Little Things

by BeyondTheClouds777

Summary

“Sometimes a little thing you do gives happiness to someone. So never stop doing little things.” - Anurag Prakash Ray

Izuku is a transfer student at a new school, where he meets lonely outsider, Shinsou Hitoshi. Izuku has always been told to “run in his own lane”—but when it comes to helping others, well, he’s never been very good at minding his own business.

Notes

Secret Santa for @rip_aizawa, AKA Sparks! Dude you’re so valid and awesome and you’re the entire reason I got into writing Hitoshi so!! I have you to thank for a lot of things, this fic included. :D Despite it being a present and despite that I’m generally very stressed about creating something for someone else, I had more fun writing this than half of my other writing. It really was a joy to write and I hope that it’s a joy to read!

Hope you like it!
“I’d like you all to give a warm welcome to Midoriya Izuku, who will be joining us from this point forward. Please treat him well.”

Izuku beams at his new classmates and bows as lowly as he can, so quickly that it gives him whiplash. “T-Thank you for having me!” he says on the way up, tripping over his words only a little bit. It isn’t the first time he’s had to transfer schools, so a lot of the “first day jitters” have been worn into non-existence by now. “I-I’m sure we’ll all be friends by the end of this.”

A couple students clap and cheer, some more enthusiastic than others. The teacher gestures to get his attention.

“Holiday break starts tomorrow,” he says, “but go ahead and take a seat. I’ll give you a list of books you’ll be needing the upcoming school year before you leave today, you can get them over the holidays. For now, go ahead and take a seat at one of the empty desks.”

“Over here!” beckons a student, waving a hand over her head—she's all bright eyes and bushy brown hair, with a thousand watt smile that immediately makes him feel right at home. Izuku hastens to take his seat at the desk beside hers, and she thrusts out her hand. He shakes it.

“I’m Uraraka Ochako,” she introduces with a smile as she withdraws her hand. Despite her beckoning words and reassuring smile, she seems a bit nervous herself. “I-It’s nice to meet you, Midoriya.”

“Y-You, too,” Izuku stammers back, returning the smile. The teacher calls their attention to the blackboard, and while the students around him open their books, Izuku draws a single notepad from his backpack and a pencil. Might as well take notes.

The teacher goes on and on about… something… and Izuku decides to pause on the notetaking to listen. He sets his pencil beside his notebook and watches the teacher at the front of the class. Everyone else is skimming through books, taking notes, flipping through notepads (one kid actually has his phone out and is taking pictures of the blackboard, and on one hand that’s genius but on the other hand why does he have his phone he shouldn’t have that—)

But that’s when Izuku notices one student among the rest who isn’t taking notes or flipping through papers. Or even paying attention. He’s got his head down towards his hands, which are resting on the desk, and he has lots of unruly, unnaturally purple hair. Izuku can’t tell if it’s styled to look like that or if the kid literally got out of bed that way.

Either way, he isn’t paying attention or taking notes, and Izuku knows the teacher sees him every time he turns around. But the student is never called out or even spoken to. Almost like it’s a sin to speak to him at all.

Izuku reaches over when the teacher turns his back and taps Uraraka on the shoulder. She turns to him with wide, wondering eyes, and he points at the student a couple desks away.

“Who’s that?” he asks quietly, not wanting to be overheard. “What’s his name?”

Uraraka follows his finger, then lets out a soft, knowing sigh. Like this has happened before. “That’s Shinsou Hitoshi,” she explains in a murmur; the teacher’s chalk scuffs the board. “He’s always been pretty quiet, but ever since last semester it’s been even worse.”

Izuku frowns at her. The teacher addresses the class for a moment, then erases a problem on the
blackboard to replace it with another; Izuku steals his chance.

“Did something happen?”

Uraraka looks down at her hands, wringing her fingers before finally locking them together. “We… don’t really know. He never really got super close to anyone here, and he never talked about it, but… something must’ve happened. I wish I knew what, but we don’t. Nobody does.”

Izuku stares at her as a weight settles in his heart—but the teacher turns back to them, and Izuku returns to his notebook and scribbles. He hears the teacher’s voice as though from far away as he stares down at his paper and pencil, thinking. Every so often, he glances up at the boy in question —”Shinsou Hitoshi.”

He looks back down at his notebook.

And, when the teacher turns his back, Izuku begins a slow, agonizing process of tearing a piece of paper from the binder without being heard. He bends the paper back to make creases, then tears along those creases as silently as he possibly can. The teacher keeps talking and writing on the blackboard. If he notices Izuku, he doesn’t say anything.

Izuku finally tears the paper from the notebook and uses the pencil to write a short message, taking care to make his print even and readable. Once that’s done, he sets aside his pencil and, the second the teacher turns his back, begins folding it into a paper airplane.

Uraraka watches him, wide-eyed and curious, but Izuku doesn’t say anything. When the airplane is done, he writes Unfold on the wing with the pencil—and then, when the teacher is indulged with the blackboard, Izuku crosses his fingers, presses his luck, and throws the airplane.

He doesn’t know how it happens, and in hindsight, it shouldn’t have happened; but the airplane makes its way to Shinsou’s desk and slides onto it gracefully, right in front of his hands.

Shinsou finally looks up. Izuku sits in his seat innocently as though he hadn’t done a thing, but he watches as Shinsou examines the plane, then finally unfolds it.

Your hair looks really cool! I dye mine too :) 

-Midoriya Izuku

Shinsou turns in his chair to look at him, and Izuku manages a fragile wave. It’s cheesy and it’s kind of embarrassing, but he doesn’t exactly regret it. A part of him is expecting Shinsou to tear it up or something (there’s no reason for that thought, either; it’s just one that comes to mind), but Shinsou doesn’t do that. He folds the paper and slips it into his backpack pocket, then turns to face the front of the class again. He doesn’t put his head down this time.

Satisfied, Izuku goes back to taking notes.

“Are you going anywhere after school, Midoriya?” Uraraka asks him as she closes her locker. “Me and a couple guys are meeting down at the coffee shop if you wanna come with us. We’d love to have you.”
Izuku slings his backpack over his shoulder, shaking his head. “I’d love to go,” he says, “but I promised I’d be home early. Something about getting a tree.”

“Ahh, right, holidays,” Uraraka says, nodding knowingly. “Well, let me know if you change your mind! We’re going to be there at six, just in case you wanna tag along.”

“Alright,” Izuku says, waving a hand over his shoulder as he turns away. “Thanks, Uraraka!”

“No problem!”

She turns away, he turns away—and he promptly crashes right into Shinsou. Shinsou doesn’t fall, though he does stumble back, but Izuku isn’t nearly as lucky. He flails on the way down, but ultimately hits the ground either way. Luckily his backpack had been zipped up; he doesn’t want to scramble about to gather papers and pencils right now.

“S-Sorry!” Izuku amends quickly, hopping to his feet and brushing himself off needlessly. “I wasn’t looking where I was going, that was my fault not yours, I’m sorry—”

“It’s okay,” Shinsou says, holding a hand out to him when he keeps rambling. Izuku trails off, and Shinsou hauls his own backpack further over his shoulder. A silence falls between them, and it’s one of the most painful, awkward things Izuku has ever endured.

“I-I, uhh, sorry for throwing the note at you,” Izuku says, rubbing the back of his neck, “I-I just thought your hair looked cool and I wanted to say something—”

“It’s okay,” Shinsou says again, running a hand through his hair. “Yours isn’t bad, either.”

“R… right,” Izuku says, mentally kicking and screaming at himself. “S-So, I, uhh, are you… I don’t know, you doing anything later or…?”

Shinsou double-blinks at him, but it’s not out of confusion. He looks almost fed up. “I’m busy,” he says; but then he pauses, brows knitting together. “… You’re the transfer student, aren’t you?”

“K-Kind of,” Izuku says, shoulders slumping. “I-It’s more, like… I moved here recently. My family and I do a lot of moving, s-so… yeah, it’s… hard to find a good place to settle down. Uraraka invited me down to the coffee shop, but, I don’t have a clue where it actually is.”

Shinsou exhales sharply through his nose. “Sucks for you, I guess.”

“It does,” Izuku says, slumping further. “It really does.”

“I mean, I know the area pretty well,” says Shinsou, pulling his backpack over his shoulder again. He’s only got one strap on it, Izuku notices now. “I could show you around sometime if you’ve got no one else to do it.”

Izuku lights up, and his eyes meet Shinsou’s. “Really? You’d show me around?”

“Sure,” Shinsou says, as though he’s indifferent. “I can’t do it tonight, but maybe some other time. If I’m ever available.”

“T-Thank you!” Izuku manages, offering a quick bow and straightening up just as quickly. “Do you, uhh… can I give you my phone number or something so we can plan a day, or…?”

Shinsou shrugs. “That works.”

Izuku is the first to pull out his phone, and he exchanges with Shinsou so they can input their
numbers. Once that's done, they swap their phones again.

