

Dabi’s eyes flicked up to meet his in a halfhearted glare - there was that touch of recognition again - then looked back down at Toga’s hands. “None of your business, old man.”

“Don’t be mean, Daaa-bi,” Toga pouted. “I wanna know too!”

“Not my problem,” he replied bluntly, finishing her nails and twisting the cap back onto the nail polish with slightly strained, jerky movements. He tossed it back into her purse and stood, patience apparently gone. “I’m leaving.”

“Aaw, but—” Toga started, but was cut off by the door slamming behind him. She frowned. Magne patted her shoulder.

“He’ll be back,” she said calmly. “Yagi-san, you should probably leave too. We’ll be having a meeting soon and I don’t think you should be here for it.”

Toshinori nodded, frowning slightly but understanding nonetheless. Toga bounced to her feet to hug him as he stood and he absently ruffled a hand through her hair. She needed to wash it more, he noticed. It was ratty and tangled, not unlike his.

“Come back soon, Mr. Yagi?” she asked hopefully.

“I’ll be back tomorrow,” he promised.

---

**Calling: Naomasa Tsukauchi**

*A- Yagi-san? Is there an emergency?*

_In a way, yes. I have reason to believe the villain Muscular will be in Hanzai tonight—*

**Muscular?! [rustling noises] You’re certain.**

_Yes. I don’t know exactly when or where. But, Tsukauchi-kun, this is important._

*What?*

_You can’t arrest him right away._

*He’s an extreme threat to public safety, Yagi-san, you must know—*

_Believe me, I do. But… you’ll have to trust me. If he’s arrested immediately I may lose my best chance to find out more about the mastermind of the League of Villains._

**Tomura Shigaraki?**

_No. The mastermind._
You mean-

Yes. I’m afraid so.

…

Alright. It’ll take some doing, but I can fill Hanzai with officers and some pros tonight. We’ll find him and follow him. Will a six-hour delay be enough?

That’s perfect. Thank you. And Tsukauchi-kun…

Yes?

Be safe.

I will. You too, Yagi-san.

Call Ended

Chapter End Notes

- Toshinori is fuckin 7’2” even in his true form and like he hunches a lot but he is seriously like seven inches taller than Muscular, who is himself absurdly tall (around 6’7”).
- Chapter title from "Keep Yourself Alive" by Queen.
- As before, beta-ed by Mistystarshine!
**i play my part, you play your game**

Chapter Summary

In which video games are a vector for tolerance, and Toshinori finally gets to ask something that he's been wondering.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After the final exams were finished and the children left UA to spend what time they had before the training camp with their families, Toshinori’s days dragged on. There were only a few days before they’d all be returning for the camp, but it felt far longer.

Limited to only an hour and a half of hero work each day, and without his students to fill up the vacant time left over, he had little to do. So maybe it wasn’t a surprise that he started spending more and more time at the bar. He became something of a fixture there as the days blurred past, bringing a crossword or some of the diminishing pile of ungraded final exams and staking out a claim to the rightmost barstool.

Of course, between brushing out Toga’s tangled hair, debating Spinner on the ethics of heroism, and putting out fires both literal and metaphorical, he usually made little progress on the crossword, but he preferred it that way. It felt good to have a project to invest those empty hours in rather than just letting them waste away.

He was fairly sure that the benefits of his months of practice dealing with superpowered children had rapidly made him Kurogiri’s favorite, as well. Toshinori still didn’t quite know what to make of him. His role in the group seemed to be primarily as a voice of reason and Shigaraki’s keeper, and he normally seemed content to dwell in the background. In Toshinori’s experience, he was a well-spoken, quiet man and a decent conversationalist.

“Yagi,” Kurogiri greeted him with a nod, which he returned wordlessly as he entered, newspaper folded under one arm.

It was still early enough that the bar was mostly empty, which wasn’t a surprise. Usually, most of its inhabitants trickled in later in the day. The exception was Shigaraki, seated on one of the barstools and watching a broadcast on a small portable television positioned at the end of the bar.

What caught Toshinori’s attention was his face. He was without the usual stiff dead hand that usually covered it. He must have removed it to better see the screen in this quiet moment. Without it, he looked years younger, even with the hollow, gleeful red eyes and shaggy bleach-blue hair that hung, unwashed, around his head.

