Summary

For as long as there's been quirks, the cycle of the new world was started the actions of two brothers. Give or take, hero or villain, legacy or immortality, One for all or All for One.

And yet... the third party faded into the background, unmentioned and forgotten. That was foolish. Considering the hidden nature of their own quirks, they should have realised that their fight was never just between the two of them. What better balance than rebirth?

Of course, this was no accident.

Notes

most likely this is going to go through a few reworkings, try to bear with me.
using the OFA user names from Dis(associate) by BeyondTheClouds777 (check that out if you haven't already)
anywho, hope you enjoy.
It was Time.

Mirai had finally sent One-For-All away to safety, and with each day that passed the embers grew dimmer.

They could delay no longer.

How did it ever come to this? Ichigou always thought Mirai would have longer to hone One-For-All before passing it on, but now? They had no time. Mirai’s long illness would most likely claim him within the year, so this was their only chance to stop Kansei themselves.

Gold eyes turned to look into pale blue as Ichigou asked “and you're sure Yukō will be safe long enough if we fail?”

“One-For-All isn't that distinctive unless you count the transferral itself, and Nii-san never knew I had any ties to Yukō... He should be safe for a time, hopefully long enough to hone it.” Mirai replied.

“I still say that was an uninspired name choice.” said Ichigou, before narrowing his eyes and continuing “Are you sure you will be able to do this? You are even still calling him 'Nii-san'. If you have any doubts you shouldn't go yourself.”

Mirai straightened, only highlighting how frail the man was, not a spare piece of flesh on him, and turned from the building to look straight at Ichigou for the first time.

“My brother is dead, and I call that man that only to remember him. I will do everything I can to stop my brother's memory being defiled by him any further.” Mirai said with such finality that Ichigou dared not challenge him further on the point.

“Alright then, shall we?” said Ichirou, turning to nod to the steel door to the warehouse, where, unless their information was wrong (or worse, Kansei had found some sort of quirk that let him sense them) their biggest opponent on the road to acceptance for quirks would be.
Mirai nodded, walking towards the door, Ichigou one pace behind him. When he reached the door Mirai reared back a fist and struck it. It had always been a wonder to Ichigou, quirks or no, to see the emaciated man perform such feats of strength. At the first blow the steel of the door dented, at the second it collapsed inward with a bang.

Beyond the door was a dark warehouse, full of shelves upon shelves of shadowed boxes. “After you.” said Mirai, as Ichigou raised his hand, palm up, golden flames springing to life there to light the dim interior.

They travelled in tense silence, walking quickly through the warehouse, Ichigou a pace ahead now, watching everything they could see in the flickering light. He was secretly fearful that their quarry had retrieved whatever he had come for and fled, or (yet another pessimistic thought) that he had come here simply to lure them into some sort of trap.

In the centre of the warehouse was an apparently empty space, devoid of shelves. As the (in Ichigou's opinion) foolhardy pair approached it there was a rustling of cloth and, from just outside the golden firelight, Kansei's voice sounded “Otouto... I'm glad to see you again.”

A pause as Kansei seemed (presumably pretended) to just notice Ichigou.

“though I don't recall inviting you to this family reunion.”

In spite of all Ichigou's experience, fighting both quirked and unquirked criminals in the chaos as quirked numbers exploded, he froze at the pure malice in those words.

Mirai did not, touching Ichigou's shoulder as he passed him into the open space.

Shaking himself, Ichigou continued forward, saying “Yeah, well, my friend is a bit frail these days, he needed someone to keep him safe, in case of any accidents.”

Ichigou allowed the flame in his palm to expand, a larger flame like a gauntlet coming to cover both his forearms, carefully held so that the flames were an inch or so above the skin. The brighter light finally revealed him. His dark hair as unruly as ever, the freckles somewhat ruining his villainous demeanour. His eyes were currently narrowed in a glare, directed past Mirai, straight at Ichigou.

“I think I can keep my own brother safe without help from the likes of you.” spat Kansei.
“Your safety is a cage Nii-san. I will not return to my cage, and I will put a stop to this.” interrupted Mirai before Ichigou could respond, “are you sure about this Nii-san? you could still join us, still do the right thing.” He continued.

At this Kansei laughed, a bitter, inhuman sound. “The right thing? With you? No, my way is right, you will see that one day, Otouto. I will make sure of it. But first, I think I will deal with our little gatecrasher, see if I can't stop him from doing any more to turn you against me.”

At this Kansei was suddenly between mirai and Ichigou. 'shit, when did he get a warp quirk?' thought Ichigou as he frantically raised his palm to launch a fireball at Kansei.

Mirai turned, as in slow motion, to face Kansei as he began to launch the sword-like thorns produced by one of quirks at Ichigou, who reflexively shaped the forming fireball into a wall to defend from them. The thorns slowed in the viscous golden flame as they burned, most reduced to ash before they passed the wall, the remainder falling short of their mark.

'The wall blocked my view of him. He has a warp quirk.' thought Ichigou in horror the instant before it happened. His back was pierced by something and Kansei's voice sounded from a couple of feet behind him “Normally I might take your quirk or simply remove you with one of mine, but I noticed how you keep your fire away from your arms. I have no use for such a pitiful, self-destructive quirk, and I have been dying to test out one of my recent... acquisitions.” He said before activating a quirk.

Ichigou burned. His quirk activated out of control fire sprouting over every inch of his flame-resistant but not truly fireproof skin. For that instant he screamed as Mirai shouted, and desperately rushed to try to stop whatever Kansei's quirk had done, somehow. Then there was nothing left, but the fire, the ash, and the only part of him that was fireproof- his hands.

Those golden flames seemed to take on the form of wings, before they too were gone, and Mirai was left alone to face his brother.
Naomasa was at his wit's end. After twelve years of calm, the most infamous vigilante in Japan had suddenly, at least it appeared, returned full-force.

It was just possible that this was a copycat, if it weren't for the fact that the new attacks matched the MO from before the gap in activity down to the smallest details that the police had never publicized.

Before his sudden disappearance, which the detectives on the case had taken to speculating was due to biting off more than he could chew with one criminal or another, the vigilante, codename “Amber,” was both a mystery and a headache to heroes and police alike ranging from Kyushu to Hokkaido, and at least once that they knew of in Korea. No sightings, no information about height or build, no name, no idea if they were even a man or a woman. Criminals would just show up outside police stations in the night, seemingly at random, tied up, and with a business card reading simply “Amber” and then a short list of offences pinned to their chests.

Most of the attacks seemingly took place in the victim's homes, but even the most circumspect criminals seemingly couldn't keep Amber out, or even catch a glimpse of them on camera. The camera footage of the areas would invariably have been destroyed somehow, criminals would claim- truthfully- that they hadn't seen whoever attacked them.

That was, until today. Naomasa had been called in specifically to interview the latest of the new wave to arrive outside a police station, in Musutafu this time. The former head of an underground fighting ring, at least according to the Amber business card, Kendo Fugou was a slight, twitchy man, not the sort people would normally associate with that sort of violent business, but then Naomasa had seen far less assuming criminals.

As Naomasa entered the interrogation room, Fugou's head snapped up from where he was staring at his hands, cuffed to the table.

“Apologises for making you wait like this, we have reason to believe your case is tied to a series of vigilante attacks, so as the detective in charge of that case I was called in. My name is Tsukauchi Naomasa. Now, before we begin, I am required to inform you that my quirk 'human lie detector,' as
the name implies, allows me to tell when you lie.” said the detective, in a relatively pleasant voice, after turning on the room's recording device.

The man nodded, unconsciously running his thumb along the burn mark on his forearm- one of the commonalities of Amber victims, most of the detectives on the case thought they probably had a fire quirk. “Y-Yeah, t-that's fine.”

“So to begin,” continued the detective, “can you state your name for the record?”

“K-Kendo Fugou.” (-)

Naomasa reached into the folder he had placed on the table between them, and pulled out a picture of the “Amber” card. “And do you recognize this?”

“Y-Yeah, it was pinned to me when I woke up outside the s-station this morning.” (-)

“And do you remember what you were doing before you woke up there?” Naomasa asked, as a formality, no-one ever remembered Amber.

“Yeah! I was sitting in my office, when I turned to get something from the cabinet behind me there was this kid-” (-)

In spite of himself the detective stiffened, Fugou must have noticed because he cut off.

“Kid? You mean you saw the person that attacked you?” Naomasa asked

“Yeah, like I said, I turned around and they were just there, in my office, no idea how they got there.” (-) Replied Fugou, confused.

“That is unexpected, did you get a good look at them? Notice any distinguishing features?”

“let's see... they were clearly surprised when I turned around, must not have expected it. Looked young, probably not more than 15? short. one-fifty, maybe one-fifty-five. Dark hair, dark eyes.
Dressed all in black,” (-) he tapped the burn mark, “threw a little fireball at me before I could see much more.” (-) a pause, “Next thing I knew I was freezing, tied up outside before sunrise.” (-) 

Naomasa was frantically writing this down, while internally cursing. ’Too young. Damn. Copycat then, most likely, but how?’ 

Schooling his voice to calm Naomasa asked “So he threw a fireball at you, and you passed out?” ’that would be a very weird quirk.’ 

“No, he threw the fireball, then rushed in. stuck me with a needle full of somrthing, then I passed out.” (-) 

’So a simple fire quirk as a distraction, then chemicals to knock them out?’ thought the detective as Fugou went on. 

“That kid was quick, he must have known what he was doing, more experience than a kid that age should have.” (-) Naomasa didn't think the man had really meant to say that last out loud, quickly adding, “I-I think.” (ping) 

“Would you be willing to describe the kid you saw to our sketch artist?” asked the detective, after noting down the lie. 

“S-Sure.” (-) said the man, seemingly remembering to stutter again. 

“And does the term All-For-One mean anything to you?” Asked the detective, pitching it as if an afterthought. 

“N-No. Should it?” (-) 

“Not really, don't worry about it. Now excuse me, we'll continue this after I call the sketch artist.” Naomasa said, standing to leave the room. 

Copycat or no, the continuation of never going after anyone- or at least anyone important enough to know- that was tied to AFO was worrying. You didn't take down ringleaders while avoiding AFO's
men by chance. Toshinori needed to be told about this, thought the plain faced man, taking out his phone.

-three hours earlier-

Izuku, as they were currently known, slipped back through the window as silently as he had entered it.

'That was a mess. What else could go wrong, mom finding out?' grumbled the boy to himself, as he removed the black wig, revealing green hair, curling wildly in every direction.

_It wasn't that bad, he barely got a glimpse, and you reacted much better than I did the first time a target turned unexpectedly._ Came the answering voice in the boy's head- more a half dozen voices talking in unison than a single voice really.

'You say that, but our last life managed to go their whole career completely anonymously. What is he saw something that would let them identify us?' asked they boy peevishly, hiding the wig in its place under the small bed.

_The worst he could do would be to mention your height. You don't look like yourself at all right now. And we stayed anonymous by pure luck half the time._

'So you keep saying, but I've got an additional generation's experience, I shouldn't be messing up this badly.'

The boy continued to argue with the voices in his head as he expertly crept through the house to the bathroom, perfectly avoiding any creaky floorboards, and opening the door in utter silence to avoid waking their mother.

_I really like this look, but not as much as that time we were blond._ Chimed the voice.

'hmph, well I like looking like myself thank you very much. And you mean the time you got
yourself killed by the time you were twenty, Dai?’ Sniped Izuku, beginning to remove the make-up that hid his distinctive freckles.

_Harsh._ Groused the voice, one voice predominating for a moment. _Don't say it as if I was being stupid, Kansei would have killed aki if I had run._

_In fairness we should have known that he would have kept that quirk after-_  

'Guys, please don't argue while we're awake, you know it gives me a headache.' cut in Izuku before the voice could begin one of its disagreements about centuries old decisions.

_FINE, fine. We'll be quiet. Should we take it you won't be dissuaded from training instead of dreaming tonight? _Asked the voice, sounding more concordant, if somewhat resigned._

'Yup! don't sound so weary, the more you teach me, the longer it will be before we have to teach someone new from scratch.' replied Izuku cheerily, removing the coloured contact lenses to reveal eyes of brilliant gold, before placing them in the special case he took from one of the dark outfit's pockets.

The voice sighed _This is worse than Ichigou, maybe we shouldn't have taught him how to hide eye bags so young._ It began grumbling, not for the first time, as Izuku sneaked from the bathroom, heading for his bed, and not-quite-sleep.
of lessons and plans

Chapter Summary

Izuku talks to himself in class, Bakugou is mad about it

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Katsuki was pissed. Fucking Deku was spacing out in English. Again. At least he wasn't muttering to himself this time.

Honestly Deku had pissed Katsuki off nearly constantly since his quirk had come in, since the green eyes had suddenly turned gold in the playground one day. It wasn't just that he started spacing out a lot, from what Katsuki remembered, the nerd had always done that, it was because shitty Deku had started to constantly look down on Katsuki. He said they were still friends, and he still called him Kacchan- which was another thing that pissed Katsuki off- but he refused to compete with him any more, like he wasn't worth it.

“Flame Shape” was the only quirk in this shitty school that was (nearly) as good as Katsuki's, and he just refused to use it, didn't even really play with it like the extras did. He even said he didn't want to be a hero. Bullshit. Who didn't want to be a hero? Not that anyone else in Katsuki's class had any hope of becoming a hero. It was fucking stupid that the only other person Katsuki knew who's quirk was such a great combo- telekinesis from his mother and fire breath from his father, to make a sort of pyrokinesis- insisted on wasting it!

It never stopped him from playing hero any chance he got, though. That was the only time Katsuki had ever seen him use it, when Deku decided to stop him teaching some shitty extra to stay out of his way, blocking his explosions easily with little bursts of golden flames from his palm, with a look in those golden eyes like he was bored. Bored! Like he could beat Katsuki any time he wanted, like he wasn't worth his full attention.

Growling to himself, Katsuki tore his attention away from stupid Deku, trying to focus on what Ichigouya-sensei was saying.

He's gone quiet again, it can't be good said the voice, primarily Ichigou for a moment.
There's a chance Yagi-kun could have gotten him, right? Replied- mostly- Hayato, sounding hopeful.

'I really hope so, but it seems unlikely, last we checked All Might had no idea where to find him right?' Cut in Izuku, staring, unseeing, out the window. '… We're sure that just telling All Might where to find him wouldn't work?'

Yes. responded the voice, every voice at the same volume again.

The voice shifted, Aoi, the incarnation immediately before Izuku, coming to the fore. He's still too young, even if we could let him know safely, there's too much of a risk he'd rush in to avenge Nana. It said, sounding kind, as it always did when it was mostly Aoi speaking.

Izuku fought hard to avoid actually vocalizing a sigh. 'I know, but it's never sit right with me, just letting him run loose like this, us not even doing anything much to slow him.'

We know, and we're sorry, but you know we can't risk letting him take our quirk, we got really lucky he though Dai was my son, and that he still didn't want a “weak fire quirk.” Came the answer, sounding mostly like Dai and Ichigou.

'Yeah, yeah, I get it. Ok, so we just have to watch for what he might be up to. Where do we stand on the hero killer?' Answered Izuku, turning to only slightly less hopeless prospects.

Pretty interesting patterns there we think, 2-4 attacks in an area, always heroes alone, or with one other, almost all found in alleys. Not a powerful quirk, or at least not something suited to drawn out fights, especially against groups. Said the voice, almost evenly, before it contradicted itself.

Hmph, that mostly describes 'Amber' and we all know their quirk could take out a group with little difficulty. This was mostly from Ren, the quietest of the pieces of the voice.

'True, but we're cautious beyond all reason, remember what the survivors said? If this guy could take out groups of heroes, he would.' argued Izuku.

Heads up, Ichigouya-chan just asked us for the past perfect of jump. Interrupted Yugo, who was on
reality watch today.

“Had jumped.” Replied Izuku immediately to the question—which he had not actually heard.

“Correct, well done.” Said the teacher, trying not to look surprised that the boy, who moments before had clearly been looking out the window absently, had answered accurately. She didn't need to know that Ren had spoken fluent English, and allowed the others free access to that knowledge.

Izuku was already directing his attention inwards again before the second syllable, trying to ignore the grinding of teeth from Bakugou.

*So shall we make a move immediately, or wait until he changes hunting ground to be safe?* The voice was saying, sounding- Izuku thought- most like Ichigou, Ren, and Dai.

'Do you really think I'm ready for someone as presumably dangerous as Stain? Dream training or no, I thought you said I was still too young for high skill targets.' Interjected Izuku into the internal discourse.

*You are, but while he's skilled we can assume he relies on ambushes, and is close combat specialized. If we get the drop on him, or even fight evenly, but from a distance, you will be fine.* Answered the voice.

*Actually, given that we are sure he's an ex-vigilante, and a recent one at that, there's a pretty good chance he'd hesitate to kill a child, or even refuse altogether, which could net us a big opening.* Added Aoi, showing her “Amber” side for once.

'Alright... so when and where do we move?' Asked Izuku, opening his current quirk notebook.

After class, Izuku started to pack away his things, still mostly focused on his internal discussion-quickly devolving into headache-inducing argument territory, the different parts of the voice beginning to talk on their own, often over one-another.
Here we go again. Came the resigned voice of Yugo, only the second thing he had said all day, drawing the attention of Izuku and the rest of the voice back to reality, only to see Katsuki approaching them, usual scowl firmly in place.

“What the shit, Deku?” growled the blond.

“H-Hey, K-Kacchan, w-what’s wrong?” stuttered out the shorter boy, as the blond came to loom over him.

“Don’t call me that, fucker, what are you playing at, you were even more spaced out than usual, do you think you can fucking compete with me when you don’t listen to what we’re supposed to be learning, huh?” demanded Bakugou, eliciting a low, Aoi predominated growl from the voice.

“I-I’m not t-trying to c-compete with you K-Kacchan, a-and I w-was paying a-attention, I swear!” Izuku responded, timidly looking down.

The fiery boy seemed to grow somehow more enraged at that, small explosions popping from his palms. “So I’m not worth competing with still, shitty nerd? And the other extras might believe that shit, but I’m not dumb enough to fall for it. You were looking out the window half the class, and scribbling in your stupid quirk notebook the other half.” He spat, glaring at the shrinking flame user.

“I t-think you’re worth competing with Kachan! B-But english isn’t really a competition is it?” Izuku answered, hoping to placate his childhood friend, and turn attention away from the book, currently full of coded plans for vigilante work.

“Of course it is, and I intend to win, so you had better take it seriously, shitty nerd,” Bakugou narrowed his eyes, “and stop fucking staying up all night, you suck ass at hiding it. If the stupid teachers start fucking making trouble for auntie because you're always dead on your feet I'll kill you!” Finished the blond, before spinning on his heal, and storming from the class, leaving the frazzled greenette to finish packing, as the voice started its usual post-Bakugou commentary session.

Chapter End Notes

for anyone who's curious, not sure if I'll make this more explicit in the story later, but
the order goes
Ichigou, Dai, Yugo, Hayato, Ren, Aoi, Izuku.
And I hope I got Katsuki’s angry Pomeranian tendencies across
Anyways, hope you enjoy
Chapter Summary

Izuku begins preparations to find a certain criminal, and meets an old friend.

That evening, after waking from a Post-Dinner nap- to make sure Bakugou wouldn't start to get suspicious of Izuku's lack of sleep- the greenette waited for his mother to go to sleep, pretending to be asleep himself for her usual check-up.

_She does tend to worry a fair bit, doesn't she?_ Said the voice, not for the first time.

'Yeah, makes me worry we aren't as discreet as we think. Let's hope it's unrelated.' replied izuku, slipping silently out of bed, and grabbing the bag with his Amber garb from its hiding spot underneath.

_She's our mother, she's going to worry, they all do, to one extent or another._ Answered the voice, Aoi slightly edging out the others.

A sigh 'In that case we just have to make sure and not give her any more reason to worry than we have to' said Izuku, slowly opening his bedroom window, careful not to make a sound.

When Izuku was outside, standing on the fire-escape he equally carefully closed the window after himself.

Jumping down to the ground with a roll, Izuku asked 'So where's today's cache Aoi?'

Aoi came to the fore of the voice. _Not far, kiddo, there's a warehouse about 10 minutes from the meeting spot._ Izuku felt the strange sensation he always did when knew knowledge was dumped in his head, as Aoi gave him access to her memories of where the warehouse was, and a couple of other associated thoughts.

_Empty road at night. deed. warehouse. Fabrics. Silk. Tree. Box._
'Wait,' called Izuku, trying to digest the new information, 'if you own the warehouse, why did you put the cache in a tree?'

*Remember we left these caches for you,* answered the voice, *if the new owners of the buildings remodelled or just knocked them down, they would have found them. Much better to put them places people were least likely to look.*

Izuku nodded at that, it made a degree of sense at least. A couple of the caches had been gone when he went looking for them, requiring another walk to the next nearest, but most had been where they were left.

Setting off, Izuku mostly focused his attention on not tripping over his feet, while the voice started to scrutinize everything Izuku sensed for anything suspicious. The problem with being young, they had always found, was that people tended to either think you needed help if they found you out in the city, alone, at midnight, for some reason. Either that or they thought of you as an easy target. It had never happened to Izuku, but Ren had once shared a memory of having to fight off a group of three thugs with... unsavoury intentions, who had taken to following him on one his night jaunts. If Izuku recalled rightly, they had been 12 at the time.

After a couple of moments of confusion, as the decades old memories failed to account for new buildings, or the absence of old ones, Izuku arrived at the warehouse.

*Well at least this place hasn't changed much, it seems.* Sighed the voice, put out as ever by buildings not being where they remembered.

Izuku, swiftly climbed the fence around the outside of the building, and headed for the tree they remembered. Jumping to a low-hanging branch, he contemplated using a burst of flame to help him climb more easily, but discounted it. ‘Don't want to draw attention to ourselves, remember?’ he thought.

After climbing a couple of branches higher, Izuku arrived at what he thought was the right spot, and sure enough, there was the hollow, it couldn't be seen from the ground, but it was big enough for the little plastic safe-box Aoi had placed there nearly 20 years earlier.

*Still there, phew. If it weren't the next nearest cache would have made us late for our meeting.*
Sighed the voice, relieved.

'He'd wait. We're a very valuable client, and he knows it.' replied Izuku.

Izuku grabbed the box, put it in his bag, checked there was nothing else in the small space, then began to climb back down.

Getting to the ground, Izuku hurried back out of the warehouse, not wanting anyone to catch him trespassing. Though Izuku thinks he probably still owns the warehouse one way or another. The voice tended not to go into detail about the trusts.

Finding the nearest public bathroom, Izuku went in, before locking the door. He quickly washed his hands before donning his Amber disguise; wig, dark many pocketed clothes that didn't restrict movement, dark contacts to hide the distinctive eyes, before quickly hiding his freckles with make-up, and turning his attention to the box.

It was locked, as were most of Aoi's caches, but some quick work with the picks had it open. Inside was what he had come to expect, a phone, and fake passport, both intended for if Aoi had ever needed to use a cache herself, and a large sum of money of various denominations.

The passport was quickly incinerated- Izuku didn't want anything incriminating on his person unless with was useful- as was the long dead phone. The money was quickly counted, and the amount Izuku would need for tonight's meeting separated into a pocket, the remainder going into the bag, alongside his civilian clothes.

Let's get going, he would wait, but if he's still in town, Stain won't. Said the voice, hurrying Izuku to the meeting place.

Giran was not looking forward to this meeting. Don't get him wrong, the kid was a very important client, regularly buying equipment, and information, and always paying promptly. But there was something about the kid. It might be partly because he was a kid, or at least looked like one. Giran had never worked with a kid before, only really worked much with people he had reason to trust, but the kid knew his way around his sort of business. Somehow. Knew where to find him, and what sorts of questions to ask right from the first. Worse, he had managed to avoid Giran learning anything about him. He never slipped anything useful. Giran had just finished his last cigarette, but
he already felt the need for another.

Just then, the door opened. Revealing the short form of Amber, wearing the same dark clothes as he did to every meeting since the second- Amber had requested them, minus a few later additions, at their very first meeting.

“Amber.” Called the broker, nodding to the dark haired kid.

“You have what I asked for last time?” asked Amber, giving Giran an even look.

Ah, there was the other reason Amber made Giran uneasy. Their eyes. A kid should not have eyes that intense. No-one should have a gaze that intense. Giran felt that he was being weighed any time Amber even glanced at him, only a couple of his clients could ever do that, and they were all high-ranking villains, or especially skilled vigilantes.

Keeping his calm façade, the broker reached beside his chair, for the small package there. “Yes, though it probably isn't exactly the same as Endeavour's, I had them made as close as possible, like you requested.”

Amber took the package, and opened it, revealing long gloves, designed to come all the way up to the elbows, as fireproof as Giran was able to make them. Inspecting the gloves, the kid asked “And you're sure these could withstand flames as hot as the Flame Hero?”

“As sure as I can be, a lot of fire quirk users use similar materials, and some of them have flames nearly that hot.”

The kid reached into a pocket, retrieving a small blowtorch. “You don't mind if I test them?”

'so, not a fire quirk then? Or are they just trying to throw me off?’

“Go ahead.”

The kid lit the torch, and held the flame against part of the glove for a while, before checking that the material was undamaged.
“You do good work, as ever.” Said Amber, pulling a small wad of cash from another pocket, and stowing the blowtorch.

Giran took the money, but didn't bother counting it, Amber wouldn't short-change him, and hadn't for any previous deal.

“So, any news on the Shibuya incident?” Asked the kid, repeating the question from the meeting where he requested the gloves.

“Not since last time. Commission is still keeping everything under wraps, official story is an earthquake, but some sort of quirk still seems more likely.” replied the broker, still not sure why the kid wanted to know about that incident especially.

“Alright then, I'll contact you if I need anything else.” said the kid, turning to leave just as calmly, and silently as he had entered.
of rooftops and knives

Chapter Summary

Amber often finds what they are looking for, Izuku doesn't like it.

Chapter Notes

woo! over 100 kudos! thanks for all your support and nice comments guys :D hope you like the chapter.

As he was leaving the smoky office Izuku had met Giran in, he struggled to simultaneously walk away calmly, and bring his racing heart back to a reasonable pace.

'I didn't stutter, or let anything important slip did I? He probably is going to figure out who we are, and where we live now an-' he asked the voice, trying not to let his eyes dart about, in search of potential watchers.

You did fine kid, we didn't notice you giving anything away, and you didn't stutter once. You did a good job. Cut in the voice, trying to calm his post-talking-to-someone anxiety, always worst when talking to someone as Amber. Try to calm down, just keep an eye on not tripping up, and we'll make sure no-one follows us, OK?

'Sure, I can do that, we need to find a bathroom to test the gloves out properly, so we can go look for Stain still, right?'

Only if you're feeling up for it Izuku, it's more important that you're at your best before we go looking for him. Said the voice, soothing.

After spending ten minutes clutching the sink of a new public bathroom, going through a breathing exercise to calm his heart rate, and a further ten testing the new gloves. Izuku was ready to go. Hopefully they would be able to find the “Hero Killer” before he found another victim.
The gloves had originally been Ren's idea, fireproof, heat insulating fabric to let him use his flames as armour over his forearms for longer without scorching himself, or even letting the flames get closer to his arms safely. These gloves were far better than the originals it seemed, letting Izuku use the armour technique for a long time without issue. In a real fight Izuku thought he might actually run into overheating from attacking before he had to let the armour go.

*Those should make for a much safer fight against a close-range opponent, but hopefully it still won't come to that.* Said the voice, as they were leaving the bathroom.

'Yeah, yeah, go for an ambush if at all possible. Avoid close combat. Don't let Chizome cut us, but if he does make sure he can't get the blood. Anything else to remember?' Listed the boy, making his way to where they had decided was the most likely hunting ground for

*Don't be so lax, chided the voice, And remember that this guy won't go down easily, he's got experience against a greater variety of opponents than you, and enough training to bring down pros.* Continued the voice, shifting into Ren.

'OK, fair point,' replied the boy, stymied, 'he probably won't, what do we do if we can't avoid close combat?'

*Probably our best bet is to focus on destroying as many weapons as we can. While he was still a vigilante, he preferred swords and knives. He will be less dangerous without, and might even try to run. But he'll have a lot of them. Be careful.* Answered the voice, watching the shadowed alleys nearby for any signs of movement.

When Izuku arrived at their suspected hunting ground, he immediately went looking for a fire escape, and made his way to the roof of the nearest building. 'Here comes the tedious bit.' thought Izuku, as he began the long task of searching the area.

For the next half-hour Izuku followed each hero patrol route he knew from above, checking to make sure the most likely targets were where he expected, jumping from building to building, and looking down into each alley he passed, spiralling outward to search the area they had agreed was most likely were Stain made his base.
Stain didn't attack every night. The voice thought that meant he probably chose his prey in advance, and learned their patterns for a few days before striking somewhere convenient. They had hoped that Izuku would find be able to find the Hero Killer stalking one of the local heroes, so he could just follow him back to his base of operations. He was not.

When the voice spotted movement out the corner of Izuku's eye in an alley below the building he was on, Izuku turned to look at it, and his eyes widened in shock. The Hero Killer was standing in the alley, already raising a heavily notched katana, standing over an unmoving hero, presumably preparing to finish them off.

Izuku have any time to think, throwing a quickly condensed fireball, carefully angled to not hit the hero if it missed. Stain's awareness and reaction times were almost inhuman, spotting the glow of the approaching fire almost instantly, and dodging back, away from the hero, and out of the path of the attack. The fireball hit the ground, dissipating after a moment, leaving a small glowing mark where the killer had once stood.

No plan survives first contact with the enemy it seems, we need to get down there, He'll probably kill the hero if we don't. said the voice, Ren taking the fore, as he always did in combat. Izuku could sense the voice carefully watching Chizome, ready to alert him to even the smallest movements.

Izuku jumped from the roof, careful to keep the masked man in view, and reached for the wall. Coating his hands and arms in flame, he grabbed it with one hand. The concrete began to melt under the carefully pitched heat of the flames, as Izuku's arm took the strain of slowing his descent from that height. In Izuku's other hand another concentrated flame was already being formed.

A couple of feet from the ground Izuku pushed away from the wall, landing between the fallen hero- still not moving, Stain must have been able to use his quirk- and his attacker, leaving a livid, glowing claw-mark running most of the way down the building.

Stain hadn't moved, sword still at the ready, but, seemingly, simply curious about who had interrupted him. He's cautious, this is not good. We've got to guard the- The voice said, watching the man, like it would a viper. It cut off as Stain's eyes widened slightly, having finally gotten a good look at Izuku.

“A child? I have no interest in killing a child, but I have to keep this fake from tarnishing the name 'hero' any longer, leave.” Said stain, lowering his blade slightly.

“Kid, run, it's too dangerous, you're going to get yourself killed!” Came the much fainter voice of
the hero from behind him.

Izuku risked a quick glance back at the hero, and was not reassured by what he saw. In the firelight the hero's costume was a bodysuit, and cape made of many different coloured patches- The Patchwork Hero, Calico, Izuku's mind supplied- but most of those patches were now dyed red from what looked like a serious guy-wound. *He's going to bleed out if we don't do something and fast.* Came the hurried advice of the voice.

Izuku ignored the hero, 'We need to get Stain away from him, and cauterize that, now' thought Izuku, keeping his hands raised, ready, and preparing a third concentrated flame in his empty hand.

“*If you stand between me and my duty, I will fight you, and the weaker will be culled.*” said Stain, raising the blade again, and stepping forward.

Izuku responded by throwing one of his fireballs, intending to make it explode into a scatter-shot to prevent Stain dodging it, but before it even began to separate stain had already dodged, rushing into striking range in an instant. 'Shit, he's fast' thought Izuku, panicked, as he raised his arm to catch the oncoming sword-blade with the hand still holding a dense flame. As the blade entered the flame it slowed, acting as if it were trying to cut through marshmallow, not air, and then quickly melted, losing it's sharp edge, and allowing Izuku to catch it firmly in his gloved hand.

Izuku launched a new attack of his own in the instant Stain paused, stopping the now shattered fireball behind the killer, and trying to punch him in the gut with his flame-wreathed left hand. The man responded quickly, letting go of his trapped blade, jumping backwards and pulling out a pair of long tactical knives.

Izuku dropped the sword, the flame falling with it, reducing it to a puddle of molten iron, before fading. Immediately afterwards, Izuku pulled the shattered fireball back together, and started forming a new one in each hand.

*We need to get the hero out of here, Stain has too many weapons for us to destroy before he's too far gone to save, and he's too fast for us to- Knife!* Started Ren, before cutting himself off, noticing Stain throw one of the knives toward Izuku.

Izuku moved the partially formed flame in his left hand to intercept the thrown knife, preparing for Stain to follow it, finishing the right hand flame, and moving the reformed flame closer. The knife was going faster than Izuku expected, embedding, still hot from the flame, slightly into his left arm. Stain moved in just behind it, stabbing down for Izuku's shoulder.
Izuku acted by long-honed instinct, making a large burst of low-concentration fire right in front of himself, forcing the hero killer to back up, lightly scorching his own eyebrows.

The reformed flame came back into reach, but Izuku didn't dare risk using it to attack the maddeningly fast man. Instead, he pulled it right to his left hand. 'Finally. This had better be enough.' thought, Izuku, bringing together the two dense flames in his hands, before hurriedly pushing them forward, trying to get them out before the burst faded fully.

Izuku's arms made a separating motion, and the huge flame exploded outward, forming a brilliant wall of scorching flame, arcing around and over the boy, and the hero, separating them from their attacker.

Izuku swiftly turned, praying that the dome was enough to prevent any knives from passing, and faced the hero. In the bright light of the flame wall he looked even worse, pale, still bleeding from a gut-wound, not moving to hold it because of Stain's quirk.

We can't move him like this, we'll have to cauterize here. Said the voice, slipping out of sounding like just Ren.

Izuku put out the armour on his arms, and the flame of his right hand, still using the left to feed a constant stream of flame to the dome, replacing any lost heat. 'This is going to take some precision' he thought, walking toward the hero, who looked like he was in shock.

Unsurprising, given that a kid just fought off the Hero Killer, and still has a knife in his arm. Said the voice, Hayato coming to the fore. Blinking, Izuku turned to see the knife, still embedded slightly in his left arm.

'Him first, we won't bleed out from this any time soon.' thought Izuku firmly. Looking down at the hero, Izuku raised his right glove to remove it with his teeth, before pushing it towards the hero's mouth. The- probably delirious- hero looked confused, so Izuku mimed, opening his mouth wide, not daring to talk in-front of the man, and the hero followed along, allowing Izuku to place the glove inside.

'Sorry, this is going to hurt. A lot.' thought Izuku, lighting a small flame in his right hand according to what Hayato had told him to do, and trying not to wince in sympathy.
Chapter Summary

everyone nurses their wounds, and deals with the consequences of their fights

Chapter Notes

why did I make this one chapter?? it could easily be two!
and I constantly feel sorry for characters like Tsukauchi, and Shuzenji, they're the real victims here.

Chiyo wasn't sure what she was expecting to find after being woken up by frantic banging on her door at three in the morning, but it was not a pale, half-conscious hero, slumped just outside her apartment.

Gasping, she rushed forward, already trying to assess the damage. 'gut-wound, must have lost a lot of blood from the stains on his costume,' then, 'he did not get here on his own with a wound like that.' She glanced around for whoever had presumably carried the half-dead man to her door, and made sure she knew he was there, but saw no-one.

Coming closer, she got a good look at the wound itself, 'Definitely a stab-wound, not very wide, but deep, and- someone cauterized this. Someone who knew what they were doing.' She added, noting the minimal unnecessary burns in the bright hallway lights.

Chiyo planted a quick kiss on his forehead, activating her quirk. This sort of thing was always a risk, she didn't know how bad things were internally, nor how much he could take, but she tried to stabilize him as much as she dared, already pulling out her phone. 'First thing's first, he needs a hospital, and from the looks of things a transfusion.'

Izuku rushed back home, bandage on his left arm slowly reddening. 'Shit, I let Stain get away! He could attack again any time, maybe even today, and I-' He began berating himself in his head.
Izuku, calm down. He won't attack anyone else tonight, he's never shown himself to be an opportunist, and you saved that hero, that's the important thing. Interrupted the voice, cutting short the spiralling ramblings.

'But he is going to attack again, and if he's cautious he'll move to a different part of town. We'll have to wait for at least one more attack before we find him again.'

You couldn't have done any more. Izuku listen to us, you saved that hero, and held off an extremely experienced villain. You should be proud of that. Said the voice, Aoi's voice soothing as always.

'Did we save him though? He lost a lot of blood while we tried to bring Stain down.' Asked Izuku, remembering how pale the hero had been as they had carried him away from the alley. Wishing he could have gotten enough fire together to make that wall from the start.

If anyone can help him it's Shuzenji-sensei. She healed us from worse, she knows what to do. Assured the voice, sending an image of the aftermath of a badly failed mission as Aoi, Recovery girl listing the injuries, and looking like she wanted to add to them. After a pause, it went on, sounding more like Hayato this time, Now come on, we need to get you home, we couldn't see well enough to tell if you would need stitches for that.

'yeah, I can do that,' a sigh, 'well if they didn't already, the police definitely know we have a fire quirk now.'

When he finally woke from the surgery, and exhaustion from all the healing quirks applied to him, Calico's first words were to ask what happened to “the kid” when police and hospital staff asked who he meant, the hero explained that he had been saved by a kid, who had fought off his attacker, using a powerful fire quirk, and then carried him to help. The description of the kid, as well as the use of fire matched Amber, so they called detective Tsukauchi.

'This was not how I expected to begin my day,' though Naomasa, making his way past the police cordon around the scene of the attack, 'another sighting of Amber, but nothing to show for it. Amber continuing to let themselves be seen is another point in favour of a copycat.' If it is a copycat, and not someone who just looks much younger than they are, Naomasa needed to catch this kid, and soon, assuming they kept going after dangerous targets like Stain.
The alley was a scene of concentrated devastation. Char marks, small craters in the stone, little puddles of once-molten metal, most about the size of large knives, one presumably from a sword, a big puddle of drying blood. And then there were the big bits of property damage; furrows in the concrete, where someone had apparently melted part of the wall, a thick arc of soot on the pavement, and a matching one climbing the wall joined to it. And the hole. The place where someone-presumably Amber- had melted right through the wall in a rough door shape, and then kicked the loose section inward.

Apparently the fire that had made the arcs around the blood and the new doorway had attracted a few nearby heroes, but before any heroes who were able to get rid of it, or get through somehow, it had dissipated on its own, revealing the mostly empty alley, and no sign of whoever had made it.

Amber seemingly became a greater mystery with each new incident. Not just a fire quirk, but a powerful fire quirk, from the ease with which they had melted the wall. And now they had moved on from unskilled or non-violent criminals to Stain of all people, but had either realized they weren't going to win, or prioritized saving the hero over the capture. It didn't make sense, with that sort of mindset, and that level of skill, they should be a hero, or hero-in-training, so why go vigilante? And who had trained them? Another vigilante, but who? And why? Come to that, how did they know where Recovery Girl lived?

And that wasn't even mentioning their weird link to All-For-One. It wasn't reasonable to think that Amber avoided everything tied to him by mere chance. They knew about All-For-One, or at least knew about his empire, and what was part of it. Naomasa felt a headache coming on, he needed to get whatever he could about Amber from this, then check on Toshinori. Hopefully Gran Torino would be able to keep him from getting up until he got there if he woke.

The next morning Izuku woke up groggily. The knife wound, thankfully, had not been bad enough to need stitches. But it still stung like hell as he got ready for school. He had spent too long cleaning, and bandaging it, then making sure there was no blood in the bathroom, so now he was tired enough that they were sure Bakugou would notice something, even with the wound itself hidden by his uniform.

'God that hurts, why do we have to be too young to go to Shuzenji?' asked Izuku sarcastically, as he was heading out the door.

*Even if we could go to Shuzenji, you'd probably be even more irritable, having to go to school that tired. Just take some painkillers.* Answered the voice.
'There aren't any in the house, and we're too young to buy them.' thought Izuku

the voice seemed to consider that for a minute

'I am not going to Giran for something like painkillers, that would be stupid.' added Izuku, preempting the voices' most likely suggestion.

*We let you make your sarcastic suggestions,* Said the voice, sounding put-out, *Don't forget, it's Thursday, you need to head to the shop before school.*

'Oh, thanks, I had forgotten. Hopefully we'll be able to learn something useful.' answered Izuku, swerving to enter the shop near his house.

Ten minutes later, Izuku was sitting in class, desperately avoiding the temptation to open the magazine he had purchased. Someone would surely notice the resultant muttering if he tried to read it in class, even if he didn't take notes.

Izuku waved when Bakugou entered, earning a scowl from the explosive blond. “H-Hey, Kacchan.”

“Deku,” growled the taller boy, “you had better have gotten some fucking sleep last night, shitty nerd.”

“Yeah, I-I did Kacchan, a b-bit anyway.” stuttered Izuku.

Bakugou studied Izuku for a second, narrowing his eyes at whatever he found. “Well you should fucking get more than that. You still look like shit, even under the fucking make-up. Are you gonna study for the shitty English test with me at lunch? Shitty extras would be useless to study with.”
“Sorry Kacchan,” said the greenette, holding up the magazine, “it's Thursday.”

The blond sneered at the cover, which read 'Bi-weekly Heroics' “I don't get why you read that shitty thing every week. Their pictures are crap, and even your shitty analysis is better.”

“I really like their comics, and the analysis is OK, p-plus, it's better to have another perspective.”

“Fine shit-nerd, but you had better not fuck up on the test.” Bakugou said, before stalking off to his own desk.

At lunch, Izuku took his bento to eat in the shade of a tree outside the classroom, and opened the magazine at last.

'Bi-weekly Heroics,' as it was now called, had originally been started by Ren, who had intended it as a way to get information about AFO and other notable heroes and villains without leaving any suspicious emails lying around, or having to meet informants in person. A lot had changed about the publication since its beginning, both name and format had shifted to keep the surface company profitable, but one thing that remained unchanged were the codes. The magazine had its readers, and its readers. The readers knowing some of all of what was hidden in it. Izuku was very much a reader.

Reading through an article supposedly on Kamui Woods, Izuku swiftly picked out a second, much shorter article, this one about recent Amber movements, hidden in the first.

'Looks like the network's mole in the police is still reporting.' thought Izuku, turning over to a comic about endeavour.

“Shibuya update #1 seen nearby last confirmed”

Izuu turned pale as he read the short message, which was hidden in the crosshatching of the comic's art. 'Shit, he couldn't have found his base in Shibuya could he?'
‘Surely the commission couldn’t hush up the death of the number one hero?’ Thought Izuku desperately.

It’s unlikely, but possible, we need to learn more, he vanished soon after Shibuya it looks like, so we should look for Toshinori. Toshinori wouldn’t be able to hide from his allies properly, unlike him. Answered the voice, trying to regain its own calm, with limited success.

‘Yeah, but how do we find him, if even the network hasn’t seen him since Sunday? Gran Torino, or Sir Nighteye, or Recovery Girl? They are the most likely to know where he is.’ rambled Izuku to himself, fervently avoiding thinking about the possibility that One-For-All might have fallen.

Whatever happens, we can’t risk Sir, he’s too skilled at investigation, and his quirk far too dangerous for us, going near Shuzenji again so soon isn’t wise either, which leaves us with Sorahiko. Assuming he hasn’t moved, we should be able to find him without any trouble. Said the voice, only slightly less hysterical than Izuku’s thought process.

‘OK, we need to call Mom, then we can just get the train to his apartment after school.’ thought Izuku, calming somewhat now that they had a concrete plan, and pulling out his phone.

Sorahiko was sure he was losing his mind. He had started jumping at shadows, imagining he was being followed to the hospital, which was absurd, no-one knew who he was, a hero about as unknown as a hero could be. But now he kept looking over his shoulder, and feeling like he was being watched by someone.

‘He’s dead. No-one is likely to mourn him, and no-one even knows that Toshi is hurt. Now stop trying to raise your blood-pressure.’ thought the ageing hero at himself, getting on the train to the hospital, alongside some middle-schoolers from their uniforms.

After the short train journey, rendered interminable by the constant itch between his shoulder-blades, Sorahiko walked the short distance to the hospital where, unbeknownst to all but a very select few heroes, and doctors, the number one hero was currently being treated.
Hospital, OK that’s a good sign, means he's still alive at-least. Said the voice, as some of the tension left Izuku's shoulders. I'm sure we were worrying over nothing anyway, even someone like Toshinori surely wouldn't do something as stupid as fight Kansei without first passing on One-For-All. Said Ichigou and Dai, splitting off from the rest of the voice.

Probably not, but it's a risk we can’t afford to take. Toshinori is an emotional man, and he really cared about Nana-san, when he learned where All-For-One was- somehow- he could very well have charged in immediately to avenge her. The other components of the voice answered, echoing Izuku's own thoughts.

'Well either way, we need to know where One-For-All is, and what All Might's condition is like, assuming he is here.' thought Izuku, moving into the hospital, discreetly entering through a side-door.

After a couple of false-starts, Izuku managed to find the room that All Might was in by hiding above the ceiling tiles, and checking every room in the most likely departments- he was in a single room near General Surgery.

“-sure he's dead Toshi?” Came the voice of the elderly hero, just as Izuku moved the ceiling tile of the room slightly to check it.

“Yes Sensei, no-one, no matter what quirks he had, could have survived having their skull caved in like that. Not to mention the building falling on them afterwards.” Came the firm reply, from a tired sounding All Might.

“I believe you, kid, I just had to be sure. Now how are you feeling? The doctors wouldn't tell me how bad it was before you woke up.” said Gran Torino, placating.

“I'm... not sure, I'm glad I don't have to worry about him any more, but I... I shouldn't have done it like that, I'm a hero, I.” Answered the injured hero, before his teacher cut him off.
“You did the right thing. We both know that that man wouldn't stay in prison very long, no matter what methods they used, he would find some quirk to get out eventually. That or one of his pawns would break him out,” said the tiny hero, “and you wouldn't have gone that far anyway, if there weren't risks to the civilians outside. Now, how badly hurt are you?”

“It's... pretty bad Sensei, I should be able to get out in a couple of weeks, with Chiyo's help anyway, but... he took a good chunk out of my side. Most of a lung, and a fair bit of my digestive tract. The doctors tell me it will be hard for me to avoid losing weight.” Answered the taller man with a sigh.

“And do you think you can keep working, or more importantly, that you should keep working?” Quizzed Gran Torino, after sucking in through his teeth.

“I'll be able to, for now at least, maybe not for as long... I'll have to use my quirk sparingly to avoid making things worse... I have to keep working, the people still need their symbol, but I think I'll start looking for a successor, hopefully I can find someone worthy before I stop being able to use my quirk.”

What?! he went to his confrontation with Kansei, still holding One-For-All?! Screamed the voice, sounding like it wanted to go down there and finish the injured hero off, forcing Izuku to clutch his head.

“I doubt I could stop you,” came the far calmer response of Gran Torino, “though goodness knows I should, and Sir and Chiyo will doubtless try. Just promise me, don't go back to work until the doctors clear you,” he continued, standing to leave, “and try not to do everything alone, I don't know how the fortune-telling brat will take this, but you have other people willing to support you, OK?”

“Yes sensei,” Said All Might, sounding chastised, “Chiyo would probably kill me if I tried.”

“Hmph, good. I'll try to visit again tomorrow, just be patient with it, and think it through about the successor, before you do anything.” Finished Gran Torino, before leaving, and shutting the door behind him.
of dreams and not-dreams

Chapter Summary

Izuku and the voice have a face-to-face

Chapter Notes

headcanon that 'Kurogiri' isn't a name, but a title for whoever has that quirk at the time. I can't see AFO not making sure that a quirk that useful stuck around, and passing it to whoever he trusted at the time.

The voice never slept. Even when the current incarnation slept, the voice remained awake constantly, and it always saw whatever he or she saw, dreams included. When Dai was young, and Ichigou had little experience with the new aspect of their quirk, Ichigou's voice would often wake him, but as Dai entered his twenties Ichigou discovered he could nudge Dai not into wakefulness, but just into lucidity. More importantly, they found that it was possible for them to share control of the resultant not-quite-dream.

Izuku stood in his apartment in the dreamscape. This was the place he felt most comfortable, and so the scene that he defaulted to whenever he came here. Looking around he spotted his quirk as he tended to imagine it-a golden bonfire, glowing in the middle of the living-room- and ceded control over that part of the dream. The bonfire split off into six smaller flames, before swiftly morphing into six disparate men and women, the only commonality between them the golden eyes they all shared.

“OK Ichigou, you knew him best. What are the odds this is some sort of trick?” asked Aoi, standing on the far right, as soon as the voice had separated itself, and settled on a form.

“I probably won't sleep well until I see a body, but I doubt he would fake his own death. Kansei always liked power, and, more importantly, using power.” Answered the tall, middle-aged man on the far left.

“Yeah, Kansei always liked to gloat, and he hates anyone who takes up One-For-All, he wouldn't have left Toshinori alive if he were alive.” added the blond, scarred young man in a simple hero costume to Ichigou's left- Dai.
“What about if he were just injured?” asked Izuku, trying to avoid getting too optimistic.

Dai laughed at that, waving his hand at a wall, Izuku allowed the change, and the wall faded away, revealing a new room. In that room All-For-One as he had been then stood, moving incredibly swiftly, and launching a wide variety of unpredictable attacks, likely using dozens of quirks, while Dai sprinted around, launching fire, throwing knives, and barely dodging the numerous unknown quirks. Whatever burns or cuts All-For-One took healed in a matter of moments, while Dai’s injuries only increased.

“If his regeneration was that good all those years ago, I think now nothing short of a killing blow could keep him from finishing what he started.” said Dai, letting the memory fade, the wall reforming.

The baby-faced man to the right of Dai, whose name was Yugo, formed a chair from the dream and sat. Turning to his left, he said “Ren do you think your 'Network' would be able to tell if he's still active?”

Izuku, and the other parts of the voice turned to the grey-haired, heavily scarred man one from the right, who scowled at the attention. “It could, in theory, but it will take some time. And we would only learn whether his supporters thought he was dead. I’m with Ichigou, a body would certainly make us all feel safer.”

“Yeah, but if All Might is right, we probably aren't getting one. How do you guys think things will go if he is dead?” asked Izuku.

“Injured or dead, I think we are going to have to lay low for a while,” said the young woman, dressed almost exactly in Izuku's Amber outfit, on the far right, “if people think the king of the underground is dead, everyone who knows there is a throne will be scrambling for it. Or at least they'll try going for a piece of his empire. It is going to be a mess for a good while,” she waved her hand, and formed still images of several people, “I don't even want to think about what AFO's lieutenants are going to do, and the yakuza and similar groups won't be much better.”

“she has a point,” growled Ren, gesturing to three of the figures- a bald little man, a man made of fog, and a rock-faced giant, “this Kurogiri is cautious, he'll play it safe as much as possible, but the doctor and Gigantomachia are both fanatics, things could easily get nasty there. Besides, AFO's empire will probably begin to split apart without him, and that will cause a huge mess... which might be our best way to tell that he is gone.”

Nodding, Ichigou and Dai turned to the last member of their little meeting, “Hayato, we can hear
Hayato was probably the oddest member of the group, being the only one not dressed for some sort of combat, and instead wearing a white lab-coat, the slender, white-haired man paused for a moment, looking around at the attention directed at him, before saying “You know I never really paid as much attention to the doings of AFO as the rest of you, and even if I can access those memories, I could easily draw the wrong conclusions, however, I am wondering how it was possible for Toshinori to force AFO to retreat, or even kill him.”

With a look of some satisfaction, the old doctor swiped away the images of the various villains that Aoi had conjured, before forming his own set of figures. Eight people, including a duplicate of Dai. On their left stood Mirai, and Toshinori stood on their far right, Dai and his apprentice, Aki, made up the middle figures. “While Aki still held One-For-All, I saw how strong he was, and combined with how strong Mirai, and Dai were, plus a few memories of Yuko, I felt sure that One-For-All wouldn't be strong enough to defeat All-For-One until the tenth user. I can't see how Toshinori is still alive.”

“Have you seen Toshinori? Whatever else we can say about him, he is adding more base strength to the stockpile than any of us could have predicted.” Said Ren, chuckling.

“I think what's most likely thrown it off is just how weak the first few users were,” Put in Aoi, gesturing to the comparatively slender- emaciated in Mirai's case- forms of the first four images, “no offence Dai.”

“None taken, and I don't think we really helped with how short a time each of the first four held the quirk.” said Dai, rubbing the back of his neck.

“It might be because he was quirkless?” put in Izuku, causing the previous incarnations to turn to him, and thus causing him to blush at their shared attention, “He doesn't have a quirk so the whole stockpile is focused on making his body stronger, not splitting its efforts like with the others,” a pause, “or it might be... we might not want to admit it, but the embers are weaker than the quirk itself. It was a stupid risk, but having the quirk might have been what did it.” Finished Izuku.

“Possibly,” admitted Dai, “but it doesn't stop me from wanting to finish Toshinori off for taking such a huge risk. Oh well, it's done now, all we can do is hope for the best with his successor.”
“So we're in agreement?” asked Hayato, “We wait, if he's dead we should be able to find out within the next few months, and until then we can't really do anything without risking too much.”

The various pieces of the voice nodded. “Agreed,” said Aoi, “now, I think it's past time that we let Izuku get some proper sleep, he still needs to heal, and if we're taking a break from vigilante work, we can safely cut down on training.”

At that the others murmured agreement, before letting go of their piece of the dream, turning back into the golden bonfire, before the dreamscape itself faded, and Izuku fell into true sleep, and unknowing dreams.
Izuku felt great. He hadn't felt this relaxed in years, the voice probably hadn't felt this relaxed in centuries. Everything had gone according to their predictions for once, the underworld was tearing itself apart without All-For-One.

Less than a month after their little eavesdropping session Kurogiri had dropped off the map, cautious as always. The doctor had stuck to his legitimate business, though Izuku still didn't dare to remove him—despite Ren's protests, and he seemingly had cut ties with the underground about two months in. Apart from one brief, surprisingly non-violent incident during month six, Gigantomachia had seemingly wandered into the wilderness.

Izuku was getting more sleep—cutting vigilante work almost completely in the ensuing chaos. The voice had taken to occasionally giddily repeating *He's gone* to itself, more and more of the incarnations seeming to genuinely believe it as time went on. They were free, they could do what they wanted without fearing they might doom everyone. Izuku had to resist the urge to giggle in class whenever he thought this. He had to keep up the illusion that he paid attention to classes like English and history.

Halfway through their final year of middle-school Izuku finally broached a subject he had wanted to ask the voice about since they finally accepted that they had won. 'Now th-that All-For-One is gone, do y-you guys think, maybe we c-could try to g-get a h-hero license?' asked Izuku on the way home from school, stuttering for once when talking to the voice, clearly nervous.

*We would draw attention if we did that. And attention is the last thing we want.* Said the voice immediately, but curiously sounding almost entirely like Ren.
But Kansei is gone. Even if we draw attention it won't be that much of a problem now. Said the voice, contradicting itself, Ren's part now mostly absent.

'A-and we wouldn't have to draw that much attention if we stayed underground. P-Plus if we had a licence we could learn a lot of what the heroes know.' Said Izuku, playing to Ren's constant need to know everything.

The voice switched, mostly sounding like Hayato now No-one is likely to guess at what our quirk does, and anyway, it is Izuku's decision, we have no right to gainsay him, Ren.

I admit there are advantages. There always were advantages to doing things aboveboard like that. But Izuku has to understand the risks. If the heroes discover that we exist, there will be no end of trouble. And he will have to take care that Amber is not tied to him, which could end nearly as badly. Countered Ren, separating from the rest of the voice entirely to make the point.

'I understand Ren, really. I still think becoming a hero is the better option. I could help people much more easily if I could do it in the open.' Reassured Izuku, causing Ren to go silent for a few seconds, trying to make sure his warning had sunk in.

Well whatever you decide, you know you always have our support, said the voice, all six pieces in unison again, we'll always do whatever we can to help you, and keep you as safe as we can. It concluded, Aoi predominating.

'I know, I love you guys, I get that you're just trying to make sure I've thought it through.' Thought Izuku, seemingly grinning at nothing.

Come on then, Inko said she was going to be making katsudon tonight, so you should hurry home. Said the voice, sounding fond.

- six months later -

Katsuki no idea what was going on with Deku lately, but at least the shitty nerd had started to take school a bit more seriously. The shitty nerd still jumped and stammered whenever anyone tried to talk to him, but he didn't spend every other class staring into space. Better yet, he started sparring
with Katsuki. No quirks, but still. It was nice to have someone around who could put up a less crappy fight. Still not as good a fight as Katsuki, of course.

Katsuki had no idea what had caused the change, probably some shitty sleeping pills or something, but he wasn't complaining. He was however complaining about the fucking muttering from in front of him that started him thinking about shitty Deku, distracting him from what the teacher was saying.

“Shut the fuck up Deku!” He yelled, making his irritation known, and startling the nerd.

“S-sorry Kacchan!” Squeaked the greenette, before finally shutting up.

Katsuki turned back to looking at the teacher, who stood there with raised eyebrows, like he had the fucking balls to say anything to the only person in this shitty school with a shot at UA.

“A-As I was saying,” said the teacher, “I'll be handing out your post-graduation destination forms,” the teacher threw the forms in the air, “but you all want to be heroes, don't you?” He finished.

The extras all started showing off their weak-ass quirks. Katsuki sneered 'Like any of these extras could be heroes with those useless quirks.'

“Don't lump me in with these losers, I'm the only one here with a shot as a hero.” said Katsuki, eliciting the usual grumbling- but no real challenges- from the cowards.

“oh yeah, you're applying for UA aren't you, young Bakugou,” said the teacher, earning some awed murmuring about the difficulty of getting into UA, “and young Midoriya too, I see.” He added, causing shocked silence from most of the class. Deku had never made much of a secret of his lack of a desire to become a hero.

“What the shit Deku,” yelled Katsuki, after he had gotten over his surprise, jumping over to the nerd's desk, palms crackling, “you say you don't want to be a hero all these years, and then you apply for UA?! You think you can get the drop on me, huh?!” Demanded the explosive blond, looming over the rapidly shrinking fire-user.

“I-It's not like that Kacchan! I wo-wouldn't lie to you like that I swear,” stammered out the shorter boy, “I j-just- you are always ge-getting mad at m-me for playing hero, a-and I.”
“So you're fucking half-assing things again, shitty Deku!” yelled the taller boy, the firecrackers in his palm growing more intense.

“Boys, that's enough, return to your seats.” Said the teacher, probably worried Katsuki would destroy the desk. It had been one time.

Katsuki tsked angrily, but did as he was told, he'd talk to the shitty nerd after school.

- after school -

_I can't believe that “teacher” just up and announced that you were applying to UA like that!_ Ranted the voice, sounding incensed.

'It doesn't really make a difference guys, we were going to have to let Kacchan know eventually. And the rest of the class would probably have found-.' thought Izuku, packing his things away.

“Oi shit-nerd,” came the angry snarl from behind them, cutting off Izuku's answer, “we aren't done here.”

“Ka-” Izuku tried to start before being interrupted.

“You are the only shitty person at this crappy school worth beating,” the furious blond bulled on, “but you fucking half-ass everything! First you say you don't want to be a hero, and then you apply for UA! Well I'm the one who's going to be number one, but so help me, if you half-ass this like you do everything else, I'll fucking kill you! I'm going to beat you at your best, Got it?” ranted Bakugou, before storming off without waiting for an answer.

_Well that was... something. No offence Izuku, but you have strange taste in friends. Said the perplexed voice._
'He must think we're belittling him,' thought Izuku, immensely guilty, as he finished packing, and turned to leave, 'I wish we could just tell him why we didn't want to be a hero. Or just come up with some reason why we changed our mind'

Izuku was more listless than he had been in half a year, wallowing in guilt for lying to his childhood friend, even as the voice simultaneously tried to console him, and reminded him exactly why they had to lie. Izuku barely registered it, just keeping his mind on not tripping over his own feet.

He did however register, if slightly too late, the warning shout from Ichigou, who was paying more attention to their senses, Izuku! Run, there's someone coming up behind us!

Izuku tried to move out of the way of the strange sloshing noise coming towards him, but before he could he suddenly found himself engulfed in- slime?- and unable to breath.

“Don't struggle, this should only hurt for about a minute.” said the slime, somehow.

Shit. Some sort of fluid based mutation, Said the voice, rapidly transitioning to Ren, see if the slime is flammable at all. It isn't water.

Izuku stilled his hands scrambling at the slime over his mouth, trying unsuccessfully to calm his panic, and lit one hand on fire before bringing it to grasp part of the villain. 'I can put it out after it lets me go.' he thought, desperately

“That's a nice quirk you've got there kid, but you can't burn me, I'm a liquid.” Laughed the villain, not pulling back.

OK we can't burn it, said the voice, forcing itself to sound calm, we should be able to boil it though.

'But that would burn me too!' yelled Izuku internally, more desperate for oxygen by the moment, his lungs burning.

Our heat resistance is definitely above his, we only need to outlast him. Make as much hot fire as you can, quick. Reassured the voice in a hurry, feeling how badly Izuku needed to breath.
Izuku swiftly formed a fire in each hand, as hot and dense as he could, before plunging both into the body of the villain. Black spots began to appear in Izuku's vision from the lack of oxygen, but the slime began to rapidly heat up. Izuku just had to hope he could force the slime to let go of him before he lost consciousness.
of indecision and unthinking decision

Chapter Summary

the voice panics, All Might screws up, and heroic things happen.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Izuku woke up, it wasn't four years later as part of the voice as far as he could tell, so that was a good sign. 'What happened?' he asked the voice.

*Don't ask us, we get nothing while you're unconscious, but someone is clearly trying to wake you up.* It answered, as Izuku registered the rapid tapping on his cheek.

Izuku snapped his eyes open, only to come face to face with Japan's most famous hero. He froze as, for the first time since before Aoi was born, the voice shattered.

Shit- we can't- we should- how did- get away- that's- we need to- yelled the voice, still talking in unison, but now saying completely different things, all overlapping in a discordant mess. Pain lanced through Izuku's head, as he stared, unseeing, at the hero, the voice trying to get him to do one of half a dozen things.

"Are you all right kid? Do you remember what happened?" Asked the number one hero with his usual jovial voice.

"A-All m-m-might." Stammered Izuku, managing to avoid wincing from the headache, as the pieces of the voice realized their error, and started to piece themselves back together, overcoming their blind panic at the idea of talking to a One-For-All user.

Izuku shot up from where he was lying, trying to overcome the desire from Dai and Yugo to get away from this man as quickly as he could, that would certainly not help with avoiding attention.

"W-What happened, there was a villain, a-and I-" stammered the boy.
“Never fear young man,” Cut in the hero, holding up two plastic bottles filled with green liquid, “a villain like that was no match for me!” he continued, as Izuku tried to ignore advice on possible aliases from Ichigou, Dai, and Ren, along with advice to check on the hero's health from Hayato, and Aoi, while Yugo tried to get them all to stop for a moment, the pain decreasing as his head stopped hosting six conversations, and shifted down to three.

“C-Can I have your autograph?” Blurted out the boy, defaulting to his base instinct on meeting a hero in the absence of any intelligible advice from the voice.

“Of course young man,” answered the hero, putting the bottles in his pocket. “I'm always happy to give an autograph for my fans!”

Izuku pulled out a notebook from his bag- one of the coded notebooks on criminal organizations, but All Might didn't need to know that- and turned to a blank page, the voice silenced by this, admittedly surprisingly non-attention-grabbing, course of action from Izuku. “C-Could you w-write something like 'You can be a hero' please, it would mean a lot.” said the short boy, handing the notebook to the massive hero, who began to write in it

“Sure thing, young...”

“Midoriya Izuku sir!” squeaked the greenette.

“Here you go young Midoriya,” boomed the hero, handing back the signed notebook, which Izuku took with a bow, “thank you for your support, but now I need to hurry and take this criminal to the police station. Heroes have to fight time as well as villains!”

Izuku watched as the hero turned, crouched down, and used One-For-All to shoot into the sky with the two bottles, already running post-disaster analysis with the voice. Well that could certainly have went worse. He didn't even see our quirk, and he probably won't remember a random fan that well.

'I got his autograph.' thought Izuku, dazed, reading the page with now read “You can be a hero, young midoriya- All Might,” beneath a silly doodle of the hero's iconic hair. OK, so maybe only the voice was doing any analysis.

But we really shouldn't have given our real na- Said the Ren dominated part of the voice, before it cut off
Come on Izuku, let's get you home, I don't know how long we were out, but you're going to be tired, and Inko might begin to worry. prodded Aoi, gently but firmly coming to be the main speaker.

Nodding, Izuku clutched the notebook to his chest, beginning to make his absent way to his apartment.

Toshinori had messed up. Badly. First he had taken too long to track the elusive ball of sludge through the sewers, which could have easily gotten that green-haired kid killed, and now he had lost the bottles, and thus the villain again, when he was forced to drop his muscle form just before landing on the rooftop. As he rushed as fast as his one remaining lung would allow down the stairs, he prayed that the bottles had stayed sealed when they landed.

Halfway down he heard a loud explosion. No such luck then. Toshinori redoubled his speed, ignoring his body's protests, and the part of his mind telling him that he wouldn't be able to do anything even if he did get down there.

When Toshinori exited the building it was to a scene out of a nightmare. The villain had taken a new hostage, just as young as the last one by the look of him. The street was on fire. Large explosions issued from the slime- more likely from the boy being subsumed by the villain- constantly adding to the patches of flame. The skeletal hero looked around the crowd, hoping to see any hero that might be able to help. Backdraft- no use against the slime, even if they weren't too busy keeping the fires under control. Kamui Woods- couldn't stop a liquid villain, and couldn't work with all that fire. Mt. Lady, a much newer hero, but Toshinori knew she couldn't control her size between the two extremes- she wouldn't be able to get into the alley. Death arms- not strong or fast enough for a hostage situation like this, he was simply helping keep the crowd back, waiting for a hero who could help. The only hero nearby who could have taken care of the sludge villain was Toshinori. And he was spent for the day- useless.

Out of the corner of his eye Toshinori saw movement in the crowd, he looked on in horror as the green-haired boy he had rescued from the same villain just minutes earlier rushed out of the group of civilians and past the heroes keeping them back with surprising agility, ignoring the shouts for him to stop from the panicked heroes.

Without breaking stride, the reckless, stammering child dropped his backpack and reached into a trouser pocket, producing something small and seemingly glinting in the sunlight (a ball-bearing?) and threw it with a swift motion. The little glowing orb flew quickly and hit the villain. Right in its eye. The villain screamed in pain, and flinched massively backwards, the sludge releasing the-
blond teenager's face and most of his torso, allowing him a gasping breath just as the greenette reached the pair. The blond's eyes registered as shocked when the greenette- with a lot of strength for his apparently slight frame- yanked the blond bodily from the recoiling sludge.

Recovering from its flinch the villain directed a baleful glare at the shorter of the two boys, the eye that had been hit seemingly badly damaged by the projectile, “You brat! You'll pay for that!” Screeched the sludge, whipping a tendril of slime to try to crush the boy, who was trying to retreat with the newly liberated hostage.

“Pathetic,” growled Toshinori to himself, rapidly, and contrary to his body's fervent, and loudly expressed wishes, shifting back to his hero form, and rushing to intercept the slime, “what sort of hero sits back while a child fights a villain for him?” coming between the boy- who was raising his free arm, as if to futilely shield himself from the attack- and the attacking villain.

Catching the attack, Toshinori forced his signature smile back onto his face, saying “Never fear, for I am here!” he reared back his other fist, shouting the name of one of his famous moves, “Delaware smash!!” And for the second time that day the sludge villain was reduced to a series of unconscious puddles. This time as clouds rapidly formed, and it began to rain.

Toshinori stood, answering questions as his body strained to maintain his muscle form, trying to keep the media away from the two boys, who had likely had a difficult enough day. Meanwhile he could hear the other heroes showering the blond with praise for his bravery, and admonishing young Midoriya for his recklessness.

He was half-tempted to go over, and ask the younger heroes to cut the kid some slack, but from the quietly defiant look on his face he would do it again in a heartbeat, so maybe he could use “some self-preservation beaten into him” as his teacher had always said he himself needed.

Once the paramedics were confident that the Blond- Bakugou, Toshinori heard him say his name was- was fine, and the heroes had finished lambasting the poor boy who had tried to save him, they went off together, Bakugou dragging young Midoriya by the arm away from the heroes and police, glaring fiercely, and seemingly ranting quietly at the meek boy. 'Huh, maybe they know each other. Well either way young Midoriya will make a fine hero it seems.' Thought Toshinori, answering the reporters' questions, before slipping away with the rebottled villain.

'he might even make a good successor,' he thought to himself, slipping back into his civilian form, careful not to drop the unconscious sludge this time, before shaking himself, 'but that's getting
ahead of myself, Gran Torino is right, I need to think my choice through, whoever I pick, and I still have a few more years of heroing in me. If he's determined to become a hero, I'm sure I'll see him again, and I'll be able to see how he compares to this young Togata that Sir keeps trying to get me to meet.'

Chapter End Notes

poor Ren never got the chance to even see the eyes in the sludge when Izuku was attacked, and now he can't stop his charge rushing headlong into danger. Also, I really need to find someone to stop me from releasing so frequently. I'm sure the quality must be going down as a result, but I just really want to get to UA already.
Chapter Summary

welcome to UA, written test, entrance exam, and Izuku makes a new friend

Chapter Notes

aaahhhhh long chapter, please someone tell me if i made any mistakes :p

the voice: "Firelord Ochako, you and your forefathers have devastated the gravity of this world, and now you will be saved from a giant robot."

The few months following the sludge villain incident, and subsequent weird tirade about jumping in "like a fucking moron" from Bakugou, were strange to say the least for Izuku. The voice still refused to condone any significant vigilante work, and it had massively cut back on dream training, instead focusing on pure physical training for strength and stamina. At Izuku's insistence they also started on breathing exercises, but otherwise the only thing that broke the monotony of jogging, school, weight training, homework, sleep was sparring with Bakugou.

By the end of it all Izuku had put of a fair bit of weight, and increased how long he could hold his breath a fair bit. Bakugou was still insisting that he “didn't need saving from a weak-ass villain like that” but a fair bit of the fire had gone out of his tirades, Izuku was sure he was feeling like a failure in some way for getting caught, and he felt guilty, but he still didn't think he could tell him that he had gotten caught by the same villain first, he was afraid Bakugou would blame him for the villain getting free. 'Not an unreasonable thing to blame me for, since it probably only happened because All Might was trying to hide his injuries from me.' Thought Izuku bitterly, as he rode the train to the UA entrance exam

You're being silly squirt, said the voice, how could you have stopped Toshinori from trying to hide it from you? And you couldn't have known that he would drop the villain anyway.

'but still if I had been paying more attention, and hadn't gotten caught-' argued Izuku, determined to blame himself.

Then you might have been able to beat the villain, might, interrupted the voice, sounding exasperated, and it would have only caused more trouble, you would have had to explain what happened to the villain to All Might when he arrived, and he still would have taken him and flown off like that. You can't let yourself drown in what-ifs like this kid.
But nothing, come on, this is our stop, said the voice firmly, as the train stopped, you. Did. Good. Drew a bit too much attention to yourself, but you saved your friend, and none of the heroes even noticed how you did it. Come on, you've got an exam to ace, hero.

Izuku got off the train, and made the short journey from the station to UA’s entrance on foot, joining the crowd of hopefuls taking the exam this year. When he arrived at the gates of UA he gaped, the voice had seen it before, and shared memories of it with Izuku, but the massive H-shaped building still stunned him when he first saw it. “Get out the fucking way, shitty Deku!” came a yell from behind him, as Bakugou bumped into him on his way into the building, knocking him out of his reverie. Turning back he added “You had better fucking give it your all today, shit-nerd, I only want to beat you at your best.” Before continuing on.

’right, I need to focus, this is no time to get distracted.’ Thought the greenette, taking an unthinking step towards the building. And immediately tripping over his own feet.

Here we go again, said the voice, resigned, as Izuku twisted instinctively into the beginnings of a forward roll, how do you always trip when you aren't paying- it cut off, as the ground stopped rushing up to meet the boy, huh, that's not what's supposed to happen here. It finished, deadpan.

“Sorry, I didn't know you were going to do that,” Called a chirpy female voice from beside Izuku, sounding embarrassed. Izuku turned his head in midair to see a blushing brunette coming forward to right him, “I thought you were just going to fall, I shouldn't have used my quirk on you without asking like that!” Said the shorter girl, before bringing her fingers together, and releasing your quirk. Izuku landed lightly on his feet.

“N-No wo-worries, y-you were j-just trying t-to help.” Stammered out the boy, caught between the voice's annoyance at the unsolicited quirk-use, and his own embarrassment at talking to a girl.

“Yeah, it would have been bad luck if you fell before the exam, but it looks like you had it covered,” she said, rubbing the back of her head, “anyway, good luck with the exam!” she added, before jogging off toward the building.

Well she's certainly got the helpful spirit part of heroics down, commented the voice, come on, we don't want to be late, watch your feet this time, OK? It added, sounding amused.
The written exam came first 'Probably to avoid people being too exhausted for it after all the quirk use in the practical.' Thought Izuku, taking his seat.

“Alright, you have 90 minutes to complete the exam, if you feel you have finished and cannot earn any additional marks you may leave after handing your paper to me. You may now begin.” came the monotone rumble of Cementoss from the front of the classroom.

Amidst the rustling of papers Izuku opened his own exam packet, and entered what he jokingly called “exam mode,” Izuku read the first question, and shared it with the voice, while the voice itself simultaneously read the next six questions, they then shared the content of the questions amongst themselves, and whichever component of the voice was most knowledgeable on the subject- usually Hayato or Yugo for academic subjects, Ren for languages- shared the relevant knowledge directly. Izuku's pencil rapidly began to scratch across the paper, almost without pause.

By the thirty-minute mark every question had an answer written. At forty minutes all those answers had been audited, ensuring Yugo hadn't given the answer for historical questions as it really happened- as opposed to how it went down in records- and also making sure no-one had muddled up the question order, and that all the answers seemed right to Izuku, and each part of the voice. After one short debate on a science question- where the consensus had shifted since Hayato had died- they were satisfied they had done as well as they could.

Izuku then spent the next ten minutes pretending to be contemplating, and occasionally altering his answer to some questions in the middle of the paper, but in reality debating what the practical exam would be on with the voice. When he felt a believable time had elapsed, Izuku gathered his answer sheets, and stood, taking them to the front. “I think I've gotten all the marks I can Sensei.” murmured Izuku, proffering the sheets to the angular man.

“Are you sure, young man?” asked the teacher, sounding surprised, but taking the offered papers.

'Damn, still too quick. Oh well.' “Yes, Sensei, may I be excused?” He asked as quietly as before.

“Of course, if you're finished. Good luck with the practical.” Intoned the cement man, as Izuku bowed, and left the room, feeling the gaze of the students who had noticed him getting up on his back.
'Now then, we've got 40 minutes to relax, and find a snack before we have to go to the auditorium for orientation.' Thought Izuku happily, hoping that the other exam-takers would simply think he had failed, and left early because of that.

30 minutes, a bottle of green tea, and a granola bar later found Izuku sitting in the auditorium watching the other hopefuls trickle in. The first couple were noticeably surprised to see him sitting there already. “How long have you been here, nerd? You had better not have fucking given up on the written test halfway through.” growled Bakugou, taking the seat next to Izuku.

“N-not long Kacchan, a-and I answered all the questions. I-I think I di-did OK.” Answered the flame user, opting not to tell his friend about the quest for snacks which took a lot of the exam time.

“Hpmh, good, you'd better not half-ass the practical exam either Deku.” Ordered the blond, before turning to watch the other applicants making their way in.

“Y-Yeah Kacchan, I won't.” murmured Izuku, as a figure made its way onto the stage at the front.

A few minutes later, when the last applicant had seemingly entered the room, the voice hero stepped up to the podium and began to speak. “Welcome to the show! Can I get a yeah!” yelled the famously loud hero. Silence. “I'm here to explain the rules of today's game yeah! This years practical will take place in our replica city, woo! You'll have ten minutes to earn as many points as you can, listeners! Your handouts will tell you which area to head to for the test, OK?!” Izuku looked down at his handout, which said area B.

“Tsk,” muttered Bakugou, “they must have made sure people from the same school went to different areas. Damn I won't get to crush you myself.”

“It's probably to stop people from helping out the people they know, or...” Izuku began to mumble
unintelligibly, as the extravagant blond began an explanation on how points were earned by disabling the three types of robots in the testing areas.

Wait, what, asked the voice, sounding disappointed, that's it? Surely that's going to cut almost everyone with mental quirks, or more subtle abilities.

'You think there's more to it?' Asked Izuku, frowning and looking around as several other students began to frown too- one purple-haired kid began to look almost sick, and Izuku resolved to speak to him before the test.

Hmmm, said the voice, transitioning into a thoughtful tone, most likely. This is just a test of ability to break things, not heroics. And Midnight is a UA alum, right? She would have a really hard time passing this test, I doubt the teachers would make the test this badly biased toward destructive quirks.

'Eraserhead too, right? so what, Some sort of hidden scoring system?’ asked Izuku, but before the voice could respond a blue-haired teen stood, and loudly interrupted the hero's explanation.

“Excuse me! I have a question,” he explained, making rigid hand gestures, “earlier you said there were three types of robots, but the handout clearly states there are four! If this is an oversight, I find it highly unbecoming of an institution such as UA! And you,” he added, turning to glare at Izuku, “You have been muttering this entire time, if you are just here to distract the other exam-takers you should leave.”

This caused Izuku to blush, and try to sink through his chair- he hadn't known he was talking out loud. Bakugou chuckled, hearing someone else call out Izuku on his “annoying fucking muttering.”

“OK, OK,” called the voice hero, “good catch examinee 7111, the fourth type of villain is different from the others! It's more of a hazard, the zero-pointer, you can destroy it if you want to, but you'd be better avoiding it, since it isn't worth any points!”

Well that was rude, calling you out on your muttering like that, grumbled the voice, Aoi sounding like she wanted to give the tall boy a good talking to, while the hero at the front finished explaining the rules of the exam, but the zero-pointer is a good sign for there being a hidden scoring system, otherwise there would be no real point to it. Probably you get bonus points for trying to help others if they get in trouble? Guessed the voice, Hayato trying to divert Aoi from the subject of the loud kid.
'Yeah, it should be something like that. I think I'm going to go give the purple-haired guy a hint, from how he looked when the explanation began, I think he has a non-physical quirk.' thought Izuku, making his way over, as all the others moved to go to their testing areas.

After Izuku had managed to hint to the tired-looking boy about the 'heroics points' (thoroughly enjoying the hopeful light-bulb visibly turning on in his head) Izuku made his was with the crowd to his own testing area. While the applicants were milling around, waiting for the test to start, Izuku spotted to brunette who had tried to help him earlier.

'I should go thank her, she seemed nice, and she tried to help when I tripped.' thought Izuku, walking toward her, only to be stopped short by a hand on his shoulder.

Ignorant of Izuku struggling to overcome his instinct to set fire to the hand unexpectedly placed on his shoulder from behind, the boy who had chastised him for muttering before said loudly, and in a stern tone “That girl is clearly trying to concentrate, were you planning on trying to distract her from the exam?”

Izuku shrugged off the offending hand, saying “N-No, I w-was j-just going t-” stammered out the boy, ignoring Aoi chomping at the bit to tear the boy, who had wrong-footed her charge twice in a row, a new one, and the other parts of the voice trying to calm her, before being interrupted by a shout from a nearby rooftop.

“**And start!**” screamed the Present Mic without warning. Izuku swiftly turned, and ran through the gate into the replica city at the voice's swift urging, quickly gaining a lead on almost all the other examinees. “**They've got the right idea! There's no count-downs in real life kids! Run!**” Cried the hero behind him, causing the other examinees to belatedly enter the area, trying to catch up with the ones who entered immediately.

Izuku began to swiftly form his usual dense flames in each hand as he ran, already gathering enough fire to form the dome that had saved him from the Hero Killer twice over before he saw his first robot- a 2-pointer. Izuku split off a small part of the fire from his right hand when he saw it, forming it into a thin vertical disk, rather than a ball, and sent it careening into the robot. The disk of brilliant flames stalled when it hit the barrier of the robot, but Izuku forced it onward, ignoring the resultant minor increase in body-heat. The disk continued through the robot, losing heat all the time, and emerged, significantly colder and more dull, out the other side. The robot fell, smoking and glowing, the left and right halves falling away from each other. 'two.' Thought Izuku, who hadn't even broken stride.
"Overkill much?" Called the voice, amused, breaking away from its study of the weaknesses of the two-pointer. If you destroy them all like that you'll overheat within the first five minutes.

'Sorry,' said Izuku, grinning like a madman, oblivious to the incredulity of the others behind him. 'I've just always wanted to do that, ever since I saw that time Ichigou did it.'

Well try to be a bit more conservative destroying the rest please, 1-pointer on your left. Chided the voice, fond.

Izuku twisted the still cooling disk with a turn of his wrist, forcing it together, and creating a much smaller version of the original disk, raising the temperature back to how it started, before motioning it forward, sending it through the joints of the robot's exposed neck as it came out of the alley. 'three.' he thought, moving on as it collapsed to the ground in a shower of sparks, and the disk dissipated.

After the first two robots the voice had him test a theory. Sure enough, the one and two point robots stopped working if you destroyed the head. The people who had speed type quirks passed him after he had destroyed four robots, but it didn't really matter, they could only thin the herd.

Izuku began to get to work with greatly increased efficiency- 1-pointers were dispatched with a single fire spear to the head, 2-pointers with either a spear, or a larger ball to knock them down- these things were stupidly fragile in some ways. 3-pointers took a bit more work, usually requiring a concentrated blast or two to destroy them, but from what Izuku heard the other examinees say he was well ahead.

At the eight minute mark Izuku was sweating and panting from running to find robots that others hadn't yet destroyed, and from the heat his quirk was constantly pouring into his body, testing the limits of his heat resistance. He had paused a couple of times on his path of destruction to interrupt a robot knocking an examinee down, or to rescue another one from under some debris, but other than that his quest for points continued unabated. 'eighty' he thought, with satisfaction, as he dispatched a 3-pointer with a couple of large blasts of concentrated flames. He turned when his attention was caught by a loud crashing sound, coming face to face with the zero pointer.

'Are they serious?! How did they even get the money to build something that size?' thought Izuku incredulously, moving to keep out of the lumbering giant's way.

"owww" came the faint call from behind Izuku and the other fleeing students. When Izuku turned, he saw the girl who had helped him earlier, her leg caught under a piece of rubble.

They wouldn't let an examinee get badly injured by one of their own robots in the exam, and we've
already got enough points to pass. Counsellled the voice, but Izuku was already moving through the crowd going the other way with difficulty.

'They might have overlooked the rubble, if that had hit her head, she'd be badly hurt.' said Izuku, getting free of the crowd, and rushing forward.

You won't be able to get her out in time, said the voice, switching to Ren for the first time in the exam, You will need to take out the robot, and make sure it falls away.

Izuku began to strengthen the flames in his palms, forcing them as hot and dense as he could before bringing the two together as he reached the girl. He watched the 0-pointer get closer as he forced more and more fire into the head-sized ball he now held between his hands, until it grew painful to look at, turning from its usual gold to a blinding, almost white colour. Now! Called the voice as Izuku began to get nervous that the robot was getting too close. He threw the ball.

The small shining sphere contained nearly as much fire as Izuku could force into something that size. When it got close to robot's head he stopped trying to confine it. The tiny point of light rapidly grew into a massive conflagration thirty feet across, ramming into the robot's face. The robot's front plates caved in where they impacted the explosion even as they began to melt. The entire robot tipped over backwards with the force that had been suddenly thrown at its top half, and fell with a massive crash.

Izuku had never done anything on that sort of scale before- outside of the not-quite-dream anyway- but he was prepared for the sort of effect it would have on him. He stood there, panting, as his body tried to sweat as much as it possibly could, desperately trying to counter the massive spike of heat that had just been driven through it, and reached for what little remained of the ice-water he had brought for the exam. He turned, surprised to find the girl standing there, favouring one leg, next to a floating piece of rubble. “good,” he said, allowing himself to sit (fall) on the ground, “I wouldn't be able to lift that now, I think. I'm Midoriya by the way.” He added faintly, before making a spirited attempt to replace some of the lost fluids.

“Uraraka.” the girl replied, dazed, before turning to throw up unexpectedly.

Well that was stupid. Impressive, but stupid. Said the voice, Aoi's concerned voice coming to the fore.
Chapter Summary

local green bean does well, and begins to creepily watch everyone.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Izuku had finished his water, the sound of Present Mic announcing the end of the exam washing over him. A minute later another, much older voice followed. “You've all done well, leave it to me for now kids, have a gummy.”

*Oh no, that's Shuzenji, run kid! She's going to skin us!* Said the voice, as if Izuku was in any state to run. Or even stand.

The incredibly short elderly hero made her way over to the two exhausted teens in her relatively plain costume- which hadn't really changed much even since Aoi was alive, except that it was smaller to continue to fit her. “Dear me, what have you dears done to yourselves?” she asked in a kindly voice.

*Oh, she doesn't know what we're like any more, we're in the clear for now.* Sighed the voice, sounding relieved, as Izuku lifted his arms, showing reddened forearms.

“Just some heat exhaustion, and first-degree burns, Shuzenji-sensei.” said Izuku blearily, causing the older woman to blink. 'I shouldn't have called her that. I should not have called her that.' Izuku berated himself, adding “I think she's suffering from quirk overuse as well.” gesturing to Uraraka.

“Hmm, well at least you know what you did to yourself, so I don't have to tell you. You shouldn't have used your quirk that much sonny. I'll heal the burns, but we'll have to keep the both of you for a little while to get some fluids in you,” said the frowning heroine, planting a kiss on Izuku's cheek, nearly instantly healing the burns on his forearm, and compounding his exhaustion, “and most of the students just call me Recovery Girl.” She added as an afterthought, calling for some robots with a stretcher.
Toshinori had thoroughly enjoyed being allowed to watch the practical exam for the most part. There were so many excellent hero eggs this year, it did his old heart good to see it. Most of them made an excellent showing of themselves to one extent or another, destroying the robots with their wits and quirks and, better yet, several going out of their way to help their fellows.

Young Midoriya had drawn Toshinori's eye yet again. The boy had an excellent quirk, and knew how to use it, destroying robots left and right without pause, except to rescue the other test-takers. The fact that the boy had a fire quirk was rather causing Toshinori to rethink his assessment of what exactly he had thrown at the sludge villain during their second meeting, but he shrugged it off- no way to be sure, and none of the other heroes had seen anything suspicious.

A few of the other examinees drew his eye, his quest for the perfect successor always on his mind, especially the dark-haired boy, who kept using his hardening quirk to protect the others from debris with his body, and the purple-haired one who seemed more intent on keeping the others safe than on actually destroying the robots- only destroying three during the whole exam.

When the real test of resolve began- the 0-pointer- Toshinori wouldn't deny how what remained of his stomach dropped, seeing the rubble seemingly crush one of the examinees, but he relaxed when he saw that none of the others in the room had tensed- it must have been planned for. Most of the test-takers fled, hoping to gain what points they could, a few- one explosive blond for example- ignored the 0-pointer entirely, focusing entirely on gaining points. Young Midoriya pulled ahead of the pack again in his estimation here, turning to face to robot when he heard someone in danger- or so he must have thought- and destroying the robot with a huge display of fire-power, earning approving murmurs from the gathered teachers. Yes, he was a very good candidate indeed, so far only young Togata really compared among all the young eggs Toshinori had seen.

“It's been a fair few years since someone managed to destroy a 0-pointer like that. Very impressive.” Said Nedzu from Toshinori's right.

“Indeed, that was well done.” Agreed the number one hero, nodding.

The week he had to wait for his letter from UA weren't especially stressful for Izuku, his general anxiety being swiftly, and frequently quashed by the voice, which not only insisted that he had done fine, but frequently complained that he had definitely performed remarkably, especially when he had jumped in to help Uraraka. Not that Izuku thought he had done anything suspicious. He had done well, but still within acceptable bounds for someone with minimal training. He just hoped that him incapacitating himself wasn't held against him.
“Izuku! It came! It's here!” said his mother, coming over with the letter, shaking him from his reverie, and nervously shaking slightly- Izuku had a good idea where he got the anxiety from. He took the letter and went to open it in his room, while his mother paced outside in worry.

Opening the envelope, Izuku found not a piece of paper, but a small projector, which quickly started up. *OK, I don't know now Nedzu is doing this, but UA has too much funding.* Grumbled the voice.

The projector began to display an image of a small white mammal of some sort, with a scarred face. “It's me! The one who you don't know if it's a mouse, or a dog, or a bear, but regardless I'm the principal, and I have your exam results!” came the squeaky voice of Nedzu himself- the only currently active hero in Japan with an intelligence type quirk, and one of the beings the voice was most wary of, knowing next to nothing about him, his history, or how much he knew beyond that he had been the subject of some sort of experiment years prior, and seemed to be of a broadly heroic bent.

“First the written test. You did extremely well, achieving not only the top score of all the applicants, but a near perfect score as well,” exclaimed the strange mammal gleefully, “as for the practical exam, you scored eighty villain points, already more than enough to pass, but you see, there is a secondary scoring system,” a pause, seemingly for effect, “Rescue points! The UA department of heroics looks for selflessness, and the ability to help others. You not only stopped to help several of your fellow applicants, but injured yourself to save young Uraraka from the 0-pointer! The judges of the exam were deeply impressed by your deeds, awarding you sixty rescue points, giving you a total score of one-hundred and forty points! This isn't just the top score of the year, but the top score of all time, edging out the previous record of one-thirty-five set by All Might himself. With this in mind it is my great pleasure to welcome you to UA, Midoriya-kun, this is your hero academia!” Finished the tiny principal at length, before the projector turned itself off.

*Don't draw attention to ourselves, just get the highest score of anyone there, and beat out All Might's own score while we're at it.* Said the voice, seemingly annoyed that they had gotten so many rescue points.

'It won't be a problem, we know nearly everything about All Might and even we didn't know about that record,' reassured Izuku, 'now let's go tell mum the good news.'

To say the least Bakugou was... unhappy at being beat out for the top spot in the exam, especially by such a huge margin. He insisted on sparring with Izuku more often, and made it clear that Izuku shouldn't get comfortable, because he was still going to be the better hero. On the other hand he seemed immensely pleased that Izuku had seemingly given his all for the exam, giving a smirk that
would likely scare even children far less anxiety prone than Izuku, and deciding to take credit for the change in attitude.

Izuku took longer than he expected to get to UA owing to the crowds. He had intended to get there in plenty of time to find the classroom, and begin reading the Monday issue of 'Bi-weekly Heroics' that was now clutched to his chest as he stood just outside the door to class 1-A.

*Now that's just an ostentatiously large door.* Said the voice, as Izuku stared at the huge door to his class.

'It might be for people with larger mutations, or gigantification quirks. OK, here goes, hopefully we our classmates will be nice, unlike the boy from the exam.' Thought the greenette, trying to relax himself, and pushing to door open. Immediately spotting the blue-haired boy engaged in an argument with Bakugou.

“Get your feet off the desk! Don't you think that's disrespectful toward our seniors, and the people who made the desk.” Said the taller boy, gesturing wildly. Izuku only noted a couple of other familiar faces in the class but the boy with purple hair was thankfully there.

“No I don't, which prissy middle school shoved that stick up your ass extra?” replied Bakugou with his usual tact.

“Ahem, I went to Somei academy, I'm Iida Tenya.” Said the Bluette, seemingly realizing he hadn't introduced himself.

“Somei huh? An elite, I'm going to enjoy destroying you.” sneered the blond.

'I know he's a bit rude, but that's a bit harsh Kacchan.' Thought Izuku, as Iida recoiled at the smirking boy's words.

“Destroy me”? And you wish to be a hero?” He cried, aghast, before seemingly noticing Izuku in the door, and marching up to him. “Hello! I am Iida-” he began
“Y-Yeah, I heard, I-I’m M-Midoriya Izuku, nice to meet you.” Cut in Izuku, trying to stay somewhat polite, while the voice practically growled at the boy.

“I must apologize Midoriya-kun,” said Iida, bowing, “I completely misjudged you! You divined the true intent of the exam, you are a better student than I.”

Izuku and the voice both blinked at that, surprised. Izuku tried to formulate a response, Iida was right- in that he had seen through the exam- but he didn't know that Izuku had such an unfair advantage. Meanwhile the voice wondered that the boy they had taken for aggressive and confrontational had turned out to simply be incredibly awkward and earnest.

Before they could formulate a response to this unexpected praise, they were interrupted by a voice from behind them, “Midoriya-kun! You got in! I'm glad we're in the same class.” Izuku turned, to see that the girl from the exam- Uraraka was the one speaking.

“Ah, Uraraka-san you got in too, well done.” said the boy, before the voice noticed movement on the floor behind her. Looking down to see what it was, they were surprised to see a dark haired, man in a yellow sleeping bag on the floor for some reason. They became even more surprised when they figured out who the sleep-deprived man was.

“Eraserhead?!” Squeaked the greenette, overcome by his surprise at seeing such a capable underground hero in such a strange position.

“That's Aizawa-sensei to you kid,” said the hero, blinking, and briefly glancing at the magazine which Izuku still held, before looking back to his face, and standing, “and you should go to your desk.” Izuku, and his shocked classmates did as instructed, as the little known pro stepped out of the sleeping bag, revealing dark clothes and a grey scarf- capture weapon. “He spotted me quickly enough, but it still took you far too long to quiet down. We don't have time to waste here. Now,” he said, pulling out a blue and white gym uniform from the sleeping bag, “put these on, and head to the P.E. Grounds.”

Izuku subtly watched to see the standard for physique in the other heroics students, and found a fair spectrum among the boys, from the incredibly slim purple-haired kid, to the better built like Bakugou, and the kid with hair oddly split down the middle. Surprisingly two of the boys- the one with many arms, and the one with large lips- had even better physiques than Izuku despite him effectively having six personal trainers for his entire life.
Some sort of mutation on the kid with the mask, and probably a strength quirk of some sort with the other, put in the voice, also trying to track the standard for UA students, as Izuku made to leave the changing room. They'll probably both be pretty tough opponents in close quarter, same with the split-haired kid.

'I can't wait to see what everyone's quirks are, especially the kid with the bird head, that's an interesting mutation.' said Izuku on his way out, fascinated as always with new quirks.

“A quirk apprehension test? But what about the entrance ceremony?” asked Uraraka once Aizawa-sensei had announced what they would be doing, when everyone finally arrived at the pitch.

“The teachers can choose not to go if they want, if you want to become heroes before you graduate, you have no time for such time-wasting. You all went through physical tests in middle-school, but you were barred from using your quirks. That's completely illogical, before anything else we need a baseline of what you can do. Midoriya, you came first in the exam, what was your best softball pitch in middle-school?”

Did he really have to bring that up? It was 71 metres kid. Said the voice, knowing Izuku never cared enough to note the figures.

“71 metres Sensei.” Answered the short boy.

The tired-looking hero tossed a softball in Izuku's direction, which he snatched from the air. “Try it with your quirk. Do whatever you want, just stay in the circle.” He said, pulling out a recording device.

Izuku considered how best to launch a ball using his quirk without destroying it on his way to the painted circle. 'That should work.' He thought, generating a dense ball of flames the colour of tarnished bronze, as cold as he could make them, but incredibly dense. This was going to be fiddly. First Izuku placed the ball in the cooler flames, and applied an odd downward swirl to the fire, preventing the ball from falling through the flames, as they constantly moved down as it sank. Then he transferred the ball back to his right, and threw it, creating a large burst of much hotter golden flames as it left his hand. As the ball flew at high speed from his hand, he continued to use his quirk to accelerate the darker flames around the ball to make it go further until they dissipated.
The teacher held up the device, which read “852.6m” “This is a much more rational metric to judge your potential.”

“Woah over 800 metres, that's awesome.” Said one of the other students, and most of the crowd seemed to agree. “this is going to be so fun!” the voice noted the way Eraserhead's expression shifted, and thought that whoever said that really shouldn't have.

“Fun? Do you think becoming a hero is a game? In that case, how about a new rule. Whoever comes last over all eight tests will be expelled.” said the dark-haired man.

*He's either bluffing to get us motivated, or he's serious and there's more to the tests than he's letting on,* Reasoned the voice- Eraserhead of all people knew pure physical ability wasn't a good metric of potential, either way, *we should keep quiet unless he does try to expel someone without giving them a proper chance.*

Izuku did fairly well at most of the tests, not really able to use his quirk to improve grip strength- at least not unless the tester was extremely resilient- or side jumps, but able to slightly improve his times for things like the long-jump and 50m dash. Regardless of whether he could use his quirk well for a test, he still gave a good showing of himself. The voice's belief in the importance of improving the body as well as the quirk was well founded.

Between the tests Izuku tried to watch each of his classmates to see their quirks, while the voice watched to see if any novel techniques could be adapted for their use- not likely in most cases, but you never knew.

Izuku was especially enamoured of the strange shadow thing that the bird-headed kid- Tokoyami he said his name was- was able to produce, and the ice the split-haired kid- Todoroki- generated to pass the tests. 'His name is Todoroki, like Endeavour, but his quirk is ice? It must be from his mother.'

*Or it could be a mutation,* said the voice before adding, *but you're right, Endeavour married someone with an ice quirk a few years before you were born. It was pretty big news.*

'do you think if he overuses it he'll develop hypothermia, like we get heat exhaustion? Or will it be a dehydration type backlash?’ asked Izuku, curious.
With cryogenesis it is normally hypothermia, said the voice, Hayato leading the thought, but I'm more curious about how he's melting it. He must have a dual quirk, maybe divided by side?

Just then a girl with pink skin, and black eyes started her 50m dash attempt, causing Izuku and the voice to both shut up, stupefied. The girl was skating. Skating on the liquid her quirk produced. *Fuck, why did we never think of that?* exclaimed the voice incredulously.

'I really want to try that, do you think our fire is solid enough to let us?' Asked the boy, ignoring the voice's shock.

*Probably, it depends how it actually works. If it does work we'd need fireproof shoes, like with out costume. But let's leave practising that to the dream, OK?* Answered the voice, while it tried to figure out exactly how to adapt that ability to a non-liquid like their fire.

Resisting the urge to pester the pink-skinned girl about what her quirk did exactly, Izuku walked over to the purple-haired insomniac, who was beginning to look increasingly worried. “Y-You OK, m-man?” he asked.

“Just embarrassing myself in-front of my favourite hero, and about to get expelled on my first day, but other than that fine.” said the slender boy bitterly.

Izuku blinked at the knowledge that Eraserhead was anyone's favourite hero despite his efforts to remain unknown- assuming that the boy hadn't noticed that All Might was watching, no-one else seemed to have. “And h-how do you th-think Eraserhead would d-do on these tests?” Izuku asked, trying to be encouraging he added, “His quirk wo-would be n-no help at all here, and you're clearly trying pretty h-hard. I'm sure he can see that. Anyway, I wanted to ask what your name was. I'm Midoriya”

“Oh, Shinsou. But he sounded pretty serious about the expulsion. Thanks, by the way,” Shinsou said, beginning to mumble, “for helping me with the entrance exam.”

“N-No problem, but he probably only expels people if he thinks they aren't worth his time, a-and he knows better than to underestimate non-physical quirks- assuming you have a quirk like that, since I haven't seen you use it all day and with how worried you were you wo-” Izuku began to mumble, blushing at the thanks, before cutting off when Shinsou's face darkened at mention of his quirk, “a-anyway, nice t-to meet you sh-shinsou-kun, let's t-talk after.”
In the end Izuku came in second, only behind Yaoyorozu, but the black haired girl was using a motorcycle for the running tests, and used a vice to destroy the grip tester, so he was pretty happy with second. Bakugou came fourth- behind Todoroki- to his visible fury. The pink-skinned girl- Ashido- came in tenth, just ahead of Uraraka. Shinsou hadn't actually come in last, barely edging out a girl called Hagakure, who's quirk apparently made them invisible.

Chapter End Notes

yeah Izuku comes across a bit creepy, his quirk obsession is only being made worse by the voice's paranoia.
not sure i like how the quirk apprehension test turned out so far, but we'll see if i need to change it.
Shota held in a groan as this year's batch of brats finished the last of the tests he had set. They were going to be a handful, he could see it already. He should just expel all of them, and focus on his own work this year. He would have done it if they hadn't had a lot of potential for the most part.

“Here are your results,” He said, pressing a button, and causing a projection to appear beside him, “you can look over how you did before you head back to class to collect your curriculum sheets. Oh, and I was lying about the expulsion thing. It was just a logical ruse to get you to do your best.” Hagakure had a good bit of potential, he could see that from her quirk, and the way she kept at it despite being unable to use it in the tests. Aizawa carefully noted the reactions of the various students, seeing which of them had believed him, and which not.

The students began to head back to the building in vague clumps. Now then, time to talk to the idiot who seemed to think he was being discreet when he was seven feet tall, and wearing a mustard coloured suit.

“Not very busy, All Might?” Asked Shota, scathing.

“A logical ruse Aizawa-kun? We both know that's not true. You expelled an entire class last year, why did you expel no-one today?” boomed the infernally jovial man.

“none of them had zero potential. If that changes I'll get rid of them. Stopping the kids from getting themselves killed trying to be heroes is a kindness. But surely you didn't come to see how many I would expel?” answered the younger hero in a grumble.
“Ah, well, I just wanted to get a look at the students and where they are with their quirks before my first lesson tomorrow.” Now that sounded like sense, so, given who had said it, Shota immediately discounted it as lies. Whatever the buffoon wanted it wasn't that.

“Sure. Good idea, hope you learned something useful.” He groaned, waving the hero off, and walking by.

As he walked by the powerful hero Shota was already compiling his yearly list of things that needed improving and possible red flags that would need to be looked into. It was unreasonably densely packed this year. Shinsou was simple enough, just make sure he stopped relying on his quirk so much, same with Hagakure, but apart from Yaoyorozu the top four of today's tests were looking to be a trial.

Bakugou was aggressive, and loud, snarling at anyone who tried to talk to him, Shota would almost certainly have to force him to learn to work in a team. Todoroki was withdrawn, possibly having the same problem, but the bigger red flag was the fire. Or rather the lack of fire. Thinking about the scar he decided it was probably some sort of fear or wariness- not that uncommon with quirks that destructive- brought on by some sort of accident. If Todoroki wanted to achieve his potential as a hero he would have to get over that, but it was too early by far for Shota to push for that. The kid clearly knew what he was doing with his ice at least. Not self-trained, that was obvious, but it made sense. Unlike with Midoriya.

In Todoroki's case he would have been able to get all the training he asked for, his father was a high-ranking hero after all. But Midoriya had no heroes in his immediate family from his file, but he was still clearly not self-taught. A quirk-licensed dojo or gym was a possibility, but such places were both rare and expensive. The kid's father was out of the picture, only one emergency contact in his mother, who was a nurse. No, Midoriya definitely couldn't afford to get training that way. Which left the question of who had trained him. And that was just one of the red flags clustered around the golden-eyed kid.

Shota's mind kept coming back to when the boy had spotted him. He had been recognized almost instantly. That was weird. Weirder still was the magazine that the kid was holding. 'Bi-weekly Heroics' was a strange publication, the analysis was mediocre, but a few heroes-in-training still read it- usually those whose own analysis fell short. It did however have its audience among pros.

Not many heroes knew about the codes, and those that did tended to be careful about who they told. The publication was, from a certain point of view, suspicious. It published a great deal of information that could be useful to heroes and villains alike, and it was almost impossible to find out where they got it from or who put it there- just last week it had been the first source that leaked the fact that All Might would be teaching at UA this year. If Midoriya, as Shota was beginning to
strongly suspect, was a **reader**, that would be a massive red flag with blinking neon lights on it.

'Either way,' he thought, making his way to the staff room, 'I need to keep an eye on that one.'

As Hitoshi was walking away from the building after his mixed first day- a disastrous set of tests, but Eraserhead as his teacher, and he wasn't actually expelled- he heard a voice call from behind him “Hey Shinsou, wait up,” when he turned, he say Midoriya jogging towards him, the girl who launched a ball into space, and the boy who topped most of the speed related tests following behind, “You're way too tall. I ju-just wanted to apologise f-for earlier, I sh-shouldn't have started talking about your quirk l-like that.”

'That. Wasn't what he was expecting. He's not mad that I started glaring at him?' Thought the insomniac, blinking, as the other two greeted him.

“It's fine, I just-” ‘He's going to find out soon enough anyway. Goodbye friendship.’ “My quirk is brainwashing.” Hitoshi said, waiting for the stammering boy to recoil, to call him a villain.

“Wow that's so cool,” Said the green-haired boy, stars in his eyes, “you could be so good at villain capture, and hostage situations! How does it work, what can you-” the greenette began rambling.

“You don't think it's a villains quirk?” Hitoshi blurted.

“No, wh-why would I? D-Do you know a v-villain with the same qu-quirk?” asked Midoriya, seeming confused.

“No, but-”

“Then its not a villain's quirk.” cut in Midoriya, firm.

“But I could control you right now!”
“And by the time you did All Might could have destroyed an entire street. It's dumb to judge people on what they could do.” The golden-eyed teen asserted, stammer vanishing.

Hitoshi just stared, uncomprehending, until the blue-haired boy added “Indeed,” while making strange, rigid hand gestures, and nodding, “judging someone on their quirk would be unfitting of students of a prestigious institution like UA, you should inform a member of staff if other students accuse you of villainy without cause.”

“Yeah,” Said the brunette, as Hitoshi tried not to cry, “your quirk sounds pretty useful Shinsou-kun, and you're in the hero course anyway. I'm Uraraka by the way.”

“And I'm Iida Tenya,” said the robotic boy, seemingly forgetting how loudly he had introduced himself that morning, “Now we should leave, before we miss our trains!”

In the dream Izuku stood in a version of Tokyo bay. He had removed all the ships, and then coated the entire surface of the water with a foot of ice with a thought all the way to the horizon. “Have I ever mentioned how much I love being able to do things like that?” He asked Yugo, turning to look at him with a grin.

“Yes, nearly every time we dream outside,” Replied Yugo in an exasperated tone, as Izuku began to make it snow beneath the clear blue sky for no reason, “come on,” he said, manifesting a pair of skates on his feet, “you're going to need to practice if you want to use that new move.”

“Yeah!” said Izuku, manifesting his own skates, and immediately falling over. The pieces of the voice laughed as they made their way to different parts of the bay, beginning their own nocturnal endeavours, while only Yugo- who was the only one who actually knew how to skate in life- stayed with Izuku.

The next hour consisted of an increasingly frustrating series of falls, as Izuku tried to get the hang of the basics of skating- not a simple task given how frequently he fell in normal shoes. Whenever he looked over Ren was looking over text that looked to have come from 'Bi-weekly Heroics’ but was now hovering in mid-air, Ichigou and Dai were practising to see how best to adapt Mina's acid skates, melting pieces of the ice as they glided along, and looking at a memory of her for reference occasionally, while Aoi and Hayato were reviewing the quirks and other abilities of their classmates- Hayato kept fixating on Tokoyami’s quirk for some reason- overall Izuku dearly wished he were part of one of the other groups as he fell over again.
Yugo was apparently not oblivious to his desire to join the others. “Go on then, you've made some progress kid, why don't you go join Hayato and Aoi before you get some real sleep. We'll get some more practice tomorrow.” said the man, tousling the green mop on Izuku's head.

Izuku gave a woop, dematerializing the skates, and ran towards the two- and the various memories being manifested around them- over some snow he made to avoid another fall.
The next day was a relatively uneventful day of school, not too different from middle-school—except that he had a new set of names to try to remember, and that he kept getting distracted by the fact that all of their teachers were pro-heroes. The voice informed him that asking for autographs after class would not in fact be a good idea.

At lunch people seemed to sit mostly in their vague friendship groups that had already begun to form, Izuku with Uraraka, Iida, and Shinsou. The voice began to laugh openly when it spotted Bakugou being dragged forcefully to a table with Mina (she insisted on her first name), a boy with strange elbows named Sero, and the other kid in 1-A with golden eyes- Kaminari- by a grinning redhead, who ignored his angry protests. *Man, that Kirishima kid must be brave or stupid. Maybe both. Hahaha, hopefully he'll be good for Blasty, might get him to calm down.*

'Well he does have a quirk that lets him tank the explosions.' Replied Izuku, grinning.

*Ha, do you think he's using it to keep his hair like that?* This prompted a sputtering laugh from Izuku.

“What’s funny?” Asked Shinsou.

“S-Sorry, I was just th-thinking if Kirishima-kun was u-using his quirk to keep his h-hair up like
that.” Answered Izuku, earning a laugh from Shinsou and Uraraka, and some mild chastisement from Iida- who failed to prevent his own small smile- about respecting his fellow students.

Izuku let the ensuing conversation wash over him, occasionally interjecting an opinion, thinking that he was really glad he had been able to come here, the people were so nice.

After lunch was Foundational Heroics, the class Izuku had been looking forward to, and the voice had been slightly dreading- ever since they had learned that All Might was going to be teaching at UA they were sure this was what he would be teaching.

“I am here! Coming through the door, like a normal person!” Cried All Might, coming through the door in a bizarre, theatrical manner. Sure enough, he was the teacher. The voice, having been forewarned, didn't break this time, but it noticeably stiffened, beginning to watch everything All Might did, as well as everything Izuku did like an overprotective hawk.

Toshinori may be a bit of a dope, but his instincts are good enough to earn him that number one spot. We need to be careful not to do anything to make him suspicious. Warned the voice, while the rest of the class exclaimed about how cool it was to be taught by All Might- Izuku agreed, but he did worry about how much it seemed to stress the voice. It had already gone silent again, and resumed its tense vigil.

“This is Foundational Heroics!” Boomed All Might, making his way to the podium boldly. “In this class we'll be teaching you the basics of heroing through various trials! Today we'll be starting with this,” he held up a card, the word battle on it, “the trial of battle!”

All Might pushed a button he retrieved from behind the podium. “And to go with your first battle as heroes-in-training, here are your costumes!” Twenty cases emerged from the wall of the classroom. “Now, everyone get changed, and head to ground beta!”

Izuku had been really happy with the design he had settled on for his costume- he, his mum, and the voice had worked on it together- and when he got it out of the case he was ecstatic to see how well the support company had brought it to life. So, naturally, the first thing he did was try to set various pieces of it on fire, and grinned widely when not only did it not catch, but the material
failed to warm significantly on the inside.

The costume Izuku had designed consisted mostly of a forest green jumpsuit, with charcoal grey flame shaped highlights on the arms, and chest, and- Izuku's favourite aesthetic addition- a pattern of feathered wings in various shades of grey covering most of the back. The voice had been against the bird-like addition, saying *We do not want to cause people to draw the phoenix comparison.* But Izuku ignored it, he loved the wings, and he only conceded to not make them red.

In addition to the main body of the suit, he had asked for a few simple accessories; fireproof shoes and long gloves- in red, and charcoal grey respectively, a belt with several pouches- also fireproof- and a coil of fireproof paracord attached, a mask that could be pulled over his lower face to deal with smoke, or gas, and, most importantly, a compact cooling system to try to keep his core temperature at an acceptable level.

When Izuku finally got everything on, and feeling comfortable and secure enough, he went out to join the others at the entrance of ground beta. When he got out Uraraka approached him, wearing a pink and black space themed costume, which was skin-tight for some reason. *Wait, are those heels?* Asked the voice. *Why-

“Wow, Midoriya-kun, you're costume's so cool. Really practical! I really should have been more specific with my application, it turned out a bit embarrassing.” Interrupted Uraraka, rubbing the back of her head.

“Ah, I, uh, r-really like the sp-space theme! B-But if y-you don't like it, you c-could pr-probably ask them t-to change it.”

“Sensei!” Oh, so the kid in full armour was Iida apparently. “This is the same fake city as the entrance exam, does that mean we will be doing something similar today?”

“No Iida-shounen, we'll be going two steps more advanced, today will be the indoor battle trial! Most villain fights you see on TV take place in the street, but in actuality the majority of villains work indoors, the smarter villains always hide in the shadows! So today we will be doing two-man team battles indoors, villains versus heroes!” Explained the enormous hero loudly.

*Well he has a point there, but isn't this a bit complex for a first lesson?* Asked the voice, as the other members of the class began to talk over one another.
“How are we determining victory?”

“How badly can we hurt the other team?”

“Are you going to threaten to expel people?”

“How will we determine teams?”

“Isn’t my cape fabulous?”

“Don’t talk all at once!” said the number one hero, pulling out a sheet of paper, beginning to explain the details of the exercise- while the voice laughed at him for needing a cheat sheet. Apparently the scenario was that the villains had a nuclear device hidden somewhere in the building, and the heroes had to either capture the villains, or retrieve the weapon, while the villains had to try to capture the heroes or wait out the clock. The teams would seemingly be decided by lots.

“Is that really the best way to choose teams?” asked Iida

“Think about it, a lot of the time heroes have to work with whoever happens to be nearby, so most hero teams are impromptu like that.” answered Izuku before All Might could speak.

“I see. I apologise for my interruption!” said Iida, bowing.

The lots were drawn, and the teams decided on:

Team A: Uraraka, and Midoriya

Team B: Shoji and Todoroki

Team C: Shinsou and Yaoyorozu
Well those are some interesting pairings, we wouldn't want to be Iida right now, or whoever has to go up against team B. commented the voice, noting that team B had both an information gathering powerhouse, and a regular powerhouse.

"The first two teams to fight will be..." said all might, drawing two more balls from two boxes, "team A as heroes and team D as villains!"

'and we're up against Kacchan, great.' thought Izuku, sarcastically, as he looked over to where Bakugou and Iida stood.

Think on the bright side. He may be a powerhouse, but he's a powerhouse you know. You could have ended up with team B or H. Consoled the voice.

"The villain team will have five minutes to hide the weapon and prepare." Said All Might, leading the teams that would be fighting to a nearby building, “then the heroes will enter, and have fifteen minutes to try to best the villains. We'll be watching from the observation room, and I will stop the fight if it goes too far.”

As All Might turned away toward the observation room, Bakugou came up to Izuku, saying "You
had better fucking take me seriously this time, Deku.” Before storming off, entering the building with Iida.

*There is no way that kid is going to stay by the weapon, even if it is the strategically sound thing to do. You should try to find a way to avoid him while you find it.* Said the voice.

“So, um, we should probably plan what we're going to do. I know your quirk is some sort of gravity manipulation, do you mind telling me how it works?”

“I can negate the gravity of anything I touch with five or more of the pads on my fingers, but it makes me nauseous if I use it too much.”

“Wow, that's pretty useful. Can you use it on yourself, and can you reduce gravity, or can you only negate it?”

“Negating only, and it does work on me, but that makes me really nauseous.” replied Uraraka, grimacing.

“OK, my quirk's pretty simple, I can make these flames,” Izuku held up a hand with a candle-like flame on one finger, “but only within a couple of inches of my body, though I can move them wherever once I make them. They're really hot, so I need to be careful around people.”

*Try to come in from somewhere unexpected, anti-gravity could let you in on an upper floor.* Advised the voice.

“Kacchan is probably going to come looking for us, he wouldn't hide out with the weapon. We should try to avoid him, I can climb walls with my quirk, but it would be easier with your quirk. I could let a rope down for you if you got me to the roof.”

“Yeah, I can do that, but what makes you think Bakugou will look for us? Wouldn't Iida be better for that?” Asked Uraraka, confused.

“He is, but Kacchan is really competitive, and he probably won't listen to Iida if he tells him to stay, so Iida will have to.”
“Prep. Time's up! Heroes, enter the building!” Came the voice of All Might, over their ear-pieces.

“OK, let’s head up.” Said Izuku, walking to the wall. Uraraka put a palm on Izuku's shoulder, and he started to float up from the ground slightly. Izuku used his fire to make handholds to quickly claw his way up the wall. “OK, let me go.” He said, once he reached the top. When gravity came back, and he landed firmly on the roof of the five-story building, Izuku quickly took out the paracord and tied it to a nearby piece of railing, checked it was secure, then dropped it off the side.

In under two minutes both heroes had reached the top of the building without the heroes noticing. Izuku swiftly began to form dense flames in his hands as they entered through a door on the rooftop, and went down the stairs into the building.

The heroes got very lucky, apparently the villains hadn't anticipated a rooftop entry, and so the bomb was placed in a room on the fifth floor, in the short time it took them to find it Izuku had only formed four full fireballs - which now orbited above his head like strange cage-less lanterns to keep his hands empty.

Iida stood, looking away from them, in the spotless room. Clever, he got rid of anything Uraraka could use. We should have gotten her to bring some ammunition along. Said the voice, as Izuku held out an arm to quietly stop Uraraka.

Izuku motioned forward two of the flames, letting them expand slightly in preparation to encircle Iida, capturing him. Iida however stymied this plan. By beginning a villainous monologue. To himself. In a room he thought was empty. Pfft, well at least he's getting into the role. Laughed the voice, while Uraraka tried in vain to cover her own laugh. Iida spun at the noise, noticing the heroes.

“Bakugou, the heroes are here!” Iida said into his earpiece, before continuing. “You may have gotten past my partner-in-crime, heroes, but you will not be able to pull any tricks now. I have removed everything you could use from this room!”

We should try to finish this before Bakugou arrives, but he's too fast for us to get past.

“Uraraka try to get the bomb, I'll deal with Iida.” Said Izuku, launching one of the fireballs at Iida (his armour will protect him from serious damage) and sending two more off to either side, still above head height, then began to form two more.
Uraraka ran towards the bomb as the fires moved. Izuku had expected to be able to use one of the three fireballs for a wall to separate Iida from the bomb, it shouldn't matter which way he dodged. However Iida thwarted him by simply running back to the bomb, and picking it up, then running with it out of reach, left of the first shot.

*This is going to be a pain. You're going to have to try to limit his movements without hindering Uraraka-chan.* Warned the voice.

Realising that the wall plan wasn't going to work, Izuku moved two of the moving flames to the right side of the room, and formed a huge wall- effectively rendering half the room inaccessible- and the third backwards to the door, hopefully preventing Bakugou from getting in. “Keep going, he'll have a tough time in confined spaces.”

The room began to grow uncomfortably warm as Izuku moved the two new flames to block off more escape routes from Iida, and rushed after Uraraka. Iida, who was understandably unwilling to enter close combat with Uraraka, finally put down the bomb, realising he wouldn't have space to run much longer, and moved to hold them off. Uraraka turned to run around him, while Izuku simply moved the nearest wall into his way, forcing him to halt. Once the speed quirk user had briefly halted, Izuku swiftly turned the wall into a ring, finally catching their opponent, as Uraraka ran- giving the fire circle a wide berth- to the bomb.

At this point the wall to Izuku's left exploded inward. Bakugou took one look at the hell-like room, and immediately launched himself at the greenette, explosions flaring. *Right hook.* Said the voice.

Bakugou did start with an explosion in his right hand, but rather than an attack, it was a smokescreen, and a way of redirecting himself behind the shorter boy. 'Shit-' another explosion came from behind him before he could counteract it, the force knocking him to the rubble-strewn ground just before All Might announced “Hero team wins!”

Bakugou's head whipped around, spotting Uraraka with her palm against the bomb, his eyes widening, as Iida did a good dramatic “nooo.”. Izuku struggled to sit up. 'That is going to bruise.' he thought, dissipating the various fires in the room, revealing the melted sections and scorch-marks.

*Well at least you doesn't seem to have broken anything.*

“You sneaky shit, Deku, how thefuck did you get past me?” ground out the ashen-blond.
“W-We c-came in by the r-roof Kacchan.”

“Hpmh, Don't you fucking count this as a win. I would have destroyed you if you fought straight, shitty coward.”

“Come back to the observation room teams, we need to review the match.” Called All Might.

When the four made it back to the observation room, the rest of their classmates began clamouring to compliment them on their fight, before All Might managed to quiet them.

“Now who can tell me who the MVP of this first match was?” Asked the teacher.

“Midoriya-kun.” Said Yaoyorozu

“And can you tell me why?”

“Yes Sensei, the other three performed admirably. Iida did an excellent job, both getting into his role as the villain, and protecting the bomb until he became boxed in. Uraraka was instrumental in retrieving the bomb, and in letting the heroes evade Bakugou. Bakugou didn't initially perform well as part of a team, but rushed back to aid his team-mate immediately. But in the end, Midoriya devised both the plan to get the heroes past Bakugou, and the strategy to limit Iida's speed, and carried them out well.” Answered Yaoyorozu at length.

Well she's certainly thorough in her explanations. Commented the voice.

“T-That's exactly right.” said All Might. “But Midoriya-shounen, and Bakugou-shounen should also have done more to limit the damage to the building. It isn't wise as a villain, or as a hero, to damage your base too much. Let's begin the next match shall we?” He added, seeming to regain his poise.

The next fight was between team B as the heroes and team I as the villains. It was as one-sided and quick as the voice predicted. Shoji located the heroes as soon as they entered, and Todoroki just
froze the entire building, before walking past the trapped heroes and grabbing the weapon within three minutes.

_That was amazing, never mind the power, Todoroki-kun has some serious control._

'He must have gotten some serious training from Endeavour.'

The next few fights were much more uneventful, and somewhat better balanced- though both team C and team J got extremely lucky to be the villains.

When all the fights were over, all might complimented them on the lack of any serious injuries, then told them to head back to the classroom, before making his “heroic exit” leaving at high speed.

Chapter End Notes

hope you liked the chapter: don't forget to leave a comment.
of panic and calm

Chapter Summary

presidential elections, and declarations of war

Chapter Notes

and here we see how much i can overdo it on making iida serious.

The day after his mediocre performance in the battle trial, Tenya arrived at his desk slightly late- only 15 minutes before the bell rang- as a result of stopping to politely answer the questions of the reporters about the quality of education at UA, and watched with some disappointment as each of the other students came in- they were not technically late, so he didn't say anything, but he worried, for some of them any sort of delay might have meant that they missed the beginning of the lesson. Especially Shinsou, who came in looking half dead three minutes before the bell. Tenya wondered if it would be the heroic thing to do to suggest that he try to get more sleep. 'But if it is a medical condition, that would be highly insensitive. It might even be related to his quirk. Maybe I should ask Tensei what to do.'

A few moments before the bell Aizawa-sensei rolled into the room in his customary sleeping bag, prompting Tenya to once again wonder how the teacher could stand the heat, especially with the addition of the scarf, before emerging from it to take a place behind the desk at the front of the class. “I have handouts with more detailed evaluation of your performances during the battle trial, you should look over them later, but a few points of note.” Said the perpetually exhausted seeming man, passing a stack of sheets to Aoyama, before continuing. “Bakugou, stop acting like a child, you are wasting your talents by not working with your team. Midoriya,” the greenette snapped to attention, coming back from wherever he had been a moment earlier, “you can't just set fire to buildings like that, and you need to be more careful of your team-mates, if Uraraka had tried to keep going towards iida she would have run into that fire wall.”

“Yes sir, it won't happen again.” Tenya's friend mumbled, staring intently at his desk, and blushing. Clearly he took the dangers of his fire pretty seriously.

“See that it doesn't. Now onto some important homeroom business. You need to pick a class president.” that. Was surprisingly normal given the intensity of UA so far. But Tenya admitted that t was something he had been expecting to come up soon.
At their teacher's statement, most of Tenya's classmates began to loudly claim that they should be picked for the position, citing leadership qualities, or a mere desire to fill the role- the only real exceptions were Shoji, Tokoyami, Todoroki, and Midoriya (who had spaced out again, Tenya needed to talk to the boy about that, he was going to miss important lessons if this continued.) After a minute of this, Tenya couldn't take their lax attitude any more. “The position of class president is an important one, just because you want it doesn't make you qualified! A class president has to have the trust of their class, so it should be decided democratically.” Then, realizing that he had technically spoken out of turn himself, he asked. “Is that all right Sensei?”

“As long as you decide on the president by the end of homeroom.” Replied their teacher, getting back into his sleeping bag.

“thank you!”

“Given how little we know each other, won't everyone just vote for themselves?” Asked Asui.

“Yes, but that's how we'll know that anyone who receives multiple votes will be appropriate for the role!” It made sense, it took impressive leadership to build that level of trust in just a couple of days.

In the end, despite his odd habit of not seeming to pay attention in class, Midoriya had shown ample leadership, and judgement between the exam, and the battle trial. So that was where Tenya cast his own vote. He was not the only one, since alongside Yaoyorozu, And Tenya, Izuku was one of the only three to receive multiple votes- getting three.

“So Midoriya will be class president-”

“I resign.” Said the greenette firmly, almost the instant the words were out of the dark-haired man's mouth, to Tenya's astonishment.

“What, why? And how could he interrupt Aizawa-sensei like that?’ Thought the blue-haired teen, scandalized.

Aizawa looked hard at the greenette for several seconds, neither black, nor gold eyes looking away. The teacher sighed. “OK, in that case, since both Yaoyorozu, and lida have two votes, we'll hold a second vote to determine which will be class president at the end of the day. Dismissed.”
When Tenya had gotten his lunch he sat down at the table that Midoriya, Uraraka, and Shinsou were already occupying. “Lunch Rush's food is the best, right guys?” Asked the greenette.

“That it is, as expected of UA, as well as a hero such as Lunch Rush.” Tenya answered, while Shinsou grunted, and Uraraka nodded enthusiastically.

Tenya was about to broach the subject of the resignation but Uraraka forestalled him. “This rice is the best.”

“Un, and this is some great katsudon.” replied Midoriya, prompting a brief aside about the table's favourite foods.

“Midoriya-kun,” said Tenya, when he was sure there was a gap in the conversation for him to talk into, “why would you resign from the post of class president? Do you not trust your judgement? And don't you think it was rude to talk over Aizawa-sensei like that?”

“Oh, um,” Midoriya began to stammer, and press his forefingers together, not looking at him, all earlier intensity gone, “I-I just di-didn't want to be class president, a-and I d-don't think I’m the b-best choice.”

“Nonsense,” assured Tenya, in his best reassuring voice, “you have consistently shown excellent judgement, and bravery. That was why I voted for you. But if you don't wish to perform the duty, that is understandable”

Midoriya flinched slightly at the loud noise, and Shinsou narrowed his eyes. “Y-you voted for me? I-I'm sorry t-to make y-you waste y-your vote like th-that.”

“Don't concern yourself, I should have checked with your wishes, rather than assumed you would want the position.” Honestly, Tenya felt bad for helping to force his friend to make a scene like that.

Just then, a loud alarm sounded. Midoriya shot to his feet instantly, then a voice sounded from the school's speakers. “Level 3 security breach, please evacuate promptly.”
“What's a level 3 breach?” Asked Tenya, as Midoriya was pulling Shinsou from his seat.

“Intruders in the grounds.” Said Izuku over his shoulder, as he dragged the insomniac ahead of the ensuing stampede. Tenya and Uraraka had to go around the table, and so swiftly fell behind, and were caught in the crowd, which pushed him against the window.

Outside a large crowd of reporters with camera crews were advancing towards the school. The press? Iida tried to tell the others the others around him that it was fine, but they couldn't hear him over the noise. This was dangerous. Someone could be trampled, Tenya needed to get everyone to calm down, but ho-. “Uraraka, make me float!” He called to the nearby girl, who did so with difficulty, reaching over the people between them.

Weightless, Tenya was able to rise above the heads of the others and use his quirk to advance to the exit swiftly (Spinning, but that couldn't be helped.) His side slammed into the wall above the exit, and he yelled to get everyone's attention. “It's just the press! There is no reason to panic! We should behave like students of UA should!”

Unsurprisingly in Izuku's opinion, given the performance he had heard from behind him, Tenya ended up being elected class president in the run-off election, Yaoyorozu taking up the vice-president position.

*Now then, let's see how they managed to get in. Said the voice, as the bell rang, releasing them for the day. Izuku left the building with his friends, and stared at the gate- where the gate used to be- came into sight. The middle of the gate was just gone. Two feet of steel. The cleaning robots had clearly been at work here, but the rough edges of the gate, and the red tint of the surrounding floor were still clear.*

'Rust? Some sort of metallic weathering quirk?' wondered Izuku, as he and his friends stared at the hole.

*The press didn't do this. No-one in the press would be crazy enough for this. And that's a pretty powerful quirk, if it did this much before the alarm went off.*

'A villain? But why?'
A message, or a warning. Said the voice, darkly. Either way we need to find out more.

After the group had passed the door, and were on their way to the train station, he pulled out his phone, and found a contact listed as “Gi-chan”, sending a message. “I was thinking of going clothes shopping later, if you're free?”

“who you texting?” asked Uraraka

“Just a friend from middle-school.” Technically true in that he had first met Izuku in the first year of middle school, though friend was stretching it a bit.

“Sounds fun, want to meet at the same place as usual?” came the reply from “Gi-chan”.

“sure.”
Giran wanted to meet at six. Thank god it was summer, so the sun was still up, otherwise Izuku's mother might have objected to “meeting a friend from school” at this hour. After leaving home, vigilante getup in his bag, at 5:30 Izuku quickly walked to the office Giran was currently using for meetings, changing on the way.

_Remember, we can't let him think that the UA gate is the main reason we came._ Warned the voice, as Izuku entered the typically muggy office of the heavy-smoking info broker.

“Izuku didn't sit. “Yes. And some info if you've got it. I need some shoes to go with the gloves I got a while back. Fireproof, and nondescript. Size 8.”

Giran frowned at Izuku's typical cutting straight to the point. The voice was sure he hated these meetings nearly as much as they did, for all that Izuku was a valuable client. “I should be able to get you something, but it'll probably take about a week, and it'll need to be custom made, is it all right if I set a price once I talk to my supplier? And the information? You know I do good prices for information.”

“that's fine. I need a few updates. First off, any news on trigger cases?”

“Nothing new on trigger, it's not getting into the country right now.”
“Hmph, any possible Stain incidents?”

Giran grinned. “That I do have news on.” Izuku very forcefully didn't show his surprise- Stain hadn't made any clear attacks since Izuku's first attempt to take him down, he seemed to continue with his mission to take down “fake heroes” but there was no way to prove who was taking the heroes down. “A hero got taken out in Hokkaido, Monday evening. Stain finally came out of hiding. Left a message.” Izuku could imagine how grizzly that message had been, and felt a resurgence of guilt for not taking the maniac down.

*Looks like the fright we gave him has finally worn off. Either that or he couldn't stand the lack of attention any longer.*

Trying to get off the subject of his failure, Izuku finally got to the real reason he was here. “Do you know anything about the media break-in at UA this morning?”

“No.”

Izuku knew that his gaze could be intimidating sometimes- probably something to do with being looked at by seven people- and he directed a look at Giran. “Is that 'no' you don't know, or a 'no' you won't sell out a client?”

Giran, predictably, neither answered, nor gave any hint with his facial expression which it was. “All right, let me know when you have a price for me.”

When Izuku had finished his traditional session of hyperventilating in a bathroom, he began to walk home- looking like himself again.

*He knows, there's no way he doesn't.* Argued the voice- mostly Ichigou.

*It doesn't matter. If he was going to learn anything he would have by now. So we need to go elsewhere.* Said the voice- shifting toward Ren.
'But where? Giran's our best source other than the “network”.'

*I'm afraid we'll have to wait and see if the “network” puts out anything, you are way too young for interrogation. Let's focus on Ishiama for now.*

All-For-One had had his hand in many cookie-jars, but by far his most egregious endeavour was his constant quest for quirks—either to buy favours, or for his personal hoard. But as “normal” began to change, and people no longer went to him hoping he would take their quirks, he could no longer acquire them as cleanly and easily as before. So, to avoid the attention that a large number of people suddenly losing their quirks would bring, he began to employ people like Ishiama.

In the grand scheme of things, Ishiama was a pawn. A minor piece of AFO's empire—unlike his predecessor, he knew AFO, but not much more than that. That said, as far as the voice was concerned, Ishiama, and his many predecessors, and employees, were the worst scum of any of AFO's minions. The voice had gone to any lengths short of revealing themselves to see to it that Ishiama's ilk had to be frequently replaced.

Izuku understood the voice's sentiment from the moment he had been old enough to grasp what it was that Ishiama actually did, wanting to take him to the police practically from his first mission as Amber. Luckily for Ishiama, the chaos that had followed All-For-One's fall had prevented Izuku from removing him. Luckily for Izuku (and everyone else, really), that same chaos had prevented Ishiama from working especially effectively, between having to fight off other former pawns left and right, and having to find new buyers. But now, the chaos had died down.

Ishiama's current trafficking ring consisted, as far as they had been able to tell, of a dozen different people, and it had taken over two weeks to get a good grip on the schedules of each one. Normally, for a group this size, Izuku, and before him Aoi, would simply take out a couple of key pieces, and let the police mop up what they could. But in this case not only was the type of crime especially offensive, but the villains had conveniently provided the means to get every member of the group to the police in a single trip. Besides, there was a good chance that if enough got away, they could regroup.

*Remember,* warned the voice, as Izuku was picking the lock of the first house, *this guy has a quirk that improves reaction times. If he's awake, you'll need to be quick.*
Izuku entered the house on silent feet, the voice's warning turned out to be unneeded, as his first mark was asleep. Some quick work with a chemical soaked rag, and he was down for the count.

Izuku trussed the man, and dragged him through the house, to the adjoining garage. The reason this man was first was quite simple. He was typically the driver, so the ill-historied van was stored here. Taking the keys from their bowl on his way out of the house proper, Izuku moved to the innocuous transport, and tossed the ex-driver in the back. This was going to be a long night.

Honestly Izuku wasn't that confident in his ability to drive, but the half-dozen back-seat drivers he brought along with him were quite capable drivers, and able to offer real-time adjustments, so there were no problems as he drove the van, and it's (currently) lone passenger to their next destination.

The next six houses were also emptied smoothly, their occupants living alone, and overconfident that their activities were only known amongst themselves. Ishiama had apparently picked his compatriots with the usefulness of their quirks for his tasks in mind, and Izuku was thankful for the length of time he could now hold his breath, because the fourth trafficker- a woman who could release a gas that made anyone who breathed it immensely dizzy- started using her quirk the moment she woke up.

The eighth house was the one which the voice thought would be the biggest problem. Two traffickers- husband and wife- lived there. Izuku picked the lock quickly, as the voice listened for any sign that they had been noticed. When Izuku began to subdue the husband- whose quirk allowed him to hypnotise anyone who looked him in the eye- he kept an eye on the wife. Predictably she woke swiftly, and almost immediately screamed.

Well that probably alerted one of the neighbours. We need to hurry this along. Said the voice urgently, as she pulled a phone from the pocket dimension her quirk created.

Izuku wasn't sure who she intended to call- her boss, or the police- but he wasn't about to find out. The woman yelled again, as the burst of flames hit the hand holding the phone, forcing her to drop it, just before the husband- finally- went limp. The next item drawn from nowhere was- rather unexpectedly- a gun. Izuku's eyes widened, and he rushed forward, wrenching it to the side as she fired. The bullet still grazed his side, as it made its way to the wall, but but he managed to get her to drop it before she could get off another shot.

The ensuing struggle lasted a couple of minutes, and earned Izuku a few nasty gashes on his arms, but eventually he managed to knock the wife out with a blow to the temple. 'Shit, that was too close.' thought Izuku, panting, as he tied the pair up.

Are you OK? We can stop if you aren't up for the last three.
'No, I can keep going. Ishiama could rebuild still.'

...*OK, but we need to get out of here. And we won't have time for all three before the first few wake up.*

'Ishiama next then, the last two probably wouldn't get away without him.'

Izuku had no idea how Ishiama had been alerted, but he had. When Izuku arrived at the compound where Ishiama tended to sleep, as well as keep people before transport, the man was not only awake, but clearly preparing to leave. When Izuku saw him he had a harried appearance, rushing through the building, clearly not long out of bed, hair mussed, suit wrinkled, various papers in one hand, and a briefcase in the other. When he saw Izuku, his eyes widened, then he dropped what he was holding, and lashed out.

Ishiama's quirk was a pretty simple one, it just caused people within his visual range to lose their sense of where parts of their body were. Izuku found himself unable to tell where his legs were in relation to one-another. *Don't move your feet, and keep your hands in sight. He will expect you to fall when he closes in.* Warned the voice, watching the man, and Izuku's hands carefully as they entered visual range.

Sure enough, the business suited man rushed in and threw a quick jab at Izuku in the hopes of making him try to take a step backwards. The path of his fist passed close enough to Izuku's arm, so he simply conjured a small, hot flame-shield in it's way, causing the man to yell and jerk back as he developed a first-degree burn on his hand in an instant.

Izuku knew that drawing this out was not in his favour, if he fell at any point, the monster would have ample time to get away before he could get up again. He threw his own punch, careful to both keep his hand in sight, and not reach out too far, though it was impossible to tell how much he was leaning. At the same time, he made a stream of fire to curve around behind the trafficker at waist height, cutting off retreat.

The man was clearly not used to anyone staying standing during a fight with him, he stepped in as the fire began to burn the back of his suit, right into the blow. His eyes widened as the air left him, and he threw a wild punch, which Izuku easily turned aside with his left hand, even unsteady as he was. Izuku turned the overreaching man, before bringing his right arm around the man's neck, and
grasping his left with it. At least, he assumed the rest of his arm was there, he couldn't see it for his head. The man's struggles quickly took them both to the floor, but eventually he went limp.

Izuku sat there for a minute, until he felt sure about where his legs were, breathing heavily. *Are you OK, kid?*

'Y-Yeah, I just- just need a minute.'

*take your time, he's not going anywhere.*
of old friends and new

Chapter Summary

the kids meet 13, and some uninvited guests meet the kids.

Chapter Notes

warning for sudden tone shift halfway through this chapter.
though that is kind of par for the course with the USJ

The voice was watching. Honestly that went without saying these days, there wasn't much for them to do other than watch, other than themselves, their current charge was the only person they could talk to. Izuku was currently trying not to look as tired as he was. Judging from the looks Bakugou-kun was sending him, it wasn't working. 'honestly, we shouldn't let him go on such long missions on school nights.'

As much as it needed to be done, and as soon as possible, the voice was not happy about acceding to Izuku going out last night. He was not getting enough sleep. But the villains were where they couldn't hurt anyone, and their most recent victim had been delivered safely to the police, rather than unsafely wherever they intended to take him. They had no idea who wanted him, or why, but whatever the reason, it most likely wasn't good, especially given that they had found him in quirk cuffs.

They were- or rather Izuku was, the voice wasn't sure it could be said to be anywhere- on a bus, heading for the site of today's rescue training, and the whole bus was abuzz with conversations, which the voice tried to make sense of. “Midoriya.” Said Asui-chan, causing them to nudge Izuku back into paying attention, “I always say what's on my mind.”

“Y-Yeah, Asui-san?”

“Call me Tsuyu. Your quirk. It's a lot like Endeavour's.”

The voice burst into hysterical laughter, as Izuku tried to stammer out a response, and Todoroki-kun finally looked to be paying attention. hahahaha. Oh man. Well that's true enough, as far as she's seen. But we can't believe she said that in front of his son.
“Hold up, Asui, sure they both have fire quirks, but Endeavour's are a different colour, and I've never seen him do that hovering flames thing. So they aren't that similar.” Said Kirishima-kun, mercifully cutting off Izuku's awkward stammering. “I'm kind of jealous though, your fire is really flashy. My hardening is useful, but it's kind of boring, you know?”

_Huh, wasn't expecting that. Poor self-esteem maybe?_ They said, but Izuku was already showering the red-head with praise unprompted. He was a good kid.

“no, it's really cool! It would be really useful as a pro, you could fight villains without much danger, or property damage with a quirk like that.”

“My navel laser is the perfect combo of strong and flashy.” Said Aoyama-kun.

“Yeah, but it sucks that you can't use it for long without causing your stomach to collapse.” replied Mina.

_Well that was blunt. She shouldn't talk about quirk downsides like-_

“But if we want to talk about strong quirks, other than Mido-kun's,” Mido-kun? “It's got to be Bakugou, and Todoroki.” Added Mina-chan.

_Has she seen Tokoyami's quirk? He has some understandable control issues, but Dark Shadow is crazy strong too._

'Yeah, but Tokoyami is more subtle about it than Kacchan, and Todoroki.' Thought their charge.

If the voice had had eyebrows during the day it would have been raising them. _Just Bakugou and Todoroki hmm?_ Izuku's face heated slightly.

“But Bakugou is always angry, so he'll never be popular.” Said Asui- Tsuyu-chan.

_Ha, she wasn't kidding about talking her mind. I like her._ Said Yugo, and the rest of the voice
followed.

The long-overdue ribbing of Bakugou-kun continued, alongside some loud yelling until Aizawa-kun announced that they had arrived. The building that was revealed when they stepped out of the bus was a huge dome. When they got inside they were greeted by the marshmallow-like form of the space hero them-self, no. 13.

Aizawa-kun walked up to 13, and quietly asked “Where's All Might? He's supposed to be here for this class.”

13 held up a hand, fingers splayed. “He got caught in some incidents on his commute, and ran out of time.” Ah, his ever-shortening hero time-limit.

“Tsk. That man is the height of irrationality. Oh well. Let's begin.” Groaned the tired man.

“Alright, before we begin, I have a couple of things to say, or three, or four.” Said the peppy hero, before launching into a sombre topic. “As many of you know, my quirk Black Hole lets me suck anything into a vortex, and turn it to dust. I use this ability to clear up rubble, to help people. However this power could easily be used to kill. The same is true of many of the quirks here.”

*We know.* Stated Ichigou, Dai, And Yugo at the same time, the others following the sentiment.