“I'll text you if I'm ever available,” Shinsou tells him flatly.

Izuku nods. “Okay. Thanks again for everything.”

“It’s okay. … You were wrong about my hair, though. It’s completely natural.”

“Really!?”

“Of course it isn’t.”

Izuku cracks a smile and rubs the back of his neck, but Shinsou turns and heads away before he can say anything else.

Izuku lives in an apartment complex with his uncle a little ways away from the school. Those two locations, along with the stops along the way, are all that he’s familiar with in this neighborhood. Shinsou’s number is stored away in his phone; now all he has to do is wait for a text.

That is, if Shinsou even ends up texting him at all. If he doesn’t, well, that’s just how it is. Winter break is among them, too, which means if he doesn’t text Izuku, they won’t be seeing each other at all until school starts back up.

A bit upsetting, but anyway. He passes a couple other closed, locked doors of other apartments and finally comes to his own, fumbling with the key in his pocket as he walks. He unlocks the door and swings it wide, kicking off his shoes on the porch and leaving his scarf and beanie on the coat hangers.

“Kid? That you?”

“It’s me,” Izuku answers back, stepping down the hall and into the living room. Boxes of stuff they have yet to unpack are stacked against the walls of the hallway, and there are more piled in the living room. There’s a threadbare couch, a rug over part of the wooden floorboards, and the electric fireplace is broken, which they’d learned only earlier today after attempting to light it. At least they have the heat unit, elsewise they’d be, to put it lightly, “screwed,” what with the winter season being in full effect.

“Are we gonna go to the tree lot?” Izuku asks, looking through doorways for any sign of his uncle. “Uhhh… Shouta?”

“In here, kid.”

Izuku turns and steps into the tiny kitchen; Shouta is standing on a small step ladder, fiddling with one of the vents on the ceiling.

“What’s the matter?” Izuku asks, moving toward him.

Shouta bangs on the metal vent with a wrench, and a clang! resounds through the small kitchen. “Damn thing hasn’t been cleaned in years,” he grumbles, stepping down the ladder and finally, off. “Sorry. Unless you’ve got homework or something, we can go to the tree lot. We’re walking, though, so wear something warm.”

Izuku beams at him. “Thanks!” he says, spinning on his heel. “I’ll go do that!”

“Right, right… oh, Izuku, one more thing.”
Izuku stops and looks at Shouta over his shoulder. He sets the wrench down on the counter and won’t meet Izuku’s eyes.

“Your mother called earlier. Said she’s not gonna be back ‘till after New Years. Just thought you’d want to know.”

Izuku’s shoulders fall, but he forces himself to lift them again, and he nods with a sense of calm and assuredness that he doesn’t have.

“I kind of figured,” he lies with a smile he only hopes doesn’t look as fake as it feels. “It’s alright.”

Shouta gives him a look, but Izuku scampers off to his room before his uncle can question his honesty. He heads into his room and shuts the door behind him, and amidst the unpacked boxes, he drags a winter coat. He shakes it out, puts it on, and meets Shouta outside when they’re both ready.

They end up heading home with what is probably the saddest, most tragic looking tree in the world—except, that’s the whole reason why they got it in the first place. Because it was the saddest, most tragic looking tree in the world.

“There’re better things to choose from,” Shouta had said with an edge of irritation and desperation. “We’ve got the whole lot of trees to pick from and you want that one?”

“No one else is gonna take it!” Izuku insisted, turning to him frantically. “It’s gonna be all alone here until it’s thrown away or something!”

“That tree makes the friggin Charlie Brown Christmas Tree look like the pinnacle of health and beauty.”

“The Charlie Brown Christmas Tree is valid!”

“Zuku…”

But Shouta had eventually agreed to it. He’d never been very good at saying no to his nephew when it came to stuff like this, and Izuku may or may not have taken advantage of that.

So now they’re heading down the sidewalk back towards their apartment as snow falls around them and a group of carolers sing a haunted, slightly off-key version of Carol of the Bells by a shop window. It’s actually kind of terrifying, and Izuku has to take three steps for every one of Shouta’s.

As they walk, Izuku thinks of Shinsou, his number in his phone, the look in the kid’s eyes. He’d saved that paper airplane, for whatever reason. He’d been down, upset, for whatever reason. Izuku doesn’t know, but that doesn’t change how he feels. He wants to do something. Maybe help.

“Kid, you’ve been muttering under your breath for the past thirty seconds and I swear to God if you don’t stop I’m going to lose whatever marbles I have left.”

“Sorry,” Izuku amends, shuffling along beside Shouta. “I-I just… got a lot on my mind.”

Shouta quirks a brow at him. On the road beside them, a car skids on ice for a moment but ultimately straightens itself out before any harm is done. Shouta hauls the sad little tree a little further over his shoulder. It’s wrapped in plastic. “What’s bothering you, then?”

“Just…” Izuku stuffs his hands in his coat pockets. “There’s this… kid in my class.”

Shouta’s brows furrow. “You’re not getting picked on, are you? I told you to tell me if stuff like this
“N-No, it’s not like that,” Izuku assures, shaking his head, “I-I just, earlier today when we were in class… I just thought he looked so sad, y’know? And lonely, too. It bothered me. I have his number now and he said he’d show me around town sometime, but... I just... don’t know what else to do at this point. Do you have any ideas?”

Shouta turns away to face the road ahead of them. “You said he looked lonely, right?”

Izuku nods.

“Well,” says Shouta, “why don’t you ask him if he wants to come over and help decorate the tree?”

Izuku blinks at Shouta, twice in rapid session. “You... really think that’d work?”

Shouta shrugs. The tree rustles. “Dunno, kid, but it can’t hurt to ask.”

“And... what if he says no?”

“Then at least you tried. Better than wondering what would’ve happened if you had asked, right?”

Izuku looks down at his shoes. The snowflakes around him melt as soon as they hit the sidewalk, and his breath fugs the air in front of him. “You don’t mind me asking him to come over?”

Shouta shakes his head. “If you really feel strongly about this, then no, I don’t mind one bit.”

Izuku can’t help the smile that stretches his face, and he nods eagerly. “Thanks, Shouta. I’ll text him as soon as we get home.”

“Ask if he can come over tomorrow,” Shouta says, “once we’ve unpacked. Trying to decorate now while everything’s still boxed up would be a living hell.”

“Right, okay! Thank you!”

Shouta reaches over and ruffles his snowy hair with a gloved hand. “You’ve got a good heart, kid. Don’t mention it.”

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[Midoriya Izuku]

Hey, Shinsou! I know you said you’d text me first but I wanted to ask you something if you don’t mind!!

[Shinsou Hitoshi]

Uhhh okay?

[Midoriya Izuku]

We’re decorating our tree tomorrow. It’s kinda sad looking but it’s still nice? Anyway I wanted to ask if you wanted to come over and help decorate. If you wanted to.

[Shinsou Hitoshi]

You... want me to go over there and help you decorate a Christmas tree

[Midoriya Izuku]
You don’t have to, I just thought I’d offer anyway.

[Shinsou Hitoshi]
...

[SHINSOU HITOSHI is TYPING…]
[SHINSOU HITOSHI is TYPING…]
[SHINSOU HITOSHI is TYPING…]

[Shinsou Hitoshi]
Sure. What time?

“What time” ends up being 8:45am the next morning. Shouta is at work, the tree is in the living room, and Izuku is breaking down cardboard boxes and dumping them outside to be recycled later.

He’s turning to head back inside when he sees another door open a couple apartments down from his, and from it steps Shinsou, wearing a scarf and a coat with his hair styled (or not-styled, he still can’t tell) the same way it was at school.

He shuts the door, locks it, stuffs the key in his pocket, then lifts his head to look at Izuku.

Izuku looks back.

A beat passes.

“Wait!” Izuku says before he can stop himself. “I didn’t know you lived in the same complex as us, Shinsou!”

Shinsou steps towards him with his hands in his pockets. Izuku can’t read the look on his face. “I was going to say something last night after you sent me the directions, but I didn’t think it mattered all that much.”

Izuku double-blinks at him. He’s about to argue that, uhhh, yes? It did matter? but he stops himself before a word gets out. Instead, he shakes his head, kicks the cardboard boxes to the side, and beckons Shinsou to follow him into the apartment. He does.

“My uncle put the lights on this morning before he left for work,” Izuku says, heading further in while Shinsou pulls off his scarf, coat and shoes at the door. “He said we could finish it up if we wanted to and he’ll put his ornaments on when he gets home.”

Shinsou pauses, raising his head and looking around. “... So it’s just the two of us?”

“Y-Yeah,” Izuku says, looking at Shinsou over his shoulder. “Is… something wrong?”

Shinsou shakes his head. “No, just, wasn’t expecting that.”

