Hell And Back

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Summary

The plan almost worked.

But it didn't, and it leaves Kirishima Eijirou blaming himself. So when the impossible happens, he learns just how far he'll go for that boy...

Notes

AU thing
!Warning! Has season 2 spoilers and minor season 3 spoilers.
Switches from Kiri’s and Bakugo’s POV (marked by K or B) or occasional 3rd person (marked by O)
Good luck.

If there are spelling or grammar mistakes PLEASE PLEASE TELL ME!!
I can hardly hear my own voice through the blood pounding in my ears. There’s hair in my eyes, blocking my sight, but through the strands I see him flying through the air towards me and it’s working, it’s going to work—

Then he’s gone.

“What?”

No.

No, this isn’t happening. We had a plan. It was risky, sure, but it was there, he was there, it was working…

They’re yelling at me. Both of them, trying to figure out what went wrong. As if I have a clue. Did he miss? No, I would’ve seen him fall. He just…disappeared.

I hit cement, hard. A sharp pain shoots through my chest, and even that doesn’t compare to the one in my heart. My lungs aren’t taking breaths. Salty tears are pouring down my face onto the ground, into a red pool that can only be my blood, but that’s not important because dammit, he’s gone and I failed, I fucking failed, he’s gone and it’s my fault—

“Kirishima!”

It’s Midoriya. Or maybe it’s Iida. As I slip into unconsciousness, I realize I can’t tell who called my name.

Blinding white light shines in my eyes as I squint them open. The room smells like hand sanitizer. It’s definitely a hospital, and as I rack my brain trying to remember how I ended up here, memories hit me like a wrecking ball.

Must’ve broken a rib or something. Can’t be too serious.

As my vision adjusts, I notice someone sitting in the chair next to my bed. Spiky yellow hair catches my eye.

“Kirishima? You’re awake?”

Bakugo?

My sight finally clears up, and I realize it’s not Bakugo. It’s Kaminari, and he’s holding his hand in mine, the latter of which has a needle puncturing the wrist. Sero is passed out in an armchair beside him.

Kaminari’s face lights up when I lift my head. Before I can fully process my surroundings, he begins to ramble. “Midoriya just went out to get some food, if I text him right now he can probably pick something up…”

He trails off as I shake my head. The last thing I need at the moment is a full stomach.
“One question.”

It comes out as more of a wheeze, but he understands.

“Bakugo?”

The mood in the room shifts drastically. I can predict the answer from his silence.

“Kiri, I’m sorry…”

Conscious for barely two minutes, and I’m already crying. Great.

“The police and Pros are looking for him, though. They’ll find him.”

It’s an empty promise; even he can feel that. I close my eyes and ignore the drops falling down my face.

The rest of the day flies by.

Then the week.

Visitors come in and out; Ashido, Midoriya, Iida, all coming to apologize. It’s not their fault.

The next week comes along.

I’m released, but the doctors tell me to stay at home. I follow the news intently. They still haven’t found him.

The weeks turn to months.

I’m allowed to go back to school, but not to participate in physical training.

Four months later, the police let the case go. There’s no new evidence, they tell the news. We’ve exhausted every lead and turned up empty-handed at each one.

It rains at his funeral.

I skip school the next day.

Week.

Month.

Sometimes someone will come to the door. I’ll hear them downstairs. ‘Is Eijiro home?’ they’ll ask. ‘I haven’t seen him for weeks. Is he okay?’ They’ll leave schoolwork, or a note, maybe a gift if I’m lucky. I never once speak to them face-to-face.

Eventually, the pain begins to ease. I grow used to not seeing him, not having him beside me, not hearing his voice or feeling his arm on my shoulder. One day, I realize I can hardly remember his voice.

Hey, Shitty-Hair! C’mere! The words are still there, but for the life of me I can’t sound them out. I’ve let hair go back to its natural colour, anyways.

I go back to school the next day.

Sometimes, people who have experienced or are experiencing something traumatic will talk about
the expression everyone around them will assume; the face of pity that materializes no matter the circumstances. I always thought they were being dramatic.

I thought wrong.

As soon as I enter the room, all eyes turn to meet mine. I had hoped that they wouldn’t notice me, but a cloud of darkness like mine is bound to draw attention. I sit at my desk and avoid eye contact.

I hold a few conversations. I don’t even cry. Not until I get home.

The week goes on. I open up more and more. The pity face lessens each day. I dye my hair back and begin to style it. By the end of the month, it feels like everything might be going back to normal.

I’m not forgetting him, I tell myself. Just showing that I can move on. I don’t need to focus on the negative, not when good things happen every day.

O

“Are you sure it’ll hold him?” the voice on the other end of the telephone asks.

The tall man laughs. “Sure as I’ve been since four years old. I’m telling you; it can take his memory. Turn him into a killing machine…you know, all the good stuff.”