“It's important that you remember that you could seriously injure someone if you make a mistake with your powers, but today you will all be learning how to use your quirks to help save lives! Your quirks emphatically do not exist to hurt others” The hero finished with a bow, to applause from the students.

Just then the lights flickered, and there was an odd sound. No, the cessation of a sound they had been hearing since entering. The fountain had stopped. Izuku's gaze, and thus theirs snapped toward the square, where there was a black spot, like someone had placed a drop of ink in midair, which rapidly began to expand into a large cloud of fog. *Shit, Kurogiri! What's he doing here?* Said most of the voice. Yugo had begun to experience as much of a panic-attack as someone without a body could the moment they spotted that dark spot.

Aizawa-kun must have turned to look too at some point, because he yelled to the students as a flood of people began to emerge from the localized fog-bank. “Huddle up and don't move! 13, protect the students!”
Izuku mirrored the voice's growing horror as one of All-For-One's most important former lieutenants showed up right in front of him without warning— with a large group of accomplices. 'How did he even know there was a class here now?'

*It must have been the media break-in, we need to get help. Now.*

“Has the exercise already started?” Asked Kirishima, as the last few villains emerged from the fog, causing the voice to fill with white-noise for a moment.

*Oh god. They brought a Nomu. Did Kurogiri find some sort of cache? Or is he back somehow?* whimpered the voice, once it could speak again.

“Stay back, those are villains.” Said Aizawa, as Kurogiri began to speak.

“13, and Eraserhead... according to the schedule, All Might is also supposed to be here.” The voice relaxed slightly, recognizing the voice of the fog.

*It's still Shiragumo, All-For-One hasn't somehow survived, and retrieved the Warp Gate quirk.* Said the voice, still watching everything that happened carefully.

Another of the villains began to speak, the one covered in... something grey? “We went through all this trouble, and the symbol of peace isn't even here. Do you think he would come if we killed some of the kids?”

“The alarms didn't go off, they must be jamming them somehow. Kaminari try to contact the school with your quirk. 13 evacuate the students.” Ordered Aizawa, moving to confront the villains himself.

*Stop him! He couldn't even take on Kurogiri if he were alone!* Yelled the voice urgently
“Sensei, you can't fight that many villains alone, you're style is more reliant on ambushes.” Izuku called.

“No hero is a one-trick pony.” Said Aizawa, jumping down the stairs anyway.

_Fuck, he's going to get himself killed-_ Started the voice, before Kurogiri disappeared. _Behind us!_ 

When Izuku turned, Kurogiri had indeed appeared between the class and the exit. “I'm afraid I can't allow you to leave. We are the league of villains, and we have come here today to extinguish the symbol of peace, but he appears not to be here. Has the schedule been altered perchance? Regardless, my role is-” He didn't get to finish the sentence before both Kirishima and Bakugou launched attacks futilely into the mist. “That could have been quite perilous.” Kurogiri said calmly, as he reformed, unharmed. “Regardless, you will be scattered.”

_We need to get in there, he still has a body, and he won't move if we grab it once he knows our quirk._

“Get back!” Said 13, as the mist suddenly expanded, engulfing the class.

When the mist faded, Izuku had been warped to a point above a large body of water- the shipwreck zone. 'Not good, we can't use our quirk under there.' He thought, as he hit the surface.

_Get to the surface. At least you can use your quirk to an extent there._ Urged the voice, before Izuku spotted a villain with some sort of shark mutation swimming quickly towards him.

Before Izuku could start to swim away, another form appeared in his field of view, and kicked the villain away. “Midoriya.”

_Why would they send her here? This is the best place for her._ Wondered the voice, as Tsuyu's tongue shot out to grab Izuku, and she swam with him toward the boat. _And is she holding Shinsou?_

Tsuyu quickly swam to the boat with both boys in tow, and deposited Izuku on deck, before climbing up with Shinsou. “Thanks, Asu- Tsuyu-san.” Said Izuku. “They knew we would be here, and the layout of the building. This is bad.”
“So what do we do? These guys said they wanted to kill All Might.” Asked Shinsou, quickly moving his wet hair from his eyes.

_They don’t know what we can do._ Said the voice.

“We have an advantage, they sent Asu-Tsuyu-san here, so they can’t know our abilities.”

“Right, kero, they should have sent me to the conflagration zone.” Confirmed Tsuyu, thoughtful.

“Shinsou-kun, do you think your brainwashing could get this many villains?”

“No, I need a response, I’d only be able to get some of them.” Answered the purple-haired boy.

“And I can’t keep them here, they would swim under anything I made. OK, A-Tsuyu, could you jump out of the circle with both of us?”

“Yes but they would just follow us, kero.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll cover us.”

Shota was beginning to panic. There were far too many villains here, problem child was right, he wasn’t suited to this. Especially not with this many mutations in the mix. Worse, now he was beginning to hear fighting from the other zones. And the most dangerous looking two hadn’t even-

There was a massive explosion from the shipwreck zone. Steam rising in a vast cloud over the water. The distraction it caused allowed him to take down a couple more of the villains, but he was slowing down. And he had no idea what had caused that explosion.

One of the two at the back finally began to move- the one covered in what looked like hands.
“You're slowing down Eraserhead.” He said, moving in swiftly.

“You the boss?” Shota asked, quirk trained on the man- he didn't know what he could do, and didn't want to have to find out.

Hand-man deftly caught the piece of capture weapon Shota sent towards him, still advancing. “seventeen seconds.” He said, entering striking range. Shota threw an elbow into the man's stomache. The villain caught it.

“You make it hard to tell. But your hair falls when you drop your quirk, and you're doing so more often. Getting tired?”

'Shit.' Thought the hero, his burning eyes finally forcing him to blink. The sleeve of his costume fell away, and a sharp spike of pain shot through him, as the skin on his elbow began to crumble.

Shota swiftly reactivated his quirk, and punched the man with his other arm, before backing away. He tried to fight off the other villains, as Hand-man spoke again. “You really aren't suited for drawn out fights against large groups like this. But you jumped in anyway. So cool. But I’m not the 'final boss.'” One instant the thing with the exposed brain was standing where it had been since the start. The next it was standing over Shota, arm raised to strike.

When Izuku and the other two arrived out of the steam cloud he had made at the shore, Eraserhead was doing far better than the voice had anticipated. When the villain with- those were hands, they finally realised, feeling slightly ill- managed to catch Aizawa's elbow, the voice urged him not to get in the way, that the teacher could still handle it. Then the Nomu moved.

Seeing his teacher- arm broken like a twig, monster suddenly crouching over him on the ground- Izuku was already moving before he thought about it. Kurogiri returned to the hand-villain, who was hanging back momentarily, and said something that prompted him to start scratching furiously at his neck. It is fast, and strong. We don't know what else it can do Izuku, be careful! Warned the voice- Ren coming to the fore, as Izuku entered active combat.

Aizawa's other arm was broken, despite him using his quirk, before Izuku arrived. Nomu often had quirks that made them extremely resilient, so Izuku had formed a very fierce fire in each hand, as Eraserhead spotted him eyes widening, what was likely an order to retreat forming on his lips. He
grabbed the Nomu's arm with his flame-wreathed right hand. Contrary to his expectations, the arm didn't withstand the flame, charring almost immediately. The beast tore the arm off, and a new one grew in seconds.

“My Nomu has regeneration, kid.” Said the hand-villain. As Izuku's eyes widened, the Nomu grabbed his right arm in it's new hand, and squeezed.

Izuku screamed as the arm broke. *Fuck, it needs to tear them off Izuku!* Yelled the voice. Izuku raised his left arm swiftly, he wreathed the arm that was holding him in flames from his right, and moved the left to destroy the other arm.

The monster screamed and let go as it's arms were charred into uselessness. Izuku was about to try to get his injured teacher away from the monster, when the hand-villain screamed “My nomu! It was strong enough to kill All Might, how could you beat it? You cheater!” And rushed toward Izuku, hand outstretched.

When the man approached, parts of the voice seemed to go into shock for some reason, and Izuku, remembering what this man could do, panicked, and sent a stream of fire to keep him away. *Izuku! No-* Started the voice, before a dark portal opened between the fire and the man.

Izuku suddenly felt pieces of his own fire, moving at speed towards him at head height to his left, and desperately tried- too late- to halt them. And then the world fell away.
of falling and waking

Chapter Summary

USJ concludes, and the staff discuss it

Chapter Notes

argh, this was a pain to write. i hope it turned out ok (spoiler alert: I don't think it did).
don't forget to comment
(also, i apologize for the cliffhanger last chapter)

Shota hadn't been expecting the monsters attack, much faster than he could react to. He expected less one of his students rushing towards it to help him, while he uselessly tried to erase the monster's quirk, getting caught by it before he could order him back.

Least of all had he been expecting what just happened. He had seen the panic in the kid's eyes when the portal opened in front of his fire, and so decided to erase his quirk, to get rid of the fire.

Shota had seen a lot of reactions to having a quirk erased. From the minor- sometimes not even noticing- to the major- perception quirk users tended to freak out to various extents- but this was by far the worst he had ever witnessed. The instant Shota's quirk took hold the fire stopped, but the kid went limp, every muscle relaxing, as he fell to the floor like a rag-doll, unmoving. Shota couldn't even see if he was breathing.

As the doors of the facility exploded inwards, he hurriedly undid his quirk, panicked. 'He can't be dead.'

He was lost. He didn't know where he was, or what was going on, or even who he was. He had no names for....anything, no context, no frame of reference. Meaningless noise, and shifting colours he could make no sense of assaulted him, and he had no idea how to make it stop, he could only wait, and beg- wordlessly, for he had no words- for it to abate.
And suddenly he was Izuku again. The world snapped back into place. Every name, every memory pouring back into his head with such violence and suddenness that he immediately blacked out.

For the first time since he had avenged his mentor, Toshinori could not bring himself to smile. As he entered the USJ, he found a cluster of frightened students supporting an injured 13, their suit all but destroyed at the back. Beyond them lay the plaza as it would likely appear in his nightmares. Dozens of villains littered the area, most unconscious, Aizawa was desperately trying to stand from where he lay, beneath a behemoth, with an exposed brain, and limply hanging arms- both of his own arms bent at unnatural angles. Following his gaze, he saw Midoriya, lying unmoving on the ground. This would not stand.

One-For-All burned in him, as he rushed down the stairs to the plaza, knocking the villains in his way to the ground before they could react. He took Midoriya (please let him be unconscious), Asui, and Shinsou to the base of the stairs in a single trip, before carrying Aizawa- as carefully as he could at such speeds- in a second.

Whatever it was, the monster- Toshinori had seen many different mutations from quirks, but never something like the exposed brain of this thing- made no move to stop him, and the villain with hands all over himself staggered back as he was struck when sprinting hero passed him to get to the furthest two.

The hand villain began raving something, but Toshinori was more concerned with checking that young Midoriya was actually breathing, then telling the conscious students to get him, and Aizawa, to the entrance.

Turning back, he made to take the hand-villain down, but the dark-skinned monster finally moved. Toshinori's Carolina smash hit the thing cleanly, but it had no obvious effect. It didn't even step back. “My Nomu has Shock Absorption, you'd have to scoop out its guts to hurt it.” Gloated the villain, revealing information about his...ally? Weapon? Without cause.

'Absorption, not cancelling, so there should be a limit.' Thought Toshinori as he threw another punch.
The first thing Izuku heard after he regained consciousness was the voice. *Don't!* It yelled, before turning to a voice like it wanted to cry, which quickly turned to one of puzzlement. *Oh, Izu... Izuku?*

"m here, wha' happened?" Asked Izuku, groggily, as relief suddenly flooded to voice.

*Izuku! You're OK! You threw some fire, but Kurogiri redirected it back. We don't know what happened after.* Well that explained why they sounded like they wanted to cry, if there had been a time gap right after that, they must have thought that he would be the youngest addition to the voice so far. Though it didn't explain why the voice had reacted as it had to the hand-villain.

Izuku tried to make sense of his last memories before waking up. But found it to be impossible, it was just senseless noise. Wait. He snapped his eyes open, and relaxed when he saw that they were not still in the USJ. Looking around, he saw Aizawa, both arms in casts, sleeping in a chair beside his bed.

Or not sleeping, since he looked up the moment Izuku tried to sit up. “Stay still, problem child. How are you feeling?” He asked, sounding concerned.


“Everyone else was fine. We were the only two injured, unless you count Kaminari overusing his quirk. All Might showed up just after you passed out, the thing that got us wasn't much of a fight with its arms out of commission.” Soothed the teacher, adding. “Only two of them got away.”

Izuku relaxed back onto the bed. Everyone was fine. Everything turned out OK. *You broke your arm, and then we don't even know what happened.* Pointed out the voice, gently chiding.

“What happened after that portal opened?” Asked Izuku, frowning.

“I erased your quirk, and you collapsed.” Answered the tired man, sounding guilty. “Do you have any idea why you might have reacted like that?”

*Shit, we need to think of a lie- Dual quirk?- Something about Memory-* Said a few parts of the voice at once, as Izuku stiffened.
“I don't know. That's the first time anything like that has happened.” Ventured the greenette, trying not to squirm at the lie. 'We have no reason to know any more than he does about that.'

“Hmmm... well we need to make sure there aren't any problems, I'll go get the old lady.” Said the dark-haired man, standing. “She's going to have words for you. And once she lets you go, so will I.”

Recovery Girl certainly did have some words for him, though by the time she let him go Aizawa apparently thought he was sufficiently chastised for one day, and she assured him that there should be minimal scarring.

That cowardly weasel, there's no way Giran didn't know about something this size! Ranted Aoi, along with the rest of the voice, as Izuku walked to the train station. But he wasn't really listening, more concerned with how curiously quiet the oldest pieces of the voice were being.

'All right, what's wrong? You've been acting weird since that villain attacked us.'

Ichigou, Dai, and Yugo all disdained to answer verbally. Instead they sent an odd emotion- some mix of anger and revulsion- and Ichigou added a memory of what had happened.

The villain covered in hands was rushing towards Izuku. Ichigou was going to warn Izuku what best to do. His focus was drawn to the man's face. That hand. He knew it. He froze. Disgust filled him, distracting him from speaking. It was his own right hand. It's pair, he could see now, gripped the back of the man's head.

Izuku tried not to be sick as he digested this new memory. 'that's... why did you have to say that as a memory? That's messed up. All-For-One kept them? How? Why?'

Kansei was a lunatic, don't bother asking why he did shit like that. Six of those hands were ours. Said the voice. Goodness knows where Kurogiri found them. Let's... talk about something else. Please.
Toshinori sat with the rest of the staff in the meeting, and forced himself to keep watching footage of the attack, retrieved after whoever was jamming signals was captured. Each new close call left him tasting iron, and threatened to bring the blood up his throat again. He should have been there.

Worst of all was watching the “Nomu” crush Aizawa-kun's arm, and then young Midoriya's when he ran to help. 'I should talk to him, make sure he's OK after that.'

That and watching the villain with the warping quirk manage to nearly kill both 13 and Midoriya with their own quirks. That was harrowing.

The students should not have been put in such danger. Young Midoriya certainly shouldn't have ended up jumping into the fray like that. But Toshinori dreaded to think what could have happened if he hadn't. The monster was strong. Even if it didn't kill Aizawa-kun before he stopped it, it would have been a far more dangerous opponent uninjured. He might even have failed to hold it off until the other teachers arrived.

Once the teachers had finished viewing the footage of the even, Tsukauchi stood. “We've checked the quirk registry for both of the villains that managed to escape, but came back with nothing. The names they used most likely are false, and they themselves are likely unregistered.”

“So we got nothin’,” Said Snipe, with characteristic bluntness. “The ringleaders are going to try again once they heal, and we don't know how to find them.”

Ringleaders... probably not the term he would have used. “I wouldn't call them ringleaders. One of them threw a tantrum when he began to lose. He was like a child, if a supremely twisted one. And the other one wasn't a subordinate. Or a partner. He was more like Shigaraki's minder.” Put in the skeletal man.

“Yes, but it is concerning that such a man could gain such a large group of followers.” Said Nedzu, before directing the meeting to discussing possible countermeasures for future attacks.
of questions and decisions

Chapter Summary

the sports festival is announced, and All Might has a chat

Chapter Notes

1) yay more kudos! thanks for the support and nice comments
2) it is seriously getting too hot, i can barely concentrate to write
3) woo new YUTS chapter!! *emperor Kuzku voice* I'm so happy!

In the aftermath of the attack school was cancelled on Friday, so Izuku had three days in which to go over what had happened and what they should do. Admittedly a fair bit of the first day was taken up with reassuring his mum that he was fine, that he hadn't been in that much danger for the most part. 'We really worried her, if we hadn't been injured she would be way less stressed.'

Izuku did no vigilante work over the long weekend, Aoi sounded distinctly like she might contrive a way to kill any piece of the voice that suggested it. So they ended up sleeping a much more reasonable amount, and thus spending more time in the not-quite-dream, reviewing what Izuku had done. In the end they decided that apart from the last panicked attack (and Ren insisting that destroying the Nomu completely would have been best) that he had performed as well as could have been expected.

Looking over the last two issues of “Bi-weekly Heroics” Izuku, and the voice had both felt stupid. In retrospect it was obvious that something big was going to happen. Crime rates plummeted, and they had been over-optimistic to think that it was because of All Might's presence.

'How could we miss this?' Thought Izuku, angry with himself.

*Even if we saw, what could we have done? We wouldn't have known who was planning what, or when, or where. Reasoned the voice.*

'Even if we didn't know when, we should have seen that the USJ would be the best place for an attack, it's too far from any support.' Argued the greenette.
And we couldn't have gotten any more there with just our hunches. Said the voice, cutting off the boy's self-recrimination. Stop worrying at it kid. Anyone trusted with the Warp Gate quirk is a nightmare to deal with. And none of us could have thought that Kurogiri would suddenly show up after this long silence.

Izuku sighed. The voice was right. It usually was. 'All right. So what should we be doing about Giran?'

Hitoshi was waiting outside of UA for his friend. Aizawa-sensei had said that he was going to be fine, but when Hitoshi headed home, Izuku still hadn't woken up from whatever had happened. 'Useless. Everyone else was fighting for their lives, and you couldn't even stop one villain. And then-' He cut off as he saw a familiar mop of green hair approaching in the crowd.

“Midoriya!” Called shinsou.

“Oh, h-hey Shinsou-kun!” Called the greenette, stammering like normal, as if nothing had happened.

“We didn't have any way to contact you. So you are OK then?”

The greenette blinked, seemingly surprised, then spaced out for a second. “Oh, I'm s-sorry Shinsou-kun, I'm fine. Aizawa-sensei's q-quirk just doesn't- I di-didn't react well to m-my quirk being erased.”

Midoriya was one of only two people his own age who never hesitated to speak to him. Well in Uraraka's case she only hesitated sometimes when she thought he was about to pull some sort of prank- not that he ever used his quirk like that. But with Izuku he genuinely never seemed to worry that Hitoshi would make him do anything. It had only been a week, and Hitoshi already wasn't sure he could live without people who trusted him like that any more. He wasn't about to let Midoriya drop off the map again. “We weren't able to contact you, so we didn't even know if you had woken up. Can we swap phone numbers, just in case you do something dumb like that again?”
Izuku hadn't expected Shinsou to react like that, but in hindsight he really should have. 'No wonder he worried if the last he saw of you was when you collapsed for no visible reason three days ago.'

Yeah, we really should have given people our number, huh? Said the voice, as Izuku and Shinsou walked into class.

“Deku-kun!” “Midoriya-san!” Came the twin calls of Uraraka and Iida as he entered. Tsuyu hadn't said anything, but she was watching him with her usual unreadable expression.

“H-Hey guys.” Answered the greenette sheepishly, as they walked up to him.

“You're OK! Aizawa-sensei said you would be, but you hadn't woken up when we left.” Said Uraraka.

“Indeed,” added Iida, with customary hand-gestures, “you should really have given us some means to contact you. As class president I should be able to tell the other members of class if something important happens!”

After he had exchanged phone numbers with his small group of friends they split up, going to their desks, as Aizawa came in- now down to a single cast- and took his accustomed place behind the desk. “Are you all right Sensei?” Asked Iida.

“Don't concern yourselves with me, after all your fight still isn't over yet.” Said the teacher, prompting a number of worried questions from the class.

Oh great, what does he mean by that?

“The sports festival is coming up.” Deadpanned the tired man.

OK, now he's just fucking with us. There's no way he didn't word that that way on purpose. Said the voice, disgruntled, as the class erupted into excited murmuring.

“Will that be safe though? What if the villains decide to attack the event?” Asked Tsuyu.
“It was decided to go ahead with the event, we need to show that we weren't shaken by the attack. And security is being tripled from previous years. Besides, the event is a huge opportunity for you to get the attention of pros.” Said the tired man.

*He really doesn't sound like he agrees with that decision. So what are we going to do? Media attention is the last thing we want.*

'I think we should just ask Aizawa-sensei, he is an underground hero, we should just do what he did for his sports festivals.'

As the rest of the class left for their next period, Izuku hung back, approaching the teacher's desk. “Aizawa-sensei?” He asked.

“Yes, problem child?”

“I was wondering if you had any advice for the sports festival?”

“I don't normally play favourites like that, Midoriya.” Said the dark-haired man, giving him a hard look.

“N-Not like that! I- um, you're an underground hero right?” Asked the greenette, looking down.

“Yes?” The man stated in a questioning tone.

“So I Wondered wh-what you did for sports festivals while y-you were a st-student?”

Aizawa blinked at him, frowning. “And why would you want to know that?”

“I do-don't really like the c-constant attention h-heroes get. I w-was kind of pl-planning to-”

“You want to be an underground hero then?” Cut in the man, raising his eyebrows.
“Yeah.” Replied Izuku, blushing.

Aizawa seemed to take some mercy on him then. “Don't make that sort of decision too hastily, you've only just begun training. But to answer your question, I won my first year, and resigned before the tournament the other years.”

“Wait, y-you won the whole tournament?” Asked Izuku- he hadn't known that.

The teacher gave a terrifying grin. “And how exactly do you think Erasure would let me destroy robots?” He asked.

“So you got moved up from gen. ed.”

“Well done, problem child. People don't remember the first-year festival, so even if you do decide to be an underground hero, you should do your best to get a good internship. Not that you could have backed out, given the speech you have to give.”

“Sp-Speech?” Asked Izuku, looking up sharply.

There was amusement in the teachers eyes swiftly hidden, as he said. “You came first in the entrance exam, problem child, so you have to give the opening speech for your year.”

“I- c-can't someone else give the sp-speech? I c-can't- I suck at public speaking.”

“Nope.” Said the man, popping the p with apparent glee at his over-performing student's discomfort. “If you want out of it, you'll have to talk to Nedzu, but he'll probably think it's a skill you need to develop. Which it is- you can't always avoid the media, even with underground heroics.”

“Yes, sir. Thank you for the advice.” Said the greenette, resigned.

“Well it is my job. Now you should go ahead, you won't be late for your next class if you hurry.”
Said the tired man, prompting Izuku to leave quickly for chemistry.

*Come on Izuku, you'll be fine, people don't expect some grand epic. Just keep it short, and put the school motto on the end. They'll love it.* The voice was saying as modern literature class finished, and Cementoss left them for lunch. A lot of the class seemed to be getting excited for the upcoming festival, while Izuku continued to silently panic as he stared into space.

'But what if I stutter? Or-or what if-

*Eyes front, Uraraka-chan just said your name, Izuku.* Cut in Hayato, on reality watch.

“-Iida, let's crush it at the sports festival.” Said Uraraka, making a terrifying face as Izuku tuned back into reality. A lot of the people remaining in the room were looking on in shock at this sudden shift in demeanour, as she added. “Everyone! I'm gonna go for it!” The voice, and by extension Izuku, was not surprised.

*What did I say, it's always the nice ones.* Said the voice, led by Yugo. *It's like watching a slightly less terrifying Aoi.*

*I think this goes without saying, but I heard that.* Added Aoi, causing a slight twinge at Izuku's temple.

'She's certainly determined. I hope she does well... You know, I still haven't asked why she wants to be a hero.' Thought Izuku, trying to forestall a possible intra-voice argument, and resulting headache.

“Hey, I've been meaning to ask, wh-why do you guys want to be heroes?” Said Izuku- he was pretty sure he knew for both Iida, and Shinsou, but he may as well ask them too.

“*To spite all the people who said I would make a good villain.*” Said Shinsou flippantly.

“Shinsou-kun, spite is not a good reason to become a hero, you should try to find a more noble
goal. I wanted to become a hero because I admire my brother, for example.” Said Iida, waving his arms in a feasibly dangerous manner in the halls.

The other three smiled fondly at Iida's overly serious response. “And what about you Uraraka-san?” Asked Izuku.

“Oh, um. For the money I guess?” Answered the brunette, blushing.

“For the money?” repeated the greenette.

“Y-Yeah, um, my parents own a construction company, but there’s often not much work. So I wanted to become a hero so I could help them out, try to let them take it easy.”

“O-oh, so i-it's about helping your family. Th-that's really n-noble Uraraka-san.”

“What about you-” Started Uraraka, before All Might unexpectedly came around the corner.

“There you are young Midoriya. Would you like to eat lunch with me? I wanted to talk to you.” Said the enormously tall hero, holding up a tiny bento, causing both Uraraka, and Shinsou to try to hold in laughter at the unexpectedly cute behaviour.

What could he want to talk to us about? We haven't done anything to give ourselves away right? Asked the voice, suddenly worried.

“Sure, that's no problem.” Said Izuku, maintaining his calm façade. “I'll talk to you guys later.” He added, walking away with the blond.

'He's probably just checking we're OK after the USJ.' Mollified Izuku.

Izuku was swiftly proven right when they got to the break room All Might took them to. “I wanted to check that you were all right after what happened. Have you been having any nightmares?” The tall man asked.
“No, sir.” Well, no more than normal. Memories did sometimes leak, but the voice made sure he got out of nightmares quickly enough. “What about you? That thing was really strong.”

“Don't worry about me my boy! It'll take more than that to finish me off.” Said the number one hero with his usual bravado. “Did Aizawa-kun talk to you? You really shouldn't have jumped in like that.”

“I know,” Said Izuku, staring at the floor for the second time that day. “I should have at least told the others to get to the entrance, but that thing was going to kill him. I moved without thinking, I'm sorry.”

“Don't beat yourself up too much for it. You're a student, you're allowed to make mistakes.”

'Well.' Thought Toshinori after he wished young Midoriya good luck with the sports festival as they finished their discussion, 'Moving to help others without thinking about it again, and trying to learn from his mistakes, without needing them pointed out. I need to talk to Nedzu, he's clearly the right choice.' For all that young Togata was equal to young Midoriya in terms of heroics, he was too close to a carbon-copy of Toshinori. And goodness knows, Toshinori had made many mistakes with One-For-All.
Chapter Summary

the offer is made, green bean and co. give their answer.

Chapter Notes

woot woot. 5k hits.

Nedzu was watching with some amusement the typical pre-festival challenging of the hero students. It was generally held that if a student did well enough in the festival they could be moved up into the hero course - it wasn't strictly true, Nedzu and the other teachers tended to keep an eye on gen. ed. students they felt could fill any empty seats from the start - and so the first year students had a tradition of scoping out the hero classes to try to gain some advantage.

It was somewhat worse this year because of the way the media had portrayed the recent attack. Disappointing, but hardly unexpected. Even the other hero class had taken a shot at their fellow students, despite their shared goal, and its associated risks. Oh well, they were first years. They would learn better soon enough, once they had experienced their own life-or-death struggles. And the A class was responding reasonably well (except for Bakugou-kun, who predictably decided to draw fire to his class).

Yes, Nedzu could see that there would be few enough chances for the other classes to enter the hero course this year. Even Aizawa-kun hadn't even tried to expel anyone so far. A very interesting group of chicks indeed.

There was a knock on the door of his office. He turned off the screen showing the confrontation, saying “Come in.” He really loved how non-threatening his voice was, it never ceased to make people who should know better lower their guards.

The person who opened the door was his newest teacher, the symbol of peace himself, in his skeletal civilian form. “Ah, Yagi-san. Take a seat. To what do I owe the pleasure?”

“Thank you, sir.” Said the improbably tall man, seating himself in a chair, so that his knees came halfway up his chest. “I think I've made my choice for my successor, and I wanted advice on how to proceed.”
Ah, now that was interesting. Not surprising that the man would ask for advice- he was surprisingly uncertain how to behave around children. But certainly interesting that he would finally make up his mind at this juncture. He felt he already had the shape of the answer but he asked anyway- it never did to be too sure of a conjecture. “Oh? Which student? Assuming it is a student?”

“Young Midoriya. I think he would be the best candidate.”

So he had been right. Always gratifying. Thought this choice did present some difficulties. Midoriya was an excellent chick, with a true heroic spirit. But his behaviour was... odd. He sometimes came across like someone with an intelligence enhancing quirk, completing the entrance exam's written portion in a ridiculously short time, with a perfect score, barring some mistakes on technicalities- thus earning Nedzu's attention. Beyond that he had a strange habit of presenting like someone not paying attention, when he clearly was- a possible side-effect perhaps? Regardless Midoriya was a mystery.

Now, the question was, should Nedzu steer the current One-For-All user away from this mystery? No, probably best not. For all his odd behaviour, all current data pointed to him being the right choice. Young Togata would also have been acceptable, but Nedzu had long suspected that the boy would turn One-For-All down, he was the sort to want to prove the value of his own abilities.

“An interesting pick, I can see no problems with it. Since I assume you still wish to keep your quirk as secret as possible, why don't we invite him here to discuss the matter tomorrow, if you are certain of your choice?” questioned the mouse/dog/bear thing- even he wasn't entirely sure what he was exactly.

“I am.” Affirmed the hero.

Izuku got a text from Giran- finally- the next day, and was busily discussing with the voice what they should be doing about the informant, and his apparent ties to the league, when Yugo called out that Aizawa had called their name. He looked at the teacher, who said “Midoriya, the principal wants to talk to you.” In his usual tired drawl, immediately filling Izuku's bones with anxiety.

‘Why does the principal want to talk to us?’ Wondered Izuku, as he made his way to Nedzu's office.
The voice offered a few possible options, some likely, and some that were clearly raving paranoid fantasy, as Izuku walked the mostly empty halls.

Izuku knocked on the door once he reached it, and waited for the squeaked “Come in.” from the principal to open it. When he saw that the room contained not only Nedzu, but also All Might, he began to think the raving paranoid fantasy ideas much more plausible, and the voice began to watch in horribly tense silence, as it was stuck in a room with two of the people it wanted to interact with least (at least among people who weren't likely to try to kill him).

“Midoriya-kun, good. Take a seat, I had hoped we could talk.” Squeeked the tiny mammal, indicating the seat across from the two, in which Izuku sat. “Would you like a cup of tea?” He added, already pouring one.

“Y-Yes please, thank you.” Said the highly stressed boy, taking the cup with miraculously steady fingers.

Surprisingly, the next to speak was All Might, the principal turning partially to look at him. “I wanted to talk to you about my quirk.” Said the hero, as unconcealed surprise took over Izuku.

*Why would he tell- Do you think he's- What do we- What does he* - Said the voice over itself, even more shocked than Izuku.

“B-But, you've never discussed y-your quirk. With anyone, a-as far as I know.” Stammered out the boy, trying to cover the reason for his surprise.

“No, and I hope you won't tell anyone what I'm about to say.” answered the blond, serious. “I have kept my quirk a secret for a reason. You see my quirk is call One-For-All.”

The hero went on to explain about what One-For-All did, but Izuku was only half paying attention. He already knew, and he was more focused on getting to voice to calm down.

When it finally did, about halfway through the explanation of the transferable quirk, it said. *He's going to offer it to you, that's the only reason he could have for explaining this.*
'I know, unless he wants us to help him look for his successor, but that's unlikely. But what should I do?' asked the greenette, still trying to look like he was paying rapt attention to the explanation.

_Turn him down!_ Said Ren, Dai, and Ichigou at once, but the other pieces of the voice pointedly didn't join the statement.

“-And I intend to pass the quirk on to you, if you agree.” All Might was saying.

“B-But that's- there's never been any recorded quirk like that. A-And wh-why me?” Said Izuku, as the voice descended into a heated argument, which it hid from him to reduce the resulting headache.

“Because you have repeatedly proved yourself a true hero- jumping in to help others without even thinking. And on top of that, you showed a willingness to learn from your mistakes.” Said the hero, smiling at him, as the debate seemingly raged on.

Izuku felt that was not all that impressive, but this thought sparked Aoi to tap out of the debate for a moment to impress upon him how few people acted that way. _He doesn't know you know about his injury. Ask about it at least._ She added, before turning back to the argument.

“But don't you need your quirk? You're the symbol of peace. People need you.” Asked the greenette dutifully.

“They do, but I will be able to use the embers of the quirk for some time even after passing it to you, and...” the hero paused, then sighed, “I will be forced to retire in a couple of years anyway.”

“Why?” Asked the boy, though he already knew.

“Because I was badly injured in a fight with a villain two years ago.” Said the hero, making it sound like pulling teeth, before letting his hero form slip in a cloud of steam.

Izuku did not have to feign the widening of his eyes at the hero's emaciated form. He hadn't seen his civilian form in some time, and hadn't expected the weight-loss to be this severe. “Are you OK?!” He blurted out, as the debate seemingly finally finished.
The now skeletal man chuckled wryly. “Yes and no. I'll live, but I am no longer able to work as a hero as freely as before.” He said, just before the voice spoke.

*Now that All-For-One is dead, the risks aren't nearly as bad, but they do still exist. But One-For-All is useful.* Said the voice, several pieces of it sounding reluctant to be speaking. *We can't and won't make the decision for you.*

That was true. One-For-All was useful... “So, if I accepted, I would just have both quirks?” He asked, to give himself more time to think.

“Yes, though in your case One-For-All would enhance your existing quirk as well as your physical strength.” Answered the hero.

Izuku pulled at his bottom lip in thought, but he didn't really have to think on it long. Whatever the risks, One-For-All was a powerful tool, he would be a better hero with it than without.

“All right.” He said at last. “I would be willing to accept your quirk. On one condition.”
of meeting and training

Chapter Summary

the condition is met, training montage ensues.

Chapter Notes

I'm really beginning to wonder what, if any, effect what time of day you post a chapter has on how many people will see it.

Shota groaned as his post-homeroom nap was pre-empted by a call from Nedzu, telling him to go to his office.

When he got to the office, he found not only All Might- suspiciously not in his heroic form- but Midoriya still there. This was going to be good, whatever it was.

Nedzu spoke as he entered. “Aizawa-kun, glad you could join us, take a seat.” His tone indicated that he had not known who was coming in until he saw Shota, but he didn't believe it for a moment. There was a reason the rat was a successful hero despite his less than intimidating build, and lack of direct combat ability. He wouldn't be surprised if Nedzu could recognize every teacher by their knock.

“So, what is today's impromptu meeting about, sir?” Shota asked, sitting.

“I'll let All Might explain.” So the kid knew about All Might's other form, weird.

Shota then sat for several minutes in a state of increasing surprise, as the skeletal man explained what must have been one of the best kept and most dangerous secrets in the world in the tiny office. He didn't have the lung capacity for a groan to do this justice. “So let me get this straight.” Said the younger hero, when the blond had finished. “Your quirk is transferable- somehow- and you intend to give it to the problem child.”

“That's right. Of course, this has to be kept a secret, more than half the people who know are in this room. But young Midoriya insisted that you be told.” Answered the tall man.
Shota's expression transitioned into a terrifying scowl. “So *your* plan was to give the problem child a quirk he would have no idea how to use and not tell his teacher?” Honestly buffoon might have been an overestimation of the man, if Midoriya was the bastion of common sense and caution here. Well at least he had the grace to look abashed. “Obviously I wouldn't tell people about something like this, that would be irrational. Well congratulations Midoriya, just one day after I told you I wouldn't and you've forced me to start playing favourites.” He added, turning to the golden-eyed teen.

“Wh-What?” And there went the positive feeling Shota had about the boy's ability to think rationally.

“If you are going to be getting a second quirk, you are going to need extra training to figure out how to use it. And I'm not leaving you to do that training by yourself.” Explained the dark-haired man. “When were you planning on transferring it?”

“Now, essentially. Young Midoriya is already ready to handle at least having the quirk.” So, not being ready was an option?

Shota sighed. “The sports festival is in three days. We will have to hurry to make sure he doesn't hurt himself. Sir, can I use ground gym gamma after school for the next few days?”

“Of course, Aizawa-kun.” Answered the principle, peppy as always (unless you counted the moments of tyrannical laughter).

Once the slightly unsanitary process of transferring One-For-All had been completed, and the various other parties had left, Nedzu sat in his office, thinking.

Midoriya's condition that Aizawa-kun be told from the start was an unexpected boon, and the clever little bean was right, Aizawa would certainly find out- maybe not the details, but he would know that something odd had happened. If Midoriya hadn't suggested- insisted on- that Nedzu would most likely have had to contrive some way to make sure Aizawa found out faster. Oh he wouldn't tell the man directly- he didn't make a habit of bandying about other people's secrets unless he had no other choice, but nor would he tolerate needlessly endangering a student.
But, strangely, that was not the most unexpected development of today's meeting. Midoriya was contriving to add more questions around his head by the day, and Nedzu was increasingly fascinated as to where the answers would lead. Nedzu never advertised the fact, but he was pretty good at reading human facial expressions. Even the best liars could not conceal the information microexpressions provided, frequently unreliable as it was. And Midoriya had reacted to today's revelations in a series of very odd, nearly contradictory ways.

He seemingly didn't know about All Might's injury, and was very concerned when he saw the hero transform- probably the only reason none of his other concerns were voiced. But- somehow- he knew about One-For-All before All Might began his explanation, only seeming surprised at the start- surprised that All Might was telling him. Certainly it was possible to find out about One-For-All if you were of a paranoid bent, and were sufficiently clever and determined. This was all pointing towards Nedzu's theory that the boy had an intelligence quirk in addition to the fire, but he needed to think about what a few of those other odd emotional events might mean.

And other possible ways he could have learned about the quirk- his quirk, now.

Izuku felt the change as One-For-All became his sometime during third period. But the voice very firmly warned him to not test it until school ended and they had supervision, so he left it alone despite the constant temptation driving him insane, until he had made his excuses to his friends, and gone to gym gamma.

When he arrived at the large building, he found that Aizawa, All Might (in civilian form), and Recovery Girl were all already there. “Midoriya, my boy, you made it!” Called All Might boisterously, once he spotted the greenette. “Did you notice any changes yet?”

“Y-Yeah, but I didn't try anything so far.”

“Good. now, All Might, how do you actually use One-For-All?” Cut in Aizawa.

“Each user visualises it differently, it should be something similar to how young Midoriya uses his own quirk, since he was born with one.”

“Very helpful.” Drawled the tired man. “Midoriya, why don't you see if you can activate it. Carefully.”
Izuku nodded, and started to concentrate on the imagined space where his quirk always was. The whole space had changed. The bonfire that had always hung unsupported in the void, now rested slightly above a large pond of still, clear water. No, not a pond. A lake.

*Holy shit, It's huge!* Exclaimed Dai, leading the rest of the voice, as he saw the vast body of imagined water. They couldn't see the bottom. *I knew it had gotten stronger since my time, but this... You're going to have to be careful with this. Try to draw some of it into your hand. Like you would with the fire.* He added, before sending a memory of one of his own early attempts to use One-For-All.

Izuku tried to move the water into his upraised arm like he saw it in the memory, it wasn't quite the same as moving the fire- which they always moved to a place outside the body- but it was close. The water moved freely, though the amount they took was barely noticeable compared to the lake.

Once it was in his arm, the water- ironically- felt more like fire than his flames ever had. Phoenix Flames always felt warm, and comforting, at least, as long as they were either not manifested, or confined to his hands. Actually, from the memories of Dai and Ichigou, they still felt comforting in some way, regardless. But One-For-All burned. Red veins of power covered his arm, as he felt an uncomfortable prickling sensation all over that arm.

Feeling the prickling, burning sensation through Izuku, Ren hurriedly spoke. *Put it back! That's too much!* Izuku complied, hurriedly dumping the water back in the reservoir, and the burning abated. It left behind an ache, as his whole arm began to turn a mottled purple, bruising heavily.

“Ow.” Said the greenette, deadpan. “That worked, I think, but I used too much.”

It took several more tries- and a few more memories from Dai- before he finally got a feel for output modulation. Which was just as well, as Izuku was feeling the voice's growing fear of Shuizenji through his tiredness. It turned out in the end, that he could currently safely use only about fifteen percent of One-For-All's current maximum output. At this point, however Izuku was all but dead on his feet, so Recovery Girl firmly called an end to training for the day.

That night, as a concession to his tiredness, Izuku did not enter the not-quite-dream. Ok, so part of the reason was that minor damage from One-For-All was non-obvious, visually, so the dream- where it was impossible to feel pain- was far from an ideal place to practice with it.
Wednesday was a blur of physical training, and sparring during the day, followed by further tiring One-For-All training after school. Today Aizawa wanted to get Izuku to learn to move with One-For-All active. This learning process was expedited greatly by the voice's resident expert on One-For-All- Dai- immediately instructing Izuku to draw a constant stream of water to fill his entire body. This was easier said than done, and resulted in a couple of losses of concentration, and one broken leg at the start. But with an incensed Recovery Girl on scene, the break was quickly fixed, and training continued with few further injuries, until Izuku was able to complete an entire obstacle course without dropping One-For-All. Aizawa seemed pleased with Izuku's progress as he called training to a halt. The resultant technique had an odd visual effect, the red veins on his arm were now replaced by flying golden sparks all over his body. Dai assured him it was a result of some of the power leaking, and should stop as he got a better hold of the quirk.
Chapter Summary

green bean does what he can, and the sports festival gets underway

Chapter Notes

the abominable heat continues. my attempts to intimidate the sun by waving my fist at it have thus far failed.

In the end, despite the simmering rage from parts of the voice for his part in the USJ attack, calmer heads prevailed, and they decided not to turn Giran over to the police. For one thing, they didn't actually know the man's quirk, or what countermeasures he might have in place. And for another, they knew Giran. He wouldn't crack. He had survived long enough in his line of work that the only person he would willingly talk about if Amber took him down would be Amber. Izuku was trying to reassure himself that this was the right call as he entered the smoky room to collect the- initially diversionary- shoes he had ordered.

The meeting mostly went the traditional way, until Izuku asked his now customary Stain related question. “He killed a villain in Hosu city yesterday.” Said Giran, when asked.

“Hosu? He hasn't come that close to here in years. Are you sure?”

“Pretty sure. No messages on the walls, but otherwise it is like the others.”

“And the victim?” Queried the currently dark-haired boy.

“A local drug dealer, not especially important. Minor speed quirk.” Answered the broker.

'What should we do?’ Asked the vigilante, after the meeting.
We can't go after him. Not now. He knows who we are, and that we're not friendly. Said the voice, led by Ren. If he ambushes us, we'd be screwed. You know how his quirk works. Besides, he's started spreading his kills out further from his bases, since your fight.

'But we can't just let him do what he wants!' Izuku objected.

No, but we can't take him down ourselves without help. Since we don't have a partner at present, we help the heroes. Replied the voice, soothing.

'That- help them how?' the dark-clothed boy asked.

He took out a villain, and left no message. The heroes won't know it was him. We just need to warn them. If they're smart, they'll be able to take him down. Said the voice calmly.

'They haven't so far, and which hero could we tell anyway?'

We just need to make sure they know how to go about it. As for the hero... There is one hero in Hosu who is infamously lenient on vigilantes.

Izuku got a train to Hosu city, still dressed as Amber, but that should be fine- Amber hardly had a distinctive look. On the train, he took some paper, and a plain file from his bag. He would need more then his normal business card.

Iida Tensei was not expecting to hear what his receptionist said when he returned to his agency from patrol. “What do you mean Amber was here?!”

The receptionist explained that a kid matching the (admittedly extremely plain) description of Amber from the one hero, and less than five villains who had ever gotten a good look at them, handed the receptionist a file, and told him to make sure that he personally saw it.
“All right,” the easygoing hero said, “give me the file, and send a copy of the camera footage to me. Oh, and call the detective running the Amber case.”

When Tensei took the file to his office, he discovered it to be a treasure trove. It started by stating that the “hero killer” Stain was in Hosu city right now, then went on to detail not only how Amber knew- that murder would need some further investigating- but also nearly everything the police currently knew about Stain, and some things that were only conjectured on. Then it urged Tensei- by name, for some reason- to make sure that no heroes patrolled alone in Hosu until Stain was caught. Finally Amber added “I think you probably know most of this already, but it never hurts to be sure- Amber.”

The detective could not get here fast enough. Tensei had some calls to make about Stain, once the Amber conversation was over.

Izuku was tired beyond all mortal ken on Thursday. The trip to and from Hosu had left him arriving home just in time to get up in two hours. But he had to tell the heroes what was happening. Honestly, he would have sent a file like that to the heroes years ago, if not for his strong belief that he knew nothing more about Stain's methods than they, the fact that heroes usually knew where stain was nearly as soon as he did. Also that hero agencies he could feel- comparatively- safe walking into as Amber were rare. Endeavour's agency staff would likely have had the sidekicks on him within five seconds of him entering the building. Maybe before.

Between stain, and Kurogiri, the inability to get any work done as Amber was beginning to grate on Izuku, he felt guilty for all the people the two had probably hurt, for all that Aoi said it wasn't his fault.

An ungodly quantity of caffeine got him through the school day, and he enjoyed a nice afternoon of solidarity with Shinsou, before the final day of additional quirk training before the sports festival. 'I still need to figure out my speech.'

“All right, problem child.” Said Aizawa as he entered the gym. “Let's get started. You seem to have figured out how to not break yourself at least, so today we're moving on to using your original quirk with One-For-All.”

“Is that likely to have the same sort of problem as using One-For-All on its own?” Asked Izuku of All Might.
"I doubt it, you're more likely to run into your own quirk's backlash if you use too much here." Said the hero, though he sounded unsure.

"Let's take it slow in any case." Said Recovery girl threateningly.

Izuku held up a single finger, and reached for the bonfire that was his quirk, intending to manifest a candle-flame on it. As he moved the imagined fire, the water unexpectedly moved with it, joining with the piece he had moved. The internal fire exploded outward when it did, and the resultant flame was closer to a large blowtorch than a candle-flame.

Okay, so maybe calling it water was a bit silly. Laughed the voice, as he hurriedly put out the large fire. Probably closer to kerosene.

'You knew that would happen!' Yelled the greenette at the voice in his head.

Yeah, but it was really funny seeing you get surprised like that. We would have stopped you if you tried to make it too big. It didn't even sound contrite.

Luckily, for all that it had just undergone a massive power-up this was still his own quirk, which they had been improving their skill with for centuries, so he quickly regained some measure of fine control.

In the end, after some experimentation, they discovered that One-For-All had improved Phoenix Spirit considerably. Not only did it increase how much fire he could make in a given time, but it nearly doubled his fire generation range. Now he could produce flames within half a foot of his body. And he thought his heat resistance had improved slightly.

When Izuku demonstrated the ability to generate fireballs of various sizes on command, Aizawa deemed that he had figured out enough about his new quirk to compete in the sports festival without hurting anyone, and dismissed him for the day. He didn't say it, but Izuku thought he was quite pleased with his progress. All Might, naturally, did say it. "Well done my boy! You've mastered your new quirk far better than I could have expected in such a short time, I'm very proud of you!" Said the characteristically frank, and boisterous hero.

"Th-Thank you, All Might." Said the greenette shyly, still not used to such bold compliments from people he could actually see.
Izuku was still worrying about his speech as he was getting changed the next day, when he was unexpectedly approached by the quietest member of 1-A barring Koda- Todoroki. “Midoriya. Objectively, I think I'm stronger than you.” Were the first words the bi-chromatic boy had ever spoken to him.

Izuku stammered, as the voice began its equivalent of a frown. “wha- uh, yeah?” Said the ever eloquent greenette.

“You've managed to get All Might's attention. I won't pry about that, but know that I am going to beat you.”

That's... odd. Why would he choose to open your first conversation like that? Wondered the concerned voice, as Kirishima tried to de-escalate the situation.

“I'm not here to make friends.” Said Todoroki.

Oh, that is a very bad sign. A kid his age shouldn't talk like that.

“I don't know what you want me to say, Todoroki-kun, but we're all going to be doing our best to win out there.” Said the shorter boy, the challenge bringing out his oft hidden intensity.

Bakugou took this opportunity to yell at Todoroki for some combination of challenging the wrong classmate, and not waiting in line to beat Midoriya, until the class was called to head to the pitch.

As they emerged into the stadium, Izuku heard the voice of Present Mic. “Welcome to the UA sports festival! Entering the stadium are the ones you all want to see, the class who shrugged off a villain attack with wills of steel! Class 1-A!”

'Isn't that a bit much?’ Thought Izuku, he wasn't even sure if the voice hero was using a microphone. But he wasn't going to look, even if he could have seen that far. Hopefully if he stared at the ground, he could pretend the crowd filling the stadium wasn't there.
“Coming after them is the hero course class 1-B!” Said the voice hero, as the other heroics students entered by another gate slightly later.

That was some pretty serious favouritism there. Said the voice before Present Mic could continue.

“Now here come classed C, D, and E from the general department. Following them are classed F, G, and H of the department of support, and classes I, and J of the department of management.”

Oh, come on! That's just ridiculous. Grumbled the voice, angry at the differing levels of attention between the heroics course and the other departments. Izuku could hear some grumbling from the somewhat snubbed classes from where he stood, until Midnight silenced them with a crack of her whip, from her spot on the stage.

This prompted another collection of murmurs about whether the famously suggestive hero should be teaching a high school.

“Quiet! My position here is perfectly legitimate! Now for the student representative Midoriya Izuku!”

Izuku walked up to the stage, trying not to visibly shake under all the attention. 'I can't do this, guys. Just- just tell me what to say, I'll repeat it.'

OK, kid. We can do that, just relax. You're doing fine. Answered the voice, letting Aoi's soothing voice lead.

When Izuku reached the microphone, the voice began to speak and he just parroted what it said exactly. “The sports festival is a big opportunity, let's all do our best regardless of department. Plus Ultra!” He finished, before fleeing the stage, not sure if the roaring was cheering or booing.

“All right!” Said the heroine, once whatever the noise had been had died down. “Now let's get our first event started. The preliminary this year will be.... an obstacle race!”
of sweet victory and bitter losses

Chapter Summary

obstacle course, and green bean builds his cavalry team

Chapter Notes

am I making this seem too easy for green bean? yes
will i stop? no
does it actually make sense in context that he is way stronger than his class-mates? yes

Phoenix Spirit was an amazing quirk- no they weren't biased- even leaving aside the (admittedly non-optional) immortality it provided, the pyrokinetic ability was beyond useful. That being said, the quirk did have some slight drawbacks... other than the constant fear of accidentally destroying your own body. In this instance, the problem was that it was impossible to safely use the quirk to move in a crowd.

The entrance to the course seemingly had deliberately been built far too narrowly, so Izuku was currently stuck in a pressing crowd. He was fiercely jostled forward as soon as the signal to start was given, but he wasn't really able to do much about it yet.

None of the students in 1-A had any wide-area attack that wouldn't constitute a murder attempt except... Izuku jumped when the temperature in the tunnel plummeted, filling his body with just one percent of One-For-All- little enough that there would be no visible sparks.

A sheet of ice covered the ground, encasing most of the students- 1-A avoiding the worst of it, they knew Todoroki's tricks by now- as Izuku rocketed over head height, and hit one of the walls. Once there he simply melted part of the wall to make a partial foothold, and ran the few steps it took to escape the ice-encrusted tunnel.

Once he was in the open, and the crowd has thinned down, he could have used his original quirk to generate thrust. But he didn't bother, even just one percent of One-For-All combined with his physical abilities left him only losing in terms of speed to Iida as he ran after Todoroki's back.

Izuku was rapidly gaining on the bi-chromatic boy, when the first official obstacle came into view.
“Here comes our first obstacle! Robo Inferno!” Came the voice of Present Mic, as Izuku rounded the corner to see Todoroki facing off against a hoard of 0-pointers, a number of smaller robots behind him.

As Midoriya used One-For-All to jump over the first robot in his way, melting its head with a burst of Phoenix Flames in passing, Todoroki again displayed the amazing range and power of his quirk, freezing multiple 0-pointers at a stroke, and sprinting by them.

Don't follow the way he went. Said the voice, Hayato leading. He waited until they were unbalanced. Aoi began to lead, as the voice added. That is unduly ruthless. Someone could get hurt. She sounded less than amused.

Izuku heeded the advice, and ran toward a 0-pointer a little to the left of Todoroki's false path. They really weren't that great of a threat he thought, as he used One-For-All to jump up onto its outstretched arm. Once there he simply ran along the sloping surface, jumping off once he reached the shoulder, and slowing his fall with a few bursts of Phoenix Flame.

'First obstacle passed.' He thought, as he heard the crashing of the falling robots. He was sure his classmates could get by without much trouble, though it was difficult to resist the urge to watch how, exactly. Present Mic kept making it sound so interesting.

When he got to the second obstacle, Izuku found it to be a series of platforms joined by long tightropes. Todoroki was already to his first island. The voice made a thoughtful sound. You could try using fire from your hands to balance as you skated along these. It said. But Izuku had heard to loud bangs of the ever slow-starting Bakugou behind them.

Izuku used three percent of One-For-All to launch himself a dozen feet in the air, floating over the void for a moment. Then he moved his hands so that the palms faced behind him at an angle, and generated a constant stream of fire.

Before One-For-All, Phoenix Spirit had never been strong enough for any type of long glide, and Izuku gave an exhilarated woop as the wind made a worse mess of his hair than usual, and he passed over the head of a surprised Todoroki, landing on the other side of the obstacle.

“The students have separated across the arena, but the frontrunners shouldn't get complacent! Here's the final barrier! The mine-field!” Called the voice hero, as Izuku came to an open space with a large number of barely discernible raised patches scattered across it. “You can spot them if you're careful, but if you step on one, the bang will make you piss your
Izuku tried not to laugh as he kept One-For-All at one percent. He didn't even slow down. The voice spotted every mine well in advance, and warned him of exactly where to step, so he was over halfway across the field before Todoroki even entered it, slightly ahead of Bakugou. The bi-chromatic boy's efforts to freeze the ground under Izuku proved futile as he just melted it with bursts of flame where he stepped.

“You heard it here first, folks! The first to the finish is Midoriya Izuku of class 1-A! He'll be one to watch!” Announced the loud commentator gleefully, as Izuku was swiftly followed first by a thoroughly frustrated-looking Todoroki, and then a furious Bakugou.

Once all the contestants had finished the race, Midnight climbed the stage again, and got everyone's attention, before speaking, “the first forty-two to have passed the preliminary will proceed to the final selection. But the one's who didn't make the cut shouldn't worry, there will be a bunch of recreation activities between the main events. Now then, this year the second event will be... a human cavalry battle!” She finished after a suitably dramatic pause, as a- presumably fake-randomiser span on the screen behind her.

She then quickly outlined the rules of this round, as Izuku began to plan. *We're already fine for both attack and defence. We need some utility, and mobility if we can.* The voice said, just as she was finishing.

“-Except first place, which is worth... ten million points!”

_Damn, they really like making things hard for whoever is in the lead. This is going to make it hard to find team-mates. But we should be able to run defence pretty well anyway._ Said the voice, as many of the others who had reached this round looked ominously at the greenette, who shied away from their gazes slightly.

Uraraka approached Izuku almost immediately, which he was immensely thankful for, tearing up that she wanted to be on his team despite the target on his back. Now he just needed some way to improve mobility a bit more.

“Hey Iida-kun, will you join our team? Between you, and Uraraka-san, we'd have completely amazing mobility, and evasion.” Said the shorter boy, approaching his blue-haired friend.
“A good plan, as always, Midoriya-kun. But I'm afraid I must decline.” Said Iida. “If I keep doing nothing but follow you, I will never grow myself. So I will be challenging you alongside Todoroki, and Bakugou.” Izuku was slightly stunned by this decision, but quickly recovered- it was a valid concern, he supposed- and began to look for Mina.

“Hey, Mr. first place!” Came a voice from behind him, which turned out to be a pink-haired girl covered in support items, who was standing far too close. “I'm Mei Hatsume of class 1-F. If I team up with you, my babies will have the most opportunity to show off! I'm sure you'd find at least one that would help you out.” Said the intense girl.

Izuku, not really good at dealing with people this intense, and seeing that some of the inventions she had on display could conceivably be quite helpful, agreed to let her join his team. Unfortunately when he turned back to his search for Mina, he found she had clearly joined Bakugou's team. That... was going to be a problem. Even with Uraraka, and the equipment from Mei, Izuku mostly just wanted to add further mobility to his team, and the only other people he thought had great mobility- Tokoyami, and Shiozaki- were a horrible combination with his quirk.

In the end, after some tense negotiations for Izuku, he managed to recruit class 1-B's Honenuki Juuzo to be their lead horse. Izuku was very thankful that the screens in the stadium had been showing highlights of the first event during the break.

With their team assembled, they took positions for the cavalry battle. Uraraka took the left, Mei the right, and Izuku climbed into position as the rider. “All right! Everyone's formed their teams, let's start the countdown! 3..2..1... cavalry battle... start!” Screamed the voice hero.

Predictably, the moment the second event started, most of the nearby teams made a beeline for the massive mountain of points that Izuku's team represented. But it didn't really worry Izuku. If there was one thing he could do, it was defend a spot. Raising one hand above his head, Izuku produced as much fire as he could in the short time it would take the nearest team to get into range. Then, with a swirling gesture, he formed it into an incredibly hot hoop, more than large enough to encompass his entire team, which he then dropped to the ground.

While he was doing this, Honenuki moved his foot forward and began to soften the floor in a large moat around them. Izuku nodded in satisfaction, still feeding more fire into the protective barrier with one hand, making it grow ever hotter, and taller. Good luck getting past that! Laughed the voice, led by Yugo. At this stage, since Hononuke was on his team, Izuku suspected only Bakugou, and Todoroki had any hope of getting to them. And Bakugou couldn't do it if he was stuck with his team.

Still watching the teams that were forced to stop by the blistering heat of the barrier, Izuku spoke
to his team-mates. “Is this too hot for you guys? Should I move it further out?” He asked, as the commentator began to exclaim over the first few moves of the event.

“And team Midoriya has already set up an iron-clad defence! Will the other teams be able to take the heat? Will his own team-mates?!”
of frustration and fury

Chapter Summary

the cavalry battle ends, and revelations are had

Chapter Notes

1) woo nearly 500 kudos. thanks as always for all your support.
2) we've finally gotten to the point where i feel tempted to start a new fic (looks at 
raised by wolves, and time slicing AUs)
3) because of fan artists, i now really wish to give green bean an undercut. i hope 
you're happy
4) how old do you guys think Endeavour is meant to be? My current figure is like 45

Shouto was feeling increasingly stifled, first he loses to Midoriya in the obstacle course, and now, 
despite him creating the most stable team he could, he couldn't even get close to the golden-eyed 
teen.

In retrospect, he shouldn't have decided to be the rider. Yaoyorozu might have been a better choice 
there, but no-one spoke against the idea, so he assumed it was a reasonable plan. Too late to change 
anything about it now, he just had to deal with the increased difficulty of making ice without 
trapping his own team, or touching the ground.

Worse than his current distance from the ground, though, was that his ice couldn't even get close to 
the fire barrier that Midoriya had built. The first two tries, from two different angles, both sank into 
the ground somehow- probably the quirk of the 1-B student with the skeletal face. Then the next 
two, carefully arcing above the ground, flash boiled as soon as they reached the fire.

Now that the other teams had realized that the ten million points were thoroughly out of reach- 
some of them sinking waist-deep into the arena floor- they were beginning to descend into a more 
chaotic melee, several even turned to rush Shouto's team. “Yaoyorozu, make an insulating sheet, 
and a conductor. Kaminari, indiscriminate charge.”

When most of the nearby teams were stunned by the discharge of electricity from his team, Shouto 
used the grounding rod that Yaoyorozu had made to easily freeze all the other teams to the ground. 
“Iida, forward. I'll grab their headbands.” Might as well, they were just sitting there now.
Once the headbands of the still incapacitated teams were collected, Shouto went back to circling the grand prize, looking for an opening. From the angry screaming and explosions, someone in class B had a death wish, so Bakugou was declaring some idiotic war on their team. But that wasn’t his concern.

Suddenly, Shouto felt two of his headbands unexpectedly being yanked away. Turning sharply, he saw the headbands disappearing between the arms of an already retreating Shoji, who was... on his own? That couldn't be right. Just then, a dark shape snapped out of the shadowed recess between Shoji’s arms, and snatched the apparently floating headband of team Hagakure. Tokoyami was hiding in there? “Iida, head for Shoji. Kaminari, ready another shock.”

Shouto sent a wall of ice into Shoji's way when he got close enough, forcing them to halt. When he turned to face them, Shouto spoke. “Kaminari, now.” Shouto blinked as the shock failed to halt the masked boy, Tokoyami's quirk managing to block it somehow, and allowing Shoji to jump the next wave of ice.

Damn. Shouto was already getting too cold, but Kaminari wouldn't be able to take another shot. He released a far larger wave of ice, made easier by the existing sheet, just as Shoji landed, encasing the tall boy to the knee. “Yaoyorzu, I need a hook or similar.” He said, trying not to let his teeth chatter. He needed to hurry to get back to the problem of the furnace in the middle of the arena.

In the end he only managed to get two of the headbands from Tokoyami in one quick sortie, before he had to put up a sudden wall of ice to defend himself, as not only an even larger Shadow, but a striking tongue tried to snatch more headbands. There was only half a minute of the event left. Time to go.

The event had gone better than Izuku was expecting so far, to his immense relief, and Mei’s increasing frustration- they hadn't even had to take a single step, much less use her jetpack. From her muttering he did not envy anyone paired with her for the next event.

Once he moved the fire a couple of feet further from the horse, his team-mates said the heat was fine, and other than four attempts from Todoroki, and one ill-fated attempt from above by Shiozaki, no-one had even tried to pass the moat, or the fire for the first fourteen minutes. Izuku was sure it wouldn't last.
Thirty seconds before the end of the round, Todoroki moved to the edge of the softened arena floor, seeming like he would take one more attempt. The path of ice he generated arced well above not only the moat, but also Izuku's own defences. Regardless it still wouldn't last more than a minute near the fire. Iida said something to his team-mate, and suddenly team Todoroki began to move.

Izuku could have stopped them. But at the speed Iida was going, he had a strong suspicion that they wouldn't have been able to turn aside or stop in time if there was suddenly a wall of fire in their way. “Hone-” He started.

Kid, you've got Bakugou incoming on your right. Cut in the voice swiftly. Moving it was.

“-Uraraka, look away!” He said, as he pressed the button Mei had provided, and his team shot into the air, away from the path of the approaching team, and the flying blond. Izuku made a separating motion with his hands, clearing the far part of the fire wall, just in case Iida had an even worse stop time than anticipated.

When his team touched down, Present Mic was already beginning the countdown “3” Bakugou swerved in mid-air to follow the suddenly mobile team. “2” Iida demonstrated an impressive turning circle as he swerved off the bridge, their momentum carrying them over the softened patch of arena, under Bakugou. “1” Izuku pushed a rapidly formed piece of flame into a tiny wall in the way of both Bakugou, and Todoroki, forcing both to swerve again.

“Time’s up! Let’s see our top four, shall we? In first place, never letting their headband out of sight, team Midoriya! In second place, despite a spirited effort to snatch the top spot, team Todorki! In third place, determined to get all their headbands back, team Bakugou! And in fourth place, the unconventional horse, team Shoji! Stay tuned folks, the final event will take place after an hour's break for lunch!” Came the ever enthusiastically shouted words of the voice hero.

Midoriya had just gotten back onto the ground, and was fanning himself as he put out the lingering pieces of fire in the arena, when he was approached by Todorki. “We need to talk, follow me.” The bi-chromatic boy said, in his usual brusque manner.

You are going to have to ask him what he wanted to talk about. Said the voice, sounding increasingly worried about Todoroki’s odd behaviour, after the silent staring contest in the tunnel-
which was beginning to stress Izuku- had gone on for three minutes.

“S-So, wh-what did you w-want to talk about T-Todoroki-kun?” Asked the greenette at the prompting.

“You overwhelmed me.” Said the bi-chromatic boy. “Fire quirks may be common, but I felt how hot yours were. Fire quirks that powerful are almost unheard of.”

“What a-are you getting at?”

“you... are you my father's secret love child or something?” Todoroki asked, stunning Izuku for a moment, and redoubling the voice's worry.

*Oh that is not a good sign at all. He not only asked something like that, but he would accuse his own father of having an affair, what's... The voice began to mutter to itself concernedly.*

“Wha- No!” Said Izuku, honestly somewhat insulted. “O-other th-than the heat, ou-our flames aren't even th-that similar.”

“Hm.” Said the ice user, nonplussed. “Well either way, you must know about endeavour. He's never been able to touch the number one spot... not himself anyway. Do you know what 'quirk marriages' are?”

Izuku stood in stunned silence, as the voice began what sounded like a desperate mantra. *No. No no no. Please don't let it be like that.*

Todoroki took the greenette's silence as a cue to go on. The blood drained from Izuku's face, and the voice lapsed into horrified silence as the explanation of Endeavour's plan began.

Izuku honestly wasn't sure which part of the voice would break the silence first, nor any idea what sort of response that part might have to what Todoroki was telling them.

As it turns out, after the explanation of- probably- spousal abuse began, it was Ren who spoke first. What he was muttering to himself sounded suspiciously like a series of possible ways to have the
number two hero assassinated. He spoke alone, but it was telling of the voice's feelings toward the man that they didn't try to stop him, preferring to stew in their own rage.

“I'm going to beat you as a personal triumph, I won't use my shitty old man's quirk. I will become number one without it. That's going to be my disavowal of him.” Todoroki was saying when Ren was finally halted in his homicidal plans. 

_Shit._ Said the normally soft-spoken doctor, Hayato, voice shaking. _Fuck, it's not just warming. He has a balancing fire quirk. We have to stop him! He's going to hurt himself doing this!

_That's not important for now._ Cut in Aoi, though he felt her guilt at the twinge it caused Izuku. _We need to get him away from that man! Izuku you have to tell someone about this!

“That's all I wanted to say. Sorry for wasting your time.” Todoroki said, as he began to walk away, thus cutting off Izuku's response.

“Todoroki-kun.” Called the greenette, moving to follow. “I won't pretend to know what you're going through,” though, between them, certain pieces of the voice more or less did, “but I know you can't limit yourself like that.” The bi-chromatic boy began to scowl at that.

“I'm not going to use his quirk. It's only good for hurting people.” Todoroki said firmly, before continuing to walk away, leaving Izuku standing alone, unsure how to proceed.
of winning and sorrow

Chapter Summary

the tournament commences.

Chapter Notes

*reaches 1% of the hits of YUTS* you hear that PitViper? i'm coming for you XD

been trying to figure out how the voice's names would be written, for some reason. (一合, 題, 悠五, 勇人, 鍊, & 葵 are what I'm currently using) That said, I don't speak Japanese, so they probably don't make any sense.

'For the last time, we can't just assassinate the number two hero, Ren.' Said Izuku, scowling at his lunch- both in anger at Endeavour, and pain as the voice continued to argue about what to do.

He doesn't deserve the title of hero, not if he did that to his own wife. Argued Ren, the other parts of the voice joining the sentiment.

Hayato took the lead after that. Izuku is right though, getting rid of him like that is far from the best course.

That's why I'm saying we need to tell someone. Todoroki might not have said it, but he probably isn't safe where he is. Cut in Aoi.

'We can't just tell someone. We don't have any proof that Todoroki-kun is in danger, he didn't even say Endeavour was hurting him. Besides, he is the number two hero. Who would believe our word over his?'

So, what? We say nothing? Izu- Started the voice, still led by Aoi.

'No, we- I- Dammit we do need to do something, but that wouldn't work. And I don't think Todoroki would want us to do that anyway.'
Izuku... sometimes what your friend wants and what your friend needs aren't the same thing. Said the now Ichigou led voice.


“Yeah man, you know you don't need to use your gaze to set fire to your soup, right?” Added Shinsou.

“I'm fine, just got a headache.” Said Izuku, still too angry to stutter.

“If you aren't feeling well-” Began Iida, but Izuku cut him off.

“It's just a headache, I took some painkillers, so I'll be fine in a little while.”

“All right then.” Said Uraraka, though she sounded sceptical. “Iida, that was really cool during the cavalry battle, how did you go that fast?”

“I simply pushed my engines as far as they would go. It lets me move faster for a short while, but I stall right after.”

“That's so cool!” exclaimed Izuku. Probably better not continue the argument and make the headache worse. At least not where his friends would see and worry. “And it was really awesome that you managed to turn that fast!”

After the lunch break, Midnight announced that the final round would be a one-on-one tournament, and to fill out the empty slot the fifth place team would have to choose one member to go forward.

This was achieved by several rounds of the ancient art of rock paper scissors, with Shinsou emerging the victor. “All right, with that decided the brackets for the tournament will be... like this!” Said the heroine, as all the competing student's names appeared on the screen behind her.
Shoji vs Midoriya
Kaminari vs Shinsou
Todoroki vs Sero
Iida vs Hatsume
Tokoyami vs Yaoyorozu
Honenuki vs Ashido
Asui vs Bakugou
Kirishima vs Uraraka

“But before the tournament starts, it's time for the recreational games. The top sixteen can use this time to prepare for their matches.”

“Woo! The recreational games are done, and Cementoss has finished the ring! It's time for round one! From class 1-A the fiery competitor who's taken the top spot so far, but will he keep it? Midoriya Izuku! Versus wearing his ever mysterious mask, also from 1-A, Shoji Mezo! The rules are simple! Just force your opponent out of the ring, render them immobile, or make them give! No deadly moves, but anything else goes! Cementoss will ensure no-one goes too far!”

Midoriya watched the much taller boy as he walked on stage opposite him. 'Am I ever going to get taller?' He wondered, causing the voice to chuckle.

Haha, don't worry about that, You've always eaten right. But you should probably focus on the match.

“Match... Start!” Yelled the voice hero, causing the taller boy to rush toward Izuku.
Shoji was probably one of the most dangerous members of class 1-A in close combat, Izuku knew, but unfortunately most of the strength came from the strength in his many arms, meaning he was top-heavy, and didn't rely on his legs enough.

Izuku decided to conserve stamina for later fights, lighting only his hands on fire, instead of half the arena. Then he began to use One-For-All at two percent, as he rushed to meet the taller boy.

“What a twist! Midoriya forgoes the big displays of fire we saw in the last round, and rushes to meet his opponent in close quarters!” Said Present Mic as the two met.

For once, Shoji had no need to make eyes with his quirk, so Izuku found himself quickly facing half a dozen fists. If Izuku had only had One-For-All, this would have been a serious challenge. Even two percent wasn't really enough to increase Izuku's speed so that he could deflect or block every blow from someone with six arms, however Shoji wasn't stupid enough to attack recklessly against an opponent who's hands were on fire.

The multi-armed boy's first attacks were hesitant, unsure how to attack without getting burned. Izuku turned a blow aside easily with his arm, and slipped inside Shoji's guard. His first punch both burned a hole in Shoji's gym uniform, and succeeded in knocking the wind from him.

When his opponent hunched in on himself from the blow, the greenette dimmed his flames, grabbed Shoji's right shoulder, and one of his right arms, pivoted, and flipped his opponent to the ground over his right leg. Once Shoji was on the ground, with Izuku leaning over him, he simply formed a quick ball of flames on the end of his finger, and pointed it at Shoji's head.

Shoji stayed still for a second trying to regain his breath, before speaking. “You are stronger than you look.” He wheezed, before raising his voice. “I surrender.”

“The winner is Midoriya Izuku!” Called Midnight from the side of the arena.

“Amazing! Midoriya makes quick work of his opponent, using his quirk cleverly to get beneath their guard!” Yelled the commentating blond.

“Are you all right, Shoji? I didn't throw you too hard did I?” Asked Izuku, pulling Shoji from the floor of the arena.
“That was awesome Deku-kun!” Enthused Uraraka, as Izuku and Shoji entered the stands to watch the next match. “You took down Shoji in hand-to-hand! You have to teach me to do that!”

This, naturally, caused the greentte to blush and stammer, and he noticed Shoji's eyes seeming to crinkle in amusement- though it was nearly as hard to read his expression as As- Tsuyu's. “I- um- it wasn't- wasn't that cool.” He said, trying to hide his head in his arms.

It must have looked pretty impressive though, you taking down someone eight inches taller than you and built like a train, especially like that. Put in the voice, sounding amused at his embarrassment. This, coupled with with Uraraka's continuing enthusiastic miming of the fight, caused Izuku to start to blush even more furiously.

Mercifully, just then Present Mic began to announce the second fight of the tournament. “Next up we have... the electric blond of class 1-A, Kaminari Denki! Versus... the kid with the gravity defying hair, and subtle quirk, Shinsou Hitoshi!” Both boys walked onto the stage, and stood facing each other quietly. “Match... start!”

Izuku couldn't hear what it was Shinsou said, as Kaminari charged his traditional omnidirectional attack, but whatever it was, it caused the blond to howl with laughter. For about a second, before his expression suddenly went blank. Huh. Wouldn't have thought that laughter counted as a response. Said the voice, as Kaminari obediently turned and walked out of the ring.

“Shinsou Hitoshi is the winner!” Called Midnight, as Kaminari suddenly jolted, and looked around, before sagging slightly.

“Another quick match! Shinsou manages to catch his opponent with his quirk almost immediately, and forces him to walk right out of bounds!”

After the obligatory round of commiserations for Kaminari, and congratulations now thankfully being directed at Shinsou, the third match began.

It was certainly memorable, if no less short. Izuku leaned back from the glacier that had sprung up inches from his nose, looking up. The ice extended all the way beyond the roof of the stadium.
For once Present Mic was silent, apparently stunned by the size of the attack levelled at Sero. “S-Sero is unable to move.” Called the partially frozen Midnight, as Todoroki moved to thaw the glacier he had built.

Both Izuku and the voice winced at what little of Todoroki’s expression they could see. He looked desolate, as he melted the ice he had made. They didn't even hear the consolation of the crowd for Sero, too busy trying to figure out how to help the bi-chromatic boy.

The next match was by far the longest so far, and really amusing for most of the people watching. Izuku thought it was somewhat less amusing for poor Iida, who was used as a prop to show off various gadgets for ten minutes, and made sure to try to cheer him up as he re-entered the stands.

The next couple of matches were somewhat more sensible, Tokoyami achieved victory over Yaoyorozu, since her quirk was much slower to start than his, and Honenuki managed to prevent Mina from approaching him, then sunk her waist-deep in concrete, which she couldn't melt in time to not be judged immobile.

Bakugou versus Tsuyu was a really interesting fight, thought Izuku, as he watched the two highly mobile students leaping and blasting around each other, but eventually Bakugou wore Tsuyu down. She couldn't reach him with her tongue without it getting badly burned, and when he approached her, she was quickly blasted away.

“Good luck Uraraka.” Said Izuku, as his friend left for her first match. He doubted she would need it. She was too like Aoi to go down easily.
Izuku leaned forward as Uraraka and Kirishima entered the stage. This was going to be a very direct melee, and he didn't want to miss any of it. Though he did blink in surprise when Kirishima slapped himself for some reason.

'Who do you think is going to win?' He asked the voice, as the match started, and the two teens rushed to one-another.

_Uraraka most likely, Kirishima's at a real disadvantage since he has to get into close quarters with her._

When the two reached each-other Kirishima started with a wild right hook, which Uraraka jumped back to avoid. 'He's pretty quick for someone without a speed quirk, but this really isn't a good fight for him.' Said the greenette, before immediately being surprised.

Uraraka had attempted to use her quirk in a quick counter-attack, only for Kirishima to twist, and catch her outstretched arm by the wrist. _Does his hardening actually make him less flexible?_ Wondered the voice, as Uraraka failed to pry the hand loose, even after she managed to activate her quirk with the other hand.

'But what will he do now? He can't let go at all or he'll lose.'
Well if he's strong eno- Started the voice, as the brunette began to try to shake the redhead off her arm, before he managed to pull himself in closer. Uraraka responded by punching him in the face, only to start rapidly shaking her scraped knuckles.

Kirishima displayed some impressive core strength, twisting so that he was nearly upright again, before hooking a leg behind Uraraka's knee, and pulling.

They both found themselves on the floor, as Uraraka overbalanced, and fell backwards, Kirishima floating a few inches above her, still attached like a limpet to her arm. The redhead used her moment of shock to grab her other arm, pulling both barely resisting arms together, so that the fingers touched.

The redhead landed heavily on top of the brunette, still clinging to both arms, he forced them to her sides. After a few seconds it became apparent that she was unable to get up from that spot, or twist to use her quirk again. “Uraraka is unable to move. Kirishima is the winner.” Called Midnight.

Well. Didn't see that coming. Not only is he good at grappling, but her quirk is involuntary.

“A great fight! Excellent dodging from Uraraka, but in the end Kirishima shows his never surrender attitude, clinging on, even under the effect of her quirk, for the win!” Called Present Mic, as Kirishima quickly stood, and offered a hand to Uraraka. Whatever he said, his usual sunshine smile was in place, and she took his offered arm.

“Come on shinsou-kun, hopefully we can find Uraraka-san before we get down there.” Said Izuku, standing to go to his next match.

They didn't manage to find the previous fighters on the way to the arena. Izuku would just have to console Uraraka after his own fight- assuming she still needed it after both Kirishima and Iida were done.

“Woo! Time to kick of round two with a bang! Continuing his win streak, the hero course's own pyromaniac, Midoriya Izuku! Versus... the man who finished his first fight without even moving, Shinsou Hitoshi! Match... Start!”
Izuku formed a tiny, somewhat dense flame an inch from his forearm, then began to run forward.

“I hate sitting in traffic.” Said Hitoshi as the greenette rushed toward him, causing him to pause, frowning at the purple haired boy. “I always get run over.” Izuku snorted, as the taller boy smirked.

“Well that's an odd sensation.’ Thought Izuku, as the world briefly went out of focus, Shinsou opened his mouth- to order him to walk out of the arena probably- but before he could speak, the confinement around the tiny flame disappeared. The fire expanded for an instant, and Izuku woke up from Shinou's control using the pain of his newly acquired first-degree burn, everything snapping back into focus.

“How did you-” Began Shinsou, before Izuku reached him. The greenette didn't respond to the half-articulated question, instead using one percent of One-For-All to shove his opponent back toward the edge of the ring.

Shinsou struggled fairly well for someone with such a slight build, even managing to land a good punch on Izuku's face, but eventually he was shoved out of the ring. “Midoriya is the winner.” Said Midnight from the side.

Izuku's explanation of how he had escaped brainwashing was followed by commiserating with Uraraka, but, as expected, she seemed in good spirits about her loss- probably because of Kirishima's efforts. Remember to thank him, kid. Chimed the voice.

“Next up we have the battle of legacies!” Called the announcer.

Oh dear- Started the voice.

“On one hand, the youngest son of the Iidaten agency, Iida Tenya! Versus... The son of the number two hero himself, Todoroki Shouto!” Both the voice, and Izuku winced at the expression Todoroki showed at this unknowingly insensitive introduction. “Battle... Start!”

Iida immediately began rushing Todoroki- in an arc to avoid possible glaciation- but Todoroki
responded quickly. Standing in place, the bi-chromatic boy forewent the huge attack of the previous round. *That sort of power display must have taken a lot out of him... his stamina is probably way lower than ours.* Commented the voice, as Todoroki pushed out a smaller wave of ice to intercept the blue-haired teen.

Iida showed his impressive reaction times, and turning circle, twisting his path to avoid the oncoming wall. But Todorki would not be outdone, throwing another wall onto Iida's new route. ‘**Iida shows his amazing speed again! But it looks like he won't have room to move much longer!**’ And indeed, the arcs of ice had now more-or-less trapped Iida in an area of the ring away from Todoroki.

It looked like Todoroki would be able to win without taking a single step, as the final ice wave approached the now trapped Iida, but Iida suddenly showed not only a huge burst of speed, but an impressive standing long-jump. The blue-haired teen vaulted over the low wall of ice, and reached its source in an instant, kicking the bi-chromatic boy in the head. *That's a mistake.* Said the voice, as Iida began to drag the seemingly stunned Todoroki to the edge. *He's got amazing control, Iida shouldn't forget about- Iida suddenly stopped in place, engines stalling. ...tricks like that.*

The ice-user grabbed his unmoving opponents arm, and ice swiftly encased him. “Iida is unable to move, Todoroki is the winner.” Called Midnight.

When Iida re-entered the stands after being unfrozen, he seemed downcast. “Iida! H-Hey man, good job.” Said Izuku, as he and his two other friends approached their serious friend.

“I lost.” Replied Iida perfunctorily.

“In the quarter-final.” Pointed out Shinsou dryly.

“Only because Mei left on her own. After I was done embarrassing myself.” OK, that was slightly fair, but-

“Y-You didn't embarrass y-yourself. Y-You did a good job tr-trying to c-catch her.”

“Yeah! And you're the only person so far that landed a hit on Todoroki at all! He's like crazy strong!” Cheered Uraraka.
“I-if he s-saw it, I-I’m sure your br-brother would be proud.” Asserted Izuku firmly.

“Woo! Time for the next match for the hope of class 1-B! One of this year's four recommended students, Honenuki Juuzo! Versus... this kid's shadow has a life of its own, Tokoyami Fumikage! Match... Start!” Announced Present Mic.

“Come on, let's watch!” Said Uraraka, dragging the slightly mollified Iida to his seat.

_Honenuke’s quirk really is pretty subtle when nothing is falling in the new lakes._ Commented the voice, as the skeletal boy- presumably- activated his quirk on the arena. Dark Shadow arrived before the leading edge of the softened cement, though. Honenuki responded by jumping forward, and executing a flawless dive **into** the arena.

… _how are they going to make sure he doesn't go out of bounds?_ Wondered the voice, as Dark Shadow tried to follow the boy under...cement?

Something strange happened when it did. The cord attaching Dark Shadow to Tokoyami grew noticeably thicker, and the ripples in the softened arena floor indicated that its main body was also getting larger. 'So it gets stronger in the dark?'

_we wonder if its personality changes at all... they probably have a really interesting dynamic. We should ask them some time._ Said the voice, Hayato leading. Just then, the pool finally reached Tokoyami’s feet. He briefly sank, but only sunk to his ankles, before a huge claw reached from the pool, and the bird-headed teen was dragged out, and dropped further from the liquid section.

_“The match has turned to a game of cat and mouse, as Honenuki has hidden in the pool of softened cement he made, and Dark Shadow begins to hunt him down. But will the shadow find him first? Or will the entire arena become liquid?”_

Just then a loud noise was heard from the cement pond. Dark Shadow emerged, now easily thrice Tokoyami’s size, holding Honenuki in one huge claw. The quirk quickly began to shrink in the full sunlight, but the match was already over. Dark Shadow threw Honenuki, not just out of the arena, but beyond the surrounding field, into the stands, where he was thankfully caught by a couple of heroes, as Dark Shadow roared in triumph.
Katsuki grinned as he heard the challenging roar from the shadow creature. He hadn't expected Bird-brain to be that strong, he might actually be worth Katsuki's time. It was too bad that the thing seemed so weak to light, otherwise it would make a great workout. Oh well, Shitty-hair would be a decent challenge, and if Deku did his usual hero thing, and forced Half-and-half to get over his fucking daddy issues, then he would make the final interesting at least- assuming Icyhot won after that, Deku might play one of his shitty tricks, and win anyway.

It didn't really matter to Katsuki, they were both strong enough for it to feel like a real win... if they didn't fucking half-ass it.

“Come on Shitty-hair, I'm gonna kick your ass.” Said the ashen-blond, standing. In the arena Big-bird's quirk seemed to have finally calmed the fuck down.

The redhead grinned, god he was even more smiley than shitty Deku, it was getting on his nerves. “Don't think I'll just let you win Bakugou.” He said, following the blond to the ring.

“Finishing up the quarter-final we've got a battle of attack and defence! The rocky redhead with the serious endurance, Kirishima Eijirou! Versus... the explosive blond with some
serious attitude, Bakugou Katsuki!” Shitty cockatoo, just because he was the only one here with
the balls to tell people what he thought of them... “Match... Start!”

Shitty-hair immediately launched himself at Katsuki, aiming a sharp-edged fist at his face. Man he
was fucking fast for someone seemingly made of rock. Katsuki barely dodged the blow, feeling it
graze his cheek, a bit of blood running down. Katsuki kept moving forward, on the outside of
Shitty-hair's outstretched arm, and launched an explosion at his exposed ribs.

Shark-teeth took a step back, a big hole in the side of his shirt, but the sharpness of the exposed
skin meant he had hardened it in time. “Nice try Explodo-boy, but that's not gonna work on me.” A
horse that wouldn't fall was fucking right. Katsuki began to back up, as the redhead launched blow
after blow at his head.

‘He's keeping the hardening up on his hands,’ thought Katsuki, as he dodged the punches, 'he's not
going to be able to keep this up long.'

Ducking under another blow, the blond's next explosion struck the redhead in his other side.
Katsuki grinned at the pained sound he made. “You're not gonna be able to keep your quirk up
much longer,” he said, “let's see how fast I can wear you down, rock boy.”

Shitty-hair raised his arms to defend the next explosion, directed at his head. 'He's on the
defensive, let's keep him there.' Katsuki thought, beginning a continuous barrage of explosions
from his palms. The first few didn't seem to phase the redhead, but he quickly began to back up
under the constant blasts.

Shitty-hair eventually fell on his ass after one last explosion to the shoulder. “Kirishima has been
knocked out, Bakugou is the winner.” Said the referee.

“Amazing! Bakugou kept going until Kirishima's endurance ran out to claim the victory!”
Said the cockatoo.

'Yeah, but it took a fucking long time,' thought Katsuki, thumbing the cut on his cheek, 'and he got
a hit in. Maybe it'll actually be worth remembering his name.' He added, putting his hands in his
pockets as he headed out of the ring.
When Katsuki got back to his seat, after the old lady- no he wasn't going to call her that to her face, he wanted to live, thank you- Deku's fight with Half-and-half was about to start.

“Welcome to the semi-final folks! First up we have a major battle of the elements! Fire! Ice! Who will win?! The top of the normal entrance exam,” stupid fucking rescue points, “Midoriya Izuku! Versus... the last of the recommended students, Todoroki Shouto!”

Katsuki saw the expression on Deku's face. 'Oh, this is going to be good.' he thought, Deku had his taking-no-prisoners face on. 'Icyhot is getting over his issues whether he likes it or not.' he added to himself with a smirk.

“Match... Start!” Said the loudmouth in the booth, the instant before the real displays of power finally began. Katsuki honestly couldn't fathom where Half-and-half got off, saying he was stronger than Deku with just his ice.

Three-quarters of the ring filled with ice in an instant, did Icyhot think that he could stop Deku like that? His fucking ice might be able to hold most of their shitty classmates, but could it hell hold anyone with a fire quirk. At the same time, the remaining quarter of the ring became a sea of golden flames, the air rippling above it in the intense heat, the fire reaching just as high as the ice. Fucking Deku had gotten better at making fire quickly.

The two fronts met on Deku's side of the arena, and the glacier exploded, as the flames dimmed somewhat. A cloud of steam blasted outward from where the opposing forces met, pushing the flames back, and melting and breaking the ice, before expanding to hide the whole ring.

When it cleared, most of the ring was covered in a layer of jagged ice, and the rest was revealed to be soot-blackened, as Deku pooled the rest of the fire he had made into a tight ball, constantly growing as the nerd added to it, never taking those golden eyes from his opponent.

Once he was able to see Deku again, Icyhot launched another wave of ice, and Deku let the ball explode outward to meet it. Half-and-half was fucking dumber than Katsuki thought if he was trying to win an endurance battle without using his fire. Nobody had two quirks, that just wasn't how quirks fucking worked. If Deku had had boiling water poured on him, Katsuki thought it would have hurt like hell, but to leave a scar like that? Icyhot had shitty heat resistance, probably crappy cold resistance too. He'd give himself frostbite way before the shitty nerd gave himself heatstroke.
This time the two waves met two-thirds of the way to Deku, and when the steam cleared, bits of the ring were glowing orange. Deku said something to Candy-cane, and his mask cracked for a second, revealing a glare that Katsuki could have been proud of as he responded with another attack—only reaching the half-way point this time.

Whatever Deku said next, it really ticked his opponent off, Icyhot didn't launch a long-range attack this time, running forward on his ice with a snarl to reach the greenette instead. Deku seemed perfectly calm, throwing the fireball he was holding backward out of the ring to hover halfway to the audience, he waited for Half-and-half to arrive, then sent him flying with a punch to the gut. They were both clearly slowing down, and Deku kept pushing at the bi-chromatic boy, keeping him in the ice covered parts of the arena, stopping him warming up on the glowing concrete.

Half-and-half managed to freeze Deku's arm a couple of times once he got close, but it won him some nasty bruises by the look of things, and it melted quickly with how hot the greenette was—it was probably only helping Deku last longer.

The whole time Deku kept yelling at the ice-user. 'Maybe he'll see how fucking annoying it is when your shitty opponent doesn't take things seriously.' Thought Katsuki, before something the greenette screamed finally seemed to work. Deku backed up, as Icyhot's left side caught fire for the first time. All the ice around him beginning to melt. 'Finally, now let's see what the nerd does when Half-and-half's stamina basically resets.' He added, ignoring whatever Candy-cane's shitty father was yelling.

Deku started forming a small ring of flames at his feet, and the ball he had thrown earlier began to move, as Icyhot began to say something, an utterly feral grin on his face, strange on the pointedly blank boy. More ice began to form on the already cold section of the ring they were using, before the bi-chromatic boy raised his left hand. Deku hurriedly raised both arms, and the fucking rock literature teacher and the referee both began to hurriedly activate their quirks.

The ball of fire shot forward, as the disk raised into a curtain wall. The explosion that arrived this time put the previous ones to shame, as more cold and heat than ever before were applied at the same time. The walls the teacher had hurriedly put up were shattered without even slowing it, the referee and some of the people in the stands were blown backward by the wind, as debris flew everywhere.

When the steam cloud cleared, Deku was already rushing toward a panting Half-and-half who had burned half his shirt off, the curtain of flame that had deflected most of the shockwave, parting to let him pass. Icyhot seemed stunned. 'Probably hasn't used his shitty fire in so long, he doesn't fucking know how to control it properly, went all out.' Thought Katsuki, as the nerd reached his opponent, and hurriedly threw him the rest of the way out of what remained of the ring.
There was silence in the arena, as people got back up from where they had fallen, and looked at the devastation. “...Todoroki is out-of-bounds. Midoriya is the winner.” Said a stunned-sounding Midnight, once she had gotten back up from where she had been shoved by the explosion. Then the cheering started. Deku stood there, panting, hands on knees. 'Shitty nerd had better be ready for our fight one I beat Big-bird.'

“Wow! Holy sh- cow! What an amazing show of fire-power! What are you teaching these kids, Eraserhead?” The insomniac murmured something incomprehensible over the cheering.

“Midoriya manages to protect himself from that massive blast, and launches a quick counter-attack, seizing victory!” Yelled the cockatoo, getting over his own shock.
Once he had caught his breath, Izuku stood up, and tried to drown out the sound of the voice laughing at him over his emotional response to his opponent burning off his shirt. “Are you OK, Todoroki-kun?” He asked, starting to offer his right hand, before changing his mind and using the left.

“I think you might have cracked a rib.” Said Todoroki, deadpan, using the hand to get back to his feet.

Izuku flinched. “S-Sorry T-Todoroki-kun, um, let's go to the infirmary. R-Recovery Girl sh-should be able to fix it.” God this was awkward. Hopefully any blushing at Todoroki’s current state of undress would be taken for overheating.

A few moments later, Izuku found himself face-to-face with the massive form of the flame hero. He was wearing a smile that made the want to punch him in the face... more so, as if Todoroki using his flames was his accomplishment. “Ha! You're flame control is still lacking, but now that you've let go of your childish rebellion-” He started, either not noticing, or not caring that Izuku was there.

“Apologies, Todoroki-san, but Shouto really needs to get to the infirmary.” Said Izuku, keeping a frostily polite tone, which would hopefully not betray the greenette's strong desire to throw the man off a cliff. “I'm sure you can talk when Recovery Girl lets him go, sir.” He added, pulling the bi-chromatic boy behind him as he pushed past the flame-wreathed man before he could get another word in.
“Shouto?” Asked Todoroki, when they had gotten some distance from the surprised man, raising a white eyebrow.

“I-I um, I just d-didn't- I thought y-you might not l-like always b-being called by h-his name.” Stuttered the greenette, blushing.

This is our life now. Said the voice, resigned. We're going to end up falling for someone with serious family issues again. Izuku blushed harder.

'I'm not-' He began to protest.

Todoroki hummed. “It's fine, you can call me Shouto if you want.” He said, coolly, as they reached the nurse's office that had been set up in the stadium.

“Y-You could call me I-Izuku, if y-you like, Shouto-kun.”

Uh-huh. What's that you were saying? Said the voice, somehow giving the impression of raising an eyebrow.

Recovery Girl was not happy at the two boys who walked into her office. “Three cracked ribs! Three! You need to learn to hold back young man!” Berated the elderly heroine, thumping Izuku's leg with her cane. “And your own injuries weren't much better. I told you last time I can't just heal your overheating, you're going to have to cool down normally. I've healed the burns on your forearms, but the best I can do beyond that is to get some fluids in you.” Izuku tried to look suitably chastised, from Recovery Girl's look, he didn't think it worked. To- Shouto kept his usual stoicism during the tirade, but Izuku thought his eyes looked amused. “Honestly, I don't know, this is a school festival, the teachers need to stop making everyone think they need to fight 'till they drop.” Grumbled the shorter woman, leaving Izuku with a bottle of ice-water.

“S-Sorry about th-that, I di-didn't think I'd h-hit that hard.” Said Izuku. He really needed to try to remember that even one percent of One-For-All could do some serious damage.

Todoroki blinked slowly, and answered without inflection. “I tried to hit you with a glacier. It's fine.”
The second match of the semi-final was delayed by the need to repair the massive damage that Izuku and Shouto's match had done to the arena, which... on one hand Izuku was grateful for, Bakugou's match with Tokoyami most likely wouldn't last very long, and Izuku needed the time to cool down, but on the other hand Izuku was now stuck in a room alone with Todoroki, desperately trying not to blush at the memory of the boy wearing that smile, and only half a shirt.

*You could try talking to him?* Suggested the voice.

'About what? We've only had like one conversation, and I don't think his dad is a safe topic. Or should I talk about how attractive he looked in half a shirt? That sound like a great idea.'

*You could ask about the matches, or his quirk?* Offered the voice, choosing to ignore the sarcasm.

Before Izuku could respond to that suggestion, Shouto broke the silence. “Who trained you?” He asked slowly.

“huh?” Asked the greenette, eloquent as always.

“That was too much control for someone self-trained.”

“Oh, um, my quirk is j-just r-really suited for fine control like that. It evolved from a really minor telekinesis, s-so little adjustments come naturally to me.” Deflected Izuku. It was very nearly true, Phoenix Spirit's ability to shape fire easily was really amazing, hence Izuku's decision to use Flame Shape as the official name.

Shouto didn't look convinced. “And the level of power? Or how you beat Shoji?”

Shouto did have a point, fine control and extreme fire-power didn't normally go together, honestly without One-For-All Izuku would have had much more trouble making enough fire to counter him directly like that, but Izuku obviously couldn't explain that. Then again he could also hardly explain that he took lessons from the voices in his head.

“I took a lot of martial arts lessons at this dojo near my house before UA, but all the quirk stuff is self taught.” Said the greenette. Technically both things were true if the voice was counted as part of Izuku.
“I see.” said Shouto impassively.

Izuku sipped his water, thinking of what to say next. “Do you mind if I ask you something about your quirk?”

“Not really.”

“Can you make snow?” Asked the greenette, suddenly sounding eager.

The only sign of surprise that Shouto showed at the question was to blink. “Probably. My sister can, but I've never really tried.”

Izuku grinned, back on safer conversational ground. “That's so cool! I love when quirks can do things like that.”

Shouto frowned slightly. “It isn't that useful though.”

“But it's really neat!” Izuku looked around to see if recovery girl could see them. “Watch this.” He added, raising his right hand. A little bronze flame formed there, Izuku concentrated, and the flame changed shape, growing longer, thinning at both ends, wings forming.

The little dragon made of fire left his hand with a flap of its wings- not really needed, but it added to the effect- and began to fly around the room. Shouto watched it with interest, and Izuku brought it close, adding a tiny piece of hotter flame in the dragon's head, which it breathed out as a small gout of brighter flame when it passed Shouto again, before returning to Izuku's palm, and dissipating. “I used to love doing that as a kid.” Said the greenette.

“That must have taken a lot of practice.” Commented the bi-chromatic teen. It had- even with the voice's help- but Izuku had always loved the flame shaping aspect of Phoenix Spirit, and had spent hours trying to get details down on tiny flame creatures.

“Yeah, but it was worth it. Besides, it helped with fine control, so it was useful in a way.”
There was a tiny uptick at the edges of Shouto's mouth. “I suppose. You should probably not be using your quirk before your next match though.”

At this point Uraraka, burst into the infirmary, Shinsou following her, and it was amazing how quickly Shouto's careful blankness returned. It made a surprising difference. “There you are! We got worried when you didn't come back. Are you OK?” The brunette asked in a rush.

“S-Sorry, I'm fine, j-just some burns, a-and I overheated a bit.” Izuku answered.

“Oh, all right then. What about you Todoroki-kun?”

Shouto looked slightly surprised that she would ask, but quickly hid behind his impassivity. “I cracked some ribs, but the nurse fixed them.” He said neutrally.

“Broccoli boy is stronger than he looks.” Said Shinsou, voice devoid of inflection.

Before the impromptu deadpan-off could continue Izuku spoke. “Is Iida-kun not with you?”

“He got a phone call while we were looking for you two.” Said Uraraka, just before the only slightly muffled voice of Present Mic began announcing the next match.

Izuku hurriedly began to finish his bottle of water- this match would not be a long one.

Shota watched the second fight of the semi-final, if it could really be called a fight. The tired man felt somewhat sympathetic for Tokoyami, it really was a terrible match up for him. Oh well, he had made a good showing of himself up to that point- possible slight loss of control against Hononuke notwithstanding- and even if he hadn't had to fight Bakugou in the semi-final, he would have had to fight Midoriya in the final, which would have been just as one-sided.

Less than two minutes after the start of the match Dark Shadow was cowering from a sparkler in one of Bakuou's palms, while Bakugou held down Tokoyami with his other hand. “Bakugou is the winner.” Said Nemuri after a moment.
'Maybe I should add Tokoyami to the list of students that need extra quirkless combat training.' He thought, as Yamada loudly added commentary on some of the more obvious points of the match.

The next match was going to be interesting... assuming Midoriya could actually keep going after that huge display with Todoroki. He was going to have to have a word with that boy about sticking your nose in without asking- trying to get someone to overcome their fears like that could do more harm than good. 'Though I suppose in this case there wasn't much he could do to avoid the fire thing, given his own quirk- original quirk.' That was still taking some getting used to, and they still needed to discuss how they intended to cover the second quirk without arousing suspicion-thankfully problem child had seemingly decided not to noticeably use the thing so far.

After a five-minute break Bakugou walked back onto the stage he had just left, Midoriya joining him in the ring from the other side. Yamada began to do his usual preamble to the match, and at the same time Bakugou was apparently saying something to Midoriya with his usual furious scowl... maybe Shota should get somewhere where there was no glass preventing him from using his quirk. If they did get overly competitive, neither Ken nor Nemuri would definitely be able to stop them in time.
of finals and medals

Chapter Summary

Bakugou anger issues Katsuki
vs
Midoriya the absolute madman Izuku

Chapter Notes

1) ugh, sorry about the delay/lacklustre chapter, really wasn't sure how i wanted to finish up the sports festival after all the todo stuff
2) was going to make shouto say Izuku-kun, but then i remembered that he almost never uses honorifics, so we're getting really informal seeming todo
3) woo! ~700 kudos & ~10k hits. thanks so much for all your supports for my nonsense fic guys :D

“Here it is folks! The moment you've all been waiting for, the grand final of this year's tournament! It's going to be a fiery finish this year, but who will emerge victorious? The controlled Midoriya Izuku, or the explosive Bakugou Katsuki? Let's find out!”

This is going to be a battle of mobility, Bakugou can fly, so you need to restrict his movement somehow. Cautioned the voice.

“You had better fucking go all out like you did with Half-and-half, Deku.” Said Bakugou, scowling at the greenette.

“Y-You too, K-Kacchan.”

“Match... Start!”

Izuku was still feeling uncomfortably warm from his extravagant use of fire against Todoroki, so he wouldn't be able to pull out any huge displays like that in the final. Not without running a serious risk of becoming part of the voice anyway.
The second the match started, Bakugou began to use his explosions to rush toward the greenette, while Izuku carefully began to generate six small fires at the edge of his half-foot range, letting the tiny fires orbit above his head like a crown of stars.

When the blond got too close for Izuku's comfort, he flung one of the six stars out, shattering it into dozens of smaller fires to try to intercept Bakugou, and prevent small course adjustments. At the same time, he began to move. For the first time in the festival, he used the trick he had adapted from Mina.

The copper flames Izuku generated under his feet left a livid arc of soot on the arena floor, as the greenette scated around the blond, and toward the other side of the arena to gain space. Meanwhile Bakugou used a couple of explosions to rapidly cancel his momentum, before using another to dodge the cloud of projectiles, still moving toward Izuku.

Izuku obviously couldn't control all the flames he currently had individually, so he gave random speeds to the cloud, and then let them stop after a moment, the fiery bullets scattered above the ring would hopefully seriously inconvenience anyone trying to move any more than a couple of feet off the ground. They were a bluff, each one individually wouldn't be able to do much more than a sunburn.

*When he stops.* Said the voice suddenly. His quirk isn't quite continuous, for larger explosions there is a delay.

Izuku nodded. When Bakugou stopped, they would have a small window to trap him. The greenette sent out three of his remaining five flames, one arcing up, and the other two to his left and right. Bakugou was expertly weaving through the three-dimensional minefield of flames in the air to reach him.

The blond's explosions were getting stronger as he propelled himself, sweating even more than usual in the heat of the many fires. “This all you got?” he asked, as he cleared the mine-field, catching up to the greenette, who launched his fifth flame with the aim to use it as a defensive wall.

Izuku had evidently underestimated the blond's speed, releasing the penultimate flame slightly late. Bakugou used a careful explosion to launch himself over the rapidly expanding mid-air wall of flames, and under the earlier fireball.

Passing over the surprised greenette's head, the blond twisted, landing on his feet, grabbing Izuku's collar, and using his momentum to easily pull him off his feet, launching him with another explosion toward the edge of the ring.
Izuku hurriedly adjusted himself, using a large stream of fire from his hands to reduce his flight speed, but the relentless Bakugou was nearly on top of him already.

'This close to the edge, I should be able to-' The greenette stopped the fire, touching down inside the ring, and taking a couple of steps back to cancel the last of his momentum. Then Bakugou came in reach.

Izuku reached out with his right arm, hoping he would be able to grab the blond, and throw him the final few feet out of the ring. At the same time he carefully adjusted the four flames he had sent out, they would still be useful if Bakugou got out of the way. The tiny flames from the start were now probably too cool to be of any use, so he let them dissipate. The now ten-foot wall was pulled toward the two, and the three spheres were stopped in place.

Bakugou did not back up. Nor did he keep going and get caught. Instead he dodged to the left with a well timed explosion, prompting Izuku to hurriedly move the last flame to block the explosion he was sure would be coming toward his exposed side.

The explosion did come, but it was somewhat larger than anticipated. The fireball was able to block the heat of the explosion to some extent, but it only dampened the force of the massive blast.

There was a rushing sensation, and things blurred as he moved too quickly to stop in a reasonable amount of time, though he did try, pushing out fire to slow, and activating the three percent of One-For-All that he could use without it being visible.

Activating One-For-All was definitely wise, since a moment later he hit the wall of the stadium. Hard. From where he was Izuku could see Bakugou, almost at the other side of the arena from where he had been, clutching his right arm.

The arena was silent for a pair of seconds, then Midnight spoke. “Midoriya is out of bounds. Bakugou is the winner.” Then the cheering started.

“Woah! Bakugou ends the final match with the biggest boo yet! Is Midoriya going to be OK after that?” Asked the voice hero, while a still slightly stunned Izuku was coming to the conclusion that he was not exactly OK after that.
Mentally shaking itself after their sudden relocation, the voice spoke. *You OK there, kid? Any burns?*

'no, he br'ke a couple of ribs though, I think. Or cracked them at least.' Responded the greenette sluggishly, before the adrenaline of the high pace fight began to wear off, a sharp burning in his side making itself fully known, causing him to add 'Ow.' as he let himself fall to a sitting position against the wall he had hit.

The award ceremony was delayed slightly to allow Midoriya to be treated for two cracked ribs and one broken one, and for Bakugou to be treated for the muscle strain, and dislocated shoulder his own quirk caused. Needless to say, Recovery Girl was livid.

“What did I say to you? Not even ten minutes ago. Stop treating these like battles to the death!” Berated the elderly heroine, attempting to kill the exhausted greenette with the force of her gaze alone, before turning to heal the lesser injuries of the blond.

“And as for you,” She said to Bakugou, once she had healed his somewhat lesser injuries, “if I catch you overusing your quirk like that again, we will be having words.” The blond schooled his face to a far lesser glare than usual, and grunted that he understood. Seemingly satisfied that he had, Recovery Girl went to the door.

“Kacchan.” Said Izuku, causing the blond to look in his direction.

“What is it nerd?”

“Would... would you have used an explosion that big against someone else?” The greenette asked, serious.

Bakugou scoffed. “Of course not, do I look that fucking stupid to you? I'm not going to give someone permanent burns for a shitty school festival.”

*He says that, but he could have punctured your lung with that stunt.* Growled the voice, irate.
“You know I'm not fireproof right?”

“Yeah, but your fucking closer to it than anyone here but Kirishima.” Said the blond, just before the door was opened to admit Kirishima, Mina, Sero, Kaminari, Shinsou, Uraraka, Iida, and Shouto, all crowding into the suddenly cramped infirmary.

“Are you two OK? That fight was so freaking manly!” Said Kirishima, getting visibly choked up about the “manliness”.

“Of course we're fucking OK, Kirishima,” growled Bakugou, “if we weren't do you think the ol-the nurse would have let you idiots in here?”

“Well I am glad to hear that you are both OK,” said Iida, keeping his voice down- only slightly louder than a normal conversational tone- and limiting himself to smaller hand-gestures in the hospital-like room, “but you should really be more careful when sparring, someone could have gotten seriously hurt.”

_We were seriously hurt._ Grumbled the voice.

“Y-Yeah-” Started Izuku at the same time as Bakuou spoke.

“Tsk, shut it glasses, the shitty nerd is fine, if he couldn't take that sort of heat he wouldn't be able to use his own shitty quirk.” Ground out the blond.

“Still-” Started the blue-haired boy.

“I-It's fine, m-my quirk does g-give me some h-heat resistance. A-And I managed to b-block a fair bit of it anyway.” Interceded the greenette.

“You flew fifty feet into a wall, Izuku.” Put in Shouto coolly. The use of his first name prompted a number of people in the room to stare at him, but Shouto seemingly didn't notice.

“I m-managed to slow down b-before I hit it though.” Reassured the greenette.
“Yeah man, that was really cool how you used your fire to move.” Said Mina, causing Izuku to blush.

“I- um, I was just trying to imitate the way you use your acid to skate.”

Mina’s cheeks turned a light shade of purple, as Kaminari spoke. “I didn't know you could make explosions that big, Bakugou.”

“Of course I can Dunce-face, I just can't do it often, like your stupid big shock thing.” At this point Recovery Girl re-entered the room.

“All right you lot, I'm sure you were worried, but these two are fine now, you can talk to them after the award ceremony. Which they should probably be going to now.” Said the elderly heroine, shooing everyone from her office.

The closing ceremony was a somewhat awkward affair, All Might showed up slightly before his cue, talking over Midnight. It then turned out that he was a hugger, of the two boys on the third place podium, Tokoyami stood there blankly as his beak was pressed into the chest of the enormous hero, and Todoroki looked like he was trying with minimal success not to stiffen at the unaccustomed contact.

When All Might arrived to hug Izuku, he imitated Tokoyami, and just stood there lamely, not that he could realistically have gotten his arms around the huge man. “Well done, my boy, you should be proud of yourself, helping Todoroki-kun like that.” The blond murmured.

“Thank you All Might.” Muttered the greenette, embarrassed.

The voice laughed uproariously as All Might hugged the previously smug-looking Bakugou, causing his ears to redden with whatever praise he offered the ashen blond.

Once the awkward hugs were mercifully over, and the students had their various medals around their necks, All Might spoke for the crowd. “There you have it folks! But remember, any one of the
people in this arena could be standing here next year! These chicks will surely be great heroes one
day! Say it with my folks... Great work!” Finished the hero, as everyone else watching said “Plus Ultra!”
to his great embarrassment, and their confusion.
Stain has a bad time, Izuku gets a glimpse at how bad things are in the Todoroki household.

headcanon that Izuku will be the tallest member of 1-A before graduation, and this will drive Bakugou insane
broke: Kaminari is the traitor
woke: Dark Shadow is the traitor. Shiggy offered him all the apples he could eat.

-two hours earlier-

Tensei was seemingly doing exactly what Amber had cautioned him not to do. To anyone watching him, they hoped, it would look as if he was wandering the streets of Hosu city alone. A prime target for Stain.

The trap had been Tensei’s idea, and, after some persuasion, he had convinced his parents to come out of their semi-retirement. Currently they were following him discreetly from a couple of streets away. Meanwhile a slight underground hero named Bullseye was providing support from the rooftops.

This “foolishness”- his mother's words- had been going on since Thursday morning, several teams of sidekicks with applicable skills patrolling this way at all times, but so far Stain had failed to take the bait. There was a small chance that Amber had been wrong, or that the hero killer had already moved on, but most of Hosu's heroes doubted it, it didn't fit his profile, so the tense, purposeful patrols continued.

The false-flag patrol today took Tensei past an area of Hosu that tended to narrower streets and winding alleys, the sort of area the hero killer would most likely strike- based on past cases. They weren't even sure if Stain would consider Tensei a target, but given that Iidaten was a larger agency, and the fida family was technically “old money” among hero families, they felt it was a good shot.
Suddenly Tensei saw a glint from the corner of his eye. Snapping his head to look at it, the blue-haired hero near instantly activated his quirk, rushing toward the figure that had been watching from the alley, distinctive knives and scarf on full display. Stain.

“Target spotted at 4-2-10 Ekou street. Ingenium has engaged. Move to block escape routes.” Came the voice of Bullseye through Tensei’s earpiece as he rapidly arrived in front of the serial killer, followed by answering confirmations from the senior Iidas.

Tensei quickly saw that Amber's intelligence- corroborated by the no more than two heroes that had ever fought Stain and lived to tell about it- had been spot on, the man was faster than someone without a speed type quirk had any right to be, and knew what he was doing with those knives. After less than half a dozen blows, the heavily armed madman managed to land a hit. Tensei's armour was cut like butter, and he grunted in pain as it failed to prevent the heavy gash that now adorned his left arm.

The hero killer grinned, looking about as unhinged as he most likely was. He thought he had won. The scarfed man raised the bloodied knife to his face, intending to paralyse Tensei, only for a large rock to break his wrist, forcing him to drop the knife.

Bullseye's quirk- Aim- was extremely useful from a distance, since it let him always know how to throw any object so that it would hit any target, as long as he could see the target, and it didn't change speed too much after the throw.

'He took his sweet time getting into position.' thought Tensei, as the hero killer growled, now keeping an eye on both his opponents. For all that he complained, he was immensely grateful that he had decided on Bullseye for this job, they really needed the ranged support.

Stain's next move was almost immediate, Tensei didn't even see when he got the knife, but suddenly it was flying towards Bullseye, and there was already a second longer knife in his left hand for Tensei.

The thrown knife was intercepted halfway to the hero on the roof by another rock, falling harmlessly to the ground. Meanwhile, Tensei rushed the masked man, hoping to get inside the man's guard. They needed to stop the man running before the senior Iidas arrived.

Tensei's speed advantage let him get a quirk-assisted blow to the man's ribs. He barely noticed, continuing with the strike intended for the blue-haired heroes side. Tensei was immensely thankful that his version of the Engine quirk didn't have gears, as he hit full speed almost instantly to get further from the blade. Not fast enough. The blade scored through his armour, and added a new cut
to his stomach. He and the support company would be having words about this.

The young hero continued to stay just out of Stain's reach, until the man was forced to shift his
attention to using his blood-stained blade to deflect a throwing knife from Bullseye, then he rushed
in again, scoring another hard blow, this time to the swordsman's head. It only earned him a grunt.

Tensei pointedly didn't look up as he saw his father at the other end of the alley, hopefully his
helmet would stop the relief from showing at all.

The younger Iida widened his eyes as the hero killer, ignoring his surely broken wrist, drew a knife
into his right hand, and threw it at Bullseye. While the underground hero was distracted blocking
the projectile, Stain hurriedly lifted the still blood-coated knife, and Tensei fell, boneless, to the
floor.

Stain rushed forward, intending to finish the hero he could reach, only to be brought short by an
unexpected kick to the back of the head from Tensei's father's engine powered legs. Stumbling, the
knife wielding man turned to face his new opponent.

“It is past time that you were in Tartarus, Chizome-san.” Came the ever stern voice of the older
hero.

“I'm not going to be stopped by fakes like you.” Insisted the outnumbered, injured man. “Only All
Might can be the one to stop me.” He added, before moving to attack.

The man didn't even manage to get half the distance to the senior Iida, as Tensei's mother entered
his field of view. Launching a palm strike, the grey-haired woman fired a concentrated gust of
wind at the serial killer, using her quirk Impact Force- which let her apply a large amount of
kinetic energy away from her to anything touching her arms.

The fight did not last long after Tensei's mother arrived. However skilled the hero killer was, his
quirk was not suited to group fights, he had no real chance against three experienced heroes.
Especially not against such a skilled hero duo as the senior Iidas.

Tensei suddenly regained the ability to move as the hero killer was embedded, unconscious, into a
wall by a light tap from the older woman. The man hadn't managed to land a single scratch on any
of the heroes other than Tensei, except when his father had blocked a thrown knife intended for the
younger Iida with his arm.

“Don't move, dear.” Said his mother, when Tensei tried to struggle to his feet. “You've lost a fair bit of blood, we'll get you an ambulance.” Meanwhile, Tensei’s father was forcing the unconscious villain into quirk suppressant cuffs, and roughly, but efficiently disarming the man.

“That was too close, sorry he managed to get me like that.” Said the younger hero, stopping his attempts to stand.

“You played your role well,” said his father peremptorily, “one-on-one he is a nasty opponent.”

-evening of the sports festival-

'All right, we've dealt with the immediate problem of his quirk... hopefully. But we still need to get him away from that man.' Said Izuku to the voice, started up his laptop.

And nothing we say can convince you to lift your moratorium on simply telling someone? Asked the voice, its tone making it clear what it felt about this decision as Izuku opened a news page.

'Yes, without proof we-' He started, before halting as he saw the top article. “Hero Killer Caught” it read.

Hurriedly opening the article he began to read. Apparently three heroes of the Iidaten agency had managed to bring the hero killer down. Izuku's eyes widened, and he reached for his phone as he read that Ingenium had been injured.

Izu: Iida! I just saw the news? Are you OK?

Iida: Yes. Thank you for your concern. I am fine, my brother is expected to make a full recovery.
Oh, good, the article didn't say how bad it was
Just let us know if you need anything

I will. Thank you for the offer. A few other
members of the class have expressed their
concerns. Sorry for worrying you.

Don't be, we're just glad you're OK

Izuku breathed a sigh of relief that the turbo hero was slated to make a full recovery, he would be
the first hero since Calico to face Stain and be able to return to active duty.

Well, that's good. Looks like he listened to your advice.

'Yeah, thank goodness he's going to be OK. I'm not sure what I would do if our warning led to him
getting badly injured.'

Making him more prepared is unlikely to have made anything worse. Pointed out the voice. Come
on, we need to focus on more pressing issues. Like the flaming skip.

Izuku shook himself, and began the arduous process of looking through as many articles about the
flame “hero” as possible, especially any relating to interviews with his family. Meanwhile the
voice began sifting through some memories of old issues of Bi-weekly Heroics, cursing the four
year gap in knowledge that resulted from Aoi's death. They had eventually convinced Ren of the
need to do this legally, the final nail in the coffin of the assassination plan being how badly it
would likely affect Shouto and his siblings.

The more Izuku read, the more stupid he felt. How could they have not seen what was going on
here? Well, the answer to that was obvious- none of the Phoenix Spirit users had ever paid too
much attention to heroes, and especially not their families, trusting the commission to keep them in
line, while they focused on villains and some vigilantes who went too far. But this... was making
them rethink that stance.
Todoroki Enji, a man infamously married to his work, suddenly marries a woman who just so happens to have a quirk that perfectly compliments his, and almost immediately starts having children, without at any point decreasing his workload.

'How is no-one seeing this?' Asked Izuku incredulously, as he noticed the suspiciously spaced ages of the Todoroki children, almost exactly as if Endeavour only chose to have another whenever the youngest child's quirk came in. Until Shouto.

*People clearly have trouble thinking a top hero could do something like this.* Said the voice grimly. *But it is surprising that he's not exactly being subtle about this.*

'Why is no-one looking into what happened with Shouto's scar, or Rei disappearing from interviews?' Thought the greenette, furious.

*He must have kept it quiet. He does have a great deal of capital. Here.* Said the voice, sending a memory of one of the earliest hidden articles Izuku had ever read, which detailed that Endeavour's wife had been sent to a mental hospital after a nervous breakdown, but even it didn't go into too much detail, only saying that she had burned her youngest son.

*But that isn't important, we need to focus on gathering actual proof. This is all circumstantial.*

'He is the number two hero, we're going to need a lot of evidence. Do you think we could get one of the children to come forward?'

It was a good thing Endeavour was such a celebrity, otherwise it would have been all but impossible to figure out much about the family. *Not Fuyumi, she still lives with him, it would be too dangerous. Anyway, he was looking for a stronger fire quirk, so Natsuo probably won't be able to tell people much.* Said the voice, Ren leading.

*And getting Shouto to come forward would be tricky, he's probably the most afraid of him.* Added Aoi.

Izuku duly started looking more into the only remaining choice- Todoroki Touya. Looking at the eldest of the Todoroki children, Izuku swiftly discovered yet another suspicious absence of coverage.
As with the other children, Touya had occasionally showed up in interviews, that is until six years ago. The red-haired flame user had, according to one article, entered UA, but, at some point during his second year, he just vanished. Not appearing in any interviews after that. Never even being mentioned.

'Did he just... disappear?' Wondered Izuku, frowning.

*He must have run away. He never kept trying for his hero license, and he clearly isn't still living with them.*

'But why? Why then? And why on his own?'

The voice didn't answer for a moment, thinking. *Either he didn't care, or... he left in a hurry. In which case, he probably just couldn't take it any more... Endeavour must have gone too far somehow.*

Izuku slowly reached for his phone. “Hey G, can we talk? I need your opinion on something.”
Giran hadn't really expected the late text from Amber, it wasn't often the vigilante came to him solely for information, usually his texts were requests for support equipment of one sort or another. Clearly the boy had some other source when it came to information, whatever it was.

As usual, the dark-eyed vigilante arrived almost exactly on time. Time for another uncomfortable meeting with the intense youth. “Amber.” Said the broker, nodding. “Glad to see you again, and so soon after last time. What can I do for you today?”

“I need you to find someone for me, Giran.” Said the boy without preamble. He didn't seem angry about Giran withholding information last time, but then it was all but impossible to tell with Amber. He honestly had no idea how important Amber felt the information on the league was.

This was a surprise though, Amber had asked him to keep an eye on news of people before, but to actually find a mark? “Oh? That's not the sort of information you usually look for from me. Do you have a name?”

“Names are easily changed. He's most likely going by some sort of false name. You can have a description though.” Said the vigilante flatly, looking hard at Giran.

’Honestly, does this guy ever blink?’
“No name is going to make things tricky.” Pointed out the broker, taking a drag on his cigarette.

The dark-clothed youth looked unimpressed. “You know I can pay well for this sort of thing.” Ah, so he took the statement as a ploy to raise his prices (which it partially was). “The man I'm looking for should be fairly distinctive, but he'll be trying to avoid attention. Mid twenties, tall, slender, blue eyes, powerful fire quirk... most likely some nasty burn scars.”

Giran was lucky he had so much experience keeping valuable information from his expression, as he managed to conceal his surprise at the description.

'Why is Amber looking for Dabi? Surely he's too small a player for Amber's attention.'

“Most likely?” Asked the man, raising an eyebrow.

Amber shot him a flat look. “I said he would be trying to avoid attention. He might be smart enough to hide them. I'm pretty sure he'll have dyed his hair.”

Giran had no idea how Dabi could possibly hide those scars, but then Amber might not have gotten a good look at them. This was going to be a tough choice, the broker had been strongly considering pushing the young villain to Shigaraki.

“That should be enough of a description to be getting on with if you give me some time. But I can't promise you anything, I won't be able to find him if he's careful enough.”

“Hm, you're good at what you do, I doubt he'll be able to hide long. Let me know as soon as you have anything.” Said the vigilante, turning on his heel, leaving without another word.

“Abrupt as always.” Muttered Giran once the door closed behind probably his strangest client.

What to do, what to do... well, the league did infamously lack any kind of true goal, if Dabi were one of the members of Stain's weird following that genuinely believed what the hero killer believed... no, probably safer not to let the petulant man-child try to recruit him. Kurogiri would not be happy about the resulting mess.
Izuku had just entered the not-quite-dream after his slightly unusual meeting with Giran, intending to go over some of the fights from the sports festival with the pieces of the voice, when he immediately felt something was wrong.

Glancing around the dream version of his home, Izuku spotted the normal bonfire, but couldn't place the feeling of wrongness... something was watching him. Not the voice.

Frowning, the greenette began to search the dream room, looking for the source of the odd sensation. Eventually he found it beneath the kitchen table. There was a... fog bank under the table. A tiny patch only a couple of feet across, but somehow persistent.

“What is that?”

Shaking his head, Izuku ceded control of the part of the dream the bonfire was in, the usual six figures swiftly forming. “hey... do you know what this is?” The greenette asked.

“No...” Answered Ichigou, frowning. The rest of the voice turned to him as he carried on. “It's not a part of phoenix spirit, the quirk probably wouldn't randomly evolve after all these years of not really changing much.”

Dai spoke up once his predecessor was finished. “It could be something to do with One-For-All, it does make quirks stronger, and it itself is much stronger than it was when I held it.”

“That would make sense, it is the only thing that has changed recently.” Said Hayato, noothing. “Dai, didn't you say that it took a little while before One-For-All takes a little while to settle in?”

“Yeah, it didn't sit quite right for a few days.” Answered the only part of the voice with direct experience of using One-For-All.

“Hmmm... why don't you try ceding control of that part of the dream, see what happens?” Said Hayato contemplatively.
With some trepidation, Izuku did as the fourth Phoenix Spirit user suggested. The fog seemed to shift slightly, but other than that nothing happened.

“Well, that was anticlimactic.” Put in Yugo when the fog failed to do anything dramatic.

“Huh,” Said Aoi, “it certainly did something... maybe you should just leave it in control of its area, while we get the popcorn to re-watch those fights, Izuku.”

Izuku grinned at Aoi, she probably would manifest some popcorn, then he waved an arm, and they were suddenly in a replica of the arena, down to every detail that Izuku had seen. The only differences were the new spectators, and the strange fog bank.

The fog bank hadn't done anything other than shift slightly, changing shape or moving a foot or two during that first not-quite-dream, nor did it do much more on Saturday or Sunday night, so Izuku had put it to the back of his mind as he entered 1-A on Monday, hopefully they would be able to figure out the strange addition to the dream soon.

When the greenette entered the room, the class was mostly discussing how many people had recognized them in the street, which- honestly had freaked Izuku out a little, he was not used to that level of attention. He really hoped Aizawa-sensei was right, and it would die down soon enough.

Pfft. Ojiro's tail wags when he's excited. That's adorable! Sputtered the voice, noticing the blond in discussion with Shoji, as Izuku made his way to his desk, smiling at Shouto, and Iida, who were both sitting silently in their seats already.

After he had seated himself, Uraraka and Shinsou both came in, getting a wave from the greenette, but before either could come over, Aizawa-sensei entered, prompting them to rush to their own desks.

“Morning.” Said the now cast-less teacher.

“Sensei, I'm glad to see your arm is better.” Said Tsuyu.
“Hm. The old lady finally decided I had rested enough to fix the other arm. But let's put that aside, today's hero informatics class is going to be a little special.” Said the dark-haired man, causing most of the students to immediately become anxious.

*He must be doing this on purpose.* Said the voice, as the teacher chose this point to pause.

“You'll be choosing your hero names.” Stated the tired man flatly, earning a loud cheer from most of the class.

When the excited murmuring had died down somewhat, the teacher continued. “As I said before the festival, you were trying to gain the attention of pro heroes, who send in nominations for internships with those that caught their eye. Though, as you are first years, they are closer to expressions of interest than anything, that interest can, and does, wane over time. The tally of offers is like this.” Said Aizawa, before picking up a remote from the desk, and pushing a button, causing the numbers to be displayed on screen.

Bakugou predictably had the most nominations, but the margin was very tight. The explosive blond had just over four thousand nominations, while Izuku had just under four thousand. The gap was less than a dozen. After that the numbers began to rapidly fall off, Todoroki having around two thousand nominations, but Tokoyami, who had placed just as well, had a mere five hundred. After that the remaining members of the top eight had between one and three hundred nominations, except Shinsou, whose display was more subtle, earning him a mere fifty.

“As you can see, the nominations were skewed this year, normally it is somewhat more even.” Said the teacher, as many of the students began to comment on the unbalanced numbers.

“Aw man, it's so black and white.” Complained Kaminari.

Shoji seemed to slump slightly, causing Izuku to feel bad, but kept his peace. Meanwhile Uraraka was shaking Iida from behind, excited to see that he had gotten so many nominations.

“Wow, the top two are so close!” Exclaimed Kirishima.

“Yeah, well Bakugou did come across as a bit crazy, did you see that huge explosion? Midoriya could easily have gotten the most.” Said Sero in response.
“What was that soy sauce face?!” Yelled Bakugou.

“Quiet.” Interceded Aizawa. “Regardless of whether you got any nominations, you will all be taking part in work-place experience.”

“So is that why we're picking our hero names?” Asked Uraraka.

“That's right dears!” Came the unexpected, cheery voice of Midnight from the entrance to the classroom.

“I am not exactly suited to helping you with names, so Midnight will be helping you come up with them.” Said Aizawa, already getting into his brightly coloured sleeping bag.

Midnight began to enter the class in her usual swaying fashion as she began to speak. “Choosing a name is very important, even if it is just a placeholder! You need to be careful, since the name you pick can very easily become the one people know you by for the rest of your career!”

When the heroine reached the front desk, she reached behind it, emerging with a number of whiteboards, and some pens. “I'll be passing out these boards, and you'll have... call it fifteen minutes to try to come up with a name, then you'll be presenting your choice in front of the class. Feel free to discuss possible names amongst yourselves.” She said, handing some of the boards and pens to each of the front students.

*Names, huh? Any thoughts, kid?* Asked the voice.

'I don't know,” thought Izuku, taking a board, and passing the rest back to Shinsou, 'it should be something fire related, but we obviously can't go with the phoenix hero, or anything like that.'

*You're right, hmmm... how about something dragon related?* Suggested the voice, now led by Ren.

'We can't do that, Ryukyu is already the dragon hero.'

*Damn, that's right. How about the dragon-fire hero?*
"That's a bit derivative, though?"

**Point. How about fenghuang?** Suggested the voice, shifting into Hayato.

**Too close to phoenix.** Pointed out Ren, before the leading part of the voice shifted again.

**Given the colour of our flames, and the way we always use them, wouldn't the solar hero work?** Asked Aoi, leading the voice, before adding teasingly. **Besides, it suits your smile.**

Izuku blushed lightly at the only partially joking praise. 'That could work, but what about the actual name?' He asked, pointedly not engaging with the latter comment.

**You could-** Izuku jumped when Shinsou tapped him on the shoulder.

"Your still jumpy when not in a fight I see." Said the purple-haired teen with a raised eyebrow.

"S-Sorry, I was j-just thinking." Stammered the greenette.

"Any thoughts on your hero name so far?" Asked the taller teen blandly.

"N-Not really, I think I'm going to go for the s-solar hero,” Said Izuku, raising one finger, and producing a small ball of golden fire on it, like a tiny sun, “but I-”

"Midoriya,” Came the voice of Midnight from the front of the room, “while I admire your passion, quirk use is not permitted in class.”

"Ah,” said the greenettee, quickly extinguishing the flame, and blushing, “sorry, sensei.”

Shinsou smirked slightly at his friends discomfort. “I know what your quirk looks like, you don't have to show me. But that's a good title, it suits you.”
“Wh-What about you, Shinsou-kun?”

“I’m not sure. My quirk works best when people don't know what it is, I'd probably be best as an underground hero, but I can't think of any names that wouldn't give it away.”

“Huh. Y-Yeah, you probably sh-should try to avoid people finding out what you can do. How about... Mindblank? Th-That wouldn't tell people too much, plus it's pretty snappy.”

Shinsou blinked slowly, considering. “Yeah... that could work. You're not bad at this.”

“Th-thanks.” Said the greenette, as his friend began scribbling on the board on his desk.

When the fifteen minutes were up, Midnight asked if anyone was ready to present their names. It wasn't entirely surprising that Aoyama was the most willing to go first, though as Midnight pointed out, his name “I can not stop twinkling” could stand to be somewhat shorter.

Mina’s name “Ridley hero: alien queen” was equally rejected, Midnight claiming it was not the most heroic image.

Finally Tsuyu stood, and her name “Rainy season hero: Froppy” won Midnight’s approval, and some compliments from the class, happy to finally see what a good name looked like.

The next several names were passed without issue, though Midnight did point out the issues of naming yourself after another hero to Kirishima, and the voice began to bemoan the lack of creativity among the class, who seemed determined to go for simple, descriptive names like “Tail man” and “Invisible girl”

Then Shouto stood, the name written was simply “Shouto” not even using the kanji in his given name that would have made it a clever reference to his quirk.

As Tokoyami stood, Izuku looked back, past the empty desk to the bi-chromatic boy. “J-Just your name?” He asked.
Shouto turned, and spoke with a slight downturn to his lips. “I'm not very good at coming up with names, I couldn't think of a good one.”

“You should have just gone with IcyHot, IcyHot.” Said Bakugou, sneering at the Ice user, and earning himself a flat look.

“That could work, or something like F-Freezerburn, or Hellfrost.” Said the greenette nervously.

Shouto looked at him for a moment, blinking slowly, before speaking. “You are quite good at this. I think I'll keep my name for now, but I like your suggestions.” He said at length, causing Izuku to blush at the praise.

Tokoyami returned to his seat, his new name “Jet black hero: Tsukuyomi” approved despite its length, and only being subjected to light mockery from the voice for his edgy tendencies.

After Tokoyami, Shinsou stood, having chosen the name Izuku suggested, then Koda earned approval for “Anima”, which Izuku thought was a really nice name. Then Bakugou stood. Predictably his choice of “King of explodo-kills” was instantly shot down by Midnight.

“You probably shouldn't mention killing people in your hero name Kacchan.” Said Izuku, as the blond furiously returned to his seat.

“Well what shitty name would you choose, Deku?!” Growled Bakuou, turning to face the greenette.

“Well,” started Izuku, while the voice decided not to tell him that Bakuou probably wasn't expecting an answer- it was curious what he would go for, “how about the Nitro hero: Ground Zero? Or the Tenacious hero: Barrage? You know, because of how your explosions get stronger during a fight.”

“Is that the best you can do, shitty nerd?” Ground out the blond, as Uraraka won everyone's approval with “Uravity”.

As Izuku was trying to stammer out some more possible options, despite how obvious it was to his friends that that wasn't actually what Bakugou wanted, Iida surprised everyone by choosing “Tenya” as his hero name.
“Another one using their given name. How uninspired.” Sighed Midnight.

“Yes, I could not think of a name I felt matched the quality of Ingenium, so I will just use my name.” Replied the blue-haired teen, in his usual earnest-loud-voice, waving his arms robotically.

“If you’re sure.” Said the heroine. “That just leaves us with Midoriya, and Bakugou.” Izuku jumped, he hadn’t realized there were so few left to go up, he stood stiffly, and took his board to the front.

“Um, m-my hero name is this.” Stammered the greenette, turning the board to reveal the name on it “The solar hero: Heat Haze”.

“Oh!” Said Midnight, when the name was revealed. “That’s clever, heat haze contains the kanji for both sun and flame, it suits your quirk really well.” Izuku blushed at her praise, and blushed harder when some members of the class added to it, hurrying back to his desk to hide his head behind his arms. This prompted Shinsou to start laughing at him, while Bakugou went up to present his new name.

Despite some quibbling about its negative connotations from midnight, the name “Ground Zero” was eventually approved, though Bakugou looked somewhat constipated at having his name suggested by “Deku” of all people.

“All right, now that that's done,” said Aizawa, emerging from his cocoon, “your work experience will be a week long, those of you who received nominations can choose one of those hero agencies to work with, those that didn't get to choose between the forty participating workplaces that any of you can decide to go to. It's important to pick an agency that will help you, and each agency has their own area of expertise, so choose carefully.” With that, he began to hand out personalized lists to each student. Most of them were only a couple of pages, for the forty, but Bakugou and Izuku both received lists that were nearly a hundred pages long.

This is going to take some time to sort through. Commented the voice, looking at the eclectic mix of different agencies listed on the front sheet.

“You have until the end of the week to decide.” Said the teacher, leaving them to discuss possible choices amongst themselves.
Uraraka swiftly dragged Iida over to the corner of the room containing Shinsou and Izuku's desks, while the greenette was busy crossing off the names of the many many hero agencies he felt didn't suit the sort of hero he was aiming to be.

“Hey guys,” said the brunette, “what hero agencies are you guys planning on going to? I'm planning on going to Gunhead's agency.”

“The battle hero?” Asked flame user, surprised. “But didn't you want to be a rescue hero like no. 13?”

“Yeah,” said Uraraka, beginning to mime punching an imagined foe, “but fighting Kirishima made me think that maybe I should keep my options open, and improve my combat skills.”

*That's a fair point,* put in the voice, led by Ren, *you shouldn't let yourself become too specialized, a diverse skill set is useful for a hero.*

Izuku hummed in agreement. “That makes sense. What about you Iida-kun?”

“I will be going to the Iidaten agency of course! My brother may not be in active duty at the moment, but there is still a great deal I can learn from him.”

“But couldn't you learn about heroics from your brother any time?” Asked the greenette.

“Yes,” said the blue-haired boy earnestly, hands waving as ever, “but it is far better to observe how heroes work in their agency, which I could not easily do otherwise.”

Izuku hummed, not entirely agreeing, but knowing that Iida's admiration of his brother would make it too difficult to dissuade him. “What about you guys Shouto-kun, Shinsou-kun?”

“I'm going for Miss Joke.” Said Shinsou, glancing at his shorter list. “She is probably the best choice for helping with my quirk.”

Izuku nodded briefly, before Shouto spoke. “I'll be going with Endeavour.” He said, devoid of inflection.
“What?!” cried the greenette in surprise, twisting to look at the bi-chromatic boy. “Are you sure,” then, realizing his reaction was slightly suspicious, he added “you train a lot with Endeavour already though, don't you?”

Shouto answered in a monotone. “I do, but my control of my fire side is lacking, and he is the most skilled hero with a fire quirk, so I could use the extra training with him if I want to improve my control quickly.”

Izuku looked down at his own list, hiding his face from the others, and drawing his lips to a thin line. He stared at one of the first names he had crossed out. “All right, then I guess I'm going to be doing my work experience with you.” He said, looking up at Shouto. He was not about to leave the boy alone with his probable abuser unless it couldn't be avoided.

Shouto's eyes widened slightly in surprise, before a loud shout caused the group of friends to turn. “What the shit Deku?! Why did you get a nomination from the number two hero?! I beat you in the tournament, and I only got one from Best Jeanist.” Yelled the ashen blond, twisting to glare at the greenette.

*Oh, that's going to be hilarious, please let him pick that option.* Said the voice fervently, thinking about Best Jeanist's preferred type of cool heroics. At the same time, Tokoyami suddenly spoke from Izuku's side.

“Most likely each hero has their own reasons for picking who to choose. I fear my nomination from Hawks was mostly due to my bird features.” Intoned the bird-headed teen gravely, before muttering something that sounded suspiciously like “what a mad banquet of darkness.”
“Midoriya, a word.” Said Shota in his usual drawl, as the class began to depart for lunch on Tuesday.

The boy looked surprised, but dutifully waited as his friends filed from the room. “Yes, sir?” He asked once the two were alone.

The dark-haired man had no idea how the kid managed to make his gaze so intense, Kaminari had the same eyes, and he never felt like he was weighing you with them. Midoriya most likely wasn't either, given all of his other mannerisms, but still.

“You did a passable job not showing off One-For-All during the festival, but you can't keep that up forever. I certainly won't have a student not using the full extent of their abilities in training. Have you given any thoughts to explaining your new abilities?”

The greenette hummed, pensive. “I had been thinking about it, Sensei, some quirks can do some pretty diverse things, if I can come up with a link... we could probably say I discovered it because of what happened at the USJ.”

Now there was a memory that Shota would rather not be thinking about. “That would make sense given the timing. And the link? You'll probably have to update the official description, and name too must likely.”
“Yeah, well I was thinking I could choose something dragon related? Y'know, because of the fire?”

That made a degree of sense given the associations between dragons and both strength and fire. “Good, that way you'll also be covered if someone else decides to give you a flight quirk out of nowhere, problem child.” Shota said dryly. “I'll get you some registration update forms, you can have Recovery Girl sign off on them once you decide on a new name.”

The short boy nodded. Satisfied, Shota finally moved onto the more important of the two topics he wished to broach with his student. “Good, now I wanted to talk to you about what you did during the sports festival.”

“Sensei?” Asked the greenette uncertainly.

“While I won't discourage the drive to help someone, it is an admirable quality in a hero, in future I would appreciate if you were more careful. It may have worked in this case, but trying to help Todoroki get over his fear of fire like that could easily have backfired.”

The boy did not act like Shota had expected, rather than stammering and blushing, or looking at his feet as he tended to when scolded in class, the boy began to frown, and one hand reached up- seemingly unconsciously- to tug at his lower lip. In short, the boy seemed torn.

After a moment, the boy seemed to arrive at a decision, looking straight at Shota, his intensity seemed to shoot up (he must be doing that on purpose). “I don't know what you're talking about Sensei.” Said the greenette, unblinking.

The hero frowned, this was more pushback than he anticipated, Midoriya was normally fairly accepting of criticism. “Midoriya, getting over a fear isn't some-” He began, before being interrupted by a student for only the second time that year- even hero students rarely had the courage for that sort of thing given Shota's demeanor.

“Shouto-kun wasn't afraid of fire.” Said the boy, his lips drawing to a thin line, before his expression smoothed out.

Shota blinked. That had been said with a great deal of certainty. “What do you mean by that?” He asked slowly.
“Just that. Was there anything else?” Well, that was final. Sometimes Shota forgot, between all the stammering and blushing around his peers that Midoriya could and would state his stance and refuse to move on some issues.

“No, you should get lunch before your heroics class.” Said the hero, prompting the greenette to turn and leave the room with little more than a perfunctory “Thank you Sensei.”

Once he was gone, Shota continued to scowl at the closed door. Problem child's normal weird behaviour aside, this was especially odd. Midoriya had probably been trying to tell him something... given that those two had taken to using first names in his hearing, Shota was of a mind to accept that Midoriya knew what he was talking about when he said that Todoroki hadn't been afraid of fire.

'But in that case, why didn't he use it?’ Certainly Todoroki had always been a hard worker in all other aspects, and refusing to use part of your own quirk was unusual. Midoriya probably knew why, and in that case his decision not to simply tell Shota was worrying. 'I need to talk to Nemuri, she might have heard what they were saying.'

This is becoming a concerning pattern. Said the voice, when the very same day All Might asked him to stay behind at the end of the foundational heroics lesson, its eternal wariness of anyone directly involved in the struggle against All-For-One entering its tone. Is this going to be a repeat of Aizawa's advice? It wondered.

“Y-Yes, All Might?” Said the greenette, after the other students had filed out to change, and the hero had deflated with a relieved exhalation.

“Just call me Yagi when I'm like this young Midoriya.” Said the skeletal man. “Well done today, that was some good work during that exercise. But anyway, I had intended to speak to you yesterday, but as it was not urgent I opted not to deprive your friends of your company on the way home. You received a late nomination.” Here Yagi unexpectedly began to shake slightly.

“A n-nomination? From who?” Asked the greenette, already suspecting the answer from Yagi's behaviour- there was only one person that could inspire this level of terror in the number one hero, unless All-For-One had somehow risen from his grave, and inexplicably decided to offer Izuku a placement.
“Ah, from a hero named Gran Torino, he's mostly retired now, but he used to teach at UA, and he was my homeroom teacher.” Said the shaking hero, beginning to mutter to himself. “I don't know, was it my lacking teaching ability that caused him to nominate you, or...”