Izuku blinks at him twice, but shakes his head. “You can come inside if you want,” he says, leading Shinsou in. “We have some hot cocoa packets, if you like that kind of stuff. Oh! I made cookies last night, too, you could take some back home with you…”

He goes on all the way ‘till they reach the living room, and then he drags a cardboard box of ornaments into the open area and sits down in front of it. Shinsou does the same beside him.
“... You weren’t kidding,” Shinsou says, looking at the object of their decorating. “That is a sad Christmas tree.”

Izuku sighs, pulling back the flaps and removing some of the tissue paper. “Yes, but if we didn’t take it no one else would’ve, and it just kinda felt wrong to leave it there all alone.”

“It’s a tree. It doesn’t have feelings.”

“You can’t say stuff like that! It might hear you!”

“Are you screwing with me right now?”

Izuku smiles, shaking his head and pushing the cardboard box over where Shinsou can reach it. “It doesn’t really matter which ones you put up, just be careful with them.”

Shinsou nods, taking out an ornament gingerly. Once the first couple are on and the tree is starting to look more like a proper Christmas tree and not some sad branch thing, they redouble their efforts and move faster, still taking the same care as before.

“So,” Shinsou says flatly, when the silence stretches, “why invite me over, anyway?”

Izuku pauses for a moment, hand outstretched, but he snaps out of it and hooks the ornament to a branch. “I dunno. I guess I just… I don’t know. I just wanted to say something, I guess? If you don’t wanna be here and if you don’t wanna talk to me again that’s fine, it won’t hurt my feelings or anything.”

“No, it’s okay,” says Shinsou, shaking his head. He settles an ornament on one of the lower branches, flinching when it bends and the ornament nearly hits the floor. “This is… kind of fun, actually.”

Izuku smiles. “I’m glad!”

When he reaches for another ornament, his fingers graze tissue paper, then the bottom of the box—and Shinsou’s hand, too, as they’d reached in at the same time.

“Hey!” Izuku says, looking in the box just to be sure before turning his eyes up towards Shinsou’s. “That’s the last of the ornaments! We’re finished!”

Shinsou looks down at the box, then nods and pushes it aside. “Guess so. What now?”

“We should light it up!” says Izuku, springing to his feet. “I’ll plug it in, one second.”

He moves behind the tree and gets on his hands and knees, and once he finds the cord, he holds it against the surge protector and says, “Ready?”

“Ready,” says Shinsou, and he plugs it in.

Nothing happens.

“Wait, what?” Izuku sits back, blinking. He unplugs it, then plugs it back in again. Still nothing. “Why won’t it turn on? What’s wrong?”

“Did you try turning it off and on again?”

“No, I’ll try tha—wait.”
He gives Shinsou this *are you serious?* look, which Shinsou combats with a small, sly grin and a shake of his head.

“Hardy har har,” Izuku says, rolling his eyes, but his frustration is replaced quickly with concern and disappointment. “Why isn’t it working? It turned on this morning when Shouta was doing it.”

“Must be some kind of a loose bulb,” Shinsou says, scooting toward the tree and filing through the branches, mindful of the ornaments. “Might as well start looking for it.”

Izuku *sighs*, but agrees, and he and Shinsou begin their long search.

“Sorry we couldn’t find the bulb,” Shinsou says when roughly half an hour of searching leaves them with nothing. He’s getting ready to leave now, slipping his scarf around his neck and pulling on his coat.

Izuku’s shoulders slump, but he shakes his head. “No, it’s fine. I’ll ask Shouta about it when he gets home, he’s pretty good with Christmas lights. Thanks for coming over.”

Shinsou shrugs. “Thanks for having me. It… well… I enjoyed it, anyway.”

Izuku smiles at him—and then he notices a sizeable tear through Shinsou’s scarf. It’s so obvious in hindsight that he doesn’t know how he didn’t see it before.

“Hey, you’ve got a hole in your scarf.”

Shinsou blinks, then drags his fingers along the tear. “Yeah. Been like this for a few years.”

“You never got a new one?”


“... I see.” Izuku looks down, thinking, then lifts his head with a smile. “Well, anyway, be sure to let me know if you need anything. There’s not a lot I can do, but I can try.”

Shinsou exhales through his nose, shakes his head, but says, “Thanks, I appreciate it,” and after a final farewell, he leaves for his own apartment down the way.

Izuku waves until he’s gone—and as soon as the door clicks shut behind Shinsou, Izuku yanks on his shoes, winter gear, grabs his wallet, and flees the apartment complex. He asks Siri for directions to the nearest shopping center and heads that way.

The apartment is empty when Hitoshi gets home. Not that he’d been expecting anything different; his grandparents always have places to go and people to see. Stuff they’d rather be doing than just hanging around with him. Besides, he’s used to being alone. Nothing new or disappointing, here.

(Okay well maybe it *is* a little disappointing, but hell if he’d let that show.)

He kicks his shoes off by the door, makes it to his room, and flops over on the bed immediately. There’s a picture frame on his dresser, face-down so he can’t actually see the picture, and above him, the ceiling fan whirs crookedly. He knows it’s gonna fall someday; he just hopes it doesn’t happen while he’s in bed, because that would not be nice.

He watches it for a while longer, turning over Midoriya’s words, smiles, and overall *kindness* in his head, before shutting his eyes. At least an empty apartment means no distractions.
… Except he’s awoken shortly thereafter by a series of knocks at the front door.

He drags himself to his feet, glancing out the window. It’s still snowing and it’s still bright outside, so it couldn’t have been too long. Maybe an hour? He doesn’t know what time he’d gotten back home, so checking his phone doesn’t help and ultimately leaves him clueless.

So he heads across the room to open the door. His grandparents are probably home by now, but it’s weird that they’d knock instead of coming right in. They have keys, so why wouldn’t they just show themselves inside?

He opens the door. There’s no one there; only a giftwrapped something sitting on the porch.

Curious, he bends down and picks it up, tearing the corner of the wrapping to peer inside. It takes him a second to figure it out, but he sees dark purple fabric and tassels.

A scarf.

He stares out into space for a moment, then doublechecks the wrapping. The front of it says To Shinsou Hitoshi in what smells like Sharpie (fresh Sharpie, because he can smell it before he even thinks to smell it), but there’s no From.

Although, he has his suspicions.

He leaves the scarf in the wrapping and turns to head back inside.

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[Midoriya - Transfer Student]
Hey what’s your favorite kind of cookie?

[Hitoshi]
… Why

[Midoriya - Transfer Student]
Science

[Hitoshi]
I don’t really have a favorite

[Midoriya - Transfer Student]
Uhh
Ok then what’s your least favorite type of cookie

[Hitoshi]
Peanut butter

[Midoriya - Transfer Student]
Ok thanks

[Hitoshi]
Can I ask why

[Midoriya - Transfer Student]
Science
The next day, there’s a knock at the door and a plate of cookies on the porch when he opens it. Except, it’s not just one kind of cookie. There are several kinds of cookies; snickerdoodles, oatmeal and raisin, chocolate chip, gingersnaps, sugar cookies, everything.

Everything, except…

Is this your doing

Dont act like you don’t know exactly how these got here

HEY you know what goes great with cookies???

I don’t know, honesty?

Hot cocoa! :D
Do you wanna come over and have some?

I’m busy today. Don’t got the time.

Ahhh, alright. I see. Alright!!
Maybe some other time, then. Hope you find out who gave you the cookies!

Hitoshi tosses his phone onto the side table, and fine. If Midoriya wants to keep playing this game then he’ll follow along with it. (He won’t lie, though, the scarf is really nice. A huge upgrade from his old one.)

At first he doesn’t think much of it. So, okay, Midoriya gave him a scarf and some cookies. Not a big deal.

Except when he gets home from a shopping expedition downtown, there’s a box of hot cocoa packets on his porch. Along with an entire bag of marshmallows.

After that, he decides he isn’t going to let this go. He gets inside, takes off all his winter gear aside
from the purple scarf, then taps away at his phone.

[Hitoshi]
Are you the guy who keeps leaving stuff on my porch

[Midoriya - Transfer Student]
Ohhhhh deck the halls with balls of holly,
Falalalala, lalalala

[Hitoshi]
I’m being serious.

[Midoriya - Transfer Student]
F a l a l a l a l a
L a l a l a l a

[Hitoshi]
I’m setting up security cameras

[Midoriya - Transfer Student]
f A L A L A A I A L A A I A L A I A L A

The next day, the second Hitoshi hears something *plunk* on his doorstep, he *flies* out of his seat, scrambles across the room, and throws open the door. Down the hall, he hears another door slam.

On the porch sits a plate of cookies.

He slams the door and fumbles for his phone, fingers flying.

[Hitoshi]
I SEE YOU MIDORIYA

[Midoriya - Transfer Student]
NO YOU DONT

[Hitoshi]
YOU CANT HIDE FOREVER

[Midoriya - Transfer Student]
YES I CAN

The next day, there’s another batch of cookies on his porch. And more hot cocoa. And another scarf. Midoriya is just toying with him now, he knows it.