“What’s the catch?”

Caught off guard, the man takes a second to respond.

“If he has an experience of…pure bliss, I guess you could put it.” The man swallows and continues. “It could bring his memory back. But you – you said this boy is never even calm—!”

“That is correct. Let me put you on hold, just for a minute.”

A pause. The man waits, his fingers tapping anxiously on his steering wheel. A few minutes later, the phone rings again.

“Come down to the fourth hideout. We’ll be waiting with the boy.”

Hanging up, the man takes the next entrance onto the highway. He reaches his destination within five minutes. An old, ramshackle shed barely stands in front of him, its rusted sign simply saying ‘4’. Entering, the man is greeted by a disturbing sight.

Various members of the League are scattered around the room, some on cellphones, some reading, all clearly bored to death. In the corner, a chained figure sits in a chair, his hands bound and covered. The room is so cold the man can see his breath.

“That him?” he asks, pointing at the shackled prisoner.

One of the members, a young girl with blond hair, looks up. “Duh.”

I see how it is, he thinks. I do your dirty work, and you treat me like shit the whole time.

Nevertheless, he makes his way towards the boy, who, unfortunately, is still conscious and yelling at
the top of his lungs. He can’t talk – not with the muzzle around his mouth – but the fury in his eyes says it all.

“Sorry about this,” the man mutters, placing a hand on the boy’s head. The latter grows quiet, dozing off almost immediately.

Seconds later, his eyes snap open again, but the rage in his eyes is gone, replaced with utter confusion. The man unclips the muzzle.

“Where am I?” the boy asks.

A beat, then…

“Who…who am I?”

Another League member, one with a disembodied hand covering the bulk of his face, appears by their side.

“Your name is Flashover. You were kidnapped by a group of evildoers who seem to have erased your memories. How are you feeling?”

It’s a blatant lie, but he seems to buy it.

“Fine. Can you…I mean, why am I tied up?”

“Ah,” the member says. “They’d turned you into a merciless killer, hellbent on destroying us. But now that you’re back…” he motions to the blond girl, who sighs and pulls out a key. As she undoes the chains, he continues.

“My name is Tomura Shigaraki. Do you remember anything?”

‘Flashover’ shakes his head, clenching his newly-freed hands. “Nah.”

“Okay, well…do you know your Quirk?”

Rubbing his hands together, Flashover holds one out and aims it at the ceiling. A small explosion erupts from his fingertips. “Yeah. I think so.”

Shigaraki goes silent.

“Do you remember UA?” he asks finally.

At this, Flashover’s face falls. “No.”

“How about your childhood?”

He shakes his head.

“Friends? Family? Anything?”

“Sorry,” he mutters. “It’s blank.”

Shigaraki pauses, before letting out a grating cough that can only be a laugh.

“You know…I envy you,” he says. “Memories are a burden. Without them, you’ll be so much more…efficient.”
Flashover doesn’t reply. Satisfied, Shigaraki pulls a stack of papers from a bag and holds them out.

“I want you to memorize every person on these papers. Names, faces, dates of birth…every shred of information.”

The man glances at the top sheet. A photo stares up at him – a young boy, maybe fifteen, sporting spiky red hair and a wide grin. Shigaraki continues.

“Once you’re ready, we’ll send you out into the world. And if you ever encounter any of these people…”

Flashover finishes his sentence for him.

“Kill on sight.”

K

The streets are bustling with the noise of people going about their daily routine. School’s out for the day, so the square I walk through to get home is insanely busy. Nothing new there. Luckily, the thrill around the UA training camp has worn off, meaning most days I can get home without a single person recognizing me.

What were the questions we had to do again? I can never remember. Maybe I’ll text Midoriya tonight, he always seems to have them memorized. Hopefully I can get them done before Kaminari asks for the answers.

There’s a kid staring directly at me. I can’t see the bottom half of his face through a muzzle, but his sharp eyes are scanning my face. His blond hair is short, cropped at the sides, and he’s wearing leather everything.

Some fan, probably. I smile at him and continue. *Man, I’m hungry—*

The ground spins, and I’m on my back. I barely have time to activate my Quirk before I hit the sidewalk. Leather kid is holding my shoulder, aiming a gloved fist at my head. Rolling out of the way, I narrowly avoid his punch, letting him hit cement instead. He doesn’t even wince. Within seconds, we’re both back on our feet. Leather pulls out a knife – a simple one, maybe 9 inches total – and rushes at me. There’s murder in his eyes.

I can barely hold the blade back, much less throw an attack of my own. He’s stabbing randomly; up, down, up, down, down, up, down, up. Through blocking, I manage to yell out a single sentence.

“Can *someone* call the police?!?”