_Well, we're not going to say he's wrong about his teaching ability, but that seems a bit far-fetched._ Commented the voice, before Izuku decided to cut the hero's fearful rambling short.

“W-Would you- A-Are you s-saying I should choose his agency?”

“It is up to you, of course, my boy, Gran Torino is a very accomplished and experienced hero, but the choice is yours.” Said the symbol of peace earnestly.

Izuku pretended to consider it for a moment, though in reality he somewhat agreed with the dismissive noise the voice had made. Collectively they had vastly more combat experience than Sorahiko, not to mention knowing more about One-For-All. And even if that weren't the case, they didn't dare choose a different agency.

“S-Sorry, Y-Yagi-san, but I a-already decided on Endeavour's agency.” Said the greenette.

All Might looked slightly surprised, likely he thought that a hero fan like Izuku would jump at the chance to train under the same master as the symbol of peace. “Are you sure, my boy? The highest ranked heroes are not always the best choice, depending on what type of hero you want to become.”

“I'm s-sure. Endeavour's agency h-has a lot of f-fire users, a-and I could use the p-practice with my original quirk.”

“Well if you're sure, I'm sure you'll learn a good deal whichever agency you pick, you're a quick study, my boy.” Said the blond hero, looking understandably worried- there was a real chance he would be interrogated by the tiny man about whether he had actually informed his protégée about the offer. “You should go get changed, you wouldn't want to keep your friends waiting.” He added with a wan smile, making little shooing motions towards the greenette.
The rest of the week passed comparatively uneventfully, and despite a number of subtle, and then not-so-subtle hints that Izuku himself would be perfectly capable of helping with fire control, Shouto was determined to take his work-place experience week at Endeavour's agency. He said, reasonably given the facts he had access to, that the number two hero would have a better grip on controlling fire quirks, and that was that.

On Wednesday Izuku sent in the forms that Recovery Girl had signed off on, officially updating his quirk registration, so that he now officially had an odd fire-enhancer hybrid quirk named Draconic Power. The older heroine had left the description as vague as she felt she could without attracting undue scrutiny.

“It seems you're finally ready to walk the path of the mighty, Shouto.” Said Endeavour with a grin that made Bakugou look reasonable by comparison.

Both Shouto and Izuku were standing in Endeavour's office- a richly furnished, if somewhat dark and forbidding room. Izuku strongly suspected that the décor had been designed to make anyone attending a meeting in the room feel small in the vast empty chamber, as if the looming form of the number two “hero” didn't achieve that end in itself. The paintings that hung behind the hero's head looked to be some truly beautiful landscapes, likewise with the carpet and the room's few chairs were well made. But between the dark wood panelling, and the lack of lighting beyond the distant windows, it was too dim to say for sure.

This was the first thing that the senior Todoroki had said to them, and not before scrutinizing them with arms crossed for several seconds. “I have no intention of taking any path you've made.” Shouto said, neutrally, but with lips thinned slightly.

The burning man smirked, looking amused at the denial. “No matter, no matter.” He said, before turning to address his second intern. “As for you, you might become a passable hero someday. You managed to eke out a victory against my Shouto because of his limited control, but I saw your fight with that Bakugou brat. You lack stamina. And besides that, whoever trained you left you unable to use your quirk effectively close up.”

It was really amazing how expressive Shouto was for someone who barely let their face move at all. The minute shifts at Endeavour's backhanded praise made for a truly intimidating scowl. Well, intimidating for someone other than the seasoned hero, who Izuku suspected barely noticed. “Yes, sir. I need to work on that.” Said the greenette, maintaining his polite façade.
The man may be an ass, said the voice thoughtfully, *but he does raise a valid point there- we do tend to only use our quirk in pretty simple ways in a melee.*

'I would really rather be being trained by you guys.' replied Izuku, internally glaring at the red-haired man.

Ren came to the fore of the voice suddenly. *Just because he's a monster doesn't mean you should discount what he has to say here. Remember that we largely learned from one-another, we have some odd quirks in our way of fighting.* Well that was unexpected. None of the pieces of the voice tended to like people like Endeavour, but Ren especially had no mercy to speak of for anyone who would hurt family- call it his upbringing- so Izuku had not anticipated him of all people to stand up for him.

The flame-wreathed man nodded, seeming satisfied at the response. “Well this week isn't going to be enough to fix your limitations,” he said for both students, “but I intend to see a start made to it, change into your costumes, we’ll be using the gym on the third floor.”

Dabi had not had a good week last week. First the news that Stain had been caught broke on Monday, the only thing to be thankful for there was that dad Endeavour didn't get to use it as a publicity stunt. Knowing the man, he would be pissed that someone had beaten him to the punch there, which did numb the blow of losing one of the only people willing to voice how corrupt today's heroes were. Somewhat.

Then some idiots had tried for some ungodly reason to mug the man with horrifying burn scars, covered in piercings and medical staples. The end result was that Dabi had gone home covered in ash, and with a couple of new holes in his already ragged clothes- he needed new ones, but he wasn't quite ready for a new bout of skip diving, and it wasn't like people were falling over themselves to hire someone looking like he did, even before it became too much of a risk that someone might recognize him.

Finally, just as another “fuck you” from the universe (as if I really needed any more of those) Toga had vanished on Saturday. Again. Honestly, that brat was going to drive him into an early grave- if his quirk didn't do it first. This wasn't the first time she had done this, so he wasn't that worried, she knew what she was doing, and would most likely show up in a few more days covered in someone's blood, and possibly sporting a new face. But it did stress him when she went off, and had to look after herself (yeah, like you looking out for someone has ever worked out).
Dabi was thinking about his clothes again, making his way to the abandoned flat- that he didn't have much choice but to stay with until Toga showed up again-for the evening. For all that he hated skip diving, he would have little choice when winter started coming. Cold-resistance of no, his ragged jacket, and trouser meant for someone several inches shorter just wouldn't cut it when the temperature dropped. 'Well if you will insist on winning every fight you get into by burning people to a crisp.' The currently black-haired villain berated himself, regretting the numerous destroyed wallets of the various thugs he had left in alleyways, as he finally arrived at the door of the previously abandoned rooms he was using.

Reaching for the handle- it wasn't locked, hadn't been since they had first taken up residence- he suddenly paused looking down. On the floor of the hall, there was a small piece of blank paper, which should by rights have been in the door-frame. Dabi frowned, Toga knew about the little pieces of paper, and would take care not to leave them, so someone else had seemingly opened the door.

Dabi, after a moment of consideration, cautiously turned the handle, and entered the dark hallway beyond, ready to incinerate any potential threats if need be. Looking around, the entrance didn't seem to have been disturbed, it was just as messy as it had been since they had arrived, post that would never be answered lay in little piles.

Advancing into the living-room, he glanced at the other doors leading from the room. They didn't look like they had been moved, but he would have to check there too. There didn't seem to be anyone in the shadowed recesses of his little hovel, but why would- there was a cough from the adjoining kitchenette. Dabi jumped and threw a stream of fire toward the noise on old, well-honed instinct.

The person who had made the noise, sitting on the counter for some reason, surprised the villain by calmly raising his hand, and answering the azure flames with golden fire of his own, cancelling them out. “Is this how you always greet guests?” Asked the intruder archly, as Dabi gathered fire for a larger attack- against another flame-user he would have to use more force.

In the light of the flames, Dabi had gotten a good look at the man- kid, really. He had seen some of the police sketches, and posters looking for information on this guy. “You're not a guest, Amber. I don't recall inviting you in.” He said, not cooling the fire that raged hungrily under his skin, but not attacking yet.

“I suppose that's true,” murmured the infamous vigilante, surprisingly seeming abashed, “sorry about that, I didn't know where else I could find you.”

This was not going how any meeting with one of the people that low-level criminals were most afraid of could have been expected to go. “So, what? Are you going to try to arrest me?” Asked the
Amber's eyes widened slightly in surprise for a moment. “No,” He said hurriedly, “You haven't really done anything that would make me look for you for that, I- sorry, this is annoying, let me just-” Amber raised his right hand, palm up, and slowly formed a large flame in it, causing Dabi to tense, then he tilted his head to the left, causing the fire to float that way, between the two fire-users, properly lighting the room for the first time.

If amber had seemed surprised a moment ago, now he looked stupefied, eyes widening comically, jaw dropping open. “If you're just going to stare, I would prefer we got back to trying to set each-other on fire.” Said Dabi, scowling.

“Ah, sorry,” Said the dark-clothed youth, schooling his face back to neutrality, “I just – that was a bit more... severe than I expected.”

This explanation did little to lessen Dabi’s scowl. “If you aren't here to drag me to the police, what the hell do you want?” He asked briskly.

“Oh, right,” answered the kid, hands stilling in his lap, “I was hoping to talk to you about your siblings-”

“I don't have any siblings.” Cut in the villain sharply. How could he know? He couldn't know. Dabi had been so careful.

The vigilante shot him a flat look. “We both know that isn't true Touya-kun.” He said, and Dabi's mind filled with white-noise.
of ultramarine and juggling

Chapter Summary

Amber talks to someone, Eraserhead finally cracks, green bean receives some training.

Chapter Notes

sorry about the delay, I've been working on my other fic (shameless self-promotion), and one of my commenters suggested I try to make each chapter longer a little at a time to get a more sensible release schedule going, so here we are :p

Izuku may have made a mistake in dropping Touya's name like that, the man didn't seem to have heard anything he had said after that, so he shut his mouth. He looked inches away from a panic attack, staring unseeing through him, and Izuku itched to move from the counter, and calm the man down, but that was a course of action that would likely see him getting immolated.

In Izuku's defence, part of the reason for the slightly poor decision was the fact that his head was currently ringing like a bell with the imprecations currently being all but screamed at Endeavour-by Hayato, oddly. What the- in one sense- oldest part of the voice was saying was making Ren's initial reaction to the revelation about the flame-user's attitude to his family seem sober, and restrained, by comparison.

Izuku reasoned that the reason Hayato had reacted so strongly was most likely because he had the most in-depth medical knowledge. This, of course, meant that he most clearly understood the horrifying implications of the burn scars covering the man- both the pain that must have accompanied their creation, and the misery they likely still caused.

“Damn,” Cursed Izuku, slowly raising his hands, as if to reach over, but refraining, “sorry, I shouldn't have just said that Dabi-san. Are you OK?” He added, in tones one might use to soothe a skittish animal.

The dark-clothed man seemed to get over his initial shock, eyes refocussing on the vigilante in front of him. “How did you know?” He croaked, seemingly realizing that denying it now would be rather pointless.

Izuku lowered his hands slightly. “Know what?” He asked, unsure if the man meant his real name,
or how to find him.

The villain growled. “My old name- how did you figure out who I was?” He spat.

“Ah,” said Izuku, leaning back, palms on the counter-top in a feigned calm, “I was just looking for someone who fit Todoroki Touya's description.”

Dabi's scowl deepened, stiffening at the new mention of his birth name. “And why the shit is a vigilante looking for a long-lost kid,” demanded the slim man, “are you going to try to make me go home or something, brat?” He added with a sneer.

Izuku shuddered inwardly at the very idea of sending someone back to Endeavour. “No. As I said, I want to talk to you about your siblings.”

Dabi narrowed his eyes. Oh, please stop that. Begged Hayato weakly, seeing how the action pulled at the medical staples under his eyes.

“So I was right, the old bastard does corrupt everything he touches. But what in the hell makes you think I'd sell one of my siblings out to you of all people?”

Izuku blinked a few times in surprise at that, before leaning forward, and making negating gestures with his hands, the sudden movement seemingly nearly causing the man in front of him to try to set the place on fire again. “Not like that,” he said hurriedly, “they haven't gotten my attention like that at all, it's your father-”

At the same time the voice was speaking, sounding thoughtful. Does he have some reason to dislike us more-

If possible, Dabi's scowl deepened further, and a small blue fire formed in his still upraised hand, as he cut in. “That man is not my father,” the villain said heatedly, “did he pay you off or something, bastard?”

This was getting dangerous... more so. Izuku just kept putting his foot in his mouth today, clearly he had used his allotted social grace for the day not telling Endeavour exactly what he thought of him. “Woah, ca-”
“Look, it's the flaming trash that caught my attention like that.” Izuku said hurriedly, starting over, and raising his hands in surrender.

The blue fire snuffed out, as Dabi began to sport an expression of surprise (as with every other expression the man wore, this caused the voice to wince slightly at the tugging on the burns), though he kept the arm raised. “What?”

Izuku relaxed slightly, glad to no longer be facing down the impending threat of death. “The sports festival, I noticed how Shouto-kun wasn't using any fire at first, so I did a little digging. It seems pretty clear that that man doesn't deserve the title of hero.”

“Hmph, pretty ironic that you notice that after you helped put a stop to the only person getting rid of corrupt heroes.”

*He's a follower of Stain's ideals? This could cause some issues.* Said the voice, as Izuku fought to keep a casual demeanour at the revelation.

“Stain wouldn't have lasted ten seconds against Endeavour, trust me,” the maniac probably would have gone down all those years ago, if Izuku hadn't had to save Calico, “besides, he was—” probably best not to openly call the man a lunatic in front of someone whose help he needed, and who seemed to respect him, “short-sighted.”

Even this much was apparently over-critical for this Todoroki's taste. “Short-sighted?” Snarled the dark-clothed man. “He was the only one who saw heroes for what they really are.”

*Careful, it's probably because of Endeavour, but he really admires the man.* Warned the voice.

“He may have been right,” said Izuku cautiously, knowing he would need to take a shower after speaking those words, “but as far as most people saw, he went after both good heroes and bad, so he didn't really stop more people becoming corrupt heroes.”

Dabi scowled, but made no move to contradict him, so he went on. “If you want to stop corrupt
heroes, you need to make sure everyone sees them for what they are.”

_We've been gone too long, warned the voice, we need to get back to the agency before our “walk” becomes infeasibly long._

“Anyway, I've been imposing on your hospitality too long. I'll come by again as soon as I can, just-think about it.” Said the greenette, moving from his place on the counter for the first time, and making his seemingly calm way to the door, not once letting the trigger-happy villain out of his line of sight.

Shota loved the week long work-place experience. For all the trouble that organizing it took each year, it meant that the hero students would be gone for a week. Since the underground hero had no flair for general education subjects, or business acumen, he only ever taught heroics classes, and very rarely support classes. That was more than enough to be getting on with, in Shota's opinion, with hero patrols, and associated paperwork added into the mix.

Yamada had three jobs. Madness. This week was one of the only times during the school year where his workload dipped to reasonable levels. A chance to catch up on marking, and paperwork, to patrol in peace, and finally get some sleep.

The poor blond had no such reprieve, between continuing English classes, and his radio show. Shota had long wondered what sorcery was involved in hiding the eye-bags the man must surely have. Though the exuberance probably came naturally. Bloody morning people.

Shota also seemed like he wasn't going to have a proper reprieve, as he once again failed to calm his worries. He kept telling himself that he was overreacting. That if it were serious, problem child would have said more. That he had no business poking into personal conversations, even if they had been being screamed on national television.

He finally broke, groaning from another uncharacteristically unsuccessful nap, on Tuesday of his normally blissful week. Bloody problem children, couldn't they let him have some peace when they weren't here at least? But no, they had to drop hints that something serious was going on, and let Shota figure it out. The dark-haired man missed villain monologues, they, at least, were usually simple to figure out. Not like needlessly cryptic teenagers.
The erasure hero rolled himself out from under his desk in the staff room- in an extremely dignified manner- before slipping out of his violently yellow sleeping bag, and leaving the room. It was last period on a Tuesday, so Nemuri would be with... class 3-C he thought. She had been complaining about that one kid never paying attention since he had been in 1-E. Shota did listen, even if his advice was always to expel him.

Sure enough, when he got to the ostentatious door- even more pointless for a Gen. Ed. classroom than it normally was- of class 3-C, it opened, revealing a horde of the schools older gremlins, and a woman dressed as a dominatrix. Why any hero would wear heels was beyond him, but his colleague's business was their business.

“Oooh, Aizawa-kun,” said the eighteen plus hero in her usual flirtatious persona, once the sea of students had parted around him, and fled to leave the two alone, “to what do I owe the pleasure?”

“I need to talk to you about Midoriya's fight with Todoroki.” He said without preamble.

The lithe woman bit her bottom lip, before letting it go. “And why would that be on your mind, dear?”

“I think whatever they were saying might be important, Nemuri.” Said Shota firmly, prompting the woman to visibly drop her persona, straightening into a more serious posture, looking straight at him.

“It did get rather heated, didn't it? I didn't hear most of it, Shota.” She warned.

“Anything you can remember would be a help.” Shota insisted.

Nemuri's lips thinned for a moment. “I didn't get much at all of what Todoroki said, though it was clearly pretty terse. Midoriya was actually shouting at a few points, so I got more of him,” she said, before pausing, as if considering how much she should tell him, “he said something about Todoroki shaking, and yelled at him to pay attention to the match... the last thing, the thing he said before Todoroki caught fire, was 'it's your power', I didn't hear anything else I could make sense of. Look, what's this about, Shota?”

“I'm not sure, problem child looked like he was trying to tell me something last week... I'll keep you posted, assuming I can figure anything out. Thanks for your help.” Said the dark-clothed man, turning to leave the room, mentally already preoccupied with trying to fit these newest puzzle
“Don't go spreading it about, I only told you because you're their homeroom teacher.” The tall woman told his back firmly.

'This is just getting weirder.' Shota thought, turning into the mostly empty halls. The first bit seemed pretty innocuous in isolation, obviously the ice-user was shaking, the both of them were probably inches from falling over from quirk exhaustion.

The second part made little sense, Shota had been watching, and Todoroki had clearly seen Midoriya for the threat he was, staying completely focused on the match.

Though... now that he thought on it, Midoriya hadn't ended the fight, despite it looking like he easily could have. Not until the explosion.

“It's your power...” Murmured the hero, tasting the words, turning them over in his head. “What power? The fire? Well obvious that is his power, who else could it-” but no, no, that couldn't be what was going on here. Could it? The blood began to leave Shota's face, as he started running back to the staff room.

Please let Midoriya have decided on Endeavour because he has a crush on Todoroki. Please let Midoriya have decided on Endeavour because he has a crush on Todoroki. Please let Midoriya have decided on Endeavour because he has a crush on Todoroki. Was playing on loop in the dark-clothed man's head, like a desperate mantra. Teenage drama would be infinitely preferable to Midoriya making his choice because he didn't trust the two to be alone together. And Shota doubted Midoriya, of all people, would want to know how to deal with the press as a top hero. Nor did fire control work as a possible reason. The kid was already suspiciously good at that.

'Don't think about it, just look at the facts, find the kid's file, you're probably overreacting, so he has a strained relationship with his father, it doesn't mean anything.' The hero tried to tell himself as he slammed the door of the staff room open, eyes wide, hair in disarray, looking even more deranged than usual, startling Ken- the only member of staff in the room- though it barely cracked the man's stoic demeanour. But no, it took more than a simple strained familial bond to make someone so firmly reject a part of their own body, called a slightly more logical part of his brain.

“Aizawa, what's wrong?” The cement man asked, when Shota stalked quickly up to his desk, relaxing slightly when it looked like he wasn't here to tell him about some villain attack that the alarms had failed to tell him about- a nightmare scenario none of the staff wanted to relive, Shota was sure.
“Nothing.” Said the younger hero tersely, unlocking his computer as quickly as he could. If what he feared was going on, Shota would very much like to know where the hell his damn heroic instincts had gone. Scratch that, he'd also like to know where all his experience as a teacher had gone.

“That doesn't look like nothing, Aizawa.” Said the blocky-faced man, gesturing to Shota's current mad rush, and crazed appearance.

“It's nothing.” He repeated firmly. 'I really, really hope it's nothing.'

Ken was probably pulling a disbelieving face, but said nothing, and Shota didn't even glance up, opening Todoroki's file as soon as the blasted machine would let him.

Quirk registration, age, hair and eye colour. No useful information here. Additional notes. One of Todoroki's middle school teacher's had remarked on the refusal to use his fire, and a general avoidance of other children his age.

The first he already knew about, so no help there. The second was more concerning, but he had seen Todoroki with friends, in just the last week. 'Only after the sports festival.' Chimed the infuriatingly logical part of his brain. Fuck.

Emergency contacts. Slim hope of anything more revealing there. Shota blinked, as he read the names listed, and their relation to his student. A home phone number, and one for Enji, fairly standard. No phone number listed for Todoroki's mother- Shota glanced at another section of the form- Todoroki Rei. Weird, was she not in the picture? Well, since he was thinking in the worst possible terms anyway, Enji could be the controlling sort... but that didn't seem to fit with his other emergency contact- his sister, Fuyumi.

Fucking records. They never told you anything useful about your students. Calm, he had to think about this rationally. The file itself was a little weird, but nothing that couldn't be explained away in a less onerous manner. He needed more information, and a figure like Endeavour would likely have a lot of it lying around, he spent so much of his time in the media spotlight.

Five minutes later, Shota thought he was about to have an aneurysm, the media vultures- useless as ever- had painted a fairly clear picture, if you knew to look for it, without providing any substantial evidence of anything at all.
He knew what had happened now, the outline of it anyway, he was sure of it, but he had no proof. If he wanted to level this sort of thing at someone like Todoroki Enji... The dark-haired man shot up, and stormed from the room, giving off an aura like a bristling cat. He would take his suspicions to Nedzu. It was the rational thing to do, for all that the most tempting thing involved breaking the senior Todoroki’s ribs.

When he slammed the door behind him, Cementoss was left with an expression like he would have if a very small tornado had just passed through the room. i.e. the same expression he always wore.

-that morning-

Izuku was not a happy bunny. His “evening walk” had clocked in at over an hour long, which raised a couple of eyebrows with the receptionist when he got back into the agency, but he had told her he had just gotten a bit lost (“Unfamiliar part of the city, couldn't figure out the way back.”) so hopefully she wouldn't get suspicious, even if she now thought he had no sense of direction. Regardless, his overtures towards Touya had left him worn out, arriving late, and consequently getting up in the morning far too soon for his taste.

“You were still gone when I fell asleep.” Said Shouto, as the pair were busily eating breakfast in the agency lunch hall, surrounded by sidekicks and interns, and a couple of full pros.

“Y-Yeah, my walk g-got a bit long, Shouto-kun.” The greenette said, looking up from his cereal.

“Did you get enough sleep, Izuku?” The taller teen asked, looking at him intently.

Izuku would have worried that the name would seemed to familiar, which might have caused problems, but then, Shouto never seemed to use honorifics. “Yeah, I-I'm a little tired, b-but it’s fine.”

“You should try to get more sleep then,” said the boy who seemed to spend a concerning amount of time either sleeping, or planning to sleep, “Endeavour is... serious about training.”

Finally, someone talking sense around here, said the voice, led by Yugo, listen to the sleepy kid, Izuku.
“Y-Yeah, you're late!” Said the greenette, happening to catch a glimpse of the clock. They had been taking too long about breakfast, Endeavour was expecting both of them on the third floor gym in five minutes.

Izuku began to wolf down what remained of his meal, while Shouto looked around sedately, noted the time, then began to eat significantly faster- somehow managing to still look poised, Izuku would have paid good money to know how he did that.

The voice snorted. You should be saving your money for his brother, it said, sending an image of the man's tattered clothes, and exposed ankles, that is, if you can find some way to get him to take your help.

'Point,' replied the greenette, taking his now empty tray to the rack, 'but I still want to now how he's doing that.'

He isn't, you just think that he is. Said the voice, sounding greatly amused.

“What do you think we'll be doing today?” Asked Izuku, when both students had gotten into a lift on the way to the third floor.

Shouto seemed to consider it for a moment. “I'll probably be doing training with my fire. I'm not sure about you, Endeavour said he wanted to work on integrating your quirk in melee yesterday.”

Izuku noted the slight downward tilt of Shoto's jaw when he spoke about his fire. “Y'know, it's fine if you s-still want to rely more on your ice.”

Shouto gave an amused huff, eyebrows rising. “That sounds odd, coming from the guy who told me I couldn't keep limiting myself.”

The greenette blushed at being called out like that. “I only meant that you couldn't use your quirk like that. You were going to seriously hurt yourself. A-A lot of heroes use s-some part of their quirks m-more then others. A-As long as you know h-how to use f-fire when you n-need to, defaulting to ice is f-fine.”
Shouto was smiling slightly as the two exited the lift. “I see. Well, I do think ice is better for capturing people safely. You might be right, but as it stands, I don’t know how, and I need to learn.”

The two were just barely on time. Which the greenette thought was probably for the best, he doubted the number two hero liked to be kept waiting. “Finally here, I see. Good, then we can begin,” said the hero, who move to the middle of the room from where he was standing, and crossed his arms.

“After yesterday, I have a good idea of how good you are with your quirks, so we can start on some proper training. Shouto, you still have no control with your fire, so you’ll be spending today on some simple target practice,” he jerked his head toward a dozen metal disks set up along the wall, “we’ll see if you can figure out how to only burn one of them at a time. Midoriya, you have passable control, but you can’t multi task, so you’ll be spending today sparring with one of my sidekicks, while trying to juggle with your quirk. Candlelight.” He finished, calling over the woman who had been respectfully waiting at the edge of the room.

Thus began a gruelling day. Izuku was sure, if not for the voice, it would have been nightmarish. The greenette found watching his opponent, choosing a method of attack or defence, and juggling with his quirk in increasingly complex ways to be utterly maddening. Candlelight seemed an amicable woman, not an overly harsh teacher, but she was very good in close combat, and she wasn’t really what was causing Izuku so much stress.

Any time the spinning clumps of fire halted in their movement, or the greenette was perceived as getting too sloppy in his current sparring match with the woman, Endeavour would yell at him from his spot near Shouto, immediately distracting him, which usually earned him a solid blow from Candlelight, which in turn got him yelled at again.

Thankfully, thinking six things at once came easily to the voice, and while they couldn’t control his actions in any way, they could warn him of any oversights extremely quickly. They even found the time to keep an eye on what Shouto was doing, and noted with interest how he had started to learn to actually centre the fire blasts on the right target, and had gotten down to barely scorching the ones on either side. A substantial improvement from the average of five targets blackened at the start.

By the time Endeavour let the pair go for the evening, Izuku felt decidedly frazzled, but he had managed to keep six fires spinning in a double loop for a solid minute at one stage, all while not getting too badly destroyed by the petite woman he was fighting.

“My entire body is going to be replaced by one large bruise by the end of this week.” Said Izuku seriously, prompting both Shouto and the voice to laugh. (this, of course, caused Izuku to blush,
and stammer— he had never heard Shouto laugh before. For once he was thankful that this
behaviour was innocuous for him).


of plans and schemes

Chapter Summary

Nedzu plans, Izuku dreams, Enji plots, Kansei schemes

Chapter Notes

Yuki_Setsu, some time ago: oh sure, I'll just put all this planning into one chapter, it totally won't be a boring hodgepodge of different characters thinking to themselves, with nothing interesting actually happening. nor will it be like pulling teeth to write. great plan, me.

Nedzu had just finished brewing a pot of some- unreasonably expensive- oolong, when he heard a rather loud knock on his office door. Well, that was odd, students didn't usually dare knock that hard, and the staff knew how good his hearing was. He was sure he hadn't scheduled any kind of meeting either. Oh well, he put his cup down.

The principle of UA may not have been able to tell who was knocking by the knock itself- he had tried to learn, but such things were frequently too varied by mood- but he did have a video feed of the other side of the door always up when he was alone in the room.

Nedzu blinked, he hadn't been expecting Aizawa-kun, he tended not to come without cause- something he shouldn't have with all his students away. Less had he been expecting the man to look so... not panicked, but close to it. He took some solace in the knowledge that, while his most expulsion-heavy teacher **would** go straight to his office, he certainly wouldn't knock in the event of a villain attack that had shut off communications. Nonetheless. “Come in.” Said the chimera, closing the video feed.

“Ah, Aizawa-kun,” Nedzu said, as the man barely contained himself from letting the door bounce against the wall. Pretending he didn't know who was going to enter his office was an old habit at this point, there was a time and a place for giving the impression you knew everything, and now he should try to stop the man bursting a blood-vessel, “what brings you here today?”

The dark-haired man didn't answer initially, instead opting to ensure the door was not only shut, but locked. A heavy discussion then. Not that he expected less, given that expression.
“I have reason to suspect that Endeavour may be abusing his children.” Said the erasure hero without preamble, turning to him.

Nedzu's normal reassuring expression cracked. “That is a very serious accusation, Aizawa-kun.” He said seriously, smile falling away.

The principle sipped his tea, as Aizawa laid out his suspicions, and the reasoning behind them. Simplistic, surface-level reasoning, by Nedzu's standards, but more compelling than the tiny mammal liked.

“That isn't exactly proof of much, Aizawa-kun.” Nedzu said, once the man had finished, but his thoughts were already running elsewhere.

On reflection, despite every effort he had made for many, many years, it was beginning to look like he had committed the cardinal sin of those with intelligence quirks- arrogance. It never, never did to take your assumptions as fact.

It had come as something of a surprise, Enji marrying, but then, humans tended to develop emotional attachments without any rhyme or reason, so he had thought little of it. In fact, the same dedication to heroics that had made it a surprise had left Nedzu unwilling to think that the flame hero would do anything to risk his position as a hero.

Tsk. Having a quirk based around extrapolating from facts and probabilities was so incredibly useful, so why did it keep leading him to this same pitfall, taking the most likely answer as the only one?

“I know, that's why I'm here, and not speaking to the police.” Said Aizawa. Oh, he had been rambling. There would be time for self-blame later, as fast as he could think, it was still probably best to finish up with Aizawa, and think this through. And he should probably put the tea away, it always made him go down rabbit-holes.

“You were right to bring this to me, I'll begin working on it immediately.” Said Nedzu, beady eyes cold. And he would. Child abuse was one of the things- alongside illegal animal experimentation- that Nedzu truly could not stand, and anyone he caught at those things was in for a world of misery.

“Un,” Said the dark-clothed man, running a hand through his already heavily messy hair, “just,
keep me posted, sir. I'll offer whatever help I can, of course.”

“Of course. This is in good hands, you should try to get some sleep, Aizawa-kun, you get far too little of that.” The dismissal was clear, and while the man clearly didn't wish to let the issue go, even temporarily, he knew well enough that he would be of little help at this stage.

“Yes, sir.” Said Aizawa, lips thinning, before he stalked from the room. Nedzu got down to the business of piecing the easily accessed facts together.

Young Midoriya's comment to Aizawa was the keystone here, and was most likely a calculated move. It was very hard to avoid starting on the self-blame when Nedzu realized that a teenager had managed to learn about this before he could. It was fairly clear why- young Midoriya was empathetic, and decidedly not an authority figure, so he was able to get around the mistrust young Todoroki probably had for such by now.

Adding the fact that young Todoroki didn't have a fear of fire, the whole picture shifted. An unexpected romance became a quirk marriage, and a laughably obvious one in hindsight. A desire for several children, tempered by attempts to ensure Rei-san's health with reasonable gaps between, became several- Nedzu's upper lip twitched- “failed attempts”, followed immediately by a new child.

No. Nedzu was not about to make the mistake of assuming he knew what had happened until he actually knew. Not again. Not with something as important and delicate as this. So, confirmation first, then the actual evidence gathering could begin.

When Touya had vanished, Nedzu had seen it as the near-typical strain from a parent with an overly demanding job, so now he was gone, and finding him would take too long.

The younger children were currently too close to Endeavour to safely approach, not without risking the man finding out that he suspected.

Rei. Rei was the person to ask, if it was only confirmation he needed. Time to see how hard it would be to get visitation permission for the poor snow-haired woman.
Izuku was having an odd dream. It started fairly ordinary, just an odd dream-version of UA, Aizawa was having them explore an indoor maze he had set up, and Izuku had decided to go through a door, one of several in the area, which had somehow led to an entirely different building. The greenette was sure he had never seen anywhere like it, it most closely resembled a cell, the steel door even had a barred grille.

Turning, Izuku glimpsed an emaciated figure, sitting on the bed, which sat in a shadowed part of the stone-walled room, which no longer contained the door he had entered by. The man looked up, seemingly about to say something, when suddenly the dream shattered, and Izuku was in the not-quite-dream, standing in his living-room.

“What the- I thought you guys said I needed my rest!” Exclaimed the greenette in surprise, immediately turning and letting the bonfire reshape itself.

“Sorry, Izuku. That was one of ours.” Said the newly formed Ichigou, sounding apologetic.

“Oh, that's weird, it's been years since that happened.” Said Izuku, a little surprised. Izuku did sometimes dream of places and events that he had not actually been alive for, the voice thought that memories leaked in some way, as had the other Phoenix Spirit users, but it was always a rarity. In any event, the voice had always made a point to not let these dreams play out, since they were almost always nightmares.

“I know, sorry, we'll let you get back to sleep in a minute or two. Hopefully you won't end up stuck in one of my memories again.” Said Ichigou.

“Don't worry, it's not your-”

“I...” Said a wavering voice from the entrance to the kitchen, causing the heads of everyone in the living-room to snap around in shock.

The bank of fog was at the threshold, shifting far more wildly than it had been up to now.

“What the...” Said Hayato uncertainly.

“I want...” said the fog, a part of it seeming to split off, every piece of the voice watching it like a lease of hawks, “I want to... show you.” It finally said, the split part taking the form of the same
man as had been sitting in the cell.

This was met with silence for a pair of heartbeats, before Ichigou yelled. “Mirai!” He said, rushing forward to try to tackle the man with a hug that might well have killed him when he was alive. This effort was stymied when the golden-eyed man passed straight through the new figure.

The centuries old veteran of countless battles lay in a heap on the floor of the tiny kitchen, blinking owlishly at this development. His juniors would probably have laughed at him, if they weren't so laser focused on the apparently intangible apparition of the first One-For-All user.

The strange mirage of Mirai slowly lifted its hand, rippling as it moved, parts of him turning back to fog seemingly at random. He stared at his hand for a minute, turning it this way and that, before speaking again. “Where... is this?” He asked slowly.

The first response to this question was a quiet but heartfelt “What the shit” from Ren, but eventually Dai decided to actually answer. “It's a dream. Sort of.”

In response to this, the fuzzy-edged wraith turned his head to look at the second incarnation, causing his whole face to blur in an intensely unsettling manner. When he saw the speaker, Mirai began to look intensely confused. He looked at the fog, then back to Dai. Suddenly Mirai's entire outfit changed, seemingly unconsciously. “A dream?”

Izuku decided he should take a leaf out of Yugo's book, and take a seat. This looked like it could take a while.

By Wednesday, Enji was getting increasingly frustrated by a certain green-haired brat. The fire-haired man didn't like mysteries, and “Heat Haze” was well named, he was difficult to see through clearly.

Enji made no secret of the fact that he liked to fight, liked to win. As a consequence of that constant drive to win, he had become something of an expert in quirk martial arts, the many schools of fighting that had emerged shortly after the advent of quirks, people trying with varying success to figure out better ways to integrate quirks into existing martial arts, or to come up with new ones in light of the new things people could do.
The vast majority had died out extremely quickly, or merged together, leaving surprisingly few schools worth considering, despite how diverse people's abilities now were. There were a few that were extremely specialized, but by and large, even in the same family, quirks weren’t entirely homogeneous, so a martial art designed for one specific quirk was of no use to anyone.

The flame hero would have dearly loved to learn who had trained the boy up to now- his protestations that he was self-taught were clear nonsense- since his style of fighting seemed to bear little to no resemblance to any school he knew of.

But was it a school unto itself? If it was, it was certainly a bit esoteric, seeming to rely heavily on making your opponent unwilling to get near your hands.

That was another thing, it had come to light during that day's training, when Enji had calmly and rationally angrily demanded to know why the boy only ever coated his hands in fire, when the entire arm would be more of a deterrent. The boy was, in some ways, a carbon-copy of Touya, his quirk was- flawed. That said, his fine control was utterly insane for someone with his fire-power, so it would rarely become an issue, as long as he was in costume. He still had the potential to be a worthy rival for Shouto.

It would certainly help if there were someone around to remind Shouto how valuable the fire, which Enji had so graciously gifted him was, and Heat Haze served that function near perfectly.

At least the greenette had complied swiftly when Enji told him to just keep the fire away from his arms. He was someone willing to push his limits. Anyone who wasn't at least willing to see where their limits lay was a coward, and Enji wasn't about to waste his time with a coward.

Enji huffed in amusement, thinking about the difficulty Candlelight began to have after that. She was far from his strongest sidekick, but she was having to hold back far less than he had anticipated. The redhead nodded to himself. His masterpiece had also been improving swiftly, it was about time he took the both of them to see a real pro in action. He would be patrolling in Hosu, since they apparently couldn't cope with a single hero being temporarily out of commission, hopefully it would be educational.

The king of the underworld sat in his throne (padded chair, with attached medical apparatus), reviewing his collection of quirks. It was one of the only things he could do to pass the time at present, though it was a somewhat less enjoyable pastime than it had once been, ever since the seemingly irretrievable- loss of his sight. Now every time he could swear he could feel all those
precious treasures he had collected that related to vision, or otherwise required the use of his eyes, atrophying to uselessness.

The last couple of years had been an intensely humbling experience for the world's oldest man. It was more than a little distressing to have to watch nearly everything you built, the empire you ruled for over a century, crumbling into dust, while you had to sit in your chair, and pretend to be dead.

It had to be done of course, in the state he had been after the biggest mistake he had made in... at least seventy years, while no individual might have been able to finish him off, he had been able to think of a number of possible strike teams among his subordinates alone who could have managed it. The smallest one he had come up with, in the long months- while he tried to recover as much as he could- was only three people.

Those months had been the most intense period of activity he thought he had ever had. Dozens of regeneration quirks were stolen, tested, then discarded. Regrowing an entire arm was fine, but evidently, the eyes were tricky.

Besides that, he had had to devise an entirely new set of quirks to use if he did end up having to fight, since in his weakened state the ones he normally used would probably kill him. Choosing quirks to use in concert was always a careful balancing act, a highly diverting game, where if he lost, he would probably die.

On top of all this, he had to both keep twisting Shigaraki, and ensure that those parts of his empire he truly couldn't lose stayed afloat.

Speaking of Shigaraki, perhaps it was time he gave the boy a hint. For all that simply telling him where he had gone wrong would prevent him from growing into a worthy successor, he had been mulling over the question he had been asked for weeks now.

“Shigaraki.” He said, turning on the microphone, but not the camera, that fed into the current Kurogiri's bar.

“Yes Sensei?” Replied the pale-haired man, turning to the blank screen with his usual fanatical fervour in his eyes. On balance, he may have done too good a job of making the boy trust him, if such a thing were possible, but he wasn't about to run the risk of a piece he had built up, one of his own turning on him, not again.
The faceless man turned, mostly from habit, to look at the skull on a nearby table. Never again.

“Have you given some thought to your next move?” He asked simply.

“Yes, Sensei.”

“And?” He prompted with a curious inflection.

“I need to recruit new team-members. The low-level NPC summons I used last time were useless, so I need to get higher level helpers.” Now there was a pleasant surprise, couched in his typical game terminology or not, getting reliable followers, and not just a huge mob of useless rabble was good sense.

Now to see if he could figure out a way to actually move forward with that plan. “This would not be much of a lesson, if I just gave you more helpers, so how do you plan to go about recruiting?”

The so-called league doubtless currently enjoyed a rather poor reputation with low-level villains, after Shigaraki had managed to get nearly a hundred of his “summons” arrested.

“Everyone is talking about the hero killer, even though he lost. They think he's strong enough to follow, so I just need to prove I'm stronger than him. If I kill the people who beat him, his followers should come to me.”

That- might actually work. Not for the reason Shigaraki seemed to think it would, and as an answer it was far from ideal, but just being the best candidate for his successor did not make him a good candidate. Not yet anyway, there was much room for growth. “I see, but with just yourself, and Kurogiri that might be a challenge, no?”

“The media said he lost to three heroes. We could take three heroes.”

The elder- eldest- villain fought the urge to sigh. “Possibly, but remember why you ultimately failed at the USJ, Shigaraki. Three heroes would quickly become many heroes, if you aren't careful.”

This seemed to give the pale-haired man pause. “Would you let me use some of the Nomu? With them we could stop the other heroes.”
He weighed his options. He may as well give the boy some Nomu, it wasn't like he even knew about the truly valuable ones, and he had to keep the brat safe, annoying as it was.

Shimura Tenko was a lucky find, it had been proven time after time that simply killing whoever held One-For-All wasn't enough, it kept rearing its head again. An especially persistent dog, always nipping at his heels, keeping his perfect world just out of reach. As if the universe was determined to never let him forget his biggest failure. As if he ever would.

Despite how often he wished to destroy them, he had kept those hands that now adorned his ward's head as a reminder for over a century, after all.

This time, he determined to crush the spirit of One-For-All's holders, and especially the one who had cost him so much.

He couldn't wait for the reveal.
Chapter Summary

a second conversation between amber and touya, a visit from nedzu, and the penultimate day of the work experience week.

Chapter Notes

1) gonna put a trigger warning here, since this chapter includes some stuff with Rei talking briefly about her treatment by Endeavour.
2) wow, this chapter ended up longer than i intended.
3) gotta say thanks to all the people who made comments to reassure me that last chapter wasn't boring. i really appreciate it. :D

Todoroki Touya

Dabi hadn't really been expecting Amber to come back. He stayed in the tiny flat waiting for Toga without any sign of her, or the young vigilante, for all of Tuesday, and was returning from a trip to get groceries on Wednesday evening, when he saw that the slip of paper was once again on the floor.

Cautiously making his way into the house, there was a near-identical repeat of Monday's visit, Amber was sitting on the kitchen counter, next to a large duffel bag, eating a bowl of instant ramen- impressive, given that there was no gas or electricity in the abandoned flat. “Yo, Dabi.” He said, very nearly earning another attempt to set him on fire.

“What's with the bag? You gonna drag me to the police in it?” Dabi asked sceptically.

“What? No! It's full of clothes.” Answered the dark-clothed kid, with a look as if Dabi had said something very stupid.

“And why did you bring a huge bag of clothes?” He asked, though he already thought he knew the answer.

The vigilante blew on some noodles held between chopsticks for a moment, then said, “Those trousers are like a foot too short for you, and I know I tend to get through a lot of clothes. Hard not to when you can so easily set them on fire.” before slurping the now cooler noodles.
Dabi scowled. “I don't need your charity.” He said, not looking around at the dingy flat he was squatting in.

“It's not charity-” Said Amber, before the door suddenly opened, and the odd sound of a large man skipping filled the room.

“Dabi-” Singsonged a deep voice, as a tall, well-built man skipped into the room, clothes covered in blood.

The intruder- amber, that is, Toga had a metaphorical key- froze, turning so that both other people in the room were clearly in sight, as Dabi turned to Toga. “Where have you been?” He demanded. Staying in one place was dangerous- Amber might not seem to have any intention of turning them in, but if he could find them, so could the police, or the heroes.

Toga did a little spin. “I met this really cute guy, he was so lovely, I wanted to be just like him.” She said, before seeming to notice the other person in the room, who was watching her warily. “Ooh, you didn't say you had a guest.”

“He's not a guest.” Said Dabi sourly.

Toga's disguise sloughed off her, leaving her in clothes that were significantly too large. “Awww, but he's so cute,” she complained, “what's his name? Do you know?”

“I'm Amber.” Said Amber, putting his ramen down at his side.

Toga gave a gleeful little gasp. “You're the one who stopped Stainy! He was so cute, too. I really wanted to be Stainy.” If Amber had been tense before, he was hyper-focused on Toga now, seeming to dismiss Dabi as a lesser threat. This was probably fair, given that the boy probably had far more resilience to fire than to being stabbed.

“You wanted to be Stainy?” He asked slowly, not seeming to blink.

“Yeah,” answered Toga easily, “When I see someone cute, I always want to be them, don't you. You're cute too, you know... don't you think you would look cuter if you were bleeding a little
though?” She asked sweetly. Oh, he didn't like where this was going.

Amber seemed to take the question seriously. “Not really, I prefer my blood on the inside, thank you.”

“Don't be silly, everyone looks better when they are bleeding. It'll only be a little.” Toga said, a manic grin lighting her face.

“Toga…” Warned Dabi, but it was too late, the blonde pulled one of the knives she always had secreted about her person, and blurred.

The scarred man honestly had no idea how she did that, forcing the eye to look away from her for a few moments, but he knew he wasn't about to mess with her.

Dabi's eyes widened painfully, as he saw something he had assumed impossible. Amber's hand had snaked out a moment after Toga had moved, and suddenly she was visible again, and the dark-haired youth held her wrist in a vice-like grip.

This looked like it could easily get ugly, so Dabi hurriedly called to the burning force in his veins, so that it rested just under the skin, ready to use at a moment's notice. Meanwhile, Toga looked momentarily surprised, as the knife halted in its journey to the vigilante's shoulder. She tried to pull loose, but it looked like Amber was considerably stronger than her. Dabi was surprised by how calm the vigilante looked upon seeing the knife struggling to move closer to him.

Seeing that she was unlikely to be able to get free, Toga began to pout. “You're so stingy, Amber-kun.” She complained.

“I'm sorry, Toga-chan, but I can't go to the hospital today, I need to talk to Dabi-san.” Said the short boy, before finally letting go of her wrist.

This seemed to catch her interest, and she glanced between the two as she backed up a bit. “Oh? What were you two talking about, Dabi-san.”

Amber answered before Dabi could. “I was just saying that I'd like to trade him some clothes, if he would tell me if he had thought about what we discussed on Monday.”
“Oooh, are they nice clothes, Amber-kun?” Asked the blonde eagerly.

“Dabi-san didn't mention that you were staying here, so they would only fit him, but maybe I can bring you some next time, Toga-chan.” Amber offered.

Dabi scowled at the vigilante, he knew what he was trying to do. Now Toga would probably want to meet Amber again, despite whatever Dabi said. And given what had just happened, Dabi dearly wanted not to meet the vigilante again. The tall man had known that Amber was skilled- according to the news, he had survived a fight with Stain, after all- but to stop Toga in her tracks with such apparent ease? Dabi thought that if he wanted to arrest them, Amber would be very very hard to stop. The whole street might burn down.

“Hard to mention much, given that you just said your piece, then ran off,” grumbled the natural redhead, “yeah, I thought about it.”

“And?”

“I don't see any reason why I shouldn't just kill that bastard.” Dabi said. He didn't think Endeavour could ever make up for what he had done to his mother, to him, to Shouto.

Toga looked visibly annoyed at being kept out of the loop, but before she could demand answers, Amber spoke. “Don't you care about your siblings?”

Dabi frowned at that. His tone clearly didn't indicate a threat, but- “You have siblings?!” Exclaimed Toga suddenly.

Amber raised his eyebrows at him, and Toga was staring incredulously. “Yes, I have three siblings,” he said angrily, “I never mentioned it because it wasn't relevant, it's not like I can go back to them, now.” Not after what he had done, not looking like this, “and what do you mean? Killing him would keep them safe.”

Amber looked at him like he had just said something supremely stupid. “I can assure you, your brothers, and your sister wouldn't take his death well.” He said, in a manner that Dabi had to fight hard not to interpret as patronizing. What did he know about it? About what any of this was like?
“What do you know? And anyway, why should that stop me? That man corrupts everything he touches, they would thank me eventually.” Growled the older fire-user.

“Do you think someone with a normal upbringing would choose to become a vigilante at my age, or, more to the point, as someone nearly four years younger than I am now?” Said the younger fire-user, pinning the elder to the spot with his gaze.

“You-” Started Dabi. Did he know? What it was like?

“My family life wasn't exactly like yours, but I do get it, and I assure you, killing him might be the worst thing you could do, unless you genuinely don't care what happens to your siblings.” Interrupted the vigilante before he could go on.

Dabi was allowed to digest this surprise revelation for several seconds, Toga surprisingly quiet, and Amber just looking at him forcefully. Eventually, before Dabi could formulate a response, the vigilante glanced regretfully at his now probably cold noodles. “Unfortunately, I'm going to have to 'run off' again, but you answered my question. The gloves are fireproof,” He said, gesturing at the bag, and getting up from his place on the counter. Dabi blinked as the vigilante abruptly began to leave, just after shaking Dabi's entire world-view, and blinked again when he turned around at the door. “Oh, Toga-chan, do you prefer dresses? Or would you like some skirts?” He asked the girl, who was still dressed like a six-foot tall man.

“Ooh, skirts please, Amber-kun.” Said Toga joyously. Dabi groaned internally, she would never let him avoid the vigilante. Assuming he could anyway, Amber had somehow found this place, when he was sure he had been careful.

“Can do.” Said Amber, before walking out with a wave.

Todoroki Rei- once Kamishiro Rei- sat in a chair in her hospital room, reading- a not uncommon occurrence. For all that the doctors assured her that she was getting better, she was still limited to her room, except for some walks with the nurses in the hospital grounds.

She was allowed visitors, of course, and both Fuyumi, and Natsuo had visited regularly for years. More recently, she had gotten a couple of visits from Shouto. Oh, how she had cried, and apologized over and over. She didn't think she could ever do so enough, not for that day-
memory of it still sharp in her mind, for all that it fuzzed at the edges- not seeing the scar she had left, even if he did say he had forgiven her.

Her parents couldn't visit, as they had died a couple of years before she came here, and the many pregnancies, and raising of her children had prevented her from keeping up with most of her old friends. Her husband, of course, would be very firmly prevented from getting anywhere near her door.

The snow haired woman frowned, hearing the door to her room open behind her. The nurse had just come in to check on her ten minutes ago, and it was not currently during visiting hours. Putting down her book, she turned, it was probably just- an enormous, pure white mouse was standing in front of her door. In a suit. Or possibly it was a very small polar bear. In any event, it was standing in her room in a suit and shoes, on two legs.

She strongly considered pressing the button that would result in the near instant appearance of one of the hospital staff. Or possibly going a couple of steps further, and using her quirk.

Since she had come here, Rei had not used her quirk for anything more than a light frost, or little flurries of snow- something that she did more often than she should, owing to the happy memories of a young Shouto, giggling in the little indoor blizzards, even if those memories were tainted somewhat by the knowledge that she had been there with him, and not in the next room, with Touya, where she should have been. That said, she was still fairly confident of her ability to fill the entire room floor to ceiling with ice in an instant.

“Kamishiro Rei?” Asked the- possibly imaginary- mammal into her contemplations. She was somewhat surprised at the use of the name, it had not been hers in many years, and was certainly not the one on the plate outside her door.

For all that she had had no call to use it in a long time, the regal bearing that her parents had drilled into her returned to her easily, and she sat straighter in her seat, turning fully to face the speaker. “I think I would remember if you were on my list of approved visitors, and in any event, visiting hours are over.” She said coolly.

“You are right, of course, and I am not strictly on that list, so I would perfectly understand if you decided to call the nurse. However I would greatly appreciate if you did not. My name is Nedzu, and I am currently the principal of UA high school.” Said the... principal.

“All right, please take a seat,” she said, indicating the bed, “but what brings the principal of UA here?” She asked, once the tiny creature had jumped onto the bed, its- his legs swinging back and
forth off the ground, and she had turned in her chair to continue facing him, hands resting primly in her lap.

“Ah, yes, I had hoped to talk to you regarding your son, Shouto.” Said the rodent brightly.

The confusion was intermingled with sharp alarm now. “Is he OK? Was there some sort of incident? If so, why come to me? You should be able to tell that I'm not really in any state to be his guardian.”

“Shouto-kun is quite all right as far as I know, and there was no incident, not at the school anyway. I had hoped to discuss what you might know about Shouto's home life.”

The urge to press the call button returned with a vengeance. Talking about Shouto's home life meant talking about him, and thinking about him was in no way a good idea for her. “Why would you come to me to ask about his home life? I haven't lived in that house in several years.” She said, knowing it was a deflection.

“We noticed that Shouto seemed to have received a fair deal of training at home. We were wondering if you could tell us anything about it.” Said the mouse brightly.

“Enji did train Shouto a fair deal, and probably still does, but if you want to know anything about more recent training, I am not the one to ask.” She said, hoping the subject would be dropped, she didn't like to think about the training.

“So, his training had already started before you came here? If you won't mind my asking, how early did it begin?” Asked the tiny bear, tilting its head.

“It started fairly early, almost as soon as Shouto's quirk came in.” She answered slowly, unsure why it was significant.

“That is very young to begin training,” Said the strange dog, reassuring smile never slipping, “Was young Shouto ever hurt at all during this training?”

Bruises. Burns. Holding a weeping Shouto in her arms. “No.” She said immediately. “Nothing serious, anyway. Just a few bruises from some bad falls.” Enji wouldn't actually hurt Shouto. He had been so happy when his quirk came in.
"I see. And was Enji ever physically aggressive towards you, miss Rei?"

Lying on the floor. The taste of blood in her mouth. Enji yelling. Shouto calling her name. "It was an accident," came out of her mouth unbidden, and her eyes widened slightly when she realised what she had said, "I used to watch them training," she explained, "and I got in the way a couple of times." Her eyes flicked to the beautiful flowers on her windowsill. He did care. He had to care.

"Ah, I am sorry, perhaps I should not have asked about that." Said Nedzu apologetically. "Let's move on. If you wouldn't mind indulging me, Shouto is the youngest of four, correct?"

"That's right." Said Rei, relieved at the shift to lighter topics. She was always happy to talk about her children.

Nedzu excused himself a little while later, at a warning from his phone that one of the nurses was due to check in on Todoroki Rei's room in a couple of minutes.

Sneaking out of the hospital in the same way he had entered, avoiding the sight of the many humans in the place with some difficulty, avoiding the sight of the hospital's cameras with far less, the smile he had carefully plastered to his face during his meeting fell away, leaving one that more closely matched his mood.

He was fairly confident that the cold expression he now wore would have sent most of UA's staff running, screaming, for the hills. The things the- clearly traumatised- woman had said, and equally importantly, had not said were very clear. Endeavour was guilty of- at the very least- domestic abuse, child abuse, neglect of both Fuyumi and Natsuo, and a number of other minor associated offences.

Nedzu was about to become very very busy in the near future. The fall of a major public figure would not orchestrate itself, the safety of the- mostly full-grown- children needed to be assured, Touya had to be found, his testimony would likely be the linchpin of any case.

On a significantly less urgent note, young Midoriya needed to be thanked for his role in bringing this to his attention, and berated for not doing so more openly. Whatever Toshinori-kun might have to say on the subject, Nedzu fully intended to have the golden-eyed bean for a personal student,
especially after this mess, and Midoriya had to learn that risking no-one learning about this was not rational. At all.

The most pressing concern- with the exception of the safety of the Todoroki children- would probably be how on earth to deal with All Might's impending retirement happening to be so closely timed with Endeavour's impending criminal case. The commission would not be allowed to silence this, even if Nedzu had to personally blackmail every member thereof. Those two things in such close succession would certainly shake the public perception of heroes, even if it was handled well. He didn't want to think about what would happen if it wasn't.

Todoroki Shouto expected another day of training with his father to master his fire- a pair of words that still sounded strange together- since it was why he had come here, and it seemed to please Endeavour to no end that he was somewhat willing to use it.

Thursday certainly started out like the last few days, with Shouto waking, feeling well rested, going down to breakfast, and being joined a couple of minutes later by Izuku, looking like a zombie.

The zombiism Shouto took to be a fairly predictable outcome of his green-haired friend's somewhat strange habit of taking late-night walks. Honestly, Shouto was somewhat worried that the- short, unassuming, not easily recognisable as the powerhouse of the UA sports festival- greenette might be attacked, wandering around so late at night, no matter how close to such a major hero agency he was.

He definitely ran more towards sweet, and unintimidating when out of combat, especially with all the stammering, and that bright smile. A slightly odd combination with a boy who could go toe-to-toe with a licensed sidekick as well as he could- while juggling with his quirk at the same time.

Breakfast passed fairly pleasantly once Izuku woke up a bit, and he stopped having to work at holding up the conversation, since the greenette started on one of his normal fits of rambling- this time a comment about Kamui woods which had devolved into an interesting analysis of several of his recent fights, and some possible workarounds for his quirk.

Shouto made a note to make sure that Izuku was never allowed to talk too long where any villains might hear, but this was so much easier than talking to most people his age, he just had to listen to the interesting points the greenette was making, and occasionally make a noise to indicate he was listening.
The ice-user gently knocked the fire-user out of his rambling when he thought they might be late to today's training if he kept on much longer, but once they were in the lift he quickly started on a new one- Gang Orca, and how he deserved a higher spot on the hero rankings, which actually was a very good point, now that it was brought to Shouto's attention- which only ended when they reached the third-floor gym.

When they entered the room, Candlelight was conspicuously absent, and Shouto worried that one or both of them might be forced to spar with his father today- never a pleasant experience- until Endeavour spoke. “We won't be staying here today, you should go change into your costumes, I'll be taking you to see what a real hero does.” He said. Oh, he was going to take them on patrol.

Shouto was slightly frustrated as he went with Izuku to retrieve the cases containing their costumes- his had been altered since he had last actually worn it, going from white to blue, and gaining a cooling system- and then changed into it. He had expected that he would finally be able to consistently hit the right target without even heating the adjacent targets by the end of today, and was mildly irked that he wouldn't be able to practice his fire.

'Instead, I'm going to be stuck with my old man, watching him angrily march along the street, showing off,' he thought, putting on his boots in one of the agency changing rooms, 'as if I couldn't see that on a dozen news channels most weeks.' He shook himself, realising that Izuku had just asked him where he thought they would be patrolling.

“Endeavour is the number two hero. It could be anywhere, really.” He said, looking up.

Izuku was looking at him, putting on his dark grey gloves. Shouto got the distinct impression that Izuku's hero costume had been designed not to stand out, with all the darker colours, but he had to say, at Endeavour's agency, whose costumes ran heavily to blues and reds, the forest green was really distinctive. “Yeah, that makes sense, Hawks and All Might are really known for solving incidents all over Japan as well.” Shouto merely nodded, Hawks was especially infamous for that, since he “Couldn't do his job properly” according to his father, meaning that Hawks tended to deal with villains, but almost immediately move on, leaving a lot of the clean-up to sidekicks and police.

“Oh,” said Izuku, face brightening, “Tokoyami-kun is interning with Hawks, isn't he? What do you think he'll be doing?”

Shouto strongly suspected that Tokoyami was being subjected to a number of bird puns, or a stint with the sidekicks, chasing after the hero. It wasn't often Shouto agreed with his father, but Hawks really was rather flippant, and tended not to take things seriously- at least from what he had seen of
the man at a couple of galas he had been dragged to.

Shouto didn't tell Izuku any of this, imagining he would be happier to be allowed to continue rambling about various ways Hawks might be helping Tokoyami improve his quirk use. Shouto was really glad that the stammering had apparently been reduced slightly since the work experience started, otherwise these sessions would have taken forever.

As it turned out, Endeavour would be taking them on patrol in Hosu city, “picking up the slack” he called it. It made sense, since Iidaten- one of the largest agencies in the city- was currently without its lead hero.

Izuku remarked briefly on the way there that he hoped they might run into Iida.

This was something that Shouto had noticed from his first time seeing Izuku interact with his father. He didn't ramble around Endeavour. He hardly even stammered. He was always unfailingly polite, but Shouto knew that if Endeavour had known Izuku at all, he would have seen just how utterly cold- for Izuku- the greenette was being. Izuku didn't like, or trust Endeavour, and he was making it pretty obvious to anyone who knew much about him.

Shouto felt pretty stupid, all things considered, for his suggestion that the two were related. They really were nothing alike at all, be it in looks, or personality. Thankfully, Izuku didn't seem the sort to hold that sort of thing against him.

The patrol started out fairly uneventfully, Endeavour's entire demeanour screamed “Commit a crime anywhere near here only if you are willing to be set on fire”, so Shouto and Izuku just followed dutifully along behind the scowling man as he marched the relatively peaceful streets.

There were still a couple of idiots, of course, so they did get to see the huge man near-instantly demolish a few incredibly minor criminals. Then, of course, they had to sit through him explaining to him why he had done it the way he had, and a few things about proper procedure, which, while necessary for the two to know, were incredibly dull.

Shouto's eyebrows had tried to shoot past his hairline, when one especially brave child had actually walked up to the flame hero to request an autograph. Endeavour had taken the proffered likeness of himself on paper with a face like thunder. The child had- wisely in Shouto's opinion- not requested
anything specific, so his father had just signed his name, and handed back the picture to the terrified child, who then all but fled, offering a hurried thanks.

The ice-user had expected that to be the most eventful things would get, but he was proven very wrong about half an hour into the patrol.

A loud explosion suddenly sounded from a street away, and Endeavour took off running towards the sound, yelling at the pair to follow him.

When the three arrived at the scene of the explosion, they found it a mad battlefield, nearly a dozen heroes were in a pitched battle with two Nomu, one jumping around like mad, and the other having just finished throwing a bus at one of the heroes.

“Keep back.” Ordered Endeavour forcefully, before leaping into the fray himself, launching a fireball that the leaping Nomu barely avoided, contorting its body unnaturally to achieve the feat in mid-air.

Shouto hated being useless in situations like this but- “Come on, we can't get in the way.” Said Izuku, in what Shouto had started calling his “combat voice”, dragging the taller boy back down the street a little way- hopefully far enough to avoid having a bus dropped on them.

“Why- are there- Nomu here?” Asked Shouto, looking at the chaotic melee happening in-front of them.

“I don't know, but I really hope they aren't as strong as that one at the USJ.” Said Izuku, as Endeavour managed to hit the leaping Nomu at least- only for it to immediately release a wave of fire back at him.

The two watched in tense silence after that, unable to go forward, lacking license to use their quirks, but unwilling to get further from the area. Endeavour had managed to deflect the fire-wave from himself, but a couple of nearby heroes had been singed, and he couldn't try setting it on fire again, and wasn't fast enough to actually catch it.

His attempts to stop the bus-throwing Nomu seemed a bit more fruitful at first, a flaming punch doing some serious damage to one of its arms, and sending it back several feet. Then the monster nearly immediately regrew the lost skin, as if nothing had happened, and charged the heroes.
Endeavour was just moving to grab the thing's head- he had mentioned before that regeneration quirks tended to have their limitations, but this seemed extreme, monster or no- when Shouto heard a sound like... wings? Followed by a pained gasp from beside him.

Shouto's head turned, seemingly in slow motion, as a third Nomu, claws digging into Izuku's shoulders, lifted his friend from the ground, and began to fly off with him, the greenette crying out in pain.

“Izuku!” Yelled Shouto, sending out a wave of ice to try to catch the thing, but it seemed to be able to see behind itself somehow, easily swerving out of the way, still flying past the heroes, and into the sky.

Shouto widened his eyes. Think, he needed to stop it. He couldn't use a glacier, it would hit the heroes, but he couldn't use fire, it would hit Izuku, and his friend wasn't fireproof.

Endeavour seemed to notice what had happened, turning from the Nomu he was fighting, and launching a fireball at the flying Nomu, but just like the leaping one earlier, the flying one dodged it, and Izuku was getting dangerously high up. Endeavour looked like he wanted to chase after the thing, but the dark-skinned Nomu immediately came in for another attack, and the flame hero had to turn to block it.

Shouto couldn't follow. He couldn't even get close to the bigger fight. Not without endangering the heroes. And Izuku was flying away. Before he could decide how to get around the fight, how to follow his friend, the flying Nomu turned, leaving his line of sight behind a building.

Izuku was gone.
Izuku was having a slightly strange week. First he had had to come to terms with the just utterly horrifying state Todoroki Touya was currently in, and had to begin working to convince a man who had turned out to be a fanatical follower of a serial killer that he himself had helped stop, then the Mirai thing had happened.

Mirai’s shade was a thoroughly frustrating conversation partner. He was only half there most of the time, and he heard half the words you said to him if you were lucky. The experience of having Mirai back in that form was so stressful for Ichigou that he had left the room after a while, and gone off to- probably- blow off steam by burning something. Maybe Dream-Tokyo.

They had made very little progress with him, he seemed to be part of One-For-All, which he did know, but he still didn't seem to grasp what the not-quite-dream was, or who the voice was. He at least knew who Izuku was, but he couldn't explain what he wanted to say to the greenette. Any time he tried, the not-quite-dream warped in some odd way, but he couldn't seem to resolve an image properly. Hopefully it was just lack of experience.

Izuku really wasn't expecting to find out that Touya had taken a knife-wielding psychopath, and villain wanted in connection to several murders, as his room-mate. He had been less than happy at her attempt to stab him- though the voice seemed to think taking a younger villain in like that was a good sign for their attempts to get Touya's help.
If not for the fact that she was clearly not entirely in her right mind, and the fact that it was a sure-fire way to get Touya to categorically refuse to cooperate, the greenette would most likely have simply tipped the heroes off to their location as soon as he left that meeting.

Their efforts during the day were bearing slightly better results, their attempts to make sure that Endeavour was never alone in a room with Shouto seemed to be keeping anything from actually happening. And the monster was right about a couple of things, he was getting better at integrating his quirk into hand-to-hand.

He was watching the fight which had interrupted their first actual patrol with a hero since... ever, really. Mirai was technically a vigilante, as were all the “heroes” Dai had associated with, and after that the bearer of the voice was typically unwilling to associate with heroes openly. Especially Ren, who by most standards was a full-blown villain.

’Can’t we do anything to help? This is dangerous.’ Asked the greenette, lips thinned in frustration, from his spot further down the street with Shouto.

We can’t interfere, even if we could work well enough in a team not to be a hindrance. Answered the voice firmly.

’Dammit, why am I never Amber when these things happen nearby?’

And do you think it would be safe to show up for this as Amber? Asked the voice incredulously, sounding like Ren.

’No, but still I- why is Kurogiri wasting Nomu like this anyway?’ Asked Izuku, eyes widening as he remembered that they were a finite resource now, and these two would probably be destroyed like this.

The cache he found must be a big one- unless... he might be working with the doctor? Wondered-mostly- Aoi out loud.

The voice switched to Ichigou for the near immediate answer. He couldn’t be working with the doctor, neither of them-
Whatever the voice was about to say, it was interrupted by the sharp stab of pain in his shoulders that caused Izuku to cry out, and the surprising shift in perspective as the greenette began to move through the air.

It took Izuku a couple of seconds to figure out what those sensations, and the sound of flapping—previously covered by the loud battle in front—meant. He had been grabbed by a third Nomu.

Quickly looking up, he saw the lithe, partially unclothed body of one of All-For-One's monsters. Exposed brain, strange gas mask arrangement seemingly welded to its face. And wings, huge bat-like wings, effortlessly keeping them both off the ground, as the thing determinedly began to fly higher with him in its grip.

_Izuku! Burn it. Quick, before it gets over the fight._ Urged the voice hurriedly, not wanting to risk distracting, or worse injuring, the heroes.

Izuku began to raise a hand to do just that, ignoring the worsening of the pain in his shoulders, but couldn't help the gasp that escaped him when the Nomu swerved to avoid the wave of ice that appeared where they had just been.

The Nomu was now over the fight, meaning Izuku had to wait until they got past, despite the pain, and the blood flowing from where the claws dug into him.

The winged monster swerved again to avoid what looked to be a fireball thrown by Endeavour. Izuku glanced down to see the man having to return to his fight with one of the other two Nomu. He was glad that the fire wasn't Shouto's—he probably didn't have enough control yet to ensure Izuku didn't get burned.

Izuku was now dangerously high off the ground, he would have to use one of his quirks to slow his fall. Getting that much force out of One-For-All would involve breaking his bones, so he needed to use Phoenix Spirit, meaning he could only drop somewhere he could safely do so without causing a massive fire in an urban area.

_There._ Said the voice, sending an image of a spot they would arrive at in a couple of seconds, which was close enough to a building that he could replicate the trick he had used to get down to stain.

Izuku waited for the opportunity, then raised his arms to grip the thing's ankles, and just poured
fire out onto it, not caring if he destroyed the things entire leg- the person it had been was long since dead.

The greenette didn't drop as he was anticipating. Looking up, he saw the fire he had used begin to dissipate, revealing unmarrred sickly yellow skin. His eyes widened, and the voice began to speak. *It's skin is fireproof... was this targeted?*

Izuku thought that it being targeted was even more of a reason to get away from this situation. The greenette began to bring his hands up again for plan B- using One-For-All to get free- when the Nomu bend its head down to look at him. Then it screamed.

Izuku's joints locked up immediately, he could still move, but his body was fighting him every step. The greenette glared at the multi-quirked bat, and continued to laboriously move his hands up to its legs. *Wait!* Called the voice, sounding largely like Ren. *If we fall now, we might not be able to stop in time.*

Damn, the voice was right. Izuku stilled his hands, feeling the effect of whatever quirk had caused the stiffness slowly, so so slowly receded. The voice seemed to be deliberating on whether it was targeted, and how to deal with the loose Nomu regardless. Izuku was just a bit glad that the thing didn't seem to be planning on just dropping him, in fact it seemed to have a destination in mind, flying broadly in one direction.

Izuku was watching the thing, seeing if it was going to try screaming at him again, when suddenly, to the surprise of both the greenette, and the voice in his head, the Nomu did drop him, flying over a building. Izuku rapidly called on One-For-All, falling a dozen feet, landing as far from gracefully as he thought he ever had because of the still lacking- if significantly improved- control of his body.

“What? Why the hell did you bring someone here, you stupid glitchy Nomu?” Said a voice from a few metres in front of Izuku, causing the Nomu to croon, as if it were immensely proud of itself.

Izuku scrambled to his feet as quickly as his body would currently allow. He had been so focused on the Nomu, he hadn't seen that the roof they were flying over was occupied. A short distance in front of him stood Shigaraki, still wearing several of his old hands, stopped a foot away from a large warp gate. The pale-haired man was scratching irritably at his neck, and the Nomu had perched on top of the rooftop entrance to the building.

“You,” said Shigaraki, turning completely to face him once he got a good look at who it was the Nomu had dropped on the roof, “you're the one who broke my Nomu. If you hadn't cheated with
that hacked fire, Nomu could have killed All Might.” He began to rant, the scratching getting even worse.

“Shigaraki Tomura,” came the calm voice of the current Kurogiri from the gate, “we should leave, the heroes will not be distracted indefinitely.”

“They’ll stay distracted long enough for me to kill this hacking fucker.”

This was not looking good, the immobilization quirk had all but worn off, but three on one, against Kurogiri, who could prevent ranged attacks, and Shigaraki, who he could not allow to touch him, he didn't have many good options.

*You aren't Amber right now,* urged the voice, consisting only of Aoi, Yugo, and Hayato, since the other three parts were devoting all of their attention to watching the threats, *you can call for backup, just play for time.*

Izuku was surprised for a second- calling for backup was something he had never actually done before- then he put his hands in his suit’s pockets. If not for the blood stained rents on the shoulders of the costume he would be the very picture of calm unconcern- he hoped. “Why are you saying I cheated? I beat your Nomu fair and square.”

Shigaraki actually growled. “That Nomu was strong enough to beat All Might,” said the deranged maniac, as Izuku quickly unlocked his phone, and pressed the button that would send his location to all his contacts- he hoped, it was hard to tell without looking, “there's no way a low-level mob like you could beat it without cheating.”

“Look, it's not my fault you chose the wrong equipment set-up.” Responded the greenette, trying to follow along with the strange gaming metaphors.

“If you plan to kill him, you should hurry, he is stalling.” Said Kurogiri, still not breaking his seemingly eternal calm.

Shigaraki’s glare got fiercer, seemingly realizing that his partner was right. “So you're hoping the boss will arrive, you cheap bastard?”

Damn, even if the heroes had finished as quickly as it looked like they might, it would take a good
few minutes for them to get here. Shouto would surely realize what the message meant, at least. The greenette pulled his hands from his pockets, and raised them to face his opponents. He didn't say anything, busy desperately planning with the voice.

Shigaraki didn't take kindly to being ignored. “Kurogiri.” He said, rushing forward with a hand outstretched.

The Nomu, thankfully, seemed happy to stay put for now, but Izuku wasn't about to trust that it would stay that way. Heedless of the fact that it would probably cause him to overheat in minutes, he did something that was only possible because of how he had designed his costume, and covered his entire body in flames, the uncomfortable heat vastly preferable to any risk at all of this man touching him. At the same time, he filled his entire body with the full fifteen percent of One-For-All he could use, the golden sparks nearly lost in the covering of flames.

The greenette hissed in pain. He had forgotten about the tears in his costume. Hurriedly, he removed the flames from around the rents, leaving areas on each shoulder exposed. Well, the bleeding seemed to have stopped.

Shigaraki stopped short, seeing that his opponent was almost entirely covered in fire. Izuku used the moment of hesitation to rush forwards, One-For-All allowing him to close the distance nearly instantly. Shigaraki flew backwards with a smouldering hole in his shirt from the punch he received to the stomache.

The immediate threat temporarily down, Izuku rushed to the larger one- Kurogiri. The mist seemed surprised by the speed that One-For-All lent him, but recovered quickly, warping to a spot near Shigaraki, who was quickly getting to his feet.

“We should leave, you can't use your quirk against him like this.” Said the warper, Izuku pausing, unwilling to rush to the pair, since it would let the Nomu out of his line of sight.

“Like hell, he's got an obvious weak spot.” Said the hand-clad villain.

Shigaraki reached a hand to his side a moment later, and a warp gate opened to swallow it. *Head!* Screamed the voice when it saw the gate. Izuku spotted the dark point at the very right of his visual field. The hand was moving too fast, too close. He couldn't duck in time, so he used his fire. Part of the green bird's nest that adorned his head caught fire, and Izuku winced at the burning sensation on his right cheek, but the desired effect was achieved, Shigaraki hurriedly withdrew his badly burned palm, hissing in pain.
Izuku put out the fire on one of his hands, and nearly halfway up his forearm, and began to rapidly pat out the fire in his hair, watching the incredibly dangerous pair of villains like a hawk. Some backup would be nice right about now.

“We are running out of time, if you still wish to complete your plan.” Stated the dark mist, seemingly watching the greenette in turn.

Shigaraki cradled his injured hand, glaring at Izuku. “Fine,” he said tersely to his partner, “we'll finish this cheater later, take us to the agency.”

Izuku ran forward, realizing that the villains were about to escape, but the warp gate opened under Shigaraki before he covered the distance, and Shigaraki began to rapidly sink into it. “We're going to deal with you after Ingenium, you little NPC bastard.” Threatened the villain, before the warp gate swallowed him.

Tenya's time at his brother's agency had been very educational, even if Tensei- he should probably call him Ingenium while he was here- still wasn't allowed back on patrols for another week or so.

His week had so far consisted of a few patrols with the agency's sidekicks, and a fair bit of combat training under Tensei- Ingenium's watchful gaze, his sleeves rolled up to show the bandages, as if he dearly wanted to be doing the sparring himself.

Tenya did not think it appropriate to call him on it, but it seemed pretty clear from his expressions that his brother really disliked being unable to patrol right now. He didn't actually try to do more than he should, but perhaps when they were at next at home- and thus brothers, instead of hero and student- he should tell Tensei how important proper recuperation was.

Ingenium had just finished an interview- an extremely common occurrence lately, after the great accomplishment of stopping the hero killer- and was telling Tenya some important things about good public relations, and how a good hero needed to be able to do more than just fight well, Tenya listening attentively, when a large number of phones in the room suddenly pinged at once.

The many disciplined heroes and sidekicks in the room demonstrated their great reactionary ability, every one of them stopping what they were doing to check their phones.
Seconds later Tensei began giving extremely quick orders, sending more than half those present scurrying from the room to prepare to leave, and several more to relay similar orders to others in the building.

Initial orders given, Tensei- Ingenium turned back to Tenya. “There's been a villain attack, you're staying here.” He said. Tenya nodded, that made sense for an intern with no license for quirk use.

“Come on,” said the hero, waving an arm for Tenya to follow him, “I need to coordinate. Hopefully it won't be too bad, and you'll be able to learn a couple of things.”

“Yes, Nii-san- erm, Sir.” Said the younger Iida, rushing after his departing brother.

“I keep telling you, just call me Nii-san if you want.” Said the elder Iida over his shoulder, not breaking stride.

When they got to the room the sidekicks who tended towards coordinating from the back it was a mess- though, it seemingly always was to some extent- with several conversations going on with- presumably- the sidekicks rushing to the site, and some who had been patrolling near the attack site.

“Jess, what's going on?” Tensei asked, addressing a woman with curling horns nestled in a head of blonde hair.

“Flier was patrolling in the area when there was a large explosion. Two attackers, Firefly, Manual, Ninja a, and Ninja b are engaging. No response to attempts to talk to them.” Jess responded quickly.

Another of the room's occupants suddenly spoke over the din. “Hero Endeavour has just showed up at the scene.”

Tensei didn't relax as much as Tenya would have expected at the news that the number two hero was dealing with the incident. “All right, get the other heroes present to give him as much room as we can, but keep the villains confined if possible,” then, after a moment of contemplation, “get some of the sidekicks on route to check for other nearby activity, Aero, Gaseous, and Bravo.”
“Yes sir.” Said Jess, relaying the orders.

“Have we got-” Started Tensei, before being interrupted by a far more onerous shout.

“Third attacker, flight quirk. Just flew off with one of Endeavour's interns.”

“Shit,” cursed Tensei, as Tenya's mind filled with panic, “Shouto?”

“No, the other one, Midoriya.”

Tenya's belief that this room was the right place for him wavered- stupidly, given that he didn't even know where his friend was, and couldn't get to a flying enemy anyway- and Tensei grabbed his arm, seemingly anticipating him trying to leave. “He'll be fine,” he said, then to Jess added, “get Flier and Aero to head wherever it was going.”

A minute later, Tenya's own phone suddenly pinged. Frowning, he automatically checked it, it was probably just Uraraka- it was from Midoriya, just a location. “Nii-san, look.” He said hurriedly, turning the phone to face his brother.

The hero took the phone, read it then hurriedly spoke. “Scratch that last, we have a location on Midoriya.” He said, before relaying the address Tenya had just been sent.

The younger Iida was alternately worrying, and wondering why a villain would just take Midoriya, when yet another of the sidekicks spoke. “Report of a fire at that address.”

Tenya wasn't sure if that was good or bad. It meant Midoriya was fighting, but at least he was alive in that case. “Get any nearby heroes up there.” Said Tensei immediately.

Less than a minute later, before any heroes had even reached the address, the phone- still in Tensei's hand- suddenly rang. His brother answered immediately, putting the call on speakers. “Iida, get out of there! Shigaraki's going after your brother!” Came the urgent voice of Izuku, slightly muffled by what sounded like rushing wind.

Then a warp gate opened in the middle of the room, and more alarms than could be accounted for
by the distant villain attack started blaring.

Chapter End Notes

4) you think one cliffhanger is bad? well how about two in a row? *louder evil laughter*
5) I'd say I'm not sorry, but that isn't true. Sorry about the cliffhangers.
6) quirk question: If Shiggy can turn people (who are mostly water) to dust, and his quirk is involuntary, can he swim?
Chapter Summary

Shigaraki arrives, battle ensues, battle ends, no trip to Hosu would be complete without a trip to the iconic hospital.

Chapter Notes

1) no cliffhanger this time, I promise.
2) got some really nice discourse out of that question last time, so I think I'll try that again.
3) couldn't think of a good question though, so I'll just ask what you guys think of this random OC quirk (would it work in universe, would it be viable for a hero etc.)

*present mic voice* Quirk: Shaed: a mutation that causes the user to always be wearing a cape or cloak of sturdy, flexible fabric. They can't take it off, but they can change the cut and colour. Only the quirk user can actually grip the fabric, anyone else will find their fingers slipping off.

Tensei's mouth was already opened to issue the order that would start the evacuation of the agency as soon as he heard the word Shigaraki. There was no way facing an S rank villain with most of the sidekicks unavailable, and himself injured would end well. Especially not this particular villain, who was an utterly disastrous match-up for people whose style was mostly close-combat.

The appearance of the rapidly expanding spot forced a change of plans. Tensei reviewed all the available personnel in an instant. “Code 3, everyone out! Jess, with me.” He said, speaking as quickly as he could while still making himself understandable.

Shigaraki had a warper with him, rendering flight impossible, even if he were willing to condemn every member of staff too slow to outrun the pale-haired villain. Something he obviously couldn't even consider.

The already busy room became even more flurried, computer screens abandoned as most of the staff jumped up, rushing for various exits. He hadn't heard Tenya move. “Now.” Tensei snapped, not turning from the villain covered in hands emerging from the gate. This was neither the time for hesitation, nor for any thoughts of near-suicidal heroics.

Tenya- finally- began to move, and Jess arrived at his side. Jess was not a good match-up against
Shigaraki either, but she was the best partner he had at hand. An illusionist whose quirk was light-based rather than psychological- and thus, not ally friendly- she had been working for Iidaten for years, and he would be able to work with her reasonably well.

Blessedly, Shigaraki seemed content to allow even the members of staff closest to him to leave, seeming if anything to revel in the seemingly panicked flight from the room his arrival had caused.

He needed to buy time, the code three would get any available heroes in the vicinity here as quickly as possible, but this pair had a non-zero chance to finish whatever they planned- probably his death from what Midoriya said- and leave before then if he wasn't careful.

It was hard to tell past the severed hand, but it looked like the madman was grinning. “finally got rid of the mobs, time for the boss,” he said gleefully, “I'm going to get some nice exp. here.”

“You won't get away Shigaraki, more heroes are on the way, and we won't go down that easily.”

“So what if they are? I brought a way out.” Shigaraki said, gesturing to Kurogiri. He had a point there, at least- with a warper, it would be very hard to actually arrest either of them. Information from the USJ attack indicated that Kurogiri had a physical body, though. Maybe he could stop the pair if he threatened the warper.

That would involve catching him though. “Why are you even risking this?” He asked, still hoping to keep the man talking.

“You're going to drop some shiny loot, Ingenium,” said the man with a sneer, “this is a timed level, so let's start.” Well, so much for stalling. Jess began to activate her quirk, and Tensei warmed up his engines.

This was far from ideal, not only was he still injured, but he was out of costume, and hence without his airbags. There was a desk between the villains and the heroes. Shigaraki touched it, and then there wasn't a desk between them, computer equipment crashing to the floor where it had been, to land in the dust.

Tensei moved, suddenly shooting to the highest speed he could without a risk of stalling. At the same time, Jess' quirk activated, the woman all but vanishing, taking on the exact appearance of what was behind her, and Tensei seeming to split into six duplicates of himself, each rushing in a different direction.
Jess had happily realized what his likely plan was, and had refrained from sending an illusion at Kurogiri, but instead keeping one with him, and pairing off the other two, as they bounced off the walls.

Expecting the duplicates or not, Shigaraki displayed remarkable reaction times, stepping forward, and reaching to grab one of the five illusions as it passed within striking range. The hand passed right through, of course, causing the illusion to ripple oddly.

The villain glared around, presumably trying to locate the woman who had moved while he was distracted. “Your stupid tricks aren't going to work.” He said, just as the real Tensei took a shot at Kurogiri, aiming to catch him. His hand passed through, disturbing the fog, but he saw a gleam of metal as it moved.

Tensei kept going, he would make a second pass when he got a chance. Kurogiri had noticed the attack seemingly, but when he turned, Jess had the nearby illusions get in his way, preventing him from making out which Tensei had tried to grab him.

“There you are!” Crowed the villain, noticing the slight peculiarity caused by Jess' pseudo-invisibility, and rushing to her.

Jess was a support type hero, not really capable in one-on-one combat, so Tensei panicked when her location was so quickly discovered. He hit the wall feet first, grunting at the impact, and then threw caution to the wind.

The recipro-powered fist hit the villain in the back of the head, making him stumble, and Tensei carried on past him, grabbing Jess, and taking her as far as they could get in the large room from the pair.

“Iida!” Exclaimed the eye-wrenching blur he was carrying, causing him to look down. His eyes widened, as his shirt... shattered was the best way to explain it, Shigaraki must have brushed his right sleeve. The heroes blood ran cold, as his heavily bandaged torso was uncovered- that had been far too close, and now not only were his injuries on full display, but he also didn't have anything to protect him from another brush with death. This was not looking good. They needed backup- now.

“You should have faced me on your own. You can't fight me, and save her at the same time, hero.” Gloated the hand-covered villain, already seemingly recovered from the blow, and rushing towards
them. What did it take to keep this man down?

Tensei was putting the sidekick down, thinking rapidly, when the window to his right shattered, shards of glass flying into the room, and half a second later a wall of brilliant flames- nearly too bright to look at directly- caused the temperature in the room to soar.

The newcomer- who Tensei had briefly thought to be Endeavour, despite the number two hero seldom using defensive tools like that wall- rolled as he soared into the building, coming up on Tensei's side of the fire-wall, and facing Shigaraki immediately.

The hero took in the form of the person who had just so dramatically entered the high-stakes combat, before realizing that he wasn't watching Shigaraki, seeing the bloody, slightly burned form of the greentette he had watched nearly dominate the first-year sports festival, costume badly torn at the shoulders. “Kid, what the hell are you doing?!” He yelled. How did he even get here this fast?

“I couldn't stay there,” he said, as if it was obvious, “most of the other heroes were busy, or too far, and you aren't suited for this.” Well, that was true enough, but this kid shouldn't be here either, Tensei had no idea how well he would even be able to integrate into a team yet.

“You are really getting on my nerves, red mage.” Said Shigaraki, who had started scratching at his neck.

“You need to get out of here.” Said Tensei, carefully watching the villain over the wall that the greentette had carefully made too short to block sight of the villains, and also left it hovering off the ground, preventing a fire spreading in the room.

“I'm not just going to sit here and let either of you get away,” said Shigaraki, “Kurogiri.”

A warp gate quickly formed between the heroes- and hero-in-training- and the fire-wall. The kid shot forward like a madman, body rapidly covering over with flames, and... were those sparks? He passed through the gate before Shigaraki even approached it, appearing in front of the man, where he wasn't expecting it, kicking him in the side and sending him bowling over.

Tensei cursed, he needed to stop Midoriya getting himself killed. “Stay here, try to keep up some illusions.” He told Jess, before shooting off, jumping off a wall to clear the flames.
This was in some ways a far better situation, but the presence of the barely-trained kid was giving him grey hairs. He had a couple of minutes left on his recipro, and Jess would be safe behind the fire, as long as the villains weren't given too long to act at the same time.

After a moment, two clones of Tensei, and three of Midoriya split off from the originals, as Midoriya moved to Shigaraki, and Tensei tried again to grab Kurogiri.

Tensei was sure his hand was less than an inch from the metal plate he had seen earlier, which must be covering the man's real body, when Kurogiri warped to Shigaraki.

Shigaraki was getting up, but slowly, clearly the kick had been as hard as it looked. Not to mention the new burn hole in the villain's shirt.

Kurogiri seemed to decide that this wasn't going well, and began to urge Shigaraki to leave. The pale-haired villain cursed out his partner, saying he wouldn't leave without killing “the hacker” whatever that meant, but suddenly a door joined the bits of window on the floor, and half the agency's heavy-hitters poured into the room, and began to encircle the villains.

“How could you have beaten my Nomu so fast? They were so strong... you low-level heroes couldn't have beaten them so fast!” Ranted the villain, before cutting off, looking like a deer in headlights as a new figure entered after the others.

“Maybe they couldn't, but your monsters were simple work for me.” Declared the number two hero, marching proudly into the room like the incarnation of wrath, ever-present scowl accentuated by the fire that licked at his hair.

Tensei relaxed, ass though he might be, Endeavour deserved his spot as number two. Shigaraki probably wouldn't be able to do any serious harm now.

After Shigaraki- somewhat predictably- managed to warp away despite the best efforts of over a dozen heroes, including the second strongest hero in Japan, the chewing out had begun. Izuku was frankly quite grateful that Ingenium was there, since he was the one to calm Endeavour's lambasting of him for getting captured, and- just as bad- using his quirk without license or supervision.
The turbo hero had pointed out that Izuku had managed to warn the heroes at Iidaten of the impending arrival of the villains, and delay them enough for Endeavour to arrive. Endeavour seemed somewhat mollified by this, but was clearly less than pleased that Shigaraki had gotten away.

Between the two- one of whom was bleeding an alarming amount, the white of the bandages on his stomach reddening as they watched- it was quickly agreed that- contrary to what anyone might have seen, or heard- Izuku's quirk use against Shigaraki here was permitted by the elder Iida. Endeavour likely agreed to it because of the PR problems that would result from vigilante work being performed by someone associated with his agency.

“You got very lucky this time,” growled the flame hero, turning to Izuku, who was sitting on the floor, sweating from mild quirk exhaustion, “the ambulance will take you to hospital with Ingenium. I don't want to see you seeking out villains without a license- ever. Are we clear?” Izuku nodded. “Good. In future I expect you to pay more attention to your surroundings.” Said the large man, before storming from the room.

What an ass. Commented the voice. Don't listen to him, you did the right thing, and you could hardly have seen that Nomu coming.

'I could have, if I had looked behind me, or actually heard the thing flapping.'

And do you think looking away from the battle involving a thing throwing buses around would have been wise? Asked the voice sarcastically. You couldn't have seen or heard it over that fight. It said firmly, in an effort to bring an end to Izuku's normal post-failure self-deprecation.

When they were both packed into an ambulance, Izuku holding an ice-pack to the nasty second-degree burn he had given himself, and Ingenium trying not to move for fear of the butterfly stitches coming loose, the greenette decided to finally speak. “Thank you, for helping me out back there.” He said.

Ingenium looked at him, smiling faintly. “I should be the one saying that- well, no, actually I should be saying 'don't commit vigilantism',” Izuku looked down with a blush, embarrassed that he had done anything of the sort as Izuku, not Amber. Ingenium sighed, “That said, your intervention bought us time for Endeavour and the others to arrive, so I will thank you... but I don't envy you when your teachers get a hold of you.” Ingenium's face and voice filled with wry amusement at this last addition, while Izuku internally shuddered at what Aizawa might say.

“I'm more worried about what Tenya will say.” Said the greenette, trying not to betray his fear of
Ingenium laughed, sounding only slightly pained. “Well maybe my little brother will be able to teach you some self-preservation.” He said, the mirth in his voice dulling any sting the words might have brought.

*How on earth is he Iida's brother?* Asked the voice, wonderingly. *Iida is more serious than this about Tokoyami sitting on his desk, and you just committed a major crime.*

Needless to say, Recovery Girl was less than pleased about being called to a hospital to deal with Izuku's self-inflicted burns again. If not for her having some understanding of the circumstances, the greenette suspected that the tirade he got from her would have put Endeavour's to shame.

In the end she did heal him, as well as she could anyway, but there was very little she could do about most of his wounds, so the hospital decided to keep him overnight to let him recuperate from the healing, and to see if there were any complications.

As expected, Iida had dropped by briefly to give his best disappointed face, and told him exactly why he shouldn't have done what he did, but only after slamming the door open, causing the greenette to jump, and demanding to know if he was OK. When the lecture was over, they had talked for a time, and Izuku relaxed when Iida said that his brother was fine, having only reopened his wounds, lengthening his recovery time, but nothing more serious.

Uraraka had opted not to give a lecture at all, when she called. She checked he was OK, then they chatted about internships until Shouto had suddenly arrived at his room.

“Are you OK, Izuku?” He asked, without preamble.

“I'm fine, Shouto, Recovery Girl came in to heal me.” Reassured the greenette.

The bi-chromatic boy's gaze flicked slightly to the left- looking at the scar. Izuku unconsciously raised a hand to the mark. “She couldn't do much about this, b-but the doctors say it should fade s-somewhat.”
Shouto looked pained. “I'm sorry.” He said simply, looking downward for a moment.

“W-What for?” Asked the greenette hurriedly, Shouto didn't have anything to be sorry for.

“I missed,” he said, clearly angry- probably with himself, “I didn't stop the Nomu taking you.”

“It's not your fault!” Said Izuku hurriedly. “It shouldn't have been able to dodge your attack, and it even dodged Endeavour's fire.”

“If I had heard it coming-” Started Shouto, determined to blame himself.

“Then Shigaraki would have given no warning, and Ingenium- or even Iida- could have died.” Interrupted Izuku, parroting one of the arguments the voice had made earlier.

_Honestly, he shouldn't have given warning either way, what he's using to blackmail someone as careful as Kurogiri into working with him is anyone's guess._ Muttered the voice, irked that it couldn't figure out why they were seemingly partnered together.

The two talked for a while after that, about nothing important mostly, Izuku firmly stopping him any time Shouto began to blame himself for Izuku's brief kidnapping, and subsequent injuries. Izuku suspected the main reason he got no comments about his vigilantism, or illegal quirk use, was that Shouto was in no position to be judging someone about that.

When Shouto finally left, citing a need for both of them to get some sleep, Izuku wandered into the bathroom to finally do what he had been putting off with one conversation after another. Pulling off his shirt, he turned his head slightly to the left and took in the results of today's activities using the wall mirror.

A good chunk of the hair on the right of Izuku's head had been burned, and there was now a rough oval red mark running from above his hairline, to just above his chin, and encompassing part of his ear. He should probably count himself lucky that the mark missed his eye by a centimetre or so. 'I'm going to need a haircut,' he thought, 'this looks really lopsided.'

The voice remained silent, as Izuku continued to look over the damage. There were three gashes
over the front of each shoulder, each surrounded by a red mark, where he had forgotten his suit was torn, and thus burned himself. He knew there would be a single shorter but deeper mark on each shoulder-blade.

Izuku- didn’t know how to feel about this, honestly. He had gotten scars before, like the one on his arm from the hero killer throwing a knife at him, the little ones from a struggle as Amber on his forearms, some little patches from accidents with his quirk near his wrists, but this was the largest set of marks he had ever gotten, and the only one on his face... 'Do you think I would be able to cover that burn up?' He asked, gesturing to the mark on the side of his head.

_Probably_, it said slowly, _you could definitely make it less obvious._ The voice sounded concerned for him, which came as no surprise, it was always concerned when anything happened to him. But he was really grateful that it didn’t ask if he was OK, or try to comfort him.

On reflection this was probably because various parts of the voice had died with far more, and far worse scars than he now bore. Izuku was... a bit numb to it at the moment, it would probably sink in soon, and he would be able to decide how he felt about the new changes to his appearance.

At least if he didn't care for it, he could reduce or remove that burn.
intermission: of the end of the fifth act

Chapter Summary

Ren has some lovely food with an old friend

Chapter Notes

Who wants some random stream of consciousness? well here you go.
(I'll level with you guys, the whole fic is random stream of consciousness, but people like it, so I'm just going with it)

Ren walked with a spring in his step today. It was something rather unusual for him, the last few years had been trying. It was all worth it though, he had finally achieved what he had set out to do. Even the rain on the way to the restaurant could do nothing to dampen his joy.

Ren didn't really argue with the voice- more like four different voices speaking in unison- but he did sometimes disagree with the voice's way of doing things. Each part of the voice had done great things in the eternal quest to see All-For-One brought down, he would never deny that. Even if Yugo was a terribly impractical man. Hey! Said Yugo on his own.

'You know it's true.' Said Ren, gently mocking. He could feel Ichigou, Dai, and Hayato all but nodding along.

You should probably be a bit nicer to Yugo, though. Said the whole of the voice. You remembered the book?

'Of course.' The grey-haired man patted his breast pocket, feeling the precious object therein.

Straining his relationship with the voice would be an incredibly stupid move, given that- unless something went horribly wrong- he would be spending the rest of time with them.

That said, the book was the mark of how much he had shifted from the voice's school of thought on how All-For-One should be fought. The loose collection of agents his predecessors had preferred had never sat well with him, and the voice itself admitted that they had only learned
about many of All-For-One's moves after the fact. To the detriment of everyone in the world.

The idea that that monster could be moving, and Ren could know nothing until it was too late left
the man with an itch constantly between his shoulder-blades. Hence, the network.

“The Heroic Times” had been set up some months ago, with the boss' permission. Presumably he
thought it would be some sort of useful front for the family. And it was after a fashion. Ren had put
a great deal of effort into making the above-board business profitable, and non-suspect.

Before that, Ren had spent some years- with the family's blessing, if not full understanding- dealing
with all sorts of people who made it their business to know things. Many of those people now
worked for him, and he had arranged this in such a way that most of them didn't know this.

He was immensely proud of the way that the network was built. It could potentially recruit new
informants without his intervention, and it shouldn't be possible for any one member to sell out
more than a couple of others, except for the few trusted executives.

It all hinged on the book, and the numerous different codes within. Codes for executive
communication, for different types of informant, for different types of information. Codes specific
to an individual, or a cell. Numerous codes solely for ensuring that the informants got paid, without
any money actually changing hands, or any meetings- mostly by way of briefly, but immediately
valuable information on the inner workings of various businesses.

He had finally finished it just the week before, and would be able to replace the rudimentary codes
he had been using up to now, and start all communication going through his newspaper. When his
right-hand man, and biological cousin, Tesshin had heard him excitedly exclaim that it was done
yesterday- after he, Yugo, and Hayato had gone over it several further times to make sure that the
whole thing was airtight, he had said he would make a reservation at the- frankly exorbitant-
restaurant he was headed to now.

“Hello, how may I help you sir?” Asked the waitress politely, when he entered.

“Reservation for Tanaka.” Answered Ren.

The waitress smiled, and gestured for him to follow her. “Your friend arrived just a couple of
minutes ago.” She informed him, as he walked into the restaurant proper, past the open dining
area, and to the private room Tesshin had apparently booked for them.
Well, he had already known that Tesshin liked to go all-out when he was celebrating.

“About time you got here, you old fossil.” Said the man, who had long hair seemingly made of steel, which he could control at will, scowling at him from his seat.

“Are you getting senile, or just impatient? You've not been here five minutes.” Said Ren just as seriously. Both men glared at one another for a pair of heartbeats, then they both broke out in grins, snorting with laughter.

Tesshin rose, and pulled Ren into a hug, patting him hard on the back. “Haha, careful there, I'm an old fossil remember?”

“Yeah, made of solid rock.” Responded his old friend easily, pulling back to grin at him.

Ren grinned back. Tesshin was his oldest, most trusted co-conspirator, he had helped with many of the things Ren had done that might be called vigilante work, fulfilling the voice's agenda, and many of those that counted as villain work, either for building the network, or for the family. He knew about many things that had been done that the family might... not have approved of.

“Come on, let's eat, we haven't talked in weeks.” Said Ren, still smiling.

“You mean since you left me to run your daft newspaper?” Asked Tesshin, retaking his seat, and gesturing to the one opposite.

“Since I started working on the backbone of the entire operation.” He countered, taking the indicated chair.

“You said on the phone that you had finished it?” Asked his friend, raising an eyebrow. “That doesn't sound like you, you perfectionist bastard.”

“Remind me, what happened when I let you plan things in Osaka?” Mocked the fire-user, before pulling the little notebook from his breast pocket. “I finished it last week, I wanted to make sure everything was right.” Ren put the book on the table between them.
“Come on, are you ever going to let Osaka go? How was I supposed to know he had a mistress?”
Asked the exasperated iron-haired man, before gesturing to the book. “May I?”

“Be my guest, I’m more likely to accidentally burn it than you are.”

His friend picked up the book gently, and began to page through it, making the occasional appreciative murmur at the ways information could be hidden without looking like hidden information. “Well, when you promise a way, you deliver, Ren.” He said, looking at Ren in near awe. “I ordered something special to celebrate, it should be arriving in a minute.”

“You've been at the expensive sake again, haven't you? Will I look outside to find you've driven the business into the ground?” Sniped the fire-user.

“Ha! Say what you will, but we both know you like the booze more than I ever did.” Said the man who had introduced Ren to the world of expensive sake in the first place.

“And whose fault is that?” He asked, before the door opened to admit a waitress, carrying two tiny cups, and a large ceramic bottle.

“Thank you very much.” Tesshin said, as the girl placed the cups, and alcohol, and bowed out of the room. “I just ordered your favourite, since you never seem to eat anything else when I take you for dinner.”

Ren shrugged, he couldn't deny that. His friend poured the clear liquid into both cups, before raising his own. “To a job wll-done.” Said Tesshin, which Ren echoed, before both downed their cups.

What followed was a truly delicious meal, and a slightly excessive quantity of alcohol. Ren began to feel distinctly tired some ways into the meal, but then it had been an awfully heavy meal, and he was not as young as he had been- though still younger than Hayato had been. The feeling only seemed to get worse as the meal went on, he began to dearly wish to go to sleep, though he couldn't do so here, couldn't be that rude to his old friend, who was rather animatedly telling a story of one of their old adventures- misremembering a number of things, unless Ren was.

“I think... 'm a b't t' dr'nk.” Slurred the grey-haired man, when his friend paused to look at him.
Wow, didn't think you were that much of a lightweight. Said the voice in answer to this.

“Yeah, le's get you home.” Said Tesshin, slurring slightly in his own right.

His friend put the bill, and supported the scarred man, whose legs didn't seem to want to cooperate with any plan that involved walking in a straight line.

Something's not right... Said the voice, some ways into a taxi ride to Ren's current home- his favourite of the one's he currently didn't think compromised. Ren wasn't really listening- to the voice, or to Tesshin. He was having difficulty staying awake.

He must have fallen asleep, because he woke up, no less tired, to Tesshin pulling him out of the taxi just outside his house, the voice was speaking, but it was little more than a muted buzz. Ren! Something's wrong! Stay awake! He couldn't make much sense of it, he had clearly drunk a lot.

Tesshin unlocked the door, taking the key when Ren fumbled and dropped it. “Let's get you to bed, Ren.” Said Tesshin, after the fire-user had toed his shoes off. The voice was still urgently trying to get his attention, but he barely noticed over his overwhelming weariness.

The last thing he remembered was Tesshin, or Tesshin's voice, he couldn't make much out, looking at him. “For what it's worth, I am sorry, old friend. Your way, the family would have stopped all this, and your network is worth so much more than you saw. Don't worry, I'll take good care of your book, your work.” Ren's mind was still muddled, had he remembered to take the book? “Goodbye, Ren.”
of return and rebuke

Chapter Summary

Shigaraki returns home, investigations continue, 1-A returns to school

Chapter Notes

1) oof, sorry for the long pause, not been feeling very motivated lately, and my not actually planning this fic in advance is beginning to cause problems :(
2) Todoroki’s conspiracy wall ep. 1 (manga spoilers):
we all know that Dabi is Touya, but what about Geten
Geten: ice powers, large build, wears a thick parka, resents hero society
Natsuo: ice powers, large build, possibly not the best with cold, obvious reason to resent heroes
3) *further manga spoilers* been reading the most recent chapters, am i to take it from what hawks says that Recovery Girl is either the only person with a healing quirk, or just that they are spectacularly rare?

Kurogiri dropped Shigaraki unceremoniously on the floor, both of them returning hurriedly to his bar. That had been too close, if the heroes hadn't been so cautious, there were a couple there that had the potential to stop him escaping.

As was to be expected, his charge was less than pleased by the way his plan had gone. Kurogiri was just glad that Sensei allocated money for cheap glasses to put within easy reach on such occasions. The alternative was the potential destruction of his bar. “That fucking red mage!” Screamed the pale-haired man, shattering a glass against the wall.

“Shall I take it things did not go to plan?” Asked the calm voice of the true head of the league.

Shigaraki schooled himself to a respectful expression at once. “Sensei, that stupid NPC from the USJ attack showed up again, I would have been able to kill Ingenium if he hadn't gotten in the way.”

“Oh? How did he manage to appear here, I understood that Ingenium had only taken one of the UA students as an intern- his brother?” Asked the voice from the screen, sounding curious.
“It was very strange,” put in Kurogiri, “one of the Nomu grabbed him and took him straight to us.”

“Yeah, the stupid thing glitched out, brought an enemy right to us, and put it in our way.” Grumbled the younger villain.

“That is interesting, perhaps some failure in behaviour testing. The doctor will be very intrigued. But how did he hinder you? As I recall he had to be saved from his own fire at the USJ?”

“He mostly used his quirk defensively, Sensei,” said Kurogiri, “though I don't understand how he suddenly became so much faster than he was last time.” He added slowly.

The silence that met this statement was terrifying even by All-For-One's standards. “I see,” he said simply, after a pause that seemed to go on for an eternity, “no matter. You may have failed in your original goal, Tomura, but as long as you escape you will have the chance to learn from failures. The important thing is not to allow yourself to fail for the same reason twice. You should give some thought over the next couple of days about where things went wrong, and why the unexpected elements caused you to have to retreat.”

“Yes, Sensei.” Said Shigaraki, bowing his head.

“Regardless, I don't believe this was a total loss, you may not have killed the hero, but you made your intentions clear, and the heroes will most likely conveniently publicize your actions.”

“But I didn’t-”

“You may not have proved yourself able to best the man who bested Stain, but in trying you will have attracted the attention of his followers.”

Shigaraki seemed visibly unhappy with this small success, but dared not gainsay Sensei. The disembodied voice said no more, and after a moment Shigaraki took out his remaining frustration with the days events by disintegrating anything that came to hand. Kurogiri fought off a sigh, pouring himself a drink.
Naomasa was happy to be finally meeting Toshinori's chosen successor, though, as he walked through the door of the hospital, he wished it were under better circumstances.

Pulling his accustomed hat off, the detective was about to ask the receptionist for the room number, when he spotted a head of shaggy blond hair, far too far off the ground as ever. “Yagisan.” He called.

The number one hero turned to face him, small smile playing on his lips like a shadow of the broad ones he seldom wore in this form. “Ah, I wasn't expecting to see you here Tsukauchi-kun.” (-)

“How are you? You're here to see Midoriya-kun I take it?” The detective asked.

“That I am,” (-), “I'm fine, and yourself?” (lie) Well, that was hardly a surprise, his friend had never been fine, not since his injury at least.

“I'm well, if somewhat swamped recently. I suppose you won't be much better there?” He asked, quirkling an eyebrow.

The shadow of a smile turned wry. “Unfortunately so, though for me that is seemingly a constant now.” (-) Tsukauchi's own smile turned wry. He was acutely aware that his friend had been struggling with a mountain of paperwork since his disastrous falling out with his only sidekick, the recent up-tick in villain activity would not have helped with that.

“Oh well, shall we head up together?” The plain faced man asked.

“Oh, you're here to question young Midoriya then?”

“Just informally, to see if he can tell us anything useful about the league.” Naomasa wasn't hopeful there, but you never knew. It was just as well this would be informal, reading between the lines it looked like the heroes were covering for Midoriya's public quirk use, and he didn't want to have to cover that up.

Not that revealing it would likely do much harm to Midoriya in the long run, given that Ingenium-whose ranking looked set to soar after recent events- and both of the top two heroes would doubtless rush to his defence.
“Do you know what room he's in?” He asked the hero, shaking himself out of his reverie.

“Yes, though the receptionist tells me that he's just finished a number of tests, so if he's too tired to talk to me, I'm to leave.” (-) Said the tall man, showing his well-earned fear of medical professionals.

Knocking on the appropriate door, the response was a nearly immediate “Come in.”

The greenette sitting on the room's bed showed some fairly clear signs of his recent misadventures, tired golden eyes sat in a face framed by incredibly messy curls, absent in a small area around a large burn, definitely a scar, given that he had already been healed by Recovery Girl.

“Oh! Al- I mean, Yagi-sensei. W-Why are you here?” Midoriya asked.

“I'm just popping in to check on you, my boy!” Said the skeleton, entering the room first.

“Oh, that's-” Started the greenette, before catching sight of the much shorter detective past the blond. “OH, s-sorry, I d-didn't see you there.” (lie) He said, focusing his gaze on Naomasa.

The detective decided to ignore the lie, he heard lots of similar lies told in the interests of politeness nearly daily. “Not to worry, I'm detective Tsukauchi Naomasa, I work with All Might a fair bit.” He said, eyes flicking to the tall blond.

The greenette looked questioningly at the hero. “Tsukauchi-kun knows about my injury, and about One-For-All, you can talk about them here if you need.” (-) Toshinori said.

“Oh, that's good, then.” (lie) “Um, I'm Midoriya Izuku.” (-) “Wh-What brings you, Tsukauchi-san?”

Tsukauchi wasn't sure what about that statement could be the lie, but decided to leave that to later. “I was hoping to ask you about yesterday's incident, hopefully you might be able to tell us something that could help us catch Shigaraki, or Kurogiri.”
“Of course, if you aren't feeling up for it, I'm sure Tsukauchi-kun could talk to you another time.” (-) Said All Might.

“It's f-fine, I'm just a little tired from the healing, and the hospital testing to make sure everything healed all right.” (-) Said the greenette.

“Everything did heal all right I take it?” Asked the incredibly tall man, failing to conceal a hint of concern.

“Y-Yeah, no h-hearing or sight problems, a-and I kept full mobility.” (-) Reassured the younger One-For-All user, before considering a moment. “The scars do tug a bit when I raise my arms, but that's it.” (-) He said, seemingly deciding on full disclosure.

Toshinori frowned slightly. “I suppose that's as much as we could have hoped for, considering the circumstances.” (-) He said.

“It's good that you were mostly unharmed,” said Naomasa, “would it be all right if you told us about the incident?”

“Y-Yeah, that's fine.” (-) “Wh-Where should I st-start?” The greenette asked.

“Anywhere you like,” the detective told him, “just go through the events, and tell us anything that stood out to you. Anything you could tell us would be immensely helpful.”

“OK, um, I got grabbed by a Nomu while we were watching the heroes fight the other two.” (-) “It had... fire resistance, some sort of sonic attack, wings, and it could somehow see behind itself.” (-) “...I don't think it was supposed to take me.” (-) Said the greenette after a moment.

“Would you mind explaining how you know about those abilities, and what makes you think that?” Asked the detective when he paused for breath.

“It dodged Endeavour's attack without looking, and after that I couldn't burn it. When I tried to use One-For-All to make it drop me, it screamed and my whole body seized up.” (-) the greenette grimaced at the memory, then paused in thought, fingers of his right hand pulling at his bottom lip. “Shigaraki called it glitchy, asked it why it brought me, he didn't seem to expect it.” (-) Well, that was very odd, Nomu always seemed essentially to be brainless puppets in all previous incidents.
“Thank you, sorry for interrupting.” Said the detective, noting down what the greenette had said.

“Oh, th-that's OK.” Midoriya said, before beginning to pull at his lip again. “Shigaraki was about to leave- probably to Iidaten when I got there.” He... stopped whatever he was doing because he wanted to kill me for damaging that Nomu at the USJ.” Naomasa saw All Might stiffen out the corner of his eye, but kept looking at the still thoughtful teen. “He was very childish, and not very rational even for a villain, he kept calling me a cheater, saying that I shouldn't have been able to beat the Nomu.”

“This was the Nomu at the USJ?” Queried Naomasa, causing Midoriya to nod.

“I-I tried to stall, after I sent my location- w-with my phone, but Kurogiri caught on.” “A-After we fought for a while, they warped away, s-so I called Iida to warn him, then rushed over.”

Naomasa was feeling immensely grateful that the villains recognised they were on a time-limit, it was already a miracle that a barely-trained teen could fight two S-rank villains, and possibly a Nomu for as long as he did. “Did the Nomu fight you as well?” He asked.

Midoriya shook his head. “It just sort of sat there, once it had dropped me.”

Naomasa nodded encouragingly. “And how did you know they planned to attack Iidaten?”

“Shigaraki said he was going to come back for me 'after he killed Ingenium'.” Naomasa could feel All Might's blood pressure increasing from here, hopefully the an wouldn't have an aneurysm.

Naomasa noted down this last, which seemed to fit with their running profile of the man as a child, prone to foolishly telling people exactly what he planned to do, and gloating about his abilities. “So you rushed to Iidaten?” He prompted.

What followed was a quick play-by-play of the brief fight at Iidaten, which matched extremely closely with the account he had gotten from Iida Tensei earlier, alongside a few lies- which he tactfully ignored- about the turbo hero giving permission for the public quirk use.

“Is there anything else you think might be relevant?” Asked the detective, once the teen finished
telling him how Kurogiri had fled with his ally as soon as Endeavour showed up.

“I don't think there's anything else I can remember about the attack.” (-) said the greenette after a moment's thought.

“All right then, thank you very much for this, your information will likely be very helpful.” Said Naomasa, already thinking over the details of what the teen had said, hoping against hope for some hint that would lead them to the league. “I should go before one of the nurses comes to yell at me for keeping you from resting. I hope they let you home soon.” He added, standing to leave.

The greenette stammered out a goodbye, after All Might had made a similar wish for the boy's recovery, and both men left. Well, All Might was closer to fleeing, he had developed an understandable dislike of hospitals in recent years.

Naomasa, upon further consideration, decided that the second lie was most likely a result of concern for too many people knowing about One-For-All, which was understandable, really.

(Meanwhile, Izuku was finally relaxing from the ghastly tension he had felt from the moment he noticed the detective, and running over with the voice anything he might have said to the infamous human lie-detector that might have revealed too much. It didn't seem likely, thankfully the conversation had avoided anything even linked to Amber, or anything he shouldn't have known about, so he was hopefully in the clear.)

Nedzu was getting... frustrated. Not only was he no further along with his quest to find the eldest child of the Todoroki household, but there had been another attack by the so-called league, which-while it had resulted in no casualties- ended with the leaders still free, and one of his students injured. Again.

The week's safety net where the youngest Todoroki would be protected by the watchful eyes of the public, and everyone at the Endeavour agency had passed, and now that he knew what was going on, every second that passed where that man was alone with his victims increased his stress.

Some part of his brain told him that they were probably fairly safe in reality- that Endeavour wouldn't do anything to risk his horrifying “plan”, but the reason for the marriage was just a supposition on his part, even if it was a well founded one. So he had the house watched. Subtly of
course, Endeavour was a capable hero- for now- after all.

He thought that some members of staff were beginning to notice his mood, or possibly that he was embroiled in something demanding a great deal of his attention- hence pulling it away from the running of the school. It occurred to him that the lack of any sadistic surprises recently might have tipped them off. Either way, he had no intention of telling the staff if it could be avoided. At least until the case went public, the last thing he needed was one of his teachers letting slip what was going on.

From how completely Touya had vanished off the face of the earth, Nedzu was beginning to doubt that he might have actually died, and his father had covered it up, if not for the fact that the principal didn't think even Endeavour capable of hiding something like that, given how recognisable a public figure he was.

The best bet, he decided, was to try to fathom why the boy had left at the juncture he had. After some consideration, he decided that it boiled down to either deciding there was no longer anything worth staying for- a worrying possibility- or... something happening that made him feel truly unsafe. Something severe enough to overcome his previous reluctance.

From the rudimentary psychological profile he had done from things he recalled of the boy, and things his teachers had said- the staff would never get him to admit to the cameras in the staff room, nor how well he archived the footage- he had ruled out fleeing the country entirely- the boy had little knowledge of foreign languages, and showed no inclination to learn. He was probably the most resentful of all the Todoroki children in his estimation, so... Nedzu frowned. He had reason for anger to get the better of sense, to do something purely out of spite.

Musutafu? That would certainly not be sensible, but he could see how someone like Touya could enjoy the irony of hiding from his father so close to his agency. But he couldn't just hack into every camera in the city. Well, he could, but it would be rather rude of him, probably best to avoid that unless he had no choice.

Time to get some agents on the ground, perhaps.

*You look fine, Izuku.* Said the voice, as the greenette stood outside the door to class 1-A on Monday morning.
'I should have covered it up completely, maybe found someone with a quirk for that.' Said Izuku, fingering the scar on his right cheek self-consciously. This morning he had been feeling much better about it, and just covered it lightly to make it less obvious. Now he was having second thoughts.

_You can do that later if you want to, but we swear, it looks fine._ Said the voice, led by Aoi, before shifting slightly to Ren. _Don't worry about it, I had way worse scars than you when I was just a little older, and nobody even paid attention to them._

Thinking about the grizzled look Ren had seemingly had since he was twelve, Izuku was not reassured by this. Nonetheless, he took a deep breath, and slid open the door- he couldn't just stand in the hall forever.

He entered into a classroom- slightly- more chaotic than usual, clumps of students previously discussing internships, and Bakugou yelling at Kirishima, and Sero- both of whom he was holding off the ground by their collars. Shinsou seemed to be sleeping, and Shouto was seemingly contemplating doing likewise.

A fair few conversations halted, when the glances his classmates threw at him evolved more into stares, making the greenette's anxiety about his new appearance even worse. Izuku looked down at the floor for a moment, before his gaze shot up at a stupefied exclamation from Bakugou. “What the fuck did you do to your hair, shitty nerd?!” Said the blond, despite the fact that his hair currently had a perfect 8:2 parting, which he suspected the two being held off the ground had just been mocking. The voice was beside itself, laughing raucously in its many voices at the sight of what must have been Best Jeanists work- Bakugou would never choose that style for himself.

In the end, Izuku had decided that he rather liked having hair, but couldn't stand the weird uneven effect brought on by the burnt section, so he had gotten an undercut on Saturday. The greenette reached a hand to the now exposed side of his head, blushing furiously. “My hair caught fire.” He mumbled, by way of an explanation, not looking directly at the blond.

“That's rich coming from you 8:2 lad.” Said Sero, still being held up by Bakugou, in a show of near-terminal bravery.

“Oi, shut it Soy-sauce face, your hair's dumber than either of us!” Screeched the furious blond, his hair somehow inexplicably exploding back to it's typical mess of spikes, as he roughly shook the boy he was somehow holding in one hand.

“I think its pretty manly!” Said the redhead in Bakugou's other hand. “Sweet new do, Midoriya.”
He added, with a thumbs-up, and a sharp-toothed grin.

“It does seem like a reasonable choice.” Said Todoroki suddenly, face and voice blank, causing several people to look at him- surprised at hearing the second quietest member of class taking part in the discourse. “You said it would fade, but I didn't think you meant that quickly.” He added with a slow blink.

Izuku was seemingly not going to be allowed to stop blushing today. “Oh, um, i-it's just make-up.” He stammered, looking anywhere but at the bi-chromatic teen.

“Wait, what's just make-up?” Asked Uraraka, who was mostly to Izuku's left as he made his way to his desk.

Izuku blinked, maybe he had managed to make it less noticeable than he had thought. The greenette tapped the area on the right of his face- feeling it somewhat less than he might have last week. “I m-managed to burn myself pretty b-badly on Thursday, it l-left a scar.”

The brunette's eyes widened, and she rushed to where Izuku was now sitting at his desk, her peering at him making him distinctly uncomfortable. “What? Why didn't you say anything about it when I called?” She demanded. Shinsou had also gotten up, and looked like he wanted to ask after the greenette's health himself, while Bakugou had turned around to glare at him.

Izuku tried to stammer out an excuse for failing to tell his friend, and was mercifully rescued by Tokoyami, even if his line of questioning wasn't much better. “Midoriya, how could one with power over fire like yourself get burned?” He intoned seriously.

“I- um, I'm not fireproof, except on my h-hands.” Izuku said, holding them up as if to demonstrate. A lot of his classmates seemed really surprised by this revelation. Had he really never mentioned it?

No, you hadn't, just like you still haven't said anything about your new quirk registration, or abilities. The voice told him dryly.

“That's some well-done make-up,” Said Yaoyorozu, now that she had a clear line of sight to the greenette, and could see his scar as he faced Tokoyami, “did your mother help you with that?”
“N-No, I did it on my own?” Answered the golden-eyed teen hesitantly.

This revelation swiftly had not just Yaoyorozu, but also Jirou, Ashido, and to even the voice's surprise, Hagakure converging on him, alongside Aoyama, all inspecting his work, and variously complimenting it and requesting tips, seeming amazed at this newly revealed talent. Izuku naturally devolved into stammering, and trying to hide his face in his arms. Meanwhile the voice distracted itself by wondering why on earth Hagakure was interested.

“Homeroom is about to start,” said Iida, from just outside the interrogatory knot of people, “you should make your way to your seats before the teacher arrives.” He was roundly ignored.

The knot did however become instantly silent at the tired voice that followed. “Iida is right. Stop wasting time.” Said Aizawa, who had just silently entered the room, prompting the little group to scatter immediately.

The teacher inspected the suddenly silent class for a moment, before turning to look at Izuku again. “Problem child, a word.” He said, jerking his chin to the door, and then stalking out.

Izuku stood, and followed the teacher into the hall with some trepidation. This is probably about Thursday, or Todoroki. Said the voice consideringly.

“Are you OK?” Asked the dark-haired man flatly as soon as the greenette had shut the door behind him.

Izuku was left blinking at the unexpected question. “I'm fine, Sensei, just a couple of scars.”

Aizawa stared at the partially hidden scar on the greenette's face for a moment. “Being grabbed like that, and forced into fighting a villain will have been... stressful.” Said the teacher, seemingly choosing his words with care.

That's honestly better than we've come to expect from educators. Said the voice, now seemingly filled with a touch more respect for the tired man after hearing him check on the mental well-being of a student like this.

“I'm fine, really. No nightmares or anything.” Said Izuku, prompting the teacher to study him seriously for several seconds.
“All right, I believe you. You should talk to someone if that changes, understood?” Izuku nodded.
“...Now then, I don't know exactly what happened, but I do know Iida Tensei.” Aizawa added, face growing hard.

Izuku swallowed. “Sensei?”

“I am reasonably confident that Iida is covering for you, given what I do know. Now, I can't prove it, and any illegal quirk use worked out well this time. That being the case, I won't unduly punish you for what you did, but I expect you to write a fifteen hundred word essay on similar cases where civilian interference- and make no mistake that you are a civilian, still- made matters worse by the end of the week. I also do not expect to hear about you doing something similar again, are we clear?” The teacher asked, staring intently at Izuku.

Izuku was caught between a desire to stare at the floor under that gaze, and mild indignation at the rebuke. Illegal or not, he had done the best he could have been expected to under the circumstances, and quite possibly saved the lives of two heroes. “What was I supposed to do?” He asked, not looking away.

Aizawa's frown deepened. “You should have called the heroes, and left it at that.” He said firmly.

“If I had done that, Ingenium could have died, none of the heroes were going to get there in time.” Answered the greenette, no less firm.

“In this case, yes. That's why in this case you're not getting much more than a rebuke. Other times, your interference could have damaged teamwork, possibly further endangering the heroes, or civilians involved. Besides which, you further endangered yourself.”

Izuku didn't know how to respond to that. It wasn't strictly a valid criticism, he had enough training to work as part of a team- at least two members of the voice didn't work alone- but there was no way for Aizawa to know that, and he wasn't about to tell him, so he kept his mouth shut.

Taking the silence as acceptance of what he had said, Aizawa went on. “Now, you should get back inside, homeroom is about to start... oh, one last thing, the principal wants to see you after your heroics lesson today.”
of conversations and lessons

Chapter Summary

the first day of school after the work experience week continues.

Chapter Notes

help, how do humans actually talk to one-another?
as always, critiques, and compliments both greatly appreciated.
thanks a lot for all the support (still have no idea how i managed to get 1k kudos...)

The sound in the dining hall washed over Izuku, he heard none of it. The voice had long since run through all the possibilities it could come up with for why Nedzu could want to speak to him- from the mundane, to the most severe- but Izuku was having trouble avoiding the topic, he knew that there was no way he could know for sure before the meeting itself, but he couldn't help going back to worry it like an old bone.

The longer he focused on the problem, the more he felt himself dwelling on the worst possible reasons. The principal had discovered he was Amber, he thought he was working for All-For-One- a horrifying possibility that Ren had pointed out as a possible outcome of their previous non-intervention- maybe he had even puzzled out the existence of the voice. Izuku couldn't even begin to imagine the consequences of that last, even with the biggest risk eliminated for years. He might end up-

“Uraraka-chan is asking about your internship.” Said Ichigou, snapping him out of his ever-darkening thoughts.

“Oh, um, it was g-good,” said the greenette, eager for the distraction.

“It must have been pretty educational, learning from the number two hero.” Said Iida, managing to limit himself to smaller chops in the crowded hall.

As much as Izuku dearly wished to check if anything had happened on the day he had failed to be there to keep an eye out for Shouto, now wasn't a good time, and this topic could easily make the bi-chromatic boy uncomfortable. “Y-Yeah, h-he's a bit intense, though. What about you, Uraraka-
Uraraka’s intense face from before the festival returned with a vengeance. “It was enlightening.” She said ominously.

*I like her.* Said the voice, led by Aoi. *Looks like the less terrifying part might need revision, she is beginning to remind us of Aoi a lot.*

“T-That’s good,” said the mildly frightened greenette, “do you think you managed to improve your combat skills, then?”

“Yeah!” Said the brunette brightly, intensity vanishing as if it had never been. “Gunhead mainly focused on teaching us armed combat, mostly knives.”

“Did you have the knife, or your opponent?” Asked Shouto slowly, with a tiny scrunch to his eyebrows.

“Both, we started out on how to deal with armed opponents, then how to handle knives.” Uraraka answered.

Shouto gave a small nod, before the hitherto silent Shinsou spoke. “Lucky you, Miss Joke seemed more concerned with mocking me than teaching.” He complained bitterly.

*Hmmm, maybe we should have warned him about that,* said the voice, *but it did seem a sensible choice, given the way he seemed to want to go with his quirk.*

“S-She did teach y-you, though? N-Not like U-Uwabami?” Izuku asked, glancing briefly at the cluster of students commiserating with Yaoyorozu, and Kendou.

“Yeah,” said the purple-haired teen with a small sigh, “I learned a couple of new ways to get people to talk to me, then she spent some time on hand-to-hand. Said Aizawa had told her to specifically. Totally got my ass kicked.”

“That is very wise,” said Iida enthusiastically, “it makes sense to be prepared in case you cannot
get someone to answer you! As expected of Aizawa-sensei, no wonder UA enjoys such a sterling reputation.” Iida paused. “You really should watch your language, Shinsou-kun.”

*So much for seeing how his brother's agency works helping him relax.* Lamented the voice. Izuku didn't laugh. Really. It wasn't Iida's fault he treated everything with such rigidity.

'Maybe we should help him go to Hawks' agency next.' He said with mock seriousness.

“What about you, Iida-kun? I bet you learned a bunch of stuff from such a large agency!” Said Uraraka cheerfully, before any snark could escape the brainwasher.

“Of course,” Answered the bluet, “My brother's injuries prevented him from patrolling, but I was able to patrol, and spar with many different sidekicks. Though my internship was less combat focused than yours seemingly were.”

Shouto made a small humming noise. “That makes sense,” he said slowly, “you could get combat training any time. I assume you worked mostly on PR?”

“Indeed!” Exclaimed the engine-legged boy. “And other things that can't be easily taught out of the agency. Things were very busy after the Stain incident.”

*Pretty sure the aerie would give Iida-kun an aneurysm.* Said the voice, seeming like it was genuinely worried about that possibility.

There was a small lull in the conversation, as everyone tried to avoid the topic of Ingenium's injuries- for all that they had now all healed- and the league attack. Shouto, in typical style, bulldozed the problem with a full non sequitur. “I hadn't thought that a burn scar could be covered that well.” He said, peering at Izuku from his spot on the greenette's right.

Izuku blushed at the attention. “I-It's n-not that well c-covered,” he explained, “if I w-wanted, I-I could m-make it harder t-to see.”

It wasn't anywhere near as severe as Touya's scars, so other than a slight difference in texture, it ought to be possible to render the mark undetectable. Izuku still wasn't entirely sure if he wanted to do that- except as Amber, of course. He thought he might actually try going without make-up at some point... the lack of interest in the scar itself, in favour of the make-up was encouraging.
Shouto blinked slowly. “I see, I had never thought to try that.”

“I-I could show you how, i-if you like.” The greenette said, then seemed to realise how this might be taken. “N-Not that- I mean- you look great.”

Well, Izuku had well and truly put his foot in it this time, judging from the way that Shinsou snorted, and the voice was laughing. ‘Not helping, guys.’ he told it, as he blushed, covered his face with his arms, and desperately tried to think of a way to back-pedal.

“Would that even work?” Asked Shouto, touching the scar tissue with his right hand. “It's on my eye.”

Izuku peered out from behind his arms, and relaxed slightly when not only was his friend not annoyed at his offer, he was graciously ignoring the slip-up. “Um, yeah, you'd j-just have to be careful. Y-You could always look for someone with a colour-changing quirk i-if you prefer, though.” He said, face still beet-red from embarrassment.

Shouto looked thoughtful as he watched Izuku for several seconds. “Maybe. I'll have to give it some thought. Thank you for offering.” He said eventually, giving a tiny smile.

“Y-You're welcome.” Said the greenette uncertainly.

You're lucky you developed an attraction to someone this oblivious. Said the voice wryly. Though, I guess it would prove a problem if you end up confessing.

Izuku would have started blushing, if not for the fact that he still was. 'It's not like that!' He protested. 'Shouto-kun is just a friend.'

The voice, predictably, didn't believe him. From the looks of things, you can't even fool Uraraka-chan, how do you think you're going to fool us? Besides, we could hear what you were thinking during that fight.

Izuku wished it were possible to glare at the voice, but was forced to settle for feeling the burning in his face intensify, remembering the fight in question- the one where Shouto had managed to
partially destroy his uniform. 'drop it.' He didn't want to discuss this, not now, not when his friends would notice the inexplicable blushing. Hopefully not ever, since it wouldn't go anywhere. Shouto was clearly way out of his league.

*Fine, fine. We'll drop it, but Uraraka-chan will probably ask about it later, and you should probably hurry and finish your lunch.*

Eijirou was stoked to see how everyone had improved after their internships, hopefully they wouldn't have left him too far behind in the combat department. For all that Tetsutetsu, and he had learned a bunch of totally useful stuff with Fourth Kind, it had mostly been the less flashy stuff, like cleaning up litter, or- oddly- making a good cup of tea.

The redhead brightened when the teacher entered with characteristic flashiness. He still hadn't quite gotten over the fact that they were being taught by the All Might. “I am here! To give you zygotes another foundational heroics exercise!” Boomed the enormously muscular hero, ever-present grin widening as he spoke. “We'll be using ground gamma today, so suit up, and move out, heroes!”

Eijirou followed most of the class- he still wasn't sure why his class had so few girls- to get changed. Putting on his pauldrons- which he needed to ask the support company to make slightly more comfortable to move in- he really wished his quirk didn't destroy clothing so well. He always felt a bit exposed without a shirt, and people would likely start asking him if he was just an exhibitionist.

As it was, he had had to make sure the trousers were pretty loose, and add that- super manly- piece of cloth to make sure any time his clothes went to tatters it looked intentional.

Looking around, Eijirou really didn't think his costume was anywhere near as cool or practical as half the class. Iida's knight thing was awesome, Bakugou's vest was damn manly, even if it was only slightly less revealing than his own shirtlessness. Midoriya was the complete opposite, his looser jumpsuit had a really awesome design, but just like his uniform, it made it really hard to remember how unreasonably buff the greenette was. Eijirou was careful not to stare, when his eyes glanced off the scars Midoriya had to have gotten on Thursday. Todoroki had seemingly totally changed his costume, dropping the ice, and going for a plain blue jumpsuit, instead of the white one. He was another one who didn't like showing off his-

The redhead shook himself, he could ask his classmates for workout tips later, now he should be heading to ground gamma- wherever that was.
It didn't take long to find really, UA had a huge campus, but everything was pretty heavily signposted. When he got there, he found the enormously tall hero standing just outside what looked to be a huge maze of piping, reaching above the walls surrounding the area, and a ton of cranes.

UA had some pretty awesome facilities, but he did sometimes wonder how they got the funding to build this stuff.

The redhead arrived pretty quickly, only behind Hagakure- an extremely good reason to not complain about overly revealing costumes, however manly it was that she chose to improve her quirk by going around like that- and was quickly joined by his classmates with simpler costumes-Midoriya, Sato, Todoroki, Yaoyorozu, etc.

a couple of minutes later, the rest of the class had arrived, and All Might posed with hands on hips to address them. “You are here! For foundational heroics, I hope you're in good spirits, it's been a while, hopefully you all gained some valuable experience last week!”

Eijirou winced slightly, remembering what he had heard about Yaoyorozu's week with Uwabami, and the only slightly better week Bakugou had had with Best Jeanist. The blond had complained about the hero's insistence on working on his image, and public interactions all week, even after his hair had somehow fixed itself.

Well, the redhead supposed that the hero had a bit of a point- Bakugou telling you exactly what he thought of you was part of why he thought he was so manly, but it could be a bit much for some people. “So to get you back into the swing of things after your work-place experience week, we could do something a bit fun today. A rescue training race!”

hearing the word race, Eijirou glanced at the mess of metal visible over the walls, racing in that would be pretty awesome, even if he didn't think he could beat out some of the more mobile members of the class- such as the bluet who was currently asking why they weren't at the USJ.

“Simple, the USJ is only for disaster rescue! Now, you'll be competing in groups of five, trying to reach a damsel in distress,” here All Might pointed at himself, making Eijirou have to stifle a laugh at the idea of the seven foot tall, muscle-bound hero as a damsel, “the winner is whoever gets there first. But you should remember to keep property damage to a minimum.” All Might pointed at both Midoriya and Bakugou as he said this, causing the greenette to blush, and the blond to grumble loudly about being singled out.
The first group of five consisted of Mina, Sero, Iida, Ojiro, and Midoriya, which certainly reduced the number of people with great mobility who would be in the other groups. The rest of the class converged at a large screen just outside the area where they could watch the race, and began to discuss how they thought it would go.

“Hey Bakugou, who do you think is gonna win?” He asked, turning to the blond, who was glaring silently at the screens showing the starting locations.

“What kind of dumb question is that, Kirishima?” Demanded the blond. “Glasses is useless at climbing, Soy-sauce Face will obviously win.”

“Not Midoriya? He was awesome in the sports festival race, wasn't he?”

Bakugou scowled at him. “Hmph, Deku is fucking slow at climbing, even if he can glide, Soy-sauce Face will swing just as fast.”

Before Eijirou could respond to that, the match started, and he had to turn to view the race. Most of the five did what he had vaguely been expecting. Midoriya did not. Instead of climbing similarly to Mina, by melting himself some handholds, his body immediately became wrapped in a layer of golden sparks, and he moved off like a shot, moving way faster than even someone as fit as Midoriya should have been able to, then jumped at the wall of the nearest building.

“What the fuck?” Asked Kaminari, and several others echoed the sentiment, as Midoriya jumped twice his own height at the nearest wall, then began to rapidly bounce between two buildings, ending up on the roof in... probably less than six seconds.

It took Eijirou a moment to find his tongue after this sudden development- by which time Midoriya had already taken the lead, jumping on various bits of piping, heading straight for All Might, and looking awesome while doing it. “How is he- Bakugou, did you know he could do that?”

Bakugou didn't respond at first, so the redhead turned from the screen to look at him. The blond was glaring at the screen, and his eye was twitching slightly. He looked pissed... more pissed than he normally looked. “Bakugou?” He asked with some concern.

“Fucking Deku,” Bakugou growled, “he was still fucking holding back. Why can't that shitty nerd not half-ass anything?!”
Eijirou wasn't sure how to respond to that. Bakugou seemed to take the idea that Midoriya hadn't gone all-out as a personal insult. If he had been holding back, it was kind of unmanly, but Midoriya really didn't seem the type to do that without a good reason, and insulting Bakugou didn't sound like something he would call a good reason.

“Hey, I'm sure he had a-” Started Eijirou, hoping to placate the blond.

“I don't care what his reason is, I'm getting a fucking rematch.” Bakugou said, cutting him off.

A couple of minutes later, the five who had been racing returned with All Might, Midoriya wearing the sash he had more than earned- he had been fastest by a huge margin.

Almost as soon as the little group rejoined them, most of the class rushed to Midoriya, likely to ask how he had gained such an awesome new ability. Bakugou got there first, and asked loudly, and aggressively. “What the shit, nerd? You said you went all out in our match, and you were hiding this shit?!” He demanded, grabbing the front of the greenette's costume.

“Kacchan, I-I wasn't- I couldn't do that during our f-fight.” Stammered out the greenette, who was seemingly moments away from being exploded.

Bakugou narrowed his eyes, but let go of his classmate- seemingly moments before both All Might, and Iida reprimanded him for grabbing it. “Explain.” He demanded, still glaring.

“I-I only recently f-figured out I c-could do that, a-and I hadn't gotten the h-hang of it yet.” Said the greenette, shrinking in on himself slightly now that he was free to do so.

“How did you do that?” Asked Shinsou, in a far more reasonable tone of voice, seeming merely curious, attempting to pull an uncooperative Bakugou out of Midoriya's personal space.

“Um, we figured out my q-quirk wasn't just f-fire when Aizawa-sensei tried to figure out what happened at the U-USJ.” Midoriya explained.

Eijirou remembered what Asui had said about what happened at the USJ, she was really frightened- he thought, it could be hard to read her expressions, or tone of voice- Midoriya had just collapsed when Aizawa had erased his quirk. Apparently she had thought that he had died at first.
“So you have a dual quirk, like Todoroki-kun?” Yaoyorozu asked.

Bakugou, seeming only slightly less furious, was finally moved a bit further from the frightened greenette when Eijirou joined the brainwasher's efforts. “S-Sort of? It's more like Hado-senpai, it's one big pool of energy that does both things.”

“What does Hado-senpai's quirk do?” Eijirou asked, not remembering ever meeting that upperclassman.

“Young Hado's quirk lets her convert her vitality into energy, and use it to make shockwaves. Young Midoya's quirk goes the other way, which is why he collapsed when his quirk was erased. Aizawa-kun has agreed not to erase it again, now, I'm afraid we have to start the next race if we wish to finish on time.” Said All Might, stepping into the interrogation, and swiftly bringing it to an end.

Eijirou thought that was a pretty awesome new ability, even if the way he had found out about that aspect of his quirk had been so unpleasant.

During the course of the next race (which Asui won) Bakugou pulled Midoriya- literally, nearly causing Iida to yell at him again- to the side. They briefly talked, Bakugou seeming a little angry still, and Midoriya trying to placate him. Whatever they said- probably a demand for a rematch, given Bakugou's (manly, but sometimes excessive) fighting spirit- Bakugou marched back seeming satisfied.

Midoriya went back to his own group- minus Uraraka- who seemed to mostly be refraining from too many questions. It had probably been a bit unmanly of the rest of the class- himself included- to crowd the shy greenette like that, given how much more comfortable he looked now that fewer people were questioning him.

Eijirou raced in the third group, and was pretty happy with third place, given that he was competing with Todoroki, and Tokoyami, who were both stupidly fast. Todoroki edged the bird-headed teen out for the sash in the end, surfing on his ice up to All Might.

The redhead was still congratulating Bakugou on his “too fucking easy” victory in the final race, as the class returned to the main building to change back into their uniforms.
“Come in.” Said the squeaky voice of the principal of UA when Izuku knocked on the door of his office.

Midoriya opened the door, and walked forward- feeling like he was walking to his own doom- before shutting it again. The mouse was sipping a cup of tea, and looking over some paperwork, but he put the latter aside as soon as he saw Izuku. “Ah, Midoriya-kun, so glad you could make it.”

“Um, you wanted to see me, sir?” Said the nervous greenette, not taking his eyes from the principal, though glad that the voice saw no signs of an ambush in his peripheral vision.

“That I did,” Nedzu said, customary reassuring smile just as opaque as ever, “I was hoping we could have a chat,” the bear gestured to a seat on one side of the room's small table, “tea?”

Izuku could think of no reason not to take the tea- he was going to fidget anyway. “Yes, please.” He said meekly, taking the offered seat, as the principal walked to the opposite one from behind his desk.

Ren was beginning to get testy already. I still haven't figured out if the smile is intended to put people off their guard, off balance, or just to keep them from figuring out what he's thinking. Said the voice, most of its attention focused on the dog.

Nothing more was said, as Nedzu turned over two of the cups resting on the table, and filled them with green tea from the prepared container. “thank you.” Said the greenette, taking to proffered cup. Taking a sip, Izuku thought the tea was quite good, and his concern that the principal would suddenly poison him remained extremely mild- despite what he was feeling on the subject from Ren.

“Let's get right to it then, Midoriya-kun. What would you say is the most important quality of a hero?”

This line of questioning did nothing to improve his anxiety. “I-Is this about Thursday, sir?”

The principal paused, his own tea halfway to his mouth. “Heavens no,” he said hurriedly, “or at least not specifically. You'll have to humour me.”
Izuku thought about the question. There were many things heroes ought to be. Driven, for one. You could never make it as a hero without determination. A desire to help people was certainly a plus, but in itself it was just a dream.

A large section of the population might say strong- an unfortunate consequence of the world All Might had created, whether he meant to or not- or skilled- which could probably be blamed on Hawks, Best Jeanist, and Edgeshot. But no, strength misapplied was worse than useless.

The centuries of experience Izuku had indirect access to showed time and time again that there was only one reasonable answer to that question. “Judgement.” He said, as the voice echoed the thought. Good judgement was the hallmark of a good hero, bad judgement the hallmark of a dangerous hero.

Nedzu's expression didn't seem to actually change, but Izuku got the distinct feeling that it was now slightly more manic, feral. “That is a significantly more lucid response than I might have expected of a first-year student. Can you tell me what you mean by that?” He asked, putting down his cup.

‘Is this working up to scolding, or teaching?’ Asked the greenette, taking a sip of tea to give himself a moment to think.

“Um, the ability to choose the right course of action to improve a situation?” He asked, still not certain what the principal wanted.

“And how would this skill be acquired?” Nedzu asked, causing Izuku to lean more toward teaching.

*Always a good sign when someone with an intelligence quirk thinks of it as a skill, rather than a talent.* Commented the voice, led by Hayato.

“Experience, and a greater information pool, I suppose.” Izuku said slowly.

“So the eldest hero is the best, then?” The principal pressed.