[Hitoshi]
Midoriya I swear stop leaving me stuff

[Midoriya - Transfer Student]
ANGELS WE HAVE HEAAAARD ON HIGH,
The next time it happens, Hitoshi is right there, hand on the knob of the door, waiting. The second he hears footsteps, he waits until they're just outside his front door before he turns the knob and swings it open.

And lo and behold, there stands Midoriya red-handed, carrying yet another plate of cookies with him. He stares Shinsou in the eyes, looking like some guilty kid who’d gotten caught stealing candy, and Hitoshi does a mental victory leap.

“I knew it!” he declares, and there was really no question in his mind who was doing it; just how long it would take before he had proof. “Why d’you keep bringing me stuff, huh?”

“Oh for the…” Hitoshi pinches the bridge of his nose, then steps out of the doorway and gestures inside with a hand. “C’mon, you can’t bring me like four plates of cookies and expect me to eat them all alone, right?”

Midoriya seems a bit wary at first, but he nods and steps inside. Hitoshi shuts and locks the door behind him.

“Do you live here all by yourself?” Midoriya asks, taking a look around as he kicks off his shoes.

Hitoshi shakes his head. “With my grandparents,” he says, “but they’re usually out doing other stuff. They don’t really care; I’m only with them because I’ve got no one else. They’re stuck with me.”

Midoriya blinks at him, then follows Hitoshi further inside when he gestures. “What about your mom and dad?”

Hitoshi pauses. “... They’re dead. Happened a few months ago. Some freak car accident or something.”

He keeps walking like it’s no big deal, but that’s when he notices Midoriya is no longer following
him.

He turns and looks over his shoulder. Midoriya stands there with the cookies in his arms, staring at Hitoshi like he’d just declared doomsday over the entire world.

“What is it?”

Midoriya seems to snap out of it, and he shakes his head feverishly. “N-Nothing, I just… I-I had no idea. I-I’m—”

“Don’t apologize,” Hitoshi interrupts, turning away again. “... It’s okay.”

He keeps walking, and Midoriya jogs to catch up with him.

Five minutes later finds them in Hitoshi’s room. Midoriya sits on the edge of his bed while Hitoshi kicks back on it, the plate of cookies on the bedside table and a mug of hot cocoa in each of their hands (made from the packets that Midoriya keeps leaving for him on his doorstep).

Hitoshi’s room is a mess, but it’s that kind of “organized mess,” where everything is in disarray but he still knows exactly how and where to find what he needs. His grandparents always badger him about cleaning, but he’s never cared. So he never has.

“Can I ask you something, Midoriya?” he says, when a while of silence has passed between the two of them.

Midoriya nods. Hitoshi swirls around his cup of hot cocoa needlessly. Considering it’s only a cheap packet and hot water, it tastes pretty good.

“Why do you keep doing this?” Hitoshi asks him, frowning. “Why do you keep bringing me stuff, inviting me out places, messaging me just because? We aren’t friends. We barely know each other. So why?”

Midoriya swallows thickly, looking down into his mug for a while longer. “I can’t give you a reason, Shinsou. I just thought you looked so lonely that day, and… if you were lonely, then I didn’t want to leave you there. I didn’t want you to stay lonely when you didn’t have to be. Maybe it’s stupid, but… still.”

Hitoshi watches him and waits to see if he’ll say something else, but he doesn’t, and Hitoshi turns away. He says nothing.

“... Hey.”

Hitoshi lifts his head, but Midoriya isn’t looking at him. He sets his mug on the table beside the cookies and gets to his feet, crossing the room. “What’s this?”

Hitoshi watches him, unconcerned. From a pile of miscellaneous junk near the closet, Midoriya finds a pair of inline skates.

“Oh, those.” Hitoshi pretends to be indifferent. “I used to go skating a lot this time of year. Haven’t done it for a while, though.”

“I’ve never been skating,” Midoriya says, running a finger along the cased blade of the skate. He pauses for a second, but when he turns back to Hitoshi, it’s with a smile that’s almost bright enough to hurt his eyes.
“We should go together!” Midoriya says, leaping to his feet again. “I could get skates somewhere, and we could go downtown to the skating rink! I-If, I-I mean…” He pauses, shuffles a foot as though suddenly being drawn back to reality. “I-If you even wanted to. We don’t have to.”

Hitoshi studies his face and the shoes in his hands. Honestly, he’d be lying if he said he didn’t want to go. He’d be lying if he said it wasn’t nice to finally have… a friend?

“It’s okay,” Hitoshi says, shaking his head. “That’d be fun. We should go.”

Midoriya beams.

“You sure seem chipper today,” Shouta comments as Izuku skips (yes, literally skips) around the living room, snatching his coat from the back of the couch and his scarf from the hooks by the door. His uncle is kneeling on the floor, still trying to find the loose bulb. “What’s got you in such a good mood?”

“Nothing!” Izuku chirps, stuffing his wallet into his pocket. “I’m gonna make a run downtown. Me and Shinsou are going to go out skating and I need some skates.”

“Ahh.” Shouta pushes himself to his feet, giving up for now. “So it went well, then. You finally made a friend.”

The way he says “finally” doesn’t quite thrill him, but he smiles nonetheless. “I don’t know if we’re ‘friends’ yet,” Izuku says, settling his hand on the doorknob, “but we might be soon, maybe!”

Shouta exhales sharply through his nose and rolls his eyes. “Well, tell you what,” he says, pulling his own wallet from his back pocket. He produces his card from it and hands it to Izuku. “Use this for your skates. Think of it as an early Christmas present.”

“O-Oh, I-I—a-are you sure?” Izuku asks, taking it tentatively. “C-Christmas is still a few weeks away, I-I don’t mind buying them myself.”

“Nah, just take it,” Shouta says, ruffling his hair. “You didn’t ask for much for Christmas, anyway. Least I can do. Just be careful, alright?”

Izuku knows it’s pointless arguing with him, so he nods eagerly. “I’ll be careful,” he promises, slipping the card into his pocket. “Thank you!”

Shouta offers a soft smile, and Izuku skips and springs out the door, past Shinsou’s apartment, down the icy steps (taking care, of course), and finally, he hits solid ground and starts down the sidewalk.

As he walks towards the mall, his mind wanders. He thinks of Shinsou and the skates, of that facedown picture frame on his bedside table, the hurt in Shinsou’s eyes. Shinsou had never told him off, never outright said he didn’t like Izuku, but…

Izuku doesn’t know if he’s doing the right thing, befriending Shinsou like this. He doesn’t know if maybe he’s being too forward. If maybe Shinsou’s just agreeing with all this just to be nice. He wonders how Shinsou really feels about him, what Shinsou really thinks about their being friends.

He looks down at the snowy sidewalks as flakes fall around him and the dark sky hangs above. Shop windows are lit. People roam the sidewalks, laughing. Carolers sing (slightly more on-key this time, and thank all things holy for that), people laugh and cheer, and Izuku takes in a breath through his nose.
Maybe I’m being too forward, he thinks, stuffing his hands into his coat pockets. Maybe I should back off a little and let Shinsou have some breathing room. Especially now that I know what actually happened…

He hears a screech to the side of him, followed by several shouts. Some are louder and more urgent than others, but they all carry the same weight. The same terror.

Izuku barely has time to look. He sees a bright red truck, swerving out of control, and then—

He doesn’t feel much. A crack, splintering pain, the sound of glass on the asphalt, the sound of footsteps, ice beneath his head. People shout and scream. Distorted lights break through his blurry vision. His breath gets caught in his lungs, but he’s unconscious before he can breathe.

When Hitoshi gets ready to set out the next morning (to where? He doesn’t know, but the empty apartment is getting to him more than usual today), he’s first stunned by the sheer amount of snow that’s falling. It’d snowed hard all last night and it’s snowing just as hard now. He’s just glad there’s no wind, else they’d be in trouble.

The second thing he notices is that there’s nothing on the doorstep. No cookies, no hot cocoa packets, no scarf, no dumb paper airplane with a cheesy note. He’s become so accustomed to Midoriya’s small treasures that, now, not seeing anything, surprises him.

He locks the apartment behind him, then starts towards Midoriya’s front door. Maybe he’s sick or something. Maybe he’s still trying to figure out how to get the tree lights working again. Heh, if he really is sick then maybe Hitoshi can bring him soup or something, return the favor a little.

He knocks on the door. “Midoriya? You home?”

There’s no answer. He knocks again just for good measure, but nothing changes. He frowns at the door for a while longer, then turns away and heads down the icy steps, down to the pavement below. Once he’s on the sidewalk, he pulls out his phone.

[Hitoshi]

Hey Midoriya where you at? You good?

One thing he has learned, whether it’s appreciated or not, is that Midoriya texts back fast. He’s as fast of a texter as he is a talker, and when he does text, he usually has a lot to say. Hitoshi doesn’t know how he does it half the time, but that’s not important now. What is important is that Midoriya still hasn’t replied.