Hopefully one member of the crowd that’s gathered around heard me. Leather swings up, and this time I’m ready for him. Grabbing his wrist, I twist the blade out of his hand. Before he can recalibrate, I land a hit on his jaw.

The muzzle flies off, as does its owner. Leather falls on his back a few feet away, landing with a sickening crunch. Seemingly unfazed, he lifts himself up, staring back at me with a face that seems so familiar…
No.

No, there’s no way. Not after this long. I must have a concussion, or something. He’s dead.

“What the hell…”

May as well try.

“Bakugo?”

He stares back at me, rage barely masking his confusion. “What the fuck are you talking about?”

Small sparks form in his hands. Either I’m hallucinating, or that’s Bakugo’s Quirk…

I hesitate, and he uses that to his advantage, running towards me. I have to hit him, I have to hit him —

I don’t have to hit him, because something else gets there before me. Or rather, someone. An array of police cars flood the street. One of the cops shot a taser at Bakugo, knocking him unconscious. Another is running towards me, and only then do I notice the slashes up and down my arms, where I must’ve forgotten to activate my Quirk…

“M fi…fine,” I manage to say, the world swirling around me. Someone’s yelling, and it’s not me, is it him? No, he’s asleep. He’s asleep. I stumble towards him, feeling my knees scrape as I hit the pavement. He’s landed face down, but when I try to reach out to him something pulls me back.

“Fuck o…fuck off,” I mutter to whatever’s holding onto me. It’s a policeman, but I don’t care, because he’s keeping me from Bakugo. “He’s m…my friend, sir.”

“Kid, you’re going to need to come with us,” he tells me. I nod and let my muscles go. He can take it from here.

They bring me into what must be an ambulance. The bright lights strain my eyes, even when I close them. Every bump brings my stomach further up my throat.

Someone bandages my injuries. The cuts aren’t deep, she tells me. She gives me a special serum and tells me to apply it every day until it heals properly. I’m very lucky to have the Quirk I do, she says; without it, my wounds would be much, much worse, but as it is, they’re mere scratches. Anything psychological I’m experiencing is shock. I try to thank her, but it comes out as a hoarse cough. I fall asleep on an armchair in the waiting room.

“Kirishima Eijiro?”

The voice shakes me awake. Its owner, a policeman with dark hair that shoots up in every angle imaginable, stands over me, his brow furrowed in concern.

“Yeah,” I groan, still in the process of waking up. “How-how’d you know?”

He blinks. “You, uh, you told us. Like half an hour ago.”

“Right.”

Helping me up, the policeman (who tells me his name is Officer Ito) goes on to fill me in.

“We’ve called your mom. She’ll be here in twenty minutes, give or take.”
“Okay.”

“Also…we’re going to need your statement. For the case.”

“…Okay.”

He brings me into a room and sits me across from him. I contemplate lying, but I find I can’t. I tell him the full story.

The failed rescue.

The police giving up.

Every detail I think might be important to the investigation, even the things that were definitely illegal.

Minutes later, I’m done. Ito says nothing; instead, he scribbles a final word onto his notepad and flips it shut. Opening the door, he leads me back to the waiting room.

“One more question,” I say before he leaves. “The kid who attacked me. Did you get his identity?”

A nod.

“Please.”

He looks around. The only person in sight is a receptionist blaring music through her headphones.

“Fine. We ran the fingerprint, but you’re not going to like it.”

“Is it…” I can’t finish the sentence, but he does it for me.

“Bakugo Katsuki.”

If you ask me, I’ve been holding back the waterworks quite well tonight, especially considering the circumstances. But those two words? They break me.

Tears stream down my face as the information hits me like a slap to the face. I back up, collapsing into the chair behind me and it’s too much, it’s too much…

“Can I go see him?”

Ito draws in a breath. “You sure, kid? You seem pretty worn out.”

“No, I…I have to. Maybe I can help with…”

“If you say so,” he says. “Follow me.”

He leads me through a door and down a hallway until I can hear yelling in a voice much too familiar. As Ito swings the door open, the unnerving sight unfolds before me.

Bakugo is chained on a chair, his hands cuffed and covered in front of him. He’s yelling at two policemen who are frantically taking notes, trying to keep up with his senseless rambling.

“Officers!” Ito calls out. “This kid wants some alone time with the…offender.”

They nod and leave, closing the door with a sickening thud. It’s just me and Bakugo now…or whatever is left of him.
“Bakugo—”

“Flashover,” he grumbles.

“Flashover. Do you know who I am?”

He smirks. “Yeah. Your name is Kirishima Eijiro. You’re one hundred and seventy centimeters tall, you were born in Chiba Prefecture on October sixteenth, and your blood type is O. Your Quirk is Hardening, and…” He pauses and looks up, his eyes meeting mine. There’s a fire burning inside them. “And I’m here to kill you.”

I’ll be honest – it’s not what I expected.

“What did they do to you?”