*This is definitely a lesson, does he want to take you as his student?* Wondered the voice.
“Um, only if they are all equally willing to learn from mistakes?” He certainly didn't think of himself as the best hero in the world, his experience was limited in scope, having never included heroics in the modern sense of the word. Not to mention the strict limit on team size- no member of the voice had ever fought alongside more than two people, or joined any large-scale raids.

“Correct, though I might also add that not all experience is of equal value.” Said Nedzu, clapping his hands together.

Izuku nodded. That made sense, a fifty year old baker would probably be a less capable hero than an eighteen year old fresh from the UA hero course.

“You seem to have a better understanding of what it takes to be a hero than most people, even a number of licensed heroes,” complimented the principal, “have you ever spent any time on the subject of quirk analysis?”

Izuku couldn't help the way his eyes lit up at this new topic. It was entirely possible that the piece of the voice he talked to most outside of actual training was Hayato, for not other reason than because Hayato was the most knowledgeable on that subject.

Nedzu clearly caught the expression change, since he didn't bother waiting for an answer. “Wonderful,” he said, sounding genuinely happy at the response, “why would you say that Bakugou-kun won his match with Kirishima-kun during the sports festival?”

“Kacchan had the reach advantage, and he could keep Kirishima-kun back. Transformation quirks tend to be hard to maintain for long periods.” He answered, after only thinking for a moment. For once, he didn't feel the need to confer with the voice- oddly, among the seven of them, he probably was the expert in this field, it just came naturally to him.

Thus began a session of rapid-fire questions and answers, some about fights Izuku had seen, others simplistic hypotheticals. Nedzu seemed fairly satisfied with most of his answers, as far as he could tell, only adding to his answers a few times. After ten minutes, the principal finally called the questioning to a halt.

“Very good!” He said, the smile seeming more genuine, prompting Izuku to blush at the praise. “your analysis is excellent, definitely a talent worth nurturing.”
“Thank you, sir.” Said the greenette, ducking his head.

“The main reason I wanted to talk to you today was to see if you would benefit from private tuition- mainly in analysis, but also other subjects that would hopefully help improve your overall judgement. It seems clear that you would, very much so. That is, if you wish to.” The mouse said, tilting his head slightly.
Nedzu was pleasantly surprised by today's meeting. Midoriya was substantially more worthwhile as a pupil than he had expected, between the marvellous views about important characteristics for heroes, and the excellent analyses. The principal had seldom seen someone so talented in ferreting out the potential strengths and weaknesses of hypothetical quirks, or how they played into the overall skill-set of the people possessing them— if the questions regarding matchups between real people were any measure.

He may have gotten slightly ahead of himself though, so he had asked if the boy was willing to undertake the additional lessons. This had prompted an interesting pause, paired with those odd microexpressions that seemed to have no anchor in anything happening in reality. He supposed it was possible that Midoriya had dissociative identity disorder, but if so, the various alters did an incredible job of impersonating one-another.

After a few seconds thought, the golden-eyed student nodded. “I'm willing, it is something I'd like to improve on.” He said.
Nedzu held in his glee, it had been too long since he had had a personal student with such potential, but it was too soon by far to say if he would ever meet it- a number of students had quit his tutelage by means of running screaming from his office, so perhaps he was slightly too demanding.

“Excellent,” said the principal, “in that case, there are a few things we will have to decide on. We can't have you staying after school for these lessons, so we will have to choose another class to steal time from.” He said the last as more of a question, urging the student to voice an opinion.

“I'm fluent in English.” Said the greenette in english, smiling lightly.

Nedzu filed that tidbit away for further thought. “Well, that certainly makes the decision easier. If you aren't accredited as such you will still have to take your English exams.” He said, also in English leaving the greenette an opening if he had exaggerated- though, knowing people Midoriya's age, there was a chance he would just double down.

The teen simply nodded. “I'm not,” he said, still not switching to Japanese, “but if it makes things easier I could probably change that.”

“Either way is fine for me, I'll inform Present Mic not to expect you for the appropriate periods.” Nedzu said, before turning to a slightly more serious topic. “Now, I must talk to you about what you said to Aizawa regarding Todoroki-kun.”

The atmosphere in the room suddenly changed. It wasn't that Midoriya hadn't been paying attention to him before, but now it felt much more so. Nedzu was reminded slightly of being in the lab. “Sir?” The boy said, tone polite, face carefully blank.

“What do you know about Todoroki-kun's situation?” He said, as Midoriya somehow gave the impression that he was weighing him with his gaze.

“Nothing. If I knew anything worth talking about, I would have said something.” The greenette said calmly- on the surface anyway, the minuscule cracks in his mask revealed anger, probably fairly severe anger at that. Nedzu had to hope the anger was not directed at him.

This sort of conversation was always a nightmare, it was devilishly tricky to sound out exactly what the other party knew without letting them know anything new. “If you suspect anything dangerous of going on, you should tell a teacher directly.” He said carefully.
The minute changes to Midoriya's face indicated that he had just clenched his jaw. Hard. “If,” the greenette ground out after taking a moment, “hypothetically I found out anything, then it would be by being told by someone I didn't know. In which case, I would probably know nothing concrete except through inference.”

Nedzu fought the urge to frown, and chose a different tack. “What do you suppose a hero with good judgement would do, if he found an authority figure was abusing their position?”

“Make sure it stopped as quickly as possible, while keeping collateral damage to a minimum.” Midoriya said, not a hint of guilt or regret in his voice.

“And how might they go about that, assuming they couldn't stop them personally?” The mouse prodded.

“By making sure someone who could stop them knew about it as soon as possible.” Midoriya said, gesturing to Nedzu with one hand.

So it had been a calculated move. Not just that, but a move not intended to get Aizawa to move, but rather to get Nedzu to move himself. Midoriya clearly felt that he had done the right thing, and unfortunately he made some semi-valid points. Time to drop the subject, he could hopefully get Midoriya see that his actions were... suboptimal over time.

Nedzu thought for a moment, he had intended to set homework before his first true lesson, but perhaps he should change the order he was going to do things in this case. “All right then, I won't keep you any longer,” said the principal brightly, standing from his chair, “I hope you could peruse a couple of books before our first lesson.” He said, moving quickly to his bookcase, and selecting a pair of slim volumes.

’All right,’ said Izuku to the voice, as soon as he had left the office, two books in hand, 'you got really quiet at the end there, Yugo, what's up?'

The rest of the voice rapidly turned their attention to the third incarnation, who was silent for several seconds, as Izuku walked down the empty halls of UA. Wings. He said finally, the rest of the voice not joining in.
'Wings?' Asked the uncomprehending greenette.

Yugo didn't respond with words, but with a series of images, and ideas that represented a half-formed thought process.


Izuku paled as he digested the images enough to realize what it was that Yugo was trying to say. Most of the rest of the voice sat in equally horrified silence. It looked like Amber had some urgent work to do tonight.

Toumita Yari, not significantly better known as the underground hero Bullseye, was patrolling in Musutafu lately, at least partially out of a desire to avoid anywhere he was involved in anything newsworthy for a while. Keeping his name out of the stain arrest stories had been... well, not a sign of foresight, given that he always avoided media attention like the plague, but certainly a happy accident.

They should really have known that Stain would have supporters given that the parasites had been trumpeting everything the maniac did for so long. Given that the league had gotten involved, it was a miracle that Ingenium had survived. A bigger miracle that there were no casualties- why was Endeavour even there?

Honestly, Yari was a bit distracted with considering a possible costume change. A couple of days ago some young hero had thought he was the villain during a fight with a minor villain, and the villain had nearly gotten away. It had actually gotten to the point that he had had to show the greenwood his license to avoid getting arrested.

Yari chuckled slightly, greenwood wouldn't actually have been able to arrest him, given the difference in experience, even if he had been the villain. But it did highlight the issue with going around in a nondescript black jumpsuit in the middle of the night and accosting people. Even Aizawa wore those goggles, despite how much he hated being recognised, so clearly he needed something more than all the pouches of various projectiles to let people recognise him.

A bullseye might be fitting, but he hardly wanted to encourage villains to aim at him, he mused as he walked down the all but deserted streets. It was nice being back at ground level, meant he wasn't
actually tailing anyone, plus there wasn't nearly so much jumping. Remembering why it was that he tended to tail people from above, the hero glanced upwards, checking the rooftops for anything suspicious. People almost never looked up.

Seeing nothing, Yari trained his eyes on the street again, noting the alleys, and briefly glancing at the few pedestrians. Mostly they were just salarymen back from either a very late shift, or some amount of late drinking. He noted a few of them swaying as they walked.

Remembering the route he had decided on for today, the hero turned left onto another street, rubbing his hands together to warm them, and cursing both the temperature, and the fact that his quirk didn't work properly if he wore gloves.

Suddenly a hurried voice sounded in the hero's ear. “Possible sighting of Amber at XXXXXXX street. Hero Calico is in pursuit, heading east.”

Bullseye widened his eyes. The most infamous vigilante- or possibly an unbelievably good copycat- was just two streets away. He took off at a run, hurriedly telling dispatch that he was joining the pursuit.

It only took a couple of minutes to get to where he thought Amber had to be going, and sure enough, a short figure sprinted out of an alley a dozen metres ahead of the hero. “Stop!” He yelled, for all the good that ever did, starting to chase the vigilante.

He couldn't just let the vigilante get away, but Amber was infamously non-violent (comparatively), and surprisingly cooperative with heroes. A good case for possible reform. And he was clearly a kid. Avoiding the pouches containing anything sharp, the hero pulled free a rock, and looked at the kid's shoulder.

Rushing to catch up, the hero raised his arm, and instinctively he knew how to move. Easily following the natural-feeling movement, he loosed the rock.

Amber was struck in the shoulder at just the right moment, he overbalanced and began to fall. Unfortunately, the vigilante showed incredible reflexes, immediately tucking into a roll, and landing on his feet, then swiftly ducking out of the heroes view down an alley.
'Dammit.' thought Izuku, as he pounded down the alley, what would likely soon be a bruise the size of an apple making itself known on his shoulder. 'What are the odds I would run into the one hero who's ever actually seen me?'

*Doesn't matter now.* Said the voice calmly, headed by Ren. *You need to get away from their pursuit. The rooftops would let you move more freely.*

Izuku stopped suddenly, turning to face the second hero- the one who had thrown something at him- as he entered the alley. Hopefully Calico was a little over a minute behind.

It would probably be better to avoid the more distinctive sports festival moves, so Izuku instead copied something he had seen Endeavour do a few times, forming a little spear from his fire, and throwing it like a javelin at the hero, who saw the fast-moving projectile, and threw himself into a roll to get out of the way.

Taking advantage of the momentary distraction, Izuku lit the soles of his shoes on fire, grabbed one percent of One-For-All, and began to run up and along the wall to his left. The javelin stopped just short of where the hero had been, hovering in the air, slowly cooling- it should dissipate in about a minute. Izuku grabbed the edge of the fire-escape, a row of molten footprints in the wall behind him.

The hero quickly righted himself, and spotted the vigilante hanging from the fire-escape. “You can't get away, it would be easier if you surrendered.” He persuaded, still trying to catch up.

Izuku said nothing, instead using three percent of One-For-All for a moment to not only pull himself up from the rail, but grab the bottom of the next platform up, before swinging down onto the fire-escape proper.

“Amber sighted in an alley off XXXXXX street, making for the rooftops.” Said the hero, just before Izuku heard to harsh metallic sound of the ladder lowering.

Keeping one percent full cowling, Izuku ran loudly across the metal structure, taking the stairs three at a time, the hero in pursuit, but falling behind. *Block the stairway.* Advised the voice, once Izuku had reached the top of the fire-escape, just one floor below the roof.

'Wouldn't that be too dangerous?' He asked, wasting precious moments arguing with the voice.
"Just don't let the fire touch the metal." It said hurriedly, before sending a mental image of the gap in the floor for the stairs covered by a layer of flames.

One-For-All poured into the internal bonfire again, and it roared to life as Izuku followed the voice's advice, forming a large, bright flame between his hands. The fire grew for a pair of heartbeats, before the voice spoke again. *That's enough.* The greenette stopped adding to the fire, and formed it into a roughly square sheet, before hurriedly putting it at the top of the last flight of stairs. Hopefully it would block ingress for a good few minutes, without damaging the structural integrity of the fire-escape.

Glancing up, both the voice and he began some rapid calculations. The voice got the answer first. *Five.* It said. Izuku bit his bottom lip, then took a risk, flooding his body with five percent of One-For-All, causing it to light up with sparks for the half-second he spent jumping to grab the edge of the roof.

Rapidly moving back down to one percent, the greenette hauled himself easily up from his position dangling over the edge. 'Any idea what the best direction would be from here?' He asked, already moving quickly away from where the heroes knew he was- both from the bright glow, and from the call for backup.

*Keep going east, then drop down a few streets away, you'll lose them if they still aren't on the roof.* Izuku did as instructed, veering right, intending to jump the upcoming gap between the building he was on, and its neighbour.

He landed safely, rolling on impact with the second roof, and rushing further from his last known position. Then he stalled, something unaccountably grabbing his wrist. Looking back, he saw the rapidly reassembling form of the patchwork hero- minus a hand- on the first rooftop, and a hand firmly grasping his left wrist.

'Dammit, how did he catch up so fast?' Cursed the vigilante.

*He must have taken the fire-escape on that building to the south, come on, we need to move.*

"This is pointless," Reasoned the hero, having to shout over the distance between them, “Given your age, and track record, there's every chance that even after we catch you, you could become a hero in your own right.”
The hero did have a point—there was a good chance that Amber might no longer be needed when Heat Haze could move on his own—but Izuku wasn't about to say anything. He had never spoken as Amber in front of a hero, and he wouldn't start now.

Calico's telekinesis, for all that it could only be used on himself, was pretty powerful, he had little chance of just dragging the hand with him. At least, not without visibly using One-For-All. Lighting his right hand on fire, he moved it threateningly toward the offending hand.

There was a good chance that Calico knew it to be a bluff, but—understandably—he wasn't willing to risk taking the chance with a vigilante so little was known about. The hand released his arm, and retreated toward the hero, who began to disassemble himself again, each piece flying at roughly a sprint across the gap to join it.

Izuku rapidly intensified the fire in his hand to one of his customary dense fireballs, already running further east. He was faster than Calico, even when the hero was moving using his quirk, but he needed to get out of his sight before the other heroes showed up.

When he thought it was large enough, he held his hand out to his side, and let the fireball stop following him. Glancing back, he waited until Calico was close to the ball of incredibly concentrated heat, then shifted how he was confining it. The ball exploded into a wall, only an inch thick, but opaque enough that it didn't matter, and nearly the width of the entire roof, starting a few inches off the ground, and taller than All Might.

‘Which way?’ He asked, rapidly approaching the edge of the roof.

*Back to the ground, if there is another way up that close, the other one will be up here soon.*

Sweating at the production of so much fire so quickly, moving it so fast with his quirk, and simultaneously running, Izuku jumped down from the roof, replicating the trick he had used at the start of his fight with stain, the resultant clawmarks in the wall fairly eye-catching, but oh well.

Quickly putting out the fire on his hands that would immediately give him away, Izuku sprinted across the street, and into another alley. The fire wall wouldn't stop Calico long—he didn't know how exactly it was limited, but the man could technically fly.

He just needed to get somewhere sufficiently innocuous that he could go back to looking like himself, and not arouse suspicion. That meant at least a few streets further over, while somehow
avoiding the heroes catching sight of him between.

Evidently the universe hated him, because he spotted movement above him not one street later.
There was a hero- he assumed, since it was clearly an adult, and using his quirk in public- watching him from the sky. He could only be thankful that it didn't look like Hawks.

Izuku turned right as soon as he could, he needed to get away from the flying hero, but keeping going in one direction would surely be a bad idea.

It looked like he had managed to lose the second hero, but Calico and the flying hero were still on his tail. Hopefully the flying hero wouldn't risk coming in range for an attack.

Izuku readied another big fire, then darted down an alley, leaving the fire and turning it into a wall covering the mouth of the alley, but not touching either building. Calico would have to be damn careful about getting past that, which should buy enough time to outrun him completely, which just left the flying one.

A minute later, the flying hero still following him annoyingly well, Izuku ran into not one, but two heroes. Clearly they had guessed he would come this way from his general movements.

The greenette's heart sank as he recognised the pair. Kamui Woods wasn't going to be easy to fight without risking seriously injuring him, and Mount Lady might actually be a threat. “Stop right there, villain.” Said Kamui Woods, not dropping the theatrics despite it being the middle of the night.

Izuku did no such thing. He was dangerously close to quirk exhaustion now, but he lit a new fire anyway, and kept running at the pair. He had to get past them, he was close to the underpass he was headed for.

Close. The closer he was to Mount Lady, the better- she needed a run up for most of her most concerning attacks. Honestly, she had no business working in a dense urban area. The female hero expanded to dwarf most of the surrounding buildings, while the wooden one stretched one of his limbs, grabbing a wall and swinging towards him.

“You are in violation of the prohibition on unlicensed quirk use, surrender yourself.” Instructed the wooden hero, somehow under the impression that he was more persuasive than the last two heroes.
The smaller hero let him pass, moving into position to flank him. *Turn now.* Said the voice, just as Izuku decided what move Kamui Woods would most likely use. Sure enough, when he turned he was moments away from being hit by a lacquered chain prison. Raising one flaming hand, he let the fireball he had formed there expand slightly unevenly. A threat.

The shorter hero aborted the move out of fear of catching fire, and Izuku turned back just as he entered the taller one's reach. They hadn't worked together long, hopefully they would have issues so close.

Mount Lady reached to grab him, and he quickly dodged to the right, only for the hand to follow him. This was so much worse than the zero pointer. *Roll.* Said the voice, sending a simple image of the direction it thought he should go.

Izuku didn't question the voice, unthinkingly following the conceptual instruction. The hero's hand grasped where he had been just a moment before, and he kept going. By the time she was able to react, stepping on him would already be the vastly easier option.

She did try to kick him, but that was far easier to dodge, given how telegraphed it was. And then he was beneath her, and running past. The voice sent another quick image, and Izuku sent the twin fires out, causing them to stretch out.

The bar of fire covered the width of the street, and was roughly the height of Mount Lady's waist. She could duck it if she was careful, or she could get over it, but she would probably need a run up to do that safely. Running under the flames several feet over his head, the greenette made a beeline for the underpass just ahead.

Kamui Woods swung into view again, while Mount Lady was loudly moving back for her jump, but with her distracted, the capture heavy hero was much less of a threat- for all the hero knew, it might be impossible to hold Izuku without catching fire. Izuku lit his hands and forearms on fire, and rushed at the hero. Predictably, he hurriedly dodged out of the way, allowing Izuku to freely enter the underpass.

Shinji Nishiya swung away from the fire-user, stifled by this horrible match up, but Takeyama-san had just cleared the fire hurdle that Amber had made, they could regroup and- Amber suddenly swerved into a nearby underpass.
Cursing, the hero followed, determined to at least track the vigilante, to not let him vanish, to not lose this incredibly unlikely chance to catch him. The unreasonably fast kid threw the fire in one hand straight at a manhole, rapidly melting the cover, which fell through to the sewer below. Then amber simply jumped down, landing in the puddle of molten metal a dozen feet below, before releasing the fire in his other hand, which formed a new- very bright, very hot- cover on the manhole.

“Fuck.” He said, thankful that there were no camera crews to hear him, before putting a hand to his ear. “I've lost visual on Amber, he escaped into the sewer, I am unable to follow.”

He gazed angrily at the small disk of fire, but it resolutely continued to exist, and none of the heroes currently en-route could readily bypass it. They'd lost him.
Izuku was exhausted as he walked through the front gate of UA the next day. The voice had made sure he slept in slightly, leaving only enough time to take a freezing shower to deal with the last of the heat from his quirk, hurriedly cover the eye-bags, then rush out the door with a piece of toast.

Mentally slapping himself, he walked into the school, he couldn’t seem tired today- that would be pretty damning under the circumstances.

"Deku-kun!" Came the cheerful voice of Uraraka from behind him, prompting him to turn.

"Hey, Uraraka-san." He said, painting a smile on his face.

"We missed you yesterday," she said, though not in annoyance, jogging slightly to catch up to the greenette, before both of them continued on, "what did the principal want? You're not in trouble are you?"

*Not unless the principal draws the wrong connections.* Commented the voice dryly, anxious about possible fallout from last night.
“N-No, he just wanted to talk about private lessons.” He reassured, waving his arms in negation.

“Private lessons? What on?” The brunette asked curiously, as the pair reached the front door.

“He wants to help me with my quirk analyses.”

“So should we expect you to be staying late more often? Like before the sports festival.” She asked, tilting her head.

“No, I’ll be having them instead of English.” He explained as they turned a corner.

“So you won't be learning English at all?” She asked, frowning.

“The principal said I need to take the exams, unless I get a qualification, but I'm already fluent.”

Midoriya blinked owlishly as the brunette walking beside him suddenly blew out her cheeks in a massive pout. “Ah, it's no fair! You and Bakugou are good at everything!” She declared, causing the greenette to blush slightly.

“W-We're not good at everything.” He protested, hiding his face in his arms.

“Hmm... yeah, blasty sucks at talking to people without swearing.”

The voice apparently found this comment immensely funny, but Izuku wasn't about to throw stones, he was useless at talking to people his own age- he almost always devolved into muttering or stammering. “Y-Yeah, but Kacchan can cook, I can barely boil an egg.” He said, trying to defend his childhood... friend.

Unfortunately he clearly said this too close to the classroom, because she gave an excited little squeal at his words, and rushed forward the last few steps to the door, opening it before he could process what was going on.

Izuku hurriedly jogged forward to stop whatever she was planning, but had only arrived at the door
when her total lack of self-preservation killed them both. “You can cook?” She asked the explosive blond eagerly, standing next to his desk.

Bakugou immediately tried to murder the brunette with his gaze, while most of the rest of the class began to stare at the spectacle. “Of course I can fucking cook, but don't think I'm making anything for you fuckers.” He bit off at the watching students, before turning his ire to the greenette. “And stop fucking talking about me behind my back, Deku.” He growled.

“Sorry, Kacchan.” Izuku murmured, looking at his feet.

Looking up, he saw the blond frowning at him, considering, before his glare redoubled. *Well, there goes the hope he wouldn't notice how tired you are.* Said the voice, in awe as ever at the inexplicable ability of the explosive boy to know when Izuku hadn't slept enough.

Thankfully, Bakugou didn't seem inclined to call the greenette on his exhaustion at present, instead allowing Kirishima to distract him with talk about how “manly” it was that he was so multi talented.

“Dare I ask why you were talking about Bakagou's cooking talents?” Asked Shinsou, as Izuku made his way to his desk, head resting wearily atop his own desk.

Izuku was stewing in his envy at how freely the purple-haired teen was able to display his tiredness, when Uraraka answered. “Deku-kun was trying to cover up how they're both good at everything.” She said with a small huff.

“How can they be good at everything?” Shouto asked curiously?

Uraraka opened her mouth to speak, as did Izuku, but Bakugou managed to answer first, turning in his seat. “How can you idiots be so damn bad at everything? Most of this shit isn't even that hard.”

Shota wasn't especially tired this morning, walking into the class in the middle of a bickering match between the two biggest cliques in the year, however he was a good deal more frustrated than usual. The one golden opportunity to catch Amber- arguably the most famous vigilante in Japan- had slipped through their fingers, with nothing to show for it but the number of heroes who had
ever seen him in person up close going from one to four.

They had decided to increase patrols around the area where Calico had run into him, but Shota wasn't hopeful they would have another sighting- Amber hadn't avoided capture this long by chance.

The tired man looked at the altercation- mostly between Uraraka and Bakugou, with Midoriya trying to calm both parties with minimal success. Honestly, given that they both seemed to be the core of the larger groups on class, those two were nothing alike, Bakugou's generally angry way of doing things contrasted sharply with Midoriya's typical timidness.

Making his way into the room, most of the students quickly noticed his presence, and the argument, and most of the other discussions broke up quickly. Good, they were learning, he hadn't even needed to announce himself this time. “Better than the start of the year.” He allowed, once the last of the noise had ceased, and everyone was in their seats.

Shota looked over the class, paying particular attention to Midoriya. He didn't seem tired, no bags under his eyes, no redness, or yawning. Staring off into space again, but that was apparently a given for the problem child- he was probably still paying attention, somehow. “And everyone's here, and on time. Good.”

The moves and general appearance had been different- the flaming bastard had been furious that his moves were being copied by a vigilante- but this most recent look at Amber's quirk showed it to be strikingly similar to the problem child's. There was a chance that Midoriya was Amber, or failing that, that he knew Amber somehow. It bore keeping an eye on the greenette, just in case.

“The only announcement I'm supposed to give you today is to remind you that term will be ending in a few weeks. Now, obviously you can't afford to waste time for the whole holiday, so you'll be going to a forest lodge for a week-long training camp.” Shota paused to allow for the inevitable cheering, before interrupting as it began to get slightly out of hand. “However, that is contingent on passing the end-of-term exams. Those who fail will be stuck in remedial hell at school.” The subsequent noise was more restrained, and mostly consisted of various members of class encouraging one-another.

“All right, that's everything for today, do what you want for the rest of homeroom, just don't wake me up.” The dark-haired man said, already getting into his sleeping back. He was hopeful that he'd be able to get in at least a few naps between marking today.
Shouto watched, somewhat nonplussed, as Izuku was surrounded by several of their classmates— not part of Izuku's usual group—surrounded the greenette's desk. “Hey man, you couldn't help us study for the classic literature stuff, could you?” Asked Sero, hands raised in prayer above his bowed head. He supposed he shouldn't have been surprised by the request- Izuku had even beaten out Yaoyorozu for the top spot during the mid-terms.

As was a fairly common occurrence when someone talked to him, the greenette ducked his head and—most likely—blushed. “I-I could, b-but you would be better asking Yaoyorozu-san.” He murmured, barely loud enough to hear from where Shouto sat.

“I- but you did better during the mid-terms,” objected the recommended student, “and I wouldn't be much help for the practical exercises.”

“N-Not by much, and I think y-you would be a better tutor.” Said the greenette, turning to face her, looking over Shinsou, who seemed to be trying to emulate their teacher, face-down on the desk.

The students who had been asking for Izuku's help began to look hopefully to Yaoyorozu, who seemed overjoyed at the compliments. “If you really think so, I'd be happy to help,” then, seeming to notice how many of the students were looking at her hopefully, “it might be easier if we split the work.”

“T-That works, um I'm best at English and biology?”

“Good,” said Yaoyorozu, clapping her hands happily, “then I can take maths, and literature. Does Thursday at my house work for everyone?”

“Wait,” said Jirou, “are you sure it's OK for all of us to come to your house at once?”

“Of course, I'll just have to have my parents open up the main dining hall.”

Shouto smiled in wry amusement at the stunned looks of most of the gathered students, they clearly hadn't known how wealthy the Yaoyorozu family was. “Oh, i-in that case,” said Izuku, turning slightly to face Shouto, “do you think you could help too, Shouto-kun?”
Shouto blinked in surprise. This having a friend thing was still taking some getting used to, it was... nice having someone try to make sure you were included. Actually having friends was slightly more accurate - it made sense that someone like Izuku would have made a lot of friends, but it had surprised Shouto how easily they had just accepted him as part of their group, essentially as soon as Izuku first asked him to sit with them at lunch.

“I'm not sure if I'll be much help, but I can come.” He said slowly, eliciting a sun-bright smile from the greenette, shifting some of the freckles on his cheeks, as the skin around his eyes crinkled slightly.

“Thanks, Shouto-kun, three people helping will be much easier.”

“Hey Bakubro, you wanna have a study session, too?” Asked Kirishima with characteristic brightness.

“Huh?! Why would I?” Demanded the blond.

Kirishima shrugged. “All right, I'll just join Midoriya's group then.” He said, in a show of extremely transparent - even to Shouto - manipulation, and suicidal goading.

“Like hell, I'm ten times the tutor that shitty nerd is. Prepare to have the shit tutored out of you, Kirishima.” Growled Bakugou.

“You are a braver man than I, Kirishima-kun.” Said Tokoyami gravely.

“What was that, you wanna go, you kenku-looking motherfucker?!” Yelled the blond, as Kirishima was required to hold him back from the bird-headed teen.

Most of the class ignored the scene, used to Bakugou's furious outbursts by now. Shinsou and Aizawa didn't even wake at all the screeching, and Yaoyorozu continued to discuss what types of tea everyone would prefer.

The subsequent classes passed without incident, but Izuku grabbed his attention as the class left for lunch. “Hey, Shouto-kun.”
“Yes, Izuku?” He asked, tilting his head slightly.

The greenette looked around briefly, as if making sure no-one was listening. “Um, I meant to ask yesterday, but did anything happen on Friday?”

Shouto blinked slowly, trying to think why the greenette would be worried about being overheard. “Just some more quirk training, you didn't miss much.”

“Um, OK. Just- you know you can talk to me if anything happens, r-right?” Asked the greenette nervously.

Oh. That's what he was worried about. Shouto really should have expected that. Given how much-not very much, but enough for someone as smart as Izuku- he had told the greenette. Why he decided to open up to someone he barely knew, who later turned out to be so incredibly determined to help people, he still wasn't sure. “I'm fine, nothing happened.” He said- truthfully, his father wasn't stupid enough to do anything overboard where other heroes might see.

“I'll let you know if there's a problem.” He added after a moment. The greenette had seemingly kept quiet about everything, and had so far shown no signs of pitying him that he could see. It might actually be nice having someone outside of his siblings, and to a lesser extent his mother with whom he could talk about... everything.

Izuku smiled when Shouto said he would talk to him, even if he wasn't sure how likely he was to actually do so. At least the bi-chromatic teen knew he could, which should help, if only a little. “Thanks, Shouto-kun.” He said. “We should probably get to lunch, I think I'm going to get some katsudon.” He said, glancing questioningly at Shouto.

Shouto blinked at the sudden shift from such a heavy topic to such a light one, but smiled and went with it, following the greenette to the lunch hall. “I'll probably just get some soba noodles.”

_We have no idea how that boy can somehow live entirely off of soba, it's kind of scary._ Said the voice, as the pair entered the noisy dining hall.

“Soooo, what were you two talking about?” Asked Uraraka, once the pair had gotten food, and sat
at the table where their friends had saved them both seats.

“N-Nothing important, I just wanted to ask what I missed on Friday.” Said Izuku, bringing his palms together before beginning to eat.

“How very studious of you, minimizing the loss to your education from your injuries.” Complimented Iida seriously.

“We were just talking about what we thought the practicals would be, kero.” Said Tsuyu, who was sitting between Uraraka, and Shinsou.

“Well, it has to be something that tests what we learned this-” Asked the greenette, before being interrupted by a blow to the back of the head, which immediately had the voice on full alert.

Izuku rapidly twisted his head to look at the culprit, raising a hand in case he needed to use his quirk, and relaxed when he saw it was just a student. “Ah, sorry, your head is so big, I ended up hitting it.” The blond said, looking down at the seated greenette.

*Man, this kid's got an inferiority complex that puts Blasty's to shame.* Said the voice, metaphorically glaring at the blond, who was still monologuing about Izuku's supposed tendency to hog the limelight.

Izuku couldn't even be insulted, trying to get the media's attention was so far from what he was doing that he had a hard time not laughing at the blond. He could however see how annoyed his friends were getting, so tried to pre-empt another argument. “You're Monoma, right?” He asked brightly.

“That's right-” Started Monoma proudly.

“I saw you during the cavalry battle, fighting Kacchan, you were so cool! What's your quirk?”

Monoma blinked twice, clearly not expecting this question, but quickly recovered, and began to preen. “Yeah, my quirk is awesome, I can copy people's quirks when I touch them.”
Izuku's eyes lit up, and he produced a notebook from somewhere. He hadn't expected that, copying quirks was a quirk he had never heard of before, and it sounded like a really interesting one. “Can you copy any quirk, even mutations? What about stockpile-types? How many can you copy at once? How long do they last...” He began to shoot off questions rapidly, before devolving into senseless muttering. Both the blond, and Izuku's friends looked on nonplussed, until the voice nudged him out of his stream of thoughts by saying *You haven't actually given him any time to answer, Izuku.* gently, letting Aoi lead.

“Oh, sorry, I was rambling again.” Said Izuku, stopping the muttering and rubbing the back of his head- which still felt a bit weird, he was used to there being more hair there. Everyone at the table just stared at him, making him feel self-conscious.

It took a few seconds, but Monoma did eventually recover, and seemingly failed to resist the desire to boast about his quirk. “I can have up to four quirks at once, and they last a long time- five minutes at the moment.”

Izuku studiously wrote this down on the right page he had opened to- leaving the left blank for a sketch of the blond, assuming he ever saw him in costume.

“What are stockpile quirks?” Asked Shinsou weakly, after a moment.

Monoma scoffed, glancing contemptuously at the brainwasher. “Figures you wouldn't know that. No wonder your class is so inferior to mine.” He said, blissfully unaware of how close Kendo was behind him.

Izuku again forestalled the argument that Monoma was clearly trying to incite. “Stockpile quirks are ones that store something in order to work, like mine does with the vitality.”

Monoma looked surprised at that. “You have a stockpile quirk?” He asked, and the greenette nodded. “The example people usually use is Fatgum, since his quirk stores fat, obviously.” He said to the group at large, before returning to talking to Izuku. “I get the ability, but not the stockpile.”

Izuku noted that down under misc. quirk notes. “So you could in theory build your own stockpile in the time you had the quirk?”

“You had better not be causing a fight again, Monoma.” Said Kendo, finally reaching the group.
“I think he's trying, kero.” Said Tsuyu uncertainly, glancing between the blond and the greenette.

“Izuku managed to distract him.” Shouto deadpanned.

“Honestly,” the 1-B president said with a sigh, “I don't see what your problem is, after the festival even Tetsutetsu seems to be getting on well with 1-A.”

“I don't have a problem,” the blond protested, “I'm just making sure 1-A doesn't get too full of themselves.”

“Well, you succeeded, now go eat your lunch, and let them eat theirs.” Kendo said.

Monoma looked like he was about to protest, but his class president raised an eyebrow, and he retreated with only light grumbling. Shaking her head, Kendo turned back to the 1-A students. “Sorry about him. You were talking about the end of term exams?”

“Do not apologize for his actions,” said Iida with little chopping motions, “and thank you for de-escalating the situation. We were talking about them, yes.”

“Don't worry about it. I heard from a senpai that the exam would be like the entrance exam, fighting against robots.”

Izuku put the notebook away- he would have to brave the blond's ranting later if he wanted to finish his page- and quickly thanked Kendo for telling them, as did the rest of the table.

*Hmm, if it's robots, they must be more advanced than the entrance exam ones.* Commented the voice.

'Yeah, but Power Loader works here, so that's possible.'

*True, but even then, I don't think it will be a straight fight, since we also had rescue training this term.* Argued the voice, while the rest of the table was discussing Monoma's weird visit.
“I don't know why you were so complimentary, Midoriya. He clearly wanted to pick a fight.” Said Shinsou, glancing questioningly at the greenette, and shaking him from his reverie.

“Midoriya-kun did get him to stop ranting, kero.” Pointed out Tsuyu.

“Y-Yeah, and it is a pretty interesting quirk.” Said the greenette.


Izuku frowned at the bi-chromatic teen. “So is every other quirk.” He said. “But in the right situation Copy could be really powerful, and it's really versatile.”

“Doesn't mean he isn't an asshole.” Grumbled Shinsou, prompting Iida to scold him, before the conversation naturally move back to the exam.

Izuku let the part of the voice on reality watch pay attention for him, instead discussing with the voice what they were going to do now that yesterday had probably made it unsafe to spend time as Amber in that area of the city.
of convincing arguments and prevarication

Chapter Summary

some more quick conversational scenes

Chapter Notes

1) now you may be asking "hey, Yuki, why didn't you just include this in the last chapter?" to which i say *SMOKE BOMB*
2) fun possible AUs ep. 2:
   Midoriya Izuku, Quirk: Time Slice: He can alter the flow of time around his body, but the further from normal flow he gets the harder it is to keep everything going at the same rate, possibly causing internal injuries.
   Iida: Oh cool, you have a speed-type quirk too? *hand chop*
   Izuku: lol, nope. *watches hummingbird in slow-mo for fun*
3) I promise, I'll get you guys some chapters in which things actually happen soon... hopefully.
4) not sure I really like this chapter, but I'll let you guys be the judges of that
5) thank you so much to the people who pointed out that I had been misapplying the word principle. it should have been principal, Ima go fix that. as always really appreciate when people point out ways to improve the fic, even if it's just small stuff like grammar errors :p
6) *rereads summer stars* dammit pitviper, why must every word you type be pure gold?? you're making the rest of us look bad :p

It had been nearly a week, and Dabi had finally convinced Toga to let them move, saying that the vigilante wouldn't be coming back. He found the key to the currently empty house under a flower pot on Sunday, and had moved both of them in that evening. This was much better, they could only stay a couple of weeks, and they couldn't turn on the lights at night for fear of the neighbours noticing that the house was occupied, but since the owners were only on holiday it still had electricity. Plus he was slightly less paranoid about the police bursting in at any moment.

Tuesday morning found the fire-user watching a news report on the latest- and by far most dramatic- Amber sighting. Complete with a couple of recordings of the vigilante giving the heroes the run around, which wrung a chuckle from him. As he had seen during his last visit, the kid was more skilled than he had any right to be. Dabi thought that whoever Amber was, he must have gone through training just as hellish as his own.

The scarred man turned the television off, shutting up the commentator complimenting Endeavour for some new villain take-down. He couldn't stand how they didn't see him for what he was. He
forced his hand down from where he had been unconsciously rubbing at the scarring under one eye.

He hated the scars. It wasn't just that they tugged, that he had almost no sensation there. It was how closely they mirrored where he always had flames on his face. He wished he could get rid of them, but it wasn't like healing quirks would do anything for them now.

Dabi really ought to be thinking about the future, about his own life- that had been his plan when he had finally left, to live his own life, to be free of him. He couldn't though, the scars were always there, and who would want to hire someone who looked like he had just escaped a furnace? As it was he hadn't even had any choice but to accept Amber's bag of clothes.

They were really good clothes, too. How much money did the vigilante have? Maybe he should give vigilantism a shot himse-

The door opened, and the scarred man frowned from his place on the sofa. Toga had gone out not ten minutes ago, surely she couldn't be back already. He pulled up some of the painful heat he carried with him- just in case. "Anybody home?" Came the voice of Amber from the entrance to the house.

Dabi groaned, the vigilante appeared in the doorway of the living room after a moment, carrying another duffel bag. "How the fuck did you find me?" He asked in exasperation, as the dark-haired kid fucking beamed at the sight of him.

"Same way as last time," Amber said, coming fully into the room, "you're not nearly as hard to track down as Toga-chan, Dabi-san."

Great, the scars wouldn't even let him go on the lam properly. "Why the hell do you keep coming back, exactly?" Dabi asked, deciding to let his quirk fade into the background, and rubbing at his temple.

Amber blinked at him in puzzlement, taking an empty chair. "I thought I said what I wanted the first time." He said slowly.

“So you still think you'll be able to get me to go back, get the old bastard arrested?” The scarred man asked flatly.
“That was certainly the plan.”

“I'm telling you, it wouldn't do any good, his lawyers would help him get away with it. Besides, I can't go back, my family probably wouldn't want me back anyway.” Fuck, he hadn't meant to say-

“Heroes aren't above the law,” said Amber firmly, cheerfulness dropping away, “if you went to the right people-”

“So what, I should just waltz up to All Might, say 'Hey, the second-best hero is an abuser, I'm his kid that no-one's seen in years'?” Dabi interrupted sarcastically.

Amber snorted, causing the older fire-user to glare at him- if it were someone else he might have tried to threaten them to take him seriously, but that would never work with Amber. “If you knew All Might, you'd realize that that would probably work, but I was thinking a couple of detectives might be able to start the case.”

Dabi scoffed. “How would a detective be able to bring down someone as important as Endeavour?”

Amber smiled. “The detective I had in mind would probably be able to get All Might on-board, unless you want to go straight to him?” He asked with some amusement.

“Wait, you know policemen? What happened to being chased across the city?”

Amber groaned. “That was a mess, I can't get near my target for now,” he complained, “but yeah, I know a few, by reputation anyway.”

“You're going to try again?” Asked Dabi, surprised that the famously cautious vigilante would run that sort of risk.

“Yes.” Said Amber emphatically, eyebrows drawing down into a scowl.

Dabi widened his eyes in surprise at the vehemence in the vigilante's voice, and was about to ask
what this guy could have done to anger the kid that much- he hadn't even seemed particularly angry when discussing all the shit Endeavour had done- but Amber shook himself, and moved the conversation on before he could. “Sorry, not what I came here for, shouldn't be wasting your time with that unless-” Amber cut himself off with another shake of the head. “Anyway, I can't- or at least won't- force you to do anything, but if you want to help your siblings...”

The younger fire-user reached into a pocket, retrieving a pair of business cards, which he leaned forward to pass to the older fire-user. Dabi took the two small pieces of card essentially on reflex, too many years as the child of someone in the “upper crust” preventing him from ignoring the cards.

Amber suddenly took on a solemn look. “It might not be my place to say this, but I knew someone who still called their brother Nii-san when they were fighting to the death, your family would almost certainly be overjoyed to have you back. The second one is for if you want to deal with the-”

Amber gestured lamely to his own chin, looking pained, before going on. “Anyway, I should probably leave, there's some clothes for Toga-chan in there.” He said, gesturing to the bag, before leaving just as abruptly as his previous two visits.

Dabi sat there dumbly for the better part of a minute after the vigilante left, still not really able to process the sudden twists in conversation that always accompanied him.

Naomasa sat in a small meeting room in UA, attempting with limited success to make polite conversation with Gran Torino, who seldom had much time for small talk. After a couple of attempts, the detective gave up, so the room descended into uncomfortable silence- or at least, uncomfortable for him, since his reason for being here was different to the elderly hero's.

Honestly, he really didn't want to be here today, but after what happened on Monday, and searching the quirk registry for similar quirks to Amber's... well, the number of fire quirks that produced readily controlled golden fire was pretty small among people Amber's probable age.

Ideally, Yagi's chosen successor would be able to help them find him- might know a cousin or similar with the same quirk. Naomasa really didn't want to consider the possibility that the current holder of One-For-All was secretly a vigilante with possible ties to All-For-One- or his empire, now- but he would be remiss not to look into it, especially now that more- and more clear-headed-heroes had seen the vigilante's quirk in action.
Naomasa was beginning to consider telling Gran Torino to stop humming- part of the senile old man act that he probably planned to pull on the unsuspecting kid- when the door opened, and All Might entered, trailed by Midoriya.

The greenette closed the door, prompting the hero to deflate in a small cloud of quickly dissipating steam, revealing his skeletal frame. The detective hid a grimace, he always hated seeing how badly his injury was affecting the hero. Combined with his prodigious height, the man looked like a slight breeze would knock him down.

When the steam dissipated enough to allow Midoriya to see the occupants of the room, he briefly froze, noticing the room's two other occupants. “H-Hello, Tsukauchi-san, and, um...” He said nervously- not surprising, given that All Might seemingly hadn't told him they would be there, making this seem an awful lot like an ambush.

“This is Gran Torino.” (-) Said Yagi, gesturing to the diminutive hero.

“Oh, your teacher!” (-) Said the greenette, momentary excitement breaking through his nervousness.

The nervousness came back full-force a moment later, as he spoke again. “Um, what's going on, though? You said you wanted to talk to me.” (-) He said, fidgeting with his hands in front of him.

Gran Torino spoke first, with characteristic bluntness. “We're here because my boneheaded student failed to tell you the first thing about the history of his quirk.”(-) He said, sounding distinctly unhappy. “And to make sure you know how to use it, since he has no experience as a teacher.” (-) “Or at least, I am.” (-)

All Might said nothing in his defence here, merely rubbing the back of his head at the insults from his old teacher- who he was seemingly still wary of. “Um, i-it's fine, All Might h-has been a good teacher.” (lie) “And I think I-I've gotten the hang of it.” (-) Said Midoriya, seemingly nervous around the older hero.

Probably best not to point out the lie there. “Young Midoriya took to One-For-All remarkably well, his progress has been astonishing.” (-) Said All Might, trying to mollify his teacher.

“Hmph, maybe so, but it doesn't excuse not explaining the quirk's history for this long.” (-) Insisted
said teacher.

“The quirk's history?” Asked Midoriya, tilting his head.

All Might sighed. “It all began with two brothers.” He said, before explaining the entire history of One-For-All, though he assured Midoriya extremely early-on that he wouldn't have to worry about All-For-One, that the villain was dead.

“... and that's the history of the quirk I passed onto you.” Finished Yagi at last. Midoriya blinked a couple of times, probably deciding what questions he wanted to ask after that huge info-dump- for which he had sat surprisingly quietly, attentive for the entire thing.

“And you're sure he's gone?” Asked the greenette finally.

“Yes, I made sure before I left.” (-) Said All Might grimly.

“OK... thank you, for telling me, a-and for trusting me w-with something so important.” (-) Said Midoriya after a moment.

“You're welcome my boy!” (-) “You proved yourself worthy of it through your own effort, earning the quirk for yourself, and I should really have explained the history of the quirk before now.” (-) Said the skeletal man, the ghost of one of his jovial smiles on his lips, causing the greenette to blush furiously at the praise.

Gran Torino chuckled lightly. “This big lug only cares about idealized heroics.” (-) He complained. “But even just from your showing with your own quirk, and the subtle stuff you did with One-For-All at the festival, you were a good pick.” (-) He added, in a rare show of praise.

Midoriya looked down, muttering “Th-Thank you, Gran Torino-san.” (-)

Naomasa, who to this point had been all but silent, finally spoke up. “Now then, I was wondering if I could ask you a couple of questions.” He said, prompting the greenette's embarrassment to shift right back into nervousness.
“Um, wh-what about?” He asked, glancing at the detective.

“I'm not sure if you're aware, but I'm the detective in charge of the Amber case-” He started, causing Midoriya to frown slightly, his golden eyes like augurs, boring into him.

“I'm not amber, if that's what you're asking.” (-) He said tersely.

Naomasa didn't breath a sigh of relief at his quirk not revealing any lie in the statement, and anyone who said otherwise was lying- he should know. “Nobody is accusing you of anything, my boy.” (lie) Said All Might soothingly.

“Of course,” agreed the detective, raising his hands, palms out, “we just wanted to check if you might know anyone in your family who might have the right quirk.”

This did little to lessen the greenette's frown. “As far as I know, I'm not related to Amber.” (-) “All the other fire quirks in my family are just fire generation, like my dad's Dragon-Breath.” (-)

Naomasa nodded, slightly disappointed at the lack of a lead, but still happy that this case wasn't going to cause problems for All Might's successor. “Thank you, sorry for asking, but I had to check, given how similar your quirks are.”

“It's fine, it's j-just a little annoying when people th-think we're related just b-because of our quirks.” (-) Said the greenette, still frowning, but beginning to absently pull at his bottom lip.

Shaking himself, the greenette's frown disappeared. “I don't know where Amber is.” (-) “But if I could, I would want to help find them.” (-) He said with a small smile.

Naomasa smiled himself. “Of course, thank you for your help.”

“Well, I'm glad that's sorted out.” (-) Said All Might happily, clapping his hands. “We should probably let you get back to your friends before lunch ends.” (-)

“Um,” said the greenette nervously, as the other people in the room made to leave. “I was wondering, how long do you have left with One-For-All, Yagi-sensei?”
All Might blinked owlishly at the question. “My time-limit went down a fair bit after the USJ.” (-)
He said saidly. “I'm down to a bit over two and a half hours.” (-)

“And how long until...” Midoriya began, before trailing off.

All Might hummed, seeming to understand what the greenette was getting at. “It will probably be a good few months yet, I still have time before I have to retire.” (-)

“And have you thought about what you're going to do?”

“Why, keep teaching you zygotes, of course!” (-)

Midoriya looked increasingly uncomfortable with what he was asking, but kept going anyway. “No, I mean- y-you're the symbol of peace, i-if you retire without warning it could be bad.” (-)

Naomasa struggled to contain his shock. Not many people in his life were actually willing to try to get Yagi Toshinori to do the sensible thing- beyond his teacher, and Recovery Girl, and he seldom listened to either of them on such things. Meanwhile Gran Torino and All Might were both staring silently at the kid, who began to try to hide his head in his arms.

After a couple of seconds, Yagi finally found his voice again. “I know, but I'm sure the other heroes will be able to take up the slack, and you'll join them soon enough, my boy.” (-)

From between the cage of his arms, the greenette looked at the blond as if he had just said something immensely stupid, which was fairly comical, given their difference in posture, demeanour, age, and height. “Th-That would be retiring without warning, n-nobody would feel s-safe like that.” (-) Said Midoriya urgently, before seeming to have some sort of internal debate over whether he should speak further. “You should start patrolling with Hawks.” (-) He finally said, stunning the other occupants of the room.
Despite what he very much wished to do, Izuku did not, in fact, breath a sigh of relief when he left the room where he had been speaking to the two heroes and the detective- UA was Nedzu's domain, and he wasn't taking any risks.

Talking around Tsukauchi was always a nightmare, and normally he would never have deliberately extended any conversation that included him- not that he disliked the man, overall he was very friendly, but every word you said around him was a danger- but Aoi's compulsion to look after Yagi was rubbing off on him.

Frankly, it was a little concerning that the only person looking out for the health of the- obviously self-destructive- hero was Recovery Girl, and she went largely ignored. He had agreed with the rest of the voice- sans Hayato- in vetoing her plan to set a meal plan for him, if only because he definitely wouldn't listen to him, but he really couldn't help himself when he realized that the skeletal man had no clear plan for preparing for his imminent retirement.

It had taken a while to lay out his case for working with hawks, since All Might was- somewhat understandably- unwilling to spread news of his injuries more than he had to, but the greenette thought he had managed it in the end, and from the looks of the other two more passive participants in the conversation, it seemed likely that further persuasion of the incredibly tall hero would happen without his intervention now.

'Any loopholes?' Izuku asked the voice, beginning the relatively shot trek back to the 1-A
The voice hummed, a slightly odd sound coming in half a dozen different tones. Not that we could see. Letting slip that you would like to help find Aoi's body was a nice touch, that should probably throw them unless we really slip up.

'And you're sure we properly understand how Tsukauchi-san's quirk works?' The golden-eyed teen asked, searching for any angle by which things could go wrong.

*Between his quirk registration, and the things the network's police informants have said, yeah, we can be pretty confident of that much.* Said the voice, slowly calming itself from the tense state it had spent most of his lunch break in.

Izuku hummed internally. 'I'm just glad it was me in there, Aoi would never have had that many ways to throw off a truth quirk.'

Aoi came to the fore of the voice. *Probably not, but you need to remember that if we end up in a true interrogation, we probably won't be able to talk around it.* It said, a gentle warning to remain cautious.

Izuku smiled as he made his way back to class, to where his friends would likely provide far less stressful conversation. He had so many important plans ongoing between Endeavour, the doctor, and All Might, but none of them required his active attention at present- actually, most of them would be made more untenable if he did anything further. Hopefully he wouldn't even start getting antsy at the passivity for a couple of days, and in the meantime he could enjoy time with his friends without worries, and focus on studying and training for the end of term exams.

Sorahiko looked on with no small amusement at his old student's expression once the human whirlwind that was Midoriya Izuku left the room. He looked like someone had hit him between the eyes, and no wonder. For most of the last part of their little meeting, it was hard to tell who was supposed to be the mentor, and who the successor.

A laugh finally escaped him, the symbol of peace still trying to process exactly what his ward had said. “Well, Toshinori,” he said, miming wiping a tear, “you may be a knucklehead, but you did a good job choosing a successor. Midoriya is clearly no knucklehead.”
“I agree,” he said weakly, “young Midoriya is very clever, but Sensei, are you sure working with Hawks would be wise, I would have to tell him about my injury, and-”

“You seemed to have no problem telling all of UA's staff about your injury.” the old hero interrupted gruffly, his student immediately deferring, “Hawks, brat though he may be, is just as much a hero as them.”

“I'm not sure, I've never really worked with a partner before...” Objected Toshinori weakly, mulishly refusing to see sense, even when his successor had forced it into his face. Sorahiko was about to tell him as much in no uncertain terms, when Tsukauchi beat him to it.

“It is true that your unexpected retirement could cause... problems.” The detective said gently.

“But why not Endeavour?” Toshinori asked, and Sorahiko wasn't sure if he had come around to the idea of a partner, or was just deflecting.

The elderly hero barked out a harsh laugh. “Even if you could get that brat,” yes, he was talking about a man in his mid forties, what of it? “to agree, the little broccoli said it, Endeavour couldn't keep up with you on speed.”

Toshinori didn't react to this beyond vaguely murmuring in agreement, but the elderly hero was willing to accept that. “Well, I need to get home. I'm overdue for my own lunch, and I'm sure the detective,” he jerked a thumb toward Tsukauchi, “has work to do catching his vigilante. You,” he pointed at his student, “should write more, and visit your old teacher some time. I don't like that I'm only seeing you now because I had to force you to tell Midoriya what you should have known to tell him anyway.”

“Yes, Sensei.” Said the skeletal man, looking slightly shamefaced, as Tsukauchi smiled lightly.

“Unfortunately, Gran Torino-san is right, but we really should talk more often- outside of business, I mean.” He said, standing, and donning his ever-present hat.

Toshinori smiled wanly, standing himself- a process that was substantially more dramatic than for either of the other two. “You're right, of course. Why don't we get together for coffee, when works for you?”
Thursday rolled around, and with it a new issue of Bi-weekly Heroics. Slightly impatient for the probable bad news, Izuku found himself reading it on the train, and then reading some more in the 1-A classroom before homeroom started.

He knew he was muttering slightly, but hopefully it was too low to be heard, he could deal with the slight funny looks he was getting from his classmates- and slightly concerned ones from Shouto, and Uraraka- but given that none of the other member of the class was very likely to be a reader, the greenette had no intention of letting them know what it actually was he was doing.

Unfortunately, the articles- the hidden ones, anyway- revealed roughly what he was expecting. The patrols around the area he had been spotted in had all but doubled, and the heroes knew to be on the lookout for him. Momentarily forgetting where he was, the greenette sighed, dragging a hand down his face.

'You don't think me screwing up will put him on guard?' He asked the voice, worried.

The voice paused for a moment, thinking. *It's possible, if he is maintaining ties to the underworld despite us not getting any sign of it. He must be pretty damn cautious, you'll have to be careful. Either way-*

“Whatcha sighin' about?” Asked Uraraka, coming over to Izuku's desk.

Izuku blushed, genuinely embarrassed that he had voiced his frustration at something he had resolved to keep secret. “N-Nothing,” he stammered, hurriedly concocting a believable excuse, “it's just this analysis,” he said, gesturing at the article he had the magazine open to- an analysis of a fight involving Miruko, covering one about some of the heroes drafted to up numbers near where Izuku had been seen, “i-it's too focused on Miruko's persona, the author doesn't say much at all about her actual fighting style.”

“Isn't her persona important, though?” Asked Shouto, entering the conversation. “Her style matches her personality closely.” He added when Izuku turned to look at him.

Izuku blinked at that. Shouto was right, Miruko was a pretty damn aggressive fighter, which
closely matched her outward demeanour, but... “I don't know Shouto-kun, she's aggressive, but not as thoughtless as this keeps making her out to be. She knows how to strategise.”

Shouto smiled in amusement. “You wouldn't say that if you'd ever talked to her at one of those interminable fundraisers, Izuku. She started practically climbing the walls, and insulted all her sponsors.”

Izuku grinned, stars in his eyes, causing Shouto, and Shinsou to both reel back slightly in surprise. “That's awesome. I didn't know you were actually able to go to those, it must be so fun, meeting so many top heroes.”

The voice gave a fond little huff at Izuku's over-enthusiasm, while Shouto just offered a small smile. “You really like heroes, don't you?” He asked simply.

Izuku looked down, pressing his forefingers together self-consciously. “Y-Yeah, m-most of them are really cool.” Having the voice always had tempered his fanboying somewhat, but even so, he was often really impressed by the skill of certain heroes. One of the heroes chasing Amber on Monday- Bullseye- could probably have killed or incapacitated him if he had wanted, but he had just tried to stop him with minimal injuries, which Izuku thought was the sign of a great hero- even if Ren grumbled that it was inefficient.

“Most of them?” Asked Shinsou, but before Izuku- or Shouto, who had opened his mouth at the question- could answer, the door opened again, and Aizawa entered, forestalling the conversation.

After lunch, and some failed attempts to ask Shouto about some of his favourite heroes- the bi-chromatic teen seemingly found the events where he met them incredibly dull, and Izuku's enthusiasm baffling, if the way he scrunched his eyebrows was any indication- Izuku bid his friends goodbye, and made his way to Nedzu's office for their first lesson.

The greenette's mind wasn't really on the upcoming lesson though, he had finished the Thursday edition during lunch, and had found no mention of Dabi coming forward, not that he really expected it so soon. 'Are you sure we should just be sitting back? He didn't sound that convinced...'

He asked the voice, walking through the busy hallways.

*Trust us, he was arguing practicalities yesterday, and we offered a good way.* The voice said,
**Ichigou leading.**

*If we go back too soon, we'll probably just annoy him, make him less likely to agree. Added-mostly- Yugo.*

That- did make sense, he supposed. 'But how long should we wait?' He asked, the idea of leaving well enough alone sitting as poorly with him as ever.

*If we hear nothing by next Thursday, we should consider checking on him, but we doubt it will take that long, he was arguing pretty weakly. Said the voice, shifting slightly toward the more recent incarnations.*

Izuku made a noise of agreement just as he was reaching the appropriate door, happy to at least have a time-frame for his wait. He was glad to not have to worry about a possible cover-up this way. Tsukauchi would doubtlessly tell All Might, and the number one hero was many things, but the sort of person to allow this to continue wasn't one of them.

Composing himself for what would likely be a fairly intense lesson, the greenette knocked on the door, prompting a familiar high pitched “come in”.

Izuku opened the door, finding the principal sitting not at his desk, but at the table they had used for their first question and answer session. The voice decided that the choice of the table, not the desk was probably- like the tea- to make a more intimate, setting, to make the lessons seem less formal.

“Good, you're right on time, Midoriya-kun.” Said the mouse, bright smile contrasting sharply with calculating eyes, and eye-catching scar. “Tea?” He asked, while gesturing to the seat opposite him.

“Yes, thank you Nedzu-sensei.” Izuku said, taking the offered seat, and placing his bag at his side.

“There,” the tiny mammal said, handing the greenette a fresh cup, “tea always makes these things more pleasant, I find. Did you have time to look over the books I gave you?”

Izuku nodded, reaching into his bag to pull out two slim volumes- The Road To Singularity, and Inevitable Heroics. “Yes, Sensei.” He said, placing both on the table carefully.
“Excellent,” said Nedzu cheerfully, “To begin then, I would love to hear your initial thoughts on both books.”

Izuku pulled his bottom lip, thoughtful. “I... don't think I agree with what either of them were trying to say.” He said carefully.

His current teacher tilted his head, taking a sip of tea. “Interesting, would you like to explain why?” He prodded gently.

Izuku rested his fingers on the first book- the one Hayato, and he had taken the most issue with- sipping his tea in a transparent attempt to buy time to think. “The author is right that quirks are getting more complicated with new generations,” he said after a moment, “but I can't agree when he uses that to say that they are getting more powerful, or that that will begin to cause issues.”

Nedzu blinked at him. “Oh? A lot of the top heroes have complicated multifaceted quirks, though, no?”

Images of Hawks and Edgeshot immediately came to Izuku's mind, but that didn't counterbalance the other, simpler quirks. “And just as many have really simple quirks,” the greenette argued, “just because a quirk is simple, doesn't make it weaker than a complex one.”

Nedzu's smile widened slightly, seeming pleased. “Good. You're right, of course. Though, complex quirks do tend to have one advantage over simpler ones.” He stated, turning it into a new question.

Izuku was momentarily stymied, until Hayato volunteered the answer. “Unpredictability.” The greenette said, realization dawning.

Nedzu beamed. “Excellent, exactly right. Complex quirks are harder to intuit the exact details of, thus making them somewhat harder to counter when you don't already know their function.”

The principal sipped his tea, allowing Izuku a moment to think about the implications of this realization, before continuing. “Let's stick with this first book for the moment, did you read the section on compatibility?”
Nedzu was forced to dismiss his newest pupil- and the best one he had had in some years, he decided- when the bell rang, handing him a couple of sheets of homework for his next lesson.

Once the golden-eyed teen closed the door behind him, the principal's nose began to twitch slightly. Midoriya had performed admirably regarding the first book, finding most of the concepts he had wanted him to, hopefully laying groundwork to improve his quirk analysis skills.

But the second... Nedzu had set the text partially as a primer on proper moral conduct in heroics, but also as a subtle- if somewhat pointed- hint that he should have been more trusting of authority figures with regard to the Endeavour case. The author of Inevitable Heroics had made a number of less-than-subtle remarks to the effect of “leave some issues to professionals”.

Midoriya- unexpectedly- had had a visceral objection to the tone of the book, and most of the lesson had turned to a debate about how the public should view heroes. The boy had gotten fairly passionate- despite his still calm, sometimes stammered arguments- in objecting to the sort of bystander syndrome that seemingly worsened as a consequence of quirk regulation.

Well, his first attempt at convincing Midoriya of better ways he could have handled the Todoroki matter had backfired, but at least he had managed to have an extremely interesting debate about the state of modern quirk regulation.

For someone his age, and moreover someone aiming to obtain a hero license, Midoriya had a very odd mindset, it wasn't often that a teenager would already be walking the road to underground heroics, but it seemed like the young One-For-All user was doing just that.

And he hadn't even been wrong, he had made a number of salient points, especially regarding his own experiences with situations where civilian intervention could have mitigated a situation where the available heroes were stymied. Possibly a bit biased, but still, he had grounded everything he said in facts- a rare trait in his experience.

Nedzu bounced out of his chair suddenly, placing his hands behind his back. He was very curious about Midoriya Izuku, and it seemed every meeting with the boy made him more interesting somehow.

Walking out of his office into the nearly empty- sans a few slower students- halls, Nedzu began to
make his way to the staff room. There was far too much to do recently.

The so-called league was still proving annoyingly elusive, which he supposed wasn't all that surprising, given that they had such a skilled warper, lots of resources, and no official records. But at least the principal was now fairly confident he had found Todoroki Touya, so now all that remained was preparing, then he could go meet the young man.

Touya was a man with every reason not to want to be found, and not to trust authority figures. Not to mention probable training with the current number two hero, and definite training at UA's own facilities. The thing, he had always felt, with quirks like High Specs was that they worked best if you had time to prepare, and he would take no risks here.

Well, prep time wasn't strictly needed, so long as you selected the battlefield. Any villain that wanted to invade UA would pay in blood for every step. UA was his. The USJ attack had been a harsh blow to Nedzu, the fact that villains had managed to invade his own den- off-site facility or not- without his knowledge, had preyed on his mind, like an itch he just couldn't scratch for weeks.

The principal had ended up running Power Loader ragged, but he had been compelled to overhaul the entire security system, he wouldn't sleep soundly until he was as sure as he ever could be that a repeat of that day would not happen.

Nedzu shook himself, opening the door to the staff room. The league would probably be caught soon enough, from what Midoriya had said about them- another attack on one of his students was yet more fingers down the chalkboard of his brain- one of their leaders was an easily distracted madman, who should slip up sooner or later.

“Ah, Aizawa-kun,” Nedzu said brightly, spotting the eternally tired man at his desk, “I was hoping to speak with you, are you busy?” For the sake of politeness, Nedzu maintained the deception that he hadn't known what the erasure hero would be doing before he even entered the room.

Aizawa looked up from the magazine he was reading, and the book into which he was jotting notes. “No, Sir. What do you want to talk about?” He asked gruffly, but with due deference.

“One of your students.” the principal said, jumping up to sit on the edge of a nearby desk.

Aizawa groaned lightly. “What did problem child do this time?” He asked with resignation.
Nedzu decided not to censure the younger teacher about referring to a pupil as “problem child”, even if he seemingly did so to said pupil's face. For now anyway. “Nothing, at least not that I was aware of. I was merely wondering if you felt he had had formal training prior to UA.”

Aizawa watched the mouse, looking slightly wary... slightly more wary than usual. “That... was my initial assessment.” He said carefully, after a moment.

Nedzu hummed. “And now?”

“It is possible, but then I might be overreacting. He seems only a bit more skilled than Bakugou, but that might just be because his natural style is more... calm. And I realized I never got the impression that Bakugou had formal training.” Said the dark-haired man thoughtfully.

Nedzu nodded, those two were both extremely skilled, but like their quirks one was far calmer, more controlled, while the other was more wild, explosive. Bakugou was clearly an untrained prodigy, and Aizawa was right, Midoriya could easily be one as well, just somewhat more conventional.

“Would you say that he has been showing the sort of improvement you would expect of someone self-taught?” Nedzu asked.

This question took a good deal more thought before Aizawa answered. “yes, especially since his internship, he's gotten better at mixing his quirk with close-combat.”

Nedzu was just about to ask another question, when he was interrupted by his phone ringing. Frowning, he apologized to Aizawa, retrieving the noisy device from his pocket. He blinked when he saw that it was detective Tsukauchi calling him. Well, he should definitely take this, the detective wouldn't call during school hours unless it was urgent.

After apologizing again to his previous conversation partner, the principal hopped down from his perch, and turned to answer the call. “Detective, to what do I owe this call?” He asked immediately.

“There's been a- development,” said the detective without preamble, immediately setting the mouse slightly on edge. “If possible, could you come down to the station, and you might want to bring Yagi-san if he doesn't have a class.”
“Oh? What would require both of our attentions so suddenly? Is it the league?” He asked, pretending to ignore the way Aizawa, and the other unoccupied teachers stiffened, maybe he shouldn't be having this conversation where others could hear, on reflection.

“No, it's- I've just had a conversation,” Nedzu really began to worry at the cracks he could hear in the normal professional mask the detective wore so well, “with Todoroki Touya, you're going to want to hear what he has to say.”

What? What? Why would- “We're on our way.” Said the principal, masking his shock, he could try to figure out the why later, now he had to move.

Hanging up the phone, he turned to the assembled staff, who were watching him closely, seeming ready to spring into action- a good thing in general, but not needed right now. “It's not the league,” he said, forcing a calm tone, “All Might, we're going to meet detective Tsukauchi.”
of calm and storm

Chapter Summary

the kids have a relaxed conversation
the adults have a far less relaxing conversation

Chapter Notes

1) OK, so I may have binged most of CWaC, so sorry about the delay that resulted.
2) fun fact: AQAQ features a national park that i chose at random, Daisetsuzan. That national park just happens to contain the kanji 雪 (snow) which depending on context can be read yuki, or setsu :p
3) gonna put a trigger warning in here, for Todoroki related discussions (read: horrible abuse related discussions)

Shouto opened the door quietly- the result of experience and careful practice- and glanced around the small entryway, checking the current arrangement of shoes, and slippers. “I'm home!” He said, once he saw that Endeavour's shoes were absent- probably still at work, thankfully.

A moment later, Fuyumi poked her head out of the kitchen, smiling at the sight of him. “Welcome back, Shouto. How was your study session?” She asked, stepping out, revealing that she was holding a large bowl, still stirring its contents.

“It was nice, though I wasn't much help... I'm still not sure why Izuku invited me.” He said, toeing off his shoes, and stowing them away. Surely Izuku would have known that Iida would be a better choice for tutoring.

Fuyumi gave him a look, though given how bad he was at these things, and how little he had ever really interacted with his siblings, he couldn't fathom why, or what it meant. “I'm sure you helped plenty,” she said after a moment, looking down at her bowl with a smile, “you're near the top of your class, remember?”

That was almost exactly what Izuku had said, when Shouto had voiced his concerns, and he didn't believe it more now than then. Less actually, since he had now lived through trying to explain trigonometry to an increasingly confused, and dishevelled Kaminari.
In retrospect, the reason the blond had become increasingly frantic might have been because Shouto had started frowning in frustration that he couldn't think of a different way to explain it. That could probably have been taken the wrong way...

After a few minutes, Izuku had come over with one of those bizarrely infectious smiles, and using the excuse of swapping with Jirou- taken over, getting Kaminari to understand in less than five minutes.

He had used his quirk as a visual aid, making little triangles out of fire, seemingly just because he enjoyed it- a pencil drawing would have had the same effect. It did slightly amaze Shouto that even after burning himself with his own quirk, he was so unafraid to use it- even using it for no real reason. There still wasn't a kettle in the entire house.

“Izuku and Yaoyorozu definitely did most of the work.” He commented wryly, not wanting to actually contradict his sister.

“Either way, I doubt they minded the help.” Said the mostly white-haired woman, turning to re-enter the kitchen. “We're having curry tonight, could you help me cut up the vegetables?”

Shouto nodded at her back, following her into the kitchen. It was no soba, but Fuyumi's curry was always nice.

When the bi-chromatic teen noticed the sheer volume of food laid out in the kitchen, he frowned. “Isn't that a bit much for just the two of us?” He asked. There was little chance of their father joining them for dinner. Mercifully.

Fuyumi turned. “Oh, it's n-” She started, before the door opened causing both siblings to still.

“Anybody home?” Called a jovial voice from the entrance a moment later. Shouto blinked at the sound, poking his head back out into the hall, only to be nearly barrelled into by Natsuo, who pulled him into a bone-creaking hug. “Shou! How's my baby bro?” He asked, as the younger Todoroki struggled to breath.

Shouto had slightly stiffened at the contact, still not entirely used to spending time with his siblings, despite Natsuo's best efforts to make up for lost time- only slightly hampered by him spending most of his time at university.
“He can't breath, Otouto.” Said Fuyumi, sounding both exasperated and fond.

Natsuo released him, looking slightly sheepish. “Do you have to do that every time?” Shouto asked, peevish.

Natsuo pouted. “What, can't I even hug my little brother?” He asked, sounding put out. Shouto didn't believe it for a moment.

“That was more of an attempt to break my ribs than a hug.” Said the youngest Todoroki flatly. “Fuyumi didn't tell me you were coming over, no Takema this time?” Shouto had only met his elder brother's girlfriend a couple of times, but while she did seem nice, Natsuo had an annoying habit of going on about her any chance he got.

“Nah,” said the broad-shouldered man, shrugging, “she's got an essay due in tomorrow.”

'Well, that explains why he's home.' Thought Shouto dryly, Takema had probably had to shoo Natsuo out of her hair, so she could actually write in peace.

“What about you, Shou, I haven't spoken to you in weeks, you got a girlfriend yet?” Natsuo asked with a grin.

Shouto shot his brother a flat look. “That seems unlikely.”

“A boyfriend then? Mum mentioned that you talk about Midoriya an awful lot.” The taller boy said, raising his eyebrows, looking thoroughly amused.

Shouto fought down a groan, why had she had to tell Natsuo that? He would never hear the end of it now. “It's only been two weeks since I spoke to you. And Izuku is just a friend.” He said flatly.

His feelings with regard to Izuku may have been different from his other new friends- he couldn't make heads nor tails of that odd warm feeling he felt whenever Izuku smiled at him- but he was not about to endure the mockery that would result from asking Natsuo for advice. He would probably ask his mother when he next visited her.
“Izuku?” Natsuo asked, amusement redoubling. “I wouldn't expect First-name terms for just any friend” He said, all but sticking his tongue out at Shouto, thereby earning himself a withering look. Izuku had suggested the change, and had probably only been attempting to avoid calling him Todoroki- which was... not really necessary, but the sort of just the sort of considerate that seemed to be Izuku's hallmark.

“All right, all right, but I really wouldn't put it past you to just not tell us, since I didn't ask last time I was home.” Natsuo added, raising his hands in surrender.

That may have been a fair point, it might not have occurred to him to mention anything to his siblings, but there was no call for Fuyumi to snort like that. “You can poke fun at Shouto later, but if you want dinner some time today, we're going to need to make a start.” She said, once she had recovered from her amusement.

“Yes, Nee-san.” Said Natsuo, in the same tone one might sarcastically say “Yes mum”, before stepping away from Shouto, and entering the kitchen proper.

The three siblings worked in slightly inefficient silence for almost a minute before Natsuo spoke again, just as Shouto was washing the carrots. “So, how's school been then, you two?” He asked, helping cut some beef.

Shouto let Fuyumi answer first, and he was halfway done cutting the vegetables by the time she finished complaining about one of the kids she was teaching- who sounded concerningly like a tiny Bakugou, which was a horrifying thought, and he should commiserate with Izuku that he had to live through that- and his latest disruptive antics.

He had initially been surprised when Fuyumi had decided to become a teacher, but on reflection he thought she was most likely extremely good at it. He was kind of glad she had never had any interest in heroics, even if it was incredibly stupid that Endeavour had overlooked her just because she had none of his (“not his, yours.” said Izuku's voice in his head) fire.

It took him a second to realize that he had gotten distracted by his own thoughts again, and his siblings were looking at him expectantly. “School is fine.” He said evenly. School was actually more than fine, since it caused Endeavour to start being slightly more hands-off with training, and thus allowed him chances to reconnect with his siblings. “We're mostly just revising for the end-of-term exams lately, so there's not much new to talk about.”

“So how are you feeling about the exams?” Natsuo asked curiously.
“Fine, I suppose.” Shouto said with a shrug, pausing in cutting a carrot. “The written section shouldn't be so bad, and the practical is supposed to be just fighting robots, which shouldn't be that bad.”

He had actually been pretty curious about the general entrance exam, and from his friends' descriptions it had seemed pretty simple, though Izuku had guessed that the robots would probably be stronger, or the scenario more complex. Either way, he would just have to deal with it.

Fuyumi blinked, then looked slightly thoughtful. “That seems a bit... simple, doesn't it?”

Shouto shrugged. “They're probably going to add some sort of twist.” He said plainly, imagining that mildly predatory smile Aizawa always wore when telling them that he had been lying about something.

Natsuo frowned for a moment. “Still, seems a bit unfair for the kids with less heavy-hitting quirks.” He said before pausing, and going on more carefully. “How are you feeling about the fire?”

Fuyumi and Natsuo had both been surprised by the sudden back-pedalling on his decision to not use his left, but he appreciated how supportive they had been. “I've been getting better, it should be fine.” Though he might take Izuku up on the offer to train together after school.

It was not entirely lost on him that the greenette had been trying to keep him and Endeavour as far from each other as he could, but strangely it didn't bother him much. It wasn't that Izuku thought he was weak- the boy just couldn't leave problems alone, even running head-first into danger for a stranger, a pro hero vastly more experienced than him. Plus it was nice, having an excuse to get out of the house.

Fuyumi and Natsuo both smiled up from their respective tasks. “That's great.” Said Fuyumi, just before Natsuo said “Glad to hear you won't be burning down the house again.”

Fuyumi and Shouto both shot him exasperated looks, but he just laughed, very nearly immune to such looks at this point. Shouto loved his brother, but he could be very irritating sometimes. Shouto got back to his task with a huff.

It had been one time, and it wasn't even the house, so much as part of the dojo before he got it
under control.

-three hours earlier-

Toshinori folded himself into Nedzu's- heavily modified to allow the mammal to drive it- car, mere moments before the principal drove off, startling the hero with his urgency, as he fumbled to get his seatbelt on.

Seatbelt safely fastened, the incredibly tall man turned to Nedzu. “What's going on, sir?” He asked, concerned by what could have sparked Nedzu to rush like this.

Nedzu didn't answer for several seconds. “Tsukauchi-san just called saying Endeavour's eldest showed up at the police station. After having essentially disappeared for six years.”

Toshinori reeled from this revelation. “What do you mean?” He exclaimed. “How could his son have just disappeared?” Or more to the point, how did he not know about it.

The tiny mammal didn't take its eyes from the road. “He dropped out of UA unexpectedly, and since then never made a public appearance.” He said levelly.

“And we're rushing like this because...” The blond prompted as the principal took a sharp turn.

“Because I am not discounting the possibility that he might disappear again if we take too long, and I have concerns about what he might have to say.” The tall hero didn't like the sound of that one bit, but decided that if Nedzu wanted to tell him he would, so contented himself with holding the safety handle for dear life.

It was only as the pair neared the station that Nedzu broke the silence in the car. “How much time do you have left today?”

Toshinori grimaced, the USJ had halved his daily time, and it had been slipping faster since he had given young Midoriya his quirk. “I had a class this morning, so probably a little over an hour at
“It'll have to do.” Said the mouse, bringing the car to a half, then quickly bouncing out of the car. “Let's hear what Tsukauchi-san has to say.”

Tsukauchi told them very briefly that the man they had come to see had made some allusions to the things Nedzu had suspected, before the detective had decided to ask the two heroes to sit in, then led the pair- All Might seemingly reeling, judging from the stiff way he was walking- to a nearby conference room.

Nedzu had been expecting an interrogation room, in truth, but seeing how uncomfortable the young man looked even in that room, rapidly tapping on the steaming disposable cup he held, the mouse decided that not using one had probably been the right call. He would probably have bolted before they got there otherwise.

Nedzu- who had told Yagi in no uncertain terms to let him do the talking- walked into the room first, followed by the other hero, and the detective, causing the man to snap his head up to look at them.

Nedzu had to very carefully control his facial features as he got a good look at Touya. If the detective was about as plain in appearance as humans typically got, this man was the complete opposite. His ears were each pierced half a dozen times, and there were what at first glance to be dozens more piercings on his face, and some gracing his hands.

It was only when you got closer, and could make out the sections of skin that were the right colour, but entirely the wrong texture, that it became clear that those weren't piercings. They were most likely medical staples, and the rugged patches must be scars- somehow recoloured to match his skin tone, something to ask about later.

His eyes gave a pretty convincing case that he was who he said he was, even had Tsukauchi not confirmed it. That piercing azure matched Endeavour, and Shouto's left eye very closely. Even if the black hair would have thrown off anyone with a less sensitive nose, who couldn't smell the dye.

“So he does know you.” Said the wiry man, directing his gaze at the- currently- muscular hero entering behind Nedzu, seeming to relax slightly. All Might himself paused a couple of steps into
the room- Nedzu guessed that he might have finally figured out what the odd patches might signify.

Touya blinked, looking down. “Nedzu-sensei.” He said stiffly, giving a little nod.

Nedzu gave his best disarming smile, and began to talk in his naturally disarming voice. “Hello! We're sorry for the delay, the detective was just running us through what you've said so far, Todoroki-san.” He said, and immediately realised his mistake when the man's face spasmed.

“Don't- call me that.” Touya said tersely.

“Ah, my apologies, would you prefer Kamishiro-san?” Asked Nedzu brightly.

Touya paused for a moment, clearly not expecting this question. “Maybe...” he shook his head, “no, just call me Dabi for now, that's the name I've been using since I left.”

The principal nodded, taking a seat, followed by the other two. Hopefully he wouldn't think of their positioning as threatening- he wished he could have interviewed the skittish man with fewer people, but none of the three was dispensable. “All right then, Dabi-san. We were hoping you could tell us about Endeavour's... misdeeds. In as much detail as you are comfortable with.” He prompted, carefully avoiding referring to the man as Touya's father, which he guessed would not go over well.

The scarred man stared into his tea for a couple of seconds, lost in thought. “I'm... not sure where to start.” He said hesitantly after a moment.

Nedzu shifted to a smile that he hoped would be taken as encouraging. “Any order is fine, any information would be a great help. If it makes things easier, you could start from the beginning.”

“All right... um, I assume you know what quirk marriages are?” Dabi asked, and the three present nodded. “Well, my... sperm donor's marriage to my mother was like that.” He said, practically spitting, tendons already sticking out on his hands.

“He just wanted her quirk, since he gave up on ever reaching the top spot himself. He essentially bought her.” The man was openly glaring at his cup now, only glancing at All Might when he mentioned Endeavour's goal in all this, clear loathing ringing through each word. “Then he...
forced her to have children with him until he had one that **satisfied** him. It... broke her eventually.”

He finished, looking like he was lost in a particularly unpleasant memory.

“And you're sure that it was a quirk marriage?” Nedzu asked, not entirely surprised, but far from happy that the detective had given no signal that the man had lied so far.

Dabi snorted derisively, looking up at the bear. “He was never very subtle about it, he never loved her, he did the bare minimum to get her to agree to the marriage, then basically trapped her in it. By the end she was so afraid of him that she burned Shouto.”

Nedzu managed to hide a grimace, though he did let the smile drop away, glad that he no longer needed to maintain it. All Might did grimace, storm clouds gathering in his expression, but he kept his peace. “So she was the one to burn your brother?” Nedzu prodded gently.

“It wasn't her fault.” He rushed to Rei's defence immediately. “She just... broke down, she was trying to get away. She knew it wasn't safe for her to stay, and then he came in... she thought he was Endeavour.” Touya was wearing a look of horror as he recalled either the event itself or its aftermath. “She woke the whole house when she realized he wasn't.”

Nedzu was honestly surprised that Yagi hadn't felt the need to leave- either to brood, or to punch the elder Todoroki's face in- yet. It was probably time to move on from this topic for now.

Toshinori listened in growing horror and disgust as the young man sitting opposite him revealed the sordid lengths his... Toshinori couldn't rightfully call that man his father, nor a hero. Not after this. Perhaps the boy's own words were best. The lengths his sperm donor had gone to- to beat Toshinori himself, which made it all the more disturbing.

Nedzu moved on from the mental breakdown the man had inflicted on the woman he had all but forced to marry him, then began to ask about training. Toshinori's face twitched. Todoroki's so-called training amounted to little more than beating his children, forcing the eldest and the youngest to push their quirks far further than they should have at their ages.

That was to say nothing of the near-total neglect shown towards the middle pair, purely because they had inherited only their mother's quirk- an incredible quirk in its own right.
The so-called number one hero barely managed to sit through a furious account of the efforts of both Touya and Rei to protect their youngest sibling and child respectively, and the blows they had ended up taking themselves as a result. By the end of it Touya was shaking. Toshinori thought it was with rage, since that was certainly why he was shaking.

When Nedzu finally asked after the- nearly hidden now- burn marks that covered the young man's body, and Touya- Dabi began to explain the flaw in his quirk, Toshinori truly couldn't stand it anymore.

The huge man stood suddenly, startling the slender man into silence. “Excuse me for a moment.” He ground out, before swiftly storming from the room.

Toshinori had more than half a mind to replicate what he had done to All-For-One. He wouldn't do it, if only because he was a hero, but it was sorely tempting. To force a child to push their quirk beyond what their body was equipped to handle. To- to- even now the boy seemed to think that inheriting his mother's cold resistance meant that his quirk was flawed- that he was flawed.

How dare he? How dare he call himself a hero? The tall man swiftly made his way to an empty observation room, before letting his hero form slip in a burst of steam. Pulling out a chair, the hero collapsed, elbows on his knees, he began to dig his thumbs into his forehead.

The horrors that boy must have gone through, probably made even worse for being at the hand of his father, and his own quirk. Toshinori couldn't even imagine. And Endeavour had- had just called him a failure. As if it was somehow his fault. He could feel an anger even beyond his feelings during the USJ attack beginning to boil over, and took a deep breath before he decided to destroy something.

What would Nana do? Well, Nana would probably have noticed earlier, and would probably have beaten the man to a pulp, given how dearly she had loved her own children- even to the point of giving up all contact with them for their own safety. Probably best not to emulate his teacher in this at least, the top hero attacking the second-best hero in the street would not end well.

Nedzu found Toshinori several minutes later, by which time he had very nearly calmed down- he was still breathing heavily, but at least he was no longer shaking, or feeling like he might explode. The tall hero braced himself, but he had to know. “Was there anything more?” He asked, dreading the answer.

“Nothing beyond a few details of specific events. Not anything as severe as what you heard, though he did mention he was living with a girl who will probably need psychological help, and he
accidentally let slip why he showed up now, while he was talking about how he found someone with a quirk that let him minimize his scars. He was rather concerned when you left.” Said the principal, accustomed smile absent, face and voice somehow incredibly intimidating without their usual cheer.

“which was?” Asked the blond, dreading some new horror that had forced the boy's hand.

“Apparently the vigilante Amber found him, and began to pressure him into coming forward starting a little after the sports festival.” Said the principal, not sounding especially happy about the fact.

The so-called symbol of peace groaned, and brought his head forward to thunk against the two-way mirror in front of him. “Twenty years,” he said, voice sounding hollow to his own ears, “twenty years I worked with him, and saw nothing, and I still wouldn't know if it weren't for a vigilante. I'm such a failure.” He knew he was returning to wallowing in self-blame, but he couldn't bring himself to care. If you counted just the quirk marriage itself, it was more like twenty-five years, his brain supplied, helpful as always when he wanted to make himself feel miserable.

Nedzu hummed. “The timing is certainly quite interesting, I will have to discuss it with Tsukauchi-san once he's done settling living arrangements for Dabi-san.” He said thoughtfully.

Pragmatism brought Toshinori briefly from his pit of self-loathing. “His siblings, we can't leave them with him. When are we going to move?” He needed to put a stop to this as soon as possible, his entire body burned with the need to move, to make up for his blindness.

“Unfortunately,” said Nedzu, as if the word itself was a particularly sour lemon, “as Endeavour is still technically a licensed hero, we will have to ask the commission's permission before moving. I intend to inform them of our intentions, but even so... when that's done it will be too dangerous to move until tomorrow at the least.”

Toshinori shut his eyes. He fully agreed with Nedzu's distaste with waiting, but he was right. Hopefully between them they would have the political pull to twist the commission's arm, but when that was done, and a team assembled, Todoroki Enji would be at home. He couldn't endanger the children further if the “flame hero” resisted arrest.

“All right, I want to help.” Said the suddenly deeply tired hero.
“Of course,” said Nedzu, as if it were still a given, despite his failings, and failing health, “overwhelming force may be needed if things get... violent.” Toshinori almost backed up at the gleam in Nedzu's eye at the word violent. It seemed Nedzu would be even less forgiving of... this than Toshinori himself.

In what could be seen as an effort to make himself feel even worse, Toshinori decided to ask one more question. “Did you have any idea this was going on?” There was no doubt there hadn't been proof, but the hero suspected that this what Nedzu had been expecting.

“Only for the last couple of weeks.” Said the mouse, clearly unhappy with his own extended ignorance.

“What tipped you off?” The blond finally worked up the courage to ask.

“Your protégé made sure I knew, if in a highly roundabout manner.” Said Nedzu, as if Toshinori had somehow personally offended him.

Toshinori drew a deep, grounding breath. Of course young Midoriya had known, he was vastly more observant than Toshinori could ever be. A child had figured it out before them. And another child had found the one person who could give them proof.

It made too much sense, really. Young Midoriya had been cagey when asked why it shouldn't be Endeavour he partnered with. On which subject, this was very close to the worst possible timing for this to come to light, given his impending retirement. This was no time to be hesitating.

“Young Midoriya suggested I start working with Hawks.” He said, hoping for Nedzu's- doubtlessly vastly better informed- opinion on the matter.

Nedzu blinked out of whatever train of thought had occupied his attention, and began to stare at him, not even bothering to hide the cogs turning in his head. “That... could certainly do some good.” He said slowly, after an uncomfortably long time.
of briefing and meeting

Chapter Summary

movement on all sides

Chapter Notes

1) did not really intend this chapter to be so long, but oh well.
2) screw sensible typing, if i end up on a pokemon adventure I'm training pokemon i like (probably something silly, like lucario, lapras, dragonite, charizard, arcanine, and scyther) :p
3) i really feel bad, AQAQ was more popular than i expected, but it probably won't get updated that often, since its the sort of fic that needs a lot of info to write :( (suggestions on possible shenanigans for that fic more then welcome :p)
4) also: just got done KOAC (great fic, highly recommend) and i gotta say... man, i thought i was calling people on their bullshit. yeesh

Hawks sat in the meeting room, tilting his chair back, smiling absently, apparently looking at the ceiling. It was a ruse, of course, being a hero tended to make it hard to actually relax that much, and everyone present knew it.

The police officer who had called him in for this briefing hadn't explained what was going on beyond that it was an urgent villain take-down mission, and Hawks had initially assumed that he had been called in just for his speed at resolving incidents. But then more and more people had poured into the room, police and heroes alike, and the winged hero grew increasingly anxious. Whoever they were here to deal with... it had to be a group, or some incredible heavy-hitter.

By five minutes before the scheduled start of the meeting, half of the top five were there- Hawks, Best Jeanist, and Edgeshot- alongside a dozen lesser known heroes, and a veritable platoon of police. This in itself reduced the possible targets to a very small set. Then All Might walked in.

The enormously tall man immediately dominated the room- as he did with essentially any room he was in. Hawks’ strongest guess immediately became the league, surely only the league, or maybe a couple of old yakuza groups could justify this much force. Unless Destro had somehow risen from his grave.

All Might was smiling brightly- as if he was ever not smiling brightly- as he glanced around the
room, noting those present. The electric blue eyes of the number one hero noted him, and the blond began to make his way over to where the winged man was sitting. “Hawks-kun, glad to see you could make it!” Boomed the huge man, only slightly quieter than had he been addressing the entire room.

“I couldn't miss this sort of fascinating get together, All Might-san.” Hawks said, head still facing the ceiling, and only glancing down at the other hero. Had to keep up the lax persona, after all.

All Might hummed, his smile slipping just slightly. “It is unfortunate we couldn't all be getting together under... better circumstances.”

Hawks noted that the taller man seemingly already knew why they were there. Not long until the brief started, though, no point in asking. “I'm always up for getting food, if it gets me out of paperwork.” He said absently.

All Might didn't speak for a moment, and when he did it was far quieter than before. “Yes, well I was hoping to talk with you privately after today's meeting, if you are available.” He said, and Hawks noted that he looked deeply uncomfortable. Whatever he wanted to say it was probably not small talk.

Hawks tilted his head forward to look straight at the tall man. “No problem, ramen sound good?” He asked, testing how private this talk should be.

“We can order some in, if you would like.” Very private then, if he wanted the conversation here, or at one of their agencies.

“Sure, I could go for some chicken shio.” Said Hawks, turning back to pretending to observe the ceiling.

“All right, I'll talk to you later, Hawks-kun.” Said the number one hero, eliciting a thumbs up from number three.

All Might walked away to find a seat of his own, reducing but not eliminating the huge amount of attention being directed Hawks' way by the others in the room. It really was not often you saw the number one hero seeking out one hero specifically like that. Hawks tried to ignore the question filled stares, until the meeting started a minute later.
“Thank you all for coming,” said a plain-faced police officer, standing at the front of the packed room, “I'll get right into it, since this is a time-sensitive matter.”

The detective took a remote from a nearby table, and turned on the overhead projector. “I'm detective Tsukauchi Naomasa, and I'll be coordinating this operation, alongside hero Nedzu,” he said, gesturing to the suited white mouse at his side, who waved cheerily, “now, evidence has recently come to light implicating the hero Endeavour in crimes including, but possibly not limited to; spousal abuse, child abuse, child neglect, and illegal quirk marriage.” Began to detective, before pausing to let this sink in, a picture of the flame hero appearing on the wall.

If not for the sound of the front legs of Hawks' chair hitting the ground you might have been able to hear a pin drop in the room. Hawks wasn't bothering to pretend the detective didn't have his undivided attention, as a moment later the room burst with dozens of loud questions.

The winged hero didn't say anything, mind still reeling, as the detective waited patiently for the uproar his declaration had caused to die down. He had grown up with Endeavour as the number two hero, and he had always respected the man for being the only one really trying to surpass All Might. Surely he couldn't really be like that behind closed doors, could he?

When it was finally quiet enough to speak, rather than the detective, Nedzu spoke, hands behind his back. “I know this may be rather unexpected of one of our own, but I assure you that the evidence is damning. The commission has already given permission to move forward.” He said, bright high voice contrasting with the words that were shaking Hawks' entire world view.

“If it's all right, could you tell us what evidence you have?” Asked Best Jeanist calmly into the silence, standing elegantly. It didn't really matter, though. Hawks knew well enough that the commission would never agree to this if the evidence were anything less than entirely damning.

“One of the Todoroki children came forward to testify to the abuse he and his siblings endured. His story was confirmed by someone with a truth quirk.” Said Nedzu, gesturing to the detective at his side.

Tsukauchi nodded. “I can confirm that the testimony we received was truthful, as well as-” he grimaced, “extensive.”

Best Jeanist nodded. “Thank you.” He said, returning to his seat.
Tsukauchi looked around the stunned audience, before continuing. “Our top priority for now is ensuring the safety of the Todoroki children, followed by capturing Todoroki Enji with minimal casualties. The former is the primary reason this meeting is being held on such short notice.”

The picture of Endeavour— who most likely wouldn't be using that name too much longer— was replaced by a group photograph of the Todoroki family at a- years old, judging by how young they looked— charity gala. “The eldest, Todoroki Touya, who was the one who testified is already in protective custody at a safe house, the younger siblings will have to be collected, and taken with police escort to safety, preferably without arousing notice.”

Hawks stopped paying attention while the detective arranged which of the present police officers— and a couple of the heroes as well— would be collecting the Todoroki children. He wouldn't be involved in that, he could only be here for actually arresting Endeavour. Oh. He was going to be the number two hero. This... was going to take some time to process.

A good chunk of the room left almost as soon as all the details of where and how to collect the Todoroki children were arranged, urgency born of the need to get to them when they were away from home, though thankfully all three would be easily located at school.

“Now, onto the actual arrest,” said the detective to the remaining heroes and police, “We are hopeful that Todoroki will decide not to resist, but in the event that he does, it is important to realise that he is an extremely skilled hero.” No shit, he was the number two hero, and had the highest incident resolution rate of any active hero, not to mention nearly thirty years of experience on the job. Skilled was an understatement.

Nedzu stepped in again when the detective paused. “In the event of a fight, our top priority is as always minimal collateral damage. To that end, the ideal time to move is when Todoroki is at home, since the large estate will minimize civilians in the area. Nonetheless, a local evacuation of nearby houses will be required.”

The remainder of the meeting was taken up with the minutia of— effectively— troop deployment. Given just how monstrously powerful Endeavour was, even the police involved in evacuation would be heavily equipped, while the other would be given full specialist riot gear.

It seemed like the heroes present had been chosen because they had the skills to ensure each other's safety, while also ensuring no chance that Endeavour would be able to get away. This sort of line-up was all but unheard of, it just took too many resources off the street to do this for anything less than a potential disaster.
Hawks himself seemed to be here mostly to harry the flame hero in the- unlikely, in his opinion-event that he chose to flee. Despite his weird state of mind, having his idol pulled from his pedestal so suddenly, Hawks just about managed to internalise the full plan, knowing that he could not afford to make a mistake.

When most of the other heroes left, prepared to wait for this evening, when Endeavour would come off duty, Hawks waited for All Might to come over.

Toshinori was sitting in a small meeting room that Tsukauchi had prepared for him, as Hawks tore into a bowl of ramen with gusto, the taller hero eating at a more sedate pace- hopefully the thin broth wouldn't cause too many problems.

He knew he was totally failing to actually talk about what he needed to say, but leaving aside that he dearly wished he didn't have to, he really wasn't sure how to begin. Hawks was a good hero- for all his odd reason for being one- but for some reason he was having a good deal more trouble than he expected revealing his weakness this time. Possibly because it could end up entailing letting the whole aerie know.

To hell with it, this was his own fault for getting over-emotional with All-For-One, and not seeing what was going on with Endeavour. “I'm dying.” He said, avoiding preamble to make sure he couldn't change his mind.

The sandy blond choked on his noodles, and the conversation halted for several seconds as he coughed. “You're- what?!” Hawks Demanded, indolent façade dropping away.

Well, it was out there now. And unlike with young Midoriya, he had managed to get out the worst of it. “I'm dying,” he repeated, “probably some time in the next few years, but I'll have to retire long before then.”

Hawks looked at him, eyes wide with something close to panic. “You can't be serious.”

“Unfortunately I am.” Said the taller man, finally letting his muscle form go in a burst of steam, grateful that he didn't have to hold it up any longer.
Hawks went slack jawed when the steam cleared the reveal the skeletal man who now sat opposite him, yellow suit now hanging loose around his emaciated frame. “What happened to you?!” He yelled, causing Toshinori to be thankful that they were the only ones who could hear.

The older man sighed wearily, lifting his shirt to reveal the mass of scars there. “I was badly injured a couple of years ago, since then... my health has been slowly failing.” He said as clinically as he could.

The winged man looked at the mess the surgeries had made of him in horror, wings subconsciously drawing closer to his body. “Can't Recovery Girl-”

All Might gave a bitter laugh, if only. “Shuzenji has been doing everything she can just to keep me well enough to work this long.” He said, leaving out the extent to which he had ignored her demands for him to reduce his workload further.

Hawks looked to be desperately looking for a way out of the room. “Is- Isn't there anything you can do?”

“Not especially, even if I stopped working entirely, I would be too unwell to keep going in a couple of years.”

“You mean you're going to retire in under two years?” Asked Hawks, sounding nearly as tired as Toshinori felt.

“one year, at best.” Said All Might, not sugar coating it.

Hawks covered his face with his hands. “I'm too young to be the top hero.” He groaned. Toshinori was a bit surprised by that, after all he hadn't been that much older when he became number one.

“Nonsense, you have become an excellent hero.” Said Toshinori as brightly as he could given the sombre topic.

“I won't be able to make people feel safe, though. My back just isn't broad enough to protect people like you do.” Said the winged man, looking at Toshinori through his fingers.
Toshinori raised his eyebrows. “If you count the wings, your back is a good deal wider than mine.”
He commented, smiling wanly.

Hawks shot him a flat look. “You know what I mean. Besides, how will people react to you suddenly retiring? You're the symbol of peace.”

Toshinori winced, this was basically exactly what young Midoriya had berated him for. Was he really the only person who hadn't properly considered it? “Well...” he said carefully, “that is what I wanted to talk to you about, Hawks-kun.”

Hawks just stared at him, silently asking for an explanation. “Um, it would be best if... people thought my retirement was properly planned, so I'll probably announce it a few months in advance,” he explained hurriedly, before moving on to the meat of the issue, “in the meantime, it would probably help if I was seen working with the next number one.”

Hawks groaned. “I never wanted to be as highly ranked as I am now, and now I- I'm going to be your successor?”

Toshinori coughed, that wasn't strictly accurate, since young Midoriya had more claim to that title, but it was close. Toshinori felt bad for springing this on the young man like this, but especially with the Endeavour mess, he really had no choice. “Y-Yes, sort of- I mean, you are your own hero of course, no-one is expecting you to be me, but it would help if people saw us patrolling together.”

Hawks drew a deep breath, closing his eyes. “People are going to expect me to be you, All Might. But you're right I guess. How long can you safely work a day?”

Toshinori decided to ignore the word safely, since using One-For-All at all exacerbated his condition. “At present, a little over two hours, but I need one of those for teaching.”

Hawks was beginning to take on a seemingly permanently pained expression. “And should I be expecting that to go down over time?” All Might nodded. “All right, I'll give you my mum's number, since she knows my patrol times better than I do, she'll organize it.” He said, pulling out a business card, and standing to leave. Toshinori instinctively took the offered piece of paper. “Thanks for the food, I... need some time to think.” Said the shorter man, turning to leave.

“Thank you for agreeing, I look forward to working with you, Hawks-kun.” Said Toshinori politely to Hawks’ back. Hawks just nodded with a grunt.
Toshinori really hoped this wasn't a mistake. Hawks was a hero too, he should at least be able to trust that the man wouldn't trumpet his injuries from the rooftops, but he barely knew him. In hindsight, maybe he should have worked more closely with the other high-ranked heroes, speed difference issues be damned. Nedzu agreed with young Midoriya. It would be fine, he tried to reassure himself.

The cogs were turning in Nedzu's head, as they had been for the last day, trying to make sense of all the new data he had gained. Touya's slip that Amber had been the impetus for his visit, and subsequent tidbits about the vigilante- hard to get as they had been, since the man hadn't seemed that interested in helping them there- were like new pieces in the world's most annoying jigsaw.

Touya himself probably didn't think that he had said anything especially useful, but the fact that Amber seemingly intended to try again was beyond helpful, and the timing for Amber finding Touya was very interesting.

One of those two bits of information may well have been a corner piece. Though the mouse was becoming increasingly disturbed by the fact that Amber had done exactly what he had been planning to do, in almost exactly the same way, and faster than he himself had been able to. Much faster, which did rather rankle the High Specs user's pride.

Whether he had all the pieces or not, Nedzu was increasingly confident that he had figured out roughly what the picture was. Hence his decision to stop Tsukauchi on the way out of the Endeavour briefing.

“Tsukauchi-san, might I have a word?” Asked the principal, halting the man on his route to his office.

“Of course, Nedzu-san.” Said the ever-polite man, gesturing Nedzu to follow him.

“What did you want to speak about?” The detective asked, once both parties were successfully ensconced in his office.

“Your recent meeting with Midoriya-kun.” Said Nedzu straightforwardly.
“What about it?” Asked the detective, tilting his head curiously.

“You said that you cleared the boy of suspicion in the Amber case. Do you think you could tell me exactly what was said?”

“You think he might have gotten around my quirk?” Asked the detective, face taking a more serious cast.

“It can be done, and Midoriya-kun bears a great many similarities with Amber.” Explained the hero, taking the opportunity to avoid directly answering the question.

Tsukauchi closed his eyes for several seconds, taking time to think. “He said he wasn't Amber, wasn't related to Amber to his knowledge, that no-one in his family had a pyrokinesis quirk other than him, that he didn't know where Amber was, and would like to help us find them if he could.” Rattled off the man, before pausing a moment. “He also said that being asked about it because of his quirk was annoying.” He added as an afterthought.

If Nedzu had been human he might have pursed his lips. That was... not entirely airtight, though it did eliminate a great many possible options. And ruined his favoured theory that the original Amber had been a relative- possibly even the boy's father. “You're sure he said 'them'?” Nedzu asked, the question most likely to lead to useful information.

“Yes?” Replied the detective. “Why?”

“Because if he did, then we can at least say that Midoriya would like to help find one of the Amber's.” Explained the tiny bear, causing the eyes of the human to widen slightly.

“You think he was abusing the fact that Amber is a descriptive name?” Asked the detective, sounding stunned.

“Midoriya-kun is certainly clever enough for that. And he managed to avoid telling you where he was on Monday.” Pointed out Nedzu.

The detective ran a hand through his hair. “He only said them once, every other time he said
Amber.” He murmured after a moment.

Nedzu nodded. This still wasn't proof, but he had managed to add his student back to the list of suspects. If indeed he was Amber, Nedzu would probably have his work cut out for him— he was genuinely impressed at how well he would have given the experienced detective the run-around, in that case.

“Thank you, Tsukauchi-san, that was all I wanted to know.” He said, turning to end their brief conversation.

“You're welcome,” said the detective weakly, “what do you plan to do now?”

“Nothing.” Said Nedzu brightly. “We know where Amber's going to be, and we can't exactly interrogate Midoriya-kun without evidence.” Informal questioning would be very unlikely to work, given recent evidence.

And there would be all sorts of other work to do if they managed to catch Amber, Midoriya or not. If possible, that sort of skill, and intellect should not go to waste. That would be like throwing pearls to pigs.

Natsuo walked through the university grounds from his last lecture of the day, hopeful that he would be able to spend some time with his girlfriend again. Without almost immediately being shooed away to let her study, that was. Though, her latest essay had given him another opportunity to speak to Shouto, and Fuyumi, which was always nice.

The white-haired youth made his way quickly to the far corner of the campus, climbing the stairs to his accommodation. Turning the key, he opened the door to the tiny, messy room.

Natsuo smiled, dumping his bag on the bed, his room now was small—smaller than his bedroom at... home— but it had one huge advantage. He rarely, if ever, had to interact with the old windbag.

Two huge advantages, now, since it was far closer to where Takema was staying. But she would still be in her bioinformatics lecture, for now.
The teen collapsed into the room's only chair, pulling the laptop from his bag, and placing it on his desk. Time to buckle down, and get on with a serious session of procrastination.

His latest essay wasn't due till Tuesday, so it would be fine. And it totally wasn't because he found diagenesis to be completely impenetrable.

Natsuo had just settled into a compilation of “hillarious animal gaffes” when he heard a knock at the door.

Frowning, the largely built man rose, stretching to his full height, and making his way to the door. That couldn't be Takema, her lecture wouldn't finish for another twenty minutes, nor his neighbours- who were content to keep to themselves, except when he occasionally dragged them kicking and screaming from the library, just to make sure they actually got some sun, and/or food.

He opened the door, expecting maybe one of his friends from the rugby team, only to look down slightly at two police officers. “Um, hello?” He said, blinking at this development.

“Todoroki Natsuo?” One of the officers- the one with a cat head, oddly- asked, and Natsuo nodded mutely. “I'm officer Sansa, and we were hoping you could come with us.”

The white-haired man looked blankly at the cat-headed one for a moment. Hoping might seem to imply that he had a choice, but... “Am I in some sort of trouble?” He asked slowly.

“Not at all, we can explain on the way.” Said Sansa reassuringly.

Natsuo noted how much of a hurry the officers seemed to leave, and grabbed his coat. “Did something happen to my father?” He asked, since it seemed the most likely reason they would be looking for him specifically.

“Not as such,” said Sansa, leading him from the building, his colleague falling in behind him, “your brother showed up at the station with some... troubling accusations.”

Natsuo drew in a sharp breath. “What did that bastard do to Shouto?” He asked heatedly. Shouto probably wouldn't go to the police unless something had happened- something worse then usual.
Natsuo thought that Sansa was smiling, probably trying to be calming. “Nothing, at least nothing recently. It wasn't Shouto I was referring to.”

Natsuo walked in stunned silence for the few remaining steps to the unmarked car the policemen were heading for, and entered it numbly, not even registering the hero, and third policeman already inside.

He didn't have another brother, he couldn't. Touya was dead, that's what Endeavour had said. Touya was dead.

Fuyumi let her last class of the day go, revelling in the resultant silence in the classroom, before picking herself up with a sigh, and making her way to the staff room. She had some marking to catch up on, then she would head home.

She had barely made it to the staff room, not even finishing preparing a cup of coffee, when she was called to reception.

Sighing, the- mostly- white-haired woman got up, abandoning her coffee. Hopefully no-one would steal it, and it would still be warm when she got back. Fuyumi made her way to reception, shoes clicking loudly in the all but deserted halls.

Now what could she be needed at reception for, anyway? She supposed it was possible that Shouto had been injured in training, or had taken ill, but in that case, she would have thought that UA would just call her directly. She was his emergency contact, after all.

When she arrived at the desk near the front door, Fuyumi found that there were two people already there, waiting for her, it seemed, from how they stood from their seats when she arrived.

As she got closer, it became apparent that they were both police. Not wanting to make assumptions, she asked the receptionist why she had been called. She responded timorously that the police officers had asked for her.
The shorter woman looked over at the two officers standing nearby. “Can I help you?” She asked courteously.

“We can't say much here,” one of the officers said, “but we would appreciate if you came with us.”

Fuyumi’s anxiety immediately skyrocketed, the close-mouthedness immediately had her thinking that something horrible had happened. Probably to her father.

Turning, she spoke to the receptionist again. “Can you call Itou-sensei, and tell him that I’ve left?” She asked, and the other woman nodded, already dialling the department head. Fuyumi followed the pair out to the car, glad it was neither raining, nor too cold in just her sweater.

Once she got in the car- joining two people who looked to be pro heroes- Fuyumi finally spoke again. “Can someone tell me what happened, now?” She asked, trying to keep the worry from her voice.

“You're being taken to a safe house. Your father is about to be arrested.” Said one of the two heroes sitting with her in the back of the car.

Shouto finished his most recent heroics lesson (read prolonged workout designed by a sadist) feeling exhausted, and sweaty. After a much needed shower, the bi-chromatic teen changed back into his uniform.

It did occur to him that changing into his uniform at the end of the last class of the day was a little silly, but rules were rules, and Iida would skin him alive if he forewent the uniform entirely, even for the five minutes it took to get out of the building. Bakugou already got enough lectures for his refusal to wear a tie. Those lectures were ignored, but it didn't seem to deter the bluet.

“Hey, Shouto-kun.” Said Izuku, coming over while doing up the last couple of buttons on his shirt.

“Izuku.” He said, looking a question at the greenette.
“I booked one of the gym rooms for an hour, do you want to join me for some quirk training?” Izuku asked, cementing the ball of sunshine’s place in Shouto’s mind as a complete lunatic.

How could he even think of doing quirk training on top of all that physical training? Come to that how could he look so little like he was any worse for wear? “I-” Shouto started, before pausing, thinking about it. It would certainly be nice to spend time with Izuku- better than risking time with Endeavour, definitely- and by quirk training he probably didn’t mean quirk strength training, so much as fine control, which wouldn’t be that tiring.

“Sure, but not for too long, I need to get home in time for dinner.” The bi-chromatic boy finally said. Izuku had mentioned that he would love to see him make snow, and Shouto would certainly enjoy seeing the greenette’s face light up... assuming he could actually do it, his other had never taught him how.

As it turned out, he didn't have to make snow, the greenette seemed oddly happy just to have company for his quirk training. “Th-That’s great!” He said, all but dragging a nonplussed Shouto away.

Shouto was even more confused to see Uraraka, and Shinsou dragging a likewise confused Iida in a different direction. He would have to ask them what they wanted with the bluet another time.

“If you wanted to do more training, shouldn't you still be in your gym uniform?” Shouto asked the greenette- who had started muttering to himself about possible things they could do during their hour.

The greenette blinked adorably, coming back to reality from wherever his mind had been a moment ago. “I wasn't really going to do anything too strenuous, it shouldn't be a problem.” He said, smiling brightly, as the pair arrived at the nearby gym.

“All right,” Shouto said slowly, “you know, my father won't be home until this evening, you don't need to-” He started, sure that that was the most likely reason Izuku specifically requested his- less than engaging- company.

Izuku blushed to his collarbone. “I-It's not like that!” He protested, waving his arms in negation, before beginning to mutter. “thisisjustmorefunwithcompanyandyouhavetheclosestquirksoiassumedyouwouldbenefitfromitnotthatyoun
He said, before halting himself suddenly, and going an even deeper shade of red.
Shouto blinked slowly, trying to parse the spoken stream of consciousness- he assumed that's what had just happened, though even Shouto's own thoughts didn't typically go that rapidly. “A-Anyway, I just thought you m-might enjoy using your quirk for something m-more fun.” Explained Izuku, moving to hide his head in his arms again.

“You just wanted to see me making snow, didn't you?” The taller boy accused mockingly.

The cage of limbs tightened around Izuku's head, and Shouto couldn't help but chuckle at him. “I've never actually done it before, so you'll have to bear with me.”

Five minutes later, Izuku was jumping about, trying to get a large piece of ice out of the back of his shirt. Shouto had no choice but to put it there, Izuku had challenged his authority by giggling uncontrollably, when he accidentally encased his own right arm in a huge block of ice- snow was far harder than his mother had made it look.

“No fair Shouto,” protested the greenette loudly, if not totally seriously, “my quirk can't do pranks!”

The warm feeling was more intense than ever, watching the greenette made a fool of himself getting the ice out, and Shouto couldn't help laughing again.

“Maybe, but I don't doubt that you can.” Shouto said, deadpan, as Izuku blushed- a very common occurrence for the greenette for some reason.

“There you are.” Said a new voice from the entrance to the gym. Both teens turned to see Aizawa standing there, looking slightly more irritable than usual.

The teacher looked at Izuku still trying to get ice out of his shirt, and the large block of ice sticking out of the ground for several seconds. “You know what, I don't want to know.” He said finally. “Todoroki, the principal wants to talk to you.”

“What about, sir?” Asked the ice-user, brows scrunching slightly, but making his way over to the door.

Shouto didn't miss how Aizawa glanced at Izuku for a moment before answering. “Hell if I know. Aren't you going to clean that?” He asked, gesturing to the block of ice.
Shouto turned back, ready to deal with it, but Izuku spoke before he took a step. “Don't worry, I'll deal with it, Shouto, you go ahead.” He said, right hand already on fire.

Shouto thanked Izuku, before following the impatient hero from the room. The pair walked in silence through the halls to Nedzu's office. Shouto suspected that Aizawa had lied about not knowing why the principal wanted to see him, but he wasn't about to question a teacher- much less one seemingly so expulsion-happy.

Aizawa- in a show of truly heroic bravery- entered the principal's office without knocking, gesturing Shouto to follow him.

Shouto entered the office, and looking around the three police officers, and three heroes- including Nedzu, and Aizawa- made it immediately apparent that this meeting was more then usually serious.

“You wanted to see me, Nedzu-sensei?” Asked the fire-user evenly, choosing to go with his mask of careful blankness.

“Yes,” said the principal solemnly, “it's about your father, and ensuring your safety- mostly from him.” Said the mouse, as if this was the most natural thing in the world to say.

Shouto sat in the car taking him goodness knows where, dazed. How could they have found out? Izuku couldn't have told them. He wouldn't. And Natsuo and Fuyumi made even less sense, since nothing had changed to make them say anything.

Shouto was slightly panicking, for all that Nedzu had said that his father would be dealt with, this was the number two hero. They couldn't just take Shouto and his siblings away, Endeavour would demand them back, and when he got his way, his training could well double.

Or worse, there was a chance that the man might follow through on his threats to stop paying his mother's hospital bills. That unwelcome thought came back to roost time and time again on the long, silent car journey, and Shouto wasn't sure by the end of it if he was managing to keep his neutral expression. Or even if he was breathing at any sensible rate. This was a disaster.
The car pulled up outside a moderately sized house on the other side of the city from the Todoroki house, and Shouto got out alongside his... guards?

One of the officers knocked on the door, and it was opened by a second policeman. Heavily guarded then, as if that would do any good against Endeavour, and his veritable army of lawyers.

Shouto was ushered into the house, and all thought of his impending doom was briefly pushed out of his head. There was a very loud discussion- not quite shouting, but close to it- going on in the house.

The first two voices were Fuyumi and Natsuo, but the third- Shouto kicked his shoes off, nearly tripping, and ran into the room he could hear the voices from. Bursting into the room- the kitchen by the looks of things- Shouto found three people standing around a table. The third was a tall slender man covered in piercings, and with two eyes just like Shouto's left.

The youngest Todoroki all but tackled the eldest, holding him tightly, as if he were afraid that his brother would vanish again if he let go. “Touya,” he said, burying his head in the man's chest, “we thought you were dead.” He wasn't sure when the last time he had cried had been, but he was certainly crying now, holding onto his long-lost sibling for dear life.

Touya had stiffened at the embrace, but then moved to return it, if far more softly. A comfort that Shouto hadn't realized how much he had missed. “So I've been told.” He muttered, sounding angry, then softening his tone to add, “I'm sorry, Shou, I should never have left you.” Before lowering his head to rest in his shorter brother's hair.
of reunion and reassurance

Chapter Summary

todoreunion continues, more lessons with the scary mammal, nice convo on the roof.

Chapter Notes

1) hopefully the long delay will be slightly made up for by the long chapter :p
2) woah, we're about to hit 1.5k kudos, and 25k hits. thanks again for taking the time to read my (poorly edited, unplanned, poorly written, weird ass) fic, and especially thanks to all the people who added to this huge pile of kudos, and lovely comments, i really appreciate it.
3) regarding a comment i recently received apologizing for always saying similar things: this. https://sulphuryasecretcloset.tumblr.com/post/185998457353/shatterpath-love-to-love-puppies
4) so idk... there's something about the major arcana that seems to encourage people to make really awesome fan art, so here's a cool example https://mapleleafuf.tumblr.com/post/183341844289/i-made-this-a-super-long-time-ago-for-the-bnha
5) you should also check out the Dark Souls, and Fullmetal Alchemist major arcana collections.
6) so I've started fantasizing about writing later events in this fic, which makes it surprisingly hard to write the chapters I'm currently working on. :'(
7) also: per my compulsion to share awesome fan art of green bean: https://frozenmusings.tumblr.com/post/185703061416/some-sketches-of-me-playing-around-with-the-idea

Touya stroked his youngest brother's hair in a familiar motion, as the shorter boy divided his attention between crying into his shirt, and trying to squeeze the life out of him. The fire-user was substantially less surprised by this reaction than he had been when Fuyumi had done it, but it was still so surreal for him that his siblings were this welcoming. That they cared so much after all this time.

Well, Natsuo had punched him in the jaw before the hugging had started, which- Ok, fair. Fuyumi had been scandalized, but Touya thought that it was the least he deserved for abandoning them like he had.

Eventually, Shouto loosened his hold enough to actually look at him. “Why did you leave?” he asked, blinking red-rimmed eyes.
The black-haired man grimaced, feeling the staples pull uncomfortably. He took his hand from Shouto's hair, bringing it to tap at the scars on his face. The “inkless tattoo” parlour Amber had given him the number for employed a woman with a semi-permanent colour-changing quirk, but it was a cosmetic fix- just covering over the problem without fixing it. The rough feel of the deadened skin was no different for all that it was harder to notice.

“It was selfish, but I just couldn't bear to stay another second in that house.” He said, skimming over the real fear he had had that Endeavour might have finished the job, if Touya had let him keep pushing. Even so, he would never have gone if he had known that the bastard would tell them he had died. Or at least, not without a word like he had. (stupid, of course he would do something like that.)

Shouto seemed to realize what the odd ridges were- to realize that the medical staples weren't just more piercings. Touya tried not to feel stung by the look of horror his younger brother wore- his other siblings had reacted the same, but it was to be expected- as he let go, backing up a step.

“What happened?” Asked the wide-eyed teen, using nearly the same faint tone his sister had not half an hour earlier.

Touya sighed tiredly, it was exhausting to talk about that day once, nevermind three times. “Endeavour finally pushed too hard in one of his 'training' sessions.” He explained, filling the word training with as much sarcasm as the bitter man was capable of.

Shouto looked like he was going to be sick. “You mean he-” The bi-chromatic teen began, but Touya hurriedly cut him off.

“No, this was my own quirk. My heat resistance can't keep up with the hotter fire I make.” (failure, weakling, no control, waste of time) He explained absently scratching at the scar tissue. He could barely feel any sensation there.

“Stop that!” Scolded Fuyumi, sounding slightly ill herself, and Touya hurriedly pulled his hand away.

“Sorry, mom.” He said, largely in an effort to keep up a minimal level of sarcasm, and earning himself another flat look. He supposed he should be grateful Shouto's arrival had paused their upbraiding.
Shouto was running a hand over his lower jaw, not seeming aware he was doing so, and looking at Touya with a pained expression. Touya couldn't think of it as pitying, he didn't know if he could cope with his youngest brother pitying him.

“Does it—” Shouto began, the words sounding forced out. Touya knew what he was getting at, though. Does it hurt?

“Nah,” he replied nonchalantly, and not entirely truthfully, since the staples were less than comfortable, even if the nerves on the scars themselves were ruined, “I barely notice them, unless I'm looking at them.”

Shouto seemed to relax slightly. “I'm glad you're back, I missed you, Nii-san.” He said, going in for a slightly less suffocating hug.

Touya smiled at the top of his head. “I missed you, too, Shou.” He replied, returning the hug. He never should have left. If nothing else, heroes not being able to find him showed that he should have gone with his plan to take Shouto with him.

When the hug came to an end, Touya saw a clear question in Shout's eyes. His brother might have been able to hide his emotions from outsiders, but he had always been able to see through it- honestly he was a little surprised that he didn't seem to have become any more shut off since Touya left.

“questions are easier to answer if you actually ask them, Shou.” The dark-haired man snarked, raising his eyebrows slightly.

Touya smirked at the unamused look he got in return. “Fine then, why did you come back?” Shouto asked, petulantly crossing his arms.

The eldest Todoroki felt like he had been slapped. Was his own brother unhappy that he chose to come home? He must have looked like he had been slapped too, given that Natsuo felt the need to interject testily. “He means why now, don't look at him like that, Nii-san.”

Both fire-users turned to the ice-user simultaneously, then turned back to each other. Shouto's eyes went wide, and he blushed furiously- always curious to see given that he did it more on his fire side. “I didn't mean—” He began hurriedly, before Touya cut him off.
Stupid, how could he think Shouto would say something like that. Touya should have known that Shouto was nearly as blunt as he was sometimes, the tendency to get to the point sometimes caused problems. “I knew that,” he lied, causing Natsuo to snort derisively, “you just got through hugging me and messing up my shirt.” He teased.

The unamused look returned with a vengeance. “And you were stroking my hair like I was six.” Replied Shouto petulantly, causing Touya to snort, and Fuyumi to groan.

The blue-flame-user crossed his arms, and schooled his face to an exaggerated scowl. “A stupid vigilante kept pressuring me into coming back. The annoying brat wouldn't leave me alone.” He groused jokingly.

“Vigilante?” Asked Shouto, looking frankly baffled.

“Yeah, showed up at the house I was staying in-”

“House you were squatting in.” Interjected Fuyumi hotly, causing Touya to scowl slightly more seriously at the interruption. Did she have to keep bringing that up?

“Fine, house I was squatting in.” Touya said testily. “I couldn't exactly take Endeavour's bank cards when I left.” Though maybe some kind of plan might have been better.

“Wait, you were homeless?” Interrupted Shouto.

“Am I ever going to get to finish?” Touya demanded, before going into the story of how Amber had unexpectedly showed up in his kitchen, seemingly with full knowledge of what had gone on behind closed doors in the Todoroki household. Somehow.

Natsuo was already getting reacquainted with how exasperating his elder brother could be, standing in the hall outside their mother's room the next day. “I should have re-dyed it.” Said Touya, pulling his hat down in an effort to cover the crimson roots that were barely visible under all the black.
“You're being stupid.” The ice-user informed him. “Colouring aside, I look more like dad than you do, and anyway, she's gotten much better recently.” He added, gesturing to the broad physique he had inherited from Endeavour, which contrasted sharply with the slender builds of Touya and Shouto.

Honestly, if Natsuo dyed his hair red, he might get asked for his autograph, flaming beard or no. Actually he might be more likely to get asked than his father, since Endeavour projected an aura of “talk to me at your own peril” most of the time.

Touya scowled at him. “Shouto looks nothing like him if we ignore colouring.” He said gesturing to the shorter, slightly built boy with hair that didn't spike up like either of his brothers.

Natsuo opened his mouth to retort, but Fuyumi forestalled him. “Don't start, you two. We're going to warn her you're coming, remember not to mention dad.” She said imperiously. Her tendency to act as a sort of mother to her younger siblings was slightly odd when applied to him, but downright bizarre when she used that tone on Touya, who was her twin.

Even stranger, he didn't object, which he had always done before he disappeared, probably because he felt genuinely guilty about abandoning them. That combined with what he must have gone through both before, and after leaving made it annoyingly difficult to stay angry with him for vanishing without a word. The white-haired teen would probably have to restrict himself to pretending the last six years hadn't happened soon, or he would start feeling guilty for mentioning them.

Fuyumi slipped into the room almost as soon as the dark-haired man nodded, and Natsuo followed her, while Shouto hung back, murmuring something to their older brother.

The white-haired woman looked up from her book when they came in, smiling softly at both of them. “Natsuo, Fuyum, it's so good to see you.” She said, immediately making Natsuo feel guilty for visiting her less since he had started university. Still at least once a week, but she really didn't get enough visitors as it was. “No Shouto today?” She added, noting her youngest's absence.

“He's just outside, um... don't freak out-” Said Natsuo, earning himself a sharp jab in the ribs from Fuyumi, as Rei began to look concerned.

“It's nothing bad, it's just- Touya came home.” His sister said soothingly, prompting the older woman's eyes to widen.
Natsuo turned, fully opening the door, prompting the waiting pair to turn from their hushed conversation, and enter the room.

“Um- h-hey mum.” Said Touya, waving awkwardly from his spot just inside the room.

For several seconds, Rei just sat there, wearing an expression as if she couldn't quite believe Touya was real. Then she stood, walking forward to hesitantly raise a hand to Touya's cheek. “You're really back.” She said, sounding close to tears.

The dark-haired man rubbed the back of his neck. “Y-yeah, I'm-” He started, before the- already slightly excessive- number of hugs he had received in the last two days increased again.

Natsuo decided to snag a spot on the bed, while Touya made murmured, bumbling attempts to comfort the crying woman, not seeming to realise at first just how happy she was. The white-haired man was slightly concerned where they were all going to sit. With so many visitors at once, their mother's room was packed.

Shouto joined him, taking position at the foot of the bed, while Fuyumi hovered behind their mother, and Touya awkwardly endured yet more familial affection.

In the end, no-one had to sit on the floor, but it was a close run thing, with Fuyumi taking the stool that Rei had asked for after the first time she had three visitors at once- for the simple reason that even more slender Touya could barely fit between the younger Todorokis.

Rei returned to her chair- which she had tried with no success whatsoever to offer to Fuyumi- wearing the happiest expression he had seen on her since she had been put in here, other than maybe the one she had the first time he visited her after Shouto started doing so.

“It's so nice having you all together like this, the only thing missing is...” She started before trailing off with a glance at the flowers on the window sill, he smile slipping slightly.

“So what have you been up to, any news?” Fuyumi asked, barely beating Natsuo to distracting her from those flowers, and who they represented. Not a topic any of them wanted her thinking about.

The smile returned, Rei shaking herself out of her thoughts. “Not much, dear. Shouto's knitting materials have been a nice distraction, though.” She said, opening a drawer, and putting on a
ridiculously coloured hat. Natsuo, and Touya snorted in unison, while Fuyumi seemed to be struggling not to laugh.

“I’m glad you like them, that’s a nice hat.” Said Shouto, in what Natsuo would have taken for full seriousness from anyone else.

Rei tittered. “Thank you, it wasn’t easy to choose a colour combination jarring enough to blind the nurses, you know. And I really like the sweets you brought last time Fuyumi- I still have some left, if you'd like I can ask for a pot of tea.” She said, looking a question at the room.

Natsuo threw himself dramatically back to lie on the bed. “I call foul,” he said jokingly, “we bring Shouto with us, and suddenly there's sweets.”

When he looked back at the room, Rei was smiling fondly, and Fuyumi looked exasperated. “Well, Shouto is better company.” Said Touya without inflection, looking over his shoulder at him.

Shouto- the traitor- looked past the dark-haired man to nod in agreement, completely straight-faced. Natsuo groaned, this would be worse than living with two Shoutos. “Et tu, Shouto?” He asked, clutching his chest.

Fuyumi shook her head at their antics, though her slight smile betrayed her. “We'd love some tea, but only if it's not a bother.” She said, pre-empting any further ribbing.

Rei insisted that it was no bother, and called a nurse, who looked pleasantly surprised by how packed the room was, before heading off to make a pot of tea- it was annoying that his mother wasn't trusted to make her own, but he did understand why.

“Anyway, you know I haven't been up to much, but what about you four?” The white-haired woman asked, looking around the room.

Fuyumi answered first, and Natsuo suspected it was to allow Touya time to think of something to say that wouldn't concern their mother too much. Though, of course it went quickly from discussions of what her class had been up to, to a pseudo-rant about her current resident troublemakers, until Fuyumi caught herself when the nurse returned with a tea-laden tray, and cut off with a few mild grumbles about her brothers, and how much chaos all three could cause together.
Which was totally unfair, it wasn't their fault the entire safe-house had been filled with steam... OK, maybe it was, but it had been one time.

Rei smiled broadly at the sensational retelling of that story, before turning to the bed as Fuyumi fell silent. “And what about you boys? Any fun stories for your old mother?”

Natsuo grinned, and eagerly started telling her about his most recent outing with Takema. “...So we got to the rink, and it turns out she had never been skating before, so we spent the first half hour with her falling over every other minute.” He said, thinking fondly of the memory from last weekend.

Touya cackled loudly. “You didn't think to ask her if she knew how to skate, before taking your date to a skating rink?” He asked incredulously.

Natsuo flushed. “I wanted it to be a surprise! And besides, she enjoyed herself, it was fun helping her learn.” He objected, while Touya continued to laugh at him.

“I'm glad you two had fun,” said Rei, “you should bring Takema-chan to visit some time, I'd love to meet her.”

Natsuo pursed his lips, humming consideringly. It would be nice to introduce his girlfriend to his mother, since they had been going out for a good few months now. “I'd have to see if I could get her added to the visitor list.” He said.

His mother looked at him for a moment, as if deciding if he was using that as an excuse. “That shouldn't be too hard, why don't you ask the receptionist about it when you go, it'll probably be allowed.” A considering pause, then. “What about you, Touya, anyone special in your life.”

Natsuo decided to get in a jab before Touya could respond. “Yeah, weren't you telling us all about the girl you were staying with?”

Touya made a sour face, his “piercings” tugging concerningly. “Toga is barely older than Shou, Natsu.” He said pointedly.

Rei frowned in consternation. “Who's Toga?”
Touya turned back to face her. “She was my... roommate, I guess. We were sharing a flat.” He explained, carefully skirting around the conditions he had been living with her in- Natsuo surmised that she was probably another, even younger runaway. “She could be annoying as hell, though. Her quirk let her shapeshift into other people, and she kept using it to mess with me.”

“Wait, anybody? That's some quirk.” Asked Shouto, commenting for the first time, before helping himself to another sweet.

“Nah, not anyone,” replied Touya, waving his arm dismissively, “she had to have gotten close to the person.”

“Still,” Shouto raised his eyebrows slightly, a sign of utter shock for him, “that could be really useful for hero work.”

Touya burst into laughter. “Yeah, but she totally wouldn't try for heroics. She was way happier using her quirk for pranks.”

Shouto hummed. “Fair enough, I guess... speaking of quirks,” he went on, turning back to face Rei, “I've been meaning to ask, how do you make snow? I can't seem to figure it out.”

Shouto seemed unaffected as the attention of the whole room focused on him. Rei blinked in confusion, tilting her head slightly to the side. “Why the sudden question? I can't imagine snow would be that helpful for you.”

“One of my friends was asking if I could, but when I tried it I just ended up icing my arm to the floor.” Shouto explained with a perfectly blank expression. Natsuo and Touya stared at him for a full second before bursting into simultaneous laughter, which only got louder at his glare.

“Would this be Izuku, or one of your other friends?” Asked the white-haired woman curiously.

“Izuku,” answered Shouto with a nod, “he says he really likes silly quirk uses like that.”

“Wait, wait. Who's Izuku?” Asked Touya in confusion.
“Midoriya Izuku, the boy who Shouto fought at the sports festival.” Explained Fuyumi.

“So... they became friends after Midoriya set him on fire?” Wondered Touya loud.

“Yup, Shouto talks about Midoriya-kun a lot.” Added Natsuo helpfully.

Touya looked over at Shouto, blinking a couple of times, before a wolfish grin grew on his face, and he gave a loud “ha!” Before going on. “I came back at he perfect time, not only has Natsu somehow got a girlfriend, but Shou got his first crush.” He said with something approaching glee.

Shouto looked genuinely puzzled, frowning something chronic. “But I don't have a...” He started before trailing off, looking thoughtful.

All three older siblings looked on in near disbelief as Shouto sat there in silent thought, eyes slowly widening. Natsuo weighed the benefits of shaking his little brother, or just hitting his own forehead. He did however remember to take note of Touya's use of the word “somehow”. There would be recompense for that later.

The silence brought by Shouto's stunning revelation was eventually broken by a high, clear sound, like a ringing bell. Shouto jerked his head back up, and his siblings turned to the side, to see their mother laughing. Not chuckling, or tittering as she had been earlier, but full, near-uncontrollable laughter. Even as they watched, she began to tear up.

Fully uncontrollable as it turned out, as she struggled to get words out, her children looking on in amazement. “I- I can- teach you, it- it's not too- hard.” The white-haired woman managed between gasps and brief fits of hysterics. Shouto didn't even seem to mind that she was laughing at him. None of them had heard their mother laugh like this in years.

Shouto really did not want to go to school on Monday. The hero escorting them back to the house from visiting the hospital on Saturday had informed them that Endeavour had been arrested, and worse, that he had gone without a fight. Shouto felt like his entire body was composed of anxiety.
If he went without a fight, it must mean that he felt confident that he could walk away from the charges, regardless of what Touya tried to say to comfort him.

He wasn't sure he could get through a day feeling like this, not to mention the revelation he had had during their visit to his mother. Damn Touya, why did he have to say that? Shouto could have remained blissfully unaware of the meaning of that warm feeling, but no, now he had to struggle to remain casual, and not blush furiously whenever he thought about it.

Apparently Natsuo had been amazed that he didn't already know. It seemed like everyone knew about his feelings before he did, which was a little frustrating. He must be even more emotionally stilted than he had thought.

The bi-chromatic teen drew a deep breath as he got to the huge door to his classroom, and assumed the careful blankness he had perfected over years of practice. He didn't want his classmates finding out about his home situation as long as he could avoid it, and he could think about whether to tell Izuku- assuming he didn't already know as well- later.

Frankly it was a miracle that Endeavour's arrest hadn't been publicized as long as it had, but the detective running the case had warned them that it probably would be some time that week, regardless of what they tried. Likely before Wednesday.

Opening the door, he noted that most of his friends were already there, only Shinsou- who was typically nearly late- being absent. Izuku was reading his magazine, outlined by the sun streaming in the window, until he glanced up as Shouto entered, and began to beam at him, as if determined to outdo the sun. Shouto felt like dying, but just about managed to keep his face composed, nodding to his friend, and walking past to his seat.

No sooner had he sat down, than Izuku stood up, and made his way over to him, still smiling, but eyes serious. “Are you OK?” He murmured, deliberately pitching his voice too low for even Yaoyorozu to hear. Though, he needn't have bothered, since both Yaoyorozu and Sato seemed to be looking away for some reason.

“Of course, why wouldn't I be?” Shouto replied evenly, face not shifting expression as he tilted his head up to look at the greenette.

Izuku smiled sadly. “People who wear masks usually have something to hide.” He murmured, in a cadence as if it were a quote, though if it was, Shouto didn't recognise it.
Great. He supposed he should have seen it coming, someone as empathetic as Izuku noticing that he was forcing the blank expression. He tried to formulate a response, some way to get Izuku not to press, but it turned out he didn't need to bother. “I won't force you to say anything, but I just want you to know that you can... if you want.”

The greenette was looking at him with that truly disconcerting intensity that was seemingly all but unique to him. If he didn't know better, he might have thought it a quirk effect, but the golden eyes looked as kind as ever, and he sounded like he meant what he said. Shouto thinned his lips unconsciously for an instant, before catching himself. Then he nodded. “I know... I'll talk to you later?” The ice-user certainly didn't want to have this conversation in class, where their neighbours could probably overhear if he wasn't careful. Heck, Jirou might have already overheard.

Izuku's smile turned more genuine, now reaching his eyes, and he nodded in turn. “All right, speak to you later, Shouto-kun.” He said slightly more audibly, before wandering back to his own desk.

Izuku left the class practically alongside Aizawa, making his way to Nedzu's office as Present Mic entered for first period English, with the accustomed loud “Good morning, little listeners”, which never failed to make Shinsou jump.

He had been expecting Shouto to be happy, or at least relieved, since he had read about Endeavour's arrest a couple of minutes before the taller boy entered the classroom, so had been startled to find him wearing the same careful blankness he had used at the very start of the year.

That blankness was not a good sign. The voice always warned against wearing masks, since they were in themselves attention grabbing, and that expression was most definitely a mask.

'Why would he be upset? Shouldn't he be happy to be away from his abuser?' He asked the voice worriedly.

*There could be any number of reasons.* Answered the voice calmly. *He might just be a bit stunned, or Endeavour could have made him develop some odd emotional attachment. Either way, you still did the right thing.*

Izuku had to repress a shudder at the thought of Shouto still feeling attached to that man. Now he was getting worried that Shouto thought that the abuse he received was in some way deserved.
He would have to make sure that the bi-chromatic teen knew that it wasn't, in that case. Also maybe break into tartarus to break Endeavour's nose for making him think so.

A new thought occurred to him. 'You don't think he just doesn't get on with his brother?'

The voice hummed in thought, before Ren came to the fore. *Unpleasant situations often bring people together, he probably is extremely close with his brother- or was.*

*Frankly, despite his abrasive personality, Shouto probably cares for Touya more than his other siblings. Added- mostly- Aoi, and Yugo.*

Izuku nodded, reaching the principal's door. That did make sense, and even if Shouto was mad at Touya for leaving, it probably wouldn't last too long.

The greenette knocked, and swiftly received the bright “come in” which he had come to expect for these lessons.

“Good morning, Midoriya-kun.” Said the principal, already seated at the table they always used for these lessons.

“Good morning, Nedzu-sensei.” Responded Izuku politely, moving to the chair opposite, waiting only briefly for permission to sit.

“How did you get on with your homework from last time?” The mouse queried, pouring a second cup of tea for his pupil.

Izuku grabbed his bag, and brought out the worksheet Nedzu had given him on Thursday. “It was all right,” he ventured, handing the completed sheets over, “I wasn't sure about a couple of the questions.”

Nedzu nodded, eyes already flitting over the tight scrawl Izuku had written. The voice chuckled. *Those were some nasty questions, even Hayato had trouble.* It said, lead by Yugo for the moment.
Izuku agreed, the pages were a series of quirk effects, along with questions on what quirks could have caused them. The greenette had had trouble thinking how a couple of the effects could possibly have been produced.

Nedzu nodded, looking up at Izuku with a bright smile. “Not to worry, I didn't really expect you to get a couple of these. You shouldn't assume you have all the information, it's perfectly all right to ask questions.”

The greenette nodded, as the bear went back to skimming the pages. Finishing up, he turned back to Izuku. “Question six, you listed two quirks instead of one.” He prompted.

Izuku frowned. Question six was a scenario where a quirk effect had burned down a building, and turned someone to stone, and neither Izuku, nor the voice could figure out the quirk. “Sorry, Sir. Unless we're counting All-For-One, I couldn't think of a single quirk that could do that.”

Nedzu put down the sheets, and his current smile was probably supposed to be reassuring. “I didn't really expect you to get that one, but your answer was a fairly good one. That scenario requires a bit of sideways thinking. It might help if I explained that the quirk is a transformation type.” He elaborated, prompting Izuku to start pulling at his lip in thought.

The voice began to mutter discordantly to itself- Izuku assumed, though most of it was kept from him. Eventually, to Izuku's surprise, it was neither him nor Hayato who got it, but Ichigou.

With a look of dawning realization, Izuku parroted the answer. “It was the man who turned to stone, he had some sort of magma-transformation quirk.”

Nedzu's smile widened. “Excellent, well done. There were a couple of other possibilities, most likely, but that was the intended answer. I suppose I should nitpick, and say that in this case it was lava-transformation, but never mind. You had some minor issues with some of the other questions, but I'll leave that until I have time for some proper marking. For today's lesson I thought we could do something fun.”

“Fun, Sir?”

The principal nodded. “I'm sure by now, your teachers have repeated that property damage should be minimized ad nauseam?” He asked, tilting his head, and Izuku nodded, Aizawa and thirteen had both made the point several times, and the greenette had tried to give them as few reasons to as
“It's an important lesson for heroes, and it is best to teach it as early as possible, you see. However, as I'm sure you're also aware, the world is messy, and things don't always go the way we want.” Another nod, Izuku had the scars to prove it. “That being the case, we should be prepared to deal with unavoidable collateral damage. Tell me, what do you know about demolition?”

Izuku sat up straighter, brightening considerably. “Nothing whatsoever.” He said honestly, and he could feel the voice taking more interest. It was rare that he found such a large subject about which none of the incarnations had ever learned anything.

Nedzu's smile was spine-chilling. “Excellent!” He enthused, clapping his hands together before jumping down from his chair. “Unfortunately, Cementoss would have my head if I made this a practical exercise at this time of year- foundational studies on demolition is part of the third-year curriculum, you see, and they just finished last week- however,” the principal said, retrieving two tablets from a drawer, “for the basics, specialist physics engines are more than adequate.”

Nedzu returned to his seat, tapping one of the tablets a couple of times before handing it to the greenette, showing a 3D render of UA's main building, except in various colours- mostly greens and yellows. “Now, let's see if we can't get you some knowledge of how buildings fall down.” Said Nedzu brightly, turning on his own tablet.

_He is far far too happy about the prospect of demolishing his own school._ Commented the voice, and Izuku was inclined to agree.

Izuku was still mulling over Nedzu's lesson, a whole world opening up to him for the first time in years, when lunch rolled around.

_But why did destroying that auditorium do so little._ Wondered the voice, picking over one of the failures that Nedzu had asked them to think about for their next lesson.

'Maybe it was because-' Started Izuku, before being interrupted.

_Heads up, Shinsou._ Said Aoi, on reality watch for the day.
“-there, man? You've been even more spacey than usual.” Asked Shinsou, who had caught up with the greenette before he even got out the door of 1-A's classroom.

Izuku grimaced. He didn't exactly like worrying his friends, even if parts of the voice found it hilarious to mess with teachers by not paying attention. “Yeah, fine. Just been thinking about Nedzu's lesson.”

“It is important to internalise your lessons, anything less is wasting this great opportunity we have.” Interjected Iida, straight-laced as always. “However you should not neglect your other classes, I'm sure the principal-”

The greenette interrupted with bold negating gestures. “I was paying attention, Iida, I got all the work done.” This was a lie, at least on the first count, but it seemed to mollify the bluet.

“So what did the terrifying mammal talk about today?” Asked Shinsou curiously.

“How to destroy the school.” Replied Izuku, prompting a stunned silence from his three friends- Shouto seemed to be hanging back for some reason.

Izuku looked around at his worried friends, and amended himself. “Well, not the school necessarily, the lesson was on how buildings fall, and how to tell what way they will.”

“Man, as if you weren't dangerous enough, with the fire, and the enhancement.” Commented the brainwasher wryly, and Uraraka nodded enthusiastically.