Hitoshi frowns down at his phone and sends another message.

[Hitoshi]

You can’t just leave me with four plates of cookies and three dozen hot cocoa packets and then play the silent game. I can’t deal with it all myself.

No response.

Hitoshi grinds his teeth and sends another message.

[Hitoshi]

Hey listen, I may have seemed pretty pissed when you kept leaving me stuff but I was never actually mad at you.
And I never got security cameras.

Still nothing.

[Hitoshi]
Midoriya seriously if this is just part of your plan it isn’t working.

Still. No response.

He gives up and stuffs his phone in the back pocket of his jeans and his hands into the pockets of his coat. He keeps on down the sidewalk for a while longer for his aimless destination, but that’s when he notices a group of police officers and firemen standing a little ways ahead by what seems like a busted fire hydrant. There are tire screeches on the asphalt and on part of the sidewalk as well, but no vehicle in sight.

Hitoshi frowns, takes the long way around them, and keeps on his way. Though he does look over his shoulder every so often at the people behind. Some car must have lost traction on the ice and drove themselves into the fire hydrant. He hopes the driver and passengers (if there were any) are okay.

His phone buzzes in his pocket, and he whips it out.

[Grandpa]
We just got home, where the hell are you?

[Hitoshi]
Went for a walk

[Grandpa]
Grab some more milk while you’re out, your grandmother used the last of it yesterday.

[Hitoshi]
Okay

He returns his phone to his pocket, taking a mental note of milk, get milk. He’s just engraved it into his mind when his phone buzzes again.

He groans and reaches for it. Great, something else. If they really needed it so badly they could’ve just gotten it while they were out.

It isn’t from them, though. The message seems to be from Midoriya’s phone. But not from Midoriya.

[Midoriya - Friend]
listen, I don’t know whether you and Izuku are good friends or not, but if so, you should get down to the hospital. He was hit by a car last night.

Hitoshi’s phone slips from his hand and cracks against the icy sidewalk.

He charges through the double doors with his phone in hand (he’d actually left it behind at first and just remembered to go grab it), only snapping back to reality when a nurse barks at him not to run. His eyes scan the waiting room; considering the road conditions, he’s surprised there aren’t more accidents. There are a couple people here, couples, a woman holding a child by the hand, but
Hitoshi’s eyes land on a man sitting all by himself in a chair in the corner of the waiting room, shoulders hunched and phone held loosely between his hands.

If you asked him, he couldn’t tell you why, but there’s something about him that says, yeah, this is who he’s looking for, and he crosses the room towards the man with small, hesitant steps.

The man lifts his head, and his bloodshot eyes meet Hitoshi’s. “... You Shinsou?”

Hitoshi swallows and nods stiffly. The man gestures to the seat beside him, and Hitoshi sinks into it. For a while, neither of them say anything. Hitoshi runs his thumb over the new crack in his phone’s screen.

“Are you Midoriya’s father?”

The man exhales sharply through his nose, then shakes his head. “His uncle, actually. Name’s Shouta.”

Right. His uncle. Now that Hitoshi thinks about it, Midoriya never mentioned his parents.

“Have... have you heard anything?” Hitoshi manages, turning to Shouta. “You said it happened last night, right?”

Shouta nods. He seems very tired. “Got the call around two in the morning. Some damn idiot wasn’t watching where he was going, lost control of his truck...” He runs a hand over his face tiredly with a shaky exhale. “He’ll be alright. The doctors would’ve said something by now if it was life threatening. He’s a tough kid, he’ll be okay.”

He says it like he’s trying to reassure himself, and that fact does absolutely nothing to reassure Hitoshi. They sit there in silence for a while longer. Hitoshi knocks his heels together absentmindedly just for something to do. Shouta sits back in his seat with his phone on the chair next to him and his arms over his chest. If not for his open eyes, Hitoshi would think he was dozing off.

Just when Hitoshi thinks that damn it, it shouldn’t be taking this long, why is it taking so long?, a name calls “Midoriya Izuku?” and Shouta’s feet hit the ground. He’s halfway across the room before Hitoshi can get his legs beneath him.

The doctor looks at Shouta, then down at his clipboard. “What’s your relationship with the boy?”

“I’m his uncle, he lives with me.” Hitoshi can hear every ounce of desperation and fear in his tone, though it’s masked with professional seriousness. “His mother’s on the other side of the country and his father’s out of the picture, I’m all he’s got.”

Hitoshi’s mind spins. He feels like he’s getting slammed several times, each time from a different, slightly more painful angle.

The doctor looks over his clipboard again. When he finds whatever it is he was looking for, he lifts his head with a nod and gestures to Shouta. “Come, follow me. I’ll take you to him. However—”

His eyes find Hitoshi’s, and without even asking, Hitoshi knows.

“I’ll stay here,” Hitoshi tells Shouta before the doctor can get another word out. “I’ll be fine, just, get to Midoriya. He’s gonna need you.”

Shouta looks from him to the doctor, then back to him. “I’ll keep you updated,” he promises, but he’s already turning away with the doctor. “I’m sorry, Shinsou.”
The doctor leads him away, and Hitoshi watches them until they’ve disappeared down the hallway. Hitoshi’s eyes go down to his shoes, and his hands hang limp at his sides.

“... It’s okay.”

Hitoshi’s grandmother chews him out for an hour when he gets home. He’d completely forgotten about the milk. Honestly a part of him wants to go out again and *get* her damn milk, if just so he can dump it in the flowerbeds without breaking eye contact with her, but he doesn’t do that. He manages a weak apology and flops onto his bed, burying his face in the pillows.

The picture frame sits on his bedside, face-down, beside several plates of cookies and a cardboard box of hot cocoa packets.

Hitoshi doesn’t move for the rest of the day.

*... What...?*

His eyelids barely lift before he’s squeezing them shut again, white-hot pain stabbing him right in the temples. He moans softly, holding still with muscles tense until he’s ridden out the pain; this time, he doesn’t move again.

_That hurts..._

*... What...?*

“Kid? Kid, you with me?”

There’s a steadying hand on his shoulder, and Izuku squeezes his eyes shut, then dares to crack them open. Through a sliver of sight, he sees Shouta’s worried eyes peering down into his. The bright overhead lights nearly silhouette his face, but Izuku can still make out his worry.

He swallows hard. “S-Shouta...?”

Shouta’s eyes flood with relief. “Oh, thank god,” he breathes, head lowering until it nearly touches Izuku’s arm. “Dammit, kid, don’t you *scare* me like that. I told you to watch out for the drivers when the roads are bad like this, I told you to be careful, *Izuku*—”

Izuku swallows hard, shutting his eyes again against the pounding in his skull. It hurts a *lot* more than before, now that he’s more conscious and aware. “S-Sorry, Shouta... I-I didn’t mean...”

He hears a sigh as his voice trails off, and Shouta’s fingers brush his hair off his forehead. “Forget it, just... just leave it, for now. I’m glad you’re okay.”

Izuku can barely nod, eyes shut. Shouta notices.

“Are you in pain?”

Izuku is going to lie at first and say that he’s totally fine, but Shouta knows him too well. The lie would be obvious and he’d have to tell the truth eventually, either way.

So he nods again. He hears Shouta shift, a small *beep* as a button is pushed. He doesn’t ask what it is, and he doesn’t care enough to want to.
“The doc should be here any second now. Just try to relax. It’ll get better soon.”

Izuku slips into unconsciousness to his uncle’s reassuring words.

Shouta has never been much for physical contact. Aside from ruffling Izuku’s hair occasionally, it’s really non-existent. But the second Izuku can sit up and is on enough meds to keep the pain at bay, the first thing Shouta does is hug him tight. Izuku hugs him back with equal ferocity, and they don’t break away until the doctor returns to explain everything in more depth.

He had a head injury, first off. It wasn’t as bad as it could have been, considering the impact, but he’ll be alright after rest. Lots of rest. And nothing strenuous for two weeks.

Aside from that and a few bruised ribs, the doctor tells him there’s nothing seriously wrong and that he should be alright to return home for the rest of his recovery.

“You’re lucky,” the doctor tells him as he flips back his folder and rises to his feet. “That could have ended far worse.”

“What about the driver?” Izuku asks. His throat isn’t as raw now that he’s eaten and drinken, and speaking doesn’t hurt his head. “Are they okay, too?”

The doctor gives him a befuddled look for a moment, before smiling and nodding. “He’s absolutely fine, actually. We did an x-ray just to make sure his neck and spine were alright, but you were the only real casualty. And, of course.” At this, the doctor turns to Shouta. “He isn’t getting off the hook. There will be legal consequences.”

Shouta nods, and it’s only now that Izuku realizes how upset his uncle really looks. “Right. Thank you.”

The doctor nods. “I’ll bring the discharge papers to you, and we’ll have a wheelchair for Izuku. Any stairs at your home?”