He doesn’t break eye contact. “Who?”

“The League.”

There’s a pause, and the air grows heavy. I’m painfully aware of my own heartbeat, pounding away in my chest.

“They saved me.” His voice is quiet now, almost sad. “I know what you did.”

Curiosity gets the better of me. “What did we do, exactly?”

“You stole my memories. You – you assholes fucking brainwashed me!”

I know I’m not going to change his mind. Not here, not now, not with him in this state. I pull myself up and make my way towards the door, leaving him with one last sentiment.

“Good to know your side of the story.”

With that, I slam the door shut.

“Eijiro? What’s wrong, sweetie?”

My mom’s voice pulls me back to reality. I shake my head. “Nothing.”

“You haven’t even touched your food.”

She’s right. I can’t eat – not after the conversation I just had. I can’t even think straight. What did they do to him?

You assholes fucking brainwashed me!

What did they tell him? They must’ve wiped his slate clean if he’s believing lies like that extreme. Also, what did he call himself? Flashover? What the fuck kind of name is that?

I’ll go see him tomorrow. Maybe I can jog his memory somehow, with the right words. It’s my fault he’s like this anyway.

If I’d gone to rescue him sooner.
If I’d managed to grab his hand.

If I’d tried again, planned another rescue mission, anything…

But I didn’t. And look where it got him; damaged and manipulated, twisted into a killing machine. He’s out of control, containable only by chains and cuffs, because of me and my weakness.

I eat a few bites, force down the bile that starts to rise, and go upstairs. Maybe if I fall asleep, I’ll wake up tomorrow morning and it’ll all be a bad dream…

I wake up the same as usual. Before I leave, I throw up in the toilet. The taste lingers on my tongue for hours.

“Ah. You’re back.”

It’s a statement, rather than a question. Ito’s words almost sting; it’s as if he was expecting me. Am I really that predictable?

“Yeah.” I point at the door. “Can I…”

“Go ahead.”

As I push the door open into the hallway, muffled yells reach my ears. But this time, they’re different – incomprehensible, as though Bakugo is just screaming in pure, unbridled rage. Maybe he is. The closer I get to the cell, the louder they become, until I’ve stopped in front of the steel door that stands between us. The security guard looks up at me from where he’s seated.

“Ito told me you’d come. Kirishima, right?”

I nod.


“Yeah?”

“Don’t take the muzzle off.” Muzzle? “Honestly, I don’t know why you want to visit him. Guy’s a maniac, if you ask me.”

I look past him. “I have my reasons.”

He lifts an eyebrow but says nothing.

I push the door open and step inside.

There’s another difference today; the muzzle around his mouth, the one the guard told me not to take off. It’s eerily similar to the one I knocked off him yesterday.

I grab a chair from the back of the room and move it closer to Bakugo. He’s stopped yelling, instead opting to stare at me through eyes that could cut stone, wincing at the grinding of metal against cement. I notice his breathing is heavy…how long was he yelling? And why did he stop?

Was it because of me?
No, I can’t get my hopes up. He’s probably just tired, that’s all. Sitting down, I return his gaze. He doesn’t relent.

“How…” I cough. “How are you feeling?”

He lets out a growl.

“Right. Sorry.” I briefly put my hands over my face, bringing them down again to talk.

“I’m sorry, Bakugo. It’s my fault, all of this, I…” Tears are welling up in my eyes. I rub them away, but more take their place. My voice is practically a whisper as I continue. “I’m sorry.”

It is my fault. I don’t care if that makes me selfish; it’s the truth, and I need to face it head-on, no matter what.

When I look up, he’s still staring at me, and maybe I’m hallucinating but I swear his face is softer, his eyes kinder than before. Maybe it’s just my mind making things up again.

The time passes fast and excruciatingly slow at the same time. I can’t think of anything else to say. Why did I come here in the first place?

To see him.

It was to see his face, to remind myself that he’s here, he’s with me right now, in this room. It was to make myself feel better.

It doesn’t. All this meeting is doing is reminding me that I’m helpless. I can’t save him, even though he’s right here, I can’t pull him out of this living nightmare he’s trapped in…

_Maybe he likes it there_, the pesky little voice in my head tells me. _Maybe he was waiting for a break from you. Did you think about that?_

I push the voice away. _Not right now._

The guard opens the door. “Time’s up.” Head bowed, I make my way out, giving Bakugo one final glance before I go. This time, he doesn’t stare back.

Kirishima leaves the room as soon as the guard appears. I see him try to meet my eyes, his still damp from his little cryfest earlier, and I don’t give him the satisfaction.

Who does that bastard think he is, anyway? Coming in here talking to me like he knows me, calling me – what is it? Bakugo?