Izuku was about to object, when Iida finally got over the confusion that resulted from authority figures contradicting one another. “But isn't that sort of lesson contradictory with Aizawa-sensei telling us to avoid property damage?” He demanded, looking scandalized.

The greenette nodded. “It is, but it can be very helpful in rescue scenarios, to make sure a partially collapsed building doesn't crumble further.” He explained, avoiding mentioning that Nedzu probably intended the lesson as a way to safely drop buildings on villains without damaging the neighbouring ones.
Iida seemed to think about this for a moment. “I see, that does sound like an extremely useful judgement for a hero to be able to make, I should not have doubted the principal's lessons.”

The trio had gotten their food, and was about to sit at their accustomed table, when Shouto finally caught up, carrying his own tray. “Izuku, can I talk to you?” He asked without inflection, still wearing that too-blank face he had been using all day.

Izuku blinked in surprise. Shouto wanted to explain now? The greenette looked around at his friends, worried about upsetting them by leaving.

“Go on, have fun. We'll just be here talking about you behind your backs.” Came Shinsou's gravelly voice, as the purple-haired teen made little shooing motions with one hand.

“We will not!” half-shouted Iida. “Shinsou-kun, that would be extremely rude of-”

Uraraka managed to cut off the well-meaning tirade with a hand on the taller boy's shoulder. “He was joking, Iida-kun. You two go on, we'll be fine on our own.” She said, sounding halfway to laughing, as she gestured with her chin for them to go ahead.

“All right, um... lead on, Shouto-kun.” Izuku said, trying to figure out why the voice had started humming a random tune.

Shouto initially seemed like he was leading them to a quiet corner of the hall, but then he shook his head, and led them out of the hall altogether. Izuku wanted to ask where they were going, but decided it would be better to stay quiet for now, given how tense Shouto seemed to be.

Eventually the dual-quirk user led the pair up the stairs, to the deserted rooftop, and laid his tray down, taking a seat with his back to a wall.

Izuku did likewise, before turning to look a question at the other boy. Shouto let the mask drop, looking worried as he seemingly contemplated what to say. “My brother came back after being missing for six years.” He decided on.

The greenette looked at his friend for a couple of seconds. “Um... that's good, right?” He asked, still puzzled by what had the bi-chromatic teen so worried.
“He told the police what- what my father did... they arrested him on Saturday.” He said, voice calm, but his entire body gave an impression like a coiled spring.

“They- they arrested him?” Asked Izuku, trying his best to feign surprise. “Who are you staying with, then?”

Shouto began to seem frustrated. “My sister,” he said dismissively, “for now, but he went without a fight. He must think they won't be able to convict him. He's the number two hero, he has really good lawyers, if- if he gets out of it... he-he could-”

Shouto looked like he might be about to have a breakdown, so Izuku twisted to put his hands on his friend's shoulders. “Hey, it's OK, just breathe.”

Izuku waited until Shouto seemed to have calmed down slightly. “If he went willingly, he's an idiot.” The greenette stated, turning to grab his bowl of curry.

“But-” Started Shouto, but he got no further.

“You said it yourself, he's the number two hero. If you want to arrest a hero, you need permission from the commission, and they wouldn't let it get this far unless they were sure they'd get a conviction.” Izuku kept his voice calm, gesturing slightly with his chopsticks, before taking a bite.


Izuku nodded. “He's a hero.” He said, infusing the word with as much derision as he could. “The commission OKed it, otherwise it couldn't have happened.”

It was a stupid law, and almost every member of the voice occasionally liked to rant about it. They collectively blamed Yugo, who had been indirectly involved in the formation of some of the laws surrounding modern heroics, for the whole mess. That being said, Yugo probably hated it the most, and had fought to keep it from being that way.

Shouto seemed to relax slightly. Did none of the heroes, or police working this tell the kids about
that?Asked the voice, sounding slightly disgusted.

Izuku would have shaken his head, had Shouto not been there with him. It was a bit of an oversight. Probably they simply assumed one or all of them already knew about those rules, and so didn't mention them.

Shouto still didn't look entirely mollified, but the greenette was content to wait, both of them eating their lunch in silence before it got cold. Shouto finally spoke again when Izuku had half-finished the rice.

“But what's going to happen with my mother? none of us can afford her hospital bills... without him-” The ice-user asked, quietly enough that Izuku half-suspected that he hadn't been meant to hear.

“Shouto,” Izuku interrupted, “did he threaten to stop paying them?” He asked with a frown.

The blank mask was back, and Shouto didn't answer for a moment- answer enough in itself- before nodding.

Izuku's frown was replaced with a furious scowl. “That bastard. The judge will probably order that they get paid, or even that your siblings well get access to part of his estate.” He explained, though his acquaintance with the technicalities of such things was passing at best. “That is, if I don't kill him first.” He added in a fully serious tone, glaring at his rice as if it had personally offended him.

Shouto snorted, mask cracking and falling away. “I think that might be a bit tricky.” He said, seeming to fully relax- probably an illusion, but Izuku would take it for now.

“Nonsense,” Izuku said, smiling again, “Nedzu just got through teaching me how to drop buildings on people.” He said, earning another laugh, something the greenette was always happy to earn. “Now let's finish lunch. I need my energy for assassination plans.”

Izuku and Shouto got back to eating, now in a far more pleasant, companionable silence. Izuku tried to ignore the far more serious death threats the voice was making. Hopefully its incandescent rage would cool to a low simmer soon.
of unfortunate pairings and unexpected solutions

Chapter Summary

poor todo has his end of term exam

Chapter Notes

1) sorry for any slight dearth of uploads, I just read towards the sun (repeatedly) and had to rehydrate after all the weeping that caused, only to embark on the herculean task of reading the undying flame.
2) I've said it before, and I'll say it again, making izu work with bakugou for the final exam was BS, and Aizawa should be ashamed.
3) AQAQ has made my search history weird, like really weird. anyone spying on me will be wondering for a long time about why I wanted to know some of these animal facts.

Kyouka meandered out to join the growing crowd outside the school, adjusting a couple of things on her costume. She was trying to concentrate, passing the exam was definitely a must if she wanted to avoid some sort of hell-training with Aizawa, but it was kind of hard.

Last week had been- something. It started on Monday with Todoroki coming in- usual blankness revealing nothing amiss- only to be immediately questioned by Midoriya. She had had no idea how the greenette had known that something was wrong within a couple of seconds of the taller boy entering the room, but he had.

It really wasn't her fault. It was just extremely hard not to eavesdrop on conversations with her quirk. She hadn't been trying to listen in, and hadn't said anything to correct anyone's assumptions that Midoriya had been in some way flirting- unlikely, given his tendency to stutter and blush whenever half the class spoke to him, but he was getting better about that.

It wasn't until the pair came back from wherever they went to at lunch that she figured out how he had known. Todoroki had come back with an almost identical expression, but the difference really was noticeable- he wasn't forcing himself to show no expression any more.

Tuesday was normal for most of the day, the only notable incident was some saccharine nonsense during quirk training where Todoroki pulled Midoriya aside to make a small snowstorm with his quirk, and the greenette was so overjoyed that he grabbed Todoroki's hand, bombarding him with
He hadn't noticed the ice-user's blush until he actually started smoking. And when he did he hurriedly let go, apologizing and nearly catching fire himself.

Honestly, 1-A’s resident power couple were perfect for each other, both incredibly awkward dorks. She had overheard Mina trying to figure out how to get them to just start dating already. Maybe she should wear a sign warning people that she could hear everything they said in the same room.

Had her interests run that way, she might have been jealous of... one of them, either for unintentionally snagging the unreasonably nice- if infuriatingly multi-talented- kid, or the unreasonably handsome one.

Then Tuesday evening happened. When she had read the headline, she had dropped her phone-luckily onto her bed, but still. Endeavour being arrested was... just- she hadn't imagined that sort of thing happening. Ever.

The flame hero had been the number two hero since before Kyouka had been born, a household name, and suddenly during the weekend he had been arrested. The story didn't say exactly why, but it did go on to talk about Endeavour's life in some detail, all sorts of wild speculation was flying about online.

Actually, most of the online discussion was about whatever charges being bull, or if he had killed a civilian. Endeavour always did have a somewhat intimidating reputation, and even if she had never met the man, interviews always made it seem justified. A lot of people could see him managing to actually get a bystander killed during a villain take-down.

Despite how much she had wanted to know about why such an important hero had been arrested, she had taken one look at Todoroki's careful blankness- man, it really was noticeable- and more importantly, Midoriya's “give me a reason to channel Kacchan, I dare you” face, and decided to leave it alone.

Kaminari- predictably- had no such sense, and made a beeline for the bi-chromatic teen's desk almost as soon as he got to class.

Todoroki's mask took on more of a glare, as the electric blond made clear his death-wish, immediately asking, “Yo, Todoroki, what's going on with your old man?”
Kyouka had to wonder if Midoriya's quirk **did** allow him to set the idiot on fire with his gaze. Bakugou's glares were unpleasant, but... man, it was nothing on the force of the ire of their resident ball of sunshine. Alongside Kirishima. Those golden eyes were like augurs, and promised a painful death if Kaminari said the wrong thing.

Note to self: don't ever cross Midoriya. Not only would you feel guilty for upsetting the cinnamon roll, but he was probably the strongest in the class- only Bakugou and Todoroki could challenge him for that crown, and only Bakugou would- and as such would frickin' end you if you went too far.

Todoroki answered quietly- to anyone but her- his voice almost blank, with just a tiny hint of strain. “Endeavour was arrested on Saturday, I don't want to talk about it, and can't give you any details.” He said simply, before beginning to stare through the moron in front of him.

Tokoyami, and Sato both got up, walking apparently calmly to talk to people further from Kaminari as the blond opened his mouth again. Shinsou was pretending to be asleep. Probably pretending anyway, the resident brainwasher really needed to see someone about the insomnia.

The idiot didn't get much further than “but” when he was interrupted by a hand on his shoulder.

“It's an active investigation, so Shouto probably can't tell you about it, Kaminari-kun.” Said the greenette, and it sounded civil. Chirpy even. But whatever face he was pulling, the blond noticeably paled, and Kyouka began to hear his heartbeat over the intervening distance.

Kaminari stammered an agreement, and bid a hasty retreat. Todoroki looked up at the greenette, lips tightening slightly. “You don't have to do that, Izuku. I can handle things on my own.” He murmured.

Midoriya probably blushed again. “Y-Yeah, I know, Shouto, b-but y-you shouldn't have to.” A pause, then. “I'll back off, if-if you want me to.”

“I'm going to have to learn to deal with it. Eventually.” The ice-user replied evenly.

Midoriya made a pained noise. “All right, s-sorry for not a-asking.”
Todoroki's face softened, looking at the greenette poking his fingers together awkwardly, shoulder's hunched. “It's fine, thank you for trying to help.”

Midoriya had nodded, returning to his own desk, but she could see him biting his lower lip. He clearly did not want to be backing off.

He did back off though, and Todoroki fielded a bunch of questions- that she heard, and probably more that she didn't- over the week, until people realized that he wouldn't say anything about it. They were all from people outside their class. Kaminari's flight from the second calmest pyromaniac in class had even put Mina off.

He wore that forced blankness for most of the week, and she was definitely not the only one to notice. She occasionally heard Midoriya biting the inside of his own cheek. He did not like that expression.

She was greatly thankful that he wasn't wearing it now- probably not many people had bothered him over the weekend- because the sound of Midoriya forcing himself to not interfere was gross, if nothing else.

She was jolted out of her thoughts by the arrival of... like half of UA's staff. Their examiners? She mentally shrugged, paying attention to Aizawa, who seemed to be leading the group of heroes.

“All right, the practical exam will begin shortly, obviously you can fail here too, so listen up.” Sighed Aizawa, gravelly monotone as unrelenting, and unchanging as ever.

“Why are there so many teacher, Aizawa-sensei?” Kyouka asked, unsure why so many would be needed, assuming Iida's- well, ultimately Kendo's- information was accurate.

Aizawa ignored her. “I'm sure you've all learned what you could about the exam beforehand.” He said, as if it had been expected that they would ask- which, on reflection, maybe it had been. She would try to remember to do so in future.

“Yeah, it's gonna be just like the entrance exam, fighting robots.” Said Kaminari, ignoring Midoriya's warning that the scenario would doubtless be more complex. Mina started the enthuse about camp activities. Aizawa's face remained unchanged, which was more than a little concerning.
Oh no, was this going to be another logi- Principal Nedzu popped out of Aizawa's scarf suddenly, startling her, and a few others. “I'm afraid not!” He exclaimed brightly, climbing down a blank-faced Aizawa. “I'm afraid we've changed the test a bit this year.”

A few of her classmates began to question how the test would be different, and Nedzu finished climbing down before answering. “Because of the uptick in villain activity recently, we've decided to focus more on person-on-person combat, so we needed exams closer to real battle.”

The mouse's smile was really beginning to make her want to run. Instead she braced for the newest sadistic activity. “We'll be having you form pairs, and facing one of your fine educators!”

Kyouka's heart sank somewhat. Robots would be far easier than this. These were fully trained pros, how could even two of them expect to win here?

Aizawa took over again, speaking with his usual disinterest. “Your pairings have already been chosen, and your opponents selected carefully.” He explained. “First off, I'll be taking Koji, and Yaoyorozu. Next up…”

All Might, seemingly incapable of not making a dramatic entrance, showed up with alarming suddenness. “I am here! To accompany young Bakugou, and young Todoroki for their exam!” He announced, loud enough to make her wince slightly.

The other teachers quickly announced their opponents, each in their own style. She sympathized with Kaminari, and Mina nearly as much as Bakugou, and Todoroki. They had the displeasure of having to fight the principal.

Eventually Present Mic stood forward, and she already had a bad feeling about- “Hey, Midoriya, Jiro, I'll be responsible for crushing you little listeners today!” He said, and she could almost feel the ear-bleeding he would almost certainly cause today.

She blinked. She was with Midoriya? Score. The shy greenette was in the class' top three strongest, and probably the easiest to work with of those three. Present Mic was a bad fight for her, but hopefully the pyrokinetic could make use of what support she could provide to win it for them.

Midoriya held up a finger, asking her for one second, before rushing to Todoroki, who was walking with Bakugou, and All Might to his bus. “Good luck, Shouto-kun.” He said brightly, and the ice-user did his usual slow blink... thing.
Bakugou looked put out that he was excluded from the good luck, despite being like two feet from the other teen. “You not going to wish me good luck, Deku?” He growled, scowling at the greenette.

“You'd b-blow me up if I did that, K-Kacchan. You always t-tell me you don't need l-luck.”

Bakugou grinned wolfishly. “Glad to see you've finally learned that, shit nerd. And I don't need your help either, you'd better stay out of my way, Icy-Hot. Deku, You'd better not-”


“I-I won't Kacchan.” Finished the greenette, prompting the blond to exhale sharply enough that she could hear it from here, and turn away, stomping to the bus.

Todoroki looked about as amused as he ever did. “Thanks, Izuku. Good luck to you too.” He said, before following the blond.

Midoriya rushed back to where she stood with a Present Mic currently miming checking his watch. “Sorry about that, Mic-sensei, I- Oh! Kaminari-kun!” He started speaking to the teacher, before turning slightly to shout to the blond, who had one foot on the bus, the other two already hidden inside.

Midoriya then did quite possibly the most impressive thing she had seen anyone do with their quirk. Ever. When Kaminari turned, Midoriya clapped his hands, then pulled them apart, dozens of little flames forming between. Each a very specific shape.

“Nedzu can control how buildings fall, but he should leave you some path to the exit.” Said the fire, in perfect handwriting. Better than the scrawl she had seen in his notebooks even. Kaminari's eyes widened, visible even over the distance between them. He gave a thumbs up after a second, and the fires went out.

When Midoriya turned back to them, they were both staring at him. “Wow, Shota wasn't kidding, you are good with those.” He said, before shaking himself. “You're lucky the exam hasn't technically started yet, little listener, teammates are expected to plan together, not with other teams.” He added, voice returning to its normal painful volume, and Midoriya- predictably-
“Come on, let's get this show on the road, listeners!” Finished the blond, stepping onto the bus.

The bus had been in motion for a couple of minutes, before Midoriya worked up the courage to speak again. “Um, w-we should probably plan. N-Normally I'd ask if you can sign, but I think Mic-sensei signs really well.”

“That I do, little listener!” Shouted Mic happily, giving the greenette a thumbs up from his seat opposite them. Why were all of UA's buses open-plan?

Midoriya pulled at his lip, and began muttering about her quirk for a moment, before pulling a notebook from... somewhere, and handing it to her. “Hopefully we can plan like this.” Murmured the greenette, barely audible even to her. “Your hearing is really good, and you can use your heartbeat to attack with your jacks, right?”

Kyouka looked over at the teacher, who was grinning widely. “That's right,” she wrote, unsure how Midoriya even knew that, but not surprised, really, “I'm sorry I doubt I'll be much help against Mid-sensei.”

The fire-user grimaced when she turned the book so he could read it. He barely even moved his lips when he spoke. “I'm not suited to fight him either.” Kyouka frowned, surely a distance fighter like Midoriya could- “My fire is dense, but still light,” he explained, “so his sound-waves will probably blow them apart, and my speed is no use if I can't get close.”

That wasn't making the sound-user anxious at all. “Can't you force them to stay together?” She wrote hurriedly.

Midoriya shook his head. “Too much heat,” he whispered, “moving them, and stopping them both make more heat, I wouldn't last against that kind of force.”

Shit.
Shouto sat down on one of the dies-facgin seats, expecting that would be the best place to sit to plan, but Bakugou shot past him, flouncing into a seat at the very rear of the bus.

The ice-user allowed what his sister would call awkward silence to fill the bus for a couple of minutes, before deciding that Bakugou probably wanted to be as far from the hero as possible for planning purposes. Huffing slightly to himself, Shouto stood, quickly making his way to the seat in front of the blond. (Not the one beside him, Shouto had enough sense to sit somewhere he could feasibly retreat from).

Bakugou would hopefully be able to do the bulk of the planning work, since he still wasn't entirely... up to it right now.

“So, did you have any thoughts about tactics?” He asked, when Bakugou stayed silent.

“Yeah, I go in, find All Might, kick his ass, and you stay out of my way, Icy-Hot.” Growled Bakugou, as if that were in any way a sensible thing to say.

“You were serious about not wanting my help?” Asked Shouto neutrally. His siblings informed him that he said almost everything neutrally, but he actually went for blandness this time.

“Obviously, why would I want your help, fucker?”

Shouto shut his eyes for a second, before adopting the tone Touya had sometimes used on him as a kid, possibly in an attempt to make him understand things as a six year old, probably to annoy him. “Because we're about to fight the symbol of peace, which is something I doubt our ability to do even working together.”

This, seemingly was the wrong thing to say, judging by how Bakugou's glare somehow- impossibly- intensified. “Shut it, Daddy-Issues, you might not be able to win shit, but I'm going to be number one, so I won't take any half-victories.”

Shouto jerked back, genuinely not expecting even Bakugou to bring up his father like that. Then he processed the rest of what the blond had said. “‘Half-victories’?” He asked slowly.

“Yeah, there's no fucking point if I need to rely on someone like you to win shit.” Said the blond, seemingly entirely serious.
Shouto blinked a couple of times, then calmly stood, and returned to his original seat. His partner was clearly insane. Time to cut his losses, and try to plan around him. Maybe he would prove a sufficient distraction to let him beat All Might... somehow.

'Seriously... does he grow his own food? Did he build his own little leaf hut? How can he think that relying on someone else's help lessens a victory?' Thought the bi-chromatic teen, before briefly wondering if he had been that bad at the beginning of the year.

Oh crap, he nearly had been. He had even told Izuku that he didn't plan to make friends. He should apologize for that. And then maybe get the sweet boy some counselling for having to deal with this for years.

...What would Izuku do? Probably something crazy, like keep trying to reason with the explosive maniac. Or failing that, try something entirely unexpected. Well, he wasn't explosion-proof enough for the former, and the latter required more details about the rules.

All he could do for now was think about how the pair fought, and the best way to use that. A difficult task, given how rare protracted fights were for the number one hero.

Though... after Izuku, he probably had watched the most of those protracted fights out of anyone in class. Endeavour somehow seemed to think that learning about All Might's fighting style would in some way help to surpass him. Shouto still couldn't fathom how.

The silent- awkward, worried, and brooding respectively- trio arrived at their destination a few minutes, and not one word later. Then the non-ashen-blond began to lay out the rules.

Shouto took no comfort from the weights, given how unreasonably strong the hero in question was, and only some comfort from getting away from the fight counted as a win. Though he could almost hear his father's voice screaming at him for considering that option.

All Might jumped off, rushing into the depths of their- huge, Izuku was right to wonder where UA got so much money from- arena. A minute or so later, and the buzzer sounded the start of the exam. Bakugou stomped in, Shouto trailing behind him.

The bi-chromatic teen was still contemplating the relative merits of continuing to follow the walking incarnation of blind rage, versus sneaking into a side path, reducing the risk of getting
spotted at all, when he heard the voice that struck fear into the hearts of almost every villain in the country. “Texas...” came the distant sound, and Shouto was already throwing himself to the side to avoid the—“Smash!”

A massive pressure wave came hurtling down the street, smashing every window, and throwing Shouto off-course, so instead of getting into the alley, he rolled uncontrollably down the street for a few feet, probably earning himself a number of fun new bruises.

Picking himself up as quickly as he could—after making sure nothing was broken—Shouto saw the smiling form of the number one hero facing them from up the street. Ah, so that certainly explained why the villains were afraid of him. Having the symbol of peace directing that strength, and that gaze at you was... disconcerting.

Bakugou had already picked himself up as well, and was rushing towards the hero—currently in the middle of an incongruous villainous monologue—so Shouto took the opportunity to run in the opposite direction, leaving a trail of ice on the street behind him.

Fire wasn’t going to be able to stop him, even if he could make proper walls like Izuku. The hero could more quickly enough that he might be able to go right through them without getting burned. Shouto could only hope that the ice would.

Something impacted his back. Something heavy. It was Bakugou. The number one was not messing around, given how far the ashen-blond had flown.

Years of training kicked in. (“If you can’t keep your feet, you’re dead, Shouto!”) And the ice-user jumped immediately to his feet, shoving the explosive boy off of him, and hurriedly facing All Might.

The tall blond was rushing to the pair at an alarming speed, and Shouto panicked, resorting to his default response. A glacier.

The ice lasted all of a second, and the shockwave still had enough energy to send Shouto flying, though this time he expected it, and was able to quickly catch himself with yet more ice.

Bakugou was already rushing down the hero, his explosions having allowed him to slow himself even faster than Shouto. Shouto was cold. He called on his left—so much easier now than it had been—and fire sprouted from him, his internal temperature achieving something a human might call
normal, while the tall boy backed up, readying more ice.

He wasn’t really sure what he could do with it— even his max output was useless, and unintentional or not, Bakugou was slightly too helpful to encase in a glacier anyway. All Might was keeping an eye on him as he tanked a couple of hits, before Bakugou was suddenly sent flying again. Time to move.

“What do you plan to do, young Todoroki?” Asked All Might menacingly, and despite himself he froze for an instant.

The incredibly tall man flickered. One second he was about as distant as the still floored Bakugou, and the next he was inches from Shouto. The teen barely had the presence of mind to limit the scope of the fire-blast he threw at the hero— avoiding both Bakugou, and the surrounding buildings—as he summoned a stream of ice, rushing down the nearest alley.

The hero easily swept the fire away, and it splashed ineffectually against the façade of the concrete buildings.

Noting where Shouto was going, the hero’s smile turned slightly amused. “Surely, you don't think I’ll let—” He started, before being interrupted by an explosion from the surprisingly springy Bakugou.

This was all the distraction Shouto needed for now, he shot into the alley, and as the hero caught his student’s wrist, filled the entrance all the way up with an ever-thickening wall of ice. It wouldn’t hold, but if he managed to get it as thick as the alley was long, it might buy some precious moments to get out of sight. His fire side was now constantly active, just enough to keep his temperature reasonable.

He did sometimes wonder what the limiting factor was on using both halves of his quirk. Izuku suspected dehydration, assuming he could use both in a proper balance. As it was, he was slowly getting colder, his less practised fire side struggling to keep up.

There were still explosions sounding in the main street when Shouto came to a junction in the smaller one. Making a snap decision, he pushed his ice side to the limit, and swept more ice in front of him, just as he turned left. Hopefully it would look like he kept going straight.

He kept running down the new street, breathing heavily, his fire side slowly countering the
horrible cold in his bones, listening as the sounds of explosions kept changing intensity, and location, accompanied by the occasional massive wind gust.

Shouto was not above admitting that- raving madman though he was- Bakugou was surprisingly capable of powering through what must at this point be some serious damage.

He was quickly glad of a couple of turns he decided to take, listening to a crash behind him indicating that All Might had demolished the ice. “Where have you gone? You don't seriously think you can hide from me, hero?” Came the cheery- weird for a villain, but OK, some villains were deranged enough for that sort of tone- shout from further into the arena.

The bi-chromatic teen prayed that the cessation of explosions was temporary. If Bakugou was out of commission, then All Might could simply guard the entrance, and Shouto would have little hope of passing him.

All Might was probably checking the alleys in the direction of the exit- like the one he was in right now- and the number one hero was fast, so Shouto had no time to waste. His temperature had not just returned to normal, but he had- per a suggestion Izuku had made at one point, seriously why did he know so much about quirks?- let the fire keep going, raising his temperature to a slightly uncomfortable level.

The fleeing student started producing ice to push him along, heedless of the trail it left, and his speed increased immensely, as his temperature began to slowly drop. He took some turns he maybe shouldn't have at that speed, but emerged as unscathed as he had been before, by some miracle arriving at the closest buildings to the exit without meeting the hero.

Glancing around from the entrance of the narrow street he had ended up on, Shouto could see no sign of All Might. He didn't entirely trust that though, so he listened carefully as well.

A moment later there was a new blast, far closer than he would have liked, but it probably meant that the hero wasn't guarding the entrance. Shouto began to run.

Unless he saw a recording of it later, Shouto thought he would never make sense of what happened next, but something hit him extremely hard, the force spread over almost all of his back, and he slammed face-first into a bus. Hard. He had probably broken his nose.

He wasn't Bakugou, but he wasn't about to stay down after one hit, so he scrambled to his feet,
turning.

There stood All Might, looking just as fresh as at the start, only a few feet from him, and further down the main street lay Bakugou, both gauntlets destroyed, dust in his hair, and innumerable scrapes all over his arms and face. Probably from close, repeated re-acquaintance with the ground.

Shouto glanced at the entrance, not much more than a dozen feet away, then back to the hero. He would never make it.

The ice-user raised shaking arms to a ready stance. He couldn't win, but while losing meant bruises, refusing to go on meant more bruises, burns, failure.

“I'm not sure if this was planned between you, or you are just abandoning your partner, but I am somewhat disappointed, young Todoroki. Heroes need to work together, and you do not seem to be working with your partner.” Intoned All Might, as if it was actually possible to work with his partner.

“It was clever of you not to throw your quirk around thoughtlessly, but what will you do now that you've been caught, hero?”

Shouto quickly ran through every option available to him, every resource. He didn't have much support gear, and neither side of his quirk was much use here. He certainly wasn't fast enough to go hand-to-hand with All Might. He could- movement to the side made him glance away from All Might. (“Idiot, what the hell do you think you're doing?! Always keep your eyes on your opponents!”) Bakugou was getting to his feet. Shouto couldn't fathom what it was that drove the boy, but it did not let up easily.

Well, that was something unexpected! A light went on in Shouto's brain, watching Bakugou somehow rise to his feet, launching another charge at All Might. Almost certainly saying something like “I'm not done yet”.

“Well I admire your determination, you have already seen that this doesn't work. You need to stop throwing power a problem like this, young Bakugou.” Said All Might- Shouto made a note to call him a hypocrite to his friends later, remembering the monster at the USJ and its ability to nullify his punches.

Bakugou swore at the teacher, rushes forward using his explosions for propulsion. Shouto needed
to pick the right time for his plan. He had already seen that there was nothing in the way of the exit.

Bakugou got closer, All Might made ready to engage, but not yet, not y- now! Shouto suddenly made a dash for the exit as All Might engaged Bakugou again, taking longer than it would have had he been a real villain, and as such willing to just kill or cripple him.

Shouto wasn't looking where he was going, instead looking over his shoulder at the so-called fight. The hero had noticed the instant he moved, and was diverting some of his attention to look disapproving at his feeble attempts to run- exactly what Shouto wanted.

He just had to pray that All Might did things the efficient way again, like at the start.

If he had had time, he would have smiled in victory, as All Might grabbed Bakugou's arm as he made another approach like some demented mosquito.

The taller boy had to remember to compliment All Might on how stupidly well he could control his strength. Shouto dropped flat, and Bakugou sailed milimetres over his back, the ashen-blond wouldn't make the entrance at that trajectory, even if he wasn't in the middle of righting himself to make another pass.

Shouto wasn't about to let that happen though. Ice shot from his grounded right hand- straight for Bakugou, and the ashen-blond barely had time to squawk in outrage as the ice- which Shouto had to concentrate very hard to prevent from encasing him- forced him out the exit at high speed.

“Bakugou and Todoroki pass!” Said a mechanical voice, barely heard over Bakugou's furious yell.

Shouto finally relaxed, nearly passing out as he lay boneless on the ground.
of marking and second attempt

Chapter Summary

Toshinori flees an old woman, Amber goes on the prowl

Chapter Notes

1) sorry for the delay, been having a more packed week than normal
2) man, actually sitting down to write this sort of vigilantism makes green bean come across as way more... creepy, and slightly scary than I had originally planned. Maybe need to do some revision there, tell me what you guys think.
3) actually generally not sure how i feel about this chapter as a whole, but here we go, had to happen some time.
4) i feel like i don't say this enough, but thanks so much to all the people who take the time to read my nonsense, and even more to the people who comment :D

Toshinori looked down at Todoroki, lying exhausted on the replica street, then up at the wall of ice that was barely muffling the yells from beyond.

“I wasn't expecting that,” he commented after a moment, “though somehow I doubt it was actually teamwork!”

“No,” said Todoroki simply, rolling onto his back, “it was the best I could come up with.”

“Are you OK, young Todoroki, do you need a stretcher?” The hero asked, concerned that he had slammed into the teen a bit too hard during his last attack- other than throwing young Bakugou at him. Hitting that bus would almost certainly leave bruises.

The boy shook his head. “Just give me a minute.” He said unconvincingly.

“There is no shame in asking for help.” The blond chided, slightly concerned that Enji had instilled the opposite view- while Toshinori was blissfully unaware.

“I’m fine, just a little tired.” Insisted Todoroki, just before a series of loud blasts began to sound
from outside the model city.

The heroes eyebrows drew down, though his smile remained more out of habit than anything. This was a concerning level of anger, he- or preferably a more capable teacher- would really have to have words with young Bakugou about this.

“He's going to hurt himself if this keeps up.” Commented Todoroki evenly, from his place in the dirt, as if talking about the weather.

Toshinori would have to agree, young Bakugou had used his quirk too much today as it was. “I'll just be a moment.” He said, before leaping the ice wall- not wanting to destroy it in case it caused anyone any further harm.

The hero returned under a minute later with an unconscious Bakugou under his arm. The boy had seemed beyond reasoning with, and the taller blond had not wished to risk his quirk exhaustion getting any worse, so he just knocked him out as gently as possible.

Todoroki was sitting up when he returned, and he looked at the unconscious form of his classmate without raising an eyebrow, or commenting.

“Are you ready to head back, young Todoroki?” The tall man asked, looking concernedly at his student.

Todoroki nodded, standing a little unsteadily. Toshinori watched, but he at least seemed able to walk on his own.

The bus ride back to the campus, and Recovery Girl's office was nearly as awkward as the ride to the faux city, with Bakugou still unconscious, and Todoroki saying next to nothing. All Might had to stop himself more than once when he noticed he was idly playing with his hands.

Todoroki looked quietly thoughtful for a while, before he broke the silence, just a couple of minutes from their destination. “You have very good strength control, Sensei.” He complimented in a flat tone.

Toshinori looked back at the boy, smile growing a little strained. “I suspect Recovery Girl will have a different view, young Todoroki.” He said, glancing at the ashen-blond laid out on several
He really hadn't meant to injure Bakugou so badly- or at all, really- but the boy was nothing if not persistent, and just could not be persuaded to stay down, or back off unless he was physically incapable of attacking.

Chiyo was most definitely going to skin him, and hang him up as an example for the others.

In short order, the bus arrived at Recovery Girl's medic station, and Toshinori picked up Bakugou, carrying him out, followed by Todoroki. Shuzenji rushed out to meet the pair of them, briskly instructing him to bring the unconscious boy in, and lay him on one of the beds.

Toshinori complied immediately, not wanting to make his punishment from the diminutive woman any worse by delaying her, he passed the door to the observation room, where a few students had already arrived, seemingly, and were cheering for their classmates.

Then he arrived at the temporary infirmary itself, which was mostly empty, except for a still costumed Midoriya, sitting waist-deep in a metal tub full of ice-water.

The conscious pair looked at the odd sight, both blinking, unsure if it was real. Midoriya opened his eyes, seemingly hearing them enter. His golden eyes were slightly unfocused. “Hey All Might, Shou.” He said blearily, waving with a small smile.

Toshinori followed Shuzenji's directions to carefully lay Bakugou down, while Todoroki went over to stand near Midoriya.

“What are you all right, Izuku?” He asked, tone barely betraying his concern. Brows scrunched into a tiny frown.

“'M fine, 'll be too warm, f'r a couple more minutes, though.” He slurred,

Todoroki let out an amused huff. “You should stop overusing your quirk so much, Izuku.” He chided gently, as Recovery Girl began fussing over the ashen-blond on the bed.
Toshinori nearly made it out of the room safely, but Shuzenji called for him to wait for her to be done in the sweet tone that indicated the hero's imminent doom. The blond tasted blood, but managed to swallow it down, despite all of today's exertion. He nodded, making his way to a side room where he could stop wasting hero time like this.

As he was leaving, Todoroki was asking Recovery Girl if he could try cooling the greenette sooner, to which he made a weak noise of protest, and Recovery Girl responded that the ice-bath would be safer in this case.

The bi-chromatic teen nodded, and made his own unsuccessful attempt to leave, before being ensconced in his own bed by an immovable heroine.

Shota was watching the footage of the exam that All Might had been administering when the hero surprisingly walked in. “I see you somehow survived Recovery Girl's wrath.” The dark-haired man commented, raising his eyebrows.

The skeletal man coughed roughly into his fist, and the red stains on his fingers when he took it away were not lost on the underground hero. “Just about, Aizawa-kun. She was... unhappy with me.”

Shota was in no way surprised, the blond had been less restrained by far than his other colleagues. “Did she mention that breaking student's spines is not generally accepted behaviour for teachers?” He asked archly. He had nearly marched off to join Recovery Girl's upbraiding of the man when he had seen the recording of Bakugou being thrown at Todoroki.

All Might devolved into coughing again, and Shota did feel a mild twinge of guilt. “Come now, Aizawa-kun, there was no risk of that.” He said, and Shota had some disagreements, but then-loath as he was to admit it- the man probably had more experience in that area than him.

“All Might is a persistent kid, I had to use more force than I would have liked to keep him down.” The blond defended weakly, before moving on. “What did you think of their performances?”

Shota turned back to the still of Todoroki leaving a misleading trail of ice, before letting out a groan. “At least one of them tried something other than brute-forcing the problem.” He said, since it was the only positive out of this mess.
All Might nodded. “Young Todoroki did make a few quite clever decisions.” He complimented earnestly.

“He still failed as badly as Bakugou in seeing the point of the test.” Replied the shorter hero flatly. The pair of them had totally failed to work together at all, unless you counted Todoroki using Bakugou as a tool- which might actually be worse, he hadn't decided. “I've half a mind to fail the both of them, regardless.”

All Might looked lightly disapproving, but the reproach slid off the underground hero's skin easily. The man may be more than old enough to be his father, but Shota had been teaching far longer than the blond. “They did pass the exercise, Aizawa-kun, and their efforts were quite impressive.”

“Bashing your head into a brick wall a dozen times is impressive, doesn't mean we should encourage it.” Deadpanned the dark-haired man, fast-forwarding the video to a particularly bad series of ineffectual attacks by Bakugou.

Shota tightened his lips watching Bakugou twisting in mid-air when he could so easily have escaped out of sight, maybe even met up with his partner. Stupid thing to do. “Todoroki I will probably give a pass to, his plan was at least more reasonable. Did either of them try to plan with the other?”

All Might tapped his chin. “Young Todoroki went to talk to young Bakugou on the bus, but he went back to sitting on his own after a minute or two.”

Shota nodded, making a note on the paper he was writing his observations in. Not too surprising, Todoroki was getting far less standoffish since the start of term, but it looked like he was really going to have to talk to Bakugou. The ice-user's issues with teamwork were minor enough at this point that he could leave it for now.

Shaking his head, Shota clicked a couple of buttons, and the screen switched to show the start of Midoriya, and Jiro's exam.

All Might noticeably straightened, clearly paying more attention now that his favourite pupil was the focus. Shota had a hard time of it, but decided not to call the blond on his blatant favouritism, he may have enjoyed being snide, but the man seemed to be having a bad day, and he didn't want to be the cause of a sickly man coughing any more blood.
Yamada took up position right in front of the exit, a reasonable choice for someone with such a preference for long-range, and a quirk with such a large effective coverage.

Midoriya had taken one look at the arena that had been selected for him, and all but blanched. His worried expression said it all, the dense forest with a lot of flammable undergrowth was the worst environment for him to safely fight in. Especially with a partner, and it looked like he told Jiro so immediately.

A few moments later, as Midoriya and Jiro were discussing- probably- strategy, Yamada made his first attack- efficacy only slightly lessened by the large distance between the hero and the students.

Both teens immediately clapped their hands over their ears- for all the good that was likely to do. Shota did nod, and make an approving note when the greenette removed one hand from his head as soon as the noise tapered off, grabbing his partner and dragging her to their right. Getting away from the directing Yamada was actually attacking in would help, if probably not enough.

Midoriya dropped a few points for running alongside Jiro, rather than picking her up, and making use of One-For-All. Shota put it down to either inexperience working with partners, or the greenette's usual awkwardness around people his own age.

Regardless, they got close enough to see Yamada after a few minutes. Probably the pair of them were unable to hear properly even when the voice hero was drawing breath at that stage. Rather than speaking, Midoriya gestured to his partner, and they separated a few dozen feet, before the greenette used his quirk for the first time.

The fire in his hands grew quickly- more quickly than the boy would have managed at the start of the year by far- and in just a few seconds he decided to launch his attack- just as the last sonic assault ended.

A large snake of flames- complete with mouth, for whatever reason- shot towards the hero through the trees, but Shota knew from the first that that wouldn't work.

Yamada spotted the fire almost immediately, and finished his pause for breath before it even made it clear of the trees, a simple “Woo!” sent the thing flying off course, flattening as the head bore the brunt of the pressure wave.
Midoriya- hands already around his ears again- widened his eyes when he saw how the fire was reacting, and jerked the now flattened snake to the side, avoiding the trees long enough for him to put it out.

“Don't you think putting young Midoriya in a forest was a little harsh?” Asked All Might, not for the first time, as Jirou made a fruitless attempt using her own quirk for a long-range attack. Yamada blocked it effortlessly, his infuriatingly loud quirk far superior in that regard.

Shota nodded. “It is, the whole point was to make sure he needed his partner's help.” Well, actually the forest inconvenienced Yamada nearly as much, but Shota wasn't about to just share the man's phobias without asking.

“Will young Jiro really be able to deal with a quirk that curbs her own so well?” Asked the ridiculously tall man, wincing as Midoriya's attempt to use One-For-All to end the fight ended with him crashing into a tree- sent flying by the pressure waves the Voice quirk caused at close range.

Shota kept taking notes, as the pair tried a number of other ways to get past Yamada, the most elaborate involving half a dozen fire-blasts and a heartbeat-fuzz simultaneously. “Not on her own, but her quirk would be enough for a number of support purposes here.” Said Shota, continuing to take notes on the various attempts, not elaborating.

Jiro's ears were noticeably bleeding at this point. Maybe he shouldn't be so harsh on the taller blond, since the louder one- who should know better- was also injuring his charges.

Shota frowned as Midoriya launched another series of attacks, not different in any noticeable way from the previous one. Midoriya didn't seem the type to pull a Bakugou and keep trying something that clearly wasn't working. He changed to a different camera.

“Hoho, that's clever.” Enthused All Might, seeing the ball of fire that Midoriya had formed out of sight, behind his back.

Shota hummed, it might work, depending what he did with the unexpected weapon.

Once the hidden fire was fully formed, Midoriya moved behind a tree, leaving it where Mic couldn't see it, then nodded to his partner equally secretly.
Both students moved at the same time. Jiro ran to where Midoriya had put the fire, while the greenette ran in the same direction, as if to flank the voice hero, dodging behind trees to avoid the full brunt of the attacks sent to harry him, but making quick progress using One-For-All.

The last attack was over extremely quickly, but it must have involved very careful timing for both parties. Shota noted it down, he was a harsh teacher, but credit where it's due, the pair must have come up with this move very early on, since they didn't have much chance to plan after the exam started.

First Midoriya lit a new fire as a signal, attracting another attack to himself, then he moved the hidden fire from its place, just as Jiro moved out behind it.

The dark-haired girl plugged her jacks into the speakers on her costume, sending a small sound wave towards the voice hero, just as Midoriya made the fire rush in the same direction.

Mic saw the movements out of the corner of his eye, and turned from Midoriya to intercept the two attacks. For the first time the fire didn't dissipate, or even significantly flatten. Shota could see visible strain in the greenette's face. Even with Jiro's help, forcing the fire to keep going towards Yamada couldn't have been easy.

If not for those stupid sunglasses, Shota expected he would have seen Mic's eyes widen as the fire kept coming. Yamada jumped to the side in an effort to avoid it, but Midoriya- who had already run past the tree line, golden lightning sparking all over- just twitched a hand, and the fire turned to follow him.

Yamada dropped to the ground in understandable panic- they all knew how stupidly hot Midoriya's fire was by now, and no-one wanted to take an attack that severe- executed a hurried roll, jumping even further to the side, and ducking under the stream of flames.

The distraction was all the greenette needed, One-For-All granting him more than enough speed to get past the voice hero during this distraction, at which point it was already over. Yamada had no way to attack that wouldn't be just helping Midoriya get past the exit faster.

Shota let out a biting laugh, as all three of them dropped to the ground, Jiro holding her head, Midoriya visibly panting- probably pushing his original quirk too far again- and Yamada patting his hair, the end of which was distinctly scorched. All Might joined him after a moment with a hoarse chuckle. “Excellent! Your students really don't give up easily, it seems.” He declared happily.
“And now Yamada will be forced to cut that ridiculous hair.” Said Shota, as close as he ever came to beaming- making the expression that made most of his pupils, and even the hardened pro former pupils, run in terror.

Shota made a few more notes, preparing to move onto grading the next pair's performance, when his mood was soured, and the need for sleep made itself known with painful acuteness by a reminder from his phone.

The erasure hero stood with a sigh, and a look of resignation. “Aizawa-kun?” Asked the blond hero, looking concerned. Perhaps he shouldn't have let his expression loose if it was going to cause the number one hero to look at him like that.

“I've got to go,” he said tiredly, “Nedzu is commandeering my patrol tonight.”

The tall man winced in sympathy. “Good luck.” He said, his tone more appropriate for sending someone on a suicide mission.

It probably wouldn't be that bad, but when Nedzu pulled a hero from their planned patrol like this it was seldom good.

You didn't actually have to go, since the rat lacked the authority to make you, but most heroes soon learned to just do it. You would end up doing what he wanted either way, and just agreeing was less painful than whatever unpleasantness the rat would put you through to get his own way.

At least the principal had said it would only be for a couple of days this time, and he hadn't even had to change his patrol times. At any rate, these things usually had a good reason behind them, even if you could never figure out what.

Time to go to the rat's office to find out where he was supposed to be going this evening. Damned lack of warning.

Izuku remembered when his quirk came in very clearly. Most people did, unless they manifested
extremely early, or at birth. It was a very memorable experience, completely unique in your life— with very few exceptions, mostly involving All-For-One in some way—and all but indescribable.

The closest way to describe it was suddenly having a new muscle you didn't before, like an additional limb—sometimes an actual, literal limb, but mostly metaphorical. In Izuku's case, he had been playing heroes and villains with Bakugou—whose quirk had manifested some months previously—in the playground when he felt it.

He heard an odd strangled noise, which quickly cut off, he had looked around but hadn't been able to find out where it had come from. Then he felt it, the fire—only a torch at the time, compared with the bonfire it was now—and he was so fascinated he barely registered Bakugou's angry demands to know what happened to his eyes—as if he could have answered at the time anyway.

On instinct, he pulled part of the fire into his hand, and... made it real. A small golden ball of fire formed in his right palm, and Izuku stared at it in fascination—alongside most of the other kids who were nearby, who quickly started saying how awesome his quirk was—until the nursery teacher spotted them.

He hadn't heard the voice at that point, it had deliberately stayed quiet until he was alone a little while later, sitting outside the office, waiting for his mother to come pick him up, as the parents of most kids whose quirks manifested during the school day did.

He remembered his surprise at first hearing the weird overlapping voices. But more vividly than that, he remembered the first few things the voice told him. The first three pieces of advice.

The first two, it had told him while he sat there, waiting for his mother. You mustn't tell people about the voice you hear, Izuku, it's very important. It had said almost as soon as he was listening. It had made him promise, even if it was years before he understood exactly why. Remember, only make fire in your hands, you'll burn yourself otherwise. Came almost right after that.

The journey home was spent between outwardly rambling to his mother about his new quirk, and all the questions he had about it, and inwardly rambling to the voice, as it answered a lot of them, and again expressed the importance of him not saying anything about the parts of his quirk other than the fire.

The third piece of advice was different. For the first two, the voice had been serious, but it sounded calm. The third arrived when the voice figured out where he lived, and it had sounded anything but calm.
The voice had told him urgently about what he had to do. He had to make sure that he didn't go to his local clinic. When he asked why, it had told him that it would explain when he was older, but that it was important. Izuku liked the voice, it was part of his quirk, even if he didn't understand it yet, so he trusted it.

He begged his mother to take him somewhere else, and while she had been confused, the voice had coached him through what to say, and she quickly agreed to take him somewhere else.

Izuku was around five when he understood the second piece of advice- an accident resulted in a small burn on his wrist- eight when he understood the first- the voice had told him about All-For-One a month ago, and he figured out what it would mean if he took the quirk, and why it couldn't ever happen.

Today's exam had been exhausting- Present Mic was bad enough, but was the forest really necessary?- but overall Izuku was thankful, since it gave him the perfect excuse to go to bed almost as soon as he came home. The greenette woke from his afternoon nap refreshed, ate dinner hungrily, and pretended to go to sleep at his usual bed time. Then he snuck out of the house as soon as he was sure his mother was asleep.

_Run through the plan again._ Said the voice with infinite patience, as the now dark-haired teen walked the near empty streets.

'The doctor lives at XXXXXX street. No security that we could find, no-one else in the house.' Replied Izuku, forcing himself to be calm, though he was anything but.

Yugo's revelation had made the greenette feel... like he imagined Bakugou felt most of the time, his veins filled with a fire similar to using a great deal of One-For-All. He wanted to be angry, wanted to be frustrated with himself for not trying years earlier, and with the heroes who had prevented his attempts two weeks ago.

More than that, he had wanted to go before now, but it wasn't until today's issue that he read that the additional heroes had been called off, and a little further digging ensured that none of the heroes who had seen him were patrolling nearby. Except possibly Bullseye, but that was unlikely. An interminable wait, but roughly what the voice had expected.

_Combat issues._ Prompted the voice as he turned a corner.
'The doctor's quirk- CAT Scan- has no combat applications, and he has no combat training.' Izuku rattled off, not for the first time. 'If he is working with the league, he might be able to call Kurogiri, ensure he doesn't have a panic button.'

It may not have had any combat applications, but that quirk had been used for some terrible things when All-For-One had been alive, since it- along with his medical expertise- was what made the man indispensable for the Nomu program.

The voice hummed in satisfaction at the answer, and kept quizzing him on little things, as he made his way to the doctor's house. He might have tried to take the man at his work, but there was a chance that the clinic had someone actively watching the security feeds, so this was safer, they had decided.

Izuku made it to the house without incident, running into no heroes at all luckily. Glancing around, he made his way through the little garden, to the front door, and summoned a tiny flame for light-shielding it from view of the street with his body.

The voice and he studied the lock for a moment, before deciding on an approach. Pulling out a tension tool, and a slim hook, he got to work, feeling around the inside of the lock.

_Less tension._ Said the voice- led by Ichigou- after a moment, and Izuku stopped pressing down on the tool so hard sheepishly. It had been years since he had done that, clearly he wasn't as calm as he thought.

Taking a deep breath, he kept going, and was soon rewarded as the tumbler turned freely. He needed to stay calm. Justified or not, anger would get him in trouble.

Izuku quietly opened the door, looking around, and pocketed his tools, before padding silently into the house. All the lights were off, which was a good sign. The doctor would be asleep- unless he was still at work unexpectedly, but either way worked for them.

On quiet feet, the vigilante tiptoed around the house, ignoring most of the rooms. One was obviously a bathroom by the door, and several had open doors revealing an empty kitchen, or a spare bedroom.

After a minute of searching, Amber found the master bedroom, and let himself in. Grim-faced, he
spotted him, the bald head and moustaches extremely distinctive. Izuku had a hard time keeping his calm, this was no pawn of All-For-One. This was his bishop, an irreplaceable piece, and someone complicit in more horrors than Izuku could imagine. Doctor Tsubasa Kenshiki.

The man who had murdered his own grandson, and who knew how many others was thankfully still sleeping, and Izuku stilled in the door, carefully joining the voice in checking for any loopholes. There was no phone that they could see, but on the bedside table there was a small button. A panic button by the looks of things, that would have to go.

The doctor didn't even have a chance to wake up, and Izuku left the house with his target drugged, unlikely to wake any time soon, and tied up in any case.

The vigilante left as silently as he entered, closing the door behind him with gloved hands, and taking his trussed up villain away, heart thundering in his chest with some mix of anger, revulsion, and paranoia. He always found this last part the most stressful, since there was no way he could explain himself if he were seen between here and the station.
The wind swept over Izuku's face. He tried to focus on it, on the feel of the tiny amounts of One-For-All he allowed himself to jump between the roofs. He wasn't very successful, even the joy of his second quirk, the freedom of not-quite-flight that it brought couldn't distract from the feel of his skin crawling.

It was as if the parts of his arm and shoulder pressed against the doctor, separated by nothing but a few layers of clothing, dearly wished to be anywhere else. This was the worst person he had ever met, the worst villain he had dealt with since manifesting the Phoenix Spirit quirk, and he couldn't focus on anything else.

'So much blood on those hands.' He found himself thinking, risking a look over his shoulders at the man, who looked so harmless with his short stature, and wrinkled face. The calmness of his features brought by his current sedated state didn't help.

He felt soiled by just being this close. Izuku suspected that he would have to take a very hot shower in the morning.

*Don't think about it.* Counselling the voice, noting his distress.

'I can't, he killed Tsubasa.' Argued the greenette, thinking about his- more Bakugou's, but still-
friend, who he had stupidly believed moved, until he had seen the winged Nomu during the Hosu attack.

Actually it might be worse than- *So when are you going to ask Todoroki out?* Asked the voice suddenly, resulting in a crash as a roofing tile was sent skittering over the edge and onto the street.

'W-What? I'm not, he's just a friend!' He answered, after getting over his stumble.

The voice chuckled. *You know we can feel your emotions just as much as you can ours, right?* Chided the ancient entity mockingly. *Don't stop.*

The vigilante blushed hard enough that he feared he might be glowing, but kept running. He did however pointedly cut his emotions off from the voice, preventing it from feeling them. 'I'm still not going to ask him out, I don't even know if he likes guys.' He said, hating that this was the topic it chose, but thankful that the voice was doing something to distract him.

Hayato, and Ren became noticeably quieter for this topic- they were probably the least experienced parts of the voice at this sort of thing. *Whether he likes guys or not, we're pretty sure he likes you.* The voice said archly.

'What, h-how could you know that? It's not like he's ever said anything?' Izuku sputtered out, leaping another small gap. He wondered when One-For-All had last been used for vigilantism.

The greenette got the distinct impression that the voice was metaphorically raising an eyebrow. *He went out of his way to learn how to make snow because you asked.* It said- in the tone it had sometimes used when he was being intentionally dense when he was about six.

'I really wish it was possible to glare at you. Remind me to do it in the dream later.' He said- more in response to the tone than anything else- earning himself another laugh. 'He could just have done that because we're friends.' He added, determined not to get his hopes up.

*Look behind you.* Reminded the voice, not urgently, but more out of habit. Ichigou and Aoi had a thing about that for some reason, they made him check behind himself more than even the incredibly paranoid Ren did, but he trusted the voice, and decided not to question it. Nothing there. *He could have, but we doubt it. Have you ever seen him laugh around anyone else?*
Well, that was a stupid question. I've obviously never seen him when I'm not around, and he might have been more open with me because I knew about his—

*Unbelievably unpleasant asshat of a father figure?* Asked the voice, Ren coming to the fore, vitriol dripping from his voice. The rest of the voice wrested back control after that, causing a slight twinge.

Ren sounded a little chagrined when they spoke again. *Pretty sure your other friends think you like each other.* Snarked the voice, led by Yugo now.

Izuku blinked, pausing just before his next jump, standing around on a rooftop halfway to his destination. In the middle of the night. The ridiculousness of this conversation topic was not lost on him.

The greenette's confusion must have been evident, because the voice sent a memory before chiding him to check his back again.

**Izuku asking Shouto to train with him.**

A hint of movement out of the corner of his eye.

**Iida coming over to say something.**

There was a man on the other side of the rooftop.

**Uraraka dragging Iida away with Shinsou's help, whispering something to him.**

The voice went on full alert, Izuku's eye turning to look straight at the new arrival.

The vigilante had the briefest instant to take in a man who looked remarkably like an older version of Amber, down to eye, hair, and clothing colours, and then-
The world fell away.

Shota blinked, cancelling his quirk, the vigilante had dropped like a puppet with its strings cut the moment Erasure activated.

The underground hero reached for his phone, preparing to call Nedzu, and tell him he had caught Amber.

He stared at the two figures laid out on the rooftop, and an unpleasant feeling grew like an especially heavy snake coiling in his gut. He trusted his instincts, they had saved his life more times than he cared to remember, but sometimes he dearly wished they would be wrong.

Slowly, the dark-haired man walked across the roof, as Nedzu picked up. “Ah, Eraserhead, any luck.” The mouse asked brightly, incongruous as it was with this eventuality.

Shota had always told himself to treat vigilantes like any other villain- at least as far as catching them, what happened after that was out of his hands- but he had to force himself to go forward, he was sure now that he had been right, but he needed to confirm. He wasn't sure what he might do after he did.

“Yeah, he went right down. He's got a-” The erasure hero started, before a dark- horrifyingly familiar- point appeared on the roof, quickly growing. “Shit, Kurogiri!” He shouted, already rushing forward, capture weapon unwinding, ready to attack, phone dropped in his haste. Nedzu would probably send backup for all the good that would do.

“I'm afraid that won't work, Eraserhead.” Chided the villain, when Erasure activated, achieving precisely nothing. Kurogiri's quirk was a mutation. “I won't keep you long, I just have to retrieve something of ours.” The fog said calmly, moving towards the slumped figures near the edge of the roof.

Still running, the hero attacked with several streams of his “scarf” but Kurogiri only tutted. The fog moved between the hero and the unconscious figures, and the ends of the capture weapon vanished into a warp gate.
The weapon reappeared behind him, seemingly, and the villain used it to trip him up. Years of training with his chosen gear came to the fore, and the attacking ends unfurled with a couple of twitches of his fingers, ready to make another attempt.

When the fog moved again, there was only one figure left- Amber- so Shota immediately sent out his capture tape again, wrapping it around the vigilante's leg, and dragging him back.

The warp-villain paused, yellow eyes thoughtful. “I'd rather avoid any reinforcements you might have, and I've got what I wanted.” He said, before humming. “Keep the vigilante, have a nice day.”

The fog folded in on itself, and in a bare moment, the villain was gone. Shota blinked at Kurogiri's sudden and unexpected exit. Was the villain really that paranoid? Shota clearly couldn't do anything to him, but he wasn't willing to take the few extra seconds it would require to kidnap both of them?

'Better call off the reinforcements, don't want to pull heroes from important work at this time of night.' Thought the dark haired man, jogging back to his discarded phone, happy to see that it hadn't even cracked.

The dream faded, along with Izuku's memory of what it was about, leaving only a couple of words from the very end that stuck in his memory. “Nearly time.” In a soft, calm voice.

When Izuku woke up, everything felt wrong. His thoughts weren't coming right, as if he were trying to think through tar.

Opening his eyes, he glanced around, stone walls, metal door, simple cot. Definitely not his room.

This wasn't right, how did he- the greenette shook his head, trying to get rid of the odd buzzing that filled his head- like a distant man trying to talk through a gale- but it didn't go away.

Grimacing, he started to sit up, trying to remember how he ended up here. He had been carrying the doctor to the station, jumping across the roofs, then- a memory that didn't make sense, just senseless noise, all sorts of sights, but none that he recognized.
Erasure. That had been what happened to him at the USJ. He had been hit with Erasure again.

'Fuck, Aizawa-sensei saw me. I need to get out of-'

A sound like pieces of metal hitting together had him looking down, and he saw that his hands were cuffed together.

He frowned at the cuffs, still too muddle-headed for this. They looked bulkier than normal handcuffs did.

They were quirk dampener cuffs. That was why they were bulky. You didn't see them much these days, because- because- damn, he couldn't remember why. It must be something to do with quirk inhibitor's being invented, which would make sense since- no, focus.

Izuku reached to touch his hair absently. Curls. Fuck, they took the wig, Aizawa would surely have recognized him.

'Guys, what should I do?' He asked, panicked, eyes widening.

No response. 'Guys?' He repeated, beginning to- quirk dampeners.

That buzzing noise was the voice, and he couldn't make it out. He couldn't hear the voice, he was alone. Cut off from the advice that always kept him safe.

Nononono, he couldn't be alone, he had never been alone, not since he had been in nursery, the voice had always been there, always made sure he was fine, he couldn't- couldn't- he couldn't breath, not enough air, why wasn't there enough air?

The door opened with a metallic sound, but Izuku barely registered that, barely noticed the man who entered, or what he was saying. He was more concerned with the fact that he was alone, and why couldn't he breath?
Some part of his brain recognized what was happening, he was hyperventilating, probably having a panic attack, but he didn't know how to deal with those. At least, not on his own. The voice had always talked him down, even when he had been with other people a couple of times, it had been the voice he listened to, and it. Wasn't. There.

Breathing, his brain finally supplied, and he latched onto the thought. He was supposed to control his breathing. He needed to start soon, from how dizzy he was feeling.

Naomasa walked from his cubicle to the holding cells at the station, fresh off the back of a stiff call to UA to let them know that Midoriya had woken up, and a far more uncomfortable one with the kid's frantic mother. Seriously, how were you supposed to tell someone's mother that their child had been arrested for vigilantism before he turned sixteen?

Turning the corner of the slate-grey hall, the detective spotted the officer guarding the cells at the moment, and he raised a hand in greeting. “How is he?”

“Better now,” said the gruff officer, grimacing, “he nearly hyperventilated himself unconscious again- panic attack. Thought I was going to have to take him to the infirmary, but he managed to calm down.”

Naomasa frowned, that wasn't something he had been expecting, but then he probably should have been, given Yagi's accounts of how anxious the boy could be at times, and a cell was less than relaxing as a place to unexpectedly wake up.

A couple of questions later, and the door to the greenette's cell was unlocked, allowing the detective entry. Naomasa paused just inside the room, watching the teen playing with tiny chinese dragon- barely two inches long- made entirely of coppery fire.

The kid's face was showing strain, clearly this wasn't easy through the quirk dampeners, but it was damned impressive, the little dragon was twirling around his fingers, and had a noticeable mane, and clearly defined claws.

Dark eyes glanced towards the door, and the vigilante jumped, catching the little dragon in his palm, and quickly putting it out. “S-Sorry,” he stammered, blushing, “I wasn't planning anything, I j-just needed it to relax.”
The detective noted the roughness of his voice, and redness around his eyes. “Are you feeling all right?” He asked. Vigilante or not, Midoriya was a child, this couldn't be easy for him.

“B-Better now, I kind of freaked out wh-when I woke up.” (-) “S-So, what happens now?” He asked, sitting up on the bed, fingers twining together nervously, the cuffs clinking quietly.

“That hasn't been decided yet, your teachers are on the way here to help with questioning.” The plain-faced man said, and the greenette nodded, seemingly unsurprised. “And since you're a minor, your mother will also be coming.” He added, and Midoriya blanched.

“This is- I-I do owe it to her.” (-) Said the greenette, wearing a face like someone about to walk off a cliff. “D-Did you get the doctor, at least?”

“This would be doctor Tsubasa?” Asked the detective without inflection, remembering the business card that Midoriya had had. The business card that indicated that the man had been possibly the worst criminal Amber had ever gone after, finally overtaking Stain for the title.

Midoriya nodded, and the detective paused. “No,” he said slowly, and the kid paled further, “when you were knocked out, Kurogiri showed up, and left with the doctor.”

Midoriya shot up, eyes wide. “No, no he can't have gotten away again.” (lie) He said, sounding like he desperately hoped the detective had been lying.

After a second of looking hard at Naomasa, seemingly looking for the lie, Midoriya collapsed back on the bed, head in his hands. “Shit.” He said softly, but with feeling.

Shota sat in the silent car, feeling like he needed to sleep for a week. OK, a week more than was normal for him. The whole car journey had been filled with a particularly painful silence since they managed to convince All Might that they were serious about Midoriya.

Currently, the dark-haired man was trying to decide which was less unpleasant to look at; Nedzu, whose smile was even more terrifying than usual in light of a particularly stubborn mystery finally
beginning to unfurl, or Yagi, who looked like the world was coming to an end.

An understandable reaction, given that he had given a dangerous weapon to someone he didn't actually know as well as he thought, but his kicked puppy look was even worse than Yamada got when no-one agreed to help him remove a bug from his classroom.

Shota... didn't know what to think exactly, a decision would have to be made, and soon, but it would be irrational to make it now, so he would reserve judgement until the problem child explained himself.

The ridiculously height diverse trio walked into the large interrogation room, currently occupied by Midoriya- who had gotten rid of the make-up at some point, and removed the colour contacts- and his mother, followed by detective Tsukauchi.

The greenette was sitting with his shoulders drawn up around his ears, studiously studying the table, barely glancing at each new person before looking down again. When All Might walked in, he noticeably flinched. He looked nearly as tired as Shota felt, those bags weren't an overnight thing, he must have been more accomplished with make-up than the underground hero had thought. There was something else off about him... he couldn't put his finger on what, though.

The elder Midoriya's eyes were red, which made sense, since according the Tsukauchi, she had no idea about her son's illicit activities. She was clutching her handbag like a lifeline.

Once the four on the opposite side of the table were seated, Midoriya glanced at All Might a couple of times, then gulped, and slowly reached for the top of his head.

The blond recoiled from the hair, acting as if he had been offered a viper. “What are you doing, my boy?” He asked, sitting as far back in his chair as he could.

“D-Don't you want it back?” He asked, to the visible confusion of his mother. “Y-You must be-”

Yagi interrupted with a raised hand. “You should hold on to it for now, I- I don't know what to think, just yet.”

The greenette nodded, tears coming to his eyes, but not spilling over. He held the hair in his fist, and when he opened it, the hair was gone, releasing an unpleasant burning smell.
The detective coughed, causing the two on the other side of the table to look at him. “Now that everyone's here, we should begin.” He said, opening a large file, and a notebook.

The greenette nodded, before going back to looking at his hands on the table.

The detective quickly went through the usual formalities about his quirk, and getting Midoriya to state his name and age. “Do you recognize this?” He asked, pulling out the business card that Shota had found when he had searched the problem child's pockets. The intensely horrifying business card, that made him dearly wish he had had the ability to stop Kurogiri taking the man Amber was carrying.

“I do, it's one of my cards.” Said the greenette without inflection.

“So you are admitting to being the vigilante Amber?”

“No, but I am a vigilante who goes by Amber.” Corrected the teen, causing his mother to let out a little choked sound.

Shota looked away from the bumbling attempts from the kid to comfort his mother, which took a good couple of minutes, and had both in tears before the end.

“So what is your relationship with the original Amber?”

“She died around the same time I was born.” Answered Midoriya, shocking everyone on the other side of the table.

The detective got over his surprise quickly, and noted down what the greenette had said. “If you never met her, how did you imitate her MO so closely?” He asked, something everyone at the table was very interested in knowing.

Midoriya seemed to weigh his words carefully, before speaking. “How much do you know about Bi-Weekly Heroics?” He asked.
of crushing and rebuilding

Chapter Summary

interrogation, and decision

Chapter Notes

1) could this have been just one long chapter? yes
will i merge the chapters together? maybe, but probably only when i finally decide to
do that for all these shorter chapters.
2) damn you muffinlance, why must you make me cry, and distrust Iroh, i used to love
iroh. i hope you're happy.
3) *checks time since last AQAQ upload*
   *wincses*
   ouch, sorry guys, I promise I'll get a new chapter out soon, just been having a tough
time writing that one.

Izuku dearly wished he had been born with some sort of quirk to let him sink into the floor. He
couldn't deal with this, especially not alone.

He had known from the start that this was one of the things that could happen, the voice had
warned him, and in some sense this was a pretty mild end to all his dreams, but the reality of sitting
there opposite an unreadable Tsukauchi, and Nedzu, and a silent, disapproving Aizawa. Not to
mention next to his mother, who might burst into tears again at any moment.

He didn't know what to do, so he was just answering the detective's questions as honestly as he
could, but that last one had touched on the one thing that was basically printed on his bones at this
point. “Don't talk about the voice.” So he didn't, instead he was throwing the network under the
bus, possibly destroying the life's work of part of the voice, and massively inconveniencing the
phoenix after him.

“So you are a reader, then?” Asked Aizawa, finally breaking his silence, though his glare in no
way lessened. The greenette glanced at the man- a mistake that caused him to try with limited
success to shrink in on himself even further.

“Y-Yeah,” he said, then, since Tsukauchi knew about his ability to talk around his quirk- man, had
that ever backfired, “I know the codes.”
“Sorry,” said All Might, causing the greenette to look up at his now thoroughly confused face, “what does a magazine have to do with this?” He asked slowly.

Izuku glanced at Nedzu, and Aizawa- both almost certainly readers to some extent- before answering. “Um, it's not a magazine- at least not really- um, the magazine is a front, for an informant network.” There, it was in the open now, and Tsukauchi was writing it down. All Might widened his eyes, but the other heroes barely reacted.

The tall hero opened his mouth- probably with another question- but Nedzu forestalled him. “I think we'd all like to know how much you know about the network, and how, but for now, why is this relevant to your vigilante activities?”

Oh, right, he'd gotten sidetracked. “The network exists to fight All-For-One.” Izuku said immediately- the simple truth.

Aizawa just looked confused- barely, past his scowling mask, but still- but the other three stiffened immediately, Yagi sitting ramrod straight in his seat, looking like a struck gong, and even Nedzu failing to control his expression, glancing at Tsukauchi for confirmation.

“Well?!” Demanded All Might hoarsely, a bit of blood leaking from the corner of his mouth.

Well he did owe the man a true explanation. “Um, the network was expanded to what it is now about fifty years ago but it was created a long time before that by the third-one-for-all-user-but-that's-” He said, before a hand on his arm cut off what was increasingly devolving into mumbling.

“Oh, thanks mum.” He said, grateful that she had brought him out of that rabbit-hole.

Aizawa was glancing around the table, clearly unhappy about the conversation going over his head, Tsukauchi was scribbling furiously, All Might didn't seem to have understood what he had said-understandable, since it was spoken very quickly, and softly- but Nedzu was truly staring at him now. Hungriy. He didn't like that expression one bit.

“So you became a vigilante to fight All-For-One?” Asked Nedzu, expression inscrutable.
“Y-Yeah.”

“You were a child!” Exclaimed All Might, sounding horrified. “All-For-One is-”

“I had no choice!” Izuku barely kept himself from shouting.

Nedzu was staring at his newest student Wonderingly. He had not been expecting this sort of revelation. Truly, it never rained but it poured. You go looking for one minor mystery, and one of the biggest mysteries of the last half-century- one that you'd been gnawing at like an old bone for a decade- suddenly unraveled without warning.

The principal's brain was reeling from the revelation that the network even had a purpose, other than making a profit, and now for once he didn't even know what questions to ask.

The High Specs user had too many questions if anything, if Midoriya knew about the purpose of the network, he must know so much more, more of the codes, more secrets. So tempting to ask, but so dangerous if he asked the wrong way. His student was being open now, but what questions might get him to clam up?

Why was he being so open? His expression was one of guilt that he was trying futilely to hide, but guilt over what? Being Amber, or getting caught? Or something else entirely?

His expression isn't shifting randomly, his quirk enhanced brain suddenly threw out, another question that needed answered. His eyes may have been the same shape and shade, but they weren't weighing him to the ounce at present. Was it because of the cuffs? Those questions had to be shelved for now, his quirk kept warning him that they would almost certainly only yield-

“All-For-One is-” Started Yagi, looking like he was about to get to his feet- to hug, or to shake the boy he wasn't sure, though he thought the blond himself didn't know either.

“I had no choice!” Exclaimed the boy sitting opposite them loudly, suddenly defensive.
Tsukauchi tapped his pen twice. Tap tap. A lie then. Golden eyes flicked down to the pen for the barest instant, and the greenette paused. “The king is in his counting house.” He said suddenly.

Tap tap.

Midoriya nodded, and Nedzu felt a moment of pride that he had figured that out so quickly, inconvenient as it was. “The alternative choice was so terrible that I never even considered it.” He offered, much more calmly. No tapping, he really felt that way, the principal had to as-

“What could be so important that you would risk so much, Izuku?” Demanded All Might, sounding close to tugging out his own hair.

“You were going to die!” yelled the greenette, tears coming to his eyes. Still no tapping. The blond reacted as if he had been slapped.

Midoriya took a moment, breathing heavily, as his mother placed a comforting hand on his arm. She still hadn't said anything so far, possibly because she was still stunned by all of this, but it really looked like she wanted to demand the same explanation the skeletal man was asking for.

When Yagi spoke again, his voice was more measured, but the reproach was still there. “My boy, I knew the risks when I became a hero, you don't-” He started slowly.

“I admired you, everyone does, and if you died- it would- I don't even know what would have happened. But that isn't what I mean.” He pushed out, before pausing to draw a shaky breath.

When he spoke again, it was in a much softer voice, and he would no longer meet the heroes eye. “One-For-All was the only hope any of us ever had, the network could inconvenience All-For-One, but that was it. You-” Another shaky breath, steeling himself, and the greenette looked straight at Yagi, some of his normal intensity returning to his eyes. “You had One-For-All. The only hope anyone had of All-For-One falling was with you, so if he found you before you were ready, it would have been all over.” He said, driving each word home with a sledgehammer. “I-I did everything I did to keep you from going to him with it, and- and you did it anyway.”

The reproach seemed to be on the other foot, and honestly Nedzu couldn't gainsay his pupil-though, he really should get this interrogation back on track. Never mind slapped, All Might looked like he had been stabbed- again. He slumped in his chair, probably going into one of his signature spirals of self-blame.
Midoriya seemed even more tired after his outburst, and even more guilty- probably for snapping at the hero. Time to move on. “So, you're saying you became Amber to help stop All-For-One?” Midoriya nodded tiredly. “How exactly did you hope to do this?” He was really curious how that worked, since as far as he knew, Amber- both Ambers- never went after anyone All-For-One related- until All-For-One died, anyway.

“About half of the people I went after- directly, or indirectly- worked for All-For-One, though none of them knew it, really.” The greenette explained. “Getting them off the streets made more work for him, stopping him going after Yagi-sensei.”

Nedzu's mind whirled. The boy's explanation made a depressing amount of sense, going after enough of the pawns would slow the entire operation, if not so much as taking out the major pieces. But given the strength difference between the two parties, drawing attention would be suicide.

That certainly explained why the work needed done, but- “Why did you feel that you needed to be the one to do this?” He asked, still deeply troubled that a child even knew about this- much less got involved.

Midoriya gave a grating, humourless laugh. It was a deeply unpleasant sound. “There was no-one else. When I was born, the network was in shambles, All-For-One was winning, the first Amber was dead, and the current head of the network didn't care about fighting All-For-One.” He explained blankly.

Here Aizawa interjected again. “I don't know who this 'All-For-One' is, but you could have told a hero, the police, an adult, anyone.” He said angrily- for him basically hysterically.

Midoriya blinked, coming out of whatever dark place his mind had been. “Oh, sorry,” he said, some shadow of his normal shyness returning, “d-do you know about the villain who steals quirks trope?”

“What about it? It's just a trope in bad films.”

“That's All-For-One. H-He inspired that t-trope.” Said Midoriya simply, staring at his fingers twining together on the table.

Aizawa's eyes narrowed in suspicion, and he looked to Nedzu, who simply nodded tiredly. He had
been fairly young when he finally confirmed to his satisfaction that those myths had a common-
and more importantly real- source. It was not an easy thing to learn.

The hero- and teacher of heroes- began to pale slightly, clearly understanding the possible
implications of a quirk that powerful in the hands of a villain, so Nedzu decided to tell him about
the monster's recent death.

“A-Anyway, the network has informants in the police, a-and a bunch of hero agencies.” He said, as
if it wasn't a bombshell to randomly drop on most of the room. “It would be irrational to think that
All-For-One didn't, too.”

Well, probably wise to move on, there were more mysteries to unravel here, and Aizawa would
take a minute to properly formulate a response to that. It slightly surprised him that All Might was
even still here, though hearing the details might be some form of self-punishment for the blond. “If
you don't mind, do you think you could tell us how you learned all this, and then we can go over
some details of your activities if we're able.”

The greenette nodded, and began to elucidate the mouse on even more of the world's greatest
mysteries. “I learned the codes from a man named Ren, who taught the first Amber...”

The questioning went on for hours- or possibly minutes, it had certainly felt like hours. Nedzu had
picked and picked, asking so many questions, often asking them multiple ways because young
Midoriya had proven that he could lie without lying.

Toshinori left the tiny room feeling truly hollow. Moreso than usual, even. Not only had he not
known so much about his successor, despite his attempts to choose carefully who to pass One-For-
All to, but he had failed to abysmally to see how close he came to disaster.

As young Midoriya had said- rightly, for all that he looked guilty afterwards- he had been stupid,
he had assumed he could beat All-For-One, and hadn't considered what would have happened if he
had failed. Nana would have died for nothing, all the One-For-All users would have, and it would
have been his fault. His side ached. A reminder of how close he came to that.

If it hadn't been for the foresight of the third user- how could he have not even known that there
was such a huge group dedicated to the same cause he had been for over a century?- it would have
come to that. Worse, the mess he caused had to be picked up by a child.

A literal child, young Midoriya had- the blond felt like he was going to cough up even more blood than usual- only been twelve, and had openly admitted that he would have started sooner if he thought he could have. Toshinori had half a mind to join the boy's mother in bursting into tears at that point.

The blond “hero”- he didn't feel like it at that moment- followed the others from the room mechanically, some of the parts of the meeting going through his mind on loop. Midoriya had offered him One-For-All again before they left. He couldn't take it. If anything, the revelations made him realize that he had made more of a good choice than he had he had known.

Midoriya was a true hero, and seemingly had been since he had been far too young to be contemplating such things.

“Well, what are we thinking?” Asked Nedzu sombrely, and Toshinori realized that they had stopped in a meeting room.

“Problem child needs some serious therapy.” Said Aizawa, indifferent mask cracking, and falling away. “And some kind of minder, he doesn't seem to care about his own well-being.” He added, sounding genuinely disturbed by some of what the greenette had said.

Toshinori grimaced. His successor had looked so small in that room, and had broken down in tears a few times trying to get out everything that had happened, and the “hero” hadn't been able to help to caught up in the horrifying realization of his failure. “Agreed.” He said, his voice sounding strange in his own ears. “He's seen far more than a child his age should have.”

“Of course, I was more asking if we think he qualifies for rehabilitation.” Elaborated the principal.

Toshinori opened his moth to speak- to defend his protégé- but Aizawa beat him to it. “His vigilante work was almost ridiculously non-violent, and- while I really don't like how rarely- he did work by just giving information to the police, or heroes. That, coupled with how co-operative he was being- yeah, he should be given a chance.” He said seriously, giving the distinct impression that by a chance, he meant a chance.

Nedzu hummed, but didn't object. “As much paperwork as the kid has caused me over the years, it is true that he went out of his way to save several pro heroes. Even if he has been working longer
than most rehabilitation cases, he started as a literal child, so it shouldn't be hard to get the forms through.” Put in Tsukauchi blandly.

The principal nodded, smile returning. “Good, he'll need a sponsor,” he said, clapping his paws together, “one of the three of us would be best.”

“I'll do it.” Said the blond immediately- he needed to do something to make up for his mistakes, even if it was something this minor.

Nedzu gave him what he assumed to be a flat look. “You're retiring in a few months, Yagi-san. As much as having the number one hero sponsor him would help, in this case I think it would be too problematic.” He said, causing the skeletal man to droop. The mouse was right. As always.

Nedzu turned to look at Aizawa. The dark-haired man groaned loudly. “I'm not getting out of this, am I?” He asked, and groaned when the response was just a wider grin.

“Since that's settled,” said Nedzu, once Aizawa had resigned himself to his fate, “we'll inform Midoriya-kun of our decision, which I assume will be contingent on his agreeing to see a therapist. Do you think you could get the forms to Aizawa-kun, Tsukauchi-kun?”

It took Shota literally until the next day to finish all the forms. Damn Nedzu. Other heroes that he knew had sponsored vigilantes before- of not anyone as prolific as the problem child had turned out to be- and they were not kidding about how nightmarish the forms were.

It was logical that the process was so complicated, since the commission had to be sure the hero was responsible enough to deal with their charge, that they could deal with them in-case of incidents, that the hero themselves could be trusted, and on, and on. So many things could go wrong with this program- and several of them had in the past.

Honestly, in some sense it was a miracle that it still continued.

Shota nodded to the duty guard, approaching the holding cells. “How's he been?” He asked, upon receiving a nod in return.
The police officer shrugged. “No more panic attacks thankfully, but he's anything but calm. He won't stop pacing. “

“Mm, thanks, can you let me into his cell?” Said the tired-exhausted man briskly, but not impolitely.

“Yeah, just give me a sec.” Answered the man, turning to grab the ring of keys from the desk.

True to his word, Midoriya was pacing when they reached the cell, but he stopped immediately when the door opened.

“H-Hello, Aizawa-sensei.” Said the greenette, glancing at him, then looking away.

“How are you feeling, problem child?”

“F-Fine,” said- lied- the short teen, “what's...”

“Have a look at these.” The hero instructed, handing over a stack of mostly filled forms.

The vigilante blinked, raising his hand to take them, the cuffs pulling tight, and earning the worst glare he had ever seen on the kid. Taking the forms, he read the first page and his eyes went wide. “Th-The vigilante rehabilitation program? B-But isn't that for- for like p-people who get cats out of trees?”

“It's for any vigilante who can get a sponsor, and hasn't killed or maimed anyone.” Explained the teacher patiently.

The greenette hurriedly flipped open the veritable novel in his hands, searching out the signature he had put there this morning. The greenette stared at the sheet like he couldn't believe what he was reading, then- “S-Sensei, y-you want to sponsor me? B-But I lied to you, aren't you going to s-send me to-?”
Aizawa groaned, he hated teaching, maybe he should cut down on the “I'll expel you because reasons, so do your best” thing, if this was what his pupils thought of him. “Kid, no-one's going to send you to Tartarus.” he said, and the surprise in his pupil's eyes made him want to groan louder.

“We're not happy about what you were doing,” understatement of the year, he had been furious, but mostly at this Ren character, who got him involved seemingly after the first Amber died from being involved. Had the man not been dead for years- according to Midoriya- the underground hero would have tried to wring his neck for getting a child- a four-year-old, no less- involved, “but it doesn't mean we don't think you're worth trying to help.”

Aaaand there went the waterworks again. Midoriya spent far too much of his time crying. At least he had the sense to get the sheets he had slaved over out of the way. The hero contemplated the merits of hugging the greenette, and barely decided against it. He was way too inclined to flinch when people touched him.

Honestly, what was wrong with that man, indoctrinating a child- to the extent that the kid wouldn't hear a word said against him- seemingly just for his quirk?

“Read the forms,” Shota said, making his way to sit on the uncomfortable bed in the cell, “there are a bunch of hoops you'll have to go through, particularly this is contingent on you going to see a therapist.”

Midoriya blinked owlishly at him, as if the idea had never occurred to him, but nodded, beginning to leaf through the pages. This could take a while, maybe he should get in a nap. Add prison cell to his list of nap locations at last.

Eventually the kid managed to get through the forms, and Shota shot him a questioning glance. “Th-This is- um, I can do that, c-can I have-”

Shota handed the kid a pen, and he quickly got to work signing in a dozen places. “Don't misunderstand, problem child,” Shota felt the need to say, now that the greenette no longer seemed on the verge of bursting into tears, “you've lost a lot of trust, and you'd better work hard at rebuilding it.”

Midoriya nodded forcefully, and went back to filling in the forms.
of reveal and confession

Chapter Summary

green bean returns to school.
people are surprised.
green bean is surprised by how they react.
everything's going better than expected

Chapter Notes

1) I really have no idea how romantic relationships work, or how one gets into one, so I shouldn't be allowed to write this sort of thing, but I'm going for it anyway
2) wwooooooo TTs updated again, and so did ascendant :D
3) thanks as always for all your support (he started saying at random intervals)
4) no idea how many of the first date ideas listed work, someone pls tell me how bad an idea they are.
5) the last page of chapter 235 makes me really anxious about reading chapter 236....

Hitoshi walked into class a couple of minutes before the bell, noting that the room was almost full as usual. Iida had complained a couple of times about how close he tended to come to being late, but the purple-haired teen was not about to miss one second of sleep he didn't have to.

It was pretty funny watching Iida trip over himself to apologize the second time, though- when Hitoshi had explained why he needed the sleep. Insomnia sucked ass, but he finally had something to add to the upside list.

Making his was quietly to his desk, the brainwasher looked at the desk between his and Bakugou's. It was still empty, and the worry he had been feeling the last two days returned. He wasn't the only one concerned, judging from Uraraka's frown, and the tiny shift in expression Todoroki was undergoing as he glanced at the desk.

It was Thursday now, and none of them had seen Midoriya since Monday, despite him never missing a day of school before that.

He hadn't been especially worried on Tuesday, until he tried to call the resident mutterer, only to realize he wasn't picking up his phone. Apparently several of them had tried, which only compounded their concern- Iida had seemingly tried several times to ask if he wanted a copy of the
Aizawa, when asked had said that Midoriya was fine, but refused to elaborate why he was missing school. This did little to help their collective anxiety, since the only thing it proved was that he hadn't been kidnapped or something, but he could still be in the hospital, or-

The teacher walked into the room, somehow contriving to look even more tired than usual, and Hitoshi breathed a sigh of relief at the sight of verdant curls coming in behind him.

A moment later, the purple-haired teen frowned in worry again, having gotten a better look at his friend. The greenette looked exhausted as well, his eye bags rivalled Hitoshi's own, which he knew from experience to be no good thing. At all.

Instead of going to his seat, the fire-user stopped at the front, standing just beside Aizawa, and looking even more anxious than he usually did when he tried to talk to someone his own age- why he always seemed calmer around adults was an inter-

“All right,” said the dark-haired hero, before sighing with such sincerity that Hitoshi almost winced in sympathy, “there are going to be a few changes in class, but first, introductions.”

Hitoshi glanced at the still open door, confused. Did he intend to introduce them to Midoriya?

“Class, infamous vigilante Amber, Amber, hero class 1-A.” Said the teacher deadpan, and Hitoshi’s brain took a second to reboot.

“Um, h-hello.” Said the greenette, giving a nervous little wave.

What? What the- “What the actual fuck?!” Demanded Bakugou succinctly, shooting from his chair, as the smell of smoke filled his vicinity. Midoriya visibly cringed, but didn't say anything.

Most of the rest of the class had no such issues, and several of the students began speaking at once, filling the room with a painful cacophony.

“Quiet.” Said the teacher sternly, Erasure activating, which brought silence in short order.
Satisfied, the hero went on. “Midoriya was arrested on Monday, after being caught in the act of unlawfully arresting a villain, any questions?” He asked, as if daring the class to actually ask.

Yaoyorozu showed remarkable bravery, raising her hand, and speaking once the dark-haired man nodded to her. “Sir, how can Midoriya-kun be Amber? He doesn't match the descriptions, and even the recent Amber attacks started when he must have been twelve.”

Aizawa looked at the greenette as if to say “I'm not helping you here” and after a moment the teen haltingly began to answer. “U-Um, I-I'm really good with- with make-up, and I used a wig for the h-hair.” He said, and Hitoshi's jaw dropped open. They were serious. His friend, who jumped at loud noises, and couldn't string three words together without stammering was a vigilante? How? Why? “A-And I was eleven, b-but yeah.”

Hitoshi paled, as the class sat in stunned silence after hearing this. He didn't know... how were you supposed to react to learning that someone you knew had been a criminal at age eleven?

“But,” started Kaminari, earning a sharp look from Aizawa, which only stymied him for a moment, “if he's a vigilante, wouldn't he be, y'know, in jail?” He asked, prompting Midoriya to wince, and stare at his feet.

“Vigilante's are a special case. Since his illegal quirk use was notoriously non-violent, and Midoriya co-operated both before and after his arrest with heroes, he's been approved for the vigilante rehabilitation program.” Answered Aizawa, before motioning Midoriya forward, prompting the greenette to gratefully rush to his seat.

“This brings me to the changes to the class. While trying to earn his hero license, Midoriya will be under a number of restrictions, but for your purposes, you only need to know about two. First, we'll be keeping a closer eye on him in training exercises, though I expect it to be a formality.” This declaration was accompanied by a sharp look at the now seated Midoriya.

“And second, his sponsor- namely me- has to be kept apprised of his movements, meaning he'll be under curfew until further notice, and he's been fitted with a tracking anklet.”

Aizawa, seemingly determined to never give them time to process any new developments- no matter how shocking, or in this case slightly disturbing- quickly moved on, before anyone could
ask anything else, returning their marks- “since everyone's here now”- and telling them that he had
been lying about failure keeping them out of the summer camp.

From the evident joy of Kaminari, Mina, Kirishima, Sero, and Satou, it seemed that they had all
failed.

Of course, both their celebrations, and Iida's obvious annoyance at Aizawa's continuing lies were
clearly distracted, everyone was waiting for a chance to grill Midoriya what the hell.

A couple of minor announcements later, and Aizawa had nothing left to tell them. “All right, I'm
going to take a nap, when Cementoss gets here for literature, I don't expect him to find any of you
dead, or the building on fire.” He said flatly, already heading out the door- virulent sleeping bag
under one arm.

As soon as the door shut, the room became a hive of activity, most of the class shooting from their
chairs to rush to the windows- to Midoriya's desk.

Sitting right behind him, Hitoshi had expected to be able to get there first, but one angry blond
managed to outpace him.

“What the fuck is wrong with you, Deku?” Demanded Bakugou, lifting the greenette bodily by his
lapels- an impressive feat, since Hitoshi suspected Midoriya outweighed the blond, despite the
height difference.

“W-What do you mean, K-Kacchan?” Asked the... vigilante? Ex-vigilante?

The burnt-sugar smell began to make itself known really strongly, but the greentte still made no
move to try to pry Baugou's- highly dangerous- hands away. “Don't give me that shit, Deku. How
could you become a vigilante? How could you fucking do that to auntie Inko?” He ground out with
a dangerous scowl. Hitoshi thought he could see a vein pulsing in his forehead.

Time to put a stop to this. “Hey, Kacchan?” Asked the purple-haired teen.

Red eyes full of white-hot rage swung to glare at him. “Don't call me-” He started, and Hitoshi felt
his quirk take hold. He'd definitely pay for that later, but for now-
“Put him down, and get back in your seat.” Ordered the brainwasher, feeling the mild guilt that always went with using his quirk outside training.

The blond did as ordered- as if there was any choice- and Midoriya thumped back into his chair. The fire-user looked, slightly panic-stricken- around the growing crowd surrounding his desk, before seemingly choosing to focus solely on Hitoshi.

It was always a slightly disquieting experience having Midoriya's full attention, but he was used to it by now. The effect was lessened when you got to know him, and saw his whole “deer in headlights” thing. “Th-Thanks, you didn't need t-to do that. He's right.” The greenette said, looking at his desktop as if it held the answers to all life's questions. “My mum, she was- really upset.”

Hitoshi made a note about Bakugou's calling Midoriya's mother auntie, if only to tease him about it when things were a bit less serious. “It's no problem, blasty needed to calm his shit.” Drawled the brainwasher matter-of-factly.

“So-oo, you're really Amber?” Asked Mina, earning a nod from the still guilty-looking greenette.

“That's so weird,” said Kirishima wonderingly, “you're like such a cinnamon roll, I would never have expected you to be a vigilante.”

“Agreed, I did not expect such darkness from such a bright soul.” Intoned Tokoyami from his chair, just as incomprehensible as always.

“Yeah,” interjected Kaminari, “how could you not tell us you were doing something that cool?”

Midoriya gave the blond a look that nearly got across how stupid a question that was. “B-Because I didn't want to be a-arrested? A-and i-it's really not cool.” He added, shrinking in on himself even further.

“Come on,” insisted the blond, “you got chased by like six heroes a couple of weeks ago, and you got away.”

“Hey, maybe give him some space.” Said Uraraka, making little shooing motions at the gathered
Izuku was living in some bizarre alternate reality, or odd dream-world. He had to be. That was the only explanation that made sense for everything that had happened the last few days.

He was Amber, and everyone knew it- it would be public knowledge within a few days- but he... wasn't going to jail? Aizawa had gone out of his way to make sure that he wouldn't, even if the vigilante had to go through quite a few hoops to keep it so.

Just as weird, most of the class wasn't treating him like some kind of leper. Kaminari had even called him cool, which- that was just wrong, hero students shouldn't think criminals were cool. Villains might sometimes have merch, but he had to do something about that. If the blond decided to let some of the people called vigilantes run loose there could be some serious issues.

The fire-user got up, hurrying quietly to lunch, expecting to find himself sitting alone, but he was quickly joined at the table by his friends. Uraraka seemed totally fine with his new identity, only flicking him in the forehead for keeping secrets, and telling him in no uncertain terms not to go to jail. Shinsou seemed even less bothered.

The greenette did however start getting anxious as he glanced up from his food at Shouto, and Iida occasionally. Neither of the pair had said anything to him so far today, and now the former was wearing a pensive frown, and the latter looked truly stunned.

Talking to the voice- he had been so relieved, and a little surprised when the entire voice seemingly wasn't angry with him, even Ren, who he had basically thrown under the bus had said he was proud, and that he had done really well under the circumstances- and occasionally making his worry worse by continuing to take furtive glances at his- hopefully not ex- friend's impenetrable expressions, Izuku ate most of his lunch. This process was slightly hampered by the occasional question from Uraraka and Shinsou, which he tried to answer, since he did kind of owe it to them- at least where the answers were safe.

“You're really Amber.” Said Shouto suddenly, as if still trying to wrap his head around the concept.

Izuku tried not to cringe, and failed abysmally. The moment he had been dreading was finally here. “Y-Yeah.” He said, forcing himself to meet the ice-user's eye.
This was going to hurt. Shouto had to hate him now, he had lied, and caused him all that stress, uprooted his entire life, betrayed his trust. His friend would probably never speak to him a-

The greenette's spiral of self-recrimination ground to a screeching halt, and he returned to the world to find the entire table staring at Shouto as if he had grown a second head. “W-What?” He asked, sure he had misheard.

“Thank you.” Repeated the bi-chromatic teen, more emotion in his voice than he normally allowed. “So much.”

“Y-You're not mad?” Izuku asked, the feeling of being in a dream-world returning. How could he not be mad?

“Izuku, why would I be mad?” Shouto looked just as confused as Izuku, brows drawing together, eyes narrowing, head tilted- it was totally unfair that he could look that adorable.

“B-Because I lied to you, a-and went behind your back!” He practically yelled, tears coming to his eyes, gesturing nearly as wildly as Iida usually did, ignoring the voice trying to get him to calm down. How could Shouto not understand? He had crossed the line. “I got your father arrested! I-I-”

Izuku's tirade cut off sharply as Shouto caught his hands- causing the voice to sag in relief, since some of those gestures got pretty close to slapping Shinsou. “Izuku, calm down.” The ice-user said softly. “I... had always thought my brother had died, until you brought him back. You went behind my back, but you were only trying to help. And you were right, things are better now.”

Shouto let go of his hands, still holding his gaze, face serious. Izuku was still reeling, he had never thought- why would he think Touya had died? “I'm not mad.” The taller boy said, and Izuku could find no lie in it.

Shouto stared at him for several seconds, then nodded, and looked down at his own hands on the table. “I... really like you, Izuku.” He said at length, and the greenette's brain shut down. This was definitely a dream.

Izuku stared at him, almost uncomprehending for several seconds. You're going to set the table on fire, kid. Jerking his hands away from the smoking table as if burned- impossible as that was- the greenette tried to find words.
“Huh?” He asked, as articulate as ever, then. “Y-You like me?”

“I don't expect you to return the feeling, but I felt like I should-”

“I do!” He blurted out, before blushing, feeling like he was about to catch fire again. “L-Like you, that is.” He finished lamely.

Shouto blinked in surprise. “I... was not expecting that.” He said flatly, and Shinsou's groan reminded the pair that they were not, in fact, alone.

“I take it back, this is more painful than the pining.” The purple-haired teen complained, dropping his head to the table, and hiding it under his arms.

Uraraka responded by slapping his arm. “Quiet, you're interrupting the moment!” She hissed, causing Shouto to start to blush, and Izuku's blush to deepen.

“W-Was it that obvious?” Asked the mortified greenette.

PRETTY much. Said the voice smugly.

“Deku-kun, you were both kind of smitten since the sports festival.” Replied Uraraka, patting his hands- cautiously returned to the tabletop, if only to stop him from hiding behind them.

Shouto took on a pained look. “Seriously, did everyone but me know?” He asked.

Shinsou looked up from the wood of the table in amazement, while Uraraka gave Shouto an odd look. “You mean you didn't know?” Asked the brainwasher.

“I only found out last weekend.” The ice-user answered seriously, and Shinsou burst into laughter.

The glare he got in return should have reduced him to a smear on the ground, but he just laughed
harder. “Oh- Oh, that's great- you two are- perfect for each other.” He gasped out. “Thank god- one of you actually said it, or the obliviousness would go on forever.”

'Not one word.' Said Izuku, anticipating the voice joining the mocking. He could practically feel it pouting in response, even if the emotion it was sending was mostly amusement.

You never let us have any fun. It said, and he could almost see the shit-eating grin some of the pieces- especially Yugo- would be wearing, if this were the not-quite-dream.

“You shouldn't mock people like this, Shinsou-kun. It is unbecoming of a hero.” Said Iida- the first thing he had said so far, and he still wasn't looking at the ex-vigilante.

“Yes, mum.” Snarked Shinsou, but he did stop laughing.

“Thanks, Iida.” Said Shouto, interrupting the spluttering that followed.

“You're welcome, Todoroki-kun.” The bluet answered, facing the ice-user, but still not looking at the greenette. “As class president, and your friend, it is the least I could do.”

“Soooo,” cut in Uraraka, her entire face lit up with a mischievous grin, as she looked between the two fire-users, “successful confession, now what?”

Izuku looked to Shouto, hoping that he had thought ahead, since the greenette had been convinced things wouldn't ever reach this point. The panicked look- which for anyone else would have appeared totally calm, but his friends could see the way Shouto's expression shut down, and were getting better at distinguishing it from his “furious” sort of shut down- disabused him of that hope.

“We could go on a... date?” Shouto said- asked- sounding totally unsure.

“Sounds fun.” Izuku said- too quickly, he realized, but too late now- before blushing. He hoped that dating would not continue to involve this much embarrassment.

“did you have any ideas what we could do?” Asked the bi-chromatic teen slowly, bringing the greenette up short. What could they do? More to the point, what would Shouto enjoy doing. He did
not want to mess this up, given that unless it was a dream, it was clearly some kind of odd miracle.

Bowling might work, or skating, or mountain climbing, there was a new All Might exhibition opening in Tokyo on Saturday, or they could just go for coffee, or maybe dinner, or kayaking, the zoo might be fun, or-

“I've never been skating before, but most of those sound fun.” Said Shouto, smiling fondly.

Izuku returned to the real world from whatever rabbit-hole he had been down a moment ago, to find everyone at the table watching him. He had been talking out loud. Nope, dating would definitely be embarrassing forever. He blushed even more crimson than before.

'Why didn't you tell me I was muttering?!' He demanded of the voice, trying to think of something to actually say.

_We're just here to advise you, we won't interfere in your relationships too much._ Said the voice, surprisingly seriously, which brought him up short. That was right, it had said that before. Clearly, he had underestimated how seriously the voice took its ‘you're your own person’ policy.

On the plus side, that did mean that the ancient entity with an annoying sense of humour would likely remain almost totally silent for dates, which was nice.

Tilting his head, Izuku regarded his... friend? Boyfriend? Was that moving too fast? Screw it, regarding Shouto. Maybe not skating if he'd never been. Teaching him might not be fun, but he didn't want to embarrass him if he ended up falling too much.

Equally kayaking would probably have to go, and he would embarrass himself if he started fanboying too much, so... “How about a trip to the zoo, then? ….Unless you prefer something else, I'm sure there's a lot of other-”

“The zoo sounds like fun. Is Sunday Okay?”

“Um, I'll have to ask Aizawa-sensei.” Admitted the greenette unwillingly. “But I'm sure it should be fine.”
“well,” interjected Uraraka, “since you're asking permission to go out anyway, why don't we go to the shops for some of the stuff we'll need for the camp tomorrow?”

When Tensei got home from patrol, he found Tenya pacing in the dining room, seeming determined to wear a hole in the carpet.

He stood in the door for several seconds before his little brother noticed him, already suspecting what was causing the pacing.

“Ah, Nii-san.” Said Tenya, giving a little jump, and halting the pacing.

“So, what happened that you felt the need to take it out on the carpet?” The hero asked with a little smile, causing his brother to stammer meaninglessly for several seconds.

“I- did you hear about Amber's arrest, Nii-san?” The youngest Iida asked eventually.

“I did,” Tensei answered, taking a seat at the dining table, “so what are you thinking about Midoriya-kun, then?”

Tenya took a seat opposite him. “I-I don't know, Midoriya-kun has always been a good friend- or... I thought so, at least.” He said, starting slow, but speeding up as he went, the little hand chops that he had always found rather endearing growing wider. “But he lied to me- to all of us- and he broke the law. For years. I'm not sure I can continue being his friend after that, but stopping also seems wrong.”

“Otouto,” said the elder Iida gently, “Midoriya-kun had every reason to be wary of telling people. He probably felt like he would go to prison if people knew.” A very real possibility, VRP sponsors were not easily come by, though under the circumstances Tensei would probably have filled the role, himself had Aizawa not.

“Then he shouldn't have been doing it!” Exclaimed his brother, impassioned. “He was breaking the law, and risking his life, and I don't know why! He wouldn't explain himself!”
Tensei had the impression that his brother had failed to ask the right questions, but now was not the time for that. “As your brother, and as a hero, I should definitely be saying that breaking the law is wrong, and you shouldn't do it.” Something he really doubted needed be said, given how seriously Tenya tended to take things. “If your friend won't tell you, he probably has his reasons. People don't become vigilantes that young without... without unusual circumstances.” An understatement, true- read trained, multi-incident- vigilantes that young were nearly unicorn levels of rare, and the lack of any information about their reasons being made public had troubling implications. “Besides which, if Midoriya-kun hadn't broken the law, several heroes would be dead, including myself.”

Tenya looked stricken, paling at the implication, and Tensei felt kind of guilty, but it was true, he probably owed Midoriya his life- at least once, maybe more if you counted the stain thing.

“But he still broke the law.” The younger Iida said, looking down.

“He did, and he is being duly penalized... I can't make these decisions for you, Otouto, if you don't think Midoriya's reasons good enough, that's your choice, and I'm sure he'll understand whatever you choose to do.”

Tensei watched as his brother mulled it over for a good while, before deciding that this was going to take some longer thought- hell, he hated heavy discussions like this. Standing, Tensei spoke, quickly changing the subject. “Why don't we get started on dinner, hm?”

Tenya nodded mechanically, mind still elsewhere, but stood. Oh well, hopefully he'd reach a conclusion soon enough.
Shouto was getting a bit nervous. People were definitely looking at him, and possibly whispering. Not uncommon in itself, since he was fairly recognisable, what with the- no, he was not going to touch the scar. What with the hair.

Endeavour’s arrest had made that a little worse, though, but Izuku was right- Izuku was seemingly always right... somehow- and no-one had actually asked him about it outside of school.

No, it wasn't the whispering that bothered him, or he would never be able to leave the house. It was that he was going on a... date? They had said it was a date, so he was going with that. A date with Izuku, and he did not want to mess that up. Difficult to ensure, given that he had no idea how it had gone this we-

A familiar shock of wild green hair, extremely short at the sides, started moving towards him from down the street, and soon he spotted the freckles. Izuku beamed at him, and the ice-user found it impossible not to offer a small- too small? He still wasn't the best at letting himself show emotion- smile in return.
Another look, and the bi-chromatic teen had to hold back a laugh. He had never seen Izuku outside of his costume, or on of UA's uniforms before. The trousers were reasonable- and covered the tracker, which he still wasn't exactly thrilled about, but... never mind, better not to sour his mood thinking about it- but the shirt. Where did he even get a shirt that just said “sheets”? And why? He owed Touya an apology, he was no longer the person with the worst fashion sense he had ever met.

“Hey Shouto!” Said the greenette, waving as he made his way the remaining distance between them.

“Hey.” Said the bi-chromatic teen, then cursed his total inability to add tone to anything he said.

Still smiling widely, Izuku gestured to the entrance building. “Let's head in, I'm really looking forward to the giraffes.” He enthused, and Shouto nodded.

A surprisingly short line- it was a really nice day, and a Sunday, they should have been waiting half an hour- and the pair entered the slightly crowded paths between various habitats.

“So what do you want to see first?” Izuku asked, pouring over the map he was holding.

“You said you wanted to see the giraffes?”

“Yeah, but look,” the greenette answered, poking at on spot on the map, “they're all the way on the other side of the zoo.”

Shouto hummed, looking over the shorter boy's shoulder. They were a bit far, it might be a bit silly to skip everything on the way there. “How about the koalas?” He suggested, getting into Izuku's space to point at an enclosure far closer on the map.

“Great idea! Koalas are great, and they're right by the bear enclosure.” Izuku said, not noticing how distracted Shouto was. Izuku was warm. Like, radiating heat warm. Which- the ice-user had noticed before, the couple of times he'd been this close to Izuku, but he had assumed that was because he had been using his quirk.

This wasn't like the scorching heat Endeavour always wreathed himself in, or even the feverish heat- comforting though it often was- Touya held. It was like sitting in a sunbeam. The warmth fit
Izuku’s personality so well, and made him want to- Izuku jumped, and Shouto hurriedly pulled his hand away from the greenette’s.

“Sorry, I should have asked.” Shouto said, returning his cold right hand carefully to his side, only for it to be grabbed again.

“I-It’s fine, I-I just wasn’t- you surprised me, i-is all.” Said Izuku, who Shouto could now see was blushing furiously.

“You’re warm.” Explained the bi-chromatic teen, glancing at the twined hands.

When he looked up again, Izuku was no longer blushing, his expression rapidly shifted from surprised to thoughtful. Shouto started smiling wryly, and pulled the shorter boy into motion as the muttering began. “Huh, that’s probably because of my quirk, I guess. I know I’m always a bit warmer than other people, especially when I’ve been using it your right side is always pretty cool, I wonder what it would be like if I was on the left...” Was as far as he managed to get before it became too quiet to make out.

‘Interesting question, though,’ the ice-user thought, 'he'd... still be warm? I guess, since his fire is probably hotter.'

Though... that didn't actually follow at all, and even then, he didn't know about whose fire was- Shouto blinked. Izuku had cut himself off, and was staring at him.

“Tell me your muttering isn't contagious.” The taller boy said seriously.

Izuku burst into raucous laughter, as if he had made a great joke. Which... he probably thought he had. Well, he only had himself to blame, copying Touya's deadpan delivery when he did make jokes. After a minute, the greenette's right hand came to cover his mouth, and he managed to calm down.

“Don't worry, Shouto, you weren't muttering.” He said, golden eyes still crinkled at the egdes, turning to look at the nearest exhibit- a cage that reported to contain a pair of owls, though he couldn't see them- and slowing. “I was just asking how your hospital visit went.”

Pro: he hadn't actually been muttering- something he thought might not be as sweet if he was doing
it, not Izuku. Con: he had been ignoring his date. Not a good start, even if Izuku didn't seem to mind.

“It was all right, she was having a good day,” meaning she had known who everyone was, and there were no tears involved. The first time that she hadn't, he had been wrong-footed, unsure, and slightly mad at Fuyumi for not telling him that that still sometimes happened (even if he should probably have put that together on his own), “she's been really happy now that it's not just Natsuo, and Fuyumi.”

“So Touya-san's been visiting, too?” The greenette asked, and Shouto blinked slowly. Still a bit weird to remember that Izuku had known that his brother was alive before he did.

More than a little distressing to think how little time it had taken his (boyfriend? Still not sure about what to refer to Izuku as) to actually find him, when Shouto had never actually looked. Or mentioned his brother, at all.

“Yeah, even more than the rest of us. It's nice having him back.” A groan. “I could do without the constant teasing though.” It wasn't like it was his fault that he had interacted with people his own age so seldom. “I'm not seeing them.” He added, still searching the large cage.

Izuku's smile widened again after dimming for the slightly heavier topic. “One of them's there.” He said, pointing with his free hand. “I can't find the other.” Shouto followed Izuku's line of sight to a point he had looked past earlier.

“I'm not seeing.” He started, before there was a slight motion, and the piece of bark he was looking at grew eyes suddenly. “Oh.”

Izuku gave a little chuckle, squeezing his hand. “They're pretty good at not being seen, Shouto.” He said happily.

The greenette spent another couple of minutes, before giving up on finding the other bird. “If you didn't see it, it's probably not in there.” Shouto said seriously. Izuku was damn observant, if he had seen the first one so quickly without waiting for the eyes to give it away.

“Thanks, Shouto.” Replied the shorter boy happily. The taller one blinked a couple of times, he hadn't really meant it as a compliment, but he'd take it as a win.
“So how did your shopping trip go?” He asked, remembering what Izuku had been up to while he had been at the hospital.

Naturally, this question set Izuku off on a series of tangents. Mostly about random bits and pieces they would need for the summer camp- which reminded him, he needed bug spray as well. Not to mention-

“wait, why do you need heavier weights?” He asked, interrupting his date's stream of words just as they reached the koala enclosure- rude, the part of him that had had proper etiquette hammered into him said, but Izuku didn't seem to need to breathe for these endearing mutter storms, so it was the only way.

“To... gain weight?” Asked the greenette slowly, seemingly unsure how to answer that.

Shouto glanced at the arm next to his, raising an eyebrow. Izuku may not have been Satou, or Shoji, but he was still- as Natsuo might say, while poking fun at the slim build he shared with Touya- “built”. Aaand it was time to stop thinking about that, before he started blushing. Shouto hoped Izuku wouldn't notice the frost on his right cheek. And whatever anyone said, he hadn't been ogling.

Izuku performed his best strawberry impression- and oh how he wanted to take a picture, it was adorable. “W-Well, I w-wasn't planning on- but I k-kind of need to for my new-”

Izuku's hand was definitely getting warmer now- which answered the question of if he could do that without actually making fire- and Shouto had to make subtle use of his own quirk. Better than actually giving up the contact, which he certainly hoped could be a regular thing in future.

“New?” Prompted Shouto, when Izuku stalled.

“T-The new part of my quirk, I think it works on muscle mass, like some sort of amplifier. Or it might just be that I can use more of it at once if I'm stronger, given how it felt when I first used it.” Murmured the greenette, pulling on his lip.

Shouto nodded, that made sense. Most enhancer quirks were amplifiers, not just something that added a set amount of strength. “So why weren't you planning on gaining weight before?” He asked, curious. Surely more strength was better? A lot of heroes who fought up close tended to be huge.
Izuku blinked, pulled out of whatever he was thinking. Then he tilted his head, as if the answer should be obvious. Which maybe it should be. “If you gain weight, it becomes harder to climb.” He said matter-of-factly.

Shouto must have looked as confused as he felt, because the greenette launched into a... really interesting lecture, actually, complete with various one-handed gestures. “Huh.” Was all Shouto could say at the end.

It had never actually occurred to him, getting stronger inhibiting mobility. He had seen bears climb pretty well before, but seemingly diminishing returns were a problem for people, and you still had more weight to pull up.

Best not to think about the sorts of things Izuku had needed to be able to climb for, the associated dangers of being Amber would give him anxiety- what had caused that scar on Izuku's upper arm, and would he want to know- and he probably wouldn't have to worry about it. Not now.

“Why do you know everything?” Shouto asked, mouth running uncharacteristically ahead of brain, and the greenette did what he always did when someone complimented him.

“I- I- it's not- I don't know everything!” Said the heavily blushing teen, pulling his hand away to cover his face, leaving the ice-user feeling ironically cold.

Shouto found himself wearing a soft smile, missing the contact, but still wryly amused by how easily flushed Izuku tended to be. The feeling Izuku's gaze gave him of being weighed tended to get far less intimidating when you had seen him do this a couple of times- or trip over his own feet somehow.

“You know an awful lot.” He stated blandly, unable to hear the greenette's muffled arguments to the contrary, and deciding to take pity on him, and watch the koalas instead of his attempts to overheat.

This had so far turned out to be a pretty good idea for something to do together, and the koalas really were cute. 'Now those would probably be nice to hug.' He thought, before shaking himself. 'No. Wild animal. Bad idea.' He decided, remembering an incident with a stray cat.

“They're kind of like you.” Said Izuku, warmth returning to Shouto's hand. The taller boy turned,
Izuku's face was like Natsuo's before he did something that got Fuyumi yelling at him. “They eat almost nothing but eucalyptus. J-Just like you with soba.” He said, mischievous expression spoiled only slightly by how wobbly his smile was.

Shouto felt his face heating up, and knew he was blushing to some extent by the victorious expression that stole over Izuku's face. “I don't just eat soba.” He stated flatly, in the vain hope that the shorter boy would discount the blush. The snort told him it didn't work.

He did eat other things, of course he did. It had turned out to not actually be possible to live off nothing else. Fuyumi had made her opinions on the matter very clear. And if he ate it a lot at school- where she couldn't stop him- no-one had to know.

Turning back to the glass separating them from the tiny not-bears, Izuku gave a little hum. “Though they don't actually drink water, either.” He said thoughtfully.

“Everything.” Said Shouto, nodding, and strawberry-Izuku made an immediate return. Shouto smiled to himself. The shorter boy had walked right into that one.

The rest of the enclosures between the koalas- of which he had taken pictures for Fuyumi, they really were cute- and the giraffes passed in a similar way- happy conversation with Izuku, thinking how lucky he was that someone this warm, and nice actually... liked him back for some reason.

What an odd thing to have happened. He knew he was aloof, nearly as cold as his ice sometimes, not to mention challenging and insulting the shorter boy nearly the first time they had ever spoken. No, no touching your scar. The bi-chromatic teen forced his left hand to stay at his side.

Maybe he'd pluck up the courage to actually ask at some point. Silence that niggling voice that said he was just being nice. But probably best not on the first date... though why not, given that his tragic backstory had been like their second conversation, he couldn't say.

Touya would never let him live it down if he learned about that conversation at the sports festival. Probably no-one would, and he was glad Izuku had been merciful, and never spoken of it again.

'Where does he keep all this information?' Shouto wondered, as Izuku managed to stop himself
The sheer volume of trivia Izuku knew was baffling, as was the apparent speed, and volume of his inner monologue. “Ah, sorry,” said the greenette, rubbing the short hair at the side of his head, “I just- um, I'm...” He trailed off, before muttering something Shouto barely caught.

“Izuku,” Said Shouto seriously, “I don't mind, I like hearing you talk, don't say you talk too much.” He shook his head. “Besides, it's really interesting, Tailwind has never spoken more than two words to me.”

The hero with the full-body eagle mutation was about as quiet as heroes came, possibly less talkative than Kouda, if that was possible. That he had six siblings, including a famous comedian was news to him.

Izuku looked torn as he was gently pulled away from the birds of prey, towards the much anticipated spotted quadrupeds. “A-Are you sure, I-I h-haven't really been letting you-”

Shouto interrupted again, fond but slightly exasperated. “You let me talk when I want to.” He stated flatly. “I just don't talk much.” A thoughtful pause. “Though if that bothers you-” Certainly he wouldn't like to be expected to fill most of the space in a conversation like Izuku had been doing all day.

“No!” Objected the greenette immediately, waving his free hand in negation, eyes going wide. “It doesn't bother me, not if you don't like- well- I mean...” He trailed off, and Shouto raised an eyebrow.

“You mean?”

“I- um, I like to talk, um, you probably noticed that, it's justthatIreallylikeyourvoice.” He said, stumbling, but picking up speed, until the last was said all in a rush. It took a second to parse, but then Shouto was blushing nearly as darkly as Izuku.

“No!” Exclaimed Izuku suddenly, dragging his somewhat stunned date behind him- seemingly not noticing how hard said date was trying not to self-immolate. He had to try
harder, noting people watching the pair of them after Izuku's loud, sudden exclamation.

'...did people know Izuku was Amber yet?' He suddenly wondered, stumbling to keep up with the greenette's attempt to distract from their mutual embarrassment. Or would they just see two UA hero students holding hands in public? Were they well known enough yet for people to care? He didn't care what they thought one bit, but he should probably have warned Izuku.

“They really do have black tongues!” Said the excited boy still holding his right hand, though thankfully no longer trying to burn it- he hadn't been trying to burn it at any point, hadn't even made it warm enough by half, but he made a note to tell him how hot things tended to feel on his right side- so he could stop using the ice side of his quirk.

“Black tongues?” He repeated lamely, and Izuku nodded enthusiastically.

“Y-Yeah, s-somebody told me they did, b-but I'd n-never seen one before.” He said, before gazing off into space for a moment. “Oh, it's s-so they don't get sunburned.” He said thoughtfully, and Shouto bust out laughing at how seriously he said it.

He didn't know how long he had been laughing, but he finally noticed Izuku looking at him that way. He had no idea what that look meant, but he only seemed to do it when Shouto laughed- not huffed, or chuckled, but laughed. Not something the bi-chromatic teen did often, so he didn't see it many times. “How could their tongues get sunburned?” He asked, almost certainly blushing self-consciously.

Izuku looked dazed for a second, before giving a little jump. “Y-Yeah, they eat leaves from the tops of trees, s-so their tongues g-get a lot of sunlight.” He explained rapidly.

Shouto glanced between the huge horse-things, and the short boy whose hand he held. Then back. “How are they even real?” He asked without inflection, getting close to disbelieving the reality in front of him. “Something that weird shouldn't be real. Black tongues to deal with sunburn.” He shook his head. “As if being taller than All Might wasn't bad enough.”

He had intended it as a joke, noting their teacher's- totally unreasonable- height, but Izuku's smile shrank a fraction as soon as the hero was mentioned. Shouto's brows drew together in a worried frown. This wasn't like Izuku, he might not be as bad as some people who went a bit far with the hero-worship, but the greenette was oddly close to the blond.
“Is everything OK, Izuku?” He asked, squeezing the shorter boy's hand. Izuku glanced at him, but didn't say anything. “You know you can talk to me if anything happens, right?” He asked, deliberately quoting something Izuku had said to him weeks ago. Then, naturally, berated himself. That kind of was a low blow.

Izuku nodded seriously. “Yeah, I do, thank you Shouto,” he said, smiling as if it meant the world, “it's nothing serious, I'll tell you about it later. For now, how about we get a seat, maybe some ice-cream, and then we can see the wolves.”

Shouto looked at Izuku for a moment, before nodding. The greenette could be trusted to tell him, and ice-cream did sound nice. As did a seat. Athletic or no, the constant stop-start of zoos, and museums always gave people sore feet.

Though... he was curious how the incredibly warm teen intended to eat it, given that his hand felt warm enough to melt it in a pair of minutes.

'Then again,' thought Shouto, smiling. I'm not under as much scrutiny as Izuku is, so I could get away with some minor quirk use.'

Sure it was technically against the rules, but no-one was going to get on at him for a party trick to keep his boyfriend's ice-cream frozen longer, and Izuku loved that sort of nonsense quirk use. He'd probably be rewarded with some weird fire trick the next time the greenette was free to use it.
of bus rides and angry children

Chapter Summary

we arrive at camp

Chapter Notes

1) *cringes* ooof, my upload schedule is dead, and I'm so sorry. (i never had a schedule, but i feel bad for not uploading for so long)
2) in my defense, summer is trying to kill me with mad temperatures. some of them above 25C. madness. utter madness, that has killed my motivation to write.
3) Quirk question: what constitutes "willingly given" for OFA, because... obviously AFO can't take it, but is it still willingly given in a scenario like...

Shinsou: Hey mido
Mido: Hey-
Shinsou, now in control of Mido: Give me OFA
Mido: *plucks hair*
Shinsou: *intensely grossed out*
(for this I'm assuming the whole "breaking out using OFA spirit magic" thing was a one time deal)
4) you know what gifset I'd really love to see? "three things all wise men fear", with the last airbender.
"the sea in storm"- Aang and appa being blown into the ocean by the storm as he runs away
"a night with no moon"- zhao killing the moon, the ocean koi swimming around the dead moon one
"the anger of a gentle man"- Gyatso laughing, before cutting to the southern air temple room with all the skeletons maybe?
Can someone who knows what they're doing pls do that? I'll be forever grateful :p

It would be entirely inaccurate to say that Izuku was a morning person. That said, he did have a lot of experience functioning on less sleep than he really should have, and an unfair advantage when it came to waking himself up. In all honesty, consistently getting a full night’s sleep was a bit weird, and he kept waking up at odd hours of the night, only to have to force himself to go back to sleep.

Shouto had no such habits, and seemingly either wasn't a morning person, or was determined to get every second of sleep he could. The upshot of this was that the greenette was experiencing a problem common to cat owners.

Izuku tried not to move, despite his arm going to sleep. Shouto had fallen asleep almost as soon as
the bus journey had started, and within five minutes his head had fallen on the greenette's shoulder. Maybe it was because he tended to run towards being unnaturally warm.

The greenette listened with half an ear to the cacophony filling most of the bus, and wondered how his boyfriend was sleeping through it. Looking down, the bi-chromatic teen looked so relaxed, Izuku couldn't help smiling down at him. Honestly, he hadn't expected Shouto to be as tactile as he was. Not that he was complaining.

The voice wasn't saying anything, seemingly judging this as “part of his relationship”, and thus determined to stay silent unless he asked it something. Which he was kind of tempted to do, since it being silent to this degree was... eerie. He almost couldn't remember a time when he hadn't shared his head-space, and now the only thing telling him not to panic, telling him that the voice was still there was a thread of emotions it still let him feel. Presently some odd mix of “aww”, and-

Click. Izuku's eyes snapped to the side- he still didn't want to move his head too much- at the sound of a camera shutter, only to see Mina, phone held aloft, near several of the other girls, all looking like they were stifling giggles.

Blushing, the greenette opened his mouth to... he wasn't sure. Probably tell her to either delete the picture, or give him a copy, then delete it. This, of course, was the exact moment that Shouto decided to make an adorable humming noise, and twist to start hugging Izuku with his left arm.

The fire-user didn't actually register the giggling, he was far too busy trying not to burn something- something he had never actually done, that no Phoenix had done by mistake in nearly one-hundred and fifty years, but better not to take chances, since he had had some close calls- and stop blushing so much.

Shouto's left side was warm. He had thought that might be the case, but now he was finding it hard to focus on anything else, and the greenette felt like he was going to die. Which would be thoroughly inconvenient.

Yeah, the voice was definitely laughing at him now- well, probably more like snickering- even if he couldn't hear it, he could feel it in the voice's emotions.

Luckily, there was enough time left in the journey that by the time Shouto opened bleary eyes- seriously, it was entirely unfair that he could both be hot, and cute to this degree- he wasn't even visibly blushing.
It took the ice-user a few seconds to realize where he was, and what it was he was doing, but when he did, he immediately pulled back as if he had been burned.

“Sorry.” He said, lacking intonation, but blushing slightly as he turned away. “I didn't m-”

“I-It's fine, I don't mind.” Hurriedly interrupted the greenette. He really didn't, though he could have done without the from Mina, and Uraraka. Smiling he went on. “Your left is pretty warm.”

Shouto blinked, cat-like, at him. “Good.” He said, though it sounded like a question. “I still should- I don't want to make you uncomfortable.”

“You didn't.” Izuku soothed, and Shouto nodded, standing to get off the bus. Izuku wasn't sure what the taller boy's face looked like, but judging by how red his ears were, he was still blushing.

'Hmmm,' The greenette thought, remembering how one side tended to blush more than the other, 'I wonder how it would feel, if I put my hand across his forehead.'

*Probably a bit weird in the middle, depending on how clear-cut it is.* Said the voice, deadpan. Aaaand the blushing was back. Izuku stood jerkily, and made his way as quickly as he could from the bus.

Stepping down, he saw that the bus was parked on a cliff-side overlooking a stunning vista, an enormous forest running right up to, and then over a cluster of mountains. Dragging his eyes away from the view, something struck him as not being quite right. The car park had one other vehicle in it, a fence at the cliff edge-

Three people emerged from the car, immediately getting Izuku's attention. Two were women in matching costumes, and the third was a child- probably not more than eight- in a red hat.

It took a second, but during their enthusiastic introduction- during which the child's scowl remained constant- he saw the tails.

“-Pussy-cats!” Finished the pair, just in time for Izuku to go full fan-boy.
“Woah, they're such a cool team! Their quirks work so well together, almost no heroes are better at mountain rescue than the pussy-cats! They've been working in the field for nearly twelve-” The greeenette cut off, wide-eyed as he was forced to dodge a clawed glove that was suddenly headed straight for his face. “Woah!”

Two percent of One-For-All allowed a panicked Izuku to get some space, and he instinctively fell into a fighting stance, still wrong-footed by the sudden-

*What the- oh, Izuku, calm down, it's fine.* The voice said, starting as a startled exclamation, but transitioning rapidly into calming tones.

Blinking, the fire-user took another look at Pixie-Bob, heart in his throat, only to find her lowering her.... paw thing, looking slightly worried, if anything.

Izuku was hesitantly falling out of his defensive stance, when Aizawa groaned loudly. Looking over, he saw the hero was pinching the bridge of his nose, looking like he wanted to hide in his capture weapon. “Was that really necessary, Pixie?” He asked, sounding exasperated.

The hero in blue looked sheepish. “Sorry kid, didn't mean to give you a fright.” She said, hands held up, palms out.

Izuku finally dropped back into as relaxed a pose as he could, still confused, feeling the rest of the class staring at him, concerned enough to be distracted from their search for the non-existent bathrooms- oh, that was what was wrong with this picture, he noted distantly.

“Um, i-it's f-fine.” He stuttered out automatically.

'Why?' He asked the voice, having no idea what was going on.

Aoi’s laughing tones predominated in the answer. *Women can get pretty sensitive about their age sometimes, Izuku.*

Izuku's cheeks burned, realizing his mistake. “S-Sorry, I shouldn't have said- Sorry.”
Pixie-Bob's concern gave way to a wolfish grin. “We're eighteen at heart.” She said, as if daring anyone to contradict her. Izuku was in no way tempted by that dare. “You've got some reflexes, though, kid.”

The fire-user blushed harder at the compliment, and tried to stammer out thanks, until Aizawa seemingly got tired of waiting.

“Problem child, a word.” He said, gesturing the greenette back to the bus, while Mandalay started explaining something to the others.

On the short walk to join his teacher, Izuku reflected that he really needed to stop answering to problem child.

The long look he received from the dark-haired man when he arrived near the bus had him shuffling his feet uncomfortably, he was probably about to get yelled at for-

“Are you OK?” Asked the teller man finally, still watching the teen intently.

Blinking in surprise, Izuku nodded. “Y-Yeah, she just s-surprised me.” He said. Mostly truthfully, since his heart-rate seemed to have returned to a reasonable level now.

Aizawa gave a little grunt, but nodded. “Good.” He said, then nodded to where the rest of the class had... just started making a run for it?

Pixie-Bob pre-empted even the fastest of them, paws touched the ground, and then Earth Flow activated, sending everyone under the age of thirty- sans Kouta, and Izuku- flying off the cliff.

“I assume you know what Ragdoll's quirk does?” Aizawa asked, turning back to the greenette, as if nothing had happened. Not in the least concerned that someone might have broken their neck in the fall.

Well, they probably hadn't, Pixie-Bob wouldn't have done that unless she was confident it was safe.

Shaking himself, Izuku nodded, he did know about Search. “Good. While we're here, you'll have
the run of the whole forest, but unless something's going on at night, I'd rather you didn't go outside after your curfew, okay?"

Izuku nodded again. That was okay, it wasn't as if the leash they had on him- loose though it was, especially now- chafed at him at all, this was fine.

Lies, of course, he was climbing the walls, and it had only been a couple of weeks. This was even worse than cutting back after Stain, or after All-For-One's dath. This was going without helping people at all, and it was like an itch he couldn't scratch.

But he had to deal. He had Shouto, which helped, and most of his friends were talking to him, still. And the voice was really helping by reminding him that it wasn't forever.

*Izuku.* Prodded his past lives gently, reminding him that Aizawa was still speaking.

“Well you should head down, join your classmates, assuming you're feeling up for it.” The dark-haired man said, pointing to the new gap in the fence. “Don't break your neck, problem child.”

Shota watched the greenette, wreathed in sparks from One-For-All- and seriously, why did it do that for him, that quirk was weird in every aspect- hopping off the edge of the cliff, and then swiftly down to join the other, less problematic students.

Once he had ensured that the fire-user had safely reached the bottom, he nodded to Pixie-Bob, who started building obstacles, before finally letting his face settle into the frown it had wanted to wear ever since Midoriya had jumped back.

The reflexes in themselves were a fairly good trait, the sort of thing that could keep a hero alive in the event of an ambush, even if this time the reaction was unwarranted. No, what was causing his scowl was the way he didn't just jump, or even dodge, but made space between himself and a perceived threat, before moving to defend himself, looking panicked.

That was not the sort of reaction a hero student should have. That was the sort of reaction pros sometimes developed, if they were lucky enough to survive things going very wrong. It was a bad sign, and he was even more glad than he had been that the boy didn't seem resistant to seeing the
therapist they had set up for him.

Mandalay started walking towards him, just as the bus pulled away. She looked nearly as concerned as Pixie-Bob had. “I suppose I should have expected something like that, but he’s” she grimaced “far too young.”

Shota let out a huff of air. She could say that again. “He is, but he's out of it now, and if he's smart, he'll stay out of it.”

“And you think he'll do the smart thing?” Mandalay asked wryly.

“He's more rational than someone his age should be. I haven't seen any problems so far, he even went to his therapist without complaining.” Something Shota seldom did, when he was forced to see one after a mission went badly wrong, or one of the other myriad things that sent heroes to therapists. He tended to grudge every minute of it, even if he did understand the necessity.

“He can't have been to more than the introductory session.” The shorter hero said, but her tone indicated a question.

The erasure hero nodded tiredly. “Early days, but it's a good sign.”

The dark-haired man wandered over to the cliff-edge, standing next to the wildly gesticulating blonde, and watched the various lights, and other visual and auditory effects of twenty not-even-half-trained teens running wild with their quirks.

A loud boom was followed by an ice-spike breaching the tree-tops, and Shota groaned. Baby steps, the kid had made a good deal of progress since his fight with Sero, and no longer responded to problems with “throw a glacier at it”, but it seemed it wouldn't hurt to reiterate that he should use more appropriate force.

Unless problem child decided to abandon the others- unlikely- the hero doubted any of them would make it to the lodge in time for lunch. Dinner was doable, if they got a move on.

Glancing at the blonde hero, Shota found her seemingly not even noticing him. He doubted she hadn't. As problem child had foolishly noted, she'd been a pro- non-combat specialist, but still- for twelve years.
“I’d appreciate if we could avoid any further startling of Midoriya. Someone could get hurt.” He said flatly, allowing himself to leave out that the one getting hurt could very well not be the problem child, if he weren’t in the room.

It was not a happy thought to him, but it was illogical to deny it. Midoriya could probably have killed half the heroes chasing him the time he had nearly been caught. High-ranked or not, Kamui Woods was an idiot for trying to get in his way.

Pixie-Bob at least looked contrite. “Yeah. Sorry about earlier, I didn't.” I didn't think, she failed to finish, though they all heard it. She should have known better, under the circumstances, but then he should have actually warned them.

“I doubt he's illogical enough to hold a grudge, and you didn't make him any more nervous.” Shota said levelly, and he dearly hoped it was true, because he didn't want to know what a Midoriya more nervous than his base-level looked like. A gibbering incoherent mess, most likely.

Picie-Bob nodded, and Shota walked with her to the car, while she continued to use her quirk to hinder the hapless students, using her visor in place of directly looking at what she was doing.

Between Mandalay driving, Izumi scowling silently- unsurprising, given the circumstances, but not exactly ideal- and Pixie-Bob distracted with using her quirk, he might, if he was very lucky, manage to get a nap in.

This week would not be fun, he would doubtless end up using his quirk for the first couple of days to stop students from injuring themselves with their own quirks, until they finally got it into their heads to listen to Mandalay immediately. And despite the lack of hero work, his sleep would not improve over-much.

It might have been a bit odd to most of his classmates that he was more relaxed when the bedraggled lot of them finally got past the last few trees, arriving at the lodge in not quite triple the time the pussy-cats had expected.

It could just have been because he was more tired, but he suspected it was partially the catharsis of actually doing something, even if he knew that fighting the things Pixie-Bob had made wasn't
really achieving much, it was still a step up from sedate training exercises.

Plus working in a pair with Shouto- which was pretty effective, even if they had to iron out some kinks in their teamwork- on those few occasions the trees were far enough apart that he was willing to use Phoenix Spirit, instead of One-For-All was pretty nice.

Earth Flow was a really dangerous quirk, and he was really grateful that it belonged to a hero- especially a hero who didn't spend much of her time in combat- because a villain could have just used it to bury the lot of them, instead of making really fragile dirt monsters.

'I wonder if Cementoss can do that.' He wondered, smiling brightly as he emerge at the front of the class, limbs aching slightly from using One-For-All, but not feeling too warm in the slightest. Shouto's quirk really was a godsend, for all that it made him feel a little awkward when his boyfriend used it like that.

He would never ask, since it felt like using him, but Shouto just cooled him down anyway, and overwrote any objections.

_Probably not_, said the voice, led by Hayato for the moment, _Cementoss' quirk doesn't seem to let him move things that aren't connected to what he's touching._

Izuku thought back to the few times he'd seen the hero's quirk in action, and nodded. The concrete man's quirk seemed to conduct through the ground, but he needed to touch concrete, and he'd never seen the hero make anything actually separate from it.

“I thought you said two hours” Groaned Kirishima, who Izuku admitted probably had had an especially bad time, given how he had had to fight the dirt monsters up close with Satou.

“That's about how fast we could do it.” Informed Mandalay, smiling at the exhausted teens.

Pixie-Bob nodded. “I'd honestly expected it to take you lot longer. Not bad, what comes of having experienced real fights, probably.”

The heroes grin was turning wolfish- contrary to the cat-like outfit- again, so Izuku tried to distract her from... whatever she was about to try. “Um, Pixie-Bob-san, I was wonder, is one of you that child's mother?”
The blonde didn't answer, and Mandalay stepped in. “No, no, that's my nephew, Kouta.” She turned to address the silent, scowling child. “Kouta, come say hello, you'll be living together for the next week.” She added, beckoning him over.

The child approached in sullen silence, and the greenette held out a hand to shake. “Hey, my name's Mido-” For the second time that day, Izuku was cut off by an unexpected attack, though this one didn't cause panic so much as confusion, as he caught the fist before it went anywhere... sensitive.

Kouta scowled harder, if that were possible, though he did look moderately surprised, as both the fire-user, and the voices in his head reeled at the sudden assault. “Let me go.” He ground out, and Izuku pulled his hand away as if burned.

“S-Sorry.” He said, and the tone of the voice's emotions indicated something like a quizzical look.

*Why are you the one apologizing?*

The dark-haired kid let out an exhalation angrier than someone his age should have been able to manage, and turned away. “I'm not gonna associate with idiots who want to waste their time becoming heroes.” He said, stalling Izuku's train of thought.

He tried to process the words, even as the kid walked away. '...Does he think being a hero is stupid?' He wondered, baffled. Izuku couldn't imagine not wanting to help people- as a hero, or otherwise- but he supposed some people might not like the profession, only- 'He's living with four of them.'

The fire-user wanted to ask Mandalay what was going on, but she had already turned to follow her nephew, and Aizawa was shepherding them inside for what turned out to be a truly delicious curry. Made more so by the class' general hunger, and only slightly less so by how mild it was.

Normally he'd use that as something to talk about with Bakugou, but... Izuku glanced in the blond's direction, only to be met with a furious glare. No, his old friend still didn't seem ready to speak to him.

Not that Izuku could really have explained himself properly if he did try to talk. Instead he started mulling over what was going on with Kouta, at least until the others calmed down how quickly
they were eating enough to allow conversation.

The voice did its usual thing, and put forth dozens of weird, and wonderful theories, some of which he dearly hoped weren't the case. In the end he decided to try to find out who Mandalay's sister was when he got the chance.

Yes, it wasn't really his business, but he never had learned how to but out of other people's problems, and Kouta's attitude was a bit worrying, even if he didn't much care for heroes.

Shouto noticed how distracted Izuku was during dinner, staring into space was normal for him for whatever reason, but he also paused midway through eating more than once, making him the only person in the room not desperately trying to staunch their hunger.

“Izuku.” Said Shouto, waving his hand in front of his boyfriend's face, when the greenette failed to react to most of the rest of the class- sans Uraraka, Iida, and Shinsou, who were waiting by the door for the pair- left for the baths.

The greenette blinked, returning to the present, and looking up at him. “We're going to the baths.” He said, once he was sure he had Izuku's attention.

Izuku opened his mouth to speak, then touched his shoulder, not seeming to realize he was doing it. Shouto forced his face to stay neutral, to not wince. Now he had definitely made the shorter boy uncomfortable, even if by some miracle all the physical contact hadn't.

How could he have forgotten the scars. The greenette had made it pretty hard to ever see the worst ones, always facing the wall to change, but the two on his back were bad enough. They always made him wince in sympathy. Getting those must have been- “You don't have to come if you don't want to, Midoriya-kun.” Cut in Iida forcefully, drawing the greenette's attention.

Izuku smiled at the bluet, standing from the table. “N-No, it's fine, Iida-kun.” He said, sounding genuine.

Shouto would keep an eye on him, though, just in case he ended up feeling too uncomfortable- Izuku, for all that he was really skilled, would probably refuse to admit anything was wrong on his
deathbed. While also not keeping an eye on him, since watching Izuku in the bath would be both creepy, and likely to result in spontaneous combustion. This was going to be a challenge.

Eijirou sank into the warm water with a contented hum, closing his eyes. Man, that felt good, he could already feel his entire body relaxing after the exhausting journey here.

Even the people who didn't have close-combat quirks were pretty exhausted, and it was that much worse for the ones that did. He had ended up covered in scrapes from when he couldn't keep his quirk up any longer, and poor Satou had joined Kaminari in the “incapable of intelligable conversation” club.

Opening his eyes, he looked at the larger boy. He seemed a bit better, possibly as a result of getting some actual food- as opposed to sugar packets, which he had some serious foresight to have on his person- but still a bit out of it.

The more slender blond seemed to have recovered, possibly as a result of Bakugou angrily dragging him off to plug him into a plug socket when the “whey”s got on his nerves. Kaminari’s quirk was odd sometimes.

A moment later, four new people approached the warm pool, and Eijirou glanced over, pushing his hair from his eyes- he had forgotten how annoying it could be down. Oh, it was Midoriya’s friends, he wondered what held them up. Shinsou and Iida got in first, and the redhead couldn't help how his eyes widened.

The greenette had done a better job than he had thought stopping his classmates seeing his scars. The burn on his face was more prominent than ever, but that wasn't what drew his eye. Those six ragged red marks going up either side of his chest, just beneath his collar bone... he tried not to grimace, he really did. Those must have hurt like hell.

And Midoriya kept fighting like that. Cinnamon roll or not, the greenette was a total badass, going up against the league after being kidnapped and injured. Getting into the pool, Eijirou noticed how nervous the fire-user looked, and it took a second to twig why. He had always changed facing the wall since Hosu.

But the scars were actually really cool, the redhead thought. Maybe he should- but drawing
attention to them might be a bad move... screw it, this felt like the right idea. “Woah, Midoriya, loving the scars.” He said, and both the greenette, and the bi-chromatic teen sitting next to him looked his way.

Midoriya looked a bit surprised, but Eijirou was more concerned with Todoroki’s impressive feat of keeping an entirely neutral face that nonetheless said “if you say the wrong thing, you're going to wind up an ice-cube”.

“R-Really? I-” The shorter boy said, reaching up to touch one set.

“Yeah,” the redhead interrupted, smiling broadly, “super manly, eh, Todoroki?”

The aforementioned boy blinked, then glanced down at his boyfriend's chest. Yeah, he liked the scars. At least if the way he quickly looked away, and the bath around his left side started to steam was any indication.

“Yes. Manly.” Said the resident ice-queen, sounding slightly constipated, and Eijirou had to bite down a laugh. Flustered Todoroki was adorable. Oh, even better, Midoriya was blushing, and heating the bath too. Mission accomplished, one green bean distracted from his nervousness about his scars.

The shark-toothed boy decided to back out of the reassurance effort, when the greenette's other friends joined in in their various ways, smiling as Midoriya tried to hide behind his arms from all the attention. Despite his embarrassment, it was clear he seemed far happier.

Eijirou couldn't help a small chuckle when Iida's customary arm movements raised no small amount of splashing, causing him to immediately halt what he was doing to apologize. With more arm movements. And more splashing. Did the class president actually not know how to not talk with his hands?

Shota woke up at around five, after what could be charitably called a cat-nap. Twenty minutes later, all the students were at least standing, and their eyes were open. It might have been a bit optimistic to say they were awake.
The hero looked around his current cluster of brats, face devoid of any sympathy. If he had to get by on so little sleep, so did they. Though, this wasn't actually a matter of him being petty, learning to cope with less sleep than you would like was a valuable skill for a hero, even if most of them would be able to manage more than he did.

An experienced eye immediately picked out the ones that would have more difficulty then the others. Bakugou was probably just a morning person- the little monster- but Shinsou, Todoroki, And Midoriya were probably this chipper- well, chipper in Midoriya's case, fairly standard for the other two- because of already having experience with sleep-deprivation.

Mina, Kirishima, Kaminari, and a few others were definitely dead on their feet, and he would have to have them work on that at some point. Work as a hero seldom went the way you wanted, so it was best to be able to at least function when disasters, or villain attacks stopped you being as well rested as you would like.

Shaking his head, the dark-haired man left that. That sort of training could definitely wait- usually until third-year. For now, it was time for one of the more fun lessons of the first-year course. For him, anyway.

The lack of progress from the quirk apprehension test always surprised most of a class, and it never ceased to be amusing to watch. Normally he would use the person he had asked to demonstrate during the first test, but Midoriya had managed to get himself a whole new quirk since then, so- “Bakugou.” He said, tossing the teen a ball, and nodding slightly in satisfaction when he caught it. Definitely a morning person.

“At the start of the year, you could throw a ball 705.2m, let's see how much you've improved since then.” The hero said, gesturing the boy to throw. Bakugou look a challenge at him- though, in fairness, every look from that one seemed to be some sort of challenge- and began to limber up.

An entirely unnecessary yell of “die!” later, and the ball soared out of sight. The teacher glanced at his phone, and grinned. “709.5” He said, turning the phone so the class could see. The blond's smirk froze in shock. “You've improved a lot in terms of skill, but your quirks haven't actually gotten that much stronger, so we'll be spending this week working to fix that.”

Twenty minutes after Aizawa's demonstration, and Izuku was in hell. Or something closely resembling hell, anyway. This was definitely a punishment from the universe for putting off so many important conversations. That was the only explanation for why he was currently sweating.
through his shirt, sitting cross-legged on the ground, on a large stone platform.

He was working on his original quirk today, and as a result, Pixie-Bob had made this pillar. Every inch of ground more than a foot from his body was currently covered by slowly dancing golden fire, which Izuku was constantly adding to to stop it from cooling and dissipating. As a result, he felt like he was being slowly cooked.