“There’s a flight of stairs to get up to the complex.”

“Help him up. Make sure he doesn’t slip.”

The doctor gives them a couple more do’s and don’ts, most of which Izuku lets Shouta remember because his head is starting to hurt again, and once all that’s settled and the papers are signed, they’re set to leave the hospital.

December twenty fourth. That’s when Izuku is allowed to resume physical activity (though he has to be careful). December twenty fourth. Christmas eve.

A nurse wheels him out while Shouta walks beside him, and Izuku gets himself into the passenger seat of Shouta’s car with minimal difficulty while Shouta makes sure he’s snapped in before thanking the nurse and heading over to the driver side. He backs out of the parking lot, and they’re homeward bound.

Izuku sleeps through most of the drive, waking only briefly when Shouta stops by a Chinese takeout place and asks what he wants. Izuku answers, forgets what he’d answered, and falls asleep again the second they’re back on the road.

The next time he opens his eyes, he’s in bed and wrapped in several blankets. There’s a bottled water on the bedside table, beside two painkilling pills, along with his phone. The thought of looking at a
screen right now makes him feel sick, so he doesn't touch it.

_Besides, he thinks, blinking slowly, maybe Shinsou will be glad to have a few days without me. I've been pretty pushy these past couple days..._

He thinks about it until his heart is heavy and his head kills him, and when he can't take it any longer, he sits up and snatches the pills off the table. He tosses them back and chases them down with water, then curls himself into his blankets and shuts his eyes. His ribs burn and his head aches, and he only hopes the meds will kick in soon.

---

Shouta is trying to find that accursed loose bulb on the Christmas tree when he hears a door down the hallway open, then click shut. He lifts his head, and his eyes have already adjusted to the darkness, so he's able to make out Izuku's figure as he shuffles down the hall with a blanket pulled around his shoulders. The doctor had told Shouta that he could remove the gauze from around the kid's head as soon as they got home, but he'd been sleeping, and Shouta hadn't the heart to wake him.

He gets to his feet, brushing his pants off needlessly. "What's up, kiddo?" he asks, moving around the couch towards him. "You've been asleep since noon, how're you feeling?"

"I'm okay," Izuku says, in a tone of voice that betrays how _not_ okay he actually is. He shuffles his foot for a moment. "I was wondering if... maybe I could come out and sit with you for a bit?"

Ah. So he's lonely.

Shouta nods, beckons him over, and takes a seat on the couch. Izuku shuffles around and sits next to him, immediately tucking himself against Shouta's side. Shouta doesn't mind; if anything, after his initial scare when the hospital phoned him (he'd never moved so fast in his life and he's fairly certain he forgot to lock the apartment), it's comforting to him, too.

He puts an arm around the kid and remembers something he should've thought of before. "That friend of yours, Shinsou," Shouta says softly, "he's been worried about you lately. I've been keeping him posted, but I'm sure he'd like to hear from you one you're up to it. Gave him quite a scare."

There's no answer, and it's only then that Shouta realizes the kid has already fallen asleep. He sighs and rolls his eyes, but it's all in good-nature, and after a while his stress and exhaustion catches up with him, and he falls asleep too.

---

The next day, Izuku still doesn't touch his phone and Shouta skips work in favor of staying home to look out for him. Izuku spends the day in bed, barely opening his eyes, much less _getting up_. Shouta brings him microwaved dinners and leftover cookies, but it’s not as appetizing as it usually is. He blames it on his aching head and only hopes Shouta’s feelings aren’t too terribly hurt every time he rejects a meal.

However, the day after that,

"I'm feeling better!" Izuku insists, and he _does_, just maybe not as well as he'll make his uncle believe. "You can't keep skipping work just because I'm here, I'll be okay! Plus, your holiday break starts soon, right? They might not give it to you if you take a lot of days off now."

Shouta looks like he wants to argue, but he sets his jaw and shuts his eyes for a long moment. "Fine," he says, snatching his coat off the hook, "but I'm coming home early, and if anything, and I mean _anything_ happens, you call me, alright?"
"Okay, okay, I will," Izuku says, beaming. He's really just relieved that Shouta is listening. He doesn't want to be the reason why his uncle misses holiday leave. "Don't worry about me here, I'll be fine."

Shouta gives him a run-down of the food they have available that'll be easy to prepare, and Izuku promises he'll be fine, promises he'll keep his phone with him, and then Shouta heads to work, and Izuku locks the door behind him and leans against it for a long moment. He still hasn't messaged Shinsou. He hasn't spoken to him at all. A small, tiny voice in the back of his head—the same one that'd nagged him right before the accident, the same one that nagged him last night—says that Shinsou would rather be alone. After all, who knows? Maybe he's overbearing. Maybe it's too much.

Maybe Shinsou would rather be left alone.

Izuku heads back into his room and flops facedown onto his bed. He’d taken pain meds earlier with breakfast, and he can feel them finally start to take effect. They lull him into a dreamless, painless sleep.

When he wakes up, it’s dark outside, he can hear his uncle making dinner in the other room, and his phone is buzzing on the side table.

He blinks open his eyes slowly. His phone is facedown, so the light doesn’t hurt his eyes or his head, but he reaches out to silence it anyway. He’ll see who’s calling later; right now he really wants to go back to sleep—

Something catches his eye that hadn’t before, as his phone stops buzzing. Beneath the bedside table, tucked against the wall, is a paper bag loaded with tissue paper so Izuku can’t see its contents.

Izuku sits upright fast enough to hurt his head without already having an injury there, but he doesn’t care. He reaches down and drags the paper bag off the floor and into his lap. It’s heavier than he thought it’d be. He looks for some kind of tag or a note, but there’s nothing on the outside that would tell him who it’s from. Shouta, maybe? But why wouldn’t he say anything?

Curiosity gets the better of him, and he pulls away the first of the tissue paper.

A paper airplane slips from the paper and flutters to the floor.

Izuku’s eyes widen. He stares down at the paper plane for a while longer, then sets the tissue paper on the bed beside him and bends down to pick it up. He holds it in his hands, examining it, until he notices a single word written on the corner of the wing.

*Unfold*

Izuku does so, taking great care. It’s nothing fancy. Notebook paper with words written in pencil. But it finds its way right to Izuku’s heart like an arrow.

*I asked your uncle for your shoe size. Hopefully they fit. Get better soon.*

-Shinsou

Heart pounding, Izuku removes the last of the tissue paper and reaches into the giftbag.
From it, he pulls a pair of white, brand-new inline skates.

Izuku flies out of the room, tripping and stumbling and almost bashing right into the hall on his way out. He scrambles for purchase, then takes off for the front door, barely remembering to snag his coat off the hook.

“Hey!” Shouta barks from the kitchen, and he puts down a pair of tongs and rushes from there into the living room. “What are you doing? The doctor told you not to do anything strenuous!”

“Sorry,” Izuku stammers, forcing his feet into his shoes and haphazardly tying his scarf, “I-I have to go see Shinsou, I-I—”

“Kid, calm down,” Shouta snaps, sternly but not without concern, and his hands land on his shoulders and squeeze. “Shinsou’s right next door, right? Why don’t you call him and ask him to come over?”

Izuku had checked his phone, once. He doesn’t want to do it again.

“I can’t.” he says, shaking his head. “Please, Shouta, you just, you have to let me go see him. There’s something I need to talk to him about, it’s important, please. I promise I’ll be careful, I’ll stay away from the street, I won’t do anything dumb or dangerous and I’ll be careful about the sidewalk and the ice and—”

“Alright, kid, breathe,” Shouta says, straightening up, and Izuku sucks in a long, deep breath. “You can go see Shinsou, but,” he adds, when Izuku’s face lights up, “be careful. Do you hear me?”

“Loud and clear,” Izuku promises, nodding—though he stops when the movement ails his head. “Thank you, Shouta. I’ll be back soon.”

Shouta lets him go, and Izuku flees the apartment. Shouta has to bark at him not to run one more time, but Izuku barely hears him, already shutting the door behind him and heading down the way, towards Shinsou’s.

He knocks on the door thrice in rapid session. “Shinsou? Shinsou, are you home?”

He’s just lifting his fist to knock again when the door is answered, not by Shinsou, but by an unpleasant-looking old man with bald spots in his gray hair and squinty, shifty eyes. Izuku immediately takes a step backwards.

“Whaddaya want?” the man questions, and Izuku becomes acutely aware of the cane in the man’s hand and wonders if he’s strong enough to use it as a weapon. “Oy. I ain’t got all day.”

“I’m looking for Shin—Hitoshi,” Izuku says, tripping over his words a little. “He said he’d show me around s-sometime, since I don’t know the area very well.”

The man squints his eyes further. Izuku feels like he’s being assessed and dissected. “What business d’ya have with him?”

“I know him from school,” Izuku answers, trying to be polite and not make his fear evident. “He said he’d show me around s-sometime, since I don’t know the area very well.”