He looked much more human this way. He had scars, Toshinori saw, one over his right eye and one slashing across his lips. He wondered what they were from.

Toshinori didn’t even know if Shigaraki had seen him come in. He appeared to be utterly transfixed by the screen. When Toshinori leaned over to see what he was watching, he felt his heart drop a good foot into his stomach.
It was him. Or, not him, but. All Might. It was a recorded news report from just two days earlier. He’d held a collapsing building up for twenty minutes while the other pros evacuated civilians. The camera was focused on him, his hero costume a bright splash of red and blue amidst the clouds of dust and falling rubble.

The camera angle tightened, closing in on his face, burning blue eyes and gritted teeth. That had been a hard day. He’d already been low on time, and being stuck in place, unable to move or help while feeling his power drain with each passing moment, had been miserably taxing.

“He looks like he’s struggling,” Shigaraki said, red eyes intent and feverishly bright, pausing the report on the shot of his face. “Don’t you think?”

Lost in thought, it took a moment for Toshinori to register that Shigaraki was addressing him. “Hm?”

Shigaraki’s intense stare didn’t waver as he reached out and tapped the grainy screen. “All Might,” he said, spitting the words with a level of vehemenent hatred that Toshinori had rarely heard before. It sent shivers crawling down his spine. “He looks… tired.”

“Well, I’d be tired too, if I was holding up a collapsing twelve-story building,” Toshinori said, struggling to sound like a detached observer.

“Not what I mean. Look. His smile,” he said, dragging the word out into a sneer, as if it was somehow offensive to him. “I’ve watched the footage of all of his fights. One of these days… he’ll break.”

Toshinori was reminded, absurdly, of young Midoriya, of his starry-eyed fascination and worship of All Might. The feverish brightness in Shigaraki’s eyes wasn’t anything like Midoriya’s, but at the same time, it was; a twisted inverse of that same obsession.

He was reminded of someone else, too.

“Yagi-san,” Kurogiri spoke, breaking into his thoughts. The teleporter’s voice was as smooth and unruffled as always, low enough that Shigaraki didn’t seem to even take notice. “I need to take my leave for an hour or so and attend to a few pressing matters. Do you mind?”

He inclined his misty head slightly to indicate Shigaraki’s hunched shoulders, and it took Toshinori an embarrassingly long moment to realize he was being asked to babysit. “Oh! Oh, of course. I don’t mind.”

Kurogiri nodded, and then vanished without further ado, leaving Toshinori alone with the boy who seemed to want him dead more than practically anything else in the world.

He swallowed down the lump in his throat and asked the question he’d wanted to ask for… months, now. “Why do you hate All Might?”

For the first time since Toshinori had entered, Shigaraki looked up from the screen, wheeling around on his barstool to face him. “What?” he asked, an air of disbelief to the word, as if he couldn’t possibly have heard right.

“I was just wondering,” Toshinori said, gesturing to the paused television screen. “What did he do to make you hate him so much?”

“It isn’t,” Shigaraki muttered viciously after a moment, fingers rising to scratch agitatedly at the dead and flaking skin on his neck, “what he did.”
Toshinori felt a sudden surge of relief well up in his chest, but Shigaraki wasn’t finished.

“It’s what he is.”

Toshinori blinked, frowning slightly. “I’m not sure I follow.”

“The Symbol of Peace,” Shigaraki hissed, leaning forward to focus all his attention on Toshinori. “The number one hero. All Might is a symbol of everything wrong with hero society. It’s his fault that people think everything will be okay. That the heroes will make everything better.”

“That’s what heroes do, though,” Toshinori said carefully. “I know they’re not always perfect, but-”

Shigaraki waved a dismissive hand. Toshinori almost instinctively flinched backward, but managed to keep himself from reacting. The memory of Aizawa’s skin crumbling and melting was still vivid in his mind’s eye. “Right, right, you work for a hero agency or something, right?”

“Something like that, yes,” Toshinori confirmed, bemused despite himself.

“You ever wonder how many they miss?”

“I’m not sure what you mean.”

“You know, all the- mugging victims and abandoned children who get raised to think that heroes will help them. Save them. And they don’t. When was the last time you heard about an ordinary passerby stopping an assault? Heroes have made everyone lazy.”