The only plus was that unlike tomorrow's One-For-All training, he didn't actually have to move, except when he hit his limit. Meaning he was free to sit there, watching the fire, wondering what was causing the weird collection of sounds from below.

The only people he could actually see were Kaminari, on his own platform, and sometimes Tsuyu, climbing a cliff. Actually, looking at Kaminari, he decided that what they were making him do wasn't that bad.

*All right, that's enough.* Sent Mandalay, after an indeterminate period of time and Izuku clapped his hands over his ears, for all the good it would do. He didn't know why, but the hero's quirk was so loud. It was like she was shouting right in his ear, and even the voice was crying out about it.

Izuku tried to stand, found his leg had fallen asleep, then eventually managed it. Splitting a path through the flames, the greenette walked on bare feet to the edge of the soot-blackened stone, and stumbled down the stairs spiralling down, finally getting a good look at what was going on.

The organized chaos was almost beyond interpreting, and Izuku decided not to question it until he at least cooled down a bit. In a few moments, he was at the bottom of the stairs, and he hurriedly jumped into the bath partially full of ice that Shouto had provided.

The second he got in, the ice began to melt, steam coming off as parts of it boiled from how overheated he was, and the fire-user groaned, relieved that his temperature was dropping.

“Man that feels good.” He said, words slightly slurred. “I could just stay like this forever.”

*Don't get too comfortable, you'll be back up there in a few minutes.* Said the voice, crushing his hopes.

'Does quirk strength training really need to be this bad?'
Pretty much. Responded the voice flatly. Intense quirk training is always hellish. Why do you think we stuck to low intensity?

'Wasn't that just because we didn't really have the facilities for this?'

That too. Admitted the voice, feeling like it was grinning. Izuku shook his head at it, then began looking around.

The yelling and explosions were obviously coming from Bakugou, who was repeatedly thrusting his arms in... a vat of hot water. 'To make him sweat more... man, that's just cruel.' Thought Izuku, wincing, imagining how uncomfortable that had to be, and how sore the blond's shoulders would be by the time they stopped for the day.

Um.... should we try waking you up? Because we're not sure why you're dreaming Uraraka rolling round in a plastic ball. Said the voice suddenly. Izuku looked around, spotting the ball. Blinked. Nope, still there.

'Yes. Yes you should.' He told it seriously. Unfortunately, it turned out that he wasn't dreaming. Hero training was weird.

And back on the platform kid. Said- screamed- Mandalay, and the greenette yelped, jumping out of the considerably warmer bath.

Dragging his feet, he made his grumbling way back onto his rock. He could still feel the remnants of the fires, but he would have to reheat them to the gold colour they had been. And keep them. He sighed. He would have to do this over and over again before they stopped for the night.

Sitting back in the rough circle in the middle of the platform that wasn't blackened by the fire, Izuku resigned himself to a long, miserable day.

Shouto got out of the barrel full of water tiredly at the end of the day. This was still better by far than any training from Endeavour, but it was really exhausting. He was drenched in sweat, mostly
from the exertion of trying to keep the water at a constant temperature.

It had turned out that that was easier said than done, since his ice side was slightly more powerful than his fire, but he got it down eventually, only freezing himself in the barrel once.

Looking around he saw most of his classmates visibly just as tired as he was. Bakugou wasn't even remembering to scowl, instead holding his left wrist, looking pained. Aoyama, and Uraraka didn't look like they actually wanted to leave the bathroom, and Shinsou had somehow given himself a nosebleed.

Looking around, something didn't add up, and it took his exhaustion addled brain a moment to figure out what. Too many people, the B class had arrived and he hadn't noticed. (Pathetic, if they had been villains you would be dead).

Shaking his head in an effort to dislodge the entirely unwelcome voice of his father, the ice-user followed the crowd back to the lodge, eager to have something to eat after that ordeal.

True to there word, their hosts hadn't prepared the food for them today, instead a group of exhausted teenagers were left with boxes of ingredients, and a number of unlit wood-burning ovens.

Shouto was looking around, unsure what he should be doing to help, when Mina hailed him. “Hey, Todoroki!” She said, and he glanced over. “Can you light this for us?”

The ice-user glanced at the oven she was gesturing to, already filled with wood, but unlit. “You should really try to adapt, and light it yourself.” Said Yaoyorozu, pulling a lighter from her arm.

“Its fine.” Said the tall boy calmly, and walked over.

A small smile came to his face as he ignited his palm and held it by the logs. It was nice using his quirk for something as far removed from combat as this. Especially nice to be able to use his fire to help people. It was his quirk, and he knew it could be used for more than hurting people, but it was nice to be reminded.

“Izuku would have been better to ask, though.” He pointed out, once the wood had caught.
Mina shrugged, smiling at him. “It's just as on fire as it would be if I'd asked Midori. Thanks, Todorki.” She said brightly, gazing at the fire in a very concerning way.

The bi-chromatic teen nodded, backing away as Mina let loose her inner pyromaniac. He made a note to correct Fuyumi later, it was not always the quiet ones you had to watch out for.

He did get to see Izuku light one of the ovens, as it turned out, after Bakugou destroyed one with his quirk, and everyone wisely agreed not to ask him to do it again.

“Hey, Midoriya!”

Looking up from where he was collecting more fire wood, the golden-eyed boy look at Kirishima. “Yeah?” He asked, pausing mid-stride.

“Can you light this one for us?” The redhead asked, gesturing to one of the surviving ovens.

“Sure!” Said the fire-user brightly, then he glanced at Shouto, and his face lit in a grin.

Not moving any closer to the oven, Izuku raised on hand, and quickly filled it with fire.

Kirishima's jaw dropped, as a dragon made of fire- Chinese this time, as opposed to the western one at the sports festival- maybe a foot long flew across the intervening space, and curled up in the bed of logs, quickly losing its shape as the fire caught.

“That. Was showing off.” Shouto informed the shorter boy, joining him at the prep bench, making what he hoped came across as a mock-serious face.

Izuku's smile lit up the entire area as usual, even if he was still focusing on unloading the logs. “No, showing off would have involved lighting them all at once.” He said, deadpan. Shouto looked at him for a couple of seconds, unrelenting, until the greenette snorted, and burst into laughter. Even if he'd tried, he wouldn't have been able to keep from smiling once his boyfriend started laughing.
“OK, it was showing off. Did you like it?” The shorter boy asked, looking up at him.

Shouto nodded. It had been pretty impressive. “I did.”

Izuku grinned, clearly pleased, then seemed to think of something, smile replaced by a more worried expression, biting his lip. “Hey, um, c-could we talk? After dinner.”

Shouto's immediate reaction was oh no, he's going to break up with me. Then, the optimistic side of his brain- which sounded increasingly like the greenette- pointed out that it was probably something less serious than that. Maybe a request to stop or cut down on all the touching.

“Of course. You can always talk to me, Izuku.” The ice-user responded seriously, and his boyfriend smiled wanly.

“I know, thanks Shouto. I don't know what I did to deserve you.”

Shouto raised his eyebrows. “I seem to recall it involving trying to set me on fire, and yelling at me to do it myself.” He deadpanned, and was warmed by the undignified snort this earned him.
of tears and strength

Chapter Summary

emotions: how do they work?

also some villains show up, i guess.

Chapter Notes

1) no seriously, how do they work? Like, I was going for green bean being really upset- as i imagine we all would be under those circumstances- but i don't think i wrote it very well.... or todo's reaction for that matter. was that realistic? was it in character? someone please let me know when I'm not doing these characters justice.
2) added some new scenes onto the end of the previous chapter, then it occurred to me that people might not get notified when i do that, so... i did that, check it out if you haven't.
3) no seriously, I'd really love to see that gifset
4) ............when did i last write an actual fight scene? it feels like forever ago.
5) woo, 1.9k kudos :D so close to 2k.... thank you guys for all your overwhelming support as always.
6) "emails with “[AO3] Comment on _____” in the subject line give me a better dopamine rush than hard drugs ever will"

After dinner, as it turned out, was when the pussy-cats had planned a “test of courage” meaning Shouto would probably have to wait to talk to Izuku. Unless they ended up paired together, since it was in groups of two.

The bi-chromatic teen was a little concerned, since his boyfriend had jumped up halfway through eating his dinner, blurted something about Kouta- it probably wasn't acceptable to freeze a child to the wall, even if he had tried to punch Izuku... there- and rushed off without giving his friends any time to say anything.

When he got back a couple of minutes later- sans the plate he had grabbed before running- the greenette seemed... troubled, and not a little upset, eyes shining, looking down, muttering to himself, deflecting when asked about it.

They drew lots to decide who was paired with whom, and the ice-user was quietly irked to be stuck
with Bakugou- who was getting frozen to the wall as soon as possible, for any number of reasons, but mostly for how much he'd been glaring at Izuku since the Amber thing.

Bakugou, on the other hand, was loudly irked- read blinded by unyielding rage- by the arrangement. “What?! I'm stuck with shitty Half-And-Half?! Fuck that! Tails, swap with me.” He barked, marching over to an Ojiro who was slowly attempting to back away. Todoroki pretended to indifference, despite his hopes that Ojiro would agree.

“U-Um, I c-could swap with you, Kacchan.” Izuku offered temulously, raising a shaking hand- why Izuku, who could probably literally tie the blond in knots, was so nervous around Bakugou was nearly as baffling as the nickname.

“Don't call me that, shitty Deku.” Ground out Bakugou, looking between the fire-user, and the ice-user as if deciding to reject the offer out of pure spite. Shouto just returned his gaze coolly, mostly out of habit. “Fine, I'd prefer not to be stuck with some shitty extra anyway.” He said, shoving his own slip of paper into the greenette's chest, while snatching Izuku's. “Have fun with your fucking boyfriend.”

Shouto decided not to comment on the likelihood that the blond would have demanded to be paired with Kirishima, had he not been stuck inside with the others who failed the exam. One of many mysteries of the class' social dynamic that Shouto never could unravel, why did someone who was nearly as much of a sunshine child as Izuku actually like the resident ball of anger issues?

Shouto raised an eyebrow, as the slightly dazed greenette made his way over. “I could set him on fire, if you'd like.” He offered, deadpan.

It took his boyfriend a second to decide if he was joking, but eventually he must have gone with yes- half-right- and gave a soft snort of laughter. “It's fine, b-but thanks for offering.” He said with a smile.

The pair spent the time waiting their turn to enter the woods in companionable silence, the greenette lost in his own little world, though unfortunately not muttering his stream of consciousness- which never ceased to be endearing- and Shouto content to enjoy Izuku's warmth- both literal, and metaphorical.

A couple of minutes into their trip through the presumably jump-scare strewn forest, Shouto decided they were probably sufficiently alone. “So, you said you wanted to talk.” He prompted, looking to his right, where the greenette was walking.
Izuku looked over, blinking up at him, initially confused. “Oh, um, yeah.” He said, before visibly steeling himself. “It's about the whole A-Amber thing,” Shouto gave a hum, just to make it clear he was listening, “It's-” The greenette grimaced, “Its- um, I never told my mum about it, and now...” He trailed off, with an inarticulate gesture.

“Is she... giving you a hard time about it?” He asked, concerned. Izuku's mother could never be as bad as Endeavour- not by a long shot, he hoped- but he could certainly see a parent being unforgiving about that sort of thing.

“What? N-No, she's- um, she's not really mentioning it. She's trying to act normal but- I- she's started baking a lot.”

“Baking?”

Izuku nodded. “She does it when she's stressed. I- it's my fault, and I n-need to apologize, b-but she changes the s-subject whenever I bring it up, a-and I-I don't know what to do.” He said, voice breaking at the end, nearing a wail.

Shit, Izuku was crying, or close to it, it was hard to tell in the dim lighting. Shouto had no idea how to comfort someone else. It had always been his siblings comforting him, he had never needed to do it himself before. Panicked, Shouto bundled the shorter boy into a hug.

Izuku stiffened at first, and the taller boy worried this had been the wrong call, but then he relaxed, grabbing the back of his shirt, and continuing to cry. Shouto held him like that for a minute, uncaring if the pair behind them caught up for now, stroking his back, and trying to think of what to say.

“It's not your fault.” He tried, and was rewarded by an incomprehensible noise. “I can't understand you when you talk into my shirt.” He added, wryly.

“It is, if I hadn't-” Started the greenette pulling back slightly, raising red-rimmed golden eyes to look at him.

“You did what you thought you had to do.” Insisted Shouto. Honestly, the whole vigilante thing fit way too well with Izuku in hindsight, given his overwhelming heroic tendencies. “And maybe it worries your mother now. She is your mother, it's her job to worry.” Goodness knew his mother
had been worried way way too much on his account- even if he was now getting over blaming himself for it. Ah, that would work. “Just give her some time, and try not to blame yourself. Either she won't think you need to apologize, or she'll let you apologize eventually.”

Some sniffling. “I do need to apologize, though. For lying to her about it, and keeping it a secret.” Shouto would argue that, given that keeping it a secret probably kept her both happier and safer, but it wasn't really his decision to make. “N-Not to mention Kacchan's so mad at me, and I need to say sorry to All Might.” He added, before letting his head fall against Shouto's chest again.

Shouto diplomatically decided not to say something to the effect of “fuck Bakugou, and his opinion”. “Why do you need to say sorry to All Might?” He asked, with a small frown.

“I... kind of snapped at him. I think he took it badly.” Admitted the fire-user.

The ice-user blinked into the mess of curls in surprise. “That doesn't sound like our resident hero fan.” He said, earning a weak chuckle. “I doubt All Might, of all people, would hold a grudge.”

“I'd feel better about it if he did.” Said Izuku barely audibly.

“That bad, eh?” A nod into his shirt. “Well I'm sure you can apologize when we get back to school. He'll probably just tell you not to worry about it, it'll be fine.” He was really curious what Izuku might have said that All Might could have taken that badly, but that wasn't important right now. “As to your mum... well, my mum and I didn't speak for nearly eight years,” which was mostly his fault, avoiding visiting her, “and now we're getting along really well. I'm sure that part will be even easier.”

Izuku looked up at him, with an odd expression Shouto decided to interpret as hopeful. One blue, and one grey eye met his gaze levelly, their owner smiling reassuringly- he hoped, anyway.

The fire-user gave one last sniff, backing up a tiny bit to free his arms, and beginning to wipe his eyes. “Thanks, Shouto. Sorry for offloading all of that on you like that.”

Shouto actually laughed at that, drawing the greenette into a closer hug, one hand on the back of his head, and rested his chin on the bed of green curls. “You weren't the one who explained your tragic back story during our second conversation.” He said in an effort to lighten the mood.
“Pfft, I guess you did do that, you're lucky you're pretty.” Izuku said, before freezing, his brain seemingly catching up with what he'd said

Shouto drew back, if for no other reason than that he couldn't miss the blush that must have resulted from Izuku somehow managing to complete that sentence. It did not disappoint. The ice-user began to worry that his boyfriend might actually spontaneously combust, himself.

Letting him go, and tilting his head to the side, the taller boy retorted. “So you do only like me for my looks.” He said flatly, face blank for all of a couple of seconds, before Izuku's gaping forced a smile onto his face, followed by full-blown laughter, as the greenette sputtered indignantly.

“Come on, we should keep going, before-” He started, letting the greenette go, and gesturing along the trail.

Izuku stiffened immediately as Mandalay's voice sounded in Shouto's head- and presumably his, too. Everyone! Two villains have invaded the area, everyone who is able should make their way back to the facility! Do not engage with the enemy. If anyone knows where Kouta is- She sent, before cutting off.

Izuku was muttering to himself from the moment the telepathic message ended. Most of it sounded like more swearing than he had ever expected from the greenette, even if it was in English. His breathing did not sound at all healthy.

“Izuku.” Shouto said, and the greenette's eyes snapped up to meet his. “We need to get to the lodge.”

Izuku immediately shook his head. “I know where Kouta is. We need to get him.” He said firmly, golden eyes intent.

Shouto looked at his boyfriend as if he were crazy- understandably, in his opinion. “We can't, we were told not to engage, we should let the heroes-”

Izuku interrupted, sounding strained, almost desperate, already sparking with the golden lightning that indicated he was using the enhancer part of his quirk. “They don't know where he is, Shouto. That means the villains took down Ragdoll already. And I can't hear Pixie-bob's quirk, either.”
Shouto paled slightly. The golden-eyed teen was right, meaning that a third of the heroes had been taken down before any of them could give warning. Shit. It also meant that there would be no way short of knocking him out— which he doubted he could, even had he been willing— to convince Izuku to leave Kouta to his own devices.

The ice-user nodded. “OK, you're right. Lead the way.” He said, accustomed forced calm falling into place. In that case, he was definitely going with him.

“We can't draw attention. Do you think you can use your ice to keep up without your fire for a minute?” Izuku asked hurriedly, glancing about to get his bearings.

Had circumstances been less dire, Shouto might have scoffed. He had been refusing— stupidly— to use his fire for years. A couple of minutes would be easy, unless he went all-out. “Yes.” He said instead, straight to the point.

Izuku gave a sharp nod, the sparks growing slightly denser. “It's that way, there's a big rock formation.” He said, pointing in a specific direction.

They both took of a moment later, the shorter boy sprinting faster than any human should be capable of, and the taller one keeping up with his ice, leaving a trail of it in their wake. Maybe he should be concerned that a villain could follow the ice to find them, but it would take a really fast villain to catch up to the pair.

Shouto kept glancing over to make sure he hadn't lost the blur of green hair, and golden sparks, but they were keeping pace with each other fairly well. Izuku was running slightly oddly, hands cupped together in front of him, and it wasn't until a glow began to leak between his fingers that he realized that there was probably a lot of fire in there.

Turning, Shouto kept his attention in front of him, carefully skirting around trees, keeping track of how cold he felt. If that was the rock, and not clouds blotting out part of the stars, they would be there before the cold became an issue. He really hoped that wherever Izuku was taking him, there was enough room to use fire, though.

Fighting a villain with both of them limited to half their quirks would be a problem.
Kouta sat on the edge of the cliff outside his secret hideout. Well, not so damn secret, as it turned out. Midoriya had been able to find it with no problems. He had known that it was only a secret because his aunt thought he “needed his space”, but it grated just how easily one of the stupid UA students had found him.

He hated that wobbly smile, how the green haired idiot had come up here, when he wanted to be alone, as if he needed help from one of them. Idiots like them, who didn't get how stupid being a “hero” was. Spending all day doing dumb shit to make their quirks stronger. It was gross.

Kouta was scowling now, remembering it. Midoriya had come up here, where he wasn't wanted, and said all... that. Acted as if he understood. He didn't understand, or he wouldn't be trying to be a hero.

Actually it was worse. Any of the others, he might have been less angry about, but his aunt had told him that Midoriya was Amber. A vigilante, basically a villain, even though he was a kid. Putting himself in danger, as if no-one would care if he died, as if his mum wouldn't have been just as sad as he had been when-

Kouta shook his head. He had told the green-haired idiot what he thought of him, so hopefully he would leave him alone, at least. And he wasn't guilty about how the older boy looked as if he had been slapped when he called him a villain.

Now the loud-mouth group of do-gooder idiots was having a test of courage. That was, they were wasting time in the middle of the night, trying to scare each other in the woods, which was only marginally less dumb than what they had been doing during the day.

The dark-haired kid looked down from the cliff, standing as one of them made some sort of purplish cloud with their quirk. It was hard to see in the moonlight, but it was probably some sort of stupid smokescreen to make things scarier. He thought he could almost hear the yelling from up here.

*Everyone! Two villains have invaded the area, everyone who is able should make their way back to the facility! Do not engage with the enemy. If anyone knows where Kouta is-* Came the voice of his aunt suddenly, sounding in his head as it always did when she used her quirk, Telepath.

It took him a second to register exactly what she'd said, then his eyes widened, and he jumped up, turning around. He needed to get back to- there was someone behind him. A very tall someone. The kid looked up, and then up some more, finally finding a face covered in a blank mask, beneath the hood of a cloak.
“Hey there, kid. You weren't on the list. I was just looking for a scenic view, and didn't expect to find anyone here.” Came a deep voice from behind the mask the impossibly large man was wearing.

Kouta didn't say anything, as he paled slightly. This wasn't one of the students or a hero. “Hey, that's a pretty sweet hat you've got there. You wanna trade for this mask? Pretty sure they're making me wear it as some sort of hazing—”

The water-user's brain finally started working a bit better, and he took off in a run to his left, rushing to the path down from the cliff. And away from the villain. “Ah, hey.” Said the man leasurely.

There was a cracking sound behind him, and suddenly the man was in front of him again, blocking the way down. There was a quieter clattering from where the man had been. The mask, falling. The cloak shifted, revealing the face Kouta sometimes saw in nightmares.

The dark-haired boy gazed into the scarred face of the man who had killed his parents, part of his brain screaming at him to run, another part not to turn his back, and a third just screaming. Muscular just grinned. “I guess I could cheer myself up, taking it out on you.” He said brightly, as his his already large arm grew, sprouting new muscle fibres from his quirk.

Kouta began to back away, shaking his head in mute horror. His parents couldn't win against this man, what hope did he-

Suddenly, it stopped being night. The thing that flew at muscular from Kouta's left looked like it had been made out of part of the sun, and the man hurriedly aborted his fatal swipe, jumping away from the terrified boy.

The ball didn't keep going, though. In a second, it swerved, headed right for Kouta, who didn't have time to cry out, before it suddenly warped, the ball stretching out, curving.

Before the kid, or the villain could recover from their surprise, Kouta was completely surrounded by a ring of calmly shifting pale golden flames nearly as tall as he was.

Kouta looked at the fire that was trapping him dumbly, eyes smarting from the sudden brightness after the moonlight. What had just happened? On his left, were two of the students. One with gold eyes, the other with mismatched blue, and grey.
Midoriya looked at him, as the pair stepped off the ice-bridge they had used to climb the cliff, while Todoroki watched Muscular. Gone was the mumbling, stammer, wobbly-smiled idiot that Kouta had insulted earlier. Now Midoriya looked like some sort of demon ascending from hell, face perfectly calm, eyes pinning him to the wall, hands on fire, feet leaving glowing footprints in the rock.

Kouta wasn't sure who he should be more afraid of. He had called Midoriya a villain earlier, and now he had trapped him with a wall of flames, so he couldn't even run. Not to mention that penetrating stare, as if measuring him. He looked around, as if searching for an exit from his cage that he knew wouldn't be there.

A moment later Todoroki's left half caught fire, as if to keep with the hellish aesthetic, while he put his right hand on Midoriya's shoulder, not taking his eyes off muscular. Muscular, who hadn't attacked the pair yet. Were they really-

Then Midoriya smiled, as if determined to outshine All Might. “Don't worry, Kouta, it's going to be all right, we'll save you.” He said, as if certain that there was no other possibility.

The fire in his hands, and covering his feet slowly got brighter, as he turned to face down Muscular.

Izuku turned from Kouta, who was clearly utterly terrified, but blessedly unharmed, to watch the monster who had been attacking him.

Contrary to the fear he had been fighting down, running here in the dark, the voice not being able to offer many plans because of how few resources he had, ambushed by an unknown number of villains, with unknown quirks, now he was angry.

If Izuku had come alone, if Shouto hadn't been there to make the ramp that got them up here faster, he wouldn't have been in time. The villain—scar, weird muscle augmenting quirk, A-rank villain muscular. The voice supplied—would have killed Kouta, with that— that smile on his face.

He didn't think he'd ever been this angry fighting a villain, this close to wanting to do things Ren's way. Phoenix Spirit flared with it, and the ocean of power that was One-For-All started to ripple,
growing choppy with increasingly large waves, as the seventh phoenix contemplated what he was going to do to-

The emotional connection with the voice cut off, and with it the larger portion of the anger filling him. *Calm down. This isn’t the time to get emotional.* Said the voice, though it sounded like it was coming through gritted teeth. *People who fight angry-

‘Die angry.’ Finished Izuku, taking a breath, centring himself. The waves on the surface of One-For-All died down to ripples, and the bonfire of Phoenix Spirit died down, the unfamiliar desire to incinerate something leaving him. He was still angry, and afraid, and half a dozen other things, but this was the closest he was likely going to be able to come to true calm.

While all this was happening- over the course of a couple of seconds- Muscular seemed content to wait, studying the pair of hero students, maniacal grin still plastered over his scarred face.

“You're muscular, right?” The greenette asked, partially for Shouto's benefit, making sure his ally knew what they were up against, and partially to buy time to make more fire.

Actually, he had a lot of fire to hand, in the form of the ring he had put around Kouta, which was all the fire he was actually able to fit between his hands- a lot, given One-For-All, but it was still like trying to shove a storm in a bottle.

That said, he didn't want to rely on that fire, for fear of putting Kouta in more danger. Right now, the villain had no hope whatsoever of getting past that barrier any time in the next half hour.

“That's right, good job recognizing me.” Said the large villain candidly. “And we got pictures of you lot. You're Amber, and Todoroki.” The villain frowned, annoyed. “Tsk. You're on the no-kill list, so I've got to take you alive, but your friend's fair game.” He said, pulling off his cloak, revealing arms bulging with new muscle growing over the skin. “Let's see some blood!”

The huge- and growing larger by the moment- man shot off from the ground, flying towards the pair almost too fast to follow. Izuku raised his arms to block the attack that was aimed at him, too fast to dodge.

The full force of One-For-All that he could use- still fifteen percent, since he dared not increase it in single point increments yet, though he suspected he could go to seventeen now- dulled the blow, but pain shot through his arm, dulled by adrenaline, and he was forced to stumble back a couple of
Shit, he's too strong for now, try not to block- Started the voice, before cutting off as the man came round for another go.

The kick to the stomach would probably have sent him to his knees, had he not managed to jump sideways to dodge it. One-For-All flared, as the greenette aimed a punch with a brightly burning fist at the man's side.

Izuku was surprised again, as Muscular moved his augmented arm to block the strike, and it was barely better than punching a wall without a quirk. The villain grunted, and took a step back, the muscle of his arm slightly charred by the intense heat, but new fibres quickly grew to cover the old ones.

“You've got some speed, and you pack a punch, but still not as much as-” Gloated the blond, before being interrupted by the sudden need to dodge a stream of flames from Shouto.

Muscular turned sharply from his new position to face the ice-user, and the voice urged Izuku on immediately. Skating on his fire, pushed faster by One-For-All, Izuku began moving even before the villain did, landing a full-force punch to the man's unguarded stomach, just as he finished yelling, “don't get in my way!”

The punch had the intended effect, halting Muscular's advance, and letting Izuku get between him, and Shouto, who wasn't as resilient at all. The force of the One-For-All augmented strike nearly sent the man flying, but he managed to turn it into a backward stumble of a couple of steps. And for a bonus, it set his shirt of fire.

If he had been alone, Izuku would definitely have pressed his advantage immediately, but he wasn't, and so the voice sent a quick image. “Shouto. Sports festival, Sero.” Said the greenette as quickly as he could, barely glancing over his shoulder at the taller boy.

Shouto looked at him, uncomprehending for all of half a second, then nodded, the ground beginning to freeze in preparation. Confident that his partner had understood, Izuku turned back to Muscular, who had just finished tearing his burning shirt off, revealing a large circle of black where the muscle fibres had carbonized, which was being slowly grown over.

“You brat.” Spat the man, glaring at the greenette for the first time. “Fuck orders, I want to see you
bleed.” He added, before reaching up to pull out his mechanical eye. “Time to get serious.”

At the same time, the voice was speaking. *Less on the sides, none on the head. Legs seem to be a good target too. Fire is better than fists here.*

Muscular wasn't Sero. He would need to be stymied for a second in order to actually catch him, and he would be able to break out if too little ice was used. Either way, this was an opportunity.

Izuku shot forward again, right fist raised, not willing to give Muscular time to replace the eye. Though he had no idea why the man had taken such a huge risk in removing it.

The villain raised his arm with a snarl to block the head shot, but instead of actually sending it out, Izuku made the golden fire collected around his right fist shoot towards the man, growing into an enormous fireball when he let it expand.

He couldn't dodge back, since there was a wall there, or to his left, because of the ring around Kouta, meaning he could only dodge right, towards the path down. The greenette had intended to shoot his other fireball that way, but Shouto beat him to it, seemingly anticipating that response as well.

The villain's eye widened in surprise at the first fireball, but he dodged it easily, but the stream Shouto shot at him effectively boxed him in. Harried, Muscular looked at the three people, before arriving at a decision.

He could reach any one of them without having to pass through fire, but he would have to pass very close to easily moved fire to get to any of them, so if Izuku could figure out which--

*Kouta.* Said the voice hurriedly, as the villain sprang backwards towards the wall. Izuku responded easily, jerking his head up, and causing the ring of flames to become a full dome. Dimmer, but still more than enough to dissuade him from trying that.

Cursing, Muscular jumped over the dome, Izuku made to move the large fireball into a better position, twisting to face the blond, but the voice seemed to largely relax as soon as he had jumped.

The villain had made a crucial error, in that unlike Izuku, or Bakugou, or even All Might, he had no really way to change his trajectory in mid-air. Shouto had more training than anyone their age
should, and didn't let the opportunity pass.

The instant Muscular landed, the fight was effectively ended by the glacier that grew from Shouto's right foot, encasing him up to the neck, and only getting taller behind him.
of deception and misdirection

Chapter Summary

the training camp attack continues, new players enter, and the teams change.

Chapter Notes

1) I'm not dead! despite the best efforts of the training camp arc, I've found the will to keep writing :D
2) sorry for the delay, this chapter went through like 6 revisions, i swear... i'm still not happy with it, but it'll have to do.
3) let's hope i managed to get rid of the plot holes....
4) *checks stats* i.... got 2k kudos? i got 2k kudos! did you hear that wilson? 2000!!!! thank you guys so much for your continued support!!! i never thought my weird fic would ever get this popular :'
5) fun AU idea vol. 3: Midoriya Izuku quirk: Adaptation: an invisible quirk that allows its user to slowly adapt to extreme conditions, including eliminating the upper limits on strength training.
   *green bean gets exploded for the 9001st time*
   izuku: umm... kacchan, did you just decide *not* to blow me up?
   bakugou: *tries again*
   Izuku: *tearing up, in no pain* i knew we could be friends again!
6) ima be real, i think dabi severely underutilized his resources for this arc.
7) fun AU idea vol. 4: quirkless green bean, but instead of letting that get him down, he goes looking for long-lasting positive quirk effects to compensate. you can't tell me that OFA is the only quirk out there that does something like that. *imagines a Lycanthrope quirk + some sort of familiar quirk + whatever else people come up with*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shouto exhaled a small cloud of mist, very deliberately refraining from curling in on himself to retain what little heat remained in his body. He did however allow his left to flare, as he had since Izuku managed to beat some sense into him.

Carefully watching the one-eyed villain, he felt the ice that had replaced his blood slowly recede, the contents of his lungs thaw. He didn't think Muscular could get out of there. All Might could have, but however strong this guy was, he was no All Might. Judging from the expletives, and death threats that followed the straining of his attempt to break the ice, he was stuck. Good.

Now if only his heart rate would return to something reasonable. That was... definitely the fastest
paced fight- excluding the exam against All Might- he had ever been part of. He didn't think he would have been able to get off that attack without the blond doing something as stupid as jumping that far.

“Are you OK, Shouto?” Asked Izuku, voice strained.

“Shouldn't I be asking-” The ice-user started, turning to the fire-user, before freezing, seeing Izuku's slightly pained expression, and the way he was cradling one arm. “Are you OK, Izuku?” He demanded, closing the distance with the greenette.

“Fine- just bruised.” Izuku said tersely, before finally taking his eyes off muscular. “We need to go.”

Izuku, Shouto discovered, when he touched his shoulder, was inhumanly warm again, and he quickly began to cool the shorter boy down. “We can't just leave him in there.” The taller boy said seriously. He understood the sorts of things extreme cold did to people. Villain or not, he wasn't about to-

“He'll be fine until we can get help.” Insisted the greenette, already moving the fire he had made before and during the fight into a wall blocking sight of the villain, and mercifully muffling his yelling.

The dome opening revealed Kouta, standing in the middle of the blackened ring, wide-eyed, and visibly shaking. He stared at the two students, as if not entirely sure they were real, then around to the wall of flames lighting the plateau. “W-What happened?”

Izuku smiled, reassuring, if slightly wobbly. “We saved you, j-just like we said we would.”

“M-Muscular?”

“On the other side of the fire. Shouto froze him, he can't hurt you. N-Now, we need to get you back t-to the lodge. I-Is it a-all right if I carry you?”
Shota's worst nightmare had become a reality. It was only a matter of time, really. He nodded to Vlad as soon as Mandalay's message ended, and rushed out the door, leaving the remedial class in his care.

This was hardly the first time his nightmares had become reality, it tended to happen occasionally when you worked as a hero. Things went wrong. But this... was fairly spectacularly wrong. Like the USJ- a recurring nightmare in itself- but even worse, between cover of darkness, and the students scattered for the test of courage.

If they survived this, he was going to find a time-travel quirk, and go back to punch his earlier self for okaying something that involved scattering the students in the forest at night, in tiny groups, not even chosen for compatability.

The front door slammed open, and he rushed out into the too quiet cleared space around the lodge. *Vlad, Eraser, we've got two villains here-*

“Hello there, hero.” Was all the warning he got. Quick reflexes, honed by years of work as a pro were what saved him from being brained by an enormous club of some sort, held by a well-muscled redhead.

“Quick reflexes.” Commented the woman, looking up at where he was hanging from his capture weapon, attached to the roof of the building, before holding the cloth-wrapped club up to point at him.

Suddenly he found himself being pulled towards her, so the erasure hero activated his quirk, then let himself fall straight down, taking advantage of the surprise villains almost always felt when their quirks failed.

The woman was indeed surprised, but she recovered quickly, getting her strange club in the way of the strands of capture weapon he sent her way. Not what he was going for, but better than nothing. A twitch of his fingers sent the strands around the club, and the hero pulled, nearly wrenching the thing from her grasp.

She managed to keep hold of it just, but he wasn't going to let her recover. The erasure hero jumped forward, landing on the weapon, and sending a punch at the villains head.

Inevitably, if she didn't want to just accept the blow, she would have to let go of her weapon. It was
impressive enough that she was still holding it, with his weight added. Sure enough, she let go with her right arm to deflect the blow, and the weight proved too much to hold in one hand.

The bar dropped, and him with it. The head-shot naturally became a body blow, hitting her in the diaphragm.

After that, things became simple, the winded villain was wound in a cocoon of grey fabric, far too strong for her to get out of.

Shota blinked, rapidly looking around in case of further assailants, but it seemed the redhead was the only villain here.

Returning his gaze- and quirk- to the woman, the hero got to work on the most critical thing he needed to do right now. Namely, get a grasp of enemy numbers, and intentions.

“As Objectives, numbers, positions. Now.” Ordered the dark-haired man, holding the woman's face in the dirt, knee in the small of her back.

Now that he was able to take a longer look, he was pretty sure he remembered this particular villain. The quirk was what let him figure it out. Hikiishi Kenji. Villain name Magne.

“And I'm going to tell you that because...”

“Because I’ll do this.” Said the hero plainly, and the snap her left arm made would definitely feature in some future nightmares, but now he had no time for doing this the nice way. The villain let out a scream of pain, though they did an admirable job trying to keep it in.

“Next will be the right. Don't make me get to the legs, it would be a pain to move you around after that.”

“Dear me, you seem to be in a rush.” Mocked the villain, just as dawn unaccountably came.

Shota looked up from the incapacitated villain, to see the top of a huge fire, he couldn't gauge distances too well from this angle, but it looked to be about twenty feet across. And it had that odd
metallic quality that the problem child's fires always did.

That was the exact opposite of good. What was Midoriya even doing all the way over there, and what on earth made him feel that much force was needed?

“Well, that makes things easier.” Said the villain, as the hero realized that taking his eyes off her was a mistake. Ignoring the pain she must be in, she pulled herself free from under him, managing to punch him in the stomach with her unbroken arm, backing away.

Shota gasped, winded, but focused on the villain, mercifully still caught in his scarf. She wouldn't be able to do much like that, despite his error. The redhead stood there, leering at him.

“It’s been fun, Eraser, but I've got to go now, I'll be back to repay you the arm later.” She said, with a malicious grin.

“You can't think I'll let you go.” He said, pulling on the capture weapon holding her, only to widen his eyes when it came free.

“Good luck keeping the kids safe.” Magne said, as she began to... melt. In a couple of seconds there was nothing left but a puddle of what looked like mud. That wasn't her quirk. But whatever it was, it wasn't good. He needed to-

There was a loud crackling sound from where he had seen the fire earlier, and his head snapped back there, only for his blood to turn cold. The fire had grown taller, and it was joined by some smaller ones, the golden light illuminating a new cliff of ice.

It was worse than he thought. Todoroki was with him, and two of the strongest kids in the class were still having to go all out. The hero was paralysed with indecision for a second, unsure who to go help, but the decision was obvious really. He needed to-

“Sensei!” Called Iida's voice, and Shota turned to see the bluet leading a small contingent of students out of the forest. Four. Plus the remedial students, less than half of one class accounted for.

“Get inside. I'll be right back.” Said the dark-haired man brusquely, looking hard at the students, making a note of who needed found. As soon as he was sure the group was obeying- damn
disobedient problem children- he rushed off into the forest, heading for the blaze, just as it 
suddenly moved, growing even taller.

Izuku held onto Kouta, thankful that Shouto had managed to cool him down enough that he wasn't 
too hot to touch- which might end up a serious problem at some point when he became a hero- and 
kept glancing around the shadowed forest.

There was no way that Muscular was the only villain, but he had no idea how many more there 
were, or if any of them would be free to come looking for them.

*More than likely, said the voice, they came prepared, that probably means more numbers than the 
pros can keep distracted.*

'Do you think Aizawa will be free to-' 

A twig snapped off to the greenette's left, and he came to an abrupt halt. Taking one hand from 
Kouta's back, he filled it with fire- ignoring the twinge of pain that shot through his arm, it wasn't 
broken, but he really shouldn't push it- just as Shouto came to a stop beside him, the ground at his 
feet visibly frosting.

The shaking child he was holding turned to look in the same direction- he wasn't making a sound, 
even before this, and that was probably a bad sign- and Izuku got ready the throw the fireball, 
confident in his ability to stop it from hitting any trees.

The greenette breathed a sigh of relief when, rather than another villain, two of their classmates 
emerged from between the trees. “Deku-kun! Thank goodness!” Said a dishevelled Uraraka.

“Uraraka-san, As-Tsuyu-san, what's wrong?” He asked quickly, studying the pair.

*They don't look hurt...* Said the voice, not seeing any blood in the firelight, and the pair approached 
normally enough, no limping. That said, Uraraka looked frantic, and As-Tsuyu's eyes were slightly 
wild. It was probably the most afraid he had ever seen the frog-like girl.
“It's Tokoyami-kun,” Answered Tsuyu, looking between the two fire-users, “he's lost control of his quirk, kero. We need to calm him down.”

Izuku paled. That was a disaster waiting to happen. He had no idea what Dark Shadow was like when it got out of control, and he didn't want to know.

“How can we help?” Asked Shouto, glancing at the greenette, who was slightly startled to realize all three were looking at him to make a plan.

_We still need to thaw Muscular as soon as possible._ pointed out the voice, shifting to Hayato, _extra insulation or no, he can't stay like that._

'We're going to have to split up, then?'

_Exactly, but don't let anyone go alone._ His past lives warned seriously.

Izuku nodded, before looking around. “Dark Shadow is weak to light, so one of us has to go.” He explained, looking at Shouto, and squatting to put Kouta down. “But one of us still needs to deal with Muscular. I'll go to Tokoyami, can you take Kouta to find Aizawa-sensei?”

Shouto nodded seriously, but grimaced slightly. “Will you be able to deal with it without help?”

“I'll be fine.” He said, not noticing the flat look he got, as he looked between the two girls. “Tsuyu, can you take me to Tokoyami?”

Tsuyu raised a finger to her chin, nodding. “Assuming he hasn't moved, kero.”

“Deku-kun, are you sure you it wouldn't be better if we stuck together?” Uraraka asked, looking worried.

Izuku nodded. “We need to split up, it's the safest way.” He replied, glancing around the small group, two worried expressions, and two worried, but nearly unreadable expressions lit by the small light he was holding.
Eventually the three other students nodded, and the greenette put out the light, and set off with Tsuyu, using less of One-For-All to make sure she could keep up, though not much less, the Frog quirk allowed her to hop really quickly, if somewhat ungainly. Maybe she had been slightly injured...

'I hope Shouto will be all right.' Thought Izuku, worrying his lip between his teeth, before realizing that that was a bad idea while running, and forcing himself to stop.

_He’ll be fine_, soothed the voice, _Uraraka's with him, and messing with her is a bad idea._

Izuku nodded to himself, the voice was right, they were both hero students, and especially strong ones at that, he had to trust them. They would be fine. Hopefully if he kept telling himself that, he would stop worrying so much.

Fumikage felt as if he were viewing the world as through a veil. He knew that the monster his partner had become now ruled his body, but didn't let himself dwell in that truth. The more important truth was this, that he had to contend with it, though he held little hope that he might become the master of his own limbs again any time soon.

Dawn would come, or one who held a light quirk, but until then, the demon that dwelt in his flesh would strike out indiscriminately at all it saw. He had to keep it here.

He did not know what foolishness had possessed him to enter the shadow of the trees, lit only by the moon with no light of his own, but it was too late to regret it now.

Shoji was bereft of a limb, and for the first time since he came to UA, he had truly lost control. Small mercy that Shoji himself had heeded his warning and gotten safely away.

The bird-headed teen had felt some hope for clawing back control when the fire had blossomed in the distance, but it was too dim, too far, and Dark Shadow had swiftly hidden itself between the trees, hissing in the light that pierced the branches.
Fumikage gritted his teeth, and brought his will to bear against Dark Shadow, as it roared, tearing at nearby trees in impotent rage. He was glad that it was merely trees the monster tore through, rather than his companions.

Then the fire went out, plunging the woods back into true night, and Dark Shadow's might returned to its peak. Fumikage felt like he was adrift on a swift current of dark emotions.

An eternity seemed to pass, Dark Shadow laying waste to all around it, in all directions, but heeding the one order he held to with his entire being, repeating over, and over again. 'Stay here.'

Suddenly, a crack was heard, as of some poor fool treading on a fallen branch, and Dark Shadow turned to face what it saw as a living victim at last, Fumikage's body unwillingly turning with it.

Crimson eyes met Gold. Fumikage relaxed his grip, relief flowing through him. In some sense, this was a mistake, but at present Dark Shadow was little more than a mere beast, and it lacked the wisdom to flee from Midoriya.

Tsuyu's eyes widened at the shadow's charge, and she began to back away, but Midoriya stood there, implacable as a mountain, and his eyes held a terrible calm. The young hero with hair like the leaves around him raised his hand, and his in his palm was all the radiance of the dawn.

Dark Shadow shrieked in pain, its power dwindling rapidly beneath the merciless flames Midoriya held, and tried to run, to stop, anything to get away from that light. It was too late, though.

Fumikage redoubled his efforts, tugging at his quirk as it flagged, and the veil began to fall away. “Keep going, kero. You're nearly there.” Declared Tsuyu, drawing close as the peril passed.

A few moments longer beneath the light, which Midoriya mercifully brightened further, and the world snapped back into focus, his quirk ceding control, instead hiding beneath his flesh, docile once more. Fumikage sank to his knees, breathing raggedly.

“Thank you, Mi-” The avian teen began, looking up at his saviours, only to cut off at a gasp of pain from Midoriya.

Crimson eyes widened, and gold filled with utter shock, as the girl that had accompanied Midoriya to the scene of devastation backed away, knife in hand, grinning wider than either had ever seen
Tsuyu smile before.

Midoriya reflexively gripped his side, crimson leaking between his fingers, as the other greenette opened her mouth, inhumanly long tongue licking the blade dyed red with the flame-user's blood.

“Yeah, thanks, Amber-chan. He was way~ too tough to deal with ourselves.” She singsonged, and the voice was right, but the tone... Tsuyu had never sounded like that.

“Y-You're working with the villains?” Ground out the ex-vigilante, still holding his side desperately, and staring at the girl who had led him here, as if he truly could not believe this had happened.

Fumikage could hardly believe it himself. Tsuyu had always had a gift for being unreadable, but this? He could not have imagined this betrayal. Mercifully, Midoriya still held the light in his other hand, else he feared he would have simply lost control once more.

Tsuyu had betrayed them? Was that how the villains had known where they were? How long... just- how? Tsuyu was once of the friendliest members of class, and now he discovered it all a ruse.

Todoroki was easy enough to find, since he seemed to be- irrationally- talking. “I don't think he cares that you tried to hit him. He'd probably have tried to save you if you broke his arm.” The tall boy was saying, as Shota moved towards the voice.

Emerging from the trees, he almost ran into the teen in the dark, and as a result was nearly frozen to the spot. Thankfully, Todoroki managed to get a better look at him just before the ice hit, and stopped it, meaning that the dark-haired man wasn't forced to erase his quirk. He would admit that wearing nondescript black did have its disadvantages. Being occasionally mistaken for a villain for example.

A quick glance around the bedraggled group left him confused. This was not the pair he was expecting to see. It wasn't even a pair, since they had somehow picked up Kouta, who was clinging to Todoroki's shirt for dear life.

“Sensei,” said the ice-user, trying for his normal blankness, but relief clear in his voice, “I was
Okay. If he were an optimist, he would assume that meant that the teen intended to do what he was supposed to, and return to the lodge. Shota was not an optimist. "Why? And where is Midoriya?"

Midoriya should have been with Todoroki. The fire further into the forest had not been the right colour to belong to Half-Cold Half-Hot.

A roar sounded somewhere else, and he didn't even want to think about what had caused it. "He went with Asui, Tokoyami lost control of Dark Shadow." Todoroki said flatly. "We froze a villain, he'll get frostbite if he stays there."

The hero blinked slowly, gaze shifting between the two students, and one terrified child. Midoriya wasn't here. And he now had no idea where he was. Great. At least they had the good sense to not leave anyone on their own. Nonetheless, the lot of them were getting detention for the rest of their natural lives.

"What about 'do not engage' do you not understand?" He demanded angrily, looking up at the glacier, and trying to gauge how long it would take to get to.

"The part that involved leaving Kouta." Responded Todoroki calmly, and Shota hi a grimace. The problem children had a point, but he was damned if he would admit it.

It took another few precious seconds before the hero came to a decision. "We go to the lodge first. Kouta's safety comes first." He said. Contained or not, there was no way in hell he was taking a child near a villain if he could help it. If the villain got frostbite in the meantime, so be it. "Come on."

'I can't fight like this.' Thought Izuku in dawning horror, as more villains began to emerge from the trees.

He began to flare the fire in his free hand, and started one on each of his feet anyway, before stopping himself. *If you use fire, you'll hurt your ally.* Said the voice, and he let the fires die down
slightly, still trying to keep his eyes on all the villains, and backing towards Tokoyami.

“How dim can I make it?” He asked quietly.

“What?”

“How dim?” He almost snapped, trying to at least see if he could tell the quirks they were dealing with.

Frog, and Magnetism were the only two he recognised. The other two villains were wearing a mask he didn't recognise, and what looked like a straitjacket. The one in the plain mask was standing in a tree near the edge of the area, but the other three were on the ground.

“How about half that bright, less and I fear I'll lose control again.” Said Tokoyami, at his back. Izuku nodded, though he doubted the other boy saw, and moved to let the fire dim.

Wait- Started the voice, before one of the villains finally spoke.

“We don't want to hurt you,” said Magne, hands raised placatingly, “but we have orders to bring you with us. It would be best for everyone if you came quietly.”

Yeah, that wasn't happening. He would be more inclined to believe that if he hadn't just been stabbed. 'Why am I waiting?'

They brought you to weaken Dark Shadow. You put it out, they attack immediately. When they move, throw it up, we need backup.

'OK.' The greenette said, still staring silently at the circling villains, and pouring a bit more fire into the ball in his palm.

“Do we have a plan?” Tokoyami asked quietly.

“Keep your distance, get away if you can. I think we're both faster than all of them.” Murmured the
Magne sighed, taking Izuku's silence as refusal. “Oh well, worth a shot. Mr Compress?”

The villain in the plain mask moved, and Izuku responded by throwing the fire into the air. With the fire more distant, the clearing got dimmer. Meaning Dark Shadow got stronger. “Tokoyami.” The greenette prompted, hopping out of the way.

Fumikage, for all his misgivings, let Dark Shadow loose once more, trusting that Midoriya would be able to survive himself, even should his control slip. Larger than he had ever deliberately used it in combat before, the shadow bird shot forth, aiming to strike down “Mr Compress” before he could reach the encircled heroes.

Dark Shadow crowed, strengthened now that it was lit only by a glove of flames that would fit in Midoriya's palm, and was a good distance away. The huge shadow followed the man closely, as Fumikage gave it as much freedom as he dared in the dim light. It didn't catch him, but he had no window to approach the pair.

The villain that had spoken earlier tsked. “Looks like he needs support.” He said, still assured of victory. “Moonfish.”

The dark-clad villain that had dismembered Shoji in his attempt to kill them earlier stepped forward, monstrous teeth already lengthening into shifting blades. “Dark Shadow.” He said, fearful of the coming wall of knives.

The shadow resisted, and he tugged at it with his will, forcing it away from its pursuit of Mr Compress, to block the many sharp teeth.

A sharp hiss from behind him forced the avian teen to turn his attention for an instant. He widened his eyes. As he had feared, the his had come from Midoriya, but unlike what he had expected, the other boy had not been struck by a villain. Rather, he was holding a fire to his own flesh.

Tokoyami felt his mouth dry further at what the greenette was doing. “Mido-” He started, before he felt Dark Shadow's intention, and forced himself to turn back. The dark-empowered shadow
The human host struggled, but Dark Shadow was relentless. With a furious sound it dove towards Moonfish. Fumikage tried to turn it aside, afraid of what it was about to do, but the villain used his remaining teeth to dodge. This was when Fumikage was forced to dodge himself, a warning from Midoriya alerting him to Tsuyu's approach.

He managed to somehow dodge the first strike of the knife, backing away, but the frog-like girl didn't let up, and the second scored a line of fire across his arm. He was in no way as fast as Tsuyu, he needed to retrieve Dark Shadow, but it resisted, determined to finish its prey. He needed- Tsuyu vanished for an instant.

Fumikage looked around rapidly, desperate to find where the enemy had gone, only for a sound directly behind him to take his attention. Midoriya stood there, grim as death, holding the wrist that held a knife inches from his spine. His hands sparked with the golden lightning that wreathed him.

“What did you do to Tsuyu, Toga?” He demanded, and not-Tsuyu smiled widely, her flesh beginning to melt.

A moment later, another girl stood there, eyes just as golden as the flame-user, but gleaming with madness. “Took you long en-” She started, pouting playfully.

Midoriya didn't let her finish, pulling her off her feet with unnatural strength, and throwing her away from him, right into the path of Mr Compress.

Dark Shadow was still chasing Moonfish, who by now had almost run out of teeth, and he could. Not. Get it. Back. “More light.” He said tersely, and Midoriya responded by throwing a stream of flames right at the redhead villain, who had to throw herself out of the way. He hadn't even noticed how close she had gotten.

Dark Shadow shrunk, and he was finally able to recall it. “Opening.” Said Midoriya suddenly, before picking Fumikage up, causing the bird-headed teen to let out an undignified squawk.

The sparks grew denser, and Midoriya sprinted towards the trees, the two villains he had knocked down too close to properly encircle to pair. Fumikage looked behind them, to find the redhead falling behind, and Toga, and Mr Compress even more so. Midoriya was right. They weren't that twisted, despite his efforts, and the steel-like blades shattered, shards flying in all directions.
fast. Moonfish didn't even seem to be follow-

The only warning they got was a light rustle from above, just as Midoriya glanced back at their pursuers. Then the world went dark.

Magne stopped running as soon as he saw the two marbles held between Mr Compress' fingers. "I must say," commented the magician, "I truly appreciate working with someone who understands the art of misdirection."

"Just trying to do the job with what I've got." She said, turning to the other two who had followed the heroes in training. One Toga quickly became two, though one of them was dressed as Mr Compress. "Good job getting the firebrand here."

"Aww, thanks Magne, it was such good fun too, Tsu(chan is so cute. I can see why Amber-chan trusts her." Enthused the Toga clone.

"All right, targets acquired, ready for extraction," the redhead spoke into his earpiece, signalling Kurogiri, "anyone not at the extraction point in five minutes is getting left behind."

She hurried with the two Togas, and Mr Compress- who had already hidden the marbles containing the result of today's attack... somewhere- back to the clearing one of the students had made.

When they got there, Twice had already arrived, and was cooing over the barely conscious Moonfish. "I can see why the boss wants them, but those two are definitely tough customers." She commented, seeing the straitjacketed villain, who now had almost no teeth left. Even with help from a doctor, he'd most likely not be able to use his quirk as well again. She hoped these two were worth it.

"It was easy! We almost died." Magne had no idea why Twice was complaining about the danger, given that he had been kept back from the fighting.

"Twice, grab moonfish, we're leaving." She ordered, ignoring both cheerful agreement, and complaints from the maniac- just one of many she'd been left in charge of, not to speak of the one
she was currently working for—before turning to the Toga that had been Asui. “You remember the plan?”

The cloned Toga nodded. “Make a distraction, so we can get away.” She responded, almost gleefully, before skipping off towards where Spinner was most likely still fighting the heroes with one of the two Nomu they had brought.

“All right, let’s get out of here before the heroes come.”

Chapter End Notes

8) to celebrate all the kudos, I’ve decided to return to my roots. my horrible, evil, cliffhanger-writing roots (muahahaha)

9) i didn't think it was possible... but i think i actually like the new summary of my fic even less than the old one

10) on that note: i’d love to hear some better ones in the comments :p
not a chapter

sorry to do this to you guys just before Kamino like this, but I'm going to be taking a short hiatus. knowing me, it will probably be *very* short, but i need a week or two to actually plan the next arc out, maybe do a bit of editing of the earlier chapters.
(OK, so i may have realized some time in the last week that i had no idea where i was going with this, and had to scrap a load of drafts of the last chapter, and the next one...)
I hope you guys can bear with me, and that taking the time now will lead to a more satisfying Kamino
awakening

Chapter Summary

I'm back, baby!

Chapter Notes

1) ack! That hiatus was longer than I really wanted it to be, sorry to keep you guys waiting
2) thanks for all the comments telling me to take my time, though! Time to see how much my ability to words has atrophied :D
3) really wanted to do the whole "manipulative/charismatic cult leader AFO" thing here, but i don't think i've done all that good a job of it
4) do you ever sit down, and write out essentially a whole chapter, then read it back, and realize it's hot garbage so bad that even yuki_setsu wouldn't willingly publish it? man that was demoralizing
5) Dabi is the one sending those flowers, and you can't convince me otherwise.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Touya padded down the hall on bare feet, the house eerily dark and silent, except for whatever had wakened him. It sounded like it had come from the dojo, whatever it was. He had to check.

The door to the room he dreaded to even walk past was slightly ajar, and lit with a flickering glow. The redhead pushed the door all the way open, revealing the source of the light.

Endeavour stood there, larger than life, furious scowl occluded by a mask of flames, surrounded by scorch marks, and more fires, slowly climbing the walls, as he just stood there, in just trousers and a vest, totally unconcerned with the room burning around him.

The man's scowl turned sharply to pierce the boy, eyes narrowing in cold fury, and Touya froze. “Useless.” The hero spat. “Get out,” a command, one Touya should obey. Disobedience meant pain, but he was rooted to the spot, “I've no use for a disappointment like you. Shouto, get up.” The taller man looked down, and Touya followed his gaze.

Fear redoubled, seeing the crumpled form of Shouto, hair singed, barely breathing. “Shouto!” Touya gasped, rushing into the room, kneeling to clutch his brother, finding his face more bruise than unmarred skin, blistering burns running down his arms.
“Nii-san,” it was barely audible, Shouto's voice so small, he looked terrified, “you- you need to go, he'll-” Shouto cut off, before coughing something dark.

“What did you do?” He demanded of his father, fear suddenly flaring into familiar anger. He placed himself between his brother and the looming man.

Endeavour sneered, and gave a derisive snort. “Training my masterpiece,” the monster said without remorse, “Shouto needs to surpass me, he needs to learn. Leave. We aren't done.”

“You can't keep going, he's hurt!”

The fire flared higher, and Endeavour's rage sharpened. “Get out of my way, a failure like you can't protect him.”

Touya glanced back, into pleading mismatched eyes. He raised his arm, and his skin began to smoke, as he called on his quirk, cerulean flames appearing in his hand.

Endeavour looked at the fire, and he laughed. “Put that away, boy. You'll only hurt yourself with that broken quirk of yours.” He mocked. Touya saw red.

Red became blue, as the fire burned, hotter, and brighter than it ever had before, the skin of his arm beginning to char black, recoil pushing his hand back.

There was a scream from the fire. It wasn't Endeavour's. Anger quickly burned itself down to ashes, and horror, and the fire dimmed to reveal Rei there, eyes too bright, skin dancing with azure lights, leaving dark trailing burns behind.


Touya stepped back, away from the accusation in her eyes, as she burned, the flames climbing the walls had turned blue. “I-I didn't- I-”
“Look what you did!” She ordered, suddenly manic, the ends of her hair catching, gesturing to the blue fire slowly consuming the house. “You're just like him!”

Touya stumbled back, shaking his head, falling as the blue-lit spectre advanced on him. “You're a monster.” His mother told him, as he'd always known she would.

Touya woke with a start, sitting up in a rush, heart jack-rabbiting in his chest, as he looked around, disoriented. This wasn't the dojo, where was- the safe house. He hadn't- she wasn't-

The dark-haired man took a steadying breath. Then another. Just a nightmare. Just a nightmare, she'd never say that. He wasn't like Enji. He wasn't.

The fire-user groaned, taking his head in his hands. It had been a good long while since he'd had a dream that unpleasant. He'd really hoped he wouldn't have one like that again.

The news was playing on the television, which combined with him being on the sofa, and fully clothed, meant that he had somehow managed to fail to get to bed again. Maybe Fuyumi would nag him about that. Might take his mind off things.

Some part of him suspected that he had kept up with the news during his Dabi years as some sort of self-punishment for leaving. Watching dear old dad get praised for massive overkill was a less than pleasant experience, that he nonetheless seemed determined to put himself through.

These days, whenever Enji was in the news, it was yet more speculation as to why he had been arrested, when the trial would be, what had been done to them. Strangers picking apart his family's lives, commenting on what they had all gone through. It was somehow even less pleasant. It would all be worth it though, when the bastard got what he deserved.

Just when he had managed to calm down, Natsuo walked in, still in his pyjamas, holding a bowl of cereal. “Oof, rough night?” The white-haired man asked, lowering himself contentedly into a nearby armchair.

Touya shot his brother a withering look. Natsuo just smirked at the dark-haired man. “Y'know, you might sleep better, if you did it in, I dunno, your bed?”

“Shove off, Natsu.” Growled the eldest Todoroki, in no mood for his brothers nagging.
“Fine, fine. Don’t blame me when you ruin your back.” Before Touya could respond, he went on. “I was going to go visit mum today, are you going to come with?”

He hadn’t planned on, but- “Fuyumi’s not going with you?”

“Nah, she’s still behind on the marking.” Natsuo somehow managed not to spray half-chewed cereal everywhere, but it looked like it was a near thing. Where was Fuyumi when you needed her?

“Don’t talk with your mouth full.” From him it was more sarcastic, rather than the defeated tone their sister would use, and he just received an eye-roll in return. “Sure, I’ll come.”

The ice-user eyed the fire-user suspiciously. “You don’t have to come with me, it’s not like I need a babysitter.”

The siblings had collectively agreed that telling their mother about Endeavour's arrest was a bad idea. They obviously couldn’t keep it from her forever. Probably just until any sentencing.

That said, the eldest two had tacitly been making sure that Natsuo- who spoke every thought that entered his head, seemingly- didn’t go see her alone. Just in case.

Touya snorted. “When it comes to not opening your mouth, I wouldn’t trust you as far as I can throw you, and,” he looked his wider brother up and down, “you probably weigh twice what I do, so that’s not far.”

Natsuo glowered over his cereal. “Hey, it’s not my fault you look like you were built out of dry twigs, and grass. Besides-” The phone began to ring in the next room, and both brothers turned to it, Touya rising to answer it, before it cut off, and Fuyumi’s indistinct voice sounded.

“-and we agreed not to say anything. It’s not like I don’t know when not to say anything.” Natsuo waved his spoon for emphasis.

Touya shot his brother a flat look. “Green vase.” He deadpanned, and Natsuo flushed, recalling the incident, which had somehow resulted in the lot of them in trouble, despite it clearly being
Fuyumi's fault it broke.

The white-haired man had no rebuttal for that, so the conversation stalled, while Touya tried to decide what- if anything- he wanted for breakfast. “Hey, Touya?” Natsuo asked slowly, after a minute.

“Yeah?”

“Those flowers in mum's room... did they look fresh to you?”

The dark-haired man stared at his brother, unsure where this question had come from. “Yes? I think they'd only been there a couple of days.”

Natsuo's puzzled frown deepened. “But... dad's been in prison.” And thank goodness for that, if he'd made bail there would have been enough anxiety in the safe-house to suit a small village.

Touya may have been giving the ice-user a look as if to say “you've completely lost your mind”. But the man clearly had lost his mind. “Yeah, so?”

“How could he have sent them?”

“Why the fuck would you think he'd-” The fire-user began incredulously, before Fuyumi rushed into the room, and judging by her expression, the phone call had not been good news.

“Shouto's camp was attacked.” She said in a rush, before her siblings could question her.

Tomura was really happy with how his latest quest had turned out. He had been right, a proper party was the way to go, the summons were completely useless, but his new team had given the heroes the run-around, and managed to complete the main objective with almost no losses.

And the losses they had taken in return for the summoner had only been the brat, who was weak to
his own quirk, and the Machoke wannabe, who seemed to think Tomura didn't have enough badges to train him.

The idiot Muscular had run off on his own, and was getting no help from the league. Maybe he'd send Kurogiri to grab Mustard, though, if he remembered.

The optional objective the other had picked up he could have done without, but Sensei had insisted that the red mage would be useful, however much Tomura itched to tear him down to his component molecules.

The pale-haired man trusted Sensei, who had taken him in after- had taken him in when no-one else would have. He might not have liked it, but the red mage was with Sensei right now, he'd see how great Sensei was, and if he was smart, he'd come around to whatever Sensei wanted him to do.

Otherwise, his quirk could always be useful, or maybe a new Nomu. That could be something fun to let loose. Maybe in the red mage's classroom.

But that was for later. For now, he had to be patient, and wait for the summoner to wake up. His allies stories of how serious the bird-headed kid got just added to Tomura's conviction that he was the right pick.

He just needed to make him see that he'd make a better villain than a hero, somehow. Persuasion wasn't exactly his strong suit, and the thin man would have preferred to just make the kid do as he was told, but Sensei was right- Sensei was almost always right- that would leave the summoner with a pretty low loyalty score.

Carrot and the stick, Sensei had said. The stick was pretty easy, he could frighten weak villains into line no problem, but the carrot was harder. Sensei was so good at that sort of thing, but Tomura was getting better. He had to get better, Sensei was trusting him to improve.

When Tenya woke up, he was not in his bed. Nor was he in the room all the boys had been using at the training camp. His confusion at the blurry room was quickly alleviated by the sharp antiseptic tang in the air. A hospital then. Not the most promising of signs.
The bluet began to look about the room after his glasses. The thing about myopia was that it tended to make it hard to find things when not wearing his glasses. Notably, his glasses.

This was after all the reason that he made sure they were always in the same place relative to him before bed, when he could. Hopefully the staff had simply placed them on a nearby table, since that would be the most sensible place for them.

Tenya's search was interrupted by the sight of a familiar blur nearby, in what was probably a chair, from supporting evidence. “Nii-san?” He asked, though the blur in question could just as easily have been his father.

The blur jerked slightly, straightening out in its seat. “Oh thank goodness, you're awake.” Said Tensei, sounding relieved.

The relief probably wasn't a good sign, but he was still too asleep to properly remember what had led him here. Better to ask then. “What happened, Tensei?”

His brother seemed to notice him squinting- not exactly good for his eyes, but it was hard not to, when he found himself unable to see properly- and reached to his side, taking something from a nearby table, and proffering it to him. A couple of inches away from his face, his glasses resolved themselves, and he took them with a murmured thanks.

The white walls of his room came into sharp relief, as did the bags under his brothers eyes.

“You gave us a bit of a scare.” Said the elder Iida softly, watching the younger somberly. “How much can you remember?”

Tenya, rapidly coming fully awake, cast his mind back, trying to think what had happened. They had been at the camp, and then- “The attack- is everyone all right?” He demanded urgently, remembering the villains that had attacked the two heroes in the clearing.

Tensei’s expression did not change, but his silence was not reassuring. The turbo hero looked exhausted when he finally spoke. “There were...” he began at length, before cutting himself off, “most of your friends are as fine as can be expected.”

“Most?” Tensei was trying for reassuring, but it really wasn't working.
“Several of the students were hit with something like Midnight's quirk. They haven't woken up yet, but they're stable. Yaoyorozu-san took a bad hit to the head, but she woke up before you did. You,” Tensei's hands tightened in his lap, “you lost a lot of blood, but Mandalay and Tiger found you in time, so there's no permanent harm done.”

That was bad, but he knew his brother, that couldn't be all of it, given just how serious he was being. But the older man went on before he could ask. “Can you remember how you were injured?”

Aizawa-sensei burst into the room, carrying Kouta, trailed by Todoroki, and Uraraka. A brief discussion with Vlad King followed, then the dark-haired man turned to Tenya, instructing him to go to Mandalay with a message.

The bluet shook his head. “The last thing I remember was heading back out of the lodge. Aizawa-sensei told me to go with Uraraka-san, and get Mandalay to give the others permission for quirk use.” He explained, as clearly as he could. He didn't want his brother thinking he had gone off without permission.

Tensei grimaced. “That matches with what Vlad King said. I'm afraid that wasn't Uraraka.”

“What?!” Tenya exclaimed, trying to stand, but a hand on his shoulder halted him.

“Calm down, you shouldn't be moving too much, you're still hurt.” Funny he didn't feel hurt. Oh, yeah. Hospital. He was probably full of painkillers right now, which might explain the lingering fuzziness.

“What do you mean it wasn't Uraraka?” He asked again, more calmly.

“One of the villains that attacked the camp had the ability to make clones of people. We're not sure how it worked exactly, but you never made it to Mandalay. 'Uraraka' seems to have attacked you, then she went to help the villains fighting Mandalay and Tiger.”

Tenya's heart was somewhere around his knees. He hadn't even noticed. Meaning he had ended up getting hurt, and failing at the task, he was- “Stop that,” instructed Tensei, “it wasn't your fault.”
Tenya blinked up at his brother. “But—”

“No buts. It wasn't your fault.” He reiterated. “It was a very good copy, even Eraserhead didn't notice. Vlad only figured it out because the real Uraraka showed up with Asui after you left. We're just happy you're OK.”

“I still...” He began, before trailing off under his brother's unimpressed look. “What... what else happened?”

He didn't really want to know what was bad enough to cause his brother to become so sombre, but he had to find out anyway.

Tensei took a deep breath, and let it out slowly. “All of the villains but two managed to get away. They left shortly after you were hurt, and your teachers managed to do a headcount. Three people were missing.”

Tenya's blood turned to ice, but Tensei went on, eyes, and tone kind, trying unsuccessfully to soften the blow. “Ragdoll, Tokoyami, and Midoriya have been kidnapped. We don't think they were hurt, the villains seem to want them alive, and healthy for some reason. And we're doing everything we can to find them.”

The first thing Izuku noticed was the buzzing, and the odd slow quality of his thoughts. Unlike last time, he recognised it. He was having his quirk dampened again.

Eyes snapping open, the second thing he noticed, even before the rest of the room, was how thoroughly his hands were bound. Unlike when he had been arrested, his hands were essentially encased in a large metal box, going halfway up his forearms, trapping them, with very little range of motion.

The lack of the voice was enough to start him panicking, but the box made it ten times worse, this clearly was overkill, and combined with the fact that he seemed to be tied to a chair... he hadn't been arrested again.

Looking back at his last memories, he had been in the forest, with Tokoyami, running from
villains. They must have caught him. The greenette fought to control his breathing. Voice or no voice, if he was with villains, he couldn't panic, he had to remain calm, think rationally.

The fire-user looked up from his excessive cuffs, taking in the dim room, unsure if he was hoping to catch sight of Tokoyami, or not. If they had him, they had probably taken the bird-headed teen.

Why had they taken them? Who had taken them, anyway?

As he looked around, either for his captor, or any fellow captives, his chains jingled slightly, and something moved in the corner of his eye. Golden eyes latched onto the motion, wondering if the figure in the shadows might be Tokoyami. Then it unfolded. Definitely not Tokoyami, the villain was far too tall.

The helpless- he could still use his quirks, but one was useless without being able to move, and the other would result in him burning himself horrifically, if he tried to get out, even if he was given enough time to do it- teen watched mutely, as the incredibly tall man stood, and walked into the light, revealing a large full-face mask, and suit, before dragging his chair over, and sitting again.

“Good, your awake.” Said All-For-One.

The buzzing stopped, Izuku's thoughts stopped, he was pretty sure his heart stopped in that moment, hearing the calm, assured tones of the man who thought he rightfully owned the world.

This was impossible, but it didn't matter, he had to get out of here. The greenette immediately clawed through the fog of the dampeners, grabbing for the muted glow of Phoenix Spirit, beginning to pull it out, use it to- he saw the still, clear water of One-For-All, though the fog, and stopped, stymied by sudden indecision.

“You don't have to be so concerned, I have no intention of hurting you.” Stated the worst monster ever to live, causing Izuku to realize his back was pressed against the chair, as if he had subconsciously tried to back away from the villain, to no avail.

That didn't make sense. None of this made sense, he was a One-For-All user, at All-For-One's mercy. He should be dead. “Why am I not dead?” Slipped from his lips unbidden.

When the masked man spoke again, it was with mixed tones of surprise, and hurt. In itself enough
to let Izuku know that everything being said was lies. All-For-One was seldom surprised, and he never let it show when he was... he thought... his memory still wasn't working right, but that was the impression given.

“Dead? Why would I want to kill you? If anything, I’d like to help you.”

“So you had me kidnapped?” It was poking a bear, an especially volatile, and petty bear, but Izuku was seemingly either beyond caring, or his brain to mouth filter was working about as well as his memory.

“Yes, it seemed the best way to get you away from the heroes. I did say that you should be taken unharmed, so I must apologize for your treatment. Shigaraki-kun's associates are... overzealous, it seems.”

Izuku stiffened, hearing that All-For-One was the one behind Shigaraki, though in retrospect it fit, and better than his theory of why Kurogiri was working with such a loose cannon. All-For-One tilted his head.

“You seem to match your reputation for stoicism, Midoriya-kun. But, I suppose introductions are in order. I'm not sure how much All Might will have told you about me, not a great deal, I suspect. You can call me All-For-One, or Sensei, if you prefer.”

Izuku blinked, small blessings, his panicked brain had at least failed to let the man know that he already knew who he was. “Why would you want to help me? You kill One-For-All users.” The greenette didn't need to feign the fear in his voice, he couldn't have hidden it, if he wanted to-which he really, really did.

The eerily well feigned hurt was back, sounding more like he was offended by the accusation. “Is that what All Might told you? He really is determined to make himself look good, even after doing this,” he gestured to the full-face mask, which Izuku saw included a breathing apparatus, “to me. I won't insult your intelligence by lying to you, I did kill All Might's predecessor, but I was not the one to start that conflict, just as I never initiated an attack on any of my brother's successors before. In any event, my interest in you is unrelated to my brother's legacy, frankly you're the best successor it has had in centuries.”

The ninth One-For-All user wanted dearly to deny All-For-One's claim that he never attacked a One-For-All user, but it could easily be true. He tried... no, he couldn't remember, the voice seemed to help with memory more than he had thought. He did remember that he had for a time had the choice to send All Might to fight All-For-One, and that he had eventually done so on his
“Wh-What?” If this wasn't about his second quirk then- Izuku's heart rate sky-rocketed- was it about his first? That was worse, if anything. The greenette tugged at the fire, ready to use it at a moments notice.

“I've lived a long, long time, and I have almost never seen a vigilante as capable as you, my boy.” Izuku felt like vomiting on hearing that appellation, and in such a tone of... praise, from this man. “I followed the first Amber's career closely, and was deeply saddened by their, I assume, death. They were good enough that I was never even sure if they **were** a single person. Equally, it was very unfortunate when you were caught.”

Izuku paled at the implication that All-For-One was trying to find both him, and Aoi, despite all their precautions. “S-Surely, m-me being caught must be good for you.” The fire-user croaked.

“Hm? No, no, quite the opposite, really. Both yourself, and your predecessor avoided things I was involved in with amazing proficiency, given that you must not have had a clear view of what was, and wasn't one of my companies. Getting rid of my competitors was a great boon for me.”

Izuku shook his head, his immediate reaction being to deny helping this man. The greenette waited for the voice to join the denial, but the hollow echoing quiet in his own head provided no comfort. Had he been helping All-For-One as Amber?

Ignoring the head shake, All-For-One went on, the ancient cult leader plying his trade, each word a barb. “That's part of why I want to help you,” he reached into the breast of his suit, and pulled out a small plastic object, the tracker that by rights should have been around Izuku's ankle, “I'd say this is proof positive that they don't trust you, no?”

Izuku swallowed thickly. “I lied to them.” They were right not to trust him, he could earn that trust back, though. He could.

“All-For-One was continuing to laud his work as Amber, and Izuku didn't think he had ever felt so ashamed of his actions. His chains clinked, as he shifted in his chair. He had lied, but the greenette
had the distinct impression that directly contradicting the megalomaniac in front of him would be... unwise. He said nothing, and the silence stretched.

Maybe saying nothing was also unwi... “Then again, I'm sure a smart young man like you could beat the odds, and manage to become a hero, actually get a license through the so-called rehabilitation program. But is that really the best path for you?”

The following silence was more stunned than anything. Of course that was the best path, it was what he had always wanted. “Why wouldn't it be?” The fire-user foolishly asked, eyes roving the expressionless mask.

Izuku could almost feel the raised eyebrows, despite being unable to see them. “Don't you think you would be able to do more good without the restrictions being under the public eye would put on you? And, given your inspired removal of Endeavour, you of all people have seen how corrupt heroes can be.”

Endeavour wasn't the representative of heroics, the Phoenix Spirit user wouldn't accept that. “Most heroes aren't like that.”

“Some, yes. But, I think, less than you might expect. Even the so-called symbol of peace attacked me with intent to kill, showing none of the admirable restraint you would have. True heroes are seldom heroes, in that sense, and those that are... well, it is more despite their license, than because of it.”

The greenette said nothing once more, thoroughly uncomfortable with the idea of All Might trying to kill someone, just as he typically was when thinking about some of Ren's life. Killing was wrong, he didn't like it, couldn't stomach it.

But this was All-For-One. All Might could easily have had no choice. Probably had, given his lack of a stomach.

All-For-One sighed, seemingly weary. “I don't ask you to agree with me there, but you should think about it. In the meantime, I'm sure you'd like to see that your classmate is safe.”

A dark swirling portal appeared in the room, and some force pushed Izuku into it, but the greenette paid it no mind, partly because anywhere in the world was safer than in the same room as this man, but mostly because his bone marrow had been replaced with shame.
He had forgotten about Tokoyami, hadn't thought about him once since he realized his position, despite his initial concern. The other hero student could easily have been dead, or injured, or have had his quirk stolen, and the greenette had just... let it slip his mind entirely.

The dark mist swallowed him.

Chapter End Notes

6) don't forget to comment, i always appreciate them (or don't, i can't exactly make you comment)
7) fun headcanon for adult Heat Haze
   a) works as part of a hero duo with shouto
   b) shouto is the number one hero at this point
   c) this makes it very hard to stay an underground hero, to green bean's great annoyance
   d) he broke the top ten last week, and is furious
   e) after villain takedowns, izuku always runs away before the media shows up, only coming back when they're gone
   f) Shouto flatly refuses to admit he was ever there when asked
      Reporter: "So what can you tell us about your partner, Heat Haze?"
      Shouto: "I don't have a partner."
      Izuku: *pokes his head up from a nearby rooftop*
   g) this, bizarrely, makes Izuku even more popular, because "oooh mysterious"
   h) only enters their agency via the roof, no-one has ever caught him doing this
parallel plans

Chapter Summary

the heroes, and not-yet-heroes plan stuff.

Chapter Notes

1) i take it back, this arc has totally sapped my will to write
2) sorry about that
3) welcome to Yuki_setsu's house of weekly updates, apparently... :(  

In other circumstances, Nedzu might have been wearing a manic grin. If he had been sure no-one would hear it, he might even have cackled, looking around the assembled force in the room. As it was, he didn't even maintain his usual smile, falling back on solemnity to hide how... irked he was.

He wasn't angry. The mouse would be confident in saying so to Tsukauchi's face. He had passed through anger, arriving at the calm chill waters on the other side. He was simply determined, and that in itself would be enough to immediately cause him to exclude himself from directly taking part in the raid.

He was smart enough to realize that he didn't know everything, and in this case, he knew that he didn't know exactly what he might try to do in a fight with people who had kidnapped two of his students, and injured several more.

Besides, he was the principal, and so UA's press conference- an unavoidable result of the attack, but he'd be damned if he failed to make proper use of it- would require his presence. Hence, some favours had been called in to make sure the raid team heroes were as capable as possible in their own right.

The principal of UA might have gone slightly overboard, when choosing which heroes to ask to join this raid. Had he been anyone else, it would have been all but impossible to get all these heroes together for anything less than the apocalypse, or maybe a meteor strike.

If he had thought that Crust's skill-set would have been helpful, the small room would have contained the entirety of the top five. As it was, half of the top ten were in this one room.
To the mouse's right, All Might was talking with Hawks, and Gang Orca, his smile still present, but to High Specs, clearly strained. The shorter blond kept an easygoing smile, though he wasn't personally invested, making the mask easier to keep up. Gang Orca was decidedly inexpressive, but that just came naturally to the large man.

Overall his most recent student's suggestion had been working extremely well. Both All Might, and Hawks were easily noticeable, and the media had been throwing around a great many guesses about their recent partnership basically from the day it began. A few of them even got it right, if not down to the exact details. It had even neatly distracted from Endeavour's arrest somewhat.

Most of the lower ranked heroes were in small clumps, or part of the larger clump around Best Jeanist, except for Edgeshot, who tended to keep his own counsel, and Tiger, who Nedzu had been very tempted to exclude from this mission, given Ragdoll's involvement. The man was a veteran pro, though. He should be able to keep his emotions in check.

The agitated mind of the tiny hero kept filling with countless little observations, piecing together any possible problems with the plan he had decided on, making little adjustments.

Gran Torino's joints were paining him, but not to any worrying degree, his age had impacted his ability as a combat hero little enough. Mount Lady was cozying up to Kamui woods, who mostly seemed oblivious to it, she seemed to have come to the same conclusion as the bear, that the wooden man would probably hit the top ten soon. Most of the heroes were making sure Nedzu was in their visual range. Not surprising, given his reputation. Hawks was not, but by the way his feathers were shifting, he knew where everyone- and possibly everything- in the room was.

After that there was a stream of tedious information, which he couldn't not notice, but had no bearing on anything, so was quickly discarded. Exactly what everyone in the room was saying, what Tsukauchi had had for breakfast, Kamui Woods' strangely slow pulse rate, and so on, and so on.

Good, no relevant data to force him to alter his plans yet. If all went well, this one might even survive a couple of seconds past first contact with the enemy. He had gone overboard, but he stood by the decision. The safe retrieval of his students was paramount, even if it required the nuclear option of bringing in a dozen of the strongest heroes on the continent.

Unfortunately, this priority required him not to bring one of the heroes he dearly wished to. He would have very much liked to think his own staff above suspicion. However, the league somehow finding out where the camp would be very unlikely without someone telling them.
He had thought that a traitor was possible after the USJ, but this was essentially confirmation. Since the traitor had to be a student, or a hero, he couldn't risk inviting Eraserhead.

As soon as this was over, he was going to do everything in his power to smoke out the traitor, the person who had for whatever reason seen fit to endanger his students, and when he found them he was going to- No, bad Nedzu, hero, have to do things the human way.

Satisfied, Nedzu stood to very little effect on his height, but immediate effect on the room. Conversation quickly petered out, and rather than glances, he was now getting nearly everyone's undivided attention. A small cough, and nearly everyone became everyone. Good.

“Good morning,” he started formally, “thank you all for coming at such short notice, I apologize for disrupting so many patrol schedules, but given the circumstances, I hope you will forgive me.”

Silence greeted this, but he judged it to be attentive silence, so he carried on after a moment. “As I'm sure you will be aware, yesterday UA's summer camp was attacked by villains, and two of the students, along with one of the pros present were kidnapped. We have reason to believe they are, as yet, unharmed, though I cannot speak to how long that will remain the case. Hence, time is of the essence for retrieval.”

“We have a location?” Asked Edgeshot, the first thing he had said since he got here.

The mouse nodded, finally allowing a smile, if one with slightly too many teeth. “Yes. One of the students' quick thinking has allowed us to trace the location of one of the villains, to a presumed base of operations.” That at least was one stroke of luck amidst this disaster.

Nedzu's smile then went slightly rigid, at another interruption coming from Mount Lady. “So this is a rescue mission, then? Doesn't this seem sort of overkill, in that case? I can't imagine what sort of villain group would require so many of the top ten.”

The principal's eyes joined the rest of the room in turning to the heroine, and his smile deliberately turned slightly predatory, causing her to shift uncomfortably in place. “It would be best not to underestimate this group. We have reason to believe this to be activity by the 'league of villains'. Any group that contains at least two S-rank villains, not to mention possible Nomu is to be taken seriously.” He said lightly, rebuking the woman more effectively than if he had shouted. She really could have done with a little more training.
Then he twisted the knife in slightly. “But that aside, as I was about to say, in addition to that location, several civilians have reported seeing people matching the description of some of the villains involved in the attack, as well as the suspected leader of the league, at a different location.”

Pulling a remote from his pocket, the hero pushed a button, causing a map of Yokohama city to be projected at his back. “As you can see,” he gestured at two red points on the map, “both locations are some distance apart, though both are in Kamino ward. We can't determine which location the hostages are being held at, so we will require two teams, in order to strike both simultaneously.”

A quick look showed that the blonde seemingly had no intention to interrupt again, so he began to expound on the teams, and individual roles. Overall the plan was fairly direct, but the timing would be very important. Time was of the essence, since every second the three remained with the villains, they were in danger.

After this, the principal just had to meet with his teachers, attend this evening's press conference, and hope that the resulting misdirection worked.

Fumikage was alone, a new experience for him. Having a persistent companion quirk did have some serious drawbacks, Dark Shadow and he didn't always get along terribly well, but the suppressant-induced absence of the other half of his thoughts was disturbing.

The villains that had taken him weren't even guarding him, just leaving him in this dank cell, and he might have been offended, were it not for his utter impotence without his quirk. He was strapped into this chair, and short of biting through the straps, he could conceive no way to alter that truth.

Perhaps he could attempt to make good his escape when they came to feed him... assuming they meant to do so at all. It was possible that they meant to weaken his resolve by way of starvation.

In retrospect, informing the clearly demented Shigaraki that he was disconnected from reality when he had first revealed his intent in his capture was ill-advised, but the man hadn't seemed angry, instead, he had simply agreed. Happily, which might have been more unsettling than if he had ranted.
This was a dangerous game, and one to which he knew not the rules. At least half of the cabal that was seemingly intent on recruiting him was clearly mad, and Fumikage did not wish to dwell on the possible implications this had for his own character, that they felt him a good addition to their ranks.

They would try again, a good chunk of the membership of the league had tried to explain the “benefits” of the side of villainy, to the point that the bird-headed teen had begun to wonder when cookies would be offered.

Whatever else, he was a hero in training, so he did try to find a way out of this, but the villains were probably not a good avenue for that. The blonde was seemingly in this purely out of some twisted fixation with blood, and trying to ally with her would be foolhardy beyond reason. Shigaraki would obviously not work, nor Spinner, or Magne, who seemed oddly devoted to their cause.

Twice might have been convinced to help him, had Fumikage the wit to be persuasive. Then again, he could just as easily change his mind ten seconds later. He did tend to contradict everything he said from sentence to sentence.

Fumikage glanced down, again contemplating how hard it would be to chew through his restraints. Perhaps he had finally found a worthwhile use for his secondary mutation, besides generating stares, and odd questions about kissing. A beak might actually help here.

A scraping sound caught his attention, causing him to glance up, expecting the door to be opened by whichever villain Shigaraki had sent to speak to him this time- assuming the man hadn't grown bored, and decided to disintegrate him.

The scraping was not the door, but rather a chair being pushed along the floor, as it emerged from one of Kurogiri's Stygian gaps in the world. Fumikage saw the familiar green undercut, and freckles of Midoriya, ad let out a relieved breath.

Magne had said he was still alive, when Fumikage had asked the room at large, but it was good to have confirmation.

The relief quickly gave way to guilt, and concern. He shouldn't be relieved that Midoriya was sharing in his fate, even if things could be worse for the fire-user. And there was something wrong...
It took Fumikage a second to realize what was wrong, but once he did it became obvious. The golden eyes that once pierced like augurs had lost their disconcerting intensity, always so jarring with the being of pure anxiety and sunshine that held them. Midoriya's gaze was blank, hollow. And the greenette wasn't looking at him.

The bird-headed teen realized that he had been watching his companion in silence for several seconds while he observed thusly, and shook himself, Midoriya wasn't saying anything, which was not a good sign. Now was not the time for stoicism of that sort. “Midoriya-”

“I'm sorry.” Mumbled the greenette suddenly, still not looking at him. He inhaled deeply, steadying. “I got us both caught, this is my-”

“I think I am equally culpable there, Midoriya-kun.” Intoned Fumikage, cutting the other boy off before he went any further down that road.

He was probably more than equally culpable, given that he had been barely keeping Dark Shadow in check, which managed to distract the fire-user during that battle.

Midoriya glanced up, before looking away again hurriedly. “I didn't notice that that wasn't Tsuyu. I just... I even saw she wasn't moving right, but I didn't think-”

“One would hardly expect to be beset by shapeshifters without warning, and again, I noticed nothing also.”

“It was stupid,” insisted the greenette, “I shouldn't have gone with her.”

Fumikage reeled back at that, not expecting possibly the most heroic member of the class- to the point that he cared more about it than obedience to the law- to decide that going to rescue him had been a mistake, but thankfully Midoriya carried on. “I always have to do things myself,” he practically spat at the piece of ground he was staring at, “even when there are better options. I could have just gone to Aizawa. He could have erased Dark Shadow, and then-”

Fumikage had heard enough, and decided to intervene. Midoriya was seemingly determined to blame himself for their predicament, it would be wise to distract him, at lest until they reached safety. “Blame can be apportioned later. Do you have any plans for escape?”
Midoriya huffed a humourless laugh, raising his arms a couple of inches, and Fumikage realized for the first time that the other was far more thoroughly bound than himself, essentially his entire forearms encased in a metal contraption, and chained, rather than strapped to his chair. Clearly the villains felt they had reason to fear Midoriya escaping somehow.

“We should just wait for rescue, if we can,” Said the fire-user sadly, “I could probably get out of these, if I was willing to give myself fourth degree burns, but we'd never make it out of the building.”

Fumikage's stomach dropped to his feet at the hopeless defeat in the other boy's tone. The voice of experience had just said they were doomed to failure- he blinked. “You can use your quirk?” He asked in surprise.

Midoriya stopped looking at the floor finally, gold eyes meeting red, as concern finally broke through the emptiness in the greenette's expression. “They've got you on suppressants.” He said, not a question, but Fumikage nodded anyway. “I'm sorry, how are you holding up?”

Fumikage just stared at the question. He had not been expecting to be asked that. Midoriya sounded so... not pitying, understanding maybe? “It's horrible being alone in your head when you're not used to it.” Said the greenette softly, still attempting to look into Fumikage's soul, despite his eyes no longer looking like they could.

The bird-headed teen's mouth fell open. How on earth did Midoriya understand... did he- No, time enough to think about that later. “I'm fine, it's not nice, but I can cope.” Fumikage assured him, and Midoriya's searching gaze continued a second longer, before he nodded, seemingly accepting the answer.

“They've only used dampeners with me, they must know that I wouldn't be able to deal with suppressants.” Said the fire-user, before his brows pinched together in a frown. “Though I don't know how they know that.”

The shadow user frowned for a moment too- for all that no-one with a human face would recognize the expression- before his blood turned cold all at once. Most of the class knew how Midoriya's quirk reacted to Erasure, but would that even be in his quirk registry? “You think we were betrayed by one of our own?”

Midoriya moved his arms, raising them towards his face, before the chains stopped him, and he stared at the box containing his hands, drawing his lips to a line. “It... makes sense,” he said at length, “otherwise, how could they have found the camp, and known my quirk?”
Fumikage did not wish to believe such of even their less agreeable classmates, and clearly Midoriya felt the same, shaking himself, before changing the subject. “We... we should focus on our current problem.” He declared. “Do you have any injuries? And do you know why you were taken, exactly?”

Shouto followed Kirishima through several corridors, as the redhead searched around for something, before his frayed temper reached its limits. “What did you want to talk about?”

He knew he was scowling, but couldn't spare the energy to stop, too busy keeping himself together. He wasn't sure if he would end up screaming at whoever was nearby, or just bursting into tears, if he broke down now, though both seemed likely. Maybe with some added wall punching. In any event, it would be nothing good, so he staved it off for now.

Kirishima turned, and somehow managed to stop smiling, despite not having been smiling. The redhead looked around, before opening the door to a nearby, as it turned out, cupboard, essentially. Dubious, Shouto followed him, wondering if Kirishima planned to do away with him, now that he had been lured to this out of the way spot.

The redhead closed the door behind the bi-chromatic teen, and got straight to the point. “I think we should try to rescue Izuku, and Tokoyami ourselves.”

Shouto looked at him, not entirely sure if he was being serious, but his expression, and their current location led him to think that he was. “How? We don't even know where they are.” If they did, then Shouto would already be there, rather than sitting around here.

Sharp teeth dug into Kirishima's lower lip. “I overheard All Might, and the police talking with Yaoyorozu. She put a tracker on one of the villains.”

Kirishima now had his undivided attention. “You mean she could make us something to find them?” The redhead nodded.

Shouto had half a mind to rush right over there, but things never went his way when he didn't think them through, so he tested the idea for flaws. “Do you think she would?” Yaoyorozu was no Iida, but she didn't seem the sort to break the rules to this degree.
Kirishima paused, considering. “Not if we said we would go in guns blazing, but I think we could help without fighting.”

The ice-user nodded slowly. If they could rescue them without fighting, then it wouldn't technically be against the rules, though they would still get in a truly amazing amount of trouble. Yaoyorozu might be persuaded to go along with that.

“When are we leaving?”

The redhead grinned widely. “Super manly, not hesitating like that, Todoroki. I asked you first, because I thought... well, you and Midoriya are pretty close. I'd like to see if anyone else would come, but after that we just need to convince Yaoyorozu, and we can go.”

A swift nod, and Shouto was reaching past Kirishima to open the door. “The others are probably still in Yaoyorozu's room,” Shouto had only left because he needed a minute away from people, in case of explosions, “let's go ask them, then.”

If he wanted to do this, he needed to do it before Fuyumi picked him up, which she would probably be doing fairly soon, now that he was cleared to leave. Why he was taken to the hospital at all he didn't know. He hadn't even been scratched during the attack.

That was pretty galling in itself, alongside the fact that he was safely defrosting a villain half-dead of hypothermia, whose quirk was erased, while Izuku and Tokoyami were fighting for their- No, not for their lives. They were fine, the villains hadn't hurt them, and he would not think about the moment he saw Izuku's signal fire go out again.

The pair never made it to Yaoyorozu's room, as they ran into the small crowd that the rest of the class had made, blocking the halls, and learned that Iida had woken up, so he ended up following mutely at Kirishima's side, his friends mercifully leaving him be, even if he could feel the looks they were giving him.

“Hey, Iida-kun, you feeling up for visitors?” Asked Uraraka, from the doorway, at the head of a veritable army of well-wishers.

“Our course, the company would be appreciated,” replied Iida, and Shouto took his continuing formality as a good sign, “...assuming you can refrain from causing a fire-hazard.”
Shinsou, entering right behind Uraraka, huffed a laugh. “I'm sure Todoroki can manage, though I make no promises about Bakugou.”

“That's good to hear. My injuries should be fully healed with one more healing session as well.” A pause, then Iida showed remarkable flexibility, by somehow bowing at the waist while seated. “I owe you an apology, Uraraka-san,” He said, as Uraraka, and half the class hurriedly opened their mouths to ask why he had folded himself in half, “I was tricked by an imposter so easily, I... have been a bad friend.”

“No you haven't,” Said Shouto plainly, “I didn't notice either, the fake did an excellent job.” That said, the ice-user was definitely kicking himself for not seeing any problems, even when faced with not one, but two fakes.

“Yeah, man,” cut in Kaminari, “none of us noticed when she came to the lodge, she looked just...
like Uraraka, and talked like her too. It was really creepy.” Nods and murmurs of agreement filled the room, as Iida finally straightened himself out.

“Still, if I had noticed something was wrong, maybe...” He trailed off, and Kirishima finally spoke up.

“Yeah, I get it man, it's really frustrating, two of my friends were taken, and I couldn't do anything about it!” The redhead was fairly heated by the end, and Shouto realized that he must have been feeling just as torn up as him, having been stuck in the lodge while everything was happening outside.

“That's why,” he added more softly, and Shouto could suddenly see the future, like a car crash moments away that he could do nothing to stop, “I think we should try to save them.”

Shouto tried not to wince, and carefully watched Iida's expression. Why had Kirishima decided to propose serious rule breaking in front of Iida? Though it wasn't Iida who broke the stunned silence in the room.

“The fuck is wrong with you shitty hair?” Demanded Bakugou, moving close enough to the redhead to ring alarm bells. “You wanna be some sort of vigilante, like shitty Deku, huh? We don't have fucking licenses.”

“I know, but-”

“And besides, if fucking Deku was too weak to-” Bakugou never managed to finish that sentence, because someone punched him in the jaw.

It took the stinging in his knuckles, and a couple of seconds before Shouto realized that he had been that someone.

The ice-user barely registered the uproar that followed, as various hero students tried to get between them, trying to calm the blond down, and probably berating Shouto for punching a classmate.

He had just punched a classmate. Just- just seen red, and hit someone, who hadn't done anything more than say something he didn't like. Worse, he realized it had felt really satisfying.
He thought he might be sick.

Shouto turned, planning to leave the room, maybe find a convenient bathroom, when he spotted a familiar face standing in the doorway. He halted in surprise.

Familiar eyes of blue watched him—judged him?—beneath a head of black hair, as Touya just stood silently in the doorway, studying him. Shouto paled slightly, despite his best efforts.

Would Touya blame him, say he was just like their father, that he was some violent monster? Worse, would he be right? (Your own mother couldn't stand the sight of you. Tainted. Monster.)

“OK, what's going on in here?” Asked Touya calmly, easily gaining the attention of the entire room, despite everyone talking over one another.

Touya wasn't sure what to expect when he entered the hospital room, but what he had not anticipated was the sight of his kid brother punching someone in the face. Not that he could blame him, judging from the yelling that led him here in the first place, the blond had it coming.

It was very hard to tell, given that Shouto had mastered hiding his emotions very well, but the frozen expression, and slightly wild eyes were a pretty clear sign that his brother was freaking out. He doubted he had meant to punch... Bakugou, he thought his name was.

He supposed he should at least act the part of the responsible adult here.

“OK, what's going on in here?” Touya asked, cutting through the chaotic din, as everyone noticed he was there. Shouto kept his mouth shut, and Touya tried not to sigh. He'd have to wait to get him to talk.

Bakugou was all too happy to talk, though. “This bastard is picking a fight, is what's fucking going on!” He said, renewing his efforts to escape the others holding him back.
Shouto shot him a withering look. “You OK, bro?” Touya asked his brother, pointedly ignoring the blond. The surprise in the faces of Shouto's classmates was both pretty clear, and fairly predictable. He never did seem like son of Endeavour material- even to Endeavour.

“I'm fine, touya.” His brother said, alarmingly good at lying through his teeth.

Touya watched Bakugou's rising fury at being largely ignored. “Good, and it looks like explodoboy isn't worse for wear, either.”

“Explodoboy?!” The blond demanded incredulously, small explosions popping in his hands now.

Touya nodded sagely, for maximum annoyance. This kid had some serious anger issues. Maybe next time he should compare him to a dandelion. “So do I need to stop you punching him again?” The fire-user asked with a small smile.

“No.” Said Shouto, less sulkily than Touya had expected.

Touya nodded again. “So can someone calmer explain what's going on?”

The kid in the bed eventually answered, with little stiff affronted hand gestures. “Kirishima-kun was suggesting we try to rescue our classmates ourselves.” He explained, before turning to face a boy with hair a brighter red than Touya's natural colouring.

“We should leave this to the professionals,” he insisted emphatically, “if we interfered, we would be breaking the law. We don't have our licenses yet!” The bluet made it sound like breaking the law was truly unthinkable. A proper orthodox hero, then.

“We can't just do nothing!” Kirishima replied. “How could I call myself a hero or a man, if I just sat here, while my friends are in danger, Iida?”

Most of the class that wasn't involved in the Bakugou restraining effort began to murmur uneasily at that, while Shouto, and a kid with purple hair nodded along. Why was he not surprised that Shouto would be going along with this?
“I know how frustrated you are!” Iida practically yelled, barely keeping himself restrained in the hospital. “They're my friends too, but it's my responsibility to keep you all safe! If you do that... I'd have no choice but to inform the police.”

Kirishima reacted as if he had been slapped, and Shouto opened his mouth- probably to say something furious, and biting. Time to intervene. “I don't think you're going to need to do that. I'm sure they don't actually intend to go through with this. Everyone's just a little emotional right now.” He said, carefully controlling his intonation.

Judging from the way that Shouto and Kirishima turned to him, the former looking slightly betrayed, that wouldn't be enough, so he turned his head, winking at the pair where Iida couldn't see.

As expected, the ice-user managed to hide his surprise almost immediately, and adopted a defeated look, before sighing. “yeah, we're just frustrated. We wouldn't do that, we don't even know where to go.”

Iida- who clearly had no idea how to read Touya's little brother, nodded, relaxing, when Kirishima nodded along. “Good. I apologize for shouting, I was merely concerned.”

“It's cool man,” reassured Kirishima, smiling widely, “we get it.”

“All right,” said Touya, “I'm just here to bring you home, but you take your time visiting your friends, Shou. I'll be in the lobby.” A wave over his shoulder, and the dark-haired man wandered out.

“OK, so what's the plan?” Touya asked, as soon as Shouto showed up in the lobby, Kirishima at his side.

“You're not going to try to stop us?” The ice-user asked, suspicious.

His brother shot him a look. “We both know that would never work. When you decide to do something this dumb, nothing's going to stop you.” He said flatly. “So I may as well try to keep you safe when you do it.”
“Wait, you're coming with us?” Asked Kirishima, too loudly, and Shouto winced, but no-one seemed to have heard.

“I'm not about to let my brother risk his life alone. Besides, unlike you, I was a second year, before I dropped out.”

The dark-haired man reached into a pocket, pulling out his wallet. “Meaning, if things go south,” he added, pulling out a small card, “I can help out.”

Shouto stared at the card, eyes widening, when Touya turned it around, revealing the single word “hero” on the back.
poisoned words

Chapter Summary

master and apprentice say hurtful things to green bean, and black bird respectively.

Chapter Notes

1) Shorter chapter, but slightly shorter gap = good? no probably not.
2) still, that seemed like a good place to cut this chapter.
3) sometimes regular commenters stop commenting for a while, and it always really worries me... where have they gone? are they OK? should i wish them luck for hypothetical exams? who knows.

No-one had ever described All-For-One as gleeful. It would probably be an extremely unwise thing to do, regardless of circumstances, but right now, the villain thought he might even let someone live if they did. He wasn't sure when he had last been this happy.

It had probably been when he had finally gotten his hands on Warp Gate- even after nearly two hundred years of searching, he had never found a warp quirk that was its equal. Blink didn't even come close.

The ancient man tsked, mood souring as he thought about Blink. Thinking about it inevitably led to looking at it, that particular light sitting in one of the most ancient parts of his collection, slowly dimming, unusable, and atrophying.

Turning from his collection, All-For-One turned his thoughts back to the reason for his initial good mood. All Might had chosen a vigilante as his successor. A vigilante. He couldn't have planned it better if he had tried.

If he had been inclined to believe in any power higher than himself, he might have thanked it for the gift that was Midoriya Izuku. This was such a perfect opportunity to deal with the thorn in his side that his brother's legacy had become. So many possible options he could go with.

Simply killing the latest successor would be easiest, since for the first time ever he had found a One-For-All user at his mercy, unable to fully use One-For-All, and even more now that he was caught. A couple of quirks would easily be enough. But no, that would be... wasteful.
The best option from his perspective would be fully turning the boy, convincing him to switch sides, and work with Shigaraki. But given the prodigious rate at which his ward burned bridges, that would take a fairly long time. He was confident he could do it, given the hero’s youth, and fragile mental state, but the heroes would doubtless not give him enough time.

He had initially been tempted to just force the boy to give up the quirk, but even now he wasn’t sure what the quirk he had accidentally made considered “willingly given”. And if agreeing under duress didn’t count, he would have destroyed any chance of making better use of him.

That being the case, the best option was... twisting. The trust between Midoriya and the heroes—most importantly All Might—had been deeply frayed, which was nothing short of a golden opportunity. He just had to keep pulling at the threads, and eventually that trust would snap.

Maybe the boy would go back to vigilantism, or wind up in prison, or become a full-fledged villain. Perhaps he might even break entirely. Regardless of the outcome, if he succeeded, then One-For-All would finally be hobbed, or stop getting in his way altogether. All he had to do was pick the right wounds to rub salt in while he had Amber here...

He would have kept pushing, but that would probably have had the opposite effect, if the boy had started to become numb to what he was saying, so he just chose to twist the knife in further, show that his fellow student was actually safe here—something he had ordered Shigaraki to ensure in no uncertain terms. Speaking of.

“How is your recruiting going, Shigaraki-kun?” All-For-One asked, immediately silencing all conversation in Kurogiri’s bar.

“It’s... slow, Sensei. The little hero doesn’t seem to want to listen to us.” The pale-haired man responded, and from the other sounds, he was scratching at his neck again.

The elder villain hummed thoughtfully. “An important lesson, Shigaraki-kun. It can take time to persuade people of things.”

“But it’s stupid, he’s got so much power, and he could use it so much more for us, than for the heroes.” The younger villain might have drawn blood with his scratching by this point.

All-For-One tried not to sigh. For all his potential, Shigaraki still wasn’t the best at persuasion.
Luckily the newer members of the league partially made up for that deficiency. “That's true,” he allowed, “but how do you mean to convince him of that? Like you said, he doesn't want to listen to you, which makes sense, given that you had him kidnapped.” The selfsame problem he was having with Amber, though to a lesser degree.

“I had to do that, I couldn't recruit him when he was surrounded by heroes.” The young man groused, and All-For-One gave no reply. His ward could be deeply petulant at times, and this was a particularly annoying example. It wasn't even true. He could easily have done this without any kidnapping, if he ever thought to do things the subtle way.

Sensing the displeased nature of the silence, Shigaraki paused, before going on more carefully. “But now I need to get him to like us more, before he will listen to us... how am I supposed to do that? If he's already decided not to listen, this is...” Shigaraki paused, seemingly having an epiphany. “I just need to convince him some way that doesn't involve talking.” He said wonderingly.

All-For-One smiled. Finally. Talking never worked when people truly weren't listening. He looked forward to seeing what his ward decided to try. “Very good,” he noted evenly, “you should think on what you mean to do to get Tokoyami-kun to hear you out for now.”

In the meantime, Midoriya had probably had enough time together with his classmate to relax slightly, any longer, and he might figure out some way to escape, and he didn't particularly want to have to retrieve them if they got loose in the facility.

Fumikage had been taken via portal back to the wretched hive of scum and villainy to which he had first been kidnapped, shortly after Midoriya had been warped who knew where.

The bird-headed teen watched the various villains lounging around the fairly ordinary looking bar, while Kurogiri polished a glass with a cloth. He thought he could see them all, but he had no idea of how many people the league actually was.

Being unable to properly see behind his chair, for he was unable to summon forth Dark Shadow to aid him in observing around corners, was causing no small worry.

“Why did you bring me back here?” Fumikage finally asked, no longer able to stand not knowing
what they intended- another attempt to turn him, or perhaps something else.

“We just wanted to show you something.” Replied their childlike leader, grinning like a madman—which he clearly was- from behind the hand covering his face.

A moment later, Magne reached over, turning on a television, and immediately Aizawa's voice sounded in the room.

“Our incompetence resulted in the injury of twenty-seven of our first year students. Despite being an institution for the training of heroes, we failed to put adequate measures in place to protect our students. It is with the utmost sincerity that we apologize for our failures.” The dark-haired man stated, before bowing his head alongside the principal, and class 1-B's teacher.

Fumikage grimaced. He hadn't known how many had been injured, but he still didn't understand why they were showing him this. Then came the questions.

“This is the third time this year that UA students have been attacked by villains. This time several students were injured. How do you intend to explain this to their families?” Demanded one hostile reporter.

The shadow-quirk user was taken aback by the tone. Their teachers had gone above and beyond, protecting them with their own bodies where needed, and to be badgered like this...

“You see? It's always the heroes that get criticized.” Mocked Shigaraki, talking over a cluster of similar remarks from reporters, to a grim Aizawa, but mostly fielded by a sombre Nedzu. “Heroes are under some pretty strict standards, eh? Always in control, can't ever make a mistake. You think you can do that?”

Fumikage ground his teeth, reminded of how little control he had had in the forest. “I can learn to control it.” He intoned, finally engaging with this madness.

“You shouldn't have to.” Cut in Magne. “We joined the league so that we could be free to be ourselves, to not have to conform to everyone's expectations.”

“I told you. I will never join your cabal.” The bird-headed teen glared at the redhead, who merely chuckled.
“You're holding yourself back.” Stated Shigaraki. “Right now, you're limiting yourself, because you're afraid of your own power. You don't have to be.”

“If you weren’t also afraid of it, why the cuffs?”

Shigaraki laughed, a harsh grating sound, and the mad gleam in his red eyes grew ever brighter. “Toga, take the cuffs off.”

The blonde widened her eyes, looking between her boss, and the captive student, then pouted. “No way, Shiggy. He's scary, and the shadow monster would get me. Get someone else to do it.”

The pale-haired man stared incredulously at the youngest of the villains, before letting out an angry breath. “Fine. Twice, you do it.” He turned to Fumikage. “You're smart. You know that fighting here wouldn't go well.”

“Sure thing, boss man. No way, that's crazy!” Said Twice, moving over with the key to his cuffs.

Fumikage tried to hide his surprise, as the masked man actually started undoing his bindings, until he finished by removing the quirk suppressant cuffs. He had forgotten just how dingy the bar was.

Shigaraki laughed again, as Fumikage doubled over, gritting his teeth, at the sudden onslaught of dark emotions, as his other half returned full-force. “You see? You hold back, and it hurts you, just like that.” He gloated.

Fumikage was too busy preventing Dark Shadow's attempts to escape, and tear the building apart to respond. “Quirks are part of us. Denying what they want us to do only hurts us. Let go.”

“I won't.” He gasped out, in the brief respite between attempts from Dark Shadow to take control. If he could just ride this out a little longer- it wasn't dark enough to be a problem, except because of how suddenly his quirk had come back.

“That so?” Shigaraki still sounded amused, but Fumikage was too busy looking at his knees to see his face. “You should listen to what they're saying.” He added, turning up the volume, so it could be heard over the too loud thoughts and emotions of the newly returned Dark Shadow.
“-For the future, the ‘worst possible outcome’ is if we were to be attacked again.” Nedzu was saying.

“Can you say the same for the two kidnapped students?” A reporter asked the principal. “During the sports festival, we've seen the sort of behaviour that Tokoyami displayed, his quirk even going out of control during the final stage, showing aggressive, even violent behaviour. And the other is a former vigilante. Not just any vigilante, but the prolific, and violent Amber.” Fumikage's control slipped for a moment, in his surprise, and he had to wrest it back, before his quirk took over. He hadn't known that anyone outside of their class, and the police had known about who Amber was.

Unyielding as the tide, the reporter went on, poisoned words spilling from the screen, as Dark Shadow railed against the bars of its prison. “Both could have been targeted to exploit this behaviour. What if the villains lead them down the path of villainy. One of them is already halfway there, and could very well be the one to have led the villains to attack. On what basis can you say that they have a future?”

Fumikage grimly redoubled his efforts, finally shoving his quirk into a box, until it calmed down, as Shigaraki muted the television again for the response from the teachers. “It's pointless,” he crooned, “you might be able to control it most of the time, but you'll slip up eventually, and will they want you as one of them then?”

Fumikage quivered like a struck bell to hear his great fear echoed thus. “I won't slip up.” He denied, still breathing heavily.

“Oh? But you already did. Twice. And you haven't even been training a year. Who knows how long before you actually hurt someone. Kill someone.” Shigaraki continued to rub salt in the wound with every sign of glee, as Fumikage finally looked up at him.

“Why- why are you doing this?”

“Because we want you to swap teams.” Said Shigaraki flippantly. “You need to see what's wrong with the world, why it needs to be torn down, and that sort of thing.”

Magne finally spoke again, as Shigaraki stood, voice filled with kindness, but subtley off. “Heroes don't care about anyone who doesn't fit their norm. they're only going to keep you from reaching your potential.”
“Yeah, aren't they great? Man, they are just the worst!”

Shigaraki approached the chair Fumikage had been strapped to, and the bird-headed teen backed into it, vainly attempting to distance himself from this man. A man who, for all his calm demeanour, still wore a severed hand. Who had tried repeatedly to kill his classmates. Who might choose to kill him at any moment.

A hand was offered, grey skin and deadly fingers a mere foot from him. “If you join us, you won't have to limit yourself.” Shigaraki repeated, as if he expected Fumikage to actually take his hand.

The shadow-quirk user considered the viability of running, kicking himself for not doing it when the most dangerous of the villains was further from him- if still not far. Unconsciously he glanced at the door, before hurriedly bringing his face back to the villain before him.

Not quickly enough. Shigaraki had seen him look. The civility fell away like a cracked mask, and with each moment the deadly hand was not taken, his face darkened. A second later, as Fumikage contemplated how to survive this threat, the hand withdrew, and the other returned to scratching at the villain's neck, as he scowled furiously.

The bird-headed teen saw the exact moment the man's patience ran out, and prepared to open the box he had stuffed Dark Shadow in, regardless of what it might try. Shigaraki brought the hand forward again with a snarl, either to grab his hostage, or just disintegrate him.

Then someone knocked on the door.

Izuku was slowly becoming numb to his own terror. He'd lost the ability to stay calm in front of villains pretty quickly, and the constant feeling of being about to die was draining in the extreme.

“I should thank you.” All-For-One said, causing the greenette to jerk in his chains.

What? What mistake had he made this time? The mask tilted, as the villain gave what Izuku had to assume was a curious look. “Surely you knew Giran was working with Shigaraki, and his allies?”
Izuku swallowed, and nodded. Already going cold, realizing where All-For-One was going with this. “When you were caught, I worried that Giran would soon follow, after all, you didn't have anything to lose. You knew who he was, how to catch him.”

“He wouldn't have talked.” The vigilante said faintly, the defence sounding weak, even to his own ears. Why hadn't he sold out Giran? He had known, even from the USJ that he worked with the league.

“No,” All-For-One allowed, “he wouldn't, but you had to know that if he were arrested, he couldn't help Shigaraki-kun. Of course, I understand why you didn't talk. You don't trust the heroes.”

Izuku shook his head in denial, he trusted his teachers, he just- “And why would you trust them? They would have arrested him, and that would have stopped him being useful to you. One less ally, if you tried to run. We're a lot alike, Midoriya-kun. Both pragmatic. You knew he was worth more on the outside, so you didn't betray him.”

The sickening feeling he was coming to associate with praise from the monster returned with a vengeance. He couldn't even defend himself, he knew that All-For-One was right, that decision had been a purely pragmatic one. Giran was an incredibly useful ally.

Seeing that Izuku wasn't responding, All-For-One tried for a different tack. “Of course, you might think the pragmatic thing to do is try for rehabilitation. Do you know how many of the vigilantes who start that program actually finish it? It’s not many.”

“There's still a chance.”

“That's true. And with the resources you have, it was the smart move, but even if you succeed, you'll always be stifled, unable to help like you used to. So much of your skill will go to waste, becoming a hero. I can offer you a way to go back to being Amber.” All-For-One steepled his fingers, seemingly watching the greenette, despite the lack of eye-holes in his mask.

Izuku may not have been in a good frame of mind right now, but even so, he wasn't stupid enough to accept that sort of offer. “What would you want in return?” He asked instead of answering. A direct no could be very dangerous.

The way All-For-One felt like he was grinning, straightening in his chair told the greenette that
that was not a good response. "Very clever. No-one wants anything for nothing. You probably think I'll want One-For-All, no?" A nod, the villain was seemingly obsessed with that one threat to his rule, it was the only thing he could think of that he might want.

All-For-One shook his head softly. "I'm perfectly happy to see you keep it. I'm overjoyed that it's back in the hands of a vigilante, like my brother was. No, all I want is for you to do what you've always done, avoid harming the people working for me."

"You want me to work for you." Izuku accused.

That clearly false hurt, near offence reared its head. "Not at all. I respect your integrity too much for that. I would never ask you to do anything for me, simply not harming my interests is good enough for me."

Izuku said nothing, as with saying no, calling All-For-One a liar was a risky move at best. The villain naturally read it in the silence regardless, sighing tiredly. "You don't believe me, I see. Not that I blame you, given what your teacher will have told you about me. Well, I won't force you-"

A loud crash from above halted the villain's words, and they turned to look at the ceiling in unison. When All-For-One spoke again, he sounded more tired than anything else. "It seems the 'heroes' have arrived earlier than I expected. I'm afraid I'll have to cut our conversation short. You should be safe here, so long as All Might doesn't try to destroy the entire building."

Then Izuku was suddenly alone, All-For-One moving blindingly fast, the door opening, and closing the only sign that he had bothered with the intervening space at all.
Amber rising

Chapter Summary

Dark Shadow takes issue with that comment, Shigaraki. rescue operations begin.

Chapter Notes

1) aaaaaaaghhhhh why was that so hard to write???
2) maybe trying to use DS's pov was a mistake?
3) sorry for the delay... again...
4) at least this time some of my other fics got updated?
5) *shameless self promotion* I've got two other fics, which people might enjoy :p
6) there is no power on earth that can convince me that the endeavour internship isn't leading into tododeku
7) better yet, it will be tododeku that bakugou will have to sit through, trying not to have an aneurysm
8) alternate chapter title: one of three

Touya waited until Kirishima, and Yaoyorozu went their separate ways in the cheap clothes shop he had been dragged into- why the heiress couldn't just make them some clothes definitely boiled down to she wanted to go shopping here- before cornering his brother.

“All right, we're alone now. You going to tell me what's bothering you?” It definitely wasn't just that his friends were missing.

“I'm fine, Touya.” The ice-user nearly snapped, not looking up from the frankly hideous shirt he was looking at.

The scarred man said nothing, merely giving his little brother an unamused look. Shouto didn't look at him, but he had been on the receiving end of enough of those looks by now to know the feel of one. The younger Todoroki hunched his shoulders.

Touya was surprised how long it took before Shouto answered. His resistance to scathing looks must have risen in recent years. “I didn't mean to hit him.” He finally murmured, still not looking at his brother, as he selected a marginally less ugly shirt.
The fire-user raised an eyebrow. “So you hit him. From what I heard, he had it coming.”

Shouto grimaced at the shirt. “He was just talking and I-I just wanted him to stop, so I just hit him, it was like something he would.” The teen cut himself off, wandering further down the aisle, in a vain attempt to escape brotherly love-the fool.

Touya frowned. No wonder he was so silent, brooding. Thinking he was turning out like him on top of everything else. “Pretty sure the old bastard never cared about another person enough to defend their honour.” He mused, causing his brother to finally look at him, face barely showing his shock.

‘Didn't think your brother would defend you there?’ Touya thought, slightly offended.

“You don't think I-’ Shouto began, but Touya was having none of it.

“No. I don't think you were acting like him.” The fire-user stuck his hands in his pockets, speaking impatiently. “And I don't blame you for hitting him. If someone started victim blaming that hard on one of my friends, I wouldn't have stopped at socking him one.” Probably best that neither of them knew exactly where the elder would have stopped.

Shouto turned back to the racks of clothes, hiding his expression. Weird, normally he had the strange belief that he could do that by just keeping his face blank.

“Thanks, Touya.” Shouto said eventually. Touya took it to mean his brother had listened. If he hadn't, he could just sic Fuyumi, and Natsuo on him later. “You going to pick out your own disguise, then?”

Great plan there, Shouto. Just call it a disguise in the open, where anyone could hear you, and get-wait. “Why would I need a disguise? I’m technically allowed to be doing this.”

Shouto swung his head back around, sending Touya a scathing look to match the one the fire-user had directed at his back earlier. “Very technically.” The ice-user said flatly.

Touya opened his mouth to object, closed it again. He was probably right, damn him. The thin man
started to rub absently at the deadened skin under his left eye, grumbling to himself, before heading off in search of some clothes that were at least bearable.

It didn't take too long to find some reasonably nondescript clothes, despite this shop's perverse need to stock clothes that no right-thinking human would willingly wear.

Meeting up with the others, he found that his brother was in a waistcoat, and a wig that didn't quite cover his hair, but somehow covered his scar. Yaoyorozu was in a red dress, while Kirishima had found a maroon jacket, and- “Where did you even find antlers?” The fire-user asked, gesturing to the weird appendages jutting from his glaringly red hair.

“The fancy-dress section.” The redhead said cheerily, face set in a shark-toothed grin.

Touya shrugged. People would probably just take them as some sort of secondary mutation, anyway.

“That's really not much of a disguise, Touya.” Shouto said.

The elder Todoroki glared at the younger. “What's wrong with it?” He demanded, looking down at his outfit- a white shirt, and dark suit jacket, paired with sunglasses, perfectly innocuous clothing.

“It looks exactly like how you used to dress to anything remotely formal.” The ice-user said unflinchingly.

“Well what would you suggest?” Touya asked, only for his brother to stand silently for a moment, before wandering off.

“Could you perhaps remove the piercings temporarily?” Yaoyorozu suggested.

“Not really.” He said flatly. Touya had already removed the ones that were actually piercings, in both his ears, and nose.

From the confuse look he was getting from both of the others, he was definitely about to get asked why not. The scarred man sighed. “They're not piercings, they're medical staples.” He explained,
tapping one of the ones under his lip.

The two kids looked distinctly ill at that, but Shouto mercifully dispelled the awkwardness—just as Yaoyorozu opened her mouth, presumably with further questions he had no desire to field—by returning with what looked like a dead Arctic fox.

“What is that?” The dark-haired man asked warily, leaning back as his brother approached.

“A wig.” Shouto said without inflection, placing the thing on his head unceremoniously, despite Touya’s best efforts to fend him off.

“Pfft,” Kirishima laughed, as Touya’s hands shot to his head, “OK, now you look like brothers.”

Touya contemplated throwing the small rug at the redhead, before reminding himself that he was supposed to be the responsible adult here—ha!—and removing his hands. “All right, but you’re taking the blame if Natsuo gets arrested.” He informed his brother.

Shouto just looked confused. “You’re too skinny to pass for Natsuo.” He said seriously.

‘Rude,’ Touya thought, then, ’need to remember to teach Shou how humour works.’ But he voiced neither of those thoughts, instead herding his charges out the door, and resolving never to agree to look after kids again, when he noticed Yaoyorozu also trying to hold in a laugh.

From the shop where they had purchased their disguises, Yaoyorozu led them on a relatively short walk to what seemed to be a large warehouse.

“The Nomu somewhere near the south wall.” The creation quirk user said quietly, studying her tracking device, and pointing.

The small group made their way into the narrow alley, staying quiet, until Yaoyorozu stopped, turning. “It's right that way.” She whispered.
Touya nodded, pulling himself the small distance upward he needed to see over the wall. The warehouse did have windows, but someone had decided against lighting. Maybe he could ask Yaoyorozu for-

A tap on the shoulder had him jerking around, but it was only Kirishima, proffering an odd pair of... binoculars. “I brought night vision goggles.” The redhead explained quietly, and Touya nodded, taking the goggles, before going back to looking over the wall.

The room was full of tanks of probably not water. Most of the ones he could see were empty, but the ones on the left were- “I thought you sai there was only one Nomu at the camp.” The fire-user hissed to Yaoyorozu, ducking hurriedly back behind the wall.

“There was.” The creation quirk user defended.

Touya jerked a thumb towards the building, “Well there's at least six in there.” The others paled slightly, even in the dim light. Touya didn't blame them. Those things were meant to be able to go toe to toe with All Might one on one.

Well, so was he, and so was Shouto eventually, but he was a “failed product” and Shouto definitely didn't have enough training for this.

Shouto held out a hand, and Touya gave him the goggles, barely paying attention as Kirishima lifted the teen onto his shoulders. The fire-user had to find a way to convince them to leave. There was no way they could deal with this sort of threat, even if all four of them were fighting.

The elder Todoroki was about to say something to the effect of “there's no way we can deal with this without fighting” or “let's wait for the heroes to get here” when one of the heroes showed up in spectacular fashion.

Mount Lady suddenly grew to her full height, head visible over the edge of the building, standing in the road. She leaned down to pick something up. Touya widened his eyes, and lurched forward to pull Shouto fully behind the wall, just as the massive heroine slammed a bus into the roof of the warehouse.
It took Izuku a second to react to All-For-One's sudden absence from the room. The moment he realized what had happened, he reached for One-For-All, grabbing through the fog of dampeners for the still pool of water.

What he pulled up from the well was barely enough to fill a thimble, a tenth of a percent of One-For-All's full output, if that. Still, he tried to pull his arms away from each other.

Nothing. The greenette grit his teeth, pulling harder. The cuffs dug into his skin, but didn't so much as creak.

The fire-user stopped pulling, panting. Dammit. He couldn't stay here, the heroes had come to rescue him, and All-For-One was probably going to-

Another crash, quieter than the first, but still heard however far down this was. Izuku redoubled his efforts, trying to drag as much of the water into his arms as he could.

“Come on,” he almost begged, as if the quirk could hear him, or even do anything more if it could, “I need to get out.”

The more he pulled on it, the choppier One-For-All got, but it never seemed to yield any more than it was already. What was even the point of the most powerful quirk in the world, if he couldn't use it to get out of these cuffs?

He could try it with Phoenix spirit, but if he tried to do that- especially fast- it would destroy his arms irremediably.

Izuku grit his teeth, and kept going. He couldn't give up, those heroes were fighting because of him. He just needed to get out. Needed to break these.

One-For-All grew even more wild, and then something seemed to shift. The water seemed to freeze, growing still again in an instant, and Izuku froze with it.

He was still pulling at One-For-All, but he wasn't pulling the water. The greenette tried pulling again, and whatever he had grabbed shifted. He pulled harder, desperate for anything that would
let him break his cuffs.

Slowly, he pulled it from where it had been. Something silvery, and glinting rose from the depths, dredged up by the baffled teen.

It looked like someone had taken an immensely complicated clock, and then blown it up. And continued to blow it up, cogwheels, and springs flying out, and vanishing into the dark, only to be quickly replaced by others from a dense core of random parts.

The instant it broke free of the water, it seemingly pulled itself into Izuku's hands- no, his fingers- and the metal encasing his arms began to creak.

Dark Shadow was furious. Not an entirely unusual state of affairs, given how dark it was, but this was a new level of intensity. How dare these pissants cage it with suppressants?

The quirk rammed into the bars of cage those infernal cuffs were pushing it into, desperate to rush out and claw the idiot who thought he could control it in half. The villain couldn't even be honest about what he wanted.

Dark Shadow sneered, the liar had said he wanted Fumi to stop limiting himself, but that wasn't what his greedy eyes said. The quirk wanted that, Shigaraki just wanted to use it, as if the quirk would ever agree to be used like that.

Dark Shadow's relationship with its host may have been a constant battle of wills, but it respected Fumi, respected the will that built the cage it got stuck in when it tried to run wild. It would never work for someone like Shigaraki, who it had no reason to respect.

Fumi was the only one who had earned that respect, ever since he essentially stopped ever losing that contest of wills.

So when the idiot had the cuffs removed- too cowardly to even do it himself- he immediately tried to rush out, silence the maniac that wanted to use it, and its host. But the quirk immediately ran into a brick wall. It could feel its host struggling, but the wall didn't let up.
Let me out. Dark Shadow demanded, disbelieving that even now Fumi wouldn't let the quirk deal with threats to their shared survival.

Fumi didn't respond, only digging his heels in, pushing the quirk ever harder. Dark Shadow growled in frustration, so close to manifesting itself, and yet so far. Let me out. You need to get out of here. How could its host never see what needed to be done.

That wasn't fair, he knew, when he was in his pathetic daytime form they frequently agreed, but it was aggravating how rarely Fumi let the quirk loose at night.

As always, the quirk fought the cage viciously, clawing at its host all the way as it was forced in. But as in each instance in years- except last night- it eventually lost that contest, and was shoved into a stifling box.

“It's pointless.” Said the villain, but the quirk wasn't really listening. It coiled on itself, every shadowy muscle tensed, ready to pounce if Fumi let up for an instant. In order to do that, what the villain said was irrelevant, only how Fumi's emotions were affected.

The idiot uttered some more inane garbage, and the shadow's host filled with quickly repressed fear, bordering on horror. The quirk snarled. Nobody hurt its host like that. Whatever Shigaraki had said, Dark Shadow resolved to tear him in half slowly.

It slammed against the bars in time with that pulse of negative emotion regardless, the bars of its cage cracking, shaking, then quickly repairing themselves.

Waiting then. However foolish its host could be at times, eventually he would let it out. Surely Fumi- someone something as powerful as it respected- would not be so foolish as to choose death rather than Dark Shadow's protection.

The view through Fumi's eyes shifted to the door and back, and Dark Shadow realized that this was the moment of truth. Shigarki was definitely done talking. LET ME OUT! It yelled, ramming into the bars.

He bars seemed to weaken. Its host had finally decided to let it out, but it would take him a second to fully let go- Fumi feared him like this, as he should. The shadow attacked the cage again, feeling
“Kamino pizza delivery.” Said someone from outside the tiny lair the ants were hiding in, and Fumi’s eyes shifted to the door again. Then the wall exploded inward.

Fumi’s head shot around to see heroes flooding through the hole, led by All Might himself. The walls thickened instantly, Fumi deciding the danger had passed, and the shadow roared in fury.

Fumi was right, the danger had passed- All Might was nearly strong enough to actually challenge him at night- but how could the villains get away with their lives after challenging it like this? The heroes would be far too merciful.

Dark Shadow’s low view of the villains lowered yet further when they were taken down in mere seconds. A hero seemingly made of wood followed All Might- Fumi knew his name, but the shadow didn't find him strong enough to care- and wrapped the entire league in branches in a moment.

The quirk was filled with brief contempt for the second hero. How could mere branches stop the warper, however well they worked on the others? Then Kurogiri slumped forward, unconscious.

The hero responsible somehow slid through the closed door, opening it from the inside a moment later, while the still conscious villains struggled uselessly in their bonds. Until they suddenly went very still.

Each villain was paired with a long crimson feather, which floated unsupported, right up against their necks. Out of the corner of Fumi's vision, the shadow spotted Hawks, floating a few feet away from the- it turned out- third storey window.

Dark Shadow felt like scoffing. This was clearly overkill, for this bunch of useless villains. “I'm sure you were scared. You did a good job bearing it.” Declared All Might, eternal smile turning to face the bird-headed teen.

“Yes. We are very grateful for the timely rescue.” Intoned Fumi, and the quirk shot him the mental equivalent of a glare.

I didn't need rescuing. Dark Shadow said pointedly, as the hero shot them a thumbs up.
'You would have killed them.' Fumi said, as if it were some sort of accusation.

*It was better them than us.* The quirk responded, not denying it, and not guilty.

“Well you're safe now. I am here!” Said the hero, unaware of the internal glaring match.

Then, despite the warper being out of commission, more villains began to appear in the room. Worse, they were like that mindless monstrosity that had appeared the first time these villains had attacked.

All Might made as if to push Fumi out of the hole in the wall, red feathers already prepared to catch him. Then Dark Shadow’s host began to uncontrollably throw up something thick and greasy, and foul-smelling.

The blond moved to grab the bird-headed teen, looking genuinely panicked, as behind him, all of the non-Nomu villains also began to vomit the strange liquid.

He never made contact, the liquid quickly spread, covering Fumi’s eyes, and when it passed, they were somewhere else.

Izuku had no idea what was going on. One-For-All had just... birthed another quirk, and that quirk had caused his cuffs to fall apart, screws, bolts, pins, bits of metal all falling at his feet, until the greenette couldn’t even recognize that they had been cuffs, then-

*Izuku! Kid!* Cried the voice, slightly out of synch with itself, talking over itself as it almost never did, and causing pain to lance through the fire-user's head. *What happened??*

Izuku grabbed his head, but stood, not bothering to answer with words. He still needed to get outside, needed to try to help- how, he had no idea. The greenette simply sent the voice a memory of everything that had happened while the cuffs were on, as he all but ran to the door.
The voice froze almost instantly, probably at the moment they heard his voice. Izuku paid the pulse of horror/fear/panic no attention, as he grabbed for the handle of the door.

The instant his hand touched the handle, the silvery mass of the new quirk accelerated, and the door didn't so much fall apart, as explode.

Screws embedded themselves in the floor, and the ceiling, and the walls behind Izuku, two of the screws holding the handle to the door stabbed into the greenette's arm, drawing blood, as the metal that made up the main body of the door flew off the hinges that had just disassembled themselves, banging against the wall outside, before bouncing off, and falling to the floor.

The stunned fire-user was left holding part of a door handle for a door that no longer existed. He blinked at it stupidly, then looked out into the hall, to find it completely empty, save for the remains of the door.

Then the ceiling cracked, at the same time as a third boom sounding, this one loud enough that the greenette had to cover his ears.

The boom reminded Izuku of the conflict outside. He needed to get up to the ground level, but glancing around the halls, he realized he had no idea how big this place was, or how to get around.

The voice was still sifting through the big mass of sensations that he had just thrown at it, when the greenette looked at the ceiling.

'Can we get through that?' He thought, mostly to himself. He knew about as much as the voice did about destroying buildings at this stage.

Dark shadow barely paid attention, as its host fell to his knees, coughing, still feeling like he was drowning in the weird liquid that had come from nowhere, and seemingly vanished after they moved.

They had been transported alongside all of the villains, and no heroes to the ruins of what was once a building, and there, to the side of the group of recently transported villains, stood an extremely tall man in a dark suit, and eyeless mask.
The quirk could feel its host's control had slipped when he had nearly drowned, but it made no
move to get out, instead coiling in a corner of its cage, staring at the man— the true leader of the
league, if the fiery broccoli was to be believed.

It gulped, making no move to strike. The shadow was never afraid, at least when it hadn't been
forced into meekness by too much light, but this man.... instinct told the quirk that attacking that
one human would be a terminally bad move.

“You've failed again, Tomura-kun,” said the incarnation of death as far as Dark Shadow could tell,
speaking calmly, as if he had all the time in the world, “but don't take it too hard, you only need to
try again. You're followers, and even your new recruit are all right here. I've done all of this for
your sake.”

Fumi’s range of vision encompassed the pale-haired man, and what little of his face could be seen
was filled with respect bordering on reverence.

Then All Might arrived, to the relief of both quirk and boy. The hero flew into the fray, still
smiling, fist flying at the lead villain, all but ignoring the minions.

The shadow's shock mirrored Fumi's as the villain not only wasn't sent flying by the punch that All
Might threw as he landed, but actually caught it. The wind from the opposing forces blew Fumi
over, along with all the lesser villains.

“You took your time getting here.” Said the villain, as if he had not just blocked a full-force punch
from the strongest man alive.

Hearing the villain, All Might's smile fell, eyes widening, skin paling. Fumi's rekindled hope died.
Get up. Dark Shadow ordered, refusing to let its host just lie down and die, even if their foe was
one that All Might clearly knew, and feared.

“No.” Croaked the hero, shaking his head softly in denial, speaking too softly for anyone further
than Fumi to hear.

The bird-headed teen scrambled to his feet, just as the villain seemed to grin behind his mask.
“Yes.”
The villain's arm bulged, and a massive force sent All Might flying into the distance, crashing through walls, and destroying several buildings in the process.

“All Might!” Fumi called, scrambling back to his feet again, having been knocked over for a second time.

The villain paid the hero no further mind, shaking his hand as if ridding himself of a mere pest. “You should go, Tomura. Take your kid with you.”

The tall man's fingers began to lengthen into dark tendrils, using an ability seemingly unrelated to the massive force that had sent All Might into the distance. The tendrils pierced Kurogiri's slumped form, and a large portal formed.

Shigaraki looked like he was going to object, but then All Might returned, leaving a cloud of dust in his wake, and a crater where he had been standing.

*Either fight or run, Fumi,* Instructed the shadow, *this is our chance.* The lesser villains were already moving to encircle the pair.

'I won't let you kill them.' Fumi said, backing up slowly from their advance.

Ark Shadow snarled, tempted to just try for full possession. The villains had threatened and insulted them, they needed to die. And Fumi might actually be afraid enough for it to work... no, this wasn't as bad as seeing a friend dismembered in front of you. Damn.

...*Fine.* The quirk agreed unwillingly. There would be other chances, for now it had to make sure its fragile fleshy vessel wasn't destroyed, and struggling for control would be too risky.

The door of the infernal cage finally finally opened, and the shadow manifested in an instant, a massive bird the colour of the night sky flying out of Fumi's body, and roaring a challenge at the fools that sought to take them.

Dark Shadow nearly preened, as the villains cringed back from its dark-empowered form. Good, at least they had the sense to fear it. Not the time for gloating, though.
The shadow bird struck while the fools were distracted, lashing out at the nearest - the lizard, bowling him over before he could even dodge. It could feel the leash, knew that Fumi would try to shove it back in the box if it tried anything. Damn but it grated.

The quirk twisted, trying to keep each of its foes in sight. Fumi wasn't helpless, but on his own, he would fare poorly against any of them. Especially the clown, and the albino, it couldn't afford to let either of them close to Fumi.

Both sides stared at each other for a moment, braced against the wind blasts from the battle of the incredibly tall humans in the distance, before Shigaraki made the first move, rushing not at Fumi, but at Dark Shadow.

Dark Shadow's rage at the man somehow reached a new height. “Do you think me the weaker target?!” It demanded, moving to close the distance between them.

Shigaraki demonstrated his lacking fear of death, by grinning, looking close to laughter. “You have a body, you can decay.” He crooned, still rushing forward.

Dark Shadow saw red. Did he really think that he would have a chance to-

Both of them stopped suddenly. The bird assumed for the same reason. The ground was... hot, between them. Then it began to glow, and the shadow-quirk shied back, shedding power in the dim light from the super-heated ground.

The ground grew brighter and brighter, as the quirk, and the lunatic stared at the unexpected volcanism from either side, until finally it sagged. The ground, softened by the heat crumpled, falling inward, leaving behind a darkened pit, which they both stared into.

From the angle at which Dark Shadow was looking, it could find nothing that could have caused the collapse. It was about to stretch itself further over the gap - unlike Shigaraki, the quirk could essentially fly - when a hand suddenly gripped the edge of the hole.

Glowing with the soft golden light of a calm flame, the hand was soon followed by a person. Seemingly without any effort, the greenette dragged himself from the pit, as Dark Shadow watched. In mere moments, the only student of UA that the quirk was truly wary of stood there,
body wreathed in sparks, hands and feet in flames.

Unlike before, Amber's eyes were as piercing as they ever were, and the shadow honestly couldn't decide if he truly was as calm as he seemed. As if he were taking a stroll in the garden, the ex-vigilante turned from the quirk, taking in the rest of the battlefield, face giving no sign of any worry.
there is a reason you shouldn't mess with the immortal vigilante.
(also his protection squad, though we'll get to that later, and the guy with the
temperamental shadow demon living in his chest for obvious reasons)

Izuku was not exactly calm, but he was far calmer than he had been a few minutes earlier. He could
hear the voice, he was safe, he was home. Logically, he knew that the voice couldn't actually keep
him safe, especially from someone like All-For-One, but he ignored the part of his brain telling
him that. Now he could at least pretend to be in control, hopefully this would fool not only the
villains, but also himself.

When the greenette rose through the hole he had made in the roof, he had expected All-For-One to
be either fighting, or toying with any number of heroes. Instead, he came face to beak with a Dark
Shadow that looked so large, and furious, that his first instinct was to make an extremely bright
light to weaken it. Or possibly jump back in the hole to get away from it, given how close it was.
When the quirk didn't attack, the fire-user realised that it must still be under control, so he quickly turned to take in whatever was going on above ground.

The voice was far better at taking in a scene at a glance than... anyone, essentially. It had more experience with it, and the advantage of six different viewpoints. By the time Izuku spotted Tokoyami, ringed by most of the league, it had already spotted All Might fighting with All-For-One.

_Run!_ The voice said frantically, just as Izuku started running, not away from the fight, but right into the middle of it. Seeing what he was doing, the voice became even more panicked. _Izuku, we need to get out of here!_

'Not without Tokoyami.' The greenette insisted, pooling fire in his hands as quickly as he could, and pushing One-For-All to its limits. He needed to get to the bird-headed teen as quickly as he could- Shigaraki was behind him, and the rest of the league was closer to Tokoyami than Dark Shadow was.

The quirk had overreached itself, chasing Shigaraki too far from Tokoyami, and the bird-headed teen was essentially defenceless as he rapidly back-pedalled, trying to keep out of their reach.

The shadowy quirk seemingly noticed that it had gotten too far away from its host, and turned back to follow the greenette, while he tried to take note of where the members of the league were, and how they might attack. Then he noticed that Kurogiri wasn't moving, and Moonfish was nowhere to be seen.

A spike of alarm shot through the earliest parts of the voice, when it realized that Kurogiri was using his quirk, despite seemingly being unconscious. Izuku gulped, All-For-One definitely still had Forced Quirk Activation, then.

The later parts of the voice, which didn't have the residual fear that came of having burned alive, managed to get the fear under control after a moment, finally noticing how big of a problem losing those two members was for the league. _Magne is the only ranged fighter left._ It said, just as Izuku got close enough to the shadow-host.

Izuku pivoted a foot away from Tokoyami, turning to face Dark Shadow, and Shigaraki, a little further away. The man was fast, nearly as fast as someone without an enhancement quirk really could be, but he couldn't catch Izuku when he was using One-For-All. Not even close. Both of
them looked frankly murderous, and the greenette just had to hope that the shadow's rage was not
directed at him.

The greenette flicked both wrists in a practiced motion, and braced himself, as Tokoyami backed
into him a moment later. The fire-user stretched out the two globes of fire as he threw them out,
and a moment later a pair of Chinese dragons made entirely of Phoenix Fire began circling the two
hero students in opposite directions, each at an angle to the other.

Izuku saw Shigaraki lurch to a halt, mere feet away from the barrier, as Dark Shadow retreated
inside their little island of relative safety, shrinking significantly, but still larger than it usually was
in sunlight.

The fire-user glanced over his shoulder to find that the rest of the league had also halted a little
ways outside the barrier, and Tokoyami was staring at him, and the circling dragons. Some
warning might have been warranted, there was a chance that the other teen hadn't even seen him
coming out of the hole.

*You need to stop Magne,* urged the voice, *she's still a threat like this.*

“Does Dark Shadow have a gender?” He asked quickly, knowing that Magne would be able to use
her quirk without even getting through the fires.

Surprisingly it wasn't Tokoyami that answered, but Dark Shadow. “**No.**” It said, curling as close to
the centre of the cordoned area as possible- as far from the light as it could.

“Keep Magne away from us, she's the only one who can fight at a distance.” Izuku instructed, not
sure if he should be speaking to the quirk, or the boy.

Both nodded either way, and Dark Shadow arced over the barrier, rushing towards the redhead,
while the fire-user began making some more fire.

Too much to do. He needed to reinforce the dragons, or they would dissipate in a couple of
minutes, and he needed to trap Magne further from them, and he needed to think of a way to get
them both safely away from here.

The ex-vigilante had almost no experience with group fights- except some training in the not-quite-
dream. He didn't think he would have coped, if not for the voice's ability to multi task so well.

“Are you hurt?” He asked, at the same time as moving his right shoulder back to pivot their back-to-back formation, so he could keep an eye on as many villains as possible - especially All-For-One.

“I am uninjured. And yourself?” The bird-headed teen responded, as Dark Shadow took a swipe at Magne, forcing her to hurriedly dodge out of the way.

“I'm fine.” He lied. He had no idea what that new quirk was exactly, but his palms were seriously burning now, he was keeping a lid on it, but he was absolutely terrified to be this close to All-For-One fighting All Might, and getting the roof to collapse had taken more fire than anticipated, he was already getting uncomfortably hot.

“Do you have a plan?”