He trusts me. For some stupid reason, he trusts me, and it’s getting fucking _annoying_. Sure, I’ve watched nearly every interview with him, but it was for educational purposes – to learn his strengths, his weaknesses, how to exploit them both. I watched them with intent to kill. Not to be his damn personal therapist.

My cuffs open, and next to me a tray of food appears from a slot in the wall. The muzzle doesn’t open at first, and when it does, it stings like hell and leaves a nasty dent. I don’t even consider using
my Quirk; I tried that yesterday, and all it got me was a taser to the back. The food is cold and unappetizing. Any regular person would say it’s a shit situation, but I’ve had worse, and I’ve gotten out of worse. This is nothing.

When I’m done, I slide my hands back into the cuffs, letting them snap shut around me. Lord knows I don’t want other people around me right now, especially not ones aiming guns at me like they were yesterday. The muzzle clicks back into place. *Fuck.*

How long are Shigaraki and the others going to take? In the rare case of the arrest of a League member, it usually takes them three days at most – and that’s with little to no press coverage. Attack a UA student, especially one from class 1-A? That’s at least two days of media reports, unless they’re specifically keeping it on the down-low. That, combined with the huge crowd of witnesses on the scene, should supply them with enough information to formulate a solid plan within the hour. So why I’m still stuck in this shithole after two fucking days? A mystery.

I forgot how quiet it is without that little fuckwad in here getting the floor wet. Would be peaceful if it wasn’t so *boring.*

I fall asleep somehow, drowning in my thoughts.

*One. Todoroki Shouto. Son of Pro Hero Endeavor. Looks like the fucking Maltese flag.*

*Two. Tokoyami Fumikage. Definitely a furry.*

*Three. Sero Hanta. Shoots tape from his elbows like a knockoff Spider-Man.*

All the way down the list. Birthdays, grade averages, heights, even blood types. Everything I’ve learned in the past few months, all running through my head at warp speed like they’ve done a thousand times over, until finally I doze off. What can I say? Some people go over the multiplication table. Some write stories or memoirs. Me? I memorize every detail of my targets.

All nineteen of them.

The sun is barely rising when the guard pokes his head in the cell. “Guess who’s back, fucker.”

He knows I can’t reply. It’s a taunt, a dare, as if to say *what are you going to do about it?* Still, I know who he means.

Kirishima.

Back to pretend we’re BFFs while I sit chained and unable to talk. Not exactly the most believable story, given the circumstances.

Sure enough, barely a minute after the guard says that, Target #12 walks into the room, his dumb face still all sad and shit.

“What, Bakugo…”

*Flashover,* dumbass.

“Remember the night we tried to rescue you? From the League of Villains, I mean.” He waits, as if for me to respond.
I’m barely processing. The League of Villains? They rescued me from these guys. Not the other way around.

“Me, Iida, Midoriya, Yaoyorozu, and Todoroki, we went to get you back. After they kidnapped you from the training camp…”

I remember hearing about the UA training camp. It was always deemed a failure by the League. Not a single casualty.

“You know about the UA training camp, right?”

I almost nod.

Won’t it be fun to play around with him, though?

At that thought, I change my answer, shaking my head instead. His face falls. “Oh. Okay, well, pretty much UA sent their students to overnight camp, but while they were there, villains started attacking the grounds. No one died, but one kid was kidnapped and taken back to their hideout. And get this – his name?”

Bakugo?

“Bakugo Katsuki. My best friend.”

Sure.

“So, me and my friends go out to rescue him. You. There’s Pro Heroes out there too, but they don’t know we’re also trying to rescue you. There’s this whole big fight, and the villains end up warping you with them to a secondary location. Of course, we’re already there, so Midoriya comes up with a genius plan – in about three seconds flat, mind you, kid’s a fucking prodigy – and we go to execute it.”

He’s actually grinning. It’s the first time I’ve seen him smiling, besides his photo in my information sheets.

“So we’re flying through the air, right, and All Might is fucking deck ing this other guy – the flying is part of the plan, by the way – and I hold out my hand to you like ‘hey, c’mon dude’ and…and…”

The smile fades.

“You disappear. Just like that.” He falls silent after that. Our five minutes must be up, because once again the guard opens the door. This time, he says nothing; instead, he motions silently to Kirishima, then into the hallway. Kirishima looks up to meet my eyes again, and I let him. There’s a tear rolling down his face that twists the meaning of the small smile he shoots my way.

Then he’s gone, and I’m alone again in this damned cell.

K

“You free tonight?” I ask the second the phone picks up.

Sero’s shocked voice rings out from the other end of the line. “Sure…? Why?”
“I don’t know. Just…don’t feel like being at home right now, you know?”

He pauses before replying. “Yeah. Want me to invite Kaminari, too?”

I swallow the lump in my throat. “Yeah! That sounds…that sounds good.”

Kaminari’s there before I am, already settled on the couch when I burst through the door. Both of them stare at me, their faces etched with concern, watching as I throw myself onto the chair across them.