Toshinori thought of a nightmareish moment when his pain was so bad he could barely move, a thrashing mound of slime and a boy about to die, then a notebook hitting the pavement, and he thought, you’re wrong. He didn’t say it aloud - Shigaraki seemed to be teetering on the edge of abject fury and Toshinori had no interest in provoking him further. But he felt he understood him a little better, at least, from the fire in his words. He meant what he said.

Shigaraki seemed to take his silence as assent. “That’s what I thought,” he muttered, sounding satisfied. Toshinori wasn’t about to correct him.

Shigaraki tapped the button on the remote once more and the news report resumed, but the footage ended after about another minute with no further close-ups of All Might. Shigaraki scoffed, sounding irritated, and tossed the remote aside, slumping down onto the counter and tapping his fingers on it in an irregular pattern.

Toshinori was just returning to his crossword when Shigaraki spoke again. “Hey. Do you know video games?”

Toshinori blinked. “I- can’t say I know much about them.”

“Perfect,” Shigaraki said, a slightly devious grin starting to dawn on his chapped lips as he slid off of the barstool. “Wait right here.”

He hurried off into one of the side rooms and returned moments later with a tangle of technology and wires in his arms. It reminded Toshinori of a similar setup in Kaminari’s room, although this equipment looked more expensive and involved significantly less electrical tape. The whole armful was set with surprising care on the bar. Eyebrows raised, Toshinori watched as Shigaraki set about plugging various wires into the small television set.

It only took a few minutes. Before long, Shigaraki was shoving a controller into his hands and
picking up another for himself as intro music played over a menu screen.

“Ah, I don’t know how to play,” Toshinori tried.

“Fuck if I care,” Shigaraki said gleefully. “This one is good for noobs, anyways. A to attack, B to jump, toggle to move. Try not to die.”

Toshinori lost the first round badly when he accidentally hit the wrong button and walked his icon off the map, and the second when he misjudged a jump and fell directly into a pit of lava.

His attention wasn’t really on the game, anyways. It was on Shigaraki. He navigated the game with the ease of hours of practice, the controller balanced with four fingers on each hand. So his quirk really was constantly active, then. That sounded like a nightmare.

The third time, he started to get the hang of the controls, at least, and lasted a full minute and a half before a monster got him. His side of the screen went dark and the words **NO LIVES REMAINING: GAME OVER** appeared in bold white text. Shigaraki cackled, a triumphant grin spreading across his face.

“I win!” he cheered, and in that moment of childish glee, Toshinori was dead certain he couldn’t have been any older than eighteen.

Something about Shigaraki’s triumphant and surprisingly bright grin tugged at an old memory, tinged with grief. There was a mole on his chin, to the lower right of his mouth.

Toshinori blinked.

“Ah, yes, it seems you did,” he said with a chuckle, rubbing the back of his neck. “I enjoyed it, though. Would you like to play again?”

When Kurogiri returned an hour and a half later, he found Shigaraki cackling with glee over his fourteenth win and exulting over how much better it felt to beat a real person than a CPU. (Apparently, Spinner didn’t count, because he “only liked to play Grand Theft Auto and the old Mutant Turtles games.”)

“Thank you for humoring him, Yagi-san,” Kurogiri said. “I know he is not the easiest to deal with.”

An understatement, and yet, Toshinori found himself shaking his head. “Don’t worry about it. It was,” he paused, searching for words, “an educational experience.”

That bright smile, that little mole.

Kurogiri made a soft hum of acknowledgment, turning back to face the bar while Shigaraki started the game up again on a single player story mode. “As you say. Do you drink, Yagi-san?”

“On occasion,” Toshinori said, one hand going unconsciously to his left side. He could feel the scar tissue through his shirt. “My… condition keeps me from indulging.”

“Forgive me for asking,” Kurogiri said, turning to pull two glasses down from the shelf above the bar, “but what is your condition, exactly? I don’t wish to offend.”

“I was… attacked,” Toshinori answered. It was honest enough, though it made the fight sound rather more one-sided than it had been. “Some years ago, now. I’ve recovered… as well as could be expected.”
Kurogiri bowed his head slightly. “My apologies.” He placed a glass full of clear amber-colored liquid on the bar.