Izuku bit his lip. He didn't have a plan, and that was freaking him out more than he had expected. He had always been a meticulous vigilante, not having any kind of plan was both par for the course with the league, seemingly, and decidedly outside his comfort zone.

The voice and he were watching the villains, but most of its attention was taken up with the latest rehash of the fight between All-For-One, and Mirai's successors. Then it began to speak to itself, sending a dull throb behind Izuku's eyes.

_He's holding back._ Said mostly Ichigou, and Dai wonderingly.

_How stupid is he?!! This is All-For-One!_ Came from Ren, composure breaking, in some mix of anger and worry.

_He can't fight at full power without endangering us._ Pointed out Yugo, and Aoi. They sounded almost entirely worried.

The voice seemed to reach agreement on that at least, though Izuku suspected that the earliest parts of the voice, and Ren disagreed with the decision to hold back anyway. _We need to get out of here, and fast, he'll lose like this._ Said the voice, returning to its usual six evenly overlapping voices.
’We can't just lead them towards a crowd!’ Objected the greenette, as loudly as a thought could be.

He might be able to outrun the league, though it hadn't worked well last time, and Dark Shadow *could* help Tokoyami's mobility, but a desperate league would be even less predictable than normal, who could say what they might try?

*Without Kurogiri, we might be able to deal with them all.* Offered Ren, but Izuku immediately shook his head.

He would never be able to capture the league with Phoenix Spirit, that would require far too much fire without any kind of cooling, especially with how warm he was right now. Knocking them out was also out of the question, since grappling with half the league was suicide- Izuku would prefer not to be disintegrated, thank you. No, the only way he could deal with the league was Ren's way. He had always sworn never to do things Ren's way. The greenette would have to live with himself forever, so he wouldn't cross that line.

Even at the speed of thought, this conversation was taking precious seconds, while Izuku stood silently, doing nothing but watching, and producing more fire, even as he wasn't sure what he intended it for. Meanwhile, the league was clearly getting impatient, waiting outside the circle.

*Twice.* Said the voice urgently, as the villain produced a clone of Mr Compress. OK, that was fine, as long as it wasn't another Magne.

*We're standing on a huge basement,* put in Hayato, deceptively placid, *I think this might be a good time to put Nedzu's lessons to good use.*

Izuku blinked, and the voice seemed surprised for a moment, then they all had to fight the urge to grin.

“I have a plan.” Said the greenette, already producing fire under one foot, and thanking whatever higher power that no-one - not heroes, or the police, or even All-For-One- expected bright red shoes to be support gear. “It's just going to take a minute.”

“What do I need to do?” Said Tokoyami, and Izuku would probably be in tears from the level of trust, if not for how little room he had to think about anything other than the fight at hand.
“When I give the signal, bring Dark Shadow back.” Izuku murmured, hopefully loud enough for Tokoyami to hear, but not the circling villains.

Izuku had just finished melting a tiny hole under his foot, and into the complex below, when he finally judged that he had enough fire in his hands. The greenette shaped the dense mass of flames into a disk like the one used to bifurcate his first robot at the UA entrance exam, and judged when there would be a gap in the cordon of dragons.

“Now!” He yelled, just before tossing the vertical disk out, and straight towards the besieged Magne.

Hawks had quickly realized, as soon as he had begun patrolling with All Might- or Yagi, as he had taken to calling the man in his skeletal form- that the older hero had no experience working with a partner at all.

Their very first patrol, the man had seen a villain attack- minor, nothing of note- and had immediately rushed into the fray at full speed, leaving the hapless winged man to eat his dust. Honestly, for someone who looked inches from death most of the day, All Might really could move. And people said he was too fast for his own good.

The winged hero had been hopeful when Yagi had apologized, pre-empting his upbraiding, as soon as the patrol was over. Since then, the tall man had been improving significantly, managing not to leave his partner behind most of the time.

But, as it turned out, the symbol of peace reverted to bad habits under pressure.

Hawks was immensely grateful that no-one was close enough to hear, because his mother would have given a proper tongue lashing if she ever caught wind of what the hero had said when All Might had thrown three Nomu through the walls of the bar to add to the ones the red-winged man was already fending off.

She might have actually tanned his hide, if she heard what he said when Yagi had proceeded to run straight to the other strike location, seemingly expecting Hawks to catch up later.
Hawks growled to himself, planning on a proper upbraiding this time, the fact that the man was twice his age, and a living legend be damned. He plucked two of his longest feathers, hardened them, and got to work.

It was sloppy work, and if he had been up against normal villains, then the commission would be forced to line up behind his mother for tanning his hide. Luckily, these were Nomu, little more than puppets, so he wasn't gentle about it. Within the span of a minute, three Nomu were decapitated, and the remaining two- who had no regeneration- had their tendons cut.

The hero waited all of three seconds, just to make sure no further healing was going to happen, before shooting into the sky, to follow All Might, with Gran Torino following him.

The blond didn't slow, but Gran Torino was able to keep up with seemingly no difficulty, jetting from building to building, as Hawks soared overhead. The winged hero was secretly impressed that a hero who must be in his eighties could keep up with him. He thought that had Gran Torino been in his prime, he would have been the one struggling to keep up. This was just getting embarrassing, for someone generally held to be one of, if not the, fastest pro hero.

When the pair arrived, it was immediately obvious that things had gone badly wrong at the second site. Most obviously, the warehouse was even more gone than could be accounted for by Mount Lady.

Then Hawks, and Gran Torino saw All Might's expression, the elder hero swore, and the younger's blood ran cold. The muscular blond wasn't smiling. In fact his face was locked in a strained scowl.

"Don't let him touch you!" Warned the older blond, as he made another swing, only to be sent flying by the villain, but Hawks had no intention of getting close to that fight for now. He had caught sight of the other fight.

His intern was stuck inside a ring of what he had to assume was fire, despite its animalistic appearance, with Amber, and surrounded by what looked like the entirety of the league, plus a clone of one of their members.

The young hero's protective instincts surged, and he wanted nothing more in that moment than to rush to the aid of his intern, and Midoriya, but- stifling as it was- he couldn't do that just yet, he wasn't dumb enough to move without understanding the situation.
The hero shut his eyes, concentrating instead on the information his quirk was constantly feeding him. Echolocating wings was an incredibly useful ability, especially for complex scenarios like this, but it was too much information by far to take in at once if he thought about it.

Solution; don't think about it. Just do it. The hero let everything his quirk was telling him just flood over him, feeling all the complex movements of the air. The largest were from the head-to-head confrontation between the number one hero, and the man who had to be the leader of the league.

A blast of wind from Gran Torino blasting off to help All Might, despite the warnings about not letting himself be touched, the heartbeats, and breathing of the various members of the league, all elevated to one degree or another, Tokoyami's high, panicked heartbeats, Amber's slower ones- still afraid, but controlling it well, someone trapped in the rubble near the two heavy-hitters.

As soon as he noticed that last, a dozen feathers were sent out, to grab the woman, and move various bits of rubble from on top of her. Keep going; he needed everyone out of the vicinity.

Laying behind some other rubble, seemingly for shelter, were a number of more familiar forms. The other hero team, and from the way he was breathing, Best Jeanist was badly injured.

No time to check how badly, or if it was even that safe to move him. That group was still far too close- so was he, actually, he thought, flying further up, and out of All Might's way. He sent a large cluster of feathers their way, picking each of them from their hiding spots, and making sure they saw the feathers before they were grabbed. He didn't want any accidents, not now.

The villain still seemed content to ignore Hawks, so he kept going. Four people behind a partially destroyed wall, high heart-rates, and rapid breathing. He had no idea what they were doing there, but he-

Midoriya launched an attack at that moment, a disk of golden fire slipping out a gap between the dragons, headed straight for Magne, as Dark Shadow retreated.

The greenette concentrated on what turned out to be a surprisingly complicated attack, as the solid disk hollowed as it flew towards the red-headed villain, forming a narrow ring about eight feet tall.

One of the other villains seemingly came to the same conclusion- that Midoriya would be concentrating on his attack- and threw a knife at him. Hawks' heart-rate spiked at the same time as
Midoriya's; the greenette must have seen her move, despite how complex what he was doing was.

The hero launched a dozen feathers, even as he sent more to deal with the little group behind the wall, intent on throwing the knife off, at least. But he was too far away, and even if he had seen, Midoriya couldn't dodge, not without Tokoyami taking the knife in the back.

The ex-vigilante seemed to realize this as well, as he didn't even try to dodge the knife flying towards his neck; instead, he simply moved his right arm up, heart rate climbing, clearly spiking with adrenaline, and caught the blade.

Hawks' jaw went slack. OK, now he could see why this kid was such a scary vigilante. Even if he was hissing in pain, and had clearly not caught it perfectly, that was some crazy good timing, and ridiculous hand-eye coordination. He even forgot about controlling his feather properly for a moment, as the golden-eyed teen went a step further.

In a single fluid motion, he threw the knife himself, with what must have been quirk-enhanced strength, because an instant later, the hilt blossomed from the shoulder of one of the two identical villains, and he was bowled over by the force of it.

Hawks' heart stopped for an instant, thinking that the ex-vigilante had just nearly murdered one of the villains with no hesitation. Then the masked man... melted. A clone then. Still, that was brutal. Not something he would expect of most students, or all but the most jaded heroes.

At the same time, the ring of fire reached its target, and as Magne dodged to the side to avoid it, and Midoriya just jerked his head to the side, causing the ring to fall over, trapping the villain in a small circle of fire.

Judging from the disrupted breathing from all the villains bar Shigaraki, and the masked man, Hawks was not the only one somewhat stunned by that development. Two villains down in the space of a second was some scary efficiency.

“I think you picked the wrong one.” Said the blonde villain faintly, and the hand-adorned one snarled.

“Shut up,” Shigaraki growled, before turning to the man resembling the recently departed clone, “Compress, get us in there, I'm finishing that shitty red mage this time.”
The masked man nodded, and marched towards the encircling flames, while Midoriya, and Tokoyami watched him- alongside Dark Shadow- but none of them made any move to attack.

Hawks swooped closer, sending more feathers towards the besieged pair, and retrieving the ones that had successfully ferried the injured to safety, while drawing his preferred long feathers like swords into his hands. He didn't know what Compress could do, but if they got inside the safety of those dragons, then with quirks like Shigaraki's things could get deadly extremely quickly.

It was pure instinct that saved him. The winged hero had not been a hero for even ten years, but successful heroes picked some things up fast. The air shifted, and Hawks threw himself to the side, not bothering with normal flight, just using the telekinesis to drag himself. Even so, the outer edges of the wind blast hit him, sending him wildly off course.

Righting himself, the blond turned to find the villain looking at him for the first time, as All Might and Gran Torino struggled to their feet. “I was content to allow you to retrieve your allies, but interfering with Tomura's league will prompt... intervention.”

The hero's mouth went dry at the malice in that voice, and he paused for a moment, but it wasn't really a decision, he was a hero, he wasn't about to just let the two students become victims while he did nothing.

The pair of sword-feathers in his hands went flying at the masked man, while all the feathers he had sent out earlier continued-

Before the first of Hawks' feathers reached the league, Compress touched the nearest dragon, and it imploded. For the first time since the start of the fight, Midoriya's heart-rate approached true panic, while the leader of the villains simply sighed.

The next air blast that was launched at him was much larger than the first, and despite the forewarning that resulted from seeing the villain start it, he barely dodged the strongest part of it, so was only sent flying, rather than being reduced to a smear on the nearest wall.

Expecting a second attack, and probably a far more lethal one, now that he had too little control of his flight to dodge, Hawks threw caution to the wind. Ignoring the long feathers that the masked man had knocked off course, he focused his attention on keeping the ones headed for the league on course.
He wouldn't be able to take out the entire league with just those feathers, but if even a few hit, the chances of the students getting away would increase greatly.

The feathers never made it past where the dragon had been, and missed the closing villains, as they jumped back. The small points of red were consumed in blue, as a huge wall of flames suddenly surged through the battlefield, stopping the villains, and burning his feathers.

To Hawks’ own surprise, he failed to die in the next instant, as the second attack never came. He halted himself above a large hole in the ground, looking over at the villain who he had expected to finish him. The man in the mask was occupied with All Might, and Gran Torino again. If they survived this, he would have to thank the older hero before any lambasting.

The winged hero turned to see where the sudden attack had come from, he had to know what the new fire-user intended. Then he noticed it, his feathers feeling what was going on underground.

He couldn't make sense of it at first, it was like a river of wind, spreading in all directions, splashing against the walls, until it covered every nook and cranny of the ceiling of the enormous basement he was just now becoming aware of, before moving onto the next section. Then he noticed the point it was spreading out from; right under Midoriya's foot.

Izuku had panicked when Mr Compress had held up that blue marble with a coiling golden dragon clearly visible in it, flourishing it between the fingers of a heavily smoking glove. He hadn't expected any of the remaining villains to be able to deal with his defence- defending a point was one of the things Phoenix Spirit had always been best at, after all.

He was too hot, and the villains were suddenly too close for comfort, and even if they weren't if he wanted his plan to work, he needed to avoid making any more fire than he had to. But now, he had no choice, since Shigaraki was right next to Mr Compress, and he dared not ask Dark Shadow, since Decay might spread to Tokoyami.

The fire-user prepared more fire in his hands, and stopped the remaining dragon behind him, he might have to burn the pair to buy them a moment, and then he could-

Izuku was suddenly nearly blinded by a massive wall of cerulean fire that rushed right between the two groups. Both Tokoyami, and Izuku stepped back instinctively, as everyone jerked around to
see where it had come from.

Standing behind the crumbling edge of a miraculously still standing wall was a man with white hair, arm still outstretched from shooting the conflagration.

*What the hell is Touya doing here?!* Came the sound of the voice in Izuku's head, as he was still trying to figure out why he recognised the man at all. The greenette was briefly stunned, as he connected the blue eyes, and fire with the dark-haired ex-villain.

The greenette's panic immediately redoubled. Protecting himself, and trying to get Tokoyami out of here was bad enough, but if Touya was here, then Shouto would almost certainly be here too. For him. To try to rescue him.

He needed to move. Now. He refused to be the reason his boyfriend got himself killed, or arrested.

*That fire is hot.* Izuku blinked at the voice's tone, confused why it mattered so much.

'Why does that matter right...' He trailed off as he actually felt the heat radiating off that wall. It was hotter than his own fire.

Phoenix Fire was hotter than almost any fire produced by a quirk, at least when Izuku made it as hot as he could, until it began to cool in the air, or whatever it was being used to heat up. But if the greenette put his fire in something hotter than itself...

*Throw your own fire in it.* The voice prompted, and Izuku quickly formed a big ball of cooler copper fire in his hand, joining the copper fire he could feel spreading all through the underground complex.

When the fire-user threw it into the wall, and the effect was immediate; instead of the normal slow cooling he felt whenever he made a fire, that ball was heating up- it was a bizarre feeling, and one he had never experienced before.

Feeling how hot the ball was getting, and how close he was to heat exhaustion, Izuku knew he had to move now. The voice agreed, since it sent the map it had been forming of the basement, from where Izuku felt his fire being halted.
He had the fire, and he had the layout of the basement, and at least an idea of what the walls and ceiling were made of. Now he just needed to apply what Nedzu had said about load-bearing walls, and how to guess which they were.

Voice nearly as calm as at the beginning of the fight, despite how close they had just come to being disintegrated, Midoriya suddenly spoke again, turning to Fumikage. “When the wall fades, run that way.” The only strain the greenette was showing at having used his quirk so much was a slight tremor in the hand he was using to point towards the white-haired man.

Though the azure blaze the man had conjured could easily hide a pallid complexion in its eerie light, nearly as well as Fumikage’s own feathers did.

The bird-headed teen looked to the man, seeing the blonde villain was still on this side of the blue wall, only separated by the remaining golden fire, and gulped, but nodded. He had asked Midoriya if he had a plan, and the greenette was a truly exemplary hatcher of plots. Fumikage's fate would rest in his hands this day.

Mere seconds later, the unexpected blaze did indeed die down, clearly the newcomer's quirk lacked the longevity of the golden-eyed one's. As Fumikage sent forth Dark Shadow, jumping to allow the shadowy monster- so much easier to control since Midoriya had lit the area- to drag him forth from their fiery prison, the bird-headed teen could not help but to look at where the wall had been.

Where blue fire had rested before, there was now a globe of brilliant gold radiance, and past it several villains, including the previously captive redhead- the one Midoriya had prioritised over even Shigaraki, all beginning to rush towards them.

The fire-user followed, body wreathed in sparks once more, and the fires moved quickly. The two held in his palms joined the large one from the wall, forming an even larger, brighter globe, while the remaining dragon suddenly twisted, stretching out, and dimming, as it encircled the sanguine villain who had been outside its safety to begin.

Both teens rushed to the partially collapsed wall in a series of rapid jumps, using their quirks to assist them. Anxious, Fumikage looked back towards the villains, just in time to see Midoriya do something unfathomable.
Instead of an attack, or some wall to delay the villains as the bird-headed teen had expected, the huge ball of sun-like fire floated rapidly to the side, and down into the pit Midoriya had opened when he first arrived.

Dark Shadow continued to drag the baffled teen toward- hopefully- safety, as the villains, lacking speed quirks, steadily fell behind. Then the ground began to rumble, as if something in the depths beneath his feet were collapsing. “Keep going!” Midoriya yelled urgently, and Fumikage realised he had slowed.

Jumping again, the cord that tied him to his companion pulled, and he finally topped the wall, his quirk dragging him over it, only to land in a heap when he hit several unexpected bodies he had not seen peering over the lip.

Midoriya joined him a moment later, flipping over the wall, and turning to view the oncoming horde when the sound crescendoed. Nothing happened for a moment, and Midoriya's face twisted. “Come on.” He almost begged.

With an almighty crash, the floor crumpled mere feet from the shelter of their little wall. Huge chunks of stone fell into the Stygian pits beneath, leaving a clear trench nearly twenty feet across, and just as deep between them and the villains, who had to halt rapidly to avoid falling in. Fumikage half expected Shigaraki, who was closest to actually do so, or at least have to windmill his arms to avoid it.

Midoriya let out a relieved breath, before all but collapsing where he stood, completely exhausted.
Izuku’s knees buckled, despite his every effort to stay upright; letting himself sag with relief when
the ground collapsed, and their little troupe was safely separated from the oncoming villains had been a mistake.

On reflection, he should have known it was a mistake, even before his knees bucked; he had been
using what amounted to three different quirks repeatedly in the last few minutes, and especially
pushing Phoenix Spirit to its limits. The adrenaline was the only thing that had kept him standing
to that point, and he should consider himself lucky that he was even still conscious.

The voice was keeping almost all of its attention on the fight between All-For-One, and the trio of
heroes, when Izuku heard someone calling his name in alarm. The exhaustion was clearly affecting
his reaction times, though, since he didn’t get further than “Wai-” Before Shouto’s hand grabbed
his arm, the ice-user probably meaning to pull him back to his feet.

The second Shouto touched his bare skin, he was jerking back with a hiss. Shit. “Are you OK?”
The fire-user asked urgently, turning to see a look of pain cross the taller boy’s face as he cradled his burned right hand.
The look of pain quickly turned to determination, as he coated his hand in ice. “I’m fine,” Shouto said tersely, “You’re way too hot. I need to cool you down.”

*Watch All-For-One.* Said the voice, which had filled with an emotion close to panic the moment All-For-One was no longer in Izuku’s visual field.

“We need to get out of here, is what we need to do.” Touya all but growled, as Izuku swung his head back to see what was going on on the other side of the pit.

Per the voice’s instruction, he fixed his eyes on the fight between All-For-One, and All Might. Or, he fixed his eyes on it when he could see it, given that the fight was between four different people who could all move fast enough to be near impossible to track by eye.

‘Shouldn’t we be watching the league?’

*They don’t have any mobility quirks,* the voice answered, just as Izuku flicked his eyes to look at the lesser villains, *...except that one.* It added, as Izuku’s eyes widened.

A spike of alarm shot briefly through Izuku, when he saw what the league was doing, only to be almost immediately blunted by the weird emotion coming from the voice. The past phoenixes had never actually scoffed derisively at a villain Izuku was fighting, but from the colour of their thoughts as they watched Magne preparing to launch Mr Compress across the gap, it was a close thing this time.

Even thinking about it for the minute amount of time it took for Magne to corral Mr Compress, and Spinner into place to launch them with their repulsion, Izuku realised why the voice was mocking them. *This is just desperate and stupid.* It almost laughed, despite the situation. They were sending someone with a touch-range quirk with no way to adjust his direction in the air... across a wide gap... in the open.

Said gap was currently being guarded by- depending on how you counted it- five different people with powerful ranged quirks. Including a trigger-happy ex-villain, and a hero student who- as much as Izuku loved him- tended to throw glaciers at problems.

The “flying” masked villain pulling out a marble which the greenette could barely make out a glint of gold in the centre of. In other circumstances the fact that the villain was holding what amounted to a white-hot inferno in a fragile glass shell might have caused more concern, but for three things.
Firstly, it didn’t change the fact that he was completely unable to dodge, or move under his own power. Secondly, Izuku was just too tired to be properly anxious right now. And third, and most importantly, he flourished the tiny orb, not throwing it immediately.

The display that was the sort of thing that caused various parts of the voice to mock most mainstream heroes backfired entirely predictably. Blue light out of the corner of his eye indicated that Touya was preparing to launch an attack that would probably kill Mr Compress extremely quickly, but thankfully, Shouto was already using his quirk in his efforts to cool Izuku down, so the ice wall came up first, just before the villain threw the marble at the huddled group.

An instant later, and Izuku could briefly feel the fire-dragon again, so the marble had presumably broken, returning the thing to its normal size, then it hit the thick ice jutting out over the gap between the villain and the students. The pale gold fire flash boiled the ice, creating a rapidly expanding cloud of steam like when Izuku and Shouto had fought during the sports festival, and delaying the mass of Phoenix Fire long enough for the greenette to dissipate it.

The force of the rapidly boiling water shattered what was left of the ice wall, and chunks of ice rained down on the little group. Kirishima’s clothes were torn, when he rushed forward to defend Izuku— which was for the best, since he still wasn’t really able to make much more than candle flames— while Dark Shadow managed to tank the shards for both Tokoyami, and Yaoyorozu. Touya, and Shouto could obviously defend themselves from the whizzing knives with their own quirks.

Izuku gave a little yelp when he was suddenly picked up a moment later. “Oof, you’re heavy, man,” said Kirishima, “time to be not here.”

“Agreed.” put in Tokoyami, just as Yaoyorozu said “Come on.”

Twisting back in the direction of the gap, the shortest fire-user saw that the tallest looked briefly conflicted, as if he wanted to argue against leaving, before he nodded. “Go, I’ll take the back.”

Izuku barely paid attention as he was carried— impressively quickly— away from the huge gap in the ground, the vast majority of not only his attention but the voice’s as well fixated on All Might, and All-For-One.

If All Might lost, it would be a disaster, especially now that All-For-One had taken an interest of any kind in him. That fight was easily the most important thing. It wasn’t going well.
Now that the two hero students were out of harms way, All Might started to gain more ground, but even with two allies, it was still far from an even fight. *He’s going to lose.* The voice said hollowly, as All-For-One tossed the blond into a nearby building, and proved how at-ease he was fighting the number one, and number two heroes by stopping to talk to Shigaraki, and send the hand-covered man, and his underlings away.

‘We need to do something.’

*How? We can’t go back there.* Said most of the voice. The weird hive-minded entity was old, and experienced, but there were so few things that made it genuinely afraid. It wasn’t coping especially well with being so close to an All-For-One that was not only alive, but free, and if not aware of them, then aware of the current phoenix. It was already beginning to… unravel slightly.

_Tell Hawks-

_Springlike Limbs-

_He could hear-

Too risky-

_Hide-

_Not our dec-

Izuku ignored the internal debate, which the voice was letting spill into his head, and the splitting headache that was the result, instead focusing on his own guesses for what quirks were being used, and the running commentary that Hayato, and Yugo were giving on them.

It should probably be noted that at this stage Izuku was only barely aware of where he was, and he had no idea if he was muttering or not.
That was definitely a strength enhancer.

*Air cannon-*

*Not Blink-*

*Why isn’t he warping-*

*Mask-*

*Something to hide-*

Aoi, Dai and Ichigou had finally realised that they were accidentally arguing aloud, and stopped, so the headache went from blinding to merely horrific.

Izuku was briefly stunned when the thought about one of All-For-One’s oldest- and most favoured- quirks suddenly bore fruit. He wasn’t using Blink because it was a visual range warp quirk, and the mask he was wearing had no eye holes. All-For-One was blind.

The shock from such a massive weakness would have had him stumbling, if he weren’t still being carried by Kirishima- he assumed, he might not have noticed if he had changed hands at some point. Hope gave way to an ever-mounting frustration, as that new weakness was added to an ever-growing pile of weaknesses that the voice could see in All-For-One’s current quirk combinations, but could find no way to use.

They were so much weaker than any of the sets of quirks that All-For-One used before he faked his death, but there was still no way for the three heroes he was currently fighting to exploit those weaknesses. They just didn’t have the right tools.

If Izuku had been the sort to growl, he would have been at this point. What was the point in knowing what quirks the man was using if they had no way to use that information? He had the Phoenix Spirit quirk, he knew more about All-For-One than anyone, surely there had to be a way to-
The voices talking over each other to fill in the list of quirks being used fell silent, when Izuku suddenly had an epiphany. He knew more about All-For-One than anyone. There was… one thing he could do. It was risky, but it could provide a window of opportunity, however small.

Toshinori gasped, trying in vain to get enough air in his one remaining lung. It was like he could feel the embers of One-For-All dimming with each new punch, but he couldn’t hold back- none of them could. Even all of One-For-All was barely making the monster step back.

“Come now, All Might. I knew you were getting weaker, but those love taps would embarrass even your pathetic master.” Said the masked villain after another Detroit Smash blocked with apparent ease.

The blond saw red. He was moving forward, fist raised before he even registered what he was doing, body moving on its own, as it always did when he saw someone in need of saving, but this time for an entirely different purpose.

Gran Torino, who knew him best, and had fought alongside him the last time he fought his master’s killer reacted almost before he moved. Hawks was a bare instant slower. Before the barrage of feather-knives arrived, the diminutive hero had arrived in striking range, only to immediately leave it again, purpose fulfilled. All-For-One had moved to grab the older hero, leaving only one hand poised to strike at Toshinori.

Enraged beyond all reason, or no, Toshinori’s body knew what it was doing, even when the hero’s brain was otherwise engaged. Instead of throwing the wild punch, the blond moved slightly to the side, grabbing the hand intended to block the blow that never came in a crushing grip. One-For-All entered Toshinori’s left arm like a flood.

The blank skull-like mask betrayed no emotion whatsoever even in the moment it was shattered, the villain flattened to the ground, Toshinori’s fist planted firmly in the flat eyeless mass of scar tissue beneath, even as his other hand let go, so as not to let the monster stay on his feet.

“Now that’s strange, All Might. Where did your smile go?” All-For-One said, seemingly unconcerned, hands rising to press into his cheeks in a perverse imitation of Nana, “whatever else, even if she was nothing but her useless ideals, she was still smiling at the end, you know. Shimura Nana.”
Ever word this man spoke was like more wood added to the fire in Toshinori’s veins. Hearing his master’s name from that mouth made it blaze suddenly higher. “You worthless scum!” He roared. “How dare you say her name?!” Toshinori finally moved his fist, if only so that he could attack again.

The blow never landed, All-For-One using some unnatural combination of stolen quirks to launch the eighth One-For-All user flying. His new position gave Toshinori an excellent view of what happened next. Gran Torino launched himself up to intercept the hero, catch him before he struck the helicopter that was too close to the fight; meanwhile, on some unspoken agreement, Hawks launched an attack with his longer feathers that would likely have reduced any lesser villain to chunks.

The older heroes hadn’t even landed when All-For-One launched another air blast at the younger blond, who showed his mettle as the number two hero. The net of feathers changed course in an instant, joining almost every feather on the man’s back, causing him to start to fall, but he somehow managed to hold them in place, for all that most of them broke as they blocked the pressure-wave.

“You know,” All-For-One said, seemingly idly, “if you keep pulling tricks like that, I may have to review my policy on taking mutations.”

Toshinori had barely landed by the time he launched himself at an angle, estimating where the winged hero would land. His body protested the continued use of One-For-All, but then it often did.

Hawks managed to recall most of his feathers, but the bulk of them were bent, or broken, and combined they were barely enough to slow his fall. He wouldn’t be able to dodge, if-

As All Might had feared, All-For-One launched a cluster of sharp black tendrils, clearly intending to strip the young hero of his quirk. The older hero couldn’t stand by as that happened. He couldn’t.

Pouring more of One-For-All into his legs, he sped up, intent on grabbing them before they got there. It wasn’t like All-For-One could take his quirk, and he might even be able to use them to-

The tendrils swerved suddenly as he got close, arm outstretched. “So predictable.” The villain mocked, as the sharp growths dug into the scarring on Toshinori’s side. The blond, who had been intending to use them as leverage to throw the faceless man off his feet, found that it was the reverse that happened.
Gran tried to rush to his aid, but was thrown away by edge the strongest air blast yet, which All Might was in the centre of.

When Toshinori struggled to his feet, he was coughing blood, and in the time he had been off them, Hawks had been floored, one wing bent at an unnatural angle, if not for his slow struggle to rise, All Might might have feared that he was dead.

“You’re a thoughtless failure,” All-For-One informed him, as the blond tried to gather enough of the embers to strike again, and enough of his wits to make the strike worthwhile, “I know you hate me for what I took from you, but did you know that I hate you just as much for what you took from me?” He asked, his ever present aura of malice thickening.

All-For-One was getting close to monologuing now. Toshinori wanted dearly to make him shut up, but that was doubtless exactly what the monster wanted. “You’ve squandered my brother’s legacy, and your only good decision was your successor.”

If his master’s killer speaking the name of the seventh had filled him with rage, then him speaking of his successor, of young Midoriya filled him with something that could only be called horror. The tiny, perennially bright greenette was too young, too new, what horrors had been inflicted on him in the time at the immortal villain’s mercy?

Something must have shown on Toshinori’s face. “Don’t like me talking about him, hm? Izuku is a fascinating young man. The heart of a true vigilante is a rare thing these days.” All Might constantly reminded himself that every word this man spoke was a barb. He had made the mistake of letting anger overrule sense once already today, but his current emotions were more than just rage… though, did All-For-One know that?

“Young Midoriya is going to be a hero!” He shouted at the man, not having to feign his anger, but it was still under control; he didn’t strike, he could see Hawks standing, and Gran moving into a better position to help.

The ancient psychopath laughed. It was not a pleasant sound. “you think so? He cares about helping people more than the system you made yourself the pillar of. You’re going to lose him, All Might, and you can’t stop it.” Now. Toshinori met eyes with Hawks, and Gran, before launching himself forward.

All-For-One would think he had been overcome with emotion again, but he knew the determined
young man he had made his successor. If it were Gran, he would- and had- say he didn’t care, but Toshinori knew that All-For-One was wrong about his protegee. No, he wasn’t moving without thinking now. If the villain thought he was, then-

There, All-For-One’s right arm bulged, the only warning he would get for the upcoming air blast. It wouldn’t have been enough unless he was watching for it. The attack hit only rubble-handily devoid of people thanks to Hawks- as the tall hero launched himself skyward, a Texas Smash coming in from above, at exactly the same time that Gran landed a Vade Retro, and Hawks stabbed most of his unbroken feathers into the man’s back.

“Your pride, and spirit are proving harder to break than I expected. Not to worry, I’m patient.” Said All-For-One, and for the first time he could tell the unconcern was feigned. The man was finally showing signs of strain. The dust cleared to show the villain holding Toshinori’s hand at an awkward angle, bare inches from his non-face.

The heroes just had to hold on a little longer. The monster would surely only show this much strain if he was close to falling. Not that Toshinori, or his partners weren’t but now- “Shigaraki is Shimura Nana’s grandson.”

The elder blond’s brain filled with white noise, his entire world reducing down to those words, and the blank skull of the man that had uttered them. It couldn’t be true, it couldn’t-

All-For-One, being All-For-One, took advantage of his momentary lapse, using his free hand to move past Toshinori’s guard, striking precisely on the scarring he had left two years ago, and the new wounds from minutes earlier.

The hero stumbled back, All-For-One releasing his hand, only the indelible will that had kept him going all these years preventing him from falling to his knees a dozen feet from the villain. His body wasn’t even protesting his continued use of his quirk at this point, so much as trying to take the decision away from him, and for all he clung desperately to it, his muscle form began to warp, only remaining on some parts of his body.

“Hoh? Well that explains it,” the villain spat, advancing slowly towards the heavily wounded hero, “I didn’t expect you to be so desperate to cling to power that you would choose that unsightly form over letting people see the real you. Still, we’ve got time.”

Toshinori was suddenly, and grimly reminded of what Nighteye had told him those few years ago. He was becoming convinced that this was that day. He glanced to the other two heroes, Gran on his feet but swaying visibly from this distance, Hawks struggling even to sit. All Might grit his
teeth, his right side seemed less resistant to using his quirk. He was the symbol of peace, and he was not going down without a fight, fate, or no fate.

As much of One-For-All as he could muster gathered in his left arm, while Toshinori prepared to move it to the right. Another second holding All-For-One off was another second for the other heroes to get to safety, to regro-

“Hey Kansei.” Came Hawks’ voice suddenly, and the slow march of oncoming doom stopped mid stride.

Toshinori saw out the corner of his eye that the winged hero had managed to sit, and was now resting an elbow on one knee, and if not for the dust, and his broken, and balding wings he might have looked casual. Certainly, when he had spoken it was like speaking to an old friend across a table. “I don’t know how you learned that name, but I will gladly find out. At length.” He said, sounding curious, if in a way that promised a horrible end for anything the man felt he had to dismantle to learn what he wanted to know.

Hawks winked at Toshinori before speaking again. This time his cadence was odd, like he was quoting. “Your safety is a cage, Nii-san.”

That one sentence caused the impossible to happen. All-For-One rarely showed emotion, and it was always anger, or a sort of twisted joy at other’s misfortune. Here, the ancient villain showed—not even surprise—shock. His head snapped around, finally turning away from Toshinori, as if he was of no concern.

Toshinori didn’t know how his partner achieved what he had just done, or why it had worked, but his goal was obvious, no matter how tired, or injured, or possibly concussed the older hero was. He had just made a window for Toshinori, and whatever else, he was the number one hero, he could hardly fail to be able to take advantage of it.

All-For-One realized his mistake the very moment he turned, but by then it was too late. “United States of Smash!” All Might yelled, as a fist filled with as much of One-For-All as the hero could safely call—and more, so much more, adrenaline lifting the limits any sane man would realize were there for a reason—brained the villain in the back of the head.

The force of it shattered the pavement, and would have changed the weather if it had been directed upward, but now it merely finished the job of shattering the mask, and left All-For-One unconscious on the rubble-strewn ground.
Chapter Summary

aizawa gives a go at talking to green bean, but the voice knows him better

Chapter Notes

1) I am not a therapist, and I have no idea how to comfort people at all, help.
2) 霜火ヒーロー偏光
3) so. Anti-quirk bullets. They're made using Eri's cells, right? So they must work using her quirk somehow, presumably by Rewinding the quirk factor to a time before it existed. This raises the question... how would they affect phoenix!izuku? since both his quirk factors are extremely old... would they work correctly? I'd assume not, but they would probably do something really weird. Thoughts?

Shota didn’t storm through the halls of the hospital but it was a near thing, he was still wearing a face that even for him was terrifying, and would likely have sent most of his former students into a panic, though he knew he would have to smooth it out soon.

The underground hero’s blood might no longer be boiling, but it was still quietly simmering, since he couldn’t stop thinking about that- that vulture from the press conference, who had the gall to suggest that two of his students had no future, to deliberately try to ruin their reputations right after they had been kidnapped. There was no way the man hadn’t known what he was doing.

Then, as if that wasn’t enough, he had to draw attention to Midoriya being Amber, after everything Nedzu had done- which Shota didn’t, and didn't want to know about- to keep that piece of information as quiet as possible. It had technically been public knowledge, but no-one published anything about it.

It was rational of Nedzu to keep a lid on things, since more people knowing meant more potential threats to the former vigilante; most of the criminals who he took down, well… it wasn’t exactly easy to say who had, and who hadn’t been caught by the greenette, but his part in taking down stain was, if not known, widely talked about. Stain’s little cult could prove a problem.

There were even much lesser problems like the number of students from other classes he might end up having to expel. Midoriya probably wouldn’t snap, but he could very much see jealous general studies students, or stupid older hero students hassling him…
Honestly, even Shota himself hadn’t been sure what he was going to do when he stood up from his seat beside the principal, and it was likely that the only thing saving the damned reporter having his nose bloodied by a furious hero was that he had enough survival instinct to not openly suggest that Midoriya was working with the league.

...Though his implication that him being Amber had encouraged them to attack was almost as bad.

And for what? To sell more copies of his insipid rag? A pay increase? The erasure hero was acutely reminded of all the reasons he despised the press, and all interactions with them that were forced on him.

Shaking his head, he approached what he thought was the right door. The dark-haired man schooled his face to, if not an encouraging look- which he doubted he would ever manage- then at least a neutral one. The last thing anyone needed was the problem child any more stressed than he probably already was.

The erasure hero opened the door without demure, not bothering to knock. He was at least fairly sure this was the right room, given the receptionist’s clear directions. The first thing he noticed about the room was that it was frigid. And not in the same way as most rooms containing both a reckless hero, and someone more rational.

No, he wasn’t a reckless hero, no matter what Recovery Girl said.

The room was at least a dozen degrees colder than the rest of the building, and Shota immediately deepened his face into his scarf.

Looking out from the comforting grey folds, the underground hero saw the… nurse? Doctor? Shota feared both equally so had never bothered learning to tell which was which on sight, but whichever she was, she was currently seeing to a shirtless problem child, disinfecting a nasty gash on his palm, and from the looks of things, just done stitching… was that a stab wound on his side?

It was a testament to how out of it from either total exhaustion, or pain meds he was that the greenette- probably the most observant first-year Shota had ever taught- seemingly hadn’t even noticed him enter. Shouta really hoped it was the latter, because he knew from personal experience how unpleasant getting wounds disinfected was, and Midoriya not reacting in the slightest would otherwise be disturbing.
The erasure hero frowned briefly, wondering how it was so cold in here, and why, before deciding that it was probably the quirk of the woman tending the kid’s wounds. Maybe she was a distance relative of Todoroki, she certainly seemed to have all colour leached out of her, with white hair, and pale skin.

And grey eyes, too. She, at least, had heard him come in. “What’s the damage?” He asked, pitching his voice towards disinterest.

Oh, now the problem child had noticed that he was there, finally turning from the point on the wall he had been staring at. “Aizawa-sensei,” blurted the fire-user, stiffening immediately, “I didn’t take it off!”

The dark-haired man looked at the greenette for a moment, before pinching the bridge of his nose and gazing heavenward. Damn, but he hated teaching. Clearly, either his- well earned- reputation as a hardass, or his “resting murder face”- as Yamada frequently put it- was working against him. “I kind of figured that, Midoriya. You’re not about to get yelled at for getting kidnapped.”

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, he wanted them back, and fought off a wince. He probably shouldn’t have brought it up quite like that. Luckily, problem child hadn’t noticed, instead seeming to sag with relief at the news he wasn’t about to be carted off to prison because some villain had stolen his tracking anklet.

He really should have brought… well, not All Might, since he wasn’t getting out of his bed anytime soon, unless he wanted Recovery Girl to be out for blood, and certainly not Nedzu, since the boy’s other mentor was terrifying to be around at the best of times. Wait, did that make him the kid’s most comforting mentor at present? That was just sad.

Rather than dwelling on that horrifying responsibility, which he had never signed up for, the dark-clothed man turned a questioning look at the woman who was now busy bandaging the boy’s hand.

The doctor answered clinically in clipped tones, not stopping what she was doing. “Severe quirk exhaustion. Given quirk, must be chemical burns on palms, one straight laceration on right palm, deep knife wound which was initially burned shut, but he reopen at some point,” here she turned to look at Shota, who had been keeping track of the ex-vigilante’s reactions, as he shrank in on himself with each new injury, “whoever taught first-aid needs to be flogged.”
Here problem child uncurled himself enough to murmur something, which Shota didn’t catch, but from the way she spluttered, as if the greenette had just insulted her entire ancestry, the nurse clearly had. “Field med- field butchery is more like. I hear you burn shut anything but life-threatening wound again, and we have words. Clear?” Demanded the irate medical professional.

The fire-user quailed, but nodded. “Yes, ma’am.” He answered tremulously.

She looked at Midoriya for a second longer, before nodding once, satisfied. “Other than those, scrapes, bruises, nothing major, I think someone stabbed arm with nail, or maybe screw, though.” She finished the rundown of the greenette’s injuries, turning back to her work.

Shota nodded to himself, not daring to say that it could have been worse. It could have been much worse, honestly, since that sounded like the villains did next to nothing while the actually had the kid- though he had no idea how the chemical burns had come about- but Midoriya wouldn’t want to hear that, he thought, not to mention that the doctor might try to murder him if he sounded like he was encouraging this sort of thing.

Shota was thinking about what he should be saying to the fire-user- dammit, why did all this having to comfort people happen to him- when the greenette beat him to it. “Sensei, is Tokoyami-kun OK?” He asked, golden eyes staring into his soul, though the effect was somewhat ruined by how his free hand was twitching, as if he really wanted to be fidgeting, “h-he said he wasn’t injured, b-but I don’t kn-know if he- not that I think Tokoyami would hide injuries, but- oh, and what about the others? I-I didn’t see anything that could have hurt them, but-”

Aizawa cut into what was rapidly devolving into unintelligible muttering- which was honestly a wonder, given how tired the boy looked to be. “Tokoyami is fine, he was barely even scraped up, thanks to you,” he said flatly- though he was going to see the bird-headed teen right after this to see if he needed set up with a therapist of his own, “and your little ‘rescue party’, too. For now. Whether they’ll still be fine when I’m done with them remains to be seen.”

Todoroki Touya was definitely getting murdered, and no less than he deserved for not only not discouraging that recklessness, but actually taking his students into harms way. He didn’t care whose idea it was initially, Touya was the adult, he was taking the fall for this shit.

Predictably, really, the greenette didn’t take well to this proclamation, eyes widening as some panic shone through the exhaustion. “You can’t expel them! They were trying to help me!” Problem child said hurriedly, “A-And they didn’t actually break any rules.”

“Debatable. Regardless, what they did put everyone involved at risk. Not just them, but you, and
“B-But if they hadn’t been there, we might not have gotten away, a-and—” the One-For-All user stammered, just as the nurse finished bandaging up his palm, and backed up to start taking some notes on a clipboard.

“So people can do whatever they want, so long as it works out, that time?” Shota asked archly.

Midoriya opened his mouth, took one glance at the erasure hero’s face, realized the answer he should be giving here, and hurriedly changed what he was going to say. “No, Sensei.” Damned vigilante sensibilities. They still needed to work on that.

Shota sighed. “I’m not going to expel them,” they had potential, and they were still green enough that that sort of over-emotional response could be forgiven, “but they aren’t getting out of a lecture. And as for you…”

The underground hero paused, considering if this would be crossing a line. He gave the mental equivalent of a shrug, and went with his gut. The problem child, who had relaxed at the news that his friends, and- Shota had to assume- boyfriend weren’t being expelled, stiffened in surprise, as the dark-haired man pulled a hand from his pocket to rest in his unruly curls. “Well done. You did good, kid, getting yourself, and Tokoyami to safety like that.” He said, ruffling the verdant hair, while noting that the golden-eyed teen was still practically radiating heat, which explained why the nurse was keeping it so cold in here.

When Shota stepped back, he had to hide a smirk in his scarf, as the greenette raised his unbandaged hand to his head, in a display of near comical confusion.

“Right then,” said the dark-haired man, as if nothing had happened, “the police are probably going to want you to stay at home until school starts up again, and for good reason, but if you need to talk to someone, just call me, and either I can talk to you,” though goodness knew he was no good at it, and would rather the kid chose to confide in someone less dead inside- why people seemed to like confiding in him he’d never know, “or we can set up extra sessions at your therapist’s, or have them come to you, if you would be more comfortable like that, OK?”

It took a few seconds for Midoriya to come back to the present, in which time Shota watched him expectantly, and the doctor pretended she wasn’t listening in. “Um, OK...” Said the greenette finally, and the hero didn’t like that uncertain tone one bit.
“Midoriya,” Shota said, trying to hit the right amount of firmness, “you shouldn’t have had to go through what you did. Now that was on me, along with the other heroes assigned to keep you students safe,” Midoriya looked like he wanted to object, but the dark-clothed man rode right over him with a flat look, “and you did extremely well, under the circumstances, but it’s important to remember to ask for help if you need it.”

Midoriya nodded, and now it was Shota’s turn to watch the boy to try to determine if he actually meant to do what he was agreeing to. Not that that was an easy task, given that the former vigilante was all but unreadable when he wanted to be. Still, he would have to take it, for now.

“How long until he’ll be discharged?” He asked the nurse, hopeful that getting the problem child to ask for help would not be a losing battle.

“A couple of hours only,” she answered immediately, “we have doctors with healing quirks. Not as good as Recovery Girl, but he would be in coma with her quirk, so a couple of days to heal is better anyway. He should rest for a couple of weeks, preferably; he didn’t break arm, but was close. Other than that we just need to cool him down slowly with my quirk, since we can’t put him in ice bath with his wounds.”

Shota nodded, that was about what he had expected. “Alright. Stay out of trouble, Midoriya, I’m going to go look for Tokoyami. The police will probably bring you a new anklet, when they come to see if you can tell them anything useful about the league. And, fair warning, I’ll probably see you in a couple of days anyway, since I need to talk to your mother about Nedzu’s plans to move your classmates into dorms.”

The underground hero barely waited for the greenette’s nod, before he prowled out of the room, hands back in his pockets to prevent them from freezing in the cold room.

The voice was worried. Oh, who were they kidding, the voice was practically hysterical, however well they were hiding it from Izuku. They couldn’t even be blamed for that, since they had a lot to worry about, right now.

First off, All-For-One was- at best- currently in a cell in Tartarus, rather than an especially deep
grave, which would have been safer for everyone involved, even if they- with the exception of the less… publicly minded parts of the voice- couldn’t really fault Yagi for not murdering the man in front of a national audience.

Not to mention that they had allowed Izuku to risk blowing the cover off the whole immortality thing, which wasn’t exactly soothing, even if the greenette had pointed out that they could deflect the blame for that onto the weird vestiges of their new quirk.

Then there was whatever the hell One-For-All thought it was doing, suddenly manifesting an entirely different quirk, which from the effect it had had on the cuffs, and the door could only be Dismantle, Shimura Nana’s quirk.

But all that paled into insignificance when compared to what was, and always would be their biggest concern- their kid. Aizawa had gone up several notches in their- already fairly high-estimation of him by coming to make sure Izuku was OK, and even tell him that he had done well, but things were still not all well in the greenette’s head.

Aoi was presently humming tunelessly just because after the second time Izuku had been subjected to quirk dampeners, he wasn’t exactly reacting well to silence from them. Hopefully that wouldn’t last terribly long, though.

No, what was worrying them, was that Izuku hadn’t freaked out when they got to safety. No crying, no hyperventilating, not even the more minor signs of distress he tended to show when he let himself process something dangerous that had happened to him. It was not a good sign.

They had, terrible as it sounded, been hopeful, if anything, when Izuku had had a minor breakdown when he arrived home, but even then, it wasn’t about what had actually happened; he just finally managed to properly apologise to Inko for lying to her, and worrying her, and a bunch of other things he blamed himself for, while she broke down in tears, since she had been terrified that she might never see him again.

No, he wasn’t letting himself think about what had happened at all. They knew what he was doing, even if they weren’t really able to stop him; after all, they had been the ones to teach him to compartmentalise like that in the first place. But they had told him, even then, that it wasn’t healthy to do it for long, that it was just something to let him keep functioning when he couldn’t let himself worry about it safely.

Now… now he was doing it when he had already gotten to safety.
Izuku collapsed into bed, almost as soon as the extended self-dehydration session with Inko was finished, and was asleep not long after.

Despite their fervent wishes, and mostly out of a sense of hopeless optimism, the voice didn’t shunt the current phoenix into the not-quite-dream the instant he was out, but tried to let him get some proper rest.

Unsurprisingly, though, that didn’t pan out, and at the first sign of that mask they shunted the boy into lucidity with a well-practiced mental nudge. The newly-formed nightmare shattered, and the dream version of Inko’s living room formed.

Izuku let up his control of the dream a second later, and the various bits of the voice separated out, forming their own bodies, and rushing towards the greenette, finally able to do more comforting than merely talking to him.

Aoi got there first, by means of simply manifesting her body already within hugging range, and a moment later their child, who had just been through the worst shit any of them had since… probably Yugo, was being crushed in a tight embrace by the terrifying redheaded woman.

“I’m fine.” Came the muffled objection from against the sixth phoenix’s chest, while the rest of the more comforting parts of the voice crowded in.

“No, you’re not.” Argued Aoi, who seemed to have started crying at some point, however unlike her that was. Izuku didn’t even seem to have noticed that he had accidentally manifested himself at around middle-school age.

“And neither would any of us be.” Said Ren, though he spoke quietly enough that it was unlikely that the boy heard him.

Here Hayato began abusing his kindly grandfather voice for all it was worth. “Izuku, do you trust us?”

The greenette was surprised enough at that that he failed to guard his thoughts properly for a moment, and they managed to catch “dad” somewhere in there. They carefully hid the shame they tended to feel whenever the seventh phoenix let slip that he thought of them like a parent.
They were more of a father to him than Hisashi, for sure, but they were in no way a good father. Actually they were, for all that they had been a parent six times, a truly terrible parent. They were pretty sure that had they been the actual father of Dai, or Yugo, then they would have been arrested at some point, and even now, they were barely mediocre at parenting.

“You need to let yourself think about it.” Said the white-beared man gently.

If not for the fact that they were privy to everything Aoi heard, none of them would have heard what Izuku said. “We know it hurts, Izu. And we’re sorry, but if you don’t, then it won’t get better.” Said the sixth phoenix, stroking the unruly curls atop the seventh’s head.

One of these centuries, they were going to have to see if one of them couldn’t learn to be a proper therapist, as it was their efforts felt fumbling, especially now that Izuku had started seeing a professional. Still, for better, or worse, he did trust them, it only took a little more prodding to get the youngest phoenix to stop avoiding remembering what had happened since the training camp.

Then the floodgates opened. A whole slew of emotions that they would have to pick apart later poured through the bond, while Aoi pulled Izuku onto a nearby sofa, quickly joined by Yugo, leaving the rest of them to hover awkwardly, trying to be there for him, but not crowd.

“I fucked up,” said Izuku, eyes already leaking profusely, and using language that he would probably never use in the waking world, “I-I didn’t realise, d-didn’t see that he might still be alive. I got caught. by- by him. I could have died,” his voice dropped to a whisper, “I could have lost you.”

The various parts of the voice wanted to interrupt. They wanted to interrupt so badly, to stop Izuku wallowing, but they couldn’t. He had to let it out, then they could help.

Honestly, hypocrite thought it made them, they didn’t want to think about that either. They had seen the memory Izuku had sent them of his time with All-For-One, and their blood would have run cold- if they had still had blood- at the moment when the greenette had reached for his fire.

Phoenixes were free birds, by definition impossible to cage. There was one choice always available to a phoenix, and the voice was under no illusions as to why it was that their quirk let them make fire anywhere on their body, even when it didn’t protect them from it. None of them had ever actually made that choice yet, but Izuku had come so, so close to it, and they couldn’t articulate how thankful they were that he hadn’t had to do it.
All through the self-recrimination, Aoi kept up a steady stream of vaguely comforting wordless noises, rubbing soothing circles in the weeping greenette’s back. They waited patiently for the greenette to calm enough that he could actually benefit from what they had to say, all while debating who would actually speak.

Speaking in unison was a bit too disconcerting for this sort of thing, at least when they weren’t just a voice in the kid’s head.

Finally, the seventh began to run himself in circles, and they decided it was safe to interrupt. “Izuku,” Ichigou cut in, squatting down at eye level with Izuku, “you didn’t fuck up.”

“But I-”

“You didn’t,” the first repeated, “we did. I did especially. You just trusted us, and we led you to the wrong conclusions. All of this was our fault, if it was anyone’s, and you can’t blame yourself.”

“But if I-” Began the greenette, before the brunet cut him off with a flick to the forehead.

“No what ifs,” said the oldest man “alive” firmly, “you’re an immortal, and that means…”

“No wasting time on what ifs.” mumbled the greenette, and rubbed at the red spot, for all that he couldn’t feel it- there was no pain in dreams.

Immortality wasn’t easy, and that was one of the lessons they had learned very early on; spending all your time thinking “what if I had done…” was a good way to drive yourself to madness.

The other thing they had learned early was that it really helped to enjoy the world, to enjoy learning new things, and that Izuku was better at than the rest of them combined.

The only difficulty was that Izuku took after Inko so much. They loved the woman, but it was telling about her sense of self-esteem as a whole that she chose to name her own quirk Minor Attraction. They had spent a good chunk of Izuku’s tenure as the president of the being alive club so far constantly affirming that he was doing a good job, that things that went wrong weren’t his fault, that they were proud of him, and so on.
“Good. Now Aizawa-kun is right, you did so so well. You were so brave, and we’re proud of you.” Said Ren gruffly, nodding his heavily scarred head.

Yugo shook his head at the especially fumbling attempts of the most intimidating- by looks anyway- part of the voice trying to be comforting. “What he said,” said the black-haired phoenix, leaning on the green-haired one, “as for the rest, well…”

Aoi cut in here, before Yugo could say whatever he was about to. She- and most of the rest of them- never quite trusted the third not to put his foot in it. “As to the rest, yes, you could have,” they weren’t exactly up for openly lying to Izuku, whatever else they might do, “but it’s over now, and you’re safe. He’s not getting out of his cell anytime soon, so he won’t be hurting anyone.”

“He was right though,” said the greenette in a small voice, and oh boy had they been dreading this, “I-I’m so untrusting… I didn’t even turn Giran in, when I knew he was working for the league… can- can I really be a hero, if I’m like this? Should I? He’s still alive, and…”

Ren huffed. “Not turning Giran in was only logical, he’s still useful, it’s nothing to do with trust.”

The flinch Izuku had at the word logical was not lost on the voice, and Aoi glared at Ren, while Ichigou- weirdly, as far as the rest of the voice was concerned- snorted. “Izuku, we are pragmatic. I honestly can’t believe Kansei was able to say that he was pragmatic with a straight face. Trust me, I knew him better than almost anyone, once; Kansei is the pettiest man who has ever lived.”

‘For a given value of face.’ Thought Yugo at that point.

Dai nodded, humming to catch the greenette’s attention. “Every word Kansei speaks is poison. He isn’t the worst villain ever because of his quirk, he would have been just as bad with just the longevity. It’s the charisma you have to watch out for.”

Ichigou nodded, and before they realised the first two phoenixes were talking in unison. “He said that, and probably everything else to hurt you. Probably because you got in his way, or just because you had One-For-All and he was feeling spiteful. It’s safest to just discount what Kansei says, unless you can figure out why he said it.”

“You’re doing it again.” Said Hayato, causing the pair of them to tsk in unison. They had been trying to separate themselves more ever since they had figured out- read been told in no uncertain
terms by Yuko- what they were doing wrong, but it was still hard to remember that they had been
two people.

“It might not have been entirely to hurt you, so much as drive a wedge between you and the heroes.
He saw that you had allies, and he wanted that to stop, either to weaken you, or to drive you to
him.” Put in Ren, who was a suspicious bastard at the best of times… though he was now
advocating for trusting the heroes, however indirectly.

The various phoenixes looked down at their current charge, finding him to be biting his lip. “So
what else is worrying you about what he said?” Asked Aoi gently.

“He said… we were helping him.” Said the greenette, looking down.

Now it was Ren’s turn to snort. “Kid, the network is my baby. I’d know about it, if anything had
happened. Plus, he’s the most petty man ever, remember? He wouldn’t be forgiving just because
‘you didn’t know which companies were his’.”

Ichigou nodded in agreement. “I can only guess that he was still trying to make himself seem…
nice? I guess. So that you would consider switching to his side.”

Dai spoke next, carefully avoiding overlapping with Ichigou. “He always did like coming across as
reasonable until you were in too deep.”

And honestly, if it weren’t for how much that conversation had seemingly hurt Izuku, they would
have laughed at the absurdity of trying to trick the one person in the world who knew him best like
that.

Thankfully, Izuku was beginning to look a good deal more relaxed now, which was probably
because he had a plausible reason for everything that had happened. It was probably their influence
that caused not knowing things to give the poor boy anxiety.

Yugo apparently decided that the greenette had had enough unpleasant conversation for today, and
removed the roof with a wave of his hand. “Right then,” the young-old man said, “who wants to
have some fun, and fly to Kyoto, while we’re here?”

Izuku blinked owlishly at him, tear tracks vanishing slowly as he forgot they were there. “Huh? B-
but shouldn’t we figure out what’s going on with One-For-”

“Nope,” insisted Yugo flippantly, “you need to relax, and so do...” he trailed off.

Aoi had just spotted the fog bank moving from its spot near the table. Of course, why not? Speak of the devil and he will appear. Mirai had better have a damn good explanation for this.
three of nine

Chapter Summary

quirk discussions, that's it.

Chapter Notes

1) today's chapter brought to you by Yuki_setsu's huge mistake
2) I should have known that writing a character that would know what all the OFA quirks were was a bad idea, but I didn't so now this has happened, and I'm sorry.
3) how many number-based chapter titles can I come up with? who knows.
4) https://captainkirkk.tumblr.com/post/188946171122/lullabyknell-there-are-three-things-all-wise
   this gifset exists, and I cannot contain my joy.
5) if anyone begins to wonder "why does Y_S cut off his chapters when he does?" the answer is that i publish a chapter as soon as i can't bear to keep writing anymore for the day :p

‘…that is not Mirai.’ Thought the voice, in what for five of them was mild surprise, when they saw the woman that was forming out of the fog bank that Izuku had just fearlessly approached, as if the greenette didn’t know the amount of nuclear fury that was about to be unleashed on it for being needlessly cryptic.

Aoi didn’t feel mild surprise, instead the red-haired woman mostly felt horror-guilt-fear, and had escaped the room before Shimura Nana’s shade was even fully formed, fleeing by the door that usually led to Izuku’s room, but in this case let out into a beautiful garden that had been destroyed twenty-five years prior. It was where she went to relax.

They couldn’t really blame her. She had been barely older than Izuku when she had made the call that had saved All Might’s life, and coincidentally resulted in Nana’s death. The rest of the voice kept half an eye on her, the rest of their attention on the dark-haired woman.

It took Nana a couple of seconds to finish forming, and they could already see that she was doing a better job of it than Mirai, even if her clothes were still occasionally flickering between her hero costume, and various sets of civilian clothes. She herself hardly blurred at all.

A moment later, she seemed to finally notice the greenette standing right in front of her, and
grinned as brightly as Yagi in his prime, but somehow much more genuinely.

“So I’m up first then? there’s a surprise,” She told him, “it’s great to finally meet Toshi’s successor. Damn, but you’re adorable. He really picked a good one, I think,” here she hit the young phoenix on the shoulder, which he didn’t seem to know what to do with, “How’s the squirt doing, anyway? he’s not dead, or we’d know about it. Something must have happened, though, if he’s picked a successor.”

“Y-You’re... Shimura Nana.” Said Izuku, seeming dazed, either by the woman’s unexpected appearance, or the onslaught of words.

Shimura’s smile seemed to get even brighter somehow, but she at least had the good grace to take a small step back. “Your recognise me then? Aw, does the squirt talk about me often? that’s good. I was kind of worried it would take him a while to get over… anyway, how long has it been? It’s hard to keep track of time in there.”

Izuku didn’t seem to be getting any more comfortable in face of the exuberant woman, and this line of questioning was causing him to pull an awkward face, and let how awkward he was feeling slip through the bond. Time to intervene.

Normally, the voice always made a point not to be intimidating as much as they could. To their charge. This woman wasn’t their charge. Plus she was clearly making their charge uncomfortable. The five disparate men raised their fists in unison to give five simultaneous “polite” coughs into them.

The dead hero jumped a foot in the air, eyes finally leaving the living phoenix to settle on the crowd of fallen ones behind him. Had she really not noticed they were there? Or was it just that she assumed them to be part of Izuku’s dream?

“Sorry,” they said together, “but what exactly is going on here?” If she looked a little freaked out at being addressed by a hive-mind in this way, then good. She might not be Mirai, but she was part of One-For-All, and they were going to get answers.

The heroic spirit recovered admirably, though she still didn’t initially answer. “Who are you?” She asked, which they supposed was a valid question.

The five sighed. “Izuku’s birth quirk is remarkably similar to One-For-All; we’re the previous
Nana looked as if she wasn’t entirely sure how to deal with this particular revelation. “Huh,” she said finally, “I never would have thought there could be another… so wait, your quirk is like some sort of reincarnation?” She asked Izuku, who nodded.

“S-Sort of, it’s called Phoenix Spirit, but it’s not really reincarnation, since we just end up a voice in the next phoenix’s head.” Answered the greenette, and given how long any of them had gone without ever mentioning so much as the name of their quirk to anyone who didn’t have it, they were surprised he managed to get it out that easily, even in the not-quite-dream.

Shimura looked like she was about to ask for more details, so the voice stepped in again. “We can answer your questions later, right now, it might be better if you got on with telling us what the hell is going on with One-For-All?”

Aoi would probably have told them off for being so curt with someone, if she were here, and Izuku certainly felt like he wanted to, but for now he stayed silent, waiting for Nana to speak.

“Right,” said the woman, flicking back to wearing her costume, seemingly unconsciously, “we probably don’t have all night, I guess,” and boy did Hayato, and Izuku clearly want to question her about that, but they held their tongues, for fear of rabbit-holes, “I know the first has already spoken to you, so how much do you already know?”

“Next to nothing, just that it has something to do with our emotions.” Said Hayato.

“Mirai was being extremely vague.” Put in Ren, clearly unhappy.

“Even for him.” Sighed Ichigou in agreement. The first phoenix loved the man dearly, but he… well, it was similar to Izuku’s mumbling; he tended to think ten steps ahead, but only tell you about that tenth step. It left a lot to be desired, when you were trying to understand him.

“Oh,” murmured Nana, running a hand through suddenly loose hair, “that’s less than I expected. All right, better make a start,” she turned from the voice, talking mostly to Izuku again, “so I don’t know how you think about One-For-All, but it’s like… a torch, burning around a core, right?”

Izuku nodded dubiously, while the voice gave her slightly odd looks; this was nothing like the
metaphors the first three users had gone with, which tended to be “a well that gets deeper when you draw from it”. Might also explain the hair thing, whenever that might have started. Dai had used a couple of drops of blood in a water bottle both times.

Nana smiled encouragingly at him, before going on. “Well, each new generation builds on the last one, making the fire bigger, and hotter. Now, the fire is hot enough to crack the core, so for you,” she poked the greenette gently over the heart, “it’s going to start manifesting the quirks of the previous holders.”

Izuku was gazing at the woman wonderingly, probably a bit overwhelmed at the sudden news that he was about to manifest six new quirks, but the voice was an even bigger mess of conflicting emotions than the six-person hive-mind usually was. Outwardly, they groaned. “You really couldn’t have picked a worse time for this, you know.” It told the slightly startled woman, talking in unison again.

“Guys!” Admonished Izuku, more seriously than they thought he had ever done so before. OK, so maybe they were being a bit harsh on her, but with Aoi gone, only Hayato was mild-mannered enough for this.

“I… didn’t? We didn’t really expect you to unlock one so fast. It should have taken longer for you to integrate with One-For-All. The quirk really likes you, you know.” This last was directed at Izuku again. “More than it ever did me, or Toshi.”

The other four looked to Dai. “It recognised us, or our quirk I’d guess. we’ve held it before.” Said the second phoenix, and third One-For-All user.

Weirdly, this seemed to surprise Nana much more than the mere existence of an immortality quirk. Probably because All-For-One had something vaguely similar. “You’ve held it before?” She said faintly, once she finally managed to close her mouth.

Dai nodded, pointing to himself with one hand, and holding up three fingers on the other.

Shimura’s face did several odd things in quick succession here. Finally it settled on what the voice might describe as utter incoherent fury. “You- you were the third, so you must… you have to know more about All-For-One than any of us did, you- you could have helped!” She said, starting hollowly, and building until she was all but screaming at the older fire-users. They distantly noted that the hair she was trying to pull out was back in its accustomed bun.
The voice raised its eyebrows in unison. For all that she was a great hero, the way she was currently making Izuku cringe was fast bringing them close to losing patience with her. “And risk All-For-One taking our quirk? Becoming truly immortal, rather than just ageless?” Demanded Dai flatly.

“Besides which,” added Ren, when this brought Nana up short, “what makes you think we didn’t help? Who told you where to find him? Made sure he never found you, when you weren’t ready for him? We have done everything we could for over two centuries, besides being the only reason that your successor is still alive. Don’t you-”

The heavily scarred man was about to go further, when an angry thought from the seventh phoenix cut him off. The voice took a deep breath, centring itself, and finally noting how the seventh One-For-All user was sagging into herself.

Hayato rubbed his temple. “Sorry, I think we might have gone a bit far there.” He offered, by way of truce.

“No… no, you’re right. I- I didn’t really think that through.” She waved him off, before finally noticing the state the youngest person present was in, namely that he looked close to bursting into tears again.

“Shit,” the hero said in English, “sorry kid, I didn’t mean to shout.” She added, bending down to eye-level with Izuku.

Izuku looked up, wiping his eyes. “Th-That’s alright, it- it must have been a shock…” he trailed off under Nana’s piercing look.

“That’s no excuse. I’m- I was a hero, I shouldn’t be acting like that. And you certainly didn’t deserve that. It’s important for a hero to smile, even when things are tough, so they can let people know ‘it’s alright’.”

The voice- who had raised generation after generation of fighters who may not have smiled, but could reassure- on the rare occasions they had to- by how calm they tended to seem- quietly disagreed, but let it be, when Izuku huffed a watery laugh at the woman using two fingers to press into her smiling cheeks.

Nana shook herself. “Anyway, we didn’t really choose when you manifested the quirk. Since it
was mine you manifested, you must have been thinking ‘I need to break this’, or maybe ‘I need to destroy this’, right?”

Izuku nodded, remembering how desperate he was to get out of the cuffs. “Well One-For-All responded to that emotion, and threw out the most appropriate quirk it had. My birth quirk is called Dismantle,” she said, touching the coffee table, and causing it to fall apart, every individual piece unscrewing itself from the whole, “it does pretty much what it says on the tin; dismantles anything built from distinct pieces when you touch them with five fingers. It’s not the most useful for a hero,” the various phoenixes disagreed, but then they usually saw potential in even the weakest quirks, “which is why I was surprised it manifested first. I almost never used it after I got One-For-All, but you should watch out, since One-For-All will have made it much stronger than it was on its own.”

The voice nodded at various rates, thinking on how it had worked so quickly through dampeners, and how it had exploded that door so violently.

“Now, what’s so bad about it manifesting now? Surely you wouldn’t have pulled it out, if you didn’t need it.” She looked expectantly at the ninth user.

Izuku gulped, clearly not happy to be forced to think about his recent ordeal again so soon. “I needed it to break some quirk dampening cuffs. I was- I got caught by All-For-One.”

Nana’s eyes went as wide as dinner plates, and she rushed to grab the greenette’s shoulders. “But you got out, right?! Please tell me you’re safe now!” She demanded desperately, seemingly only holding back from shaking him out of some fear that he might somehow be hurt in a dream. She kept looking him up and down for injuries.

“We’re safe,” said Hayato in his most calming tones- mostly for Izuku’s benefit, “we’re asleep in his room, after All Might rescued us. We should be all healed physically in a day or two.”

“Oh thank fu-” the heroine started, stumbling back, clutching her chest, breathing heavily, “thank goodness. That’s- that’s good. I’m glad you got away safely. And All-For-One?”

“Currently in prison. And I doubt he’ll ever recover from his injuries.” Said Ichigou, with no small satisfaction.

“you should be proud. For all his exuberance, you picked a great successor.” Allowed Ren, barely
grudging the praise for once.

“So the squirt actually did it...” Said Shimura wonderingly, smiling widely, and looking like she might burst into tears, “and he actually went ahead with that name? Oh, I wish I could have seen it.”

“Yeah!” Said Izuku, “He’s the number one hero now, people call him the symbol of peace. Plus people always feel safe when he shows up.” The voice was... fairly sure he was saying all of this for Shimura’s benefit, since he usually shared their mixed views on the blond, but what he said was true, and from the way she started crying in earnest, it clearly made her pretty happy.

After a moment she sputtered a laugh, still crying. “They really call him the symbol of peace?” A nod from the assembled phoenixes. “Thanks kid, I’m really, really happy to hear he did well for himself, even if I never get to see it.”

Izuku smiled at the thanks, and the voice sighed. Dammit, now she was making the kid happy. Fine. They sighed. “Here.” Said Hayato, waving an arm, and one of the living room walls disappeared, leaving an opening onto a memory. Specifically of one of the old videos of All Might, the one that Izuku used to swatch on loop for hours as a kid.

This resulted in a lot more happy tears, and some blubbering, and the voice was pretty glad that time worked weirdly in dreams. Looking in on Aoi, it looked like she had stopped shaking, and was now just drinking tea in the garden, but when asked she still refused to come back.

Understandable, the others thought they might end up leaving when the time came to talk to the One-For-All users they had sent to their deaths.

Eventually, when Shimura had calmed down, and stopped hugging Hayato, they managed to get back to more important discussions. Thankfully, whatever time-limit Nana mentioned didn’t seem to be approaching anytime soon.

“So, you’re worried that people might think he gave it to you?” The dark-haired woman asked, turning from the now opaque wall.

The voice collectively gave her a flat look. “We spend time with All-For-One, then suddenly start manifesting new quirks at random, what do you think people are going to think?” Ren said, while the others nodded along. Including Izuku, who was worried about what people thought of him at
Nana shook her head wryly. “not very trusting, are you?” She said to the voice at large.

“Comes with guarding something so valuable for so long.” Answered Ichigou, and Nana sighed.

“I suppose that’s fair; I didn’t exactly trumpet One-For-All from the rooftops, and your quirk would be even worse if people knew about it,” she shook her head, “you can tell Toshinori, though. He would be a bit surprised, but I know Toshi. The squirt would believe you, if you explained, I promise.”

Neither the voice, nor Izuku, who had been explicitly told he had lost a lot of trust over the whole Amber thing seemed convinced, so the shade continued. “And besides, it’s not like-” She cut off, as her arm began to fuzz, turning back into fog.

“Drat, looks like I’m running out of time for now,” she said, before going on all in a rush, “he never had a chance to take my quirk, and Toshi should recognise it. You’re a good kid.”

She rumpled Izuku’s hair, moments before the arm that was doing the rumpling also fuzzed away. “Oh,” said the rapidly dematerializing woman, “and could you tell Toshi I’m proud of him?”

She didn’t seem to see Izuku’s nod, as the rest of her turned back into fog, rejoining the silently shifting bank of the stuff, with one final “It would mean a lot.”

‘Well that was abrupt.’ Thought the voice, while Izuku was still blinking, not used to people rapidly disappearing on him, rather than the other way around. The voice was secretly kind of grateful, she hadn’t stuck around long enough for one of them to feel compelled to tell her that there was a good chance he might have her quirk, or a copy of it anyway, from her son.

The surprise from Nana’s sudden departure lasted a few seconds, and then Izuku began to all but vibrate with excitement. He was going to be able to use the other quirks. Six whole new quirks! If he could convince the heroes that he had come by them legitimately…
There would be so much more he could do. More lives he could save, people he could help. Not to mention the whole world of ways that many quirks could be combined, combination moves that other heroes could only dream of. It was an analyst’s dream.

This excitement quickly gave way to worry bordering on fear, when the five parts of the voice still in the room collapsed on the nearest available seats, not one of them looking happy about this.

“That’s it then.” Said Ren, into the silence.

The voice, on the whole, was… childish. He might have thought of it like his dad sometimes, but honestly it acted more like a fun uncle, laughing at inappropriate times, mocking anyone in any way “overly serious”, and making dirty jokes once it thought he was old enough to hear them.

Sure, it was a fun uncle who was also a raving paranoid lunatic, but that was just because it had lived through so many years of a war that they had almost no hope of ever winning.

In short, the voice didn’t act its age, which was for the best, since that would have involved immediately dropping dead for every part of the voice older than Ren. It was acting its age now, half of them holding their heads, and Ren… he sounded so tired.

“Guys?” Asked the greenette tremulously.

Aoi re-entered the room, grabbing Izuku’s shoulder gently, and pulling him to the sofa, so that he was wedged between her, and Ichigou. “What’s- what’s wrong?” The youngest phoenix asked his elders.

Hayato answered, and he sounded just as tired as Ren had, for all that his tone was gentle. “Izuku, One-For-All has always been kept secret. The reason this was possible, was because it’s users were circumspect, and the quirk itself was… basically as generic as a quirk really can be. Now… One-For-All is going to do something extremely distinct. When it comes time for you to pick your successor, except in the extremely unlikely event that you pick your own kid, people are going to figure it out.”

(The reason this was extremely unlikely is that, for reasons they weren’t entirely sure of, though they guessed it was because in some myths there was only one phoenix, the phoenix in every generation so far had been gay, and the ones that had bothered testing it found that they were infertile.)
Oh. Well, that certainly explained why the voice was so distressed by this news. “But… One-For-All has a copy of our quirk, right? So no-one will be able to do anything, even if it does come out?”

Ichigou turned to face Izuku, smiling wanly. “You’re right, One-For-All is now as immortal as we are. We’ve won,” and Izuku was sure the first phoenix never expected to sound so unhappy to beat Kansei, “I’ve half a mind to ask you to go to Tartarus so we can gloat. But even so, people will want One-For-All. This is immortality that can be passed, Izuku. It’s going to cause a lot of problems, down the line.”

Izuku opened his mouth, realized that even he had no idea how to respond to that, and closed it again. The voice collectively took a deep breath, comporting itself. “It is what it is,” said Hayato, making a motion like throwing something over his shoulder, “Izuku is right to be excited, anyway. It might actually be wiser never to pass it on, let the next phoenix take it, maybe claim they’re our… what was the phrase Todoroki used? ‘Illegitimate love child’?”

The voice, which had experience bouncing back from even the worst tragedies, snorted with laughter. “Right. Let’s see if we can’t figure out what to do for the present?” Said Aoi, as the rest of the voice got a more comfortable seating arrangement.

Hayato duplicated the sofa, and Dai, and Yugo moved onto it from their places on the table. Ren stayed in the armchair. “Now that the council has assembled-” Said Yugo, in a deep, mock-serious voice, only to be immediately cuffed by Dai, and Hayato on either side of him.

The suddenly playful antics of the voice immediately soothed the dread that their warning had left Izuku with. He was sure it was on-purpose. “Here.” Said Aoi, handing him a pamphlet.

The greenette looked down at it, reading the gold lettering on a sky-blue background. “So you are about to get six new quirks”, and snorted. He opened it, and it sprayed confetti at him, while making a loud, high whine, like from those noise-makers you got at parties.

Yup, the voice was definitely childish sometimes. But it did make him feel better almost immediately. “Alright,” said Ichigou, from Izuku’s left, “let’s look at what we’re dealing with, then we can decide what to do about it.”

With a wave of his hand, Ichigou formed nine- slightly creepy- still copies, each one a One-For-All user.
On the far left there was green-haired, freckled Izuku, then blond, skeletal Toshinori, then dark-haired, white-caped Nana, then dark-haired Senshi, who was dressed like Best Jeanist, then white-haired Kibo, who was- in contravention of all probability- a head taller than Toshinori, then bald Aki, then blond, golden-eyed Dai, then unassuming Yuko, whose green eyes were slitted, then pale-haired, blue-eyed Mirai.

A moment later, Hayato waved his hand, and the dream was manipulated again to fill in the quirks. Izuku’s hands filled with fire, nothing happened to Toshinori, Nana now held the weird ball of springs, and cogs, Senshi had the word “Summoner” over his head, Kibo had “Stone Scales”, Aki had “Black Whip”, Dai’s hands were full of fire, Yuko had “Slow Motion?”, and Mirai’s hands held a ball of water.

“…This is going to take forever,” whined Yugo, “let’s ignore the one’s we’ve already figured out. Yours is easy, Izuku, and we got Nana’s already, and Mirai is the base quirk.”

The golden-eyed man waved his hand, and the three statues mentioned turned to smoke and blew away, leaving six. Aoi nodded. “And we can ignore Toshinori too, since he isn’t adding anything.”

Ichigou shot Aoi a sharp look over Izuku’s head. “You had better not be getting back on your quirkist bullshit, Aoi.” Said the eldest phoenix, and the sixth shot him a scowl.

“It was one time, I was fifteen, you made your point quite succinctly, and I wish you’d let it go already,” she said flatly, exasperated, “I wasn’t looking down on Toshinori, goodness knows he’s added a lot to the energy pool, but he won’t be adding any problematic quirks to the mix.”

Ichigou looked at her for a moment longer before nodding, and removing Toshinori’s statue. He tended to take a… dim view of quirk bias, largely because he had lived long enough to see it happening from both directions- first against the quirked, and then against the quirkless- or those with undesirable quirks.

That left five, each holding a quirk that they had to figure out how to unlock, and if they really should. Hayato hummed. “I think we should avoid unlocking Slow Motion, if at all possible.” He said, and Ren jerked in his chair.

“What? Why? Yuko’s is the strongest of the lot, if All-For-One hadn’t ambushed him-”
“We’d have to be crazy to unlock Slow Motion,” said the white-haired phoenix, bulldozing over what the grey-haired one was about to say, “not only is it a mutation, but it was a mutation in the man’s brain.”

“What’s wrong with it being a mutation? Aren’t we a mutation? And one in Izuku’s brain, at that?”

“No,” said Izuku thoughtfully, speaking for the first time in a while, and the voice turned to hear the opinion of the younger of the two experts on quirks, and probably the better of the two, “you can’t be a mutation, or Erasure wouldn’t do anything to you. You have to be some sort of passive emitter type, without a physical alteration to my brain.” Though… that did raise questions about whether his memory, and personality was actually stored in his brain at all, since Erasure affected him too…

Hayato nodded in agreement. “Anyway, All-For-One always avoided mutations like the plague. Since he and Mirai were brothers, it’s safe to assume that One-For-All has the same problem with mutations.” Something about that statement gave Izuku a really uncomfortable feeling.

Ichigou butted in at this point. “My best guess, Kansei couldn’t actually turn mutations off, which is why he kept Warp Gate, but never himself. It would have interfered with a ton of other quirks, most likely.”

“…OK, that’s a fair point, I guess, it’s not like we really need it, given that Izuku already has extremely good reaction times.”

That uncomfortable feeling, when examined, quickly became a deeply unwelcome thought. “I have a question.” The green-haired phoenix said, immediately gaining the attention of the entire room. “Is the quirk stockpiling thing coming from the stockpiling quirk,” he held up one hand, “or the quirk transferring quirk?” He held up the other.

This question had various effects on the voice, most of them frowning in puzzlement, but Hayato, and Aoi immediately blanched. “It… could also be some combination of the two?” Offered Ichigou slowly.

“Why does it matter?” Ren asked, still looking puzzled.

“If it’s some combination of the two, or if it’s the transfer quirk it’s fine, but if it’s the stockpile quirk…” Said Hayato, before trailing off.
Aoi finished the thought, by waving her hand, and making a new statue on Mirai’s right, of a man with unruly hair, and freckles. Kansei. Those parts of the voice which hadn’t immediately, paled. “Well that’s horrifying.” Said Yugo.

“Yeah, I don’t think thinking about this is a good idea,” said Aoi after a moment, “Izuku, just don’t try taking anyone’s quirk, and let’s pretend that it’s definitely some combination of the two.” She turned the Kansei statue to smoke with a thought.

“So any thoughts on the quirks we’re willing to admit exist?” Asked Dai, making the assumption that the decision on Slow Motion was final, and removing Yuko’s statue.

That left four. “Maybe we should hold off on Stone Scales for now?” Suggested Izuku, “It’s a transformation type, so it will take longer to get used to.” The ability to cover his body in stone scales- now he was wondering if the outrageously tall man was related to Kirishima- would be handy, but given One-For-All, and Phoenix Spirit, he wouldn’t really have a use for it most of the time anyway.

“Agreed,” said Hayato, “plus, if you do need it, it’s probably the easiest to figure out how to unlock, since it’s probably just ‘defend’ that you need to think.”

“It won’t be that simple, Hayato,” said Ren, “it really seems like it needs to a strong thought, but you’re probably right broadly. I think we already know what we would need to do to unlock the copy of our own quirk, though.”

“Huh?” Asked most of the voice in unison.

Ren looked a bit surprised that they had asked. “The waves? One-For-All never did that for Dai, so it must be what it does when you’re close to a new quirk? When you were fighting muscular, you got mad,” he said, focusing on Izuku now, “it must be a desire to burn something, or maybe just destroy it in general that unlocks ours.”

“Huh.” Said Hayato, while Izuku shrunk in on himself. If that was what was needed to unlock the copy of Phoenix Spirit, he would be happy to never do it. He vanished the third, and fifth statues.

If the voice noticed what he was doing, it didn’t comment. “Which leaves us with Senshi, and Aki.” said Aoi.
“Summoner should be pretty simple, just want something hard enough, like one of your notebooks, and you could unlock that one. Black whip, though… that could be anything from ‘capture’, to ‘grab’, to ‘do a Spider-Man impression’.” Said Ichigou with a wry smirk.

“Well, Summoner would be easier anyway, since it is just on-off, unlike the others we wouldn’t have to deal with output modulation,” said Hayato, “plus the ability to warp useful support gear into your hands would be really hand. …Just remember it’s your choice which, if any you want to try to unlock, and try not to think ‘I wish this moment could last forever’ the next time you’re out with Shouto, and everything will be fine.”

“Would it really be as simple as-” Izuku began, before being cut off by a loud buzzing from his right.

Every part of the voice looked right, despite the fact that this was not the same direction for every part of the voice, letting them know that whatever had made the noise was in the waking world.

Regardless of the voice’s wishes that he should get some sleep, or at least not-quite-sleep, Izuku shunted himself awake to see what it was.

Toshinori was standing around awkwardly, waiting for young Midoriya, and he had honestly never felt this exposed. He kept thinking people were watching him, since his true form was more or less out there now, and the few people walking past the former beach were giving him anxiety nearly to the greenette’s level.

Hopefully he would be here soon, his text had said that- “A phone call is here!” Said his phone suddenly, and he fumbled it out of his pocket in a rush with his working arm, nearly dropping it in his haste. “Is the problem child with you?” Asked Aizawa without preamble as soon as he picked up

“What?” Toshinori asked, as articulate as ever.

The erasure hero sighed on the other end of the phone. “Is Midoriya with you?” He repeated more slowly.
“No, I-” He started before sighting the shock of green curls coming around the corner, “Oh, I see him coming now.”

“Good,” Aizawa said, “now I don’t have to yell at him for lying to me so he can secretly meet up with Todoroki, or something equally asinine.”

Toshinori choked on his own spit, and began coughing. “Aizawa-kun, what-” He began, but the erasure hero wasn’t done.

“Meaning I only have to yell at you. What the hell are you doing at… a dump?”

Oh, Toshinori definitely coughed up some blood that time, though he tried to smile at the approaching greenette. “How did you-”

“Did you forget that his parole involved a tracking anklet? Though I’m beginning to think that you might be the one who needs one fitted. you’re not supposed to be out of the hospital yet, and he’s not supposed to leave the house.”

Toshinori hadn’t been aware of the latter. “Right. I’ll just… walk him back home?” He ventured, wary of the dark-haired man’s wrath.

Aizawa didn’t make a sound for a moment, and the blond thought he might be pinching his nose again. “No, say whatever you wanted to say to him first, just make sure he gets home. And if you get tetanus, I won’t save you when Recovery Girl tries to skin you.”

“Yes, Aizawa-kun.” And she would try, too, if he managed to do something that stupid.

“Good. I expect you to go back to hospital after, I have no desire to have to drag you there, and tie you to a bed to make sure you get some rest.”

Toshinori blinked at his phone, as Aizawa hung up immediately after that… threat? It sometimes struck him that his relationship with other heroes was a little odd. The way Hawks, and now Aizawa were chewing him out today made him forget that he was easily old enough to be either of their fathers.
He might actually be old enough to be Hawks’ grandfather… not quite, but it was close enough to make him feel old.

“You could have just told me you were supposed to be staying at home, Izuku.” The skeletal man chided the smiling teenager gently.

“Oh, I- um, I thought it would be important, and- and I’ve been meaning to talk to you anyway.”

Toshinori shook his head, still smiling. “Clearly, I’ve not been a good mentor, if you think I’d only want to talk to you for something onerous.” He said, pulling the boy into a one-armed hug.

Young Midoriya just stood there for a moment, before haltingly returning the hug. “Maybe I just wanted to see that you were OK for myself.” He said, before backing up, and ruffling the mess of forest curls.

The noise that Midoriya gave at that could only be called a whine, and the idea of a famous vigilante, and terrifyingly powerful hero student making that sound nearly pulled a laugh out of Toshinori. “Everyone’s doing that lately.” The fire-user complained.

“Doing what?”

“Messing with my hair.”

That actually did wring a laugh from him, and mercy of mercies, not one that came with any blood. “Well it is very fluffy,” the hero informed his successor with a nod, “but what did you want to talk about, my boy?”

Izuku started playing with the bandages Toshinori was just now noticing on his right palm. “I… I wanted to apologise.” The greenette said, with clear reluctance, before forcing himself to look up at the blond.

Toshinori blinked in surprise. “My boy, whatever for?” He really hoped it wasn’t for getting captured; that wasn’t the sort of thing he should be feeling guilty for.
“F-For snapping at you. Dur- After I got caught. I- you didn’t deserve that.”

“Izuku, you don’t need to apologise for that,” Toshinori said gently, “you were right, I-”

The greenette cut him off, to his surprise, and possibly to the boy’s own. “No, I- it doesn’t matter if I was right, I shouldn’t have done it. It was already done, and yelling at you wasn’t helping- me getting mad was just… I-I was really stressed, but that’s no excuse. It- it’s important for a hero to smile, e-even when things are tough. I’m not very good at that, b-but I should have at least stayed calm, not lashed out.”

Toshinori watched his successor for a second. There was fire in his eyes, even beyond that usual terrible weight they held. The blond realised that there would be no making his successor change his mind that he needed to apologise for calling his mentor for his mistake- mistakes. “Hmm… alright then, apology accepted.”

Izuku’s shoulder’s slumped, a large part of the tension leaving them. He must have been really unhappy with himself over that. “Thank you, Yagi-sensei.”

“You’re welcome, my boy. Now, let’s sit down, there are a couple of things I wanted to talk to you about, even if they could have waited until I could visit you at home.”

The blond gestured the greenette to follow, and wandered over to an old, discarded fridge, sitting on its side. He checked it over briefly, then carefully cleared it of any smaller debris. It would be just his luck to manage to actually get tetanus.

When he sat, he found Izuku looking around with that bright curiosity that he seemed to have for just about everything. “Why did you choose to meet at a dump, anyway, All Might?”

Yagi laughed softly. “It’s nice and quiet. Besides, it wasn’t always a dump. When I was your age, it was a really nice beach, and I would run here for training sometimes.”

“That’s too bad,” said the short boy, sitting gingerly on an old television, “I’m sure it must have been really nice, back then.”
Toshinori hummed, thinking back to when he used to come up here to watch the sunrise. Maybe now that he was going to have a lot more free time, he should start work on clearing it. It would be a nice project. “That it was, my boy… anyway, the main thing I wanted to say was… well, I’m sure you saw how I partially reverted to this form during my fight with All-For-One?”

“Yeah.” Said the greenette, and Toshinori could see it. Young Midoriya was a bright kid, almost scarily so; he knew where this was going already.

“Since the cat is out of the bag, so to speak, Hawks and I agreed it would be best to announce my retirement,” Toshinori put on a sly grin, “after he’s done preening, of course,” that earned a laugh, golden eyes crinkling at the edges, “he needs to regrow a bunch of feathers, and I’d like to get out of this cast,” he lifted his right arm, “then we’ll hold a press conference, saying I’ll be retiring, after a couple of months winding down my hero hours.”

Midoriya frowned, taking on a nearly unreadable face. “That’s… so weird. You’ve been the number one for my whole life. Hawks as number one is going to be strange.”

Toshinori was almost grateful that Young Midoriya didn’t mention that he had been number one for nearly twice as long as he had been alive. He still felt pretty old. The retiring hero gave a hollow chuckle. “Well, it’s about time I gave up the seat to the next generation, no?”

The greenette responded by trying to stare into his soul again. “But are you… OK with that?”

And there it was. Young Midoriya was so empathetic, and it would serve him in good stead as the next wielder of One-For-All, but it meant that he was one of the only people who ever seemed to see him- Yagi Toshinori, not All Might- which in turn often left the hero wondering who was the mentor, and who the mentee here. His relationship with Midoriya on the whole was weird. He had been vaguely expecting something like what he had had with Nana, but… well, this was probably better anyway.

He knew he wasn’t long for this world, for all his rekindled desire to keep going- just one more day, to see how much his successor would grow that day, and the same for the next- and he wouldn’t wish the pain he had felt losing Nana on anyone.

“Of course I’m OK with it,” he said, leaning over to chop his protege lightly on the head, “I’ve always known I would some day, and I’ve had a couple of years knowing roughly how long until I would have to.”
The greenette hummed. “I... don’t like sitting still. After I got caught, I was climbing the walls for
days, getting frustrated that I wasn’t doing anything. I still am. What were you planning on doing
with that new free time?”

Toshinori took a couple of seconds to get over the mentor-mentee disconnect again, before bursting
into laughter. “Why, teach you, and your classmates, of course. Why do you think I took a job at
UA?” Well, that was partially to look for a successor in the first place, but post-retirement plans
were the other reason.

“Oh. Right.” Said Midoriya, looking down and, knowing him, probably blushing.

The hero chuckled again. “Speaking of, I haven’t asked in a while, but how are you coming along
with One-For-All?”

If Izuku was surprised by the topic shift, he didn’t show it, but instead brightened, and entered into
one of his mumble-storms. “Good? I think. It’s kind of hard to tell, but I think if I keep up my
current routine, I should be able to hit twenty percent by the time of the next hero licensing exam-
speaking of, do you think UA will be letting us take part in that? Actually, will I be taking part,
even if they do? I can understand if he might not want me taking part in something like that, with
all those strangers…”

“Wait, wait.” The hero frantically cut his student off, before he began losing the thread of all the
things he had said so far.

“Oh, sorry, I was muttering again.” Muttered the shamefaced greenette.

“It’s fine, I was just losing track of all the questions. Why is it hard to tell?” He asked first off.
Since he had been using all of One-For-All from the word go, he had no idea the problems Izuku
would face there.

“Oh, I’m not good enough at output control to feel safe going up in one percent increments. I think
I’m at seventeen right now, but I’ve not been able to test it.”

The blond blinked owlishly at the teen. “Not good enough at output control? weren’t you switching
between one, two, and three percent less than a week after you got the quirk?” He prodded.
Izuku responded by moving his bandaged hand in mid-air, as if grasping for an idea. “It’s like... telling the difference between one litre of water and two is easy, but telling one hundred, and one hundred and one apart is really tricky.”

Toshinori grinned. Partially it was joy, and partially relief. Screw it, he laughed. “Well that’s just something we’ll have to work on then, my boy. Thank goodness, I was beginning to worry for a second there.”

“Huh?”

The hero shook his head wryly. “I may have been able to use all of the quirk from the start, but I was never as good at output control as you seemed to be at the start. It took years of practice. I was beginning to worry that you were some sort of One-For-All savant, and I’d never have anything to teach you. That aside, I think One-For-All is strong enough with you that you should be able to start making wind-blasts at twenty percent.”

Now it was Young Midoriya’s turn to perform an owl impression. “Really? I would have thought... thirty-five? Or at least thirty percent before I was able to do that.”

Toshinori smiled brightly- or as brightly as he could, in his emaciated form. “For me it was about thirty-five, when I first got the quirk anyway, but it’s gotten a lot stronger since then, so I think for you, twenty should be about right.”

Izuku’s smile eclipsed his easily. The boy looked genuinely ecstatic. “That’s great! I’ve been really looking forward to having a ranged option that isn’t going to risk setting anything on fire!”

The hero raised his eyebrows. “Given how much effort you’ve put into control, it isn’t really that much of a risk with your own quirk, is it?”

“No, but it does worry me sometimes, anyway...” Murmured the greenette, rubbing at the burn on the side of his face, then his face suddenly shifted, and he looked intently at Toshinori. “Oh! That was the other thing I was meaning to ask. Do you ever have weird dreams, since getting One-For-All?”
meet the parent

Chapter Summary

tododeku second date

Chapter Notes

1) second update of the day
2) this update is pure fluff as an apology for the last chapter
3) i promise the next chapter will be dorms.
4) here, have heat haze headcanons vol. 2
   a) people often call ground zero the symbol of victory
   b) they also sometimes call shouto the symbol of hope
   c) shouto *hates* this, and wishes they would stop
   d) bakugou laughs at him, saying it's his own fault for taking the number one spot
   e) between them they mostly fill AM's role of making people feel safe
   f) despite this, it's not them that villains are most afraid of
   g) that title goes to the number nine hero, heat haze
   h) the reason for this is that mido never gave up his ambush predator roots.
   i) a number of villains have essentially gone to sleep in their homes/lairs, and woken up in tartarus as a result.
   j) heat haze adds to this utter terror by frequently changing his: costume, physical appearance, and quirk
   k) consequently, the only way to be sure a hero is heat haze is if they're patrolling with shouto

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shoutolooked at the nameplate, checking again to make sure it was the right one. All the flats looked the same, and he had initially ended up in the wrong building entirely. But no, this one definitely said Midoriya. It wasn’t exactly a common name, so hopefully that meant this was the right place.

The bi-chromatic teen swapped the bag he was holding to the other hand, before ringing the bell. A little under a minute later, the door was opened by a shorter woman with green hair, and eyes, who Shouto had to assume was Izuku’s mother.

The elder Midoriya smiled when she saw him. “Oh, hello, Todoroki-kun,” She greeted happily.

“Hello, Midoriya-san.” Shouto answered politely, determined to make a good impression, even if
he wasn’t… entirely sure how to interact with this woman. A feeling made somewhat worse by how weirdly Touya had acted when he had said where he was going.

“It’s so nice to meet you finally, Izuku is always talking about you. I assume you’re here to see him?”

The ice-user… probably shouldn’t have been surprised by that, given how much he had been informed he had talked about Izuku, but it still left the bi-chromatic teen feeling anxious; how much did she know, exactly? How much had Izuku told her about his home situation? Had he even told her that they were dating? It hadn’t actually occurred to him until Touya called him a “friend” before Kamino that he hadn’t actually said anything after his confession, except to mum.

Shouto nodded, not voicing any of this; he would ask Izuku when they got a moment alone. “Is he in?”

“Of course. Come in, come in. I’ll just call him.” The short woman said, before turning and calling back into the house, stepping out of the doorway.

“Pardon the intrusion.” The ice-user murmured, stepping over the threshold of the little home.

Shouto was toeing off his shoes in the entryway a moment later when the head of verdant curls-which he had been increasingly wanting to run his fingers through- appeared round the corner, finally easing whatever lingering worry Shouto might have had that his boyfriend had somehow vanished again.

It had only happened twice, but that was still two times too many for his tastes.

When Izuku caught sight of him, the greenette beamed, calling his name brightly. Shouto briefly felt blessed- not only was he privy to that expression, but he had seemingly been the cause of it. “Shouto!”

A moment after the exclamation, the warm feeling Izuku’s smile had caused gave way to startled bemusement, as the greenette rushed around the corner, took one step towards him, and somehow managed to trip over his own slippered feet.

Izuku quickly turned the fall into a forward roll, and barrelled into the taller boy with enough force
that Shouto had to take half a step back to avoid falling over, before squeezing him into a hug.

Shouto looked down at the golden-eyed teen, smiling softly, completely baffled by the sudden display of clumsiness, immediately followed by quick reflexes. “Hello Izuku.” He said, unsure how to react.

At least- assuming Izuku wasn’t that much of a hugger- that answered the question of Izuku’s mother knowing about them dating. This in mind, the taller boy hugged back with his free hand, before they separated.

Idly he noted that the shorter boy was for want of a better word wearing a Fat Gum hoodie that would have been too large on Shouto- on Izuku it was practically a tent. The enormous yellow thing did unfortunately cover the smaller boy’s arms extremely well… not that Shouto was complaining, exactly; cute Izuku and hot Izuku were both equally nice- at least until he figured out a way to get both at once.

“Izuku, please try not to knock guests over,” the elder Midoriya chided gently, seeming entirely unsurprised by whatever just happened- did it happen often?- before turning back to Shouto, who was removing his other shoe, “Will you be staying for dinner?”

“I wouldn’t want to impose, Midoriya-san.” He murmured, sure she was just offering out of politeness.

The plump greenette gave him an odd look. “It’s no trouble, Todoroki-kun, I’d be happy to have you. don’t feel pressured to, if you don’t want to, though.”

Yep, this was definitely Izuku’s mother; that concern, and desire to make sure he felt comfortable was exactly like her son. Shouto’s eyes flicked to Izuku for a second, and the younger greenette nodded encouragingly. “OK, I’ll stay for dinner. Thank you.” He ventured.

Inko nodded, smiling. “I was thinking of making kamonaban, since Izuku mentioned that you like soba, unless you would prefer something else?” Shouto shook his head; he still felt like he was intruding, he wasn’t going to ask them to make something else on top of that.

The shorter woman nodded again, seeming satisfied by the non-answer. “That’s all sorted then, so I won’t keep you,” she said, before turning to her son, “let me know if you want any snacks,” then her smile changed- he still wasn’t the best at… people in general, but more specifically reading
expressions, but he interpreted the new one as teasing, “and I hope I don’t need to tell you to use protection.”

“Mum!” Izuku practically yelped, covering his face with his hands, prompting Inko to laugh as she turned back into the house, while Shouto frowned in confusion. That was exactly what Natsuo had said, and it didn’t make any more sense now. Did she think they were going to be training in Izuku’s room somehow? There wouldn’t be enough space.

Thoughts of why Inko and Natsuo seemed to think they would be training were swiftly forgotten a moment later, when the greenette grabbed Shouto’s right hand in the sunlight warmth of his left, gently pulling the ice-user into the house proper.

It didn’t take long to reach Izuku’s room, and when they got there, it was immediately apparent that it was a mess, with a dozen different notebooks fanned out across the floor, along with what looked like several magazines.

“Sorry about the mess,” Izuku said, already bending to pick up one of the notebooks, and return it to a specific shelf, where it had a corresponding slot, “give me a minute, I’ll clean up. Make yourself at home, you can sit anywhere.”

Shouto should probably have offered to help, but he had no idea where anything was meant to go, and he had been momentarily stunned by the sheer volume- and diversity- of hero merch on display in the small room, so instead he took a seat on the end of the Gang Orca themed bed, putting down his bag by his feet.

It didn’t take long before Izuku was putting the last of the magazines in a box, which itself was put in his wardrobe. The greenette stared at the notebook he had been carrying since Shouto arrived, before deciding to put it in his hoodie pocket.

“It’s great to see you, Shouto, I missed you!” Was the first thing the shorter boy said, when he turned back to face Shouto, a bright smile on his face.

Shouto smiled in amusement. “It’s only been a couple of days.” He said wryly, as if he wasn’t feeling exactly the same.

“Y-Yeah… b-but I usually see you nearly every day at school.” Izuku responded, while Shouto strode the couple of steps across the room needed to enfold the greenette in a hug. Damn, but he
was grateful that Izuku wasn’t bothered by how weirdly tactile he had become recently.

“I missed you too.” The taller boy said into the fluffy curls, causing the shorter one to give a huff of laughter against his chest. Shouto hummed contentedly when Izuku hugged him back; he really had started to miss him, despite how absurd that was given how recently they had seen each other.

He hoped that wasn’t just to do with the worry about Izuku being kidnapped again.

When, at length, Izuku pulled away, Shouto took a step back, before foolishly- saying the first thing that came to mind. “Your hair smells like peppermint.”

Izuku stared at him long enough that he nearly opened his mouth to apologize just out of habit, before bursting into laughter- more giggling, really. “And- And you’re too tall for me to know what yours smells like.” He gasped out, between trying to stop laughing- like trying to hide the sun behind a cloud.

The bi-chromatic teen smiled teasingly. “Is this better?” He asked, retaking his seat, and bowing at the waist.

“Now you’re just making fun of me.” Izuku said, and Shouto turned his eyes up to find the greenette was practically pouting, even if his eyes were still crinkled in laughter. Still, the shorter boy did step forward slightly, delicately grabbing his head with both hands.

“Huh. Lemon. I don’t know why, but I was kind of expecting strawberry.” Said Izuku thoughtfully, as Shouto straightened.

The ice-user shrugged. “I just like the lemon shampoo.”

Izuku shook himself, golden eyes focusing back on the ice-user. “So what do you want to do now? We could play a video game, or watch a movie, or I’ve got some board games somewhere, or we could just sit here smelling each-other’s hair like a pair of lunatics.”

“Definitely that last one. That sounds like fun.” Shouto deadpanned, earning himself a flat look the likes of which Aizawa would be proud of. The taller boy smiled, when Izuku added a sigh to complete the picture. “A movie sounds nice, I brought popcorn.”
Here he pulled out the little packet of microwaveable corn. Which reminded him, he still needed to ask about the other thing he had brought—strawberry milk notwithstanding. “By the way, am I going to get an explanation why I am delivering gloves, or why Touya laughed so hard when I asked if he still had them?” He asked, pulling the two bits of soft fabric from the bag, and offering them to Izuku.

The smile Izuku had developed when Shouto said he’d like to watch a movie faded as the greenette took the gloves. He looked conflicted for a moment before he answered. “All right,” the fire-user said, sounding resigned, “but only if you tell me why Kacchan told me to ‘tell my shitty boyfriend to fight him like a man’.”

“Because Kirishima is rubbing off on him.” Shouto offered. The flat look he got in response felt significantly less playful than the last one; he supposed he deserved that.

The ice-user hunched his shoulders, despite his every effort, and looked away from those piercing golden eyes. He hadn’t intended to keep this from Izuku; even if he could have, it would have felt wrong. Still, he would have liked to find some way to say it where he wouldn’t come across so badly.

‘OK Shouto, you can do this, this is Izuku, he might get mad, but he would never do anything to hurt you. what’s the worst that could happen?’ Of course, asking that question was a bad idea, since his brain immediately supplied a number of possible answers. Notably, that Izuku might choose to break up with him. The mere idea made him feel like there was a gaping hole in his chest, everything turning cold.

“After you got taken…I punched him.” Said the ice-user, still not looking at the fire-user. If Izuku broke up with him, it was no more than he deserved for being unable to control his temper.

The silence that followed Shouto’s confession was stifling; it felt like it went on forever, before Izuku finally spoke. “Okay~.” The green-haired teen said slowly, moving to sit on the bed beside the bi-chromatic one, “why?”

“He said something I didn’t like,” Shouto told the floor, “I lost my temper.”

A pause, before Izuku spoke again with that endless patience that Shouto normally found to be a blessing, but now felt like torture. “I’m going to need more details than that, Shouto.” He prompted.
The ice-user thought that one of the knots in the wood by his feet was fascinating. “Kirishima was talking about going to get you, Bakugou said that you were weak. Like it was your fault you got kidnapped.” Shouto tried to keep his tone neutral, but some bitter aftertaste of that fury that had washed through him rose to turn the last few words into a furious growl. There, it was out, now Shouto just had to brace for Izuku to be furious that lashed out at his childhood friend like that.

“That would do it, I guess.” Murmured Izuku. The total lack of anger in the shorter boy’s tone, even now that Shouto had explained was enough of a surprise that the taller one finally dragged his gaze away from the knot in the floor, expecting to see condemnation in those intense golden eyes.

Instead, Izuku was looking at him with… Shouto didn’t actually have any idea what that expression was; whatever it was, it wasn’t anger, or even disappointment, really. “You’re… not mad?”

Izuku blinked at him in surprise. “Not really. I mean… you definitely shouldn’t have hit him, but I can see why you did; Kacchan… really isn’t very good at saying what he means.”

Now it was Shouto’s turn to be surprised; how could Izuku be trying to defend Bakugou, even after that? “I don’t think that was that open to interpretation.”

Izuku hummed. “He came to the door this morning, pretty much as soon as he knew I was out of the hospital.”

Shouto was almost afraid to ask. “What did he say?” He asked, and something in his chest clenched a moment later, heart thundering as Izuku’s face morphed into a furious scowl.

The greenette looked him up and down with a sneer, then spoke in an oddly gravelly voice. “At least you managed to get back in one piece, Deku,” Izuku said, putting one hand in his pocket, “Auntie was fucking distraught the whole time you were gone. So don’t,” the fire-user reached up to poke Shouto in the chest, “get kidnapped,” another poke had the ice-user leaning back on reflex, “again.” A third poke.

The scowl vanished as soon as it had arrived, Izuku’s normal cheerful countenance not quite returning, but nearly anything was a step up from whatever the hell had just happened. “He kind of stormed off after that, I didn’t even manage to say anything.”
Shouto managed to get his breathing back under control. “First, please never do that again.” The ice-user said weakly, clutching his chest with one hand.

“Huh, but I thought that was a pretty good impression of Kacchan...” Murmured the greenette, seemingly completely clueless to how utterly terrifying he was when he put his mind to it.

“Bakugou is not that scary.” Shouto said firmly, still trying to return his heartrate to something appropriate to a human, rather than a rabbit.

When Bakugou scowled like that, it was barely threatening, but Izuku’s eyes had weight, and even if that weight wasn’t as much as it had been during the attack on the camp, or even their fight during the sports festival, that weight being used to glare at him was not. Pleasant.

“And second, that really isn’t helping his case.” The explosive blond had just gone up to Izuku as soon as he got back from the hospital to blame him again for what happened, and try to make him feel guilty about how mother getting upset by his kidnapping. He wasn’t going to punch him again, but... he did say to fight him like a man...

Izuku’s eyes widened slightly. “Right, sorry I forgot you don’t speak Kacchanese he came to the house to make sure I was OK because he was worried but he couldn’t admit that he was worried which is why he said that mum was worried- though I don’t think he actually saw her while I was gone- then he ran off because he always does that when he’s uncomfortable with something and can’t just attack it.” The greenette said all in a rush, which was difficult to parse even with all the practice Shouto had been getting.

When he did parse the rush of words, he had to work very hard not to snort derisively- in Shouto’s opinion, Bakugou had never shown any signs of worrying about anyone but himself. (Shouto didn’t know that the voice- which had never liked Bakugou- was experiencing the same struggle).

“That still doesn’t explain what he said while you were gone.” Shouto told the greenette flatly.

Izuku frowned. “I’m assuming he said something like ‘I was too weak to not get caught’, right?” A nod. At least, that’s what he was probably about to say. “I’m pretty sure he meant something like ‘they caught me, so going after me would be really dangerous’,” Izuku paused, looking into the distance for a second, “which, to be fair, it was. I was so, so scared when I saw that you were there, but to be honest, I’m really glad you came... I’m honestly not sure if I could have escaped if you hadn’t.”
“You would have.” Shouto insisted, partially because he suspected it was true, and partially because he really didn’t want to consider the alternative. Izuku pursed his lips, but wisely didn’t disagree.

“So yeah, I can’t blame you for hitting him, I probably would have too, but he does care, in his own way.” Shouto privately still wasn’t convinced, but didn’t want to argue the point.

Izuku was smiling a soft, fond smile that left the ice-user feeling incredibly warm inside. “I still want to thank you for coming to rescue me, though. You were really my hero.”

It happened really quickly; it wasn’t until Izuku had started speaking again that Shouto properly processed that the fire-user had just leaned in and kissed him just beneath his left eye. The bi-chromatic teen’s hand rose unbidden to touch the too-smooth skin. Shouto wasn’t good at emotions at the best of times, and he couldn’t even begin to pick apart what he was feeling at that moment, beyond surprise, and joy. Also a pressing need not to catch fire. “And Shouto?”

“Yes, Izuku?” He asked only a little roughly.

“I know this makes me a massive hypocrite, but can you try not to do something that reckless again? I’m not sure how I’d cope if you got hurt.”

Shouto stared at the greenette, who in turn was looking at him earnestly with big golden eyes which Shouto increasingly found it difficult to deny anything. “You’re right,” he said, drawing the fire-user into a hug, “it does make you a massive hypocrite,” he really hoped that his tone conveyed that he wasn’t being serious, but just to be sure- and not for any other reason, no sir- he kissed the shorter boy back, this time in the middle of the forehead, “but I’ll try.”

Izuku let his head droop forward, humming contentedly from where he was being held against Shouto’s chest. The ice-user stayed like that, chin in the fire-user’s curls, until it became apparent that Izuku had no intention of ever moving from that spot.

“Izuku,” the greenette gave a questioning hum, “you still haven’t told me why you wanted gloves from my brother.” the next sound made against his chest was more or less a huff, which preceded Izuku pulling away.

The greenette pulled the long gloves from his hoodie pocket with what looked like a small grimace. “It’s stupid, I’m being childish, but I just… feel more comfortable if I at least have them.”
He said, and the palm holding the limp gloves suddenly filled with a small ball of bronze fire.

Shouto’s eyes widened slightly when Izuku looked like he had decided to burn the gloves he had asked Shouto to bring, and he was no less surprised when the fire went out to show the pair of gloves to be completely unharmed.

The ice-user had a number of questions- like why Touya had those in the first place- but they could wait, so he started with the most important one. “Are you going to get arrested if Aizawa-sensei finds out you have those?” He asked seriously, gesturing at the- seemingly- support gear.

Izuku shook his head immediately, making wild negative hand gestures. “No… I mean, he might not exactly be… happy about it, but it’s completely legal for me to have these, so I shouldn’t get in trouble even if he figures out what they are, they’re not even proper support gear, the Detnerat company makes them, and anyone can buy a pair. They’re not as good as my costume, or even my old Amber stuff, so I would probably be able to set them on fire if I tried…”

Shouto relaxed incrementally when Izuku denied it, and began to ramble, though he did take note that his boyfriend had said “shouldn’t” not “won’t”. At least the ice-user wouldn’t have to try to convince the greenette to give them up before he ended up in prison. Second question. “Why do you think you’re being childish?” He cut in to Izuku’s rambling.

The greenette fiddled with the gloves for a moment. “Um, it’s not like I c-can wear them all the time, o-or put them on that quickly if I need to, s-so it’s basically like- like clutching my teddy bear for safety, or something.” He said, staring intently at his hands.

“If it makes you feel safer, then it’s not childish. But are you feeling OK? You still haven’t said anything to me about what happened.”

“I-I’m good,” replied the greenette, “I managed to make up with my mum, and apologize to All Might-”

Which was telling Shouto exactly nothing about what happened before the rescue, so he cut in. “Izuku, you know you can talk to me if anything happens, right?”

Izuku looked mildly betrayed. “You’re going to keep quoting that back at me forever, aren’t you?”
Shouto smiled wryly. “Only until I know that you know.”

The greenette sighed, looking down, before returning Shouto’s gaze. “Yeah, I know,” he said, sounding genuinely grateful, “I’m really fine, I kind of freaked out once I got home, but I haven’t been having nightmares, or flashbacks, or anything.”

Shouto studied his boyfriend’s face for a moment- for all the good that was likely to do- but he seemed to be being honest. “And you’ll let me know if that changes?”

Izuku smiled warmly. “You’ll be the second to know. Thanks for worrying about me, Shouto.”

“Of course.”

Izuku leaned backwards on his hands, tilting his head to look at the ceiling, eyes closed. “OK, that’s enough serious conversation for now, let’s go pop the corn, and we can pick out a movie.” He said tiredly.

They both wandered on stockinged feet to the kitchen, and the little packet of kernels was put in the microwave in short order. “Hey, Shouto?” Izuku asked, breaking the companionable silence, shortly before the popping corn would have.

“Hm?”

“Have you given any more thought to your hero name?”

Shouto hadn’t actually thought about it at all since the day the class picked their names, what with everything else going on. “Not really, why?”

“There’s a provisional license exam coming up next term, and there’s a chance UA might let us try it, so I was thinking if you wanted to change it, it would probably be easier if you did it before then. Not- not that there’s anything wrong with just using your name.” Izuku hurried to reassure him, talking with his hands nearly as much as Iida.

Huh, he hadn’t thought of that. “I suppose you’re right. I’m still not sure what sort of name I want,
though. Coming up with them is harder than I would have thought.”

Surprisingly, Izuku snorted at this, as if Shouto had said something really funny. The ice-user raised a questioning eyebrow. “Coming up with names is easy, it’s coming up with good names that is hard.” The fire-user explained seriously.

Shouto didn’t exactly believe him, but now he was curious, so he made a “go on” gesture with one hand. Izuku answered the gesture almost immediately. “The Christmas hero: Peppermint.”

The taller boy held it together for two whole seconds before the laughter bubbled out of him. Izuku looked entirely too proud of himself. “I am not calling myself Peppermint.” He said between bouts of laughter, and popping kernels.

“I did say making them good was the hard part.”

“It’s honestly impressive how ridiculous that name would be.” Shouto informed his boyfriend, who just grinned, nodding.

“Alright, how about… the polar hero: Erebus?” Izuku suggested after a moment’s thought.

“Erebus?” Shouto asked, the name meaning nothing to him.

“It’s a volcano in Antarctica; I thought it might work well with your quirk.”

“Isn’t that a bit obscure, though?” Shouto asked, causing Izuku to shrug, before going on unperturbed.

“The frostfire hero: Polarise, then?” Izuku offered. The ice-user stared at him, as something… clicked.

“You’re just going to keep going until I stop you, aren’t you?”

“That or until the popcorn’s done.” The greenette agreed happily.
“Polarise.” The bi-chromatic teen said slowly, tasting the word. Henkō… it actually had a nice ring to it. Plus it rhymed with Kagerō. He nodded decisively after a second. “That’s a good one.”

Izuku beamed. “Thanks, I’m glad you liked it, Shouto.”

Shouto decided not to bring up that at this stage, Izuku had helped choose the hero names for nearly half of 1-A; instead he made a note to ask Aizawa to change his hero name when they got back to school, while Izuku pulled the finished popcorn from the microwave.

Once the pair of pyromaniacs were safely ensconced back in Izuku’s hero merch storage room—with optional bed- The greenette put the popcorn down. “So, did you have any preference for what to watch, Shouto?”

The taller boy shook his head, sitting back down on the bed. “I haven’t really watched many movies.” And he had been reliably informed by his siblings that he had no taste, and was not to be allowed to pick the movie, since they had started reconnecting.

The ice-user watched curiously, as Izuku began to murmur to himself, tugging at his lower lip, saying what he could only assume were a series of film titles. “OK, let’s watch Moana, I think you’ll really like it.”

Shouto nodded in agreement, trusting Izuku’s judgement, even if he had never even heard of the film before, and the greenette quickly retrieving the DVD, and his laptop, before pausing, and pursing his lips. “How do you want to sit? I’m not sure you’ll be able to see well, if you have to keep leaning over, or if it’s all the way on my desk.”

Shouto thought about this for a moment, before devising an elegant solution.

The fire-user gave a small yelp, but didn’t resist when the ice-user moved to grab him, which was fortunate, since manhandling the extremely heavy greenette was hard enough when Izuku was cooperating.

After a brief struggle, Shouto had them positioned so the shorter boy was essentially lying on him, head pillowed on his chest, while Shouto’s head was pillowed on the pillow at the end of the bed. “Does this work?” He asked, trying to make out Izuku’s expression, which was upside down from his perspective.
The greenette didn’t answer for several seconds. “You’re a lot more touchy-feely than I would have expected.” He said finally.

More than Shouto had been expecting, if he was honest with himself- he had never been like this with… anyone, really. “Do you want me to stop?” He asked, moving his hands from where they had been resting over the smaller boy’s ribs. He really liked that he had been allowed to touch his boyfriend as much as he had, but he would gladly tone it down, if he was making the other boy uncomfortable.

“No!” The greenette said hurriedly, “I like it, it’s really calming to be honest, just a bit surprising… but could you let me up for a minute?”

Shouto complied readily, and Izuku stood just long enough to doff his ridiculously large hoodie- granting Shouto a brief glimpse of his back, all the way to the bottoms of the twin scars he had borne since Hosu- before carefully lying back on Shouto.

“That’s better, now I won’t end up overheating. Are you comfortable there?” the greenette asked, tilting his head back to look at the bi-chromatic teen. Shouto nodded, Izuku was pretty heavy, but he was also really warm, and the exact opposite of bony Touya. The greenette nodded, opening the laptop on his stomach.

“Izuku.” Shouto said partway through the- really good- film.

“Yeah?” Said boy answered, swallowing a mouthful of popcorn.

“This movie is over two hundred years old.” He accused, moving his phone, so that the greenette could see the Wikipedia article he had opened when he wanted to check who had made it.

“It’s a classic.”

“Why did you pick a movie over two centuries old? Where did you even get a copy?”
“Ebay, and because it’s a flawless masterpiece with no flaws whatsoever.”

The movie chose this exact moment to show Maui turned into some sort of half-man half-shark thing. Shouto decided not to comment. The film was actually really good, even if he was puzzled why Izuku even knew about it, much less owned it.

Chapter End Notes

5) izuku did not realise this was his first time kissing Shouto, and when the voice pointed it out after he left, there were many frantic apology texts
behind closed doors (are open windows)

Chapter Summary

let the dorm shenanigans begin!

Chapter Notes

1) wasn't sure where to cut this chapter exactly, so I'm doing it here, and next chapter I'll finish the room showcase, and some other conversations that night.
2) the british floor numbering convention is the hill i die on.
3) a subheadcanon of tall!deku: Bakugou has already reached his full height. ground zero is a tiny ball of incoherent rage, and you shouldn't mess with him.
4) someone once thought he was cosplaying as Ground Zero, and asked if he made the costume himself. That person was never seen, or heard from again.

Izuku’s remaining days of holiday passed… slowly. He had a lot to be happy about, really; it was silly that he was so stressed just sitting in the house. But that was the thing, he was sitting in the house because he wasn’t allowed to leave. If stopping all work as Amber cold turkey had been unpleasant, then this was truly maddening.

If he were to focus on the positives- as the voice did- he would say that he was getting along well with his mother again, and his “apologies owed” list was getting much shorter.

Plus, after his conversation with All Might about the One-For-All dreams, no-one had actually interrogated him about what he had told Hawks to say- or how he knew to say it- so either the symbol of peace had surmised that Mirai had told him- understandable, since he had mentioned the first trying to show him memories of his lifetime- or he actually didn’t know that Izuku was the one to tell Hawks how to stop All-For-One. The second was admittedly unlikely.

That conversation had gone really well. The voice had been a little worried that Yagi would end up risking depressive episodes after his retirement, but the man did seem genuinely enthusiastic about teaching full-time, so that was good… and he had broken down in happy tears when Izuku had brought up Nana’s dream, and passed on her message.

Plus it was kind of heart-warming that the blond’s first reaction to being asked about dreams was concern about possible nightmares. (Izuku genuinely had no idea how normal people dealt with nightmares, since he had never actually had one that lasted more than a couple of seconds).
No, Izuku’s life was largely going quite well, except for one thing. The press conference that UA had held while he was tied to that chair.

People knew that he was Amber, and that was fine, just like it had been when 1-A found out, and the UA staff. But people knowing that Midoriya Izuku was Amber? That being a thing that nearly everyone in Japan was now aware of? That was stressing him out.

His mother had agreed to letting him return to UA, even though he could tell that she was clearly unhappy about it. It wasn’t hard to tell that she was only letting him move into the dorms because she didn’t have much choice in the matter.

It was either studying at UA with Aizawa-sensei, or patrolling the streets with Eraserhead, after all.

Not that Izuku was entirely happy about the idea of moving into the dorms himself, since it meant his mother living on her own. Where anyone who was sufficiently determined, or deranged could go after her to get to him.

Luckily, or unluckily, depending on how you looked at it, he hadn’t been able to convince her to move. Few enough people knew where the Midoriya’s lived, which was good, plus they lived in down town Musutafu. That is, they lived so close to UA that crime was practically non-existent, so moving anywhere else would probably only make things worse, unless Inko decided to start doing as Izuku did, and altering her appearance.

The voice had been- as ever- a source of comfort there, when it finally grew exasperated, and pointed out that Nedzu was probably smarter than they were, even collectively.

If they could figure out the risks posed to his mother, then the principal surely could as well, and it was telling of the Mouse’s ability to fortify a location that the league hadn’t even tried to attack them at school after the first time. Despite All-For-One’s backing, and Kurogiri’s warping abilities.

Nedzu knew what could potentially happen, and would have plans in place to deal with it. He just had to keep telling himself that. He had to learn to be more trusting. Setting vigilantes to guard the house would be a bad plan, even if he could have managed it.

So now he was moving boxes from his room into the hallway in the pre-dawn light, getting ready
for when Aizawa arrived- which was due to be any second, seemingly on the grounds that if he wasn’t getting any sleep, then no-one else should be either- with only slight abject terror about what might happen while he was at school.

The younger greenette had just managed to get the last of the cubes containing nearly everything he owned that he hadn’t inherited from his past lives into the hall, and the elder had just about finished z blearily constructed breakfast, when there was a knock at the door.

Izuku- being closer- opened the door, revealing his teacher, who despite the early hour, looked no more tired than normal. *Maybe he’s reached some sort of pinnacle of exhaustion.* Thought the voice, in typical irreverent fashion.

“Izuku-senei.” Izuku said, showing no sign of what he- for a given value of he- was thinking about the dark-haired man.

*Would that be a pinnacle, or a nadir?* Tacked on Yugo, while Aizawa’s blank look clearly took issue with the greenette’s use of the word good.

“Are you ready to go?” The teacher asked tiredly- as if he ever did anything any other way.

“Um, mostly? I’ve finished packing, but I need to have breakfast, and say goodbye to my mum. Er, would you like to come in? I think there should be coffee?”

The erasure hero looked like he was considering refusing, or just starting on moving the boxes right away, but the allure of coffee proved too great. He nodded once, before following Izuku, as the greenette bounced to the kitchen.

Breakfast was a fast affair, with the two greenette’s eating mostly in silence, while the teacher barely restrained himself from downing the cup of life-giving- to him anyway- caffeine. Saying goodbye was a far slower affair, with Inko bursting into tears, which never failed to cause Izuku to follow suit, but eventually everything was packed away into Aizawa’s entirely nondescript car, and they made their way to the UA campus.

(This was naturally a little awkward, since Aizawa had just seen him breaking down in tears again, but he was either so tired that he didn’t notice, or he had enough tact to pretend he had. Izuku stayed almost entirely silent for the journey, largely out of a fear that the hero was already struggling to stay awake enough to safely drive.)
When the pair—along with the robots that had conveniently been arranged to carry most of the boxes—arrived at the huge building that hadn’t been there at the end of last term, Aizawa finally spoke again. “Welcome to your dorm.” He said with about as much enthusiasm as someone saying “welcome to the department of motor vehicles”.

The dark-clothed man led the pair into a large open-plan room, before waving an arm to one side of the dorm. “Boy’s rooms are over there, yours is on the first floor. you’ve got a couple of hours head start on unpacking, then I’ll call you back, since I’ve got a couple of announcements to give, before the grand tour.”

“Yes, Sensei.”

“If you need anything in the meantime, don’t hesitate to call Yagi, because I’ll be asleep.” Was the last thing his teacher said, before slouching off to the main building.

Izuku wasn’t entirely sure that his teacher personally escorting him to the dorms had been necessary, and he felt kind of bad about delaying the man’s nap, but it did have one advantage, in that he was now here on his own.

The first box was dropped off in his room, to give Aizawa time to get out the door, then the kitchen was very briefly invaded. Just long enough to make sure that the kettle would never be seen again, then the greenette began to get back to the task of figuring out how to organise all his merch in his new room.

Fumikage stood amongst the assembled scholars, growing increasingly unsettled. Part of this was the most recent- and most extreme- instance of their raven-haired teacher saying he had an announcement- in the tone of one about to announce the end times- before pausing for an extended time. (Admittedly, in this case it was because he had to go retrieve Midoriya, but still.)

The greater part, though, was the scholars themselves. The bird-headed teen might not have been able to actually see auras, but such an ability was unneeded to tell that the class’ was disturbed.

For once, the greatest source of seething rage was not from Bakugou. No, Bakugou’s rage was an expected part of life at this stage, and it was generally loud but harmless, except for those
possessing high blood-pressure. Iida’s rage, on the other hand, was silent.

Fumikage felt no small trepidation, waiting to see when the dam would bust, and the silence would end. What would the class president do?

For his part, the shadowmancer was unsurprised at the bluet’s rage- it was entirely fitting with his personality, given how he had been deceived- but... he did find himself questioning the boy’s expectations. It only made sense that he would be deceived, given the threats he had apparently made, when Kirishima first suggested the illicit plan of action that had ultimately saved Fumikage, and Midoriya. (though it was entirely possible that Midoriya, or Dark Shadow might have done something to save them, even if Fumikage feared what it might have been).

A moment later, thankfully before Iida finally broke, and vented his spleen, Midoriya bounced out of the building, greeting everyone with enthusiasm undampened by recent days. Actually, it might have been brighter, though that may have been the result of the time of separation.

The greenette was greeted warmly, his friends crowding around, though due deference was given to Todoroki, who had nearly exclusive rights to the fire-user’s personal space these days. Fumikage merely nodded to the ex-vigilante, receiving a grinning, somewhat more thorough nod in return.

Iida greeted the boy cordially, which the bird-headed teen found a little odd. It seemed that Iida was slow to forgive those that went against those laws they were bound to, but he was forgiving eventually. Midoriya had not been part of the illicit rescue effort, and so, seemingly, was not subject to the taller boy’s ire.

The golden-eyed student, and the black-eyed teacher were like unto night and day, as the bedraggled man followed the greenette out of the building a moment later, as enthusiastic about it as everything else- that is, not.

“Alright,” said the exhausted educator, once the greetings had wrapped up, “since everyone’s here, I can show you around the dorms. But first,” he looked around the assembly, as if to be sure he had their full attention, “Yaoyorozu, Todoroki, Kirishima. You may have managed to skirt the quirk licensing laws, but I promise you, had circumstances been different, or had you gone one hair closer to breaking them, then I would be expelling all three of you.”

It was not lost on Fumikage that Todoroki’s face took on an entirely displeased cast, and he opened his mouth to object, or maybe go further, before a hand on his shoulder from his paramore, and something murmured by the fire-user brought the ice-user up short.
Iida’s stone-faced expression didn’t let up, and it occurred to the bird-headed teen that he had not so much as looked at the rescue party so far. Bakugou simply looked… smug? The declaration seemingly made him happy to some extent. Perhaps it was merely vindication, given that he had seemingly spoken out against the idea.

“And that would not have been limited to the three of you. I can’t say for sure how many of you knew about what they planned to do, but anyone I could find out about would have been expelled alongside them, since none of you saw fit to say anything.”

That served to darken the overall aura of the meeting, various members of the class lowering their heads, especially Iida, whose silent furore seemed to bore inward. Bakugou might not have lowered his head, but the terrible smile broke.

“From now on, I would appreciate it if you went along with established procedures, and rules… and it would certainly go a long way to restoring my trust.” Finished the exhausted man, causing the class to pull further in on themselves.

Even Tokoyami, who had done no wrong on that front, felt a bubbling shame as their mentor turned away. He really should have considered that Aizawa would think the behaviour of the three a betrayal.

In an unprecedented event, the overall mood of proceedings was improved, not by Midoriya, or even Uraraka, but by Bakugou. The ashen blond muttered something that sounded like “fuck this”, before dragging Kaminari behind a bush.

None were privy to the terrible events that occurred to the poor blond fool behind that bush, but when he returned a moment later, all mental faculties had abandoned him, and he began to stumble around in a manner that much of the class found truly hilarious.

In the ensuing chaos- with which the bird-headed teen did not engage, and even if he had, none could prove it, for he lacked the capacity to smile anyway- Fumikage spotted Midoriya slipping Kirishima a wad of bills for reasons unknown, the redhead looking down at them bemused, before the greenette returned to his own greatly strained clique.

“What a mad banquet of darkness.” Fumikage murmured, though whether this was just to himself, or to nearby Shoji, he himself was unsure. From the shake of his head from the teacher, who had glanced back at the bedlam, it seemed Aizawa held a similar view.
“Alright, let’s head in, so I can give the grand tour.” Said the raven-haired man.

The somewhat happier class was led through the doors, and into a vast, luxurious living area. Not for the first time, Fumikage wondered how many souls had been traded to how many devils in exchange for UA’s budget.

The “grand tour” was, in reality, extremely brief, consisting of a simple run-through of the layout of the dorm building. “Boy’s rooms are on the left, girl’s on the right, except the ground floor, where everything except the baths is communal space. This is where the laundry facilities, and dining area are,” the teacher jerked a thumb at a plaque detailing the configuration of the building, “look here to find out which room is yours. You should find your luggage already in there. I expect the communal space to be treated as such; leave everything as you would want to find it, and all that. don’t destroy the kitchen, unless you want to lose cooking privileges. Likewise, don’t try to use it as your personal domain.”

This last was directed solely at Bakugou, who growled in response, and Fumikage found himself wondering how their teacher even knew the blond could cook.

“Alright, that’s it for today. You’ve got all day to unpack, and familiarise yourselves with the space.”

The shadowmancer considered for a time, as the class dispersed, how much of an adjustment the dorms would be, seeing as he had never had to cohabit with anyone outside family before. Then again, he had had to share the space within his own head for ten years. Sharing the space without would be a small adjustment by comparison.

True to Aizawa’s word, the room on the first floor besides which Fumikage’s name was printed contained the many earthly possessions he felt he could not do without, and he closed the door behind himself, so as to begin the process of making the space his own.

He felt sure that the positioning of his room would prove both a blessing and a curse, since it was positioned closest of all to the common areas. Then again, none of those in the surrounding domiciles struck him as the loud sort.

“What do you think?” He asked his quirk, looking around the walls, trying to decide where to place the wards, along with the purely aesthetic pieces.
Left of the window. Said the quirk, though it made no move to help. That’s where the ghosts live, Fumi.

Fumikage shook his head, opening the top box, and beginning his search for the seals, taking out the pair of skulls packed in on top. “Ghosts don’t live, Dark Shadow.” The shadow demon huffed in annoyance at the contradiction.

Unpacking actually didn’t take too long, once he noticed that UA had blessedly seen fit to bestow his room with a dimmer switch, and he had carefully adjusted the light level until Dark Shadow could be persuaded to help, rather than hinder.

Larger Dark Shadow was more destructive, true, but it was also less inclined towards pranks. It was a delicate balance.

Placing his sword and shield down at the foot of the bed, he surveyed his domain, and did not find it wanting. The bird-headed teen paused. To return to the hubbub of the common areas, or to remain here with his thoughts- and Dark Shadow’s thoughts?

Go down, Said the shadow immediately, today isn’t a brooding alone day.

Fumikage shrugged, turning to the door. He wasn’t opposed to that, and it was the dawn of a new age after all. He still hadn’t decided if he should congratulate his old mentor, or commiserate with him on his sudden ascension to the pinnacle of heroism.

The man would likely never have a moments peace again.

The shadow-user left the lift, and took as his place a spot on the nearest sofa, keeping his own council, as the noise washed over him, as the others filed in by ones and twos, offering a nod for each new greeting.

Most of the conversations pertained in some way to the dorms, and the students’ feelings about living together like this, or the oncoming end of All Might’s era.

If he was being honest with himself, he- and Dark Shadow- were mostly looking for an
opportunity to speak with Midoriya, but by the time the girl’s returned from whatever secret council they had been holding- which he dared not even speculate about- the greenette was one of only three absent.

“Hey,” objected Mina, with what could only be a pout, “Where are Baku, Mido, and Todo? Are they holding some sort of pyromaniacs convention without me?”

Fumikage made a note to develop a healthy wariness of the pink-skinned girl. That crazed look should be viewed only from a safe distance.

“Bakugou said he was retiring about half an hour ago.” He informed her, shaking his head. If you were going to have such a consistent aesthetic, you should at least try to embody it. Seeking Morpheus’ sweet embrace at the tender hour of eight in the evening- earlier than even Iida- did not suit the ashen-blond’s delinquent look in the slightest.

“As for the other two, I suspect that where you find one, you shall find the other.” The bird-headed teen added, wondering if he should be thankful that Aoyama’s was acting as a buffer between his room, and the greenette’s going forward. “Though it is doubtful if any pyromania is ongoing.”

Mina took a moment to parse this, before shifting the topic entirely. “So are you done setting up your rooms, boys~?”

There was general agreement, which the acid-user received with some dark glee. He didn’t like that look in the slightest. “So we were talking, and we had an idea… why don’t we have a look around the rooms, and choose a room king?”

Fumikage looked at Mina askance, trying to make up his own mind on the idea. On one hand, he had no desire to invite anyone into his sanctum, but on the other… each room would surely be like unto a reflection of the soul of its owner- his surely was- which would most likely be some combination of fascinating, and disturbing.

“Just the boys, or will you also be taking part?” Asked Shinsou tiredly, cutting through the excited din. Kaminari failed to adequately hide the gleam in his eye at that.

The girls paused then, looking between them, possibly using some sort of gender-specific telepathy. “Sure, we’ll show ours too.” Said Uraraka after a moment.
“Yeah, that’ll make it even more fun.” Enthused Hagakure, her sleeves waving.

Fumikage joined the standing horde with some reluctance. He did want to gain a deeper understanding of his peers, but he wasn’t Bakugou, and as such was not so dead to social convention that he could simply refuse to show his own, upon seeing the others.

“But we should try to find Mido, and Todo first, since they could want to take part too.” Said Mina to general agreement, and the vast crowd squeezed its way into the stairway- there was no hope of using the lifts for this.

No response was forthcoming from Midoriya’s room, so the assembled masses made their way up to the top floor to seek Todoroki. Hopefully they wouldn’t have to try the roof.

“Come in.” Came the call from the master of blizzards, when Mina skipped ahead to knock on his door.

For once, Fumikage’s stoic demeanour fit in perfectly with the class, as the entire assembly was reduced to stunned silence. The door opened, revealing that some dark power, by means unknown, and for reasons just as arcane, seen fit to replace the space inside with a room that looked to have been stolen from some ancient Japanese castle. Fumikage’s money was on Himeji.

Additionally, he was quickly proved wrong in his assessment. There was pyromania going on in the room.

Sitting on a floor-height chair, the ice-prince of class 1-A was shamelessly preening the terrifying ex-vigilante sitting in his lap, his long fingers carding through the curls, while gazing over the shorter boy’s shoulder, as the greenette formed a series of ever shifting shapes from the fire in his palm.

“Hey guys, what’s up?” Said Midoriya, lifting his gaze from the fire, which had just shifted from a tree to a flower, and was now turning into a tiny snake, to look at those crowding the door.

There were many things to unpack here, and each chose their own order to prioritise them in. Fumikage was largely concerned that such displays of affection might become commonplace in the future. At least on those rare occasions where Dark Shadow preened him, or vice-versa, they made sure to do it in private, but Todoroki wasn’t stopping what he was doing because of their presence. What a mad banquet of darkness indeed.
Mina seemed most concerned with the room itself. “It’s a Japanese room! Are we even in the same building anymore?!” She demanded, eyes bulging.

Todoroki nodded, as if it was of no consequence. “My old house was a Japanese style house, so I find it really hard to settle down without the tatami flooring.” He said blandly. He hadn’t looked up from the fascinating display Midoriya was putting on still. The greenette wasn’t even looking at what he was doing anymore, turning the snake into a bird blindly.

Kaminari became a succinct mouthpiece for the collective here. “Who cares why you did it? How did you do it?!”

“I worked really hard.” The bi-chromatic teen responded without inflection.

“Hey!” Objected the greenette, bending his neck back to look at the ice-user. Bird into butterfly.

“Izuku helped.” Todoroki allowed.

“Nevermind that, stop hogging Deku.” Argued Uraraka out of nowhere, Todoroki finally looking away from the flames to blink at her.

“That’s a good point!” put in Mina, “it’s not like either of you needs your own personal space heater. Learn to share.”

“No,” said Todoroki in what was indistinguishable between his normal flat tone, and his deadpan humour tone, “he’s mine, get your own.” Then the stoic, emotionless boy proceeded to perform a koala impression, legs wrapping around the brighter one’s waist, and arms around his chest.

From Midoriya’s snort, it was probably the humorous tone. The fire-user finally put out the ever-shifting golden blaze, only to proceed to stand, the taller boy still hanging from his back.

The sound that Todoroki made when this happened entirely betrayed his normal demeanour, so Fumikage decided to ignore it, while the ice-user quickly got his face back under control, only some small wisps of flame in his cheek giving him the lie of calm, as he tightened his grip to avoid falling.
“So what is going on?” The fire-user asked, totally unconcerned with his flustered boyfriend.

“Oh, right,” Mina said brightly, as if the bizarre backpack thing wasn’t happening, “we’re gonna do a room showcase, then decide who’s the room king.”

Midoriya grinned brightly. “That sound like so much fun!” He exclaimed, before twisting his head in an effort to address Todoroki. “Do you wanna come, Shouto?”

Todoroki smiled a bemused smile, something the bird-headed teen didn’t think he had ever seen him do before. “Sure? This is my room. Not much to say about it.”

Everyone clearly disagreed, but it was true that it was fairly standard for a Japanese room, with minimal decoration beyond the standard.

To the ice-user’s evident surprise, the fire-user made no move to let him down, though he did nothing to hold him there, rather walking to the door as if he didn’t have someone four inches taller than him hanging off his back. Fumikage realised to his mild terror that, from the lack of sparks, he was likely doing this without his quirk.

Next up was Sato’s room, which was a fairly simple setup, barring the miniature kitchen on one corner. The room did, however, somehow result in everyone getting a slice of cake. The shadow-user found it to be of excellent quality, even if he ended up having to share some with Dark Shadow, who was feeling left out.

The third and final room of the uppermost floor belonged to Sero, which was Asian-style, though thankfully for the sanity of everyone involved, it had not been extensively remodelled, like Todoroki’s.

After some debate, it was decided that all the boys’ dorms should be investigated, then the girls’. This led them, inevitably, to Shoji’s room, which contained… nothing.

“Is this what they call minimalist?” Todoroki asked from his position on Midoriya’s back, as the rest of the class gazed in slight fear at the total lack of anything in the tall boy’s room.
Shoji just shrugged. “I’ve never really had any worldly desires.” Said one of Shoji’s mouths calmly. Fumikage had no issue with this, but he was a little concerned that he saw no books, or clothes in the overlarge looking room.

Next- and, since Bakugou was sleeping, last- on the third floor was Kirishima, whose room was unaccountably being eaten by a gym. “Check out the manliness of my badass room!” Declared the redhead, as most of the boys with more physical quirks received the room with some enthusiasm, and with the sole exception of Uraraka- who was slightly scary, even if Dark Shadow didn’t see it-none from the girls.

Kouda’s room was fairly unremarkable, except in that it was clearly designed with the comfort of his pet rabbit in mind. Some amount of fawning over the adorable insipid ball of fluff occurred before the collected students could move onto the next room.

Kaminari’s room was a… mess. The bird-headed teen would probably never cease to wonder why the master of lightnings had decided on a leopard-print bedspread, or why he had so. Many. Hats. The boy had never even been seen to wear a hat since they had started at UA.

Iida’s room was as true a reflection of the upper strata of the boy’s soul as could be hoped for, the walls lined with books, and numerous spare pairs of glasses. The latter of which, as seemed to be some inherent aspect of all human behaviour, were tried on by various members of the class. Though perhaps he should not judge too harshly, seeing as he was partially held back by the fact that they wouldn’t fit properly on his head.

In the nicest possible way, Ojiro’s room was like unto the flowers with which his hair shared its colour; vanilla. And from his response to what was said about it, the tailed boy knew as much.

Finally, the group came to the door of his nest, and the shadow-user opened the door with some reluctance, and let it be known with a muttered “what a mad banquet of darkness”, and a shake of the head.

The horde poured into his sanctuary, like a swarm of locusts, commenting on the dimness, and messing with his key chains until he wished only to banish them from the space. Midoriya immediately went to the sword at the foot of his bed. “So cool, do you know how to use it, Tokoyami-kun?” The greenette asked, briefly distracting him from his annoyance.

“No, why would I?” He asked, wondering why the other boy would even thing… right. Ex-vigilante. He probably knew the way of several weapons.
“It could be pretty useful, if you got separated from Dark Shadow again,” the fire-user mused, “maybe you could try to learn?”

Fumikage looked at the- just- taller boy in bafflement for a moment, before he arranged his response. “Midoriya, I am loathe to be the bearer of such tidings, but you have been spending too much time around Bakugou, and Todoroki.”

“Huh?” Asked the greenette, while his backpack blinked cat-like at him.

“Mere mortals, such as ourselves, cannot simply gain a new skill, as easily as willing it so.” He informed the confused genius.

Midoriya’s face went through several emotions in rapid succession, and he began to wave his hands around wildly in negation. “Wh-What? No, I- obviously you can’t- I mean, I couldn’t either, b-but it c-could be useful, i-if you had long enough to learn.”