For a second, Izuku thinks the man is going to call him a liar and hit him over the head with his cane (which is really the last thing Izuku needs; he’d only just taken the bandages off yesterday), but instead, he grumbles something under his breath and jerks his head towards the steps.
“Damn kid said he was going downtown,” he growls. “Something about a walk. Hell if I know. He ain’t here, so get out.”

Izuku doesn’t wait. He bows shortly without meaning it, then turns and races down the icy steps as fast as he dares (which is definitely a lot faster than Shouta would permit). Once he’s on the sidewalk, he breaks into a sprint, ignoring the pulsing pain in his bruised ribs. The carolers are slightly off-key still, but they wave to Izuku as he passes, and he waves back distractedly. Snow falls around him. He passes the site of the car accident, recognizes the spot and sees the tire marks, but he simply goes around the caution cones on the sidewalk and keeps on moving.

He doesn’t know where he’s going. Once he passes the shop where he’d bought Shinsou’s scarf, he’s flying completely blind. He’d ask for directions by one of the passersby, if he had any idea where Shinsou is. His phone sits in his pocket but he doesn’t touch it. After reading the messages Shinsou sent him, he can’t. Not again. Not until they talk.

The snow begins to fall again, and the wind cuts into his skin as he goes, but he doesn’t care. He keeps moving until the shops are gone and all he has are the dull streetlamps. He passes a skating rink in town square, right in front of a towering, fully lit and well-decorated Christmas tree. Behind that is a park, and Izuku races past it.

—Or, he’s going to, until he notices a familiar figure with a purple scarf, heading down a stone pathway in said park. His back is to him, so Izuku can’t see his face, but he doesn’t need to. He knows exactly who it is.

Izuku screeches to a halt, his heaving gasps fogging the air before his face. Then he turns and sprints towards him.

“Shinsou!”

Shinsou flinches and whirls towards him, eyes wide as Izuku has ever seen them, and Izuku trips and nearly faceplants on the way over. He stops a little ways away and puts his hands on his knees while he catches his breath.

“Midoriya?” Shinsou gasps out, looking shocked. “You just got out of the hospital, didn’t you? What the hell are you doing out here?”

Izuku gasps and heaves for breath. His ribs send white-hot pain through his chest when he breathes, and the icy air burns on the way in, but he scarcely cares.

“I—h-had to—talk to you—”

“You could’ve called me,” Shinsou says, startlingly calm (or maybe that’s just the startle itself). “You didn’t have to run all the way out here, in the cold no less—”

“I-I’m already out here either way just—let me—t-talk.”

Shinsou stops and stays silent. When Izuku has gathered himself and replenished his deprived lungs, he straightens up slowly and meets Shinsou’s eyes.

When Izuku had found the inline skates in his room—the moment he’d gotten over his initial shock—he’d checked his phone for the first time since the hospital. Some of the messages were sent from him through Shouta, explaining to Shinsou what’d happened, and updates when they were available.

But after that was a long page of just Shinsou’s messages.
And they went something like this:

[Shinsou Hitoshi]
I heard you just got home from the hospital. Sorry I couldn’t visit you. The doctors were pretty weird about it even though they said you weren’t really hurt that badly.

[Shinsou Hitoshi]
I’m glad you’re alright. I was worried. Drivers over here need to get a damn grip.

[Shinsou Hitoshi]
And, by “I’m glad you’re alright” I mean I’m really, really friggin glad you’re alright. Scared me real good there. Don’t do it again.

[Shinsou Hitoshi]
Hey, when you start feeling up to it, I’ll bring cookies over sometime. And maybe hot cocoa, god knows I can’t finish it all myself and I ain’t letting my grandparents have any.

[Shinsou Hitoshi]
Anyway, get better soon, alright? Talk later

“They’re dead. Happened a few months ago. Some freak car accident or something.”

Izuku’s fingers curl into fists. The snow bites into his skin, colder than ever.

“I-I’m sorry,” Izuku says, looking down at the sidewalk so he doesn’t have to meet Shinsou’s gaze. His eyes burn, and it isn’t just because of the cold this time. “I made you care about me. I pushed myself on you to be your friend, a-and—and I almost made you go through losing someone again.”

“Midoriya—”
Izuku shakes his head feverishly, and suddenly he can’t breathe again. “I’m sorry, Shinsou, I just—” He brings his hands up to his face, pressing the heels of his hands in his eyes to staunch the flow of tears. “I w-watched my own family fall apart. I watched my mom bury herself in her work and I-I watched as she smiled less and less every day, a-and—”

He has to stop and breathe, and when the air won’t come, he stammers on.

“A-And I couldn’t bear the thought of that happening to someone else, n-not when I had the chance to stop it. But I made you care about me. Y-You didn’t ask to be my friend, a-and—I-I scared you. I-I hurt you, I-I almost—”

Some freak car accident or something.

“I almost made you go through it all again.”

He hears Shinsou take a step forward. “Midoriya, listen—”

Izuku shakes his head and steps backwards. “I hurt you,” he whispers, hands clutching his chest. The tears on his cheeks burn like ice when the wind hits them. “I-I’m so sorry, Shinsou. I should have left you alone that day. I s shouldn’t’ve said anything.”

“Midoriya—!”
“M-Maybe you’d be better off if you’d never even met me.”

“Stop!”

Shinsou’s hands land on his shoulders, and in surprise, Izuku’s head snaps up. He had no idea Shinsou had gotten so close.

And, with this proximity, Izuku is able to see what looks like tears gathering in the corners of his eyes.

His breath gets stuck in his throat again. “Sh-Shinsou…?”

Shinsou’s fingernails dig into his shoulders, and he breathes through gritted teeth.

“Don’t you dare say that!” Shinsou snaps at him, shaking him ever so slightly. “I don’t give a damn what you think, don’t talk like that!”

This isn’t what he wanted. He hadn’t meant to make him so upset. “S-Shinsou—”

It doesn’t help. Shinsou is still angry, and tears still pool in his eyes. “You are overbearing sometimes!” Shinsou rants on. “Sometimes it is a lot, and that’s just how it’ll be! But that doesn’t mean I don’t like being with you! That doesn’t mean I don’t want you as my friend!”

“S-Shinsou—”

Shinsou’s voice rises further, in volume and pitch. It cracks several times. “So don’t you think for one second that my life was better without you! My life wasn’t better— I wasn’t better! You’re the only thing that’s made this damn life worth living. You’re the only reason I’m still here!”

Izuku’s tears slow. His chest is tight. “Sh… S-Shinsou…”

“So don’t say it didn’t matter!”

Shinsou’s hands squeeze his shoulders again, but he doesn’t seem angry this time. It’s a different kind of emotion now. Something softer. More pleading.

“Don’t say it didn’t matter,” Shinsou says quietly, head lowering until it nearly touches Izuku’s chest. “Don’t apologize for being my friend. If I hadn’t met you that day, if you hadn’t thrown yourself out there, made yourself available… I don’t know where I’d be. And every day I’m thankful that I got to know you. You…”

Shinsou lifts his head and meets Izuku’s gaze. His eyes are slightly red on the edges, but there’s a smile on his face. Not like the sly smirks coupled with eyerolls that Izuku has seen from him quite often. This smile is soft. Honest. Real.

“… You made me smile again, Midoriya,” Shinsou murmurs. “No one’s ever done that before.”

Izuku blinks, and this time only a single tear runs down his cheek. “S-Shinsou…”

His feet move before he’s aware of it, and Shinsou closes the remaining distance between them. Their arms go around each other, so tightly that it actually hurts Izuku’s ribs a bit, but he doesn’t pull out of the embrace. He doesn’t care that it hurts, it’s worth it.

Izuku doesn’t know how long it lasts. Five seconds. Five minutes. Five hours. But finally he pulls away and steps back to meet Shinsou’s eyes. Izuku studies his face for a moment, and when he cracks a smile, Shinsou returns it.
“Are… you okay?” Izuku asks.

Shinsou’s gaze turns softer. “… Yeah. I’m okay.”

Izuku smiles at him. “I’m glad.”

Except, that’s just the moment that the pain catches up with him with a startling amount of speed, and he would’ve collapsed then and there if Shinsou didn’t swoop in when he did.

“Oh dammit, I forgot you were still hurt,” Shinsou breathes, hands on Izuku’s shoulders. “C’mon, I’ll take you back to your place, you shouldn’t be out here right now like this—”

He doesn’t really carry him, just steadies him by his shoulders and is ready in case he falls again, and they start home. Shinsou frets and complains all the way back to the apartment complex, and in the meantime, Izuku is the happiest he’s ever been before in his life.

“—come out here in the snow like some kind of a moron, right after you got hit by a car, do you have some kind of a death wish—”

“Do you wanna spend Christmas with me and Shouta?”

Shinsou stops abruptly and turns to him. “Why?”