Toshinori shook his head, pulling his hand away from the old injury to accept the drink. “Thank you, but it's quite alright. It was a long time ago, and I've come to terms with it. And... there's still plenty I can do.”

Toshinori had the sense that if Kurogiri had a mouth, it might have been wearing the ghost of a smile. As it was, he nodded and tapped their glasses together in a wordless toast. Toshinori took a sip, glancing over at Shigaraki, who was utterly absorbed in his game.

A wide smile, with the small dot of a mole just below it.

Yes, there was still plenty he could do. His power wasn't all gone just yet, and there were still people to save.

Chapter End Notes

Shout out to Misty as usual for beta-ing like an absolute boss! Also to everybody on the Sarcasm and Sobbing Discord for being such lovely supportive folks in general! <3 <3 <3

Thank you so much for reading! I'm really glad that you all seem to enjoy reading this as much as I enjoy writing it.

Title from this chapter is from Bon Jovi's You Give Love a Bad Name.
Chapter Summary

In which the students leave, the villains leave, and nobody tells Toshinori anything.

Chapter Notes

GUYS THIS FIC HAS ART NOW!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Toshinori missed his students. They’d departed for the training camp in the forests the day before and wouldn’t return for nearly a week. He found himself eager for that day. He’d be glad when they were back in class and within his line of sight, the daily frenetic activity of school life resumed once more.

It wasn’t that he didn’t trust Aizawa to keep them safe. On the contrary, the man had proven himself willing to die for his charges if need be. Toshinori trusted him completely. But the vague feeling of unease beneath his skin at the idea of having the children so far away, isolated and hard to reach in the event of a disaster, didn’t go away.

But he couldn’t go; that was just a fact. He couldn’t be around the children 24/7 for a week straight. There was no way he could maintain his secret for that long.

He’d wondered if he should just tell them. It was an idea he had been toying with for a while. It would certainly be easier if he didn’t have to expend so much of his power each day just to maintain his disguise while teaching. Nezu had been heavily opposed to the idea when he raised it, insisting that the knowledge of his vulnerability was kept on a strictly need-to-know basis.

Toshinori knew the principal was right, of course. He usually was. He just didn’t need to like it.

Aizawa would keep them safe, though, and probably run them into the ground training in the process. There was nothing to worry about.

“What’re you scowling about, old man?” Dabi snapped, jolting him out of his thoughts. “Your hand that bad? Your poker face is shit.”

So he’d spent his free time focusing on the other group of mismatched children that had come under his care, instead. Because he did care about them. He’d realized that somewhere between the first time Twice had made him laugh in a staff meeting with an unexpected text and that first time he’d seen Shigaraki grin.

It hadn’t come as a surprise to learn that Mr. Compress had an almost obsessive glee for card games. Even behind the balaclava, it had been easy to tell he’d been scandalized to learn that Toshinori didn’t even know how to play poker.

Toga, sitting next to him, leaned almost her entire body into his personal space to look at his cards.
“Ooh! This is a good hand! You should drop this one,” she said, pointing, “and try to get all reds!”

“It doesn’t matter if they’re all the same color,” Compress said from the other side of the table. He had the voice of someone who had said the same thing to the same person more than once. “What matters is the suit. If all your cards are red, but three of them are hearts and the other two are diamonds, they’re not worth anything.”

Toga stuck her tongue out at him.

Toshinori followed her advice with a bemused smile. He was pretty sure Compress was cheating, anyway. Cards kept disappearing from his hand into the glassy blue orbs of his quirk when he thought nobody was looking.

---

Toshinori had quickly learned that the League had no consistent schedule. Or, more likely, they had one, but he wasn’t privy to it. They seemed to do everything at irregular times on random whims. They gathered in the bar more than anywhere else, though most of them seemed to live elsewhere. Regardless, most times when he arrived, at least two of them were there, be they sitting at the bar, tossing darts at pictures of various pro heroes (his own face was a favorite target, and it always made him feel a little nervous when he saw it), or just talking.

So an immediate chill went down his spine when he entered, two days after his students had left for the training camp, and found nobody home. No signs of a struggle, bar still glossy with polish, tattered photograph of Best Jeanist still pinned to the dartboard. He knew none of them had been arrested or fought with heroes - he would have been the first one notified, had that been the case.