“Rough day?” Kaminari asks, stretching his legs over the rest of the sofa and, by extension, Sero. I nod.

They share a glance. There’s tension in the room, and it’s thick enough to cut with a knife.

Finally, Sero pipes up.

“Kirishima, you know we were allowed to change out of our hero costumes after training?”

No wonder people were staring at me the whole way here.

“Fuck!”

Sero’s kind enough to lend me some of his clothes for the night. They’re a little baggy on me, which is concerning given that he’s definitely skinnier than me.

“How do you fit in these, dude?”

He shrugs. “I don’t.”

“Why d’you get them, then?”

“I dunno.” He picks at a button on his shirt. “I guess…baggier clothes make me feel less scrawny?”

I almost laugh at that. “Scrawny? Dude, you’re not scrawny! You’re in the hero course, for fuck’s sake!”

Sero shifts over to let Kaminari sit beside him, the latter toting a ginormous bag of Doritos. “I don’t think there’s a correlation. Y’know, Denki’s in the hero course.”

“Fuck off, Hanta!” Kaminari opens the bag with a loud ripping noise. “You’re not getting any of my Doritos now.”

“Those are my Doritos, dumbass!”

“Well they’re mine now, dipshit!”

I sigh. It’s nice to see my friends, especially after the past few days I’ve had.

It reminds me that there’s still good in the world. No matter how bad it feels, they’ll always have my back.
“Bakugo!”

Kirishima’s arms are suddenly around me, nearly knocking me off my feet.

“What is it, Shitty-Hair?”

“Happy Birthday!”

So it is. Thursday, April 20th.

Why do people make such a big fuss about birthdays? It’s not like anything special happened. Just some day where you happened to be brought kicking and screaming into a hospital room. Not really worth all the excitement.

“…thanks.”

He smiles and leads me across the grounds. There’s a line of trees at the end of them, right where bustling city meets the soothing quiet of nature. A path winds between them; a narrow, dirt one, barely visible among the foliage. Kirishima pushes the leafy curtain back.

“After you.”

I cross my arms and duck through. Rays of sunshine poke through the thick canopy, casting a warm, yellow light over the rocks and branches that litter the forest floor.

“Great. Trees. Why are we here again?”

“We’re not done here, Bakugo.” His soft voice carries through the woods, wrapping around trunks and rustling the leaves. “Besides, this is super illegal, so I figured it was right up your alley.”

“I’m listening.”

He takes my hand and pulls me down the path, holding back stray branches for me as we go. The roof is getting thicker now, barely illuminating our way. Kirishima doesn’t seem to mind. Instead, he tugs me deeper into the forest.

There’s a fleeting moment where we’re in near complete darkness; a minute at most, and I would be terrified. But I trust him. I trust Kirishima to know where he’s going. And it’s a good thing I do, because he leads us back, until we can both see again.

Then we reach a clearing.

It’s absolutely gorgeous.

A huge lake stretches for miles, twinkling in the sun, its waves lapping onto the rocky shore. Not one sign of human civilization is in sight, and we don’t need it; I could stare at this lake for hours, entranced by its rhythmic flow. Small flowers speckle the meadow, swaying in the breeze like dancers to a song…

“Hey! Loverboy!”

Snapped back to reality, I turn to face Kirishima. He’s grinning.
“There’s more, you know.”

I follow his finger. A cave sits at the edge of the clearing, its gaping mouth dark and rocky. Kirishima watches my face as it turns to shock.

“Don’t worry, it’s perfectly safe,” he tells me.

I scoff. “I don’t worry.”

“If you say so.”

Neither of us hesitate to lower ourselves into the cave. Inside, it’s a steep downhill angle, and I can’t see a thing.

“You got a flashlight?”

I hear him rustle around, then a beam of light shoots across the hall. I narrowly dodge a stalactite headed straight for my head.

The hallway suddenly widens until we’re standing in a full room, illuminated only by Kirishima’s flashlight. Pillars of rock reach from the ground to the ceiling about ten meters high, blanketed in patches of moss. In the corner, a slow waterfall pours into a clear pond. I find I can’t move, only stare in pure awe at the sheer beauty.

“C’mon. Let’s find a place to sit.”

We end up right next to the pond. Kirishima’s dangling a finger in it, his arm resting on a large rock next to him.

Finally, I talk.

“So…why’d you bring me here?”

He looks at me, a smile floating across his lips. “Cause it’s your birthday!”

I stare at him. He turns back to the water, dragging his finger across the surface. “And…because this place is special to me. And, well, you’re special to me, so…”

He moves the flashlight so that it shines on the rest of the chamber, putting his other arm on his knee. “Let’s take the day off. Stay here, instead of going back to school.”

“Yeah,” I say. “That’d be nice.”