“Because I met your grandfather,” Izuku answers, “and if I had to spend Christmas with him I’d probably cry. You should come over with us. We’ll make cookies, hot cocoa, we can finally find out how to light the sad little Christmas tree… it’ll be a lot of fun. Would… would you want to come?”

Shinsou falls silent for a while.

“… I would. I’d… I’d love to, Midoriya.”

Two weeks fly by just like that. Izuku’s doctor-ordained restrictions have expired, and Christmas Eve is upon them. Shouta is making dinner (although Izuku has a hunch they’ll just end up getting takeout again, which is fine—whatever keeps the house from burning down), and Izuku and Hitoshi have finished putting on their winter gear.

“We’re going out!” Izuku calls into the kitchen as he opens the front door. “We’ll be back in an hour!”

“Alright!” Shouta hollers back—followed by a curse and a clang as what sounds like several pans hit the tiled floor. Hitoshi winces, but Izuku beams and sets out. Hitoshi follows him shortly.

“Did you even try them on? Do they fit?”

Izuku nods enthusiastically, raising his ice skates up where Hitoshi can see them. “They fit perfect!” he assures, beside himself. “I still wish you’d let me pay you back for them—”

“The cookies, hot cocoa packs, and scarves add up to more than what they cost,” Hitoshi cuts in, shaking his head. “So if anything, I owe you one. Besides.” He turns to him with something in between a smile and a smirk. “Think of it as a gift. It is Christmas, after all.”

Izuku sighs, but he knows Hitoshi would never back down from an argument, so he doesn’t start one. He lowers his arms back down to his sides; his and Hitoshi’s skates swing from their hands as they walk. Izuku has a little paper airplane sticker taped to the side of his skate.
When they get down to the rink, they wait in line behind a couple with three kids, all excitedly pointing out people and lights and carolers (who have finally, blessedly learned the tune of their songs. Izuku has half a mind to congratulate them, but thinks it’d be rude and refrains). The line moves slowly, but before they know it they’re at the front and sitting at the bench with their shoes.

Hitoshi helps Izuku put his on, then slips into his own skates and rises to his feet on the ice. He sways for just a moment, out of practice, but carries himself with purpose, like he knows exactly what he’s doing.

He holds a hand out to Izuku. “You ready?”

Izuku bites his lip, fingers clenching the armrest of the bench. “N-Now that we’re here I’m kind of—k-kind of nervous about slipping,” he admits.

“Don’t worry.” Hitoshi smiles at him again, and Izuku will never get tired of seeing that smile. “I won’t let you fall. Promise.”

Izuku bites his lip a little harder, but puts his hand in Hitoshi’s and lets him pull him upright. He slips immediately and flails for purchase, but true to his word, Hitoshi is right there to steady him. Laughing.

“It’s not funny!” Izuku protests.

“Sorry,” Hitoshi says, moving slowly and guiding the two of them along the ice. “You’ll get the hang of it, promise. C’mon, try moving your feet a little. You’ll never figure it out unless you try.”

Izuku clutches Hitoshi’s forearms a little harder, but he nods, and off skating they go. Hitoshi never lets him fall.

Early next morning—Christmas morning—finds Hitoshi at Izuku and Shouta’s apartment almost first thing in the morning, after his grandparents so kindly went into town for breakfast for themselves.

Izuku welcomes him in, just around the time Shouta lets out a resounding, “Aha! Got you now!” as the Christmas tree lights finally, finally turn on. After some minimal but honest cheering, they have cookies and hot cocoa for breakfast and go straight to the gift exchanging.

Izuku gets Shouta a coffee mug and Hitoshi, a pack of stickers, along with a scarf for the both of them. Hitoshi admits that he had no idea what Izuku liked and ended up getting him exactly the same thing—stickers and a scarf. Izuku cackles, and Hitoshi looks mutely embarrassed.

In the meantime, Shouta gives Hitoshi a giftcard for one of the shops downtown, and he pushes a sizeable cardboard box towards Izuku. Izuku gives him a confused look, then tears open the wrapping and flips back the flaps, revealing—

Izuku’s eyes go wider than Hitoshi has ever seen them, and from the box he pulls a tiny, fluffy white cat. The kitten mewels at him, and Hitoshi has half a mind to remind Izuku to breathe because that’s definitely not something he’s doing right now.

“A-Are you serious?” Izuku gasps, looking at Shouta with wide, sparkling eyes, and Shouta chuckles and nods.

“Yeah, she’s yours. You’re gonna have to name her, though.”

Izuku looks just about ready to die, cuddling the kitten against his chest snugly. He turns to Hitoshi.
“What do you think we should name her?”

“What do you think we should name her?”

“Uhh…” Hitoshi feels suddenly on the spot, and of course he blurts the first thing that comes to mind which is in this case, “Cookies.”

He swears he can pinpoint the exact moment the light drains from Shouta’s eyes. Meantime, Izuku looks elated.

“Cookies!” Izuku repeats, holding the cat at arm’s length only to draw her close again and hug her tight. “Aww, I love it! It’s the perfect name!”

Shouta sighs, but shakes his head. “As long as you’re happy with it,” he says, “then I have no objections.”

Izuku beams first at Shouta, then at Hitoshi, and with that damn smile that could light up a night sky like the stars, Hitoshi knows.

This is better than “okay.”

When he’s with Izuku, Hitoshi is home.

That night, after Hitoshi has gone home and Shouta has retired to bed, Izuku can’t sleep. He tosses and turns relentlessly, and even though he isn’t really uncomfortable, he just can’t seem to fall asleep. Cookies is angry with him for moving around so much and making her switch positions, but really, he can’t help it. He doesn’t know what’s nagging him, because honestly this has probably been the best Christmas he’s had ever since he was very little, before Dad left and Mom threw herself headfirst into her work and all the times they moved henceforth.

Just when he thinks he’s going to be able to sleep, his phone rings.

He sits up at once and reaches for it, thinking perhaps it’s Hitoshi, perhaps it’s Shouta (who know?) —but it’s not them. It isn’t even scam.

The caller ID comes up as “Mom.”

Izuku’s breath hitches, and with shaking fingers, he swipes to answer and holds the phone against his ear. “M-Mom?”

“Izuku!” Her voice is high and shrill, and there’s more emotion in it now than Izuku has heard for a very, very long time. “Oh, baby, I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry—I-I was so blind, Izuku, I’m so sorry—”

She sounds like she’s crying. It’s taking all of Izuku’s effort not to cry with her but he just hasn’t heard her voice in so long.

“M-Mom?”

“Oh, oh, Izuku, I’m so sorry, I’m so, so sorry, I didn’t even see my messages until now, I-I got so caught up, a-and—oh, oh god you were hurt, you were hurt you could’ve died, Izuku—”

“I-It’s okay, Mom,” Izuku manages, feeling strangled. “I-I’m okay now, it wasn’t that bad at all, really—”

“S-Still, I-I lost sight of what really mattered. I-I was so—I was so upset and hurt that I didn’t even think about you, or my brother, or anyone else. I-I’m so sorry, Izuku, sweetheart—I-I’m going to make it up to you, I promise. I’m trying to get on a plane now, I’ll be there soon and I promise, I
promise things are going to be different. I’m so sorry, Izuku, I love you so much—”

The tears fall freely now. Izuku can’t hold them back. “I-I love you, too, Mom.”

“Oh, sweetheart—I’ll be there soon, okay? I’ll be there soon.”

“O-Okay. H-Have a safe trip. I-I’ll…” The words feel so unreal. “I-I’ll s-see you soon.”

And he does.

She arrives two days later, with teary eyes and a thousand apologies to give. She hugs Izuku so long and so tightly that he thinks he’ll suffocate before she lets go, but she pulls away eventually and hugs Shouta, too (who again seems alright with the physical contact).

She meets Hitoshi, too, and is elated to hear that Izuku has a friend. Izuku can tell she likes him from the second she lays eyes on him; she smiles and, when he agrees, she hugs him, too.

They celebrate Christmas once again, this time with all four of them—plus Cookies (who may or may not be responsible for the broken Christmas tree lights).

And with Mom, Shouta, Cookies, and of course Hitoshi, Izuku finally feels whole again.

The picture frame on Hitoshi’s bedside table doesn’t stay facedown forever. When he’s ready—and only when he’s ready—he sets it up again.

It’s a picture of him and his parents at a skating rink in the snow, holding peace signs to whoever was taking the photo.

And right beside that framed picture is another frame—this time, though, it’s a picture of him and Izuku, taken by Shouta in front of the Christmas tree. Izuku has Cookies tucked under one arm, and he’s using his hand, along with one of Hitoshi’s, to form a heart. It’d been Izuku’s cheesy idea, and Hitoshi was in too good of a mood to say no.

The pictures sit on the bedside table, and the memories rest in Hitoshi’s heart forevermore and then some.

“Sometimes the smallest things take up the most room in your heart.”

-Winnie the Pooh

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