“Hello?” he called, worry curling in his gut. “Kurogiri? Himiko?”

The silence that answered him was absolute. He swallowed. If pressed, he couldn’t have said who he was worried for at that moment. The League? Everyone else? He pulled out his phone and saw no new messages or texts from any of them, nor any from law enforcement indicating where they might be.

He scrolled through his contacts and took a moment to marvel at the fact that he had personal numbers for nearly the entire League of Villains in his phone before selecting one.

---

**Calling: Kurogiri**

*Hello?*

*Ah, Kurogiri! I’m glad I caught you. ...Is everything alright? I can hear yelling.*

*Yagi-san, how can I help you? I’m sorry for the noise, Dabi and Toga are having a minor dispute.*

*So, they’re with you, then?*

*Yes. There’s nothing to be concerned about.*

*…*

*My apologies. I didn’t think to notify you that we would be absent.*

*Oh! No, it’s quite alright, you aren’t obligated-*
I'm aware. I would like to apologize nonetheless. It's clear you care for them, and I failed to take that into consideration.

We will return soon.

---

**Himiko Toga**

hey!!! mr. yagi!!
you should come by the bar sometime 2morrow!
we might have a new friend for you to meet!!! :D

**Toshinori Yagi**

Oh?
Have you found a new recruit or something along those lines?

**Himiko Toga**

yes!!!
well! maybe!! shiggy thinks he could be a huuuuge help!

**Toshinori Yagi**

Well, then I’d like to meet him!

**Himiko Toga**

good!! <3

---

When he realized what had happened - why the League had suddenly vanished while the children were training - it was like a punch to the gut. The breath suddenly left his lungs and he felt stupid. He should have realized, should have known as soon as he walked into the bar and found it empty. If he had, maybe he could have warned them, could have gotten them to leave the campsite early.

At around midnight, Aizawa had sent a message out to all the teachers, to-the-point in the way that Aizawa always was: *Training camp under attack from League of Villains. Students in danger.*

*Students in danger.* Those words rattled around in his head, echoing in his mind to the pulse of his quickening heartbeat.

*His* students. From a danger *he* should have foreseen.

He ran through names in his head. Kurogiri was there, he knew that much. He’d mentioned Dabi and Toga fighting on the way as well; the idea of them hunting down his students made his blood run cold. He’d been stupid. Between poker with Compress and nail-painting with Toga, he’d forgotten that these people were still *villains*. No matter how much sympathy he had for them and the mistakes they’d made, that hadn’t changed.

Some of them were children, children who were hurting and broken and needed help… but his students were children too.

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**Toshinori Yagi**

Aizawa, what’s going on? Are the students safe?
Toshinori Yagi
Young Midoriya! Are you alright?

---

Calling: Shouta Aizawa

[You’ve reached my voicemail. Say what you need to say. I’ll get back to you. Or not.]

[Beep!]

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Toshinori was trapped. Part of him wanted to call Kurogiri and plead with him to call them off, but he knew that wouldn’t do the slightest bit of good. He wasn’t even supposed to know that the training camp was under attack. He would only give himself away by doing that. And although he didn’t want to help the villains in whatever their mission was, he also didn’t want to see any of them hurt or killed.

He couldn’t go by himself, either. Even if he hadn’t already used the majority of his time for the day, he would never be able to make it to the isolated camp in time. The dust would already be settling when he got there. For all he knew, the attack was already finished, the damage already done- but if it was, then why weren’t any of the people he’d reached out to answering? The more he thought about it, the more terrible possibilities coalesced in his mind.

No matter what, he wanted to help, and he couldn’t. It was against his every instinct to let something like this happen without intervening. He’d already done all he could do.

Why did it have to be so impossible to help everyone?

The silence inside his apartment as he waited for updates felt deafening, dragging on interminably. When, with still no word from camp the clock ticked over to two hours after the initial message had been sent, he abruptly shoved himself up from his seat, unable to sit still any longer.

He wasn’t sure where he was going, only that he needed to get out of his depressingly spartan apartment and go somewhere, do something, think about something that wasn’t the fact that his kids could be hurt or dying and there was nothing he could do.