There’s a pause, but it’s not awkward.

I place my hand over his, holding it in mine.

“You’re really special to me, too, Kirishima.”

My eyes snap open, squinting in the sunlight. God, that was a weird dream.

I try to bring it back to my mind. Nothing.
Something about trees and caves, and a sense of fulfillment.

With each blink, it slips further and further from my memory, dwindled down to a dust speck in my mind. *Something about it seemed so familiar*…

It doesn’t matter, though, because whatever it was, it’s long gone by now.

K

It’s still the same security guard. I’m starting to get the impression that he’s getting sick of me.

“Back again?” he asks as I walk past him.

I smirk. “Not giving up that easy.”

With that, I open the door and step in.

Bakugo’s still chained. That’s not going away anytime soon. He’s breathing hard again, his eyes closed tight.

“Hey.”

He doesn’t move. He doesn’t even open his eyes.

“You asleep?”

Looking up, he gives me a shake of his head. I smile. *Why am I smiling?*

He tilts his head back down. *What do I do with this?* I fill the silence the only way that comes to mind; incessant rambling.

“I’m sure you don’t miss school, huh? What with the work, and the…the training…and all?”

Bakugo doesn’t answer. Of course he doesn’t answer, dumbass; he has a muzzle, he can’t. I cough, starting a barely related train of thought aloud.

“I, uh, I actually just got off school. Trust me…you’re not missing much.” Maybe if I can keep talking about the memories he lost, I’ll be able to reawaken that part of his brain. It’s a long stretch, but so far, it’s the only plan I’ve come up with.

“We did just have a test. In grammar, of all things. As if we’re gonna need that when we’re out kicking bad guys’ asses!”

Looking up, Bakugo stares daggers into me.

“Sorry.”

All it’s accomplishing so far is pissing him off, which, granted, isn’t hard. *Dammit, Kirishima, think!*

“They finally cut down that old-ass tree last week. You know the one at the edge of campus that’s like, basically hollow inside? The school *finally* marked it as a danger and took it down. Took them long enough, you ask me.”
He’s giving me nothing, not even a glare.

“Thank god it’s almost the end of the week. You know how many times I’ve fallen asleep in class this week?”

A pause. Fucking hell.

“Too – too many times.” I cough. “Just gotta survive through tomorrow, at least.”

The silence is deafening. It’s painful; a reminder that I can’t bring this boy back from where they sent him.

“Time’s up.”

Fuck.

“Same time tomorrow?” I ask Bakugo. He doesn’t even look at me, staring blankly at the wall behind me. I smile, barely keeping the tears at bay.

I don’t sleep tonight. Memories play in my head like catchy songs, if those songs made me cry and hug my pillow until the sun rises. What if those memories were so intense that I could send them to him?

I’m sure it’s someone’s Quirk. It’s the kind that seems completely useless until situations like these, when you realize it had a purpose after all, and an important one at that.

“Kirishima Eijiro!”

Lifting my head, I blink in the glaring light of the bright classroom. Why is this when my body wants to sleep?

“Yes, sir?”

Aizawa turns back to the board. “You know what…just do what you want. Don’t blame me if you miss important information, though.”

“That’s what Midoriya’s for, sir!”

He lets me have it. I look over to see Midoriya’s expression (he’s barely stifling a laugh), but all I can focus on is the empty seat in front of him.

How long is this going to take?

“Go ahead in.”

The guard doesn’t even look up from his magazine as he says it. I nod and push through the door, running my fingers through my hair in a futile attempt to spike it up.
There’s something different this time around. Bakugo’s shaking; not with heavy breaths, but something else. I don’t realize what until I see a tear fall onto the floor.

He’s *crying*. Hard, too, sobs racking his body.

“Bakugo? Oh, god, what’s – hold on—”

I run over to him, ripping the muzzle off his face. He looks up at me, and his face, his *eyes* are soft again.

“What’s wrong?”

He blinks.

“Kirishima?”

I smile so wide my face feels like it’s going to rip apart. “Bakugo? Is that you?”

“Of course it’s me! Who else would it even be?”

*Long story.* “I’ll tell you later, but we need to get out of here. Do you remember anything?”

Bakugo shakes his head. “It’s blank. Is the door clear?”

My mind goes to the guard. In a freak miracle I might be able to take him out, but it’s too risky – after all, he’s professionally trained to keep dangerous people from escaping, and we don’t even know his Quirk. “Definitely not.”

“Window?”

I turn to look at the opening. It’s small and heavily barred, but with both of our Quirks combined, we should be able to make it.

“Sounds good.”

I free his hands. He sighs as I unclasp the cuffs, rubbing at the red dents in his skin.

“Can you still use your Quirk?” I ask him.