His feet carried him, for some reason, to the bar. It made sense. It was the place he’d been going whenever he found himself with empty time to fill over the past several days, and that time had never seemed to drag more than right then - with his kids in danger somewhere and nothing he could do but wait.

The bar was still as empty as the last time he’d left it. Toshinori sighed, slumping onto one of the stools. There were a few deep scratches on the varnished wooden surface of the counter that had doubtlessly been left by a knife. He wondered if it was Toga or Spinner who was responsible. Either way, it was something to do. Something to fix, no matter how small.

He grabbed the tube of wood filler Kurogiri kept behind the bar and set to work, filling in the gashes and smoothing the top over. It wasn’t much, but it gave him something to do with his hands. While he was waiting for it to harden and dry, he threw away the tattered picture of Best Jeanist that had fallen from the dartboard and wiped off the layer of dust that was beginning to accumulate on the counter and neat rows of untouched glasses behind the bar.
He hadn’t, admittedly, thought about what he would do when the League returned. Perhaps he should have, for as he was reaching for the small jar of polish to seal over the filled slashes, a pitch black portal edged in rippling violet opened in the middle of the space.

The first thing Toshinori felt when he saw it was relief. The attack was over. If they were coming back, then his students must be out of danger, and the villains, too.

Half a second later, the villains came through, looking battered and worn. As Toshinori looked, his relief turned into shocked dread. Entering the room last, with Dabi’s scarred fingers clasped tightly around his neck, was Katsuki Bakugou, pale and frightened and shaking with fury and very, very young.

Toshinori’s throat closed.

So that was why they’d attacked the training camp? He remembered Himiko’s earlier excited texts to him. *A new friend. A huge help.*

It was another moment before they noticed him. Himiko saw him first, lighting up. “Hey! Mr. Yagi! I didn’t think you’d be here!”

Toshinori was sure his smile was wan and strained, but he gave it his best try anyway. “Couldn’t sleep. I, ah. I see you’ve been busy.” She had blood in her hair and on her teeth. He didn’t want to think about whose it might have been.

“Hell yeah!” Spinner said, excited voice slightly slurred and drunken with a concussion that made him slump against Magne’s side. “We found the heroes and kicked aaaaaall their asses.”

“I met a boy!” Himiko chimed in, bouncing in place. “He was cute. And I met some cute girls, too!”

“It was lousy!” Twice said, the enthusiasm in his words completely at odds with the words themselves. “We did great!”

He offered Toga a fist-bump, which she returned with accompanying sound effects. Toshinori could barely hear them over the blood rushing in his ears. He couldn’t stop staring at Bakugou. The boy was barely moving, obviously acutely aware of the danger posed by Dabi’s hand around his neck. The contrast against the way he’d thrashed and screamed and fought in protest of his victory at the Sports Festival made his heart hurt.

Kurogiri, in the back of the group, resolidified into his usual humanoid form and followed Toshinori’s gaze. “Yagi-san, this is Bakugou. He’s a heroics student at UA. You may have seen him at the Sports Festival. Shigaraki has hopes he’ll be joining us.”

He needed to do something. He needed to get Bakugou out- needed to get this information back to the other heroes- needed to-

Bakugou was glaring directly at him, reddish eyes bright with fury. Toshinori waved a little, desperately unsure of what else to do, and the scowl intensified. His phone was heavy in his pocket. Kurogiri was saying something about bringing Shigaraki in to deal with the hostage, but Toshinori wasn’t really listening, all his attention focused on his captive student.

"We missed you, Mr. Yagi!" Toga was saying, tugging on his arm.

"Speak for yourself," Dabi grumbled under his breath.

"-we've got so much to tell you!"
"Ah- yes, please do," Toshinori managed. "What exactly happened?"

What was he going to do?

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Chapter End Notes

And finally, we've hit the training camp arc! Oboi. Things will be moving a bit more quickly from here on, for rather obvious reasons. The response to this story has kind of knocked me off my feet, and I want to say thanks to every single person who's commented- they really do make my day. :)

Title from this chapter is from the Kids Aren't Alright by Fall Out Boy.

As always, shoutout to my beta, Mistystarshine! And to all the hella great and encouraging folks on the Sarcasm and Sobbing Discord, I love you all.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!