He holds out a hand, aiming directly for the window. I don’t even need to use my Hardening; the explosion is devastating. Shards of glass, plaster, and metal shoot out in every direction, raining down on the two of us. He grins, dried tears still clinging to his face.

“Yeah, I think so.”

The feat is so remarkable, I almost forget about the noise Bakugo’s Quirk makes. That is, until the doorknob rattles.

“Fuck – let’s go, Bakugo!” I hiss in his direction. He nods, and together we climb out the window and down a back alley behind the institute.

We don’t stop running until the prison is far behind us, but by the time we do we’re both panting like we ran a marathon. Bakugo leads me through a maze of sketchy pathways, all lined on every side with concrete.

“Jesus, Bakugo…” I look behind us. “You sure know your way around.”
He takes off his jacket, tying it around his waist. “Yep. Perks of the job, I guess.”

“Job?” I’ve fallen behind, somehow way more out of breath than my companion. “What job?”

Scanning the dead-end we’ve hit, Bakugo turns to look at me. His eyes aren’t soft anymore; they’re hard as steel, and just as cold. “The League of Villains, obviously!”

I take a step back. He paces towards me, his gait even and confident.

“Bakugo, don’t do this…”

He smirks. “How are you going to stop me? With that pathetic little Quirk of yours? Thanks for busting me out, by the way…once I kill you, I can get back to the League and they can scratch your name off our list. It’s been there a little too long, if you ask me.”

My mind doesn’t process the last bit, but it catches the first, and he’s right. I can’t beat him, not in hand-to-hand combat. So, I do the next best thing.

I run.

“Seriously?” he yells down the alleyway. A flaring pain shoots up my back, knocking me to the ground, and fuck, I’m going to die, I can’t get up…

The world swirls around me. Hands grab at my shoulders; warm hands, hands that wouldn’t ever hurt me, but here they are slamming me into the hard cement. The taste of blood fills in my mouth, leaking over the corners. Bakugo stands over me, his face an inch from mine, holding a fireball in his right hand. I can’t activate my Quirk, can’t fight back, can’t do anything except lie down and accept my fate.

“Any last words?”

Yeah. A million of them.

All the words I haven’t said yet.

‘I finally graduated! I’m a pro now!’ ‘Mom, Dad…I need to tell you something.’ ‘I’ll be there soon; work ends at three.’ ‘That’s my kids! Aren’t they adorable?’

‘I love you.’

But I can’t make the words; not here, not now. So, I do the next best thing.

I lean forward, and I kiss him.

It’s insane, I know. But if these really are my last moments?

Fuck it. I want this to be the last thing I do. I want to die kissing Bakugo Katsuki, even if he’s the one killing me. Just once in my life, I want to know what it feels like.

He freezes solid, the fire in his hand fizzling out. I’d say it’s a struggle to stay calm, but it’s not; a sense of total euphoria spreads over me as I reach up to kiss him deeper. There’s a moment where time stands still. It’s just me and him, in this back alley, fighting to the death.

Then the clock unfreezes, and the most extraordinary thing happens.

He kisses me back, running a hand through my hair. The other one finds mine and holds it tight.
If he wanted to kill me, he would’ve by now. I break the kiss and breathe a single word; a question, one I thought I’d already had the answer to.

“Bakugo?”

Pure confusion runs across his face. “Where are we?”

“Is that you?”

“As opposed to?”

I smile. “I’ll tell you later.”

He looks around at the surrounding concrete. “Did you fucking roofie me?”

“N – what? No!” I lift myself up, forcing him to sit up as well. Maybe he’s already settled, or maybe he just hadn’t noticed, but Bakugo is sitting on my lap now, his legs on either side of mine. He’s still got his arms around my neck.

“One question,” I say.

“Shoot.”

I dig through my memories, trying to find one poignant enough to remember without being common knowledge.

“Remember that time Ashido stuck her charger in Kaminari’s mouth to see if it would charge her phone?”

Bakugo scoffs. “Hell yeah, I do. Kaminari got so freaked he surged and went full dumb mode for, like, three days.”

I grin. “And the phone?”

“ Went to a hundred and four percent, shut down, and never started again.”

It’s him. He’s back. He’s back.

“Fuck yeah, it didn’t.” I flip him onto his back and go in for another kiss, bright red hair falling loosely into my face.

He laughs. “I’m not one to kinkshame, but that’s one hell of a way to get off.”

“I’ll explain later.”

“You better.”

I realize something that day, sitting in that alleyway with the boy I love.

I will get to say everything that ran through my head in what I thought to be the last seconds of my life. I’ll say them all, and I can start with one of them.

I squeeze his hand.

“I love you.”

He pauses before squeezing it back.
“…I love you too.”

I’ll say them all, damned if I don’t. It’s something to fight for. *He’s* something to fight for. And I’ll go to hell and back if it means living through each and every one.

I’ll go to hell and back if he’s by my side.

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