“Deku,” put in Uraraka, her tone silk covered steel, “please tell me you don’t know how to use a sword as well.”

The fire-user just looked confused. “No? Why would I use a sword? That wouldn’t fit my fighting style at all.”

The brunette looked mollified, but Mina decided to raise her own objection. “Who ever heard of a hero using a sword, though? Isn’t that more of a villain thing? Like Stain?”

The greenette frowned at the pinkette in consternation. “Hawks does.” He said simply, leaving the entire room reeling.

“What? When?” Mina demanded, when no more was forthcoming.

“Well, he uses his feathers, but the long ones are basically swords, the way he tends to use them,” Midoriya said, as if that should have been obvious, before brightening into a sunlight bright smile, “oh! Maybe he could teach you, if you end up interning with him again.”
The shadow-user stared at the fire-user for a moment longer, before answering. “I’ll ask him, in the event.” It was a bit weird, that he had never made the connection before. Perhaps it was just how rarely he held the feathers in his hands during Fumikage’s time with the man.

Once he had finally cleansed his room of the interlopers, they moved into Aoyama’s room, which was… about as different from Fumikage’s room as possible. He thought it might be possible to get a tan standing in here, just from the lights and the many mirrors.

The only thing the gothic teen thought he might approve of was the full suit of armour- how did he even get that in here? Did he have to assemble it?- but even that was tainted by being too polished, and too close to… what looked disturbingly like an oil painting of Aoyama himself.

It was as he had feared. The room matched the boy perfectly.

The penultimate room on the boy’s side finally came, and the bird-headed teen was admittedly extremely interested in it. What would the room of the walking contradiction be like?

His initial reaction was disappointment, since to the untrained eye the room looked to be the room of one who had taken obsession with heroes to an almost religious fervour. The only inch of the room that didn’t seem to be taken up with hero merchandise was covered in a dartboard. Even the bedspread was hero merchandise.

It took several seconds to notice the oddities in the eclectic mix of objects. The dartboard had holes larger than could be accounted for by simple darts, for one. Then there was how indiscriminate the mix was.

There were figurines of All Might- five in fact, all in a row, one for each version of his costume, and one with him in his newly revealed skeletal form. He wondered how the greenette had that last, since they surely hadn’t really come onto the market yet. But other than that, there seemed to be at least one piece for nearly every hero Fumikage had ever heard of, and no more than a couple for any one hero. But there were gaps.

“Wow, you sure love heroes, Deku-kun.” Uraraka pointed out lamely, since that was by far the most obvious thing about the room.

The greenette blushed lightly, while his backpack looked uninterested- perhaps he had seen the
hoard before. “I just like to g-get some of the merch for heroes I respect. Sh-Show support, y’know?”

Fumikage looked around the collection for a moment, trying to make sure of the gaps he had seen. “What did Mt. Lady, Kamui Woods, Death Arms, Backdraft, and… Fat Gum do to invoke your wrath?” What Endeavour had done seemed fairly obvious, these days.

Midoriya showed a rare scowl. “Fat Gum didn’t do anything,” he said, pointing to a figurine of a thin man in yellow on a shelf with several black-clad figures, one in an All Might hoodie, and what Fumikage initially feared was a stolen pair of Aizawa’s goggles, until he decided they were probably replicas, “the other four stood by while a kid was drowning.” The last was said in a growl nearly fierce enough for Bakugou.

Fumikage blinked, taken aback. Not just that they could have done such a thing, but at the anger from Midoriya, who seemed generally forgiving of just about everything. The bird-headed teen was about to ask about that, when Shinsou spoke first.

“This is Fat Gum?” he asked, gesturing to the thin figurine, and Midoriya nodded, “Tell me that he isn’t about to reveal some weaker form, and retire too?” The brainwasher almost groaned.

The entire class turned their attention away from the impressive collection to gaze at the greenette. “Huh? No, that’s just something his quirk does, he can return the force of physical attacks sometimes, but it burns up all his fat. He doesn’t do it very often, and he doesn’t really go out again until he’s put the weight back on… I think it makes him embarrassed.” The greenette would probably have kept murmuring about the man’s quirk, but Todoroki cut him off with a tap on the shoulder.

“Oh. It was custom made? That whole shelf was, actually.” Well that certainly answered how the fire-user had somehow managed to get Eraserhead merch. The class as a whole became pretty interested in the shelf of heroes that had enough respect from Amber that he had commissioned merch of them.

“Okay~, that’s pretty interesting, but in that case, how do you have this?” Shinsou asked, gesturing to the little Thin Gum again.

Fumikage quickly found that he recognised exactly none of them. “I assume most of these must be underground heroes,” said Iida, plucking the hoddie-wearing figure from the shelf, “but surely an underground hero wouldn’t wear something so bright?”
Midoriya looked at Iida, mouth open for a couple of seconds, totally surprised by the question for some reason. “Um, that one isn’t a hero. That’s The Crawler, he was a pretty active vigilante a few years ago.”

Iida nearly dropped the little figure in shock, eyes blowing wide, and hurriedly putting the thing back where he had found it.

“Why was Iida’s question so surprising?” Fumikage asked, just as Iida asked “You can get merchandise of vigilantes?”

Midoriya looked between the pair, before deciding to answer Fumikage first. “Um, b-because he knew Ingenium p-pretty well? He practically worked for Iidaten for a little while, I- I was going to ask Iida i-if he knew what happened to him.”

If Iida had been shocked before, now he looked as if the universe had just spontaneously inverted itself before his eyes. His mouth was actually hanging open. Not that the rest of the class was much better.

“A-And… I- yeah? You can obviously commission whatever you like, but some vigilantes get proper merch. Some villains, even. stain’s got a fair bit of it, and if you went looking I think you could still get Destro merch, though that’s probably because...” Fumikage began to tune out the increasingly quiet rambling, in favour of watching Iida’s entire world-view shift.

“Excuse me.” the bluet said abruptly, before speeding from the room. The fire-user finally cut off, looking after the engine-quirked boy, and then to the assembled masses.

Midoriya began to pale slightly. “I… shouldn’t have said that, should I?” He asked faintly.

“Not your fault,” said Todoroki, finally climbing down, “honestly, I’m surprised Iida didn’t know.”

“Still, I should...” the greenette said, looking to the door again, “how could he not know that Ingenium is laid back about vigilantism? I’ve worked with his brother before.” He murmured, still some mix of guilty and confused.
Fumikage guessed that he should probably bear some of the guilt for asking the question in the first place.

Shinsou shook himself finally, returning his face to its tired amusement at everything. “Let’s go check out my room, while Iida calls his brother. Though it’s not that interesting. Midoriya, I’m going to get where you got that Eraserhead merch out of you.”

Midoriya nodded distractedly, and Todoroki pulled him along by the shoulder, murmuring barely audibly as he passed by Fumikage. “Iida’s going to be fine, Izuku.”
Shouto finally got down, even his own lacking ability with… people in general not preventing him from noticing the tanking mood of the room as a whole, and Izuku’s mood in particular. Being distracted by how flustered the closeness, and casual display of strength made him wouldn’t help right now.

The ice-user briefly contemplated stopping all physical contact, before remembering what Izuku had said on their second date about it being calming, and instead reaching out to grab a shoulder to gently pull him after the rest of the class- sans Iida. “Iida’s going to be fine, Izuku.”

The fire-user glanced towards the lift, clearly still worried, but still followed the crowd to the last of the boy’s rooms. The greenette looked guilty, and worried by turns still, so Shouto reached down to grab a hand, lacing their fingers together, before giving a reassuring- he hoped- squeeze. His face may have been more stony than Kirishima's, normally, but he hoped that he was making himself understood.

Golden eyes looked up at him as they reached the door near the back of the crowd, and Izuku’s face broke into a grateful smile, squeezing back, though Shouto could still feel the worry radiating off of him.

Hopefully the bluet would be back soon enough, given that he was almost certainly just calling his brother. Brothers always made things better, in Shouto’s experience… maybe he should say something about that to Izuku, since he was an only child?
“Ta-da.” Said Shinsou, in the flattest, most disinterested tone Shouto had ever heard from anyone other than Aizawa, gesturing to the room.

Shouto didn’t think the room was uninteresting, per se. Not the most interesting one they’d visited today- a title that definitely went to Kouda, and he would fight anyone who disagreed- but it was far from the least interesting.

The brainwasher earned several points from the ice-user for the several cat posters, and what looked to be a cat calendar on the wall. Much of the class immediately went to coo at the various adorable felines.

Shinsou rubbed the back of his neck, while Shouto was wondering why he had a bike resting against one wall- surely there had to be a better place to store that? “Like I said, not very interesting.”

“Nah man, it’s a pretty rad room,” said Kirishima, giving a shark-toothed smile, “loving the cats, and… is that a copy of Aizawa-sensei’s scarf?”

Shouto, and Izuku turned in unison to look at the mass of grey cloth peaking out from behind the desk. Huh, it did look like a copy of Aizawa’s scarf. Plus the black hoodie with a grey pattern on it, resting on the back of his chair, Shouto was beginning to think that Shinsou might have more Eraserhead merchandise than Izuku already.

The purple-haired teen grimaced in either annoyance or embarrassment. “Yeah, he’s been teaching me how to use it.”

That was surprising. Not just that it wasn’t a prop, but that his classmate actually knew how to use it. “Woah, how’d you convince Aizawa to give you extra lessons?” Kirishima asked, eyes widening- a reaction shared by much of the class.

“Why’d you convince him?” Put in Kaminari, earning him a glare from the brainwasher.

“I didn’t, he offered. It’s probably just because we both have non-physical quirks.”
“Ooh, how’s it going, Shinsou-kun? You’ve never used it in a hero lesson.” Uraraka asked, turning from the cats to look at the tall— even by Shouto’s standards, though it was hard to tell how much the hair added— teen.

The grimace returned. “Slowly, it’s…” he ran a hand through his hair, “it’s harder than it looks.”

Shouto blinked at him slowly. “Really? It looks complicated.” And it did. How the tiny motions their teacher used to control the thing— on those few occasions they had even seen him use it— were a totally closed book to him.

Shinsou gave a sharp amused exhalation. “It’s more complicated than that, I promise. I’ll probably start using it this term, though; Aizawa says I’ve got the basics finally.”

Shouto mentally added to his secret love-child tally, vaguely listening to the exclamations from Kirishima, and the— slightly less-so than normal— enthusiastic compliments from Izuku. Poor Shinsou looked a bit out of his depth, and Shouto couldn’t blame him; being the subject of both the sunshine children’s attention like that would be too much for nearly anyone.

(Izuku had nearly reduced that tally, once Shouto realised how stupid it was to think that Endeavour could have produced anyone that happy, even if they had avoided the dubious honour of being raised by him, until the ice-user connected the strength with All Might. No, he didn’t have a problem, Fuyumi.)

After the brainwasher had weathered excitement, there wasn’t too much more to see in Shinou’s room, so the class meandered out, and Mina raised a fist into the air suddenly. “Now it’s the girls’ turn!”

The ice-user had no idea what to make of the level of enthusiasm the girls— bar Jirou— showed at the idea of sharing their rooms, but made no comment, only glancing surreptitiously at Izuku. The golden-eyed teen was smiling along, as the class’ mood turned back up, though it was more wan than his baseline.

Unsurprisingly, the most observant person Shouto had ever met— and also his boyfriend, so it was to be expected the person who knew him better than most of the class— caught the glance. The greenette widened his smile, turning to look up at him, and giving another squeeze to their still joined hands, as they crossed onto the foreign soil of the girls’ wing.
Silent communication done, the boys followed the girls through this terra incognita. Getting to the first of the girls’ rooms actually took a surprisingly long time, since for some reason the girls had been separated as much as humanly possible, and there weren’t any occupied rooms on the first floor at all.

First up was Hagakure. The invisible girl led them there with what would probably have been much sleeve waving. Actually, it was surprising how much the lack of long sleeves affected her ability to emote. She was still better at it than him, in his estimation, but she came across as much less bubbly than standard, and he doubted he could have gauged her mood at all, if she wore anything without sleeves.

The room was… he didn’t want to say girly, but it really was the stereotypical girl’s room. The dominant colour was pink, and there were numerous stuffed animals. Kaminari had no such compunctions, and spoke his mind with enviable ease.

Then, three doors down for some unknown reason, Jirou’s room was pretty interesting, for all that the girl seemed pretty embarrassed at showing them. The whole thing was very musical, between the band posters, and the sheer variety of instruments…

“Woah, rockin’ room there, Jirou-san,” Said Kirishima, “you can play all these instruments?”

Jirou, who to this point had been facing the wall, playing with her jacks, glanced over her shoulder. “Well, the basics, anyway.” She murmured.

Uraraka’s reaction to this was… odd. She groaned in… exasperation? “That’s it! you’re going on my list.” She declared, pointing accusingly at the dark-haired girl.

“You’re list?” Jirou asked quizzically, finally turning to face the room, while most of the class turned to the brunette.

“Yeah, my list of people who are unfairly good at everything! It’s just you, Midoriya, Bakugou, and maybe Todoroki right now, but still.” She crossed her arms, with an exaggerated pout/scowl.

Shouto imagined that the twin looks of surprise and confusion the two fire-users gave the bubbly girl at this proclamation must have been pretty funny. He wasn’t good at everything; he could barely hold a conversation unless it was with someone like Izuku, who did most of the work. Heaven help him if he ever got stuck in a room with Shinsou.
“Wha- b-but we’re n-not good at everything, Uraraka-san.” Spluttered Izuku, recovering enough to respond first, while Jirou was still in the process of turning crimson.

“No, she’s got a point, you kind of are.” Argued Shinsou, smirking.

“And you’re the worst of all four of you, Deku,” Added Uraraka, though the pout had given way to a wry smile, “so you can’t talk. How many languages do you even speak?”

“O-only three.” Said the greenette faintly, rapidly joining Jirou in the impersonating a tomato club. Uraraka actually spluttered, repeating the word “only” in disbelief.

“It is true that you got the highest score in nearly every exam last term.” Reasoned Yaoyorozu, prompting Izuku to pull his hand away- and Shouto definitely didn’t immediately miss the warmth- to cover his face, giving out a high-pitched whine.

Hmm. To stop the ribbing, or to let it go on? Well, it was clearly keeping his boyfriend from worrying about Iida. “Didn’t you also take the top spot at the entrance exam?” The bi-chromatic teen asked innocently.

Shouto only smiled in response to the look of betrayal he got from between the shorter boy’s fingers. Shinsou clearly found this immensely funny, and Shouto needed to make sure that the purple-haired teen never met Touya, since that level of snide in one room should never be allowed. “By over sixty points.” Said the brainwasher flatly, prompting Izuku to give up on hiding his face with his hands, instead trying to bury himself in Shouto’s side.

“I’m- it’s only really instruments, and I’m really not that good.” Objected Jirou, clicking her jacks together, and looking down.

“And you’re all so humble about it!” Exclaimed Uraraka in- mock?- frustration. “Knowing how to play this many instruments is really impressive. Next thing Shouto’s going to tell us that knowing how to make it snow inside whenever he wants is ‘no biggie’.”

Shouto opened his mouth- it really wasn’t that impressive, and he had had to ask for help on that front anyway- then he realised that she was probably being sarcastic, and shut it again. Great, now he had no idea how to even begin to deny belonging to this hyper-talented group. Izuku totally deserved his place there though, for all that he denied it.
From the smirk Shinsou sent him, as they wandered to the next floor - seriously, did the staff have some fear of the girls banding together for evil purposes if their rooms were near each other? All this walking was getting tiring - the brainwasher was entirely aware of his dilemma. Shouto didn’t glare back at him, no matter what anyone said.

Uraraka’s room was surprisingly plain, with very little out of the ordinary - which was fairly out of the ordinary, in itself, given all the others - with even the bedspread, and curtains being unpatterned.

“Ta-da!” Exclaimed Mina, with all the enthusiasm that Shinsou’s “ta-da” had lacked, opening the door to a room that immediately made him miss the plainness of Uraraka’s.

The room was pink. The room was violently pink. It looked like Mina had been trying to weaponise the colour. Shouto thought he might go blind. Every single pink thing had a different pattern, and none of them matched.

Shouto gently pulled Izuku to the photographs on the wall, since they were one of the only things he felt it was safe to look at for any extended time, but even here the board they were on was ringed in pink.

He didn’t really recognise most of the people in the pictures, though he guessed that that one had to be a family picture, and... there was something strangely familiar about that black-haired boy. He mentally shrugged, he could ask later, and everyone was already moving on.

Asui’s room was both a blessed relief, and really fitting. The whole room was a mix of blues, and greens, and the girl had seemingly taken the time to paint the walls with various vines, and flowers. It gave a really nice nature-y feeling- and- there Izuku went to compliment her on the wall-art, while Shouto was still a tiny bit surprised that the frog-like girl had an entirely normal bed. Yup, just patterned with lilly-pads, no pond in here.

Last but not least - except in terms of floor space- was Yaoyorozu, who like Iida had packed her room with books, but unlike their class president had further filled it with a four-poster bed, and a writing desk with a quill, and a large dresser, and all sorts of other bulky furniture.

Shouto didn’t even bother trying to enter the room, since there wasn’t enough room for more than maybe two people. “Isn’t it a bit cramped?” The ice-user asked, turning to the other recommended student.
The dark-haired girl nodded, looking abashed. “This is just the furniture I’ve always used. I didn’t expect the rooms to have such limited space.”

Shouto nodded in understanding. His room was a lot smaller than the one on the Todoroki estate, and he probably would have had the same issue, if Endeavour hadn’t been so… ruthlessly utilitarian with regards to everything, including furnishings.

The ice-user was really longing for his futon, but he dutifully followed the class back down to the common areas. He had started this, and he may as well finish it, plus he did kind of want to wait until Iida got back, just to make sure he was alright.

The bluet actually surprised them by arriving in the room at almost exactly the same time that they did. “Iida!” Izuku exclaimed, spotting him, “Are you OK?”

Iida nodded mechanically, but he smiled, which seemed a good sign. “I am. I apologise for any concern my departure caused, I simply needed to speak with my brother, since I was unaware of his relationship with the Crawler.”

“Oh, um, wh-what did you say?” Asked the greenette nervously.

“Not much of importance,” replied the bluet with a chop, “we both agreed that such serious discussions should be held in person. I will ask for further details- those he is at liberty to share anyway- the next time we meet. Though he outlined his reasons for working with the vigilante, and how they pertained to the duties of a hero.”

“T-That’s good. I’m sorry, I didn’t…” Murmured Izuku, before trailing off.

“No need to apologise, Midoriya, you had no reason to suspect I did not know. Again, I apologise for causing you any distress.” Iida replied, bowing briefly.

“Well now that you’re back,” put in Mina, while the fire-user was still fumbling for something to say in the face of Iida’s excessive formality, “we can vote on the room king!” She held out a ballot box, which had come from… somewhere.
“But it would be dishonest of me to place a vote,” declared Iida, “I did not see every room.”

“Just vote for the best one you did see then.”

“But that would unfairly skew the vote against Shinsou-kun, and the girls!”

“I don’t think it’s that important.” Said Shouto, causing Iida to face him. The ice-user became keenly aware that this was the first time the bluet had looked at him directly since the morning, and from the way his face stiffened slightly, he was definitely still angry about Kamino.

Shouto couldn’t really blame him for that; Fuyumi had been furious for days, and it was a wonder she didn’t actually skin Touya over it, and she hadn’t actually been lied to.

The engine-quirked boy drew a deep breath, Shouto tensing for possible tirades, or possibly an attempt to break his nose, before Iida let it out in a rush, turning away from him. “Very well, if no-one minds my unbalanced vote being added?” He asked of the group at large, carefully not looking at Shouto, or Kirishima.

Shouto cast his vote for Kouda, then took a place on the sofa next to Izuku, waiting for the votes to be counted while leaning on the greenette. Izuku was so warm, and this was definitely a good way to fall asleep on him again, but he didn’t care- so long as Izuku didn’t, that was.

To the bi-chromatic teen’s surprise, it was not Kouda who won, but Sato. Apparently, the rest of the class liked sweets more than he did. Kind of funny to see the wider boy being beset by Kaminari for “bribing” future heroes, though.

“Todoroki.” Said Tokoyami suddenly, distracting him from listening to the conversation Izuku was having with Shinsou about how the capture weapon worked.

“Yes?” He replied, looking up at the bird-headed teen.

“Can I borrow Midoriya for a minute?”

Shouto wasn’t sure what his face did in response to that question- to it being asked of him, and not
of Izuku- but whatever it was, it was probably obvious, so he immediately smoothed it out, purely from reflex. People didn’t think he was that controlling, did they? …He wasn’t that controlling, was he? Please don’t let him be that controlling.

“I don’t decide where he goes.” He said, feeling slightly proud of how even his voice was.

Tokoyami chuckled darkly. “I doubt any would be able to control such a being of chaotic energy.” The shadow-user said, sounding amused, looking to the greenette.

Izuku smiled, mildly bemused. “Sure, what do you need me for?”

“I wished only to speak with you,” Tokoyami glanced around the little group that always seemed to gravitate towards Izuku, “in private, if possible.”

“Okay?” replied the greenette, slightly unsure, “Shouto, could you let me up?”

Oh. Shouto finally relaxed. He had just been leaning on Izuku a bit more than he had thought. The ice-user straightened on the sofa, freeing the fire-user’s shoulder.

Fumikage led the verdant one to the highest point of the structure, ignoring the incessant demands of his other half to just ask already. This conversation truly did need privacy, he decided, and shoji have eyes, so he had resolved to hold it beneath the stars.

For all that he could feel the intensity of the gaze directed at his back from the way his feathers rose, Midoriya chose to say nothing, even as he was led through the building. Fumikage was honestly a little touched by the trust, given the possibility of a saboteur in their midst.

Then again, even if he attacked without warning, he doubted he could fight someone whose quirk countered his own so perfectly.

The shadow-user turned when he heard the click of the pyromancer closing the rooftop door. “S-So what did you want to talk about?” Midoriya asked, thumb playing over his right palm nervously-
playing over the knife scar he had earned catching a knife to protect Fumikage, when he could much more easily have dodged it.

Fumikage paused, considering how best to approach what he wished to ask. *Come on, just ask him.* Insisted Dark Shadow again. He ignored it, except in that he made sure it was thoroughly held, since the roof was pretty dark at this time of night.

“What you said during our… incarceration, with the league.” The bird-headed teen stated.

The greenette tilted his head. “Wh-What about it? And what p-part?”

Fumikage hummed. This needed to be approached delicately, but the desire to know if they had found a kindred spirit was not solely Dark Shadow’s. “The part about being alone in your head,” he answered, and had he a better understanding of people he might have realised his mistake at that, as Midoriya stiffened, “I wished to know if you had your own internal companion, like myself.”

The effect was immediate, and Fumikage quickly realised that he had erred. Midoriya- Midoriya, who had been implacable in the face of Dark Shadow’s wrath, who had reacted to being stabbed by a friend by searing shut the wound, and continuing to fight, and who had wreathed himself in reassuring calm in the face of almost the entirety of the league- suddenly looked like a hunted animal, eyes going wide, and flicking about, as if searching in vain for some way, any way, out of this situation.

The fire-user opened his mouth, and Fumikage felt sure that the words that would spill from his lips would be a frantic denial, so the bird-headed teen forestalled him. “I see that I have trod ground where I am not welcome. You need not speak, if you don’t wish.” He reassured, fully prepared to drop what was doubtless taboo amongst the denizens of the other boy’s head.

“Really?” Midoriya blurted, before his eyes somehow widened even further, and he clamped a hand over his mouth, realising what it was he had said- something that could be construed as confirmation.

If Fumikage had eyebrows, they would have been raised at that. “A man’s mind is his final sanctuary; I would not trespass there, if I was unwelcome.”

Golden eyes searched red for a moment longer, before their owner sagged, palpable relief making up the entirety of his expression. “Thank you.” Midoriya whispered, and Fumikage doubted he had
ever heard a more heartfelt statement.

He shook his head wryly. “I would extend that courtesy to anyone, I think I can do that much for one to whom I owe my life. Know that, if you ever feel comfortable to speak, you can trust to my confidence. If I had lips, no word of what you say would pass them, and-” He prodded his quirk, then carefully let it out.

“I wouldn’t say anything, either.” Agreed Dark Shadow, the huge bird-shaped darkness emerging to hover behind its host’s shoulder.

Midoriya briefly gave the impression that he was looking through, rather than at, Fumikage, and the bird-headed teen wondered if that vacant expression the other boy so often wore was a sign that he was conversing with his alters. It was none of his concern, and he dropped the thought.

“T-Thanks, I-I really appreciate it, and… I’ll think about talking to you about it.” The tone in which the last was said gave Fumikage the distinct impression that hell would freeze over before a single word passed the greenette’s lips, but he would take what he could get. That one hint had probably been a slip, and most likely only happened because of the stress they were both under at the time.

Fumikage cast about for a less unapproachable topic, but Midoriya beat him to it. “So, um, h-how have you two been doing, a-after everything?”

“I have been fine.” Insisted the shadow demon, as unwilling to admit fault, or weakness as ever in this sort of lighting.

“I have never experienced a more damning indictment of my character than being the subject of a recruitment campaign by such madmen, but I am coping. Beyond a small scratch from Toga, I was not even harmed, thanks to you.”

Midoriya smiled wanly. “I-It’s good that you’re coping, b-but I really didn’t do much. My plan wouldn’t have worked without Dark Shadow,” the quirk preened at the praise, “a-and I wanted to say that I really appreciate t-that you went along with it, since I didn’t really explain.” Said the greenette, before murmuring something about talking that Fumikage didn’t make out.

The shorter boy blinked at that; it wasn’t like he had had a great deal of options, and besides. “Of course I went along, any plan of yours would have been our best chance.” He said seriously, and
Midoriya immediately burst into tears.

Oh no. Midoriya was crying. No, he needed to put a stop to this, right now. He was too young to be eviscerated by Todoroki. Or worse, Uraraka. He looked to Dark Shadow, but the quirk was just as surprised by this development as he was. Damn, he needed to-

“Thank you, Tokoyami-kun.” Sniffled the greenette… happily? Rubbing his eyes. “That was such a nice thing to say.”

The thoroughly lost shadow-user just nodded lamely, not sure what was so significant about telling the smartest, and most experienced of his classmates that his plan would be better thought out than Fumikage’s own.

Once the waterworks finally ceased, the greenette moved on, as if he had not just cried more than any human should have been capable of. “So you two have been fine, after what happened in the forest?” He asked, glancing between Fumikage, and Dark Shadow, while absently rubbing the scar that covered much of the right of his face.

Fumikage glanced at his quirk, briefly thinking about the concerning rate at which the other boy acquired scars. “We have agreed to visit our old quirk councillor, but it was not the first time that has happened, and we have always gotten through it.” Though this time was the first in many years, and certainly the worst, especially given Shigaraki’s words afterwards.

“Hmph.” Said the quirk, turning away petulantly. It never did like being forced to see their councillor, or at least, it would never admit to liking it, despite the apple-based bribing that usually occurred.

Midoriya smiled at the quirk’s antics, totally fearless, despite its current size. Fumikage couldn’t blame him, since he was beginning to suspect that Dark Shadow was afraid of him, to some extent. “That’s good, I’m glad that you’re still getting along.” As was Fumikage, since the alternative hardly bore thinking about.

The quirk, seemingly taking issue with Midoriya’s casual tone, growled. “Are you two going to stay up here all night? You still need to talk to Asui.” It told its host, who would have grimaced, if he could.

“That’s right, I still need to apologise to As- Tsuyu-san.” Said Midoriya, biting his bottom lip.
“Shall we go together, then?” Fumikage offered, as Dark Shadow retreated back inside, bored of their conversation.

Midoriya nodded, looking as relieved at the idea of moral support as Fumikage felt.

“Nope.” Said Asui, as soon as the pair approached.


“You’re going to do what Iida did in the hospital, and apologise for not noticing the fake me.” She told the pair, and Fumikage subtly leaned away from her. Those unblinking eyes truly saw too deeply at times.

“Indeed.” The shadow-user said.

“Don’t. You couldn’t have known the villains would have a quirk like that, kero.”

“Yes, but...” Midoriya began, before trailing off under her stare, mouth open as he searched for something to say.

“Kero.”

The greenette shut his mouth.

“Good.”
Izuku finished decrypting the notebook before bed on the day he moved into the dorms, and found himself… much less anxious about the existence of a plaintext version of it than expected. It was lifetimes of work, just sitting there where anyone could take it. It should be worrying him more. It's not like there's really anything anyone can do with it that isn't good, really. The voice had said, which he supposed was fair.

A side-effect of having finished it was that the greenette finished his morning workout in plenty of time, and was left at a loose end on the morning of the first proper day of term. He found himself casting about for something to do.

Not that he minded Iida’s company, or anything, but he had never arrived at class this early before, and he thought he might find himself nearly equally bored there. Covering the scar on the right of his face barely put a dent in his time.
Most of the fun things he tended to do to kill time were some flavour of Amber related, honestly. The police had confiscated both his picks, and his knives, so lock picking, and target practice were out…

He could go bother Shouto, he supposed, but goodness knew his boyfriend loved his sleep. ‘Any thoughts, guys?’

He knew, really, that he should be spending this time trying to figure out One-For-All, but honestly? At this stage even the voice was becoming fed up with the stubborn quirk.

Dismantle was behaving pretty well, all things considered. Getting it to rise out of the water was pretty easy, and getting easier with each new attempt. Though it was somewhat inconvenient, in that it the original quirk was involuntary, so he had to be careful until One-For-All decided to eat the quirk again, which took about ten minutes every time. Unless he used it deliberately, which seemed to reset that timer.

No, it was trying to convince the infernal pool of water to give him anything else that was a nightmare. After the first time, just a vague desire to break something was enough for Dismantle, but Ren was seemingly right about first time usage. He had barely been able to get the water to ripple by just wanting some specific object, so it seemed likely that it had to be an especially strong emotion to dredge up a quirk for the first time.

Honestly the frustration that this was causing meant that they had been having a better time unlocking the copy of Phoenix Spirit, rather than Summoner.

*Practice makes perfect, Izuku.* Chided the voice, mostly Hayato.

Izuku groaned, and thumped his head on the desk. “I’m going to go crazy if I spend another minute looking at something across the room, and glaring at that quirk.” He complained.

*Kid’s got a point,* agreed Ichigou, the rest of the voice following, *it’s not likely to do much good, and putting that watch back together over and over is a pain. I’d say getting Dismantle up in under two seconds is enough progress for now.*

*Doesn’t answer the kid’s question, though,* chimed Aoi, *I’m pretty sure he’s just as bored doing nothing.*
The voice hummed, considering this. We could do something a bit more interesting with the makeup, suggested Yugo, though the rest of the voice stayed silent, I reckon we could do a really good Kaminari, and your Hawks cosplay is as amazing as ever, as long as you don’t burn someone with the wings.

Izuku perked up, that sounded like fun, and he really loved his Hawks cosplay, especially with the fire-wings. By this time next year he would probably be tall enough to pull off the impression height-wise, as well.

His hopes were once more dashed, when the rest of the voice spoke up, generating a mild twinge as they disagreed. With Toga working with the league, we’re going to guess that shapeshifting in school is not going to go well. It said flatly.

Yugo sighed defeatedly. Point… oh! How about camera hunt? That’s always fun. From the way that all six voices said this, it was obvious that the voice had no objection to the plan, and Izuku grinned, jumping from his chair, and making his way into the hall.

Camera hunt was technically a sort of observation training, but as with a lot of training, the voice liked to make it into a game. The goal was to try and find all the cameras in a new location, and see if he could see as many as the voice did. The twenty minutes until class was due to start would probably be long enough for a game around the dorms.

Hard mode? The voice asked, and Izuku nodded. Finding the cameras without seeming like you were looking for them was much harder, but more fun.

The greenette looked both ways down the hall, pretending to check if there was anyone else there with him, but secretly noting the two cameras at either end- which he had spotted the first night- before walking to the lift, and heading down to the common room.

There were surprisingly few cameras down here, Izuku noted, wandering into the kitchen to get himself a bowl of cereal, and some water- he said he couldn’t cook to Uraraka, and he meant it; a bowl of cereal was nearly the full extent of his abilities there.

One camera in the kitchen itself, and another that should take in most of the sofas. He didn’t let his eyes dwell on them, but pursed his lips as he added the milk. Those two left some pretty big blind spots. But there wasn’t anywhere inside where more could be, or he would have seen them-Making assumptions, kid. The voice mocked gently.
The fire-user huffed, and shook his head. He might have missed them, but no way to check without possibly giving himself away. Unless they were outside. The greenette took his bowl, and wandered to the front door, waving to a couple of the others eating breakfast, before making his way out.

Another look both ways, noting cameras on the outer walls, before he sauntered down the steps, turning right. There was a bench at the back of the building, which he had seen through the bay windows last night, he could have his breakfast there, and see if there were any outside cameras facing in.

Some people would say that it was too cold to sit outside in their shirtsleeves in august, but those people didn’t have fire quirks, or run unnaturally warm.

Rounding one corner, he spotted a couple more cameras out of his peripheral vision, carefully not looking directly at them, bringing his total up to eight. Those cameras combined should have a pretty good coverage, if anyone tried to get in from the outside. Good to see that Nedzu is taking security in the dorms seriously. Praised the voice.

‘Yeah, but–’ Izuku started, before a slight turn of his head brought his attention to a brighter patch in the wall, just above head height. The greenette froze mid-stride, turning his head slowly to look at it.

“Good morning, Togata-senpai?” He said slowly, gazing at the smiling face in the wall.

The smile widened greatly, seeming immensely pleased. “Ah! You recognise me? That’s awesome!” He said, sounding bizarrely pleased about something that would have caused Izuku stress, if anything.

“Um, y-yeah. I watched your...” Izuku started before trailing off, “wait. How are you doing that?”

“Doing what?” Asked the face in the wall, tilting slightly, but still grinning, seeming amused.

“Talking!” Izuku exclaimed, tilting his head to both sides, trying to work out how thick that wall was. Not that it mattered really. “Your neck, and probably your lungs are intangible you shouldn’t be able to breathe unless your quirk doesn’t work on air, or...”
Togata clearly hadn’t been expecting that answer, since he blinked twice in surprise. “You know what my quirk does?” He asked, breaking Izuku from his mumbling.

“Huh? Yeah, I w-watched your sports f-festivals.”

*Though figuring out what you were actually doing was a bloody nightmare.* Griped the voice, remembering hours watching the scandalous footage of the blond’s first year on loop, trying to figure out how his quirk worked.

“All right, Tama.” Reassured the strongest of the big three brightly, prompting the dark-haired boy to lower his head further, pulling at his fringe.

“Ah, it’s fine, Tama.” Reassured the strongest of the big three brightly, prompting the dark-haired boy to lower his head further, pulling at his fringe.

*Oh, they had better not be here for what we think they are.* Muttered the voice sounding… disappointed?

“Ah, that’s adorable, you’re like a big strawberry!” Enthused Hadou, bounding right into Izuku’s personal space, causing the greenette to blush even harder, and try to lean away from the girl who was so close to him that at that moment he was reminded horribly of Hastume.

“So it’s true you’re Amber, right? And you fought the league! That must have been scary. you’ve
got a fire quirk, right? Or is it strength? Both? How does that work?”

Izuku was leaning even further away at this point, and he really didn’t like this line of questioning. He briefly considered throwing his bowl at her, and making a break for it. Thankfully, Togata took mercy on him, pulling the bluette back. “I think you’re scaring him, Hadou-chan.” He said, sounding only slightly stern, before turning a bright smile on Izuku, “don’t mind her, she’s just really excitable.”

“Um, okay?” Said the greenette uncertainly, still worried about why the big three were here. Something not helped by the way the voice was watching them, seemingly in case they tried something.

He was pretty sure that Yogata’s answering smile was meant to be reassuring, but it didn’t work especially well, given that he was surrounded by the three strongest students at UA. “We just wanted to talk to you,” the blond explained brightly, “none of us has ever actually met a proper vigilante-”

“Yeah,” cut in Hadou, exuberance undimmed, “and you’re like the vigilante! Who trained you? Was it the first Amber? Ooh, or some other vigilante? How did you go so long without being seen? Does your quirk let you change your eye-colour? How did you make that big hole?” She bombarded him with questions, causing both the fire-user, and Amajiki to shrink in on themselves.

Togata shook his head, putting a hand on her shoulder, cutting her off. “One question at a time,” he turned to Izuku, “we’ve never actually met a real-life vigilante, so we thought it would be cool to talk to you. You must have trained really differently, before UA, right?”

Izuku uncurled himself slightly to answer, carefully only looking at the blond’s face. “Um, not really? I’ve been doing a lot of similar stuff here? A-and I d-don’t really do that sort of thing any more.” The last thing he wanted was future heroes thinking he was still working as Amber, despite his parole.

“Really? But you’re so good with your quirk. Plus I’m still not as good at demolition as you.” He queried the slightly overwhelmed greenette.

_Hm, they seem to be just curious…_

“I’m not that good. You’re way b-better at u-using Permeation.” Objected the fire-user. He had
centuries of experience to draw on to help with his control of his quirk, but the blond was amazingly skilled after only a few years working on it.

Togata paused, frowning slightly. “Did you really figure out my quirk just from watching the sports festival?” He asked, sounding slightly disbelieving.

“…Yeah?” Answered the greenette, not sure why that was so surprising. The sports festival was a bit of a sore spot for the various phoenixes, given that it let pretty much anyone see what UA’s students were able to do.

“He’s Nedzu’s student, Mirio.” Murmured Amajiki suddenly, briefly glancing at Izuku in mild fear. The big three shuddered as one.

“Oh yeah, what’s that like?” Asked the blond, overcoming his terror first, “What sorts of things does he teach, anyway?”

“It’s… nice?” Offered the fire-user uncertainly, which was mostly true. The principal was still scary, but the lessons were usually interesting enough to distract from that. Though now that he was thinking on it, he hadn’t had one since the Amber reveal… hopefully today’s lesson wouldn’t be significantly more awkward or terrifying than his earlier ones. “We mostly-”

“I really hope I don’t have to expel anyone here.” Said the tired, somewhat growly voice of Aizawa suddenly, and the three students, two of whom had been crowding the greenette, while the third hung back, froze.

All three of them had identical expressions for a moment, as if they, all three, had been caught with a hand in the cookie jar. Four gazes swung to Aizawa, as the closer two moved to allow Izuku to finally see the scowling teacher.

“Oh, we were just talking, Aizawa-sensei.” Togata proclaimed their innocence, hands raised in front of his chest.

The erasure hero raised his eyebrows, glancing between the blond, and the greenette, who turned, glancing about, then looking a bit chagrined. *Good to see he finally noticed how much they were crowding.* Grumbled the voice, as the blond took a step closer to the teacher, and away from Izuku.
“Sorry, Kouhai.” He murmured, before turning back to face the exhausted man.

Aizawa just watched for a moment, before reaching some sort of decision, and just shaking his head. “Well if you want to get to class on time, and preferably dressed,” he glanced at the blond’s shorts, “I suggest you cut it short.”

“Right! Well, nice talking to you, Midoriya-kouhai!” The future hero said, before making a hasty retreat, Amajiki, and Hadou in tow.

The dark-clothed man watched them go, before turning to Izuku. “Were they causing you any trouble?” He asked, frown lessening.

“Um, no? I-I don’t think so, a-anyway.” The fire-user answered honestly. They were a bit more enthusiastic about questioning him than he would have liked, but given how he tended to get about quirks, and some heroes, that was only fair.

After the conversation had actually started, he was mostly just afraid that they were going to ask about Kamino, which he thought he would have to have a couple of therapy sessions about, before he was entirely comfortable with talking about to anyone but the voice.

Aizawa hummed. “Alright then. Let a member of staff know if anyone does. I don’t think anyone in the hero course will be that stupid, but you never know.” Izuku nodded, he had kind of expected that to be a possibility, since the press conference, and the voice had made their opinions about what to do clear.

The teacher frowned down at his watch, sighing. “I’ve got to get to class, since there isn’t time for a nap,” he glanced at the bowl in the greenette’s hands, “you should finish your breakfast. Try not to be late.”

You know, for someone who likes to expel students at the drop of a hat, he’s weirdly protective of the ones he does like. Commented the voice, as the teacher shuffled away.

‘He doesn’t like me,’ objected Izuku, ‘he is constantly calling me problem child, and with good reason.’

The voice laughed at that. Yeah, that’s definitely a term of endearment. Face it, kid. He’s trying to
be your new dad. It's so sad, we're being replaced. Lamented every part but Aoi, with Yugo the loudest.

The sixth phoenix hmphed, while Izuku flushed- again. He's definitely a better influence than we are, she declared, and stop referring to us as his father, some of us aren't male.

‘It’s not a term of endearment!’ Argued the fire-user hotly, interrupting the inevitable argument about whether any of them could be said to be male any more.

Dadzawa.

Izuku decided he didn’t like this conversation, and endeavoured to block it out with mental whistling, while he went back to walking to the bench to eat his cereal. The voice found the whistling immensely amusing.

Nedzu had not been looking forward to this meeting, and had been putting it off for weeks, with all sorts of- mostly true- excuses. Unfortunately, it really was one he needed to have at some point, despite his dislike, so here he was, watching a furious Todoroki Touya trying to be intimidating by looming, and leaning his hands on the principal’s desk.

“You said she was going to be getting help!” Growled the now white-haired man, glaring at the mouse. Thankfully, he had had the foresight to schedule the meeting just before another meeting, so it wouldn’t be able to run too long.

Nedzu looked at the fire-user, glancing down at his hands, and then back at his face, ensuring his smile stayed nothing less than pleasant. Touya breathed out sharply, but removed the offending weight from his desk. Good to see that that still worked, despite how long it had been since the man was a student here.

“That I did. And she did, for a time,” answered the bear brightly, before showing some more teeth, “though it may have been helpful, had you seen fit to mention to anyone that she was such an accomplished escape artist.”

The eldest Todoroki child narrowed his eyes, scarred tissue not stretching as it should, and pulling
at the staples beneath. “Wasn’t that obvious from what her damn quirk does?” He growled, which might have been a fair point, had she actually used her quirk to escape the facility she had been placed in.

“Perhaps, though her additional skills went unaccounted for,” said the dog pointedly, “I don’t believe she used her quirk at all in her escape, from the footage. Rather, she simply stabbed an orderly, and ran off, somehow dodging all the staff.”

A look of guilt passed across the scarred face, before being replaced by the scowl, though the micro expression gave him the lie- the anger was real, but not his dominant emotion. “How the fuck did they let her get her hands on a knife? Or did she manage to make a shank?” Touya demanded.

“An excellent question, though not one that is entirely relevant, after the fact, no?” Nedzu responded, partially to cover that even he wasn’t entirely sure where she had gotten the thing.

“The orderly OK?” Ground out the fire-user, trying and failing to hide his concern.

“She survived, though it was closer than anyone would have liked,” allowed the principal, “so, in order to prevent any further stabblings, it would be extremely helpful, if you could tell us anything about the sorts of places she might go.”

It was clear from the set of his jaw, that this line of questioning would be like pulling teeth. “What, so you can cart her of to Tartarus, never to see the light of day again?”

“She is presently a danger to those around her, working with a villainous organisation. Not to mention having attempted to kill several of my students.” Perhaps he shouldn’t have put it quite like that, but truthfully, people trying to kill UA students tended to make Nedzu rather annoyed.

Touya looked close to putting his hands back on the desk, and he still hadn’t sat down since he got here. “She’s sick! She needs help, not some cell.”

Nedzu briefly contemplated telling the younger man that, in his experience, most villains who were not simply victims of circumstance were to one extent or another crazy, and that this did not lessen the danger they posed to society. But this would most likely not go down well, given the man’s emotional attachment, which could very well pose a problem.
“Perhaps, but the longer she is loose, and harming others, the less likely it is that she is going to get that help. And given the events at Kamino, and with you only having a provisional license—” one which Nedzu had been sorely tempted to join the voices demanding its revocation—“it will be quite difficult for you to find her on your own.” Nedzu pointed out reasonably.

Touya initially didn’t answer, but Nedzu had the horrible feeling that there were cogs turning behind his scowl. “Then I’ll get a full license.” He bit out, clenching his fists, and surprising the mouse; the fire-user had always showed at least mild disdain for heroes, up to now.

Perhaps he had miscalculated how attached to Himiko Touya was, since he failed to visit her prior to her escape, or inform her of his intentions at all. In retrospect, distractions of family, and an understandable fear of what she might do, if told, might be the true reason for that.

“Well, I wish you luck with that,” so long as he did it far away from his school— he might not be as vengeful as Aizawa, but he was not best pleased about Kamino, either, “but it will take some time, meaning it would be in her best interests, if you helped my investigation.” Damn, but he needed to get everything he could to help him find the league. They were the most dangerous villain group in recent memory. He could take some concessions, despite her actions at the camp, especially given that she truly was quite unbalanced. “I promise I will do everything in my power to see to it that she gets what help she needs, and is kept out of prison, if at all possible.”

Touya took a deep breath, though this had a limited effect on how calm he was. From the slight narrowing of his eyes, it seemed the fire-user didn’t entirely believe him, but it seemed he at least understood that Nedzu was his best shot at keeping his friend out of prison at present. “Fine, as long as you can get her away from those bastards.”

Nedzu managed to get an extremely helpful expansion on Himiko’s abilities, though Touya was not the best versed in them. Apparently the shapeshifting was limited by blood consumption, and the time depended on how much she could get. The fire-user had mentioned the lack of quirk copying thing before, but it was reassuring to hear again; it could be one way to determine if she had replaced someone.

Touya had just about run out of useful things to say about the sorts of places where Himiko wasn’t supposed to be that he had known her to get into. It was quite extensive, but it did give a much better view of her overall MO. Hopefully he would be able to use it to track the league.

The expected knock came almost exactly on time, cutting Touya off. “Ah, I’m afraid we’re going
to have to stop here for today, Touya-san, unless you have something urgent to add. My next appointment is about to begin.”

Touya frowned, clearly unhappy at the sudden dismissal, but shook his head sharply, turning to stalk to the door.

The door opened to reveal a much more welcome fire-user, who jumped at the sight of the white-haired man. Touya seemed a bit surprised, too. Though it was hard to tell from only his back.

“Oh! Hello, Touya-san. I like the hair.” Said the smiling Midoriya, looking up at the elder fire-user.

Touya let out a huff of laughter. “You're very different when you're not Amber,” he commented, “thanks. Finally joined the old man club. what’d you do to get sent to the principal’s office, hm?”

Midoriya paused. “Nothing?” He asked, which Nedzu wouldn’t agree with; he had very much earned these extra lessons, “I get private lessons with Nedzu-sensei.”

A hiss, as if Touya had sucked in a breath through his teeth. “Better you than me kid,” he said with mock sobriety, “try not to let the rat kill you, I still haven’t given you the shovel talk yet.”

Nedzu had been wondering if the tendency to be so casually insulting was something Shouto’s siblings all had in common, or just these two, but now he was forced to hold in laughter. There was no way Touya could pose any real threat to his student.

Midoriya actually did laugh- more of a giggle. “I’ll try.” He answered, stepping slightly to the side to let Touya pass.

“Well you have fun.” Said the white-haired man, passing the greenette, still treating the principal like air. It was truly remarkable how much Touya’s demeanour had changed, when he was talking to someone who was not a hero, or law-enforcement.

The ex-student’s departure had revealed what Midoriya- scarless today, for whatever reason- was holding; a notebook. The principal’s quirk immediately flagged the book as important, but it took him a moment to figure out why, as he jumped down from his chair. “Come in, come in.” Said the mouse brightly, making his way to the table they normally sat at.
His student was holding the notebook oddly. That was why his quirk tagged it as important. It initially looked like he was trying to both protect it with his arms, but also that he was uncomfortable touching it. Then it twigged. He was making sure he only touched it with his hands, as if to be prepared to destroy it at a moment’s notice.

Nedzu took his accustomed seat, while Midoriya was closing the door, and then waited patiently for his pupil to sit. He wanted to ask about the book, but he felt sure, if he wanted to, his student would tell him about it.

If Nedzu was going to get into a mentoring competition with Yagi, and Aizawa, then he meant to win. That meant that he should avoid making his student too uncomfortable.

As it turned out, Nedzu didn’t have to wait for long, since his student spoke before he even offered tea. “Um, I… I wasn’t sure who to give this to, but I figured… here.” He said, briefly struggling, as if unwilling to surrender the book, before leaning forward to offer it to him.

Nedzu took the book carefully, looking down to see nothing written on the cover. It was an entirely unremarkable looking object, and Midoriya hadn’t yet said what it was. After a glance at the greenette, he opened it.

“Emitter” read the title line of the first page. Below that “Blink: visual-range warping quirk, requires user to briefly close eyes. Miena Idou, 2-27/8/2XXX” A set of dates over 180 years ago…

“It’s not complete.” Midoriya was saying, but looking at the second line, which was similar- but with a different quirk, and only a description, no name- Nedzu had just figured out what exactly it was he had just been given.

Pupils blowing wide, the intelligence-quirk user could not think of a time he had felt such a strong gnawing hunger. “This is a list of All-For-One’s quirks.” He said, feeling sure he was right.

“All the ones the network knows about,” replied the greenette softly, “I’m sorry, some of it is guesswork.” Midoriya was apologising. Apologising, as if he had not just handed something worth more than jewels or gold to the bear without any fuss.

“How was this gathered?” He breathed, finishing the first page, and moving onto the next, not looking up. He didn’t think he was physically capable of looking away from this, his quirk
seemingly terrified that it might vanish if he looked away from it.

The second page included a couple of diagrams. Nedzu really hoped he wasn’t drooling. That would be embarrassing. “Missing people, infantile quirk regression, post-traumatic quirk impotency, above average quirklessness in certain areas. Basically the sort of thing you can use to figure out where he is active.” Explained the boy, as if he was not currently revealing just how mind-bogglingly resource-rich the network had to be. Even that should be insufficient, and if Nedzu was reading the subtext right, the network had agents in All-For-One’s inner circle. Or used to, at any rate.

Nedzu could read extremely quickly, but he was still in the emitter section. The principal again felt the desire to confine his student to his office- for several months, if needed- to see if his well of information would ever run dry. Pesky human laws, and meddling teachers meant he probably couldn’t, though.

“He… took Search, didn’t he?” Asked the greenette quietly, as Nedzu finally reached the transformation section.

Nedzu grimaced. He didn’t have to look to see the guilty expression the fire-user would be wearing. “It seems so. She hasn’t been able to use it since she woke up. it’s not your fault, you’re not culpable here.” He tried to reassure, while still working to commit the book to memory.

Nedzu kept reading, while waiting to field the questions the boy likely had about how the pussycats would cope without her, or what she herself would do after her retir- “How long until she can get back into the field?” The greenette asked, shocking Nedzu enough that he stopped reading for an entire second.

That was not one of the questions he had been expecting. Surely his student knew she wouldn’t be getting her quirk back, and so would retire? “I doubt she will return to active duty.” Said the principal delicately.

“What?!” Midoriya yelped, “Why?!”

Nedzu was brought up short yet again, this time actually glancing at his student, who looked truly shocked. “It is fairly normal, a pro retiring after that sort of serious injury.”

“All Might didn’t retire after losing his lung, and stomach!” Argued Midoriya, oddly impassioned.
“We can’t all be All Might.” Replied Nedzu, still confused as to why Midoriya was reacting this way.

“Ectoplasm-sensei lost both of his legs, and there have been dozens of heroes who didn’t retire after losing hands, or entire arms.” Insisted the greenette.

“Still, it would be extremely difficult to function as a hero without a quirk.”

Midoriya made a sound somewhere between a groan, and a growl. “Why?” he asked, exasperated, “She should be able to keep going, if she learns to use a support weapon she could…” He trailed off into frustrated silence.

“You feel quite strongly about this.” Nedzu noted, turning another page, getting close to the back of the book now, hundreds of new quirk names memorised.

“I just- I can’t stand quirk bias.” the greenette explained, “They’re just tools,” from the glow, the greenette had made a fireball in his hand, he was probably staring at it, as he went on thoughtfully, “good heroes can work without them, like when Aizawa-sensei fights mutant quirks, and it didn’t stop Mandalay, even though her quirk is largely useless for combat. Ragdoll still has other tools, like three years of training, and twelve of experience in the field.”

Now that… that was an interesting stance, and a not unreasonable argument, but Nedzu found himself baffled that someone from the fifth generation could be having it, given how the view of quirkless people, and quirk bias in general, was slowly getting worse.

“You think it would be possible to function as a hero without a quirk, then?” Voiced Nedzu, slightly wonderingly, finally reaching the much shorter mutations section towards the very end of the notebook.

“Do- do you think a human could be as smart as you, without a quirk?” Midoriya asked, as Nedzu skimmed through dozens of regeneration quirks. All-For-One clearly liked to stockpile those.

Another surprise, that his student would use him as an example, but it was an excellent point. Maybe he would end up needing fewer classes on rhetoric with Midoriya than he had thought.
“A good point,” the mouse praised, closing the book after Ageless, and Warp Gate- the last two quirks, “I will try to make it to her, though you should know that there is still a good chance she will retire. Also, I shall see to it that this,” he indicated the book on the table, “gets to the proper authorities.”

“Thank you.” Said the fire-user, smiling wanly, and gazing at the book. Nedzu didn’t need to be told why; if he could see the implication about spies, then All-For-One could as well. He would need to be careful who to give this to, and what to say about it.

Nedzu nodded, smiling again, and hoping his breathing had evened out after that experience. It was not often you were handed the treasure of treasures without warning, but Midoriya seemed determined to do so every other week.

“Do you like carrot cake?” The principal asked, pretending to be paying no more heed to the book, letting it lie on the table, as if part of his mind was still distracted with puzzling likely, and unlikely combinations, and security measures that would be needed to deal with them.

“Yes?”

“Excellent!” said the bear, clapping his hands, then reaching into the bag beside his chair, and pulling out a plastic container, “I was planning a little reward, even before you gave me this, but now I should say you definitely deserve one.”

Midoriya blinked at him. “Um, a reward for what?”

Nedzu laughed brightly- and genuinely, given how happy he had been at the time. “It isn’t often I see a pupil apply a lesson so perfectly in the field, especially so soon after the lesson itself. I could not have collapsed that floor better myself. Hence, cake.”

The mouse watched his pupil, as he said this, checking for signs of distress at the topic, but found the greenette’s smile quite genuine. “Oh, thank you.”

“You can help yourself to as much or as little as you like, I know strength-quirk users usually watch their diets especially closely.” He said, opening the container, and producing a knife- an object anyone who knew him would be rightly terrified to see him in possession of- to put next to it, along with a couple of plates, and forks.
Midoriya cut himself a small slice, while Nedzu poured tea— he had largely stopped asking if the greenette wanted any— it was rather gratifying that he always seemed to want, or at least accept, tea at these lessons.

“I thought today’s lesson could be a more infiltration oriented one, if that’s acceptable?” The principal asked, cutting himself a slice.

“T-That sounds fun.” Replied the greenette, taking a bite of his cake.

Nedzu smiled. “I think you’ll enjoy this.” He said, pushing a button he produced from his pocket, causing a section of floor to move, revealing a large wooden box. The box was raised to roughly the height of the table, now sitting on its own table by a clever mechanism the mouse had installed in the room.

Midoriya tilted his head, studying the box, as Nedzu produced a comically small key, maybe as long as one of Nedzu’s fingers, and unlocked it. “This is my toy chest.” Proclaimed the principal, opening the box, which fanned out to reveal shelves upon shelves of locks.

The thing was stuffed with locks of all kinds, from all different brands, and eras, from lever tumbler, and pin tumbler, to wafer, and combination locks. The dog had been collecting them for years.

“We’re going to be doing lock picking today?” The greenette asked, and Nedzu found the excitement in his voice entirely understandable. This sort of hands-on puzzle-solving was always fun, in Nedzu’s opinion.

“Picking and bypassing,” the bear corrected, pulling out two sets of tools, and handing one to his student. “I know the police confiscated some picks from your house, so today will be something of a test, so I can see where you are right now, and where you can improve.”

Midoriya nodded, looking over the array of mismatched objects crammed onto ever self of the large chest. “Let’s get started, shall we?” Said the principal, passing out the first lock.
Izuku left Nedzu’s most recent lesson as enlightened, and terrified as usual. The principal had a lot of tips to share about lock picking, and especially bypassing, which, he claimed, was the more valuable skill anyway. All in all it had been an enjoyable hour, but it did really drive home just how horrifically intelligent the little hero was.

Izuku at least had an excuse for being as multi-talented as he was, but Nedzu hadn’t even lived a single century, but seemed to have something to say about every topic under the sun. Getting into places he wasn’t supposed to be was something he hadn’t been expecting to improve on under the mouse’s tutelage.

Lunch had passed without incident, unless you counted an attempt to trip him in the hall, which the
greenette didn’t, really. The voice might have tried to get him to tell Aizawa about it, but it was always overprotective.

The student hadn’t had any chance of succeeding, and when Izuku had dodged his leg, hadn’t even done anything beyond calling him a villain. Even Kouta had done that, it wasn’t anything to get upset about. (He was upset anyway, obviously, but he still didn’t think it worth bothering his teacher).

The greenette smiled, remembering the letter the black-haired boy had sent after the camp, thanking him for rescuing him. And saying sorry for both trying to punch him, and for calling him a villain. He’d never actually been thanked for saving someone before. Actually, he’d been attacked, or insulted for it more than once. It was kind of weird, having that suddenly change, but he really liked it.

‘I wonder if Shouto got a letter, too.’

*Probably, said the voice, amused, it would be a bit weird, if Kouta-kun only sent you one.*

Izuku gave a little mental hum, happy that his boyfriend’s efforts were finally being properly recognised, as they probably hadn’t been under Endeavour. Maybe he should ask.

Unfortunately, he had been a bit distracted, not really giving Shouto all the attention he deserved, mostly because he was concerned about Iida, and how he was reacting to Kamino, and- making the fire-user feel even more guilty- to the Crawler revelation.

*It's not exactly like you can really do anything about that right now,* said Aoi, leading the rest of the voice, he just needs to talk to his brother. *Why don’t you focus on something more productive, like maybe getting the old farts to stop plotting Nedzu's murder.*

Izuku blinked, while the first three parts of the voice- which had been quietly seething ever since Nedzu's announcement that Ragdoll would be retiring- started grumbling aloud. *We do have some restraint, but can you blame us for being annoyed; Nedzu should know better. Goodness knows he's been on the receiving end of enough prejudice himself.* Ichigou noticeably led here, though Dai, and Yugo were also very prominent in the sentiment.

(It was hardly surprising; Mirai had been more of a hero before he got One-For-All than easily ninety percent of "heroes" today, and Ichigou knew that better than anyone.)
'Um, maybe he did?' Offered Izuku slowly, far from sure of his conclusion.

The voice paused, the various emotions ruling it- anger, resignation, frustration- all gave way to curiosity, as the voice gave off the impression that it was silently looking at Izuku to continue.

'Well, he changed sides really quickly there, so...'

_Maybe he always agreed?_ Finished the voice, _But in that case, why have the argument at all?_ It asked, before immediately answering itself in a slightly different combination of tones, _A test._

If not for the fact that the greenette was surrounded by his classmates, he would have nodded, as it was he barely stopped himself. (Seemingly not paying attention was one thing, but clearly reacting to things that weren't actually happening would be bad.)

'Y-Yeah, a lot of what they seem to be trying to teach us here is not to take things at face value.' The fire-user said diplomatically, causing the voice to snort loudly, and say _Logical ruse._ In unison, sending different images of Aizawa smiling that terrifying smile.

_Okay, maybe you've got a point there, kid,_ allowed Ichigou, voice still tinged with laughter at their normally stoic teacher's expense, _they do really like messing with us... I can see Nedzu doing that, but quirk prejudice is never nice to think about._

_Any prejudice, really._ Added Hayato, the rest of the voice following eagerly.

Ichigou grunted his agreement. _Let's talk about something else._

Izuku gave a mental hum, casting about for something to talk about- not to do with whatever they had changed into their costumes for, since Ren could probably answer that straight away, and they still hadn't arrived wherever they were going anyway.

'So do you think we will end up getting secondary mutations from the One-For-All quirks?' The greenette asked after a moment, recalling the argument about Slow Motion.
The voice paused. *Okay, said the voice, Yugo predominating, I know we didn't exactly get a chance to see all the users naked, or anything, but isn't Yuko the only one with a secondary mutation?* The third phoenix sent along an image of slitted green eyes.

Ichigou chuckled, sending an image of the monstrously tall Kibo. *I don't know, I have a hard time believing anyone could be that tall, and not have a quirk involved somehow.*

Something like excitement shot through Izuku at that. ‘You mean I'll get taller, if I unlock Stone Scales?’ He asked, not bothering to hide the emotion- he knew it would make the voice laugh, which was always a good way to get rid of any lingering dregs of annoyance at someone.

Sure enough, the- for anyone else- intensely unsettling sound of six people laughing in perfect unison sounded inside the greenette's head. *Maybe, said the voice, assuming we get secondary mutations, and it wasn't a glandular thing, and you manage to unlock it before your spine fuses, and if by taller you mean "so tall that it will be really difficult to get through most doors".*

That quashed some of Izuku's enthusiasm for the quirk- though he still held a fair bit, since it was a really good defensive quirk, and his height... totally didn't bother him... especially not now, where he was dating Shouto, who he had no way to kiss without the taller boy bending down, or the greenette getting a stool.

Not that he had kissed him, either way, except that one time, which he still felt bad about; he really had been trying to let Shouto set the pace as much as he felt comfortable with, but mercifully, the other boy didn't seem to mind.

Ren spoke up for the first time in a while here, dragging the rest of the bits of the voice back to reality, just as Izuku arrived alongside the rest of the class at one of UA’s many gyms. *You should probably be thinking about class now, he chided lightly, we’re doing “special moves”.*

‘Um- What does that mean, exactly?’ Asked the puzzled greenette. There were all sorts of moves he could do with- or without- his various quirks, but he wasn’t sure what qualified a move as special.

The voice sighed, resigned, as Ectoplasm began generating clones of himself for every member of the class, and Cemementoss began messing with the floor of the “training dream land” as this gym was seemingly called. *Probably something to show off how cool you are, and give yourself quirk exhaustion.* It said.
Izuku paused, feeling… oddly disappointed. It was kind of weird, since he knew that he would have been really excited to be doing this, if it had been before he started training to be Amber, but now…

The voice had a thing for practicality- no wasted movements, no wasted energy- and, having seen just how dangerous a lot of hero work could be, Izuku agreed. Even if he didn’t hold efficiency to the absolute bottom line of everything, like it sometimes seemed to.

Now, he was more concerned with just how often he had been managing to give himself quirk exhaustion as it was, nearly every villain encounter he had dealt with as Heat Haze had left him clammy, sweating, and overheating to a genuinely hazardous degree.

There were a few constructs that the voice had used down the centuries that might qualify as a “special move”, and nearly all of them would just increase the danger of quirk exhaustion. The voice had used those abilities sparingly, if at all, for decades, preferring to use minimal force where it could.

Honestly, given what had happened since coming to UA, Izuku just really wanted to work on his hand to hand, and see how to apply One-For-All there, since- as One-For-All was now- even Dai didn’t have much useful advice for it.

The greenette stood for a long time, tugging on his lower lip, his own Ectoplasm standing silently waiting, as he watched his classmates come up with ideas one by one, and then begin to experiment with them.

A lot of the ideas were really interesting, though he was a tiny bit disappointed that Mina didn’t come up with anything he could try to adapt to Phoenix spirit- a stream of fire was a fairly basic move for him.

So distracted was the fire-user with whatever Shouto was doing- which involved the use of both sides of his quirk, and from that look of intense focus, a lot of concentration- that he actually jumped when his personal Ectoplasm clone coughed.

The shamefaced greenette spun to face his teacher, whose eyebrows were raised. *Probably because you jumped.*

“So what are you thinking, there?” The skull-faced hero asked archly, looking down at him.
“Um, I- I had a few i-ideas,” Izuku said automatically, just to buy time for him to decide on something he could use for a special move.

*You could use those dragons,* put in the voice, amused by his scramble for a good answer, *they’re showy enough.*

*But they’re far from useful; in any circumstance where you’re not afraid someone will destroy the floor, a simple ring would work better as a defensive move.* It immediately contradicted itself, shifting more towards Ichigou, Dai, and especially Ren.

The slight twinge from the contradiction coincided with a lightbulb going off in Izuku’s head. There was another construct he could use, which was showy enough for this class, and- weirdly enough- practical enough that some version of it might end up seeing use occasionally. Plus it was something that might actually be worth practising.

“B-But I m-might need a bit more r-room,” the greenette said, mind already set on trying his idea, the voice not raising any objections, “f-for the one I want to try.” He added nervously, glancing at the stoic teacher.

The cloning hero’s eyebrows rose a fraction, but apparently his quirk was dangerous enough that the teacher raised no questions about why he needed extra space, so he simply nodded, and gestured for Izuku to follow him to where Cementoss stood, altering the building as needed.

A minute later, and Izuku stood inside a large ring, completely surrounded by concrete walls, short enough to see over, but tall enough to clearly mark off the space. “This enough room?” The Ectoplasm clone asked from just outside, and Izuku nodded.

*Take it slow,* said the voice, suddenly nervous, now that it came time to actually try this, *check your costume first, and be careful of the shoulders.*

Izuku nodded again, looking down at the green fabric that covered almost his entire body. This wouldn’t be like last time. He checked the back, no holes.

First, the fire-user lit his hands up with a familiar motion, then his feet, which he was slightly less used to. He drew a deep breath. This next part shouldn’t be too difficult, but he still needed to be careful.
Carefully excluding his head, and neck, and—since this was the first time he was training to do this, as opposed to desperate, and stupid—shoulders, the greenette pulled on the imaginary bonfire, wildly producing fire over every inch of his body, just a little outside of his costume.

A second later, Izuku looked down to see that, yes, he was completely covered in a thick layer of golden fire, like armour covering most of his body.

He knew that keeping this up for any length of time, even with the cooling system hidden in his costume, would be a very bad idea, so he needed to either put this out, or make use of it. Raising his right hand to just in front of his chest, he swept it in an arc down and to the right, stopping at waist height off to the side.

It wasn’t very graceful, different bits of the armour moved at different rates, peeling away from him, but it was following the arc of his hand like he intended. The fire formed into a rough ball just above his right hand, as he moved and shaped how it was confined.

He didn’t actually have enough time to smooth out the ball—even though that was something that he would have done automatically, after all his training—before the heat hit him. Izuku had been prepared for how hot that move would likely have made him, but it still hit him like a freight train. The fire-user gasped, breathing raggedly, hands on his knees, the rough ball hovering in place as sweat began to ooze from every pore.

The voice hummed, voices clinical, but emotions betraying concern. *That… was slightly worse than we expected,* it stated, as Izuku started on a breathing exercise, *though… we suppose that should be expected, that isn’t really part of our quirk we were ever intended to survive using.*

The greenette gulped, feeling the strange emotion from Ichigou, and Dai, and slightly uneasy himself. He didn’t like thinking about the reason for that aspect of his quirk (*especially after Kaminō*).

He glanced at the white-hot ball of pale fire he could feel—both on his face, and with his quirk—off to his right, only to have to blink and look away. Right. This *had* been an exercise in making as much fire as possible in a short time. The ball was very bright.

Breathing coming under control, Izuku stood up properly, glancing around to find his Ectoplasm to ask if that would work as a special move, blinking away greenish after-images, only to find that half the students working nearby staring into his ring, their own efforts abandoned.
A bit attention grabbing, isn’t it. Commented the voice, as Izuku made the mistake of glancing at the sun again. It was hard to tell, since that required actually looking at it, but it looked like it was roughly twice the size of the fire-user’s head.

A rough chuckle from behind him had the greenette jumping. Again. He hadn’t even noticed All Might coming in, despite the excited murmuring that always seemed to follow him. He blamed Bakugou, who was still loudly practising his AP shot.

The fire-user spun to face his mentor- One of your mentors, Izuku.- who was for once dressed in clothing that fit; a new costume had been designed that was similar to Mount Lady’s, so he could patrol without wasting hero time, unless he was actually fighting.

(It was, on some level, a bit silly to have a whole new costume designed when he was only likely to use it a couple of months, but it had already proved quite beneficial.)

“H-Hey All Might,” said Izuku, smiling as he waved at the skeletal blond, “Wh-When did you get here?”

The gaunt man gave a wan smile, entering the ring alongside an Ectoplasm- Izuku thought it was his original one. “Just a moment ago,” he said, waving back, “you were concentrating on your newest move,” he glanced at the bright ball, before he, too, was forced to blink and look away from it, “I see you chose your hero title well, my boy.” The incredibly tall man gave an approving thumbs up.

Ectoplasm nodded. “That certainly qualifies for a special move, if one a bit far towards the ‘last resort’ end of things,” he said, tilting his head to Izuku’s left, “have you given any thoughts about what you could do with that much fire?”

Izuku opened his mouth to answer, then paused. He was going to say that he could draw parts of it off, and use it over a whole fight, but in that case, it made more sense to just make fire over the fight as needed. What would he use that sort of heat for? Other than destroying a building, which wasn’t the sort of thing he should be resorting to too often.

As ever, when Izuku couldn’t answer a teacher’s question, the voice came to his rescue. “I g-guess it could be pretty useful in group fights, f-for confining a lot of villains at once.” He offered, going along with the suggestion Ren had quietly given, almost talking to himself. Well, Ren had said it could be useful for groups, Izuku was sticking to confining, though.
All Might grinned- as much as he could in his skeletal form- and nodded. “An excellent idea. And a word of advice, my boy?” Izuku looked expectantly at the somewhat experienced hero, to see what he was going to suggest, “When your quirk does multiple things, you should see if you can’t combine them, when making moves.”

Izuku paused, genuinely unsure how to react to that bit of advice. Was All Might gently berating him for relying too much on Phoenix Fire, and not enough on One-For-All? Or did the older hero see some way that his enhanced strength could be combined with the fire to do something useful? Or had he somehow figured out about Dismantle, despite Izuku deciding to wait to say anything? “Okay?” Izuku said uncertainly, and All Might nodded, still smiling.

The blond said something about looking in on the other students, and favouritism, turning away while Izuku was still trying- with the voice’s help- to figure out what on earth that advice was supposed to mean.

The greenette’s reverie was broken a moment later, by a loud cracking-snapping sound, and he looked over to find a huge block of stone flying towards the skeletal blond who had reached the edge of Izuku’s empty ring.

Heart suddenly lodged in his throat, Izuku pulled on One-For-All, while moving the huge fireball he had on hand, hoping to knock the block off-course- and in the process probably melt it. Simultaneously, the other heroes in the room reacted, moving towards the older hero, making various startled exclamations.

It turned out that nobody’s alarm was warranted, as All Might reacted the fastest, filling out to his previous heroic stature, he- with seeming ease- caught the block, holding it as easily as if it was made of styrofoam.

All Might laughed, seemingly incapable of passing up the opportunity, whenever he used his hero form. “I am here!” he said, putting the rock down, “But you should be more careful, young Bakugou. You could hurt someone.” He finished, before deflating in a cloud of steam, leaving everyone blinking in surprise at the sudden shifts.

_Huh. He can activate, and deactivate One-For-All way faster than we can._ Said the voice considerably, while Bakugou got over his surprise to… berate All Might? “Hah? You should be more careful where you’re walking, All Might.”
This probably wasn’t the wisest thing to say, and Izuku could feel the disapproval radiating from Aizawa on the other side of the room, but luckily All Might—being All Might—took it in stride, simply chuckling again. “Perhaps I should,” he said lightly, looking up at Bakugou’s platform, “but still, destroying things is no good for a hero agency.”

The ashen blond grumbled something about him already knowing that—causing the voice to snort—while All Might took the chance to amble away towards Kirishima to give the redhead some sort of advice that Izuku couldn’t hear over the intervening distance.

“So what were you thinking of calling it?” Ectoplasm asked, prompting Izuku to just blink dumbly at him for an uncomfortably long time.

Why would he bother giving a move a proper name? That was just one step away from actually saying that name out loud in a fight, which was the sort of theatrics that the voice had too much disdain for to be put into words. Unless you were doing it for misdirection, it was both pointless, and dangerous.

As was seeming to be the theme for this whole lesson, Izuku put the bare minimum of effort into his answer, since the—slightly uncomfortable looking—teacher seemingly did expect one.

“Fire armour.” The greenette said, after discarding full-flare as the only other descriptive name he could come up with in under two seconds.

_Hmm. Maybe he’s right, that you should be working on One-For-All a bit more. But that does mean more close combat, so you will need to update your costume._

Izuku made his way to the support classrooms with some trepidation. Hatsume was there, and he couldn’t be sure if she would still be annoyed at how little screen time he had given her inventions during the sports festival.

_Not to mention you can’t deal with that sort of personality very well, anyway._ The voice added, as the greenette reluctantly reached for the handle of the metal workshop door.

“Deku-kun!” Call Uraraka from down the hall, prompting the ex-vigilante to turn to face her just in
time for the door he was holding to explode.

The sudden transition from totally peaceful, to lying under a weight on the floor, left Izuku blinking in surprise, not moving, just long enough for the voice to go from “red alert, we’re under attack in the school again somehow” to “no real danger signs, some idiot was just testing something dangerous”.

This was just as well, since Izuku initially assumed the weight was the door, and would have thrown it off himself with much more force than would be safe for a human.

The greenette looked down, immediately coming face to chest with the one girl he was secretly hoping to avoid during this trip to the support department. He jerked his head back, very nearly banging it against the floor in his haste to stop looking there.

The girl was making no efforts to get off him, but he… didn’t really want this contact to continue, thank you. It was surprising how uncomfortable it was making him to be making this much contact with someone who wasn’t Shouto, or maybe his mother. As gently, and politely as his haste would allow, the fire-user rolled onto his side, pushing the pinkette away from him, and getting swiftly to his feet.

Brief contemplations about if he should offer Hatsume a hand, or check if she was still conscious, or simply flee from her vicinity, were brought up short by the girl- who must have been closer to the explosion which blew the doors of their hinges- springing to her feet, seemingly none the worse for wear.

Well at least she’s tough, which is just as well, if she’s going to be that reckless.

“Amazing, I would never have expected that sort of output!” Enthused the pinkette, grinning manically, and deeply concerning Izuku with the gleam in her golden eyes.

“I am very disappointed in you, Deku-kun.” Said Uraraka, seemingly finally getting over both her surprise, and her concern for her recently exploded friend.

“What- what for?” The fire-user asked, turning from the clear threat the deranged support student posed, to face the brunette, confused about what he had done to upset her. He couldn’t afford to upset his friends any more, Iida was barely talking to anyone- and especially not Shouto- as it was.
“Staring at another woman’s chest like that, poor Todoroki-kun will be heartbroken.” The brunette said, shaking her head.

The fire-user blanched and reddened by turns, stammering even worse than usual, as he frantically tried to deny the accusation. “What- I was- I wouldn’t- I- I- I don’t like girls like- I mean, I do I-like girls, of course, th-there’s nothing wrong with- but not like- I mean-”

From the way the voice had started to giggle to itself, he knew this wasn’t likely to become any more clear soon, so he sent a look to Iida, silently begging “please help”.

Iida- the wonderful man that he was- got the message immediately, turning to the brunette. “Uraraka-san, it is not appropriate to accuse a fellow heroics student of cheating,” then, since at this point the girl was barely holding in her laughter at the mortified greenette’s expense, “this is not amusing, you should not joke about such things. Living in such close quarters, such rumours could cause a great deal of strife.”

The hand-chop infested tirade mercifully made Uraraka turn from Izuku, who managed to get the heat in his cheeks to die down somewhat, while Power Loader escaped from the smoke-filled lab, already berating Hatsume for blowing it up in the first place.

“It was just a joke, Iida-kun, no-one’s going to start any rumours. Have you seen the way that Deku, and Todoroki look at each other?” Uraraka asked, eyes still crinkled, while Power Loader said “I’ve warned you before, I will ban you from the labs, even if you are the top student.”

“It is still a risk, and endangering your friends’ happiness like that is no laughing matter.” Said the stern bluet, still chopping his hands implacably.

“There’s failure, and then there’s endangering all our lives.”

“I-It’s fine, Iida-kun, I- I’m s-sure she didn’t mean any harm.” Cut in Izuku.

It wasn’t fine. He couldn’t really blame Uraraka for it, but now he was thinking about just how upset that sort of rumour- or even worse, reality- would hurt Shouto, and he was beginning to feel physically ill. Still, the brunette was looking guilty already, and there was no real reason for Iida to
keep going, and make her feel worse, since it had just been a silly joke.

Iida looked at him, seeming ready to ask if he was sure, when someone grabbed his arm, beginning to feel the muscle there. The greenette stiffened, skin crawling at the unwanted contact, jerking the arm free with perhaps more force than he had intended.

Turning his head to see that, yes, the one who had grabbed him was the pinkette, Izuku jumped back- incidentally towards the lab- away from the briefly surprised girl, heart in his throat.

The surprise didn’t last long, and quickly gave way to mild annoyance, as she continued to advance on him, while he continued to back away into the slightly smoky lab. Izuku, said the voice, letting Aoi lead with her endlessly calming tones, relax, let One-For-All go.

Izuku paused in his retreat for a brief moment, belatedly noticing that he was holding One-For-All, despite not consciously pulling on it. It was only maybe two percent, but it was sufficiently weird that he was holding it that Hatsume nearly got into grabbing distance as he was letting it go.

“Come on, let me measure you.” Demanded the pinkette impatiently, as the greenette began backing up again.

“N-No thank you.” Said the fire-user quickly.

The pinkette didn’t seem to notice how strangled Izuku’s response was, stopping with a mildly affronted look, hands on hips. “Why not? Do you not want one of my babies?”

Izuku had worked with Hatsume in the sports festival. He knew what she meant when she said that. Still, the wording was not helping the greenette’s discomfort. The pinkette didn’t even seem to notice, but- blessedly- Power Loader did. “Give it up, Hatsume.” The hero said sternly, prompting his student to turn to him in shock.

“But Sensei-“ She started, as Izuku’s friends belatedly followed them into the lab.

“Some heroes,” Power Loader interrupted, tone reminiscent of a wise mentor imparting the secrets of the universe, “will come into support already thinking they know exactly what they want. You won’t be able to convince them to take something else.”
Hatsume drew a sharp breath, head snapping back to Izuku, eyes widening into an expression that made it seem like she had just been informed that he liked to eat puppies in his spare time.

Izuku had no idea what to make of that look, but he was only mildly ashamed of how grateful he was when the girl turned to waylay the other hero students instead.

“I’m… sorry?” He said-asked, unsure if his specifications for his costume had been too detailed, and had somehow offended the support course teacher as well.

“Don’t be,” the short hero said, waving him off, “you’re the one who’s got to use it. That sort of thing is only a problem when heroes make you give them something stupid. Your costume design was sensible, no spikes, no cape, nothing to really cause issues. Though, I’ve got to say, all the stuff you asked for was pretty basic, nothing very complicated at all. couldn’t really challenge the students with yours.”

“The simplest tools are usually the best?” Izuku responded uncertainly, echoing the voices- much more self-assured- sentiment.

The answer barely caused Power Loader to blink, but Hatsume paused in the process of trying to forcibly shove Iida into some kind of mech to gasp, head jerking to look at the greenette, expression moving on from “informed of the puppy eating”. Now she looked like she had just been forced to actually watch him eat a puppy.

“I’m assuming that’s a reliability thing?” Asked the hero after a moment, as Hatsume turned away in disgust, and Izuku nodded. If he was going to use something on a mission, he wanted to be absolutely sure it would work. “Well anyway, what brings you here today? It’s not often you see heroes change their costumes much, when they start off sure what they want.”

“Um, well my quirk changed a bit last term, s-so I th-think I’m going to be fighting up close a bit more often.” Izuku explained, as Power Loader grabbed a pencil from a cluttered desk, and a notepad.

“So you want to make some alterations to make that easier, then?”

Izuku nodded. “Um, yeah. I think some knee, and elbow padding would be helpful.”
Power Loader nodded. “Pretty standard for melee fighters, so that shouldn’t be an issue.”

*If you’re going to actually use fire armour, I suggest some resistance to cutting.* Put in the voice, led by Ichigou, and Dai.

“W-Would it be possible to make the m-main body of the costume a bit more s-slash resistant?” The fire-user asked, only to find himself unconsciously touching the claw-marks on his shoulder again. He forced the hand down.

Power loader tapped his pencil against the metal of his helmet with a light clink. “Fire-resistance is a pretty standard feature, but with how fire-proof you said yours needed to be… it’s going to be tricky to do much there, unless you were willing to cut back on the heat-proofing?”

Izuku didn’t even have to consider it, the mere thought of the damage he could do to himself by setting fire to a less well designed costume- or worse, melting it- had him visibly shuddering. “Thought not. Well, I’ll see what I can do, but no promises.”

The greenette nodded in understanding, as the teacher added another note. He prodded the voice for further suggestions, only to be immediately bombarded with them.

*Fingerless gloves.* From Ren.

*Darker colour.* From Aoi.

*You should change the pattern,* tacked on Yugo, *really sell the “Draconic Power” thing.*

*Knives are always useful, if you can convince them to let you have some.* Suggested Dai, though this was met with less approval than the other three ideas.

The first suggestion Izuku gave immediately; newfound legitimacy, and the resilience from One-For-All negated almost all the advantages that fingers gave gloves. Power Loader simply nodded.
“Much darker and you’ll end up with a costume that’s essentially black. How dark do you mean?”
Was the response to the second question.

Izuku opened his mouth to answer, only to pause as Iida rocketed into the ceiling. He closed his mouth a moment later when his friend got back up, seeming more irked than in any way hurt.

The fire-user just raised a hand pulling a lock of green hair that was practically black in a lot of lighting- it was the shade he had actually wanted his costume to be to begin with, but he wasn’t about to cut off part of his hair to get that point across in his initial costume specification.

Dai’s suggestion was summarily ignored. He wasn’t likely to use one as a weapon, and his quirks, and other tools could do most of the other jobs a knife could.

“Um, the rest of it is j-just aesthetic st-stuff… I- I c-could send you a sk-sketch?” He asked, already going back and forth on different dragon-themed patterns with Yugo.

*Let us all pray that Uraraka never learns how good your drawing for your costume design was, or she will be even more annoyed that we’re too good at things.* Said the rest of the voice, while Power Loader was making a few final notes, nodding along.
Chapter Summary

basically a couple of conversations in the dorms, the plotless wasteland continues on with no end in sight.

Chapter Notes

1) *looks at stats* wooooo, nearly 3k kudos!! prepare for your regularly scheduled thank you
2) thank you guys so much for reading my fic, and being so generally supportive of my writing. I doubt I would have kept going this long, if not for all the positivity I've been getting :D
3) I decided we haven't had a Bakugou pov chapter in a while, so all aboard for cognitive dissonance avenue
4) I don't really get why kiri complains about his lack of mobility, and ranged moves? like... buy a slingshot? or some of Mei's rocket boots? support gear exists, and it doesn't actually have to work using your quirk, you know.
5) you are my favourite character, and so help me, you *will* feel good about yourself, you adorable rock, you.
6) you'll pry my tododeku from my cold dead hands, but weirdly, when i think about it, this is mostly because i hate shipping todo with anyone else. you can ship deku with other people, and that doesn't bother me. weird, idk why it's like that. (Tokodeku is a weirdly fun rarepair)
7) there's a similar thing with OFA. I don't mind you not giving it to deku, but giving it to anyone else rubs me the wrong way for some reason. like, that doesn't belong to you. stop that.
7.1) though i really dislike when quirkless!deku turns OFA down? that feels so OOC to me.
8) anyway, enough rambling out of me, hope you enjoy the chapter, don't forget to leave a comment, they give me life. (you know, the regular lycansubscribe schpiel)

Shouto had retreated to his room to complete his homework; the ice-user had never known how distracting friends could be. Normally he wouldn't be opposed to the idea of Uraraka, or Shinsou dragging him away from seemingly endless pages of numbers to play a video game, but the homework needed done, and he'd rather do it now, and have the entire weekend free.

Izuku was actually even worse on the being distracting front, since he didn’t actually have to do anything to be distracting. Trying to do homework in the same room as the greenette would doubtless result in Shouto trying to count his freckles, or something equally enjoyable unproductive.
Of course, he should have known that his efforts to get the work done wouldn’t work out. He hadn’t actually written anything for a good five minutes, just staring unseeing at the sheet, thinking about today’s super move training.

He was fairly happy with the idea he had had for a move, remembering how powerful- if ultimately ineffective- the steam explosion from his last fight in the sports festival had been. Plus it had given him a couple of ideas for things he might be able to do by reducing the output. A smokescreen could prove really handy in the right circumstances.

Unfortunately, super moves had gotten him thinking about Endeavour again- something he had no wish to do whatsoever. Steam was fairly powerful as an attack, and skating on his ice could get him moving pretty quickly, but it was small potatoes to flash fire.

Not for the first time, he felt stupid for refusing to use his fire for so long, but it was too late to regret now. A couple of days until sentencing, and he would most likely never see Endeavour again.

Generally, he was pretty happy about that. Not just because the man was getting what he deserved, but also because the trial itself had been a nightmare. He wasn’t proud to admit that he had ended up making liberal use of the therapy dog the court had provided. Luckily- or unluckily, depending on how you looked at it- Enji had gone off-script multiple times, showcasing just how unrepentant- even proud- he was of his actions. The case was open and shut.

The problem was… without Endeavour training him (“that wasn’t training,” said Izuku’s voice in his head, “that was just him beating you for no reason.”) he had no idea how flash fire worked exactly. Whatever you said about the former flame hero, he was powerful, and knew how to use his quirk very well.

Without a road-map for the technique, he’d have to figure it out step by step. That was, if he even could; his quirk wasn’t Hellflame. Not to mention the danger that would involve. He might not hate his quirk any more, but fire quirks were still dangerous, and if he pushed his in the wrong way, he could easily end up burning himself. Images of the staples that were seemingly all that was holding his brother together involuntarily came to mind.

No, trying that could end up being a very bad idea. Would he just have to go his entire career without learning it? He didn’t think he would ever be able to bear to visit his father in prison to ask about it. Not with the way he would likely gloat.
The ice-user’s brooding was interrupted by sharp knocking on his door, causing him to frown in puzzlement. That was odd; he had said that he would be doing homework, so who was visiting?

Rising, he opened the door to reveal an Uraraka who was bouncing from foot to foot. “Todoroki-kun,” she said, sounding oddly relieved, “I need your help.”

Shouto tilted his head. That didn’t sound like the tone the brunette would use for a “the league is attacking the dorm right this minute” type need your help, but it did still sound fairly urgent. “What with?”

“I think I really upset Deku-kun.” The brunette answered, stopping her bouncing, and instead moving her hands together into the release position for her quirk, and tapping her index fingers together.

The bi-chromatic teen took a second to figure out that it was Izuku she was referring to, then furrowed his brows slightly. “How?” He asked plainly, hoping to get a feel for how badly she had upset the greenette, and how annoyed he should be about it.

Uraraka started looking increasingly shamefaced, not meeting Shouto’s eye. “So when we went to the support department, there was an explosion-” there was a what?! “and a girl ended up landing on Izuku, so I joked that you would be jealous, because he ended up looking at her chest.” The brunette explained, before glancing briefly up at him, and then away.

Again, it took a second to figure out what Uraraka was implying- Fuyumi was right, he wasn’t good with peopling- but eventually he got it, and the furrowed eyebrows moved into a full frown. “Izuku wouldn’t do that.” He said with absolute certainty. He could picture Izuku breaking up with him- though he really really didn’t want to- but the idea of Midoriya “I would take a knife for someone I’ve barely spoken to” Izuku hurting him like that? The image just wouldn’t form.

“I know that,” said Uraraka, contrition giving way to slight impatience, as if she saw how ridiculous the idea was too, “I’ve seen the way he looks at you.”

Shouto blinked. How he looks at me? How does he- no, not important right now. “Why did you come to me, though? Shouldn’t you apologise to him, instead?”

“I will. Actually I might make muffins, or something- protein muffins? Honestly, I have no idea what he eats to get like that- but I was hoping you could check that he’s okay? He really freaked
out when she started feeling him up.”

The temperature in the room began to noticeably drop, and the frown was well on its way to a scowl. “She did what?” He asked, plots for certain nameless support student’s downfalls already forming.

Uraraka had seemingly been hiding her own anger over the incident. Her fists clenched, and her mouth pinched, as her usually friendly eyes narrowed. “She started feeling him up. She actually kept trying, even when he backed away. Oooh, that woman is just- I’m pretty sure she was just trying to kill Iida-kun. He ended up having to go to the nurse, after her invention launched him into the ceiling.”

By the end of her little tirade, the brunette looked close to stamping her foot in frustration over the whole thing, and Shouto couldn’t blame her. Yep, someone was getting mysteriously frozen to the ceiling. That could wait, though. “I’ll go speak to him,” Shouto said, abandoning thoughts of getting homework done before dinner, “is he still in the common room?”

The brunette nodded, stepping away from the door. “He was when I left, but he’s avoiding Iida, and Shinsou-kun.” She said, as Shouto made his way out, and down the hall.

When the pair arrived back in the common room, Shouto found it to be mostly normal, except that the shock of deep forest curls was not situated near anyone else, instead occupying a sofa of its own. This was weird, given that Izuku had this odd thing where he didn’t find spending time with other people tiring- unlike Shouto, for whom Izuku was the only exception to the rule.

While Uraraka made her way towards the sofa occupied by Tsuyu, and a couple of the other girls, Shouto wandered around to the front of Izuku’s sofa, curious what he was doing.

When he got a proper angle to see, Shouto saw that the fire-user was sketching in one of his many journals, a look of intense concentration on his face, golden eyes intent, pink tongue poking out of the corner of his mouth.

Unfortunately, the ice-user didn’t get long to properly enjoy that expression, as Izuku- being Izuku- noticed him almost immediately. Not that the smile he got when the greenette looked up, which caused his eyes to soften, was in any way worse. “Shouto,” Izuku said happily, “you finished your homework already?”
“Not yet. Homework can wait, at least until I find out if I need to start some sort of war with the support department.” Shouto said, taking a seat next to his boyfriend.

Izuku’s smile noticeably fell. “Uraraka told you.” It wasn’t a question, but Shouto nodded anyway, “You don’t have to do that. It’s not a big deal, I just overreacted. She didn’t even mean it like that, anyway; she was just trying to get my measurements.”

“She still made you uncomfortable,” the completely unswayed ice-user stated, “and she needs to learn about boundaries.”

The fire-user opened his mouth to argue, then paused, looking off into space for a couple of seconds. “Okay, m-maybe she does,” the greenette conceded after a moment, “but don’t do anything, I just freaked out a bit at the time, I’m fine now.”

Shouto looked at the boy beside him, knowing exactly how much “fine” counted for from Izuku sometimes. “Promise?”

The greenette gave a little huff, before smiling fondly- Shouto thought- and shuffling over the short distance Shouto had left between the two, and leaning into him. “I promise. Don’t start a fight, I’m pretty sure Power Loader will speak to her about it anyway.”

The ice-user hummed, briefly considering doing something anyway, before discarding the idea. Izuku had backed off when Shouto had asked, when Endeavour was arrested. “Alright. What are you working on, then?” He asked, shifting from the subject, content for now that the greenette was feeling alright.

Izuku’s mood did a full about turn, suddenly returning to more of the bright- if nervous-enthusiasm that Shouto was used to. “Redesigning my costume,” he said brightly, reopening the notebook he was holding, revealing a partial sketch, currently little more than a vague humanoid form, “since my quirk changed last term, I thought I should mix up the design a little.”

“Do you mind if I watch?” The bi-chromatic teen asked, interested to see what the other boy would come up with.

Izuku blinked up at him, head twisting. “Don’t you still need to finish your homework?”
“I’ll just do it tomorrow,” Shouto said, leaning further into Izuku. It wasn’t any great surprise to him that he would be unwilling to leave, once he was already comfortable next to Izuku, “it isn’t due until Monday anyway.”

The fire-user grinned, picking up his pencil. “Great. I’d love to see what you think. Hopefully I can get it looking alright quickly.” He said happily, before resuming adding detail to the sketch.

Shouto let them lapse into a comfortable silence, broken only by the conversations going on further from the pair, and the scratching of Izuku’s pencil, as he added detail, finishing the general shape of the figure taking up the left page, before removing the construction lines.

The ice-user watched, enthralled, as Izuku added the general pattern to the costume, which was nothing like the dark-grey fire on the original design, but instead featured chinese dragons coiling up each arm. The attention to detail was really amazing, including a pattern that gave the impression of scales, even on such a small sketch.

He really wanted to know what changes might be made to the wings on the back, but the figure was facing out of the page.

The bi-chromatic teen finally spoke up, when the fire-user started adding a face to the little figure. “No hood?” he asked curiously, causing Izuku’s pencil to pause, “Wouldn’t a hood let you use your super move over your whole body?”

Izuku pursed his lips, tapping his pencil on the page a couple of times. “I guess? But I don’t really want to add a mask.”

“Why not?” Shouto was puzzled; most heroes had some sort of mask, it was a really popular thing among heroes, even if Shouto’s own costume had none.

“My old… mentor? The man who taught me before I came to UA had a thing about masks.” Izuku explained, an odd expression on his face, as if he was reliving a happy memory.

“Your mentor? The one who trained you as Amber?” Izuku nodded, “Why would he dislike masks?” Surely someone training a vigilante, and who was probably one himself would like masks, if anything.
“He was a weird guy,” Izuku said, laughter in his voice, “at least the mask thing made more sense than his hatred of suits. He always used to say masks were dangerous. ‘Masks draw attention in and of themselves.’”

“How. Was that who you were quoting, back then? ‘People who wear masks...’” Shouto trailed off, unsure of what, exactly, Izuku had said.

“‘Usually have something to hide.’” Izuku finished, smiling down at the page, “Yeah, that was one of his. He really didn’t like masks.”

Shouto thought about it for a while—long enough that Izuku started sketching again. It did make a bit of sense; Shouji’s mask was one of the first thing he had noticed about the taller boy, and unlike the arms, he was still pretty curious about it. If you wanted to avoid attention, it might be a good idea to not seem like you wanted to avoid attention— to not make people wonder why.

“Fair enough,” he finally said, “but what was the thing about suits?”

“Oh,” Izuku chuckled, “he always used to say he didn’t want to see me wearing a suit. At first, I thought it was just a ‘don’t become a salary man’ thing, but no, he just hated the idea of me in a business suit.” The greenette smiled the same smile he did when one of his— their—friends did something silly.

Okay~. A little creepy, dictating what a child you’re teaching should wear, outside of purely practical things, but Shouto decided to leave that alone for now. The man was presumably out of Izuku’s life, and the boy’s therapist would know better how to approach that than Shouto anyway.

“Fair enough,” the ice-user said, trying to imagine his boyfriend in a suit, “I think you might look nice in a suit, though.” He murmured, tilting his head closer to the other boy.

Izuku flushed, and Shouto could feel a noticeable up-tick in his temperature. “N-Nope, not happening. B-Besides, y-you’re biased.”

“True,” the ice-user admitted easily, before making a spur of the moment decision, kissing him lightly on the cheek, “But I’m still right.”

He had a brief horrifying moment, thinking he had gone too far, that the second date had been more
of a one-off than he had thought, when Izuku shivered, but then Izuku turned to him, smiling shyly. “Your quirk makes that feel really weird, you know.” The greenette murmured, still blushing.

Shouto tilted his head. “The temperature thing?” He asked, honestly having never considered how his quirk might affect this, of all things. He had never really considered that his future would involve much kissing, really.

Izuku nodded, but had barely opened his mouth, when Bakugou made a fake retching noise from his own sofa. The greenette immediately went scarlet, head snapping back down to his notebook again.

Shouto glared at the blond, making a note to ask Shinsou for help with appropriate revenge for ruining the moment, and embarrassing Izuku.

Katsuki was pissed off with Kirishima. Weirdly, this had nothing to do with Kamino. Sure, it had been fucking dumb- not to mention a dozen kinds of illegal, and the blond was beginning to wonder if UA cared about laws at all- but at least the redhead had manned up, and gone along with his stupid plan to rescue Deku, and Bird-Brain.

Honestly, the only one Katsuki was especially pissed at over Kamino was Icy-Hot, and that was only over that weak-ass sneak attack. Damn coward wouldn’t even give him a proper fight for insulting his precious boyfriend.

No, the reason he was pissed at Kirishima was that he just refused to grow some balls, and ask for what he fucking wanted. And he obviously did want it, from all the looks he kept sending towards the blond, which were verging on the looks Icy-Hot kept sending Deku, these days.

Fuck, even right now, the gross pyros were all over one another, Deku with his head in Half-And-Half’s lap, with Daddy-Issues fucking about with his hair- in a move Katsuki was increasingly sure was actually designed to make Kirishima jealous- and the other boy kept glancing between them, and Katsuki when he thought no-one was looking.

(Why the hell were those two even sitting there, instead of fucking off to one of their rooms, or to spend time with their own friends?)
Worse, he bit his lip a couple of times, sharp teeth denting them, to the point that Katsuki was worried they might draw blood—damn those fucking teeth. Katsuki wasn’t staring. Kirishima just happened to look at him as he was… glancing the boy’s way.

The blond gave the redhead a challenging look, as if to say “are you finally going to ask?” But no, Kirishima looked away right away, blushing nearly as hard as Deku did when… basically anything happened.

Damn it, how many hints did he have to fucking drop before Kirishima got the picture? The redhead wasn’t subtle, he had to realise that Katsuki knew what he was thinking about. Katsuki would have told him to fuck right off, if he wasn’t up for that, and Ei- Kirishima should know that by now.

He’d even remembered the boy’s damn name, and frequently called him by it— a privilege even his own mother didn’t get.

Katsuki was getting frustrated enough that he honestly considered giving up, and asking the idiot out himself… but no, Kirishima had become his friend— rather than a hanger-on like Fingers, or Wings— because he was strong enough to say what he wanted, and back it up. The old hag didn’t raise no quitter, and he wasn’t going to be the first to crack; if Kirishima wanted something, he was going to have to say so.

(The hypocrisy of this thought process never crossed Bakugou’s mind.)

There was a lull in the conversation, which Kirishima— seemingly still embarrassed at getting caught out— tried to fill. “That was a totally awesome super move you came up with today, Todoroki.” The redhead said, and Katsuki wasn’t annoyed that it was Half-And-Half getting complimented. All he had managed was some fucking steam.

The ice-user turned away from making cow eyes at Deku, to look up at the redhead. “I guess. Yours was very good as well.” He said, as if he had been practising his dead tone with Insomniac, and Insomniac Jr.

Kirishima blinked, looking genuinely surprised. “I don’t know,” he grimaced, “it… You guys all have cool ranged moves, or a lot of mobility, apart from Kaminari.” The shark-toothed boy stared at his hand. “I just feel like you’re moving forward, but I’m staying still.”
Katsuki was close to growling, as Pikachu loudly objected to being called out like that; nobody talked about Kirishima like that, damn it. He was about to tell the moron that, when Deku beat him to it.

“B-But your quirk’s super s-strong,” said the ex-vigilante, pinning the redhead to the sofa with his gaze like he always did, “a-and unbreakable is a really useful power-up.”

Kirishima shook his head dejectedly. “I’m still useless, when I can’t get close to villains,” he said bitterly, “like at Kamino.”

Katsuki actually scoffed at that. “Well your useless ass was the only thing that stopped Deku from getting impaled on that ice.”

Ice-Hot visibly flinched, and Katsuki felt a twinge of regret, but he ignored it. “None of us would have even been there, if you hadn’t said anything.” The ice-user said softly, looking at the boy who was increasingly the centre of attention, as the many friends he had managed to get in class focused on the effort to stop him being a dumbass, looking down on himself like that.

“I guess...” The redhead said, still sounding unconvinced, “but I still wouldn’t say my quirk is ‘super strong’, not like you guys.” He gestured between the three fire-quirk users.

“Huh?” Deku asked, looking totally lost, “but it is. Defensive quirks like yours are like the... third? Hardest type of quirk to fight.” The ex-vigilante said, before descending into that damned annoying muttering again, “well I mean that’s just my experience but I’ve fought a lot of villains I guess and that always seemed...”

Now normally, Katsuki would be telling the greenette to shut the fuck up, but since Kirishima’s expression had brightened from gloomy to just puzzled, he could stay- for now.

“Wait, you think my quirk is that strong?” Kirishima asked, overcoming his shock long enough to interrupt the mutter-storm before it scared everyone out of the common room- except Katsuki, he wasn’t that weak, and this one wasn’t even about anything too horrifying.

Deku finally sat up, nodding repeatedly. “Yeah. D-Defensive quirks are really hard to fight, e-especially when you train them right. The top student in third year right now has a defence quirk. A-And his is weaker than yours, since his only protects him, b-but you can p-protect other people. I- I d-don’t know what your heat-resistance is like, b-but I’d guess that you and Tetsutetsu will be
the hardest students in our year to beat, by the time we graduate.”

And Deku had been doing so fucking well, getting the redhead to cheer the fuck up. He just had to mention Tetsutetsu, and compare the two of them like that. Kirishima’s expression immediately clouded over slightly, being reminded that their year had someone with a quirk just so similar to his. Damn Cockatoo and his matching intros.

“Oi Deku,” Katsuki interrupted Deku, before he could explain in excruciating detail why Kirishima would be so unbeatable in a couple of years- not that Katsuki believed it; he would be the unbeatable one by that time, ”stick to comforting your own fucking friends, I don’t need your help with mine.”

Katsuki immediately realised his mistake, when Kaminari made a cooing noise, and Deku blinked at him in surprise. The blond idiot moved from his sofa, almost falling on top of Katsuki. “Aww, did you say we’re friends, Kacchan?”

Katsuki shoved the other blond none too gently away from him, nearly launching the lighter boy off the sofa entirely. “Kirishima is, you can die in a hole for all I care, Pikachu. And don’t call me that.” He added, the reflex at being called Kacchan just as strong as ever.

(Why did he have to get stuck in class with Deku? He’d been in the same class for ten years. Couldn’t he go one without hearing that damn nickname?)

Kaminari clutched his chest theatrically. “So cruel.” He complained, but Katsuki ignored him.

“Kirishima,” Katsuki said to the boy, who was staring at him, slightly wide-eyed, “what happened to the horse that wouldn’t crumble, huh? If you refuse to go down, that makes you stupidly strong.”

The blond held his gaze for several seconds, waiting for the words to penetrate that hard head of his, but eventually Kirishima grinned, sharp teeth on display. “That’s so manly.” The redhead says, banging his fists together, as if Katsuki’s declaration was anything noteworthy. “Thanks man. I’m not gonna go down easy.”

Katsuki saw the fire in Kirishima’s eyes, and decided that that had worked for now. “You’d better.”
Katsuki turned away from the redhead, slouching back into his seat, one foot on the table, only to notice that Deku, and Candy-Cane were both looking at him, with nearly identical expressions of mild puzzlement. Oh no. Deku’s eyes widened a second later, in seeming realisation. Damn it no. It took Peppermint a second more, and a glance Kirishima’s way, before he, too, got it. Fuck.

Katsuki glared at both of them, giving as much of a silent death-threat as he could without tipping anyone else off to what was going on. That was the last thing he wanted.

Deku backed off immediately, so he got to live, but Icy-Hot glanced between Kirishima, and him a couple more times, and Katsuki did not like the look of that smile.

Katsuki ramped his glare up from Defcon 2 to Defcon 1- essentially the difference between “I will explode you”, and “I will explode you repeatedly, don’t test me”. Candy-Cane didn’t lessen his smirk. Shit. That bastard was so dead, Katsuki was going to explodo-kill his face, if he said anything.

“Not to stop the Kirishima-comforting hour,” said Insomniac Jr. suddenly, surprising everyone present, since they had assumed he was actually asleep, “but did you actually rank how hard different sorts of quirks are to fight?”

Everyone’s attention turned back to the greenette, who immediately shrivelled under their collective scrutiny. “No?” He replied hesitantly, fooling precisely no-one- except possibly Kaminari.

Katsuki groaned, tossing his head back to gaze at the ceiling, resting it on the back of the sofa. He didn’t have the patience for this. “Just fucking tell him, Deku.” Said the blond, who had not been surprised that he had. The creepy weirdo probably knew the favourite breakfast cereals of every hero in the top one hundred. And that was just from memory.


Katsuki looked back down at the greenette, to see him shrinking in on himself even further, until Icy-Hot put an arm around his shoulders. “Um, second would be perception-altering quirks.” Deku said, immediately halting Raccoon-Eyes’ excitement, and replacing it with confusion.

“By perception-altering quirks,” asked High-Class from behind Katsuki, nearly making the blond
jump- when the hell did she get here? “Do you mean illusion-type quirks?”

Fuck, she was encouraging him to go off on one about quirks. Shit, he had encouraged him to go off on one about quirks. What was wrong with him? From the shine in Deku’s eyes, he could tell they were in for a long one.

“Yeah, illusion quirks, but other types of quirk too. There’s a lot of types of quirk that can mess with your senses that aren’t just illusions.” Deku explained, twisting to look at the dark-haired rich-girl.

“Such as?” She asked curiously.

“Um, well anything that disrupts a sense. Quirks that can blind you, or invert your vision, or make you feel drunk, or anything like that. I once fought a villain whose quirk completely removed a person’s proprioception, when they looked at someone.”

Ponytail inhaled sharply, as if she had somehow understood whatever the hell Deku had just said. “How would you fight, if you couldn’t feel where your legs were? Surely you couldn’t even walk like that.” She sounded genuinely alarmed at the idea of that sort of quirk.

“Oh,” Deku said, rubbing the back of his head, “I didn’t. W-Walk that is. He rushed at me, and I was able to keep my hands where I could see them.”

“Still, that is very impressive, winning a fight in that condition.” She insisted, awed.

“Um, thanks? It was mostly luck, though. If I had been outnumbered, I doubt I could have won there.”

“That would make sense. If you come across quirks such as that often, are there countermeasures that could be employed?” Ponytail asked, already in full business-mode.

“Y-Yeah, but it mostly comes down to training- a-and planning, if you know you’re going to come across one… avoiding the activation condition is usually safest.”
Damn it. And just when Katsuki thought it might be safe to tune this dumb conversation out. Now he was going to have to listen to Deku go on and on about learning to fight blind, or some shit, just to make sure he didn’t lose, if some shitty villain managed to blind him. He could feel the headache coming on already.
a hero's armour part 3: the soul

Chapter Summary

an oasis in the plotless wasteland, or just a mirage?
Touya has the easiest job interview ever. of all time.

Chapter Notes

1) all sorts of thanks to Bochord of Leaspell for coming up with a better summary, because mine sucked.
2) someone once asked me how far i intended to take this fic, which... doesn't really have an answer. RoT started as a time-travel fix-it without the time-travel, and a self-indulgent way for me to yell at people for making bad decisions. So, in summary, I can't end it before Nighteye shows up, but after that I have no idea.
3) relatedly, this means I'm going to have to run the Overhaul arc, which terrifies me. It's such a good arc, with so many moving parts, that others have written so well, and I am definitely going to mess it up.
4) to those few people who write comments on every chapter: i love you so much, you guys are the best
5) fair warning, i might end up tacking another scene onto the end of this chapter later, if i can't make it fit into the next one. sorry.
6) *manga thoughts* oh man, oh- I- I just love how bouncy twice is! like, he's OP beyond all mortal ken, but still so happy, I love it.

Touya sat in the kitchen, silently nursing a cup of coffee, and staring at the tabletop. He needed to think. He needed a plan, or everything would go to shit beyond what he had any hope of fixing.

It was kind of a surprise to the fire-user that his current biggest problem didn’t have the slightest thing to do with his blessed father, or the man’s enlightened parenting methods.

Not to say that he didn’t still despise the man’s guts with a fury deep and hot enough that he often couldn’t sleep for thinking about it. He got so angry that he had to avoid talking about the man in front of his siblings- and especially his mother- sometimes.

The whole trial had been an unremitting nightmare. Whenever Enji’s lawyers took to claiming that his eldest’s injuries were nothing to do with the man because Touya’s own quirk had caused them… well, he did slightly regret giving up on his plans to just murder the man.
The only positive out of the whole thing—upcoming near-certainty of the man’s long-term imprisonment notwithstanding—was the utter blank shock on Enji’s face when he had—finally—recognised Touya. Oh, he really wished he had brought a camera—even if they weren’t allowed in the courtroom—just so that he could print out and frame the look on Endeavour’s face when he finally realised he was going to lose. As it had turned out, Endeavour had thought that Touya died as well.

Still, that was for later, since the only thing he had left to do there was wait until sentencing in a couple of days, so he could dream pleasant dreams of all the truly unpleasant things that would happen to a child abuser, and former hero in prison. For now, the more pressing issue was Toga.

It burned him, being unable to deny Nedzu’s unspoken words that it was his fault that she got out of whatever hole she had been put in. He should have visited. Should have told them more about what she could do, fear about the associated questions be damned. Too late to think about that now. Much too late.

He needed to get her away from those psychopaths that she was running with, and he didn’t trust Nedzu as far as he could throw All Might, meaning he had to at least try to do it himself.

The longer she was with them, the worse it would be. The more she would get attached, or the more likely one of them might decide to turn on her. And that was just the stuff that was possible. What was **definite** was that she would start racking up a body-count, and a longer rap sheet, by the day reducing her odds of a comfortable institution where she could get help, and increasing her odds of a cell in Tartarus.

Touya’s first thought had been to follow in Midoriya’s shoes, go after her and leave the law to go hang. He would have done it, too; he knew her best, and as a vigilante he could do things that the heroes wouldn’t dare, so it would be faster, probably.

The only problem? He suspected that Midoriya **knew** some—or maybe even all—of the shit he had pulled in his Dabi years. The kid hadn’t said anything, but that was when Touya had been useful to him, and the knowledge that he could say anything was probably meant as some sort of sword of Damocles, ready to drop at a moment’s notice, if the little firebrand thought the ex-villain was going back to old habits.

(Touya remembered the perfect terrible calm in those gold eyes, and knew with utter certainty that Midoriya dating Shouto wouldn’t sway the greenette in the slightest.)

Which left him with only one way of doing things, and it was leaving him with a bad taste in his
mouth, and a whole host of new and interesting problems.

Touya was willing to admit- even if only in his own head, and never to any of his siblings- that he would never be a great thinker. All the brains among the two of them had been shoved into Fuyumi’s head, and even Natsuo was probably brighter than him, however much he hated to acknowledge it. But that didn’t mean that the fire-user was stupid; Nedzu might have been almost entirely polite, and the commission itself hadn’t said anything, but he could read between the lines.

For all that it wasn’t apocalyptic fury like Aizawa, they were both distinctly displeased by the stunt he had pulled at Kamino. He had expected that, and had known, going in, that he would almost certainly lose his provisional license, and maybe even any right to try for a new one. At the time, he didn’t care.

Why on earth would he need a hero license, anyway? It wasn’t like there was any love lost between him and heroes, and he had mostly gone to UA because that was expected. Better to use the thing for something useful now, rather than just letting it expire without ever being worthwhile.

He had been perfectly content to go looking for a normal job, and hopefully never think about his quirk again. He might not have had the quirk for it, but he had really started to like the idea of getting a job at the tattoo place that had fixed up his scars, since they also did more traditional work.

Now though? Now he needed that little piece of plastic, and the damned rat was right that he probably needed a better one, as well. His license was safe enough for now, between the desperate need not to do anything to discredit him, at least before Endeavour was firmly behind bars, and the incredible amounts of good press provisional hero “Azure” had gotten for saving the kids, as he was “passing by”.

That wasn’t going to last, though, and after all was said and done, Nedzu’s warning had been clear enough, even for someone even less clever than he was- good luck getting a hero license, but dream on, if you think I, or my school will be helping.

His good press would be gone before too long, and then the commission would be itching for any excuse to revoke his license, and he had precious few people in his corner. Ah, who was he kidding? He had no-one in his corner. No-one with any pull, anyway. He needed to fix that, and he needed to fix that right now.

Midoriya was- weirdly enough- Touya’s first thought. The kid was dating his brother, which should earn him some points, at least. Plus, the tiny vigilante was somehow influential enough to
Avoid going to prison for even so much as five minutes, despite the better part of five years of violent kidnappings, and other quirk-related crimes. But no, the broccoli was probably lucky to have been able to save his own skin, and even if he could somehow delay the commission, that left him no further forward for getting his full hero certification.

He had spent most of the evening after leaving Nedzu’s office looking up how exactly he could do that. School was out, since for whatever reason, hero training was done in high school, and there were next to no university level courses. Leaving only the barely official back door into a license. He needed to intern at a hero agency.

If All Might hadn’t up and retired after Kamino, Touya might have tried his luck there, since that was some powerful backing, and he could probably swallow the shame that would result from leveraging the guilt from his tragic backstory to get the blond to help him. It was for a good cause.

But now, a couple of weeks before the symbol of peace stepping down, that would be a terrible idea. He would have to look elsewhere to get some sort of protection against the commission.

As he said, Touya maybe wasn’t the smartest, and any clever plan he hatched would probably backfire horribly, just like every other decision he had ever made, resulting in some new and interesting disaster that he would have to wade through. The simplest plan, then. He’d just have to try to get the most powerful backing he could, and if that didn’t work? Just go down the list.

He knew he was going to come out of this hating himself, but he didn’t care, if it meant he could protect his found family, without having to leave his real one. He would just have to swallow his pride, and swallow his distaste with heroes in general. It didn’t even matter if he ended up leveraging his sperm donor’s name to increase his chances.

Mind made up, he pulled out his phone, checking the news. Top heroes were pretty easy to find, since they spent an annoying amount of their time pandering to their associated sycophants- even leaving aside the number of said obsessives that liked to stalk them in droves. The best case scenario, he could find a talk, or some sort of “let me write my name on all your random shit” event, because otherwise finding his famously flighty target would take days.

“Sorry for leaving you waiting so long,” was the first thing Tensei said to him, after being brought to Tenya’s room, a few days after their last call, “UA’s new security measures are no joke.”
“It’s fine,” said Tenya, as if he hadn’t spent his time since Midoriya’s revelation as a boiling mass of confusion, barely able to concentrate in class, “I’m sure you were very busy.”

The elder Iida immediately sucked a breath through his teeth. “Oh, I’m in more trouble than I thought.” Tensei muttered, barely loud enough for Tenya to catch, before returning to a normal volume. “Alright, let me have it.”

Tenya opened his mouth, realised he had no idea how to respond to that, and closed it again. Tensei just watched him, bird-like, in silence, as he tried to marshal his thoughts. He didn’t have much success.

Tensei, long since used to those rare- though they had been more common in his youth- times when his younger brother found himself incapable of forming words properly, eventually spoke. “You wanted to know why I didn’t arrest The Crawler?” He prompted gently.

At that, whatever unfamiliar cocktail of emotions Tenya had been saddled with the last few days exploded out with a violence the younger Iida had not been expecting. “Not arrest him? You worked with him! Midoriya-kun said that he practically worked for Iidaten!” The bluet threw his hands over his head, shooting from his chair, and beginning to pace, “How could you work with a vigilante like that? How- How could you involve Iidaten in working with- with- with a criminal?!”

Normally, he might be concerned with possible noise complaints, and later he would surely be knocking on his neighbours’ doors to offer apologies for his overloud tirade, but for now, he was just staring, breathing heavily, at his brother, as the elder Iida sat in place on his bed, unmoving.

After waiting a second, just to be sure that his younger brother was done shouting at him, Tensei frowned, and turned to look at the ceiling for a further moment, before he spoke, seeming unaffected by the yelling. “I wouldn’t say that he ever worked for Iidaten-” Ingenium’s hand went up to forestall his brother, who had opened his mouth to object- “though I can see how your friend would think he did. We did end up working together a fair bit, for a little while. And I’ll admit, that hardly makes it better.”

“Then why?” Tenya pleaded, desperate to understand why his own brother showed such seeming disregard for the laws he was supposed to protect.

Tensei sighed, smiling sadly. “Tenya,” he said slowly, seemingly weighing each word carefully, “what do you think heroes do?”
Tenya blinked, thrown off-guard by the sudden shift in topic, but whatever else, and for all his impatience, he trusted his brother enough to see where this was going. “Heroes enforce the law, and use their quirks to defeat villains.” He said immediately— the textbook answer. He was pretty sure that exact phrasing had been used in one of his quirk law textbooks.

Tensei raised one sharply pointed eyebrow at him. “And rescue heroes, like Thirteen? You don’t see them fighting villains, unless something’s gone badly wrong. Disaster relief is an important part of hero work, too.”

Tenya frowned. That was right… he hadn’t really thought about disaster relief, which didn’t really have much to do with the law. You couldn’t really arrest an earthquake. In retrospect, he should have known that this conversation would force him to challenge some preconceived notion. Almost every conversation since he had come to UA did, he swore.

“So, heroes save people?” He offered after a second, though even he wasn’t exactly satisfied with the answer. It didn’t fit, though he couldn’t word why.

Tensei actually laughed, prompting Tenya to bristle, reflexively intent on defending his terrible answer. “If heroes were only paid to save people,” his brother informed him mirthfully, “I’d be in a lot of trouble. Do you have any idea how many patrols I’ve slowed down to rescue cats from trees?”

Tenya didn’t know, but he was guessing that he wasn’t supposed to answer that. “Then what…”

Tensei shook his head, still smiling. “Heroes are supposed to help people, Otouto.” He said, as if it was supposed to be obvious.

Tenya felt his anger resurfing— more annoyance now, since had gotten the initial shouting done; Tenya’s anger did tend to burn hot and fast— and he pushed it down. “So what,” he demanded, tone letting him know that he might not have done the best job of putting it down, “should we start helping villains, as well as ordinary civilians?”

“That’s not what I said,” Tensei answered, smile fading, “and no, you shouldn’t.”

Obviously. “Then why try to help the crawler?” He still couldn’t see. Why was his brother willing to work with someone who was for all extents and purposes a villain, brazenly flouting the law, and risking civilians’ lives?
“Because he wasn’t a villain. I wouldn’t help a villain, because that would hurt way more people than it helped, but vigilante’s are different.”

“Different how?” Tenya frowned, not really understanding the distinction. By definition, vigilantes were a subset of villains, from the moment they used their quirks illegally.

“Vigilantes are...” Tensei frowned, seeming unsure how to continue, “varied. A lot of them, they aren’t much better than villains. But others? Vigilantes like your friend Midoriya, they avoid collateral, don’t injure people too much. Basically, that sort of vigilante could be a hero, but for whatever reason, they couldn’t get licensed.”

“But they’re still breaking the law.”

Tensei nodded. “Yeah, they are, and as a hero, you’ve got to stop them. But tell me, what’s better, a vigilante going to jail, or another person getting the help they need, earning their license, and becoming another hero to fight alongside you?”

The latter, obviously. Even Tenya could see that, but it all seemed to… unjust. Why could some people just get away with whatever they had done as a vigilante? And now Tensei was smirking at him.

“Yeah, a lot of heroes don’t like it, so how they react to vigilantes varies. That’s up to you to choose, when you go pro. Midoriya, the school chose to put him on the rehabilitation program, and I wanted to do the same for Koichi.” Tensei said, chuckling at his discomfort.

Tenya spent a couple of seconds in mute confusion until he decided that Koichi was probably the Crawler’s civilian name. “How- How do you… choose? How can you just decide to follow the law in some cases, but not in others?” He asked, storing away questions about how Tensei knew that for later.

Tensei hummed. “Not really got an answer for you there, Tenya. Like I say, vigilantes are a grey area, so it’s pretty hard to tell if they really can turn themselves around, unless you get to know them. Honestly, Koichi was easy. He was such a nice guy, his original vigilante name was ‘Nice Guy’,” Tensei laughed, “got his start cleaning up litter.”
Tenya just gaped at that. A vigilante? Cleaning up litter? The image just didn’t fit properly in the bluet’s brain.

Tensei watched, but it seemed like Tenya wasn’t going to be able to answer him any time soon. “Yep, looks like you’re going to have to think about that a while,” he declared, eyes twinkling. “So, why don’t you tell your awesome brother about school, huh? I probably won’t be able to come see you for a while, since I *am* pretty busy, ever since All Might announced his retirement. Man, I do not envy Hawks, right now.”

Hawks’ wrist hurt. Honestly, that might be the most petty complaint he had ever had as a hero, and compared to the truly awful experience of being the number one hero in all but name, it was really really stupid. His manager would have a fit, if he came up to her and started whining about his wrist hurting.

But his wrist hurt. And it was only getting worse as this merch signing thing went on. The event had been his mother’s answer to him complaining about just how big his workload had gotten, ever since he had started stepping into All Might’s shoes. He was never going to her for help again. “Go sign their posters” she had said, “It’ll be less exhausting than fighting villains” she had said.

She was doing this as some sort of vengeance for the added media attention she was getting, somehow. She knew full-well that he had always been the sort to be more bothered by the small stuff. There was no way she could forget the week when he had broken his leg, and not said a single thing in complaint, but cried a couple of days later over a stubbed toe.

The winged man just liked to complain about life’s petty problems, but knew enough to suck it up, and get on, when things got properly tough. Hence, *someone* was getting an earful about his impending arthritis.

The event itself hadn’t been too bad, so far. He didn’t really like shutting himself up, or doing the baseball hat and shades thing some heroes did- which was just as well, since he would have a job hiding bright red wings- and he enjoyed talking to fans. Especially grandmas. Grandmas tended to call him a “fine young man” and offer cookies. It was his biggest weakness as a hero. One older villain with poisoned cookies would surely be the end of him, one day.

But no cookies today, even if the lack of overly creepy fans nearly made up for it. The number of times obsessives had stolen- or tried to steal- one of his feathers alone was kind of frightening.
Truth be told, Hawks couldn’t decide if he wanted to thank Yagi for keeping the transition gradual, or curse the man for having the audacity to not be immortal. The older blond had just done so much. To the extent that his successor as number one was just getting more and more swamped with work.

There had to be some kind of secret to this. Hawks’ initial solution was to try to get more sidekicks. All Might might have gotten on fine with just Nighteye, and then entirely alone, but if he could just get more people into the Aerie, then he could surely lessen his currently impossible workload.

Unfortunately, as with a lot of the fastest heroes, Hawks’ name was poison among lesser heroes with any sense, as it meant near-perpetual clean-up duty, which no-one wanted to be stuck doing, since it made it impossible to make a name for yourself.

But he couldn’t just flood his office with idiots, who would rack up property damage numbers, and run the place into the ground, meaning he was finding it almost impossible to get more heroes, even if office staff was much simpler.

Blessedly, the event was nearly over, so he could go speak to his manager. Thinking about this himself, with what little brain-power he could spare from being charming, was getting nowhere. Maybe he could start selling space on his costume? That could earn him enough money to run with a couple of looser cannons.

But no, he couldn’t do that. The heroes that had tried that in the past invariably found… their… popularity… he was being watched. The winged hero didn’t frown, because the winged hero did not frown. Instead, he kept his indolent smile on, looking casually around for the source of the feeling. He had no idea why he noticed it, given that he was already the focus of attention for an entire crowd, but there it was.

It didn’t take long to spot the source of the feeling. The guy wasn’t being subtle. Blue, blue eyes looked at him from beneath a head of snow-white hair, as the man leaned against a nearby wall, arms crossed. Hawks was sure he knew the leather-jacketed man from somewhere.

Hawks returned to the fan he was talking to, hoping that his brief look around wouldn’t have upset them. Not seeming to pay attention to fans was a sure-fire way to –

Oh, that was a Todoroki. The eldest, Hawks thought. Todoroki… Touya! That was it. He snuck another glance, as the next fan approached, an official branded shirt in hand, to see the taller man
just… standing there, staring at him intently, but making no move to approach. Waiting, then? He tried smiling at Todoroki, tilting his head to gauge the reaction, but other than a sharp exhale felt through his wings, he got nothing.

Internally shrugging, he resolved to wait. Getting stalked, and/or murdered by someone that famous was pretty unlikely, so the eldest Mini-roki probably just wanted to talk to him about something. Plus, the crowd was getting pretty damn thin now…

Barely ten minutes later, the last fan made his nervous way away, laughing at some lame joke the winged hero had said, clutching a hat, as if his signature made it worth its volume in gold.

He didn’t have to look to notice Todoroki approaching him, since he could hear the rustle of clothing as he moved away from the wall. Still, he turned to face him, and… oh shit. He was hot—pun intended. He hadn’t been able to see before, but he was totally covered in piercings, plus those intense eyes, and the way he nearly towered over the shorter man… dammit.

“So, you’re… Touya-san, right?” Hawks said, carefully letting none of this internal panic show on his face. This was not the first time he had developed an instant crush on someone, and he was not going through Rumi’s teasing over this again. “Did you want to talk to me? Only, you’ve been watching me like a hawk for like ten minutes.”

Todoroki gave a slow blink, which had Hawks sweating with the effort of not blushing, then frowned at him. “Was that a pun?” He demanded, sounding intensely offended.

Hawks laughed. “Yup, you got me.” He admitted easily, prompting the taller man to look genuinely pained, and not responding for a moment.

“Right. Whatever. Do you need any interns?” Todoroki finally asked, seemingly deciding to ignore the pun.

Hawks blinked. That wasn’t what he was expecting. “Yes.” He answered, trying with limited success to hide his desperation. It came out as more of a groan. He really did need more staff, and soon.

The fire-user narrowed his eyes suspiciously. “That was too easy.” He stated, studying the hero. Well, at least he wasn’t getting filed in the idiot category, if he could see that.
“Hey, no backsies.” Said Hawks, unwilling to give up on the man- who Hawks had seen first-hand using his quirk to great effect.

Unlike the pun, which had earned him nothing but a slightly scornful look, now Todoroki snorted, though he still looked somewhat scornful- maybe that was just his face? “What are you, twelve?”

“Hey!” Hawks squawked- pun intended, “I’m older than you.”

Flat look. “I’m twenty-four.” Said the fire-user smugly.

Hawks blinked at that. He really hadn’t expected him to be older. “Look, you want the job or not?” He asked, covering his embarrassment.

Todoroki raised his perfect white eyebrows. “What, no interview? You don’t even want to check if I’m qualified for it?”

“You’ve got a provisional license, right?”

“Yeah?” The fire-user said sceptically.

“Well, that’s good enough for me. UA cares about its reputation. They wouldn’t let you spread your wings,” Hawks spread his own wings, as much as the appropriated corner of a local library would allow, “if they thought you would embarrass them.”

Todoroki closed his eyes, and drew a deep breath. “The bird puns are going to be a regular thing, aren’t they?” He asked, resigned. Hawks only smiled, holding out a hand.

The fire-use stared at the hand for a second, then sighed, taking it. “I am so going to regret this.”

Hawks grinned, feeling a small amount of the weight he had had dumped on him by All Might lifting off. Then he had a thought. “Hey, you know Midoriya-kun, right?”
“I guess? We’re not exactly the best of pals. That’s more my brother’s job.”

“Think you could introduce me?”

“Why?” Todoroki asked sharply, utterly baffled by the question for whatever reason.

Hawks put both hands on the back of his head, elbows out, appearing for all the world totally relaxed. No way was he telling his newest intern about the All-For-One case, no matter how cute he is. Even he didn’t know half of what was going on there, and the curiosity was just killing him.

Dammit, he wanted to know why Midoriya had asked him to do possibly the scariest thing he had ever done- and also why he had done it, but that was more a conversation for his shrink. Except he was a UA Student, and Nedzu’s student besides- man keeping an ear to the ground pulled up scary things sometimes when pros talked too much- so he didn’t dare bother him, for fear of certain rodents roasting him on a spit.

“I really wanted to meet him, he’s a really cool guy; I really like his work.” Hawks said easily, the answer true enough, if far from the whole story.

“Your funeral.” Said Todoroki, shrugging helplessly. “I can try, if you’d like. No promises, though, boss.” Oh right, he’d probably have to talk to… his manager, he guessed? Who did he talk to when he hired someone without actually consulting anyone else at his agency, anyway? A funeral director, maybe.
Chapter Summary

last week on "Todoroki Nightmares": Touya
this week on "Todoroki Nightmares": Shouto

Chapter Notes

1) woo, AQAQ hit 900 kudos! at this rate, just one more chapter (maybe two) and I'll finally have 2 fics with 1k+ kudos :D
2) I really need to get on with writing the next chapters for my other fics, since they actually have plots and everything.
3) I know what I want to write for them, but sitting down to write is just... ugh. I used to be a much more disciplined writer than this, I swear.
4) thank you guys so much for sticking with me, your comments, kudos, etc. are all really appreciated.
5) haven't actually had someone ask me in a while, but constructive criticism is really welcome, I'm always happy to see how I can make my writing better for you guys.
6) does anyone know any animals with non-lethal, but incapacitating venom? asking for a friend. (asking for AQAQ research)
7) more things should have cinnamon in them. It's totally delicious, and good for you (as long as you aren't some sort of maniac trying to eat it by the spoonful), and the ideal flavouring. this has nothing to do with my fics, but the public deserves the truth.

Shouto ran through down the cliff, carefully picking his way down the ramp of ice he had made, bypassing the stone-made path entirely, the hoarse laughter of Muscular still sounding behind him. The man was barely conscious, but somehow he still found the energy to laugh, as if being half-dead from hypothermia, and tied up in the dark, quirk suppressed was of no consequence.

Shouto didn’t think he could have stood that, honestly. He had been expecting Aizawa to be dragging both the villain, and him back to the lodge, to the comparative safety of numbers, and lights. No time for that now.

He glanced up at the little ball of light, slowly dimming, which looked like it was directly above where all the roaring and screaming had been coming from. Eerily silent now.

It had taken him a couple of seconds, staring dumbly at the little ball, to figure out what it meant. Seconds enough for the villain to begin to laugh, and Aizawa to start telling him to go back to the lodge, despite the hero clearly having no intentions to do so, suddenly.
It was a call for help, for reinforcements, he had realised, panicked, by the time his teacher finished the order. Shouto had argued that Aizawa had told them not to go off alone, that it was too dangerous, given that they had no idea how many more enemies were out there.

The dark-haired man had obviously known what Shouto was doing, gritting his teeth, and glaring at the ice-user, but Shouto just looked at him, refusing to back down. Every second counted, and Aizawa obviously knew that, so he ground out a new instruction to follow him, and not do “anything stupid”, before rushing off.

The steep descent down a slowly melting ramp of ice nearly had him falling, and he knew there would be no way he could safely stop, so he just gave up trying to control his speed, and reached the bottom, stumbling, but still upright, just about.

“No fire.” Aizawa instructed tersely, and then he just… vanished. Shouto stopped for a bare instant, before spotting a tiny bit of motion a few metres ahead of him. A bit of motion, he was sure, that he had been meant to see. Not bothering to run, their teacher was using his capture weapon to swing between the trees, costume making him all but impossible to pick out.

The ice-user also forewent running, skating on ice as he had earlier, leaving a clear trail of the stuff at an angle from the one he had used to get here. He grew colder, little by little, but he couldn’t get warmer.

Every time the hero student began to truly feel the terror that he had lost his teacher, the man left a sign of his passing. A patch of grey scarf in the black leaves, or a dull thump of landing on a branch. It was too periodic to be anything but deliberate.

It didn’t make sense that he could hear the laughter still.

The trip through the mostly silent forest felt like it went on forever, like he was sitting still, despite moving forward, and the tiny sun shining dim and distant in a black sky never got any closer, he only got colder, and colder, breath coming in ragged gasps, desperate for his left, but forbidden to use it, even as the golden light between the leaves revealed he was breathing freezing mist again.

Then, all at once, the slowly dimming blaze winked out, expanding to thrice its size for a bare instant, then nothing. At the same time, the distant roaring, and screeching that could only be Dark Shadow grew silent.
Shouto froze. He couldn’t see Aizawa. For a moment, it looked like the entire world had just ceased to exist, before his eyes adjusted. Without the fire, the only thing lighting the forest was the moon, which was barely enough illumination to let him avoid crashing into trees. If he had been running, or even touching the ground, he would surely have tripped dozens of times on any exposed roots or rocks.

“Hurry.” Came the disembodied voice of his teacher, some ways ahead of him. Shouto had no idea how the man even knew he had stopped.

Unlike the seeming endlessness of the forest while the light was there, he reached the end of the trees in what felt like mere seconds. The end of the standing trees anyway.

A vast swathe of the woods were just… gone, dozens upon dozens of trees toppled, lying in every direction but inward, most lying on top of at least one more, all at different angles, some broken at the trunk, some uprooted entirely. A weird mishmash of confusing silhouettes.

“Careful, they might still be here.” Murmured Aizawa, from Shouto’s left, prompting the fire-user to jump fully a foot in the air, as he saw the movement of the man treading silently towards the middle of the ruined section of woodland, entirely too close.

Shouto followed the man, walking silently towards the centre of the clearing, all sound either of them made drowned out by the roaring in Shouto’s ears, and his own breathing. The fire had gone out. The fire had gone out, and the villains were nowhere to be seen.

In the very middle of the broken trees, there was one area where none of the trees had fallen. Shouto took a step beyond the towering roots of the closest tree, and his foot immediately sank into mud, where before the forest was mostly dry packed earth and some undergrowth.

“Light.” Instructed the silhouette of his teacher, stopping, and Shouto raised his left hand, still staring at the mud.

The mud was the wrong colour, too red in the yellow light. Shouto opened his mouth, looking up to tell Aizawa so, only to stop short, because the world had ended as soon as he saw what his teacher was standing over, dark strands of hair entirely hiding the man’s face.

Golden eyes stared at him vacantly, unseeing, from where they lay, the pale, thin form that owned
them laying in the too-red mud, mouth slightly open.

Shouto woke up, shivering, and gasping in a room that felt like it had had all warmth surgically removed, a band of jagged ice reaching out from his futon, stabbing towards the door, attacking something that wasn’t really there. The rest of the room was covered in a thin layer of hoar frost, on nearly every surface, ferns of white had grown on what little of the window could be seen through the curtains.

Jerkily, the person responsible for all the cold, and the ice sat up, arms wrapped tightly around himself. “That wasn’t what happened,” he said to no-one in particular, teeth chattering, “that wasn’t what happened.” It was a comfort he had for few enough of his dreams, and somehow, naïvely, he had expected it to help.

He couldn’t get the image out of his head for a solid minute, and it didn’t help how similar it had been to what he really had seen when he had followed Aizawa to where Izuku, and Tokoyami had been taken. Even the mud had been real. He really hoped he would forget about the mud eventually.

After a minute of fruitlessly trying to calm himself down, the part of his brain responsible for keeping him alive got loud enough that he had to stop ignoring just how cold he was.

Uncurling stiff fingers, Shouto moved his left hand away from his chest, and put it on the ground. He needed to get warm, and more distantly, he needed to avoid prompting any mould to start growing in his room.

Still shaking, the youngest Todoroki knew he wasn’t going to have the finesse to do this right, but it still surprised him enough when he scorched his futon slightly that he let out a near-hysterical burst of laughter. Imagine if the former number two hero could see him now, accidentally burning his own blanket, like he was five years old.

The laughter probably wasn’t a good sign. He was always pretty quiet, even when he did laugh, and he had had that pointed out to him by a blushing-

He saw the eyes again, and the shaking got worse. At this point, he sort of had to admit to himself, it wasn’t the cold. The ice-user got to his feet, rushing to the door, through where the ice had been earlier, ignoring how damp he could feel it still was.
He could barely remember the trip down the stairs, padding through the halls on bare feet. One moment he was rushing out his door, probably failing to be as quiet as he should be at whatever hour it was, when he closed his door behind him, and the next, he was standing outside the door that Izuku had to be behind.

This was a bad idea. This was definitely crossing some invisible line, and would probably really annoy the fire-user, who might be better than Shinsou, but very much did cover the bags under his eyes with makeup every morning.

Still, he knocked, hand still trembling. He had to know. Had to see that his boyfriend really was okay, that rescuing him hadn’t been the dream, and the too-still body lying in the mud wasn’t the reality.

The sound of feet hitting the floor sounded almost as soon as Shouto’s fist hit the door for the second time, and the ice-user nearly collapsed with relief right then. The room wasn’t empty, as some weird irrational part of his brain had been concocting, as if UA would for whatever reason be keeping a room empty like a monument to the fallen.

A moment later- too fast for someone walking, and much too fast for someone stumbling out of sleep- the door was yanked open, and the first sight off that incomparably messy green hair was enough to make the taller boy’s heart fully unclench.

Shouto opened his mouth, preparing to either sigh with relief, or apologise for waking the boy, looking further down, briefly noting that Izuku was currently only being lit by the hall lights, and a small fireball in his hand, then hurriedly looking back up, and carefully looking only at the shorter boy’s face.

Izuku may have been alive, but his boyfriend was definitely trying to kill him. This was the only logical explanation Shouto could come up with for why the greenette was currently only wearing a pair of loose sleep shorts, and scars.

“Shouto,” said Izuku, not putting the fireball away, as the taller boy was noticing just how alert- nothing like someone who had just been woken from peaceful sleep- the fire-user’s eyes were, “What’s wrong?”

Shouto took a moment, immediately noticing that Izuku was using his combat voice, stutter gone, tone deadly serious, while his eyes bored into him, very much alive, and practically glowing. Shit, the shorter boy was on full-alert. Shouto raised his hands- no longer shaking, blessedly- calmly, palms out.
“Nothing’s wrong,” the ice-user said placatingly, “sorry, I shouldn’t have woken you.”

Izuku looked confused, face scrunching up adorably- so long as Shouto made sure not to look low-no, bad Shouto, not the time. “Then… why are you up?” He asked, letting the little fireball go out.

“I just had a nightmare,” the bi-chromatic teen said, embarrassed; something so stupid shouldn’t have ever bothered him so much, and it was hardly the first nightmare he had had. Izuku’s large eyes widened in surprise at the admission.

Shouto was beginning to feel extremely awkward, standing there, and honestly quite guilty for waking, and worrying his boyfriend, whose eyebags were easily visible, since he obviously didn’t sleep with makeup on. The taller boy opened his mouth to apologise again, and make his excuses to go. He had seen Izuku, he should be able to get back to sleep. Maybe.

Izuku lunged forward before the ice-user had made a sound, wrapping the other boy in a tight hug. “Are you okay?” The greenette whispered, sounding far, far more worried than Shouto felt the situation warranted.

Shouto went very very still, staring straight ahead, eyes fixed on a figurine one hero or another. “Izuku,” Shouto said, in the strained tones of a teenager trying desperately not to catch fire, or have any… other embarrassing physical responses to what was currently happening. The greenette gave a questioning noise against his shoulder, “you’re not dressed.”

Shouto, for obvious reasons, felt it very clearly, when Izuku froze, before the shorter boy leaped away from him, rapidly putting distance between them. “Sorry, sorry, I- sorry, I run really hot, so- I forgot- oh no, I made you really uncomfortable, didn’t I?” The greenette began to babble hurriedly, reaching over to the hamper by the door, and putting on a shirt as quickly as he could. Shouto noted that the shirt was on backwards.

“It’s alright, Izuku.” Said Shouto calmly, smiling fondly at the display, though he did subtly activate his right side. The shorter boy looked close to tears, and the taller one knew enough to stop his boyfriend spiralling early, by now.

“But I made you uncomfortable.” Izuku all but wailed. It probably would have been a wail, if not for the way he was keeping his voice low, in deference to it being… however late it was.
“Izuku,” Shouto said, grabbing his hands to stop him wringing them together, and get his attention properly, “I’m fine.” He insisted.

Izuku stared at him, and Shouto… honestly had no idea how to use his expression to prove that he was fine, but he trusted Izuku to know if he was lying. Whatever the greenette saw, he seemed to relax, and Shouto let go of his hands.

“Okay,” Izuku said, letting his hands fall to his side, “but- do you want to talk about it? If your dreams are keeping you awake, maybe I could...” Izuku trailed off, looking expectantly up at him.

Honestly, Shouto didn’t really want to talk about his dreams, embarrassed enough at admitting he was having nightmares, and worse, how much it bothered him. He should be stronger than this. Still, now that the alertness had slipped from Izuku’s face, it was so open, so trusting… Shouto couldn’t lie to Izuku. He sighed. “I don’t want to talk about it,” he said plainly, before pausing, and going on more hesitantly, unhappy at the admission, “but… I don’t think I’ll be able to sleep again right away.”

Izuku nodded, as if nightmares terrible enough that- despite how tired training at UA left him- he couldn’t rest were to be expected. “Alright.” he said, smiling invitingly, motioning Shouto to come into the room.

Shouto blinked at him, not having expected the invitation. “I don’t want to keep you awake.” He said lamely, only to be immediately waved off.

“I wasn’t really sleeping anyway,” the greenette said, picking his duvet from where it was lying on the floor, and laying it back on the bed.

Well now Shouto was the one concerned. Still, he was out of excuses, so he dutifully followed the other boy, closing the door behind him. This, of course, immediately plunged the pair into total darkness, and Shouto just sort of stood there, no longer sure where anything was. Izuku, naturally, gave a muffled giggle at his expense.

The ice-user lit a small fire, just enough to let him find the light switch, and- after adjusting to the brighter light- turned to see the fire-user sitting on the bed, smiling softly at him. Shouto briefly glanced at the chair, before Izuku patted the spot beside him on the bed, so the taller boy duly sat right next to him, just like they had been sitting most of the evening.
Izuku bumped his shoulder, seeming just to make sure Shouto knew he was there. He really appreciated it. “So what do you want to do, until you can get to sleep?” Izuku prompted gently.

Shouto closed his eyes, leaning into the other boy. Whatever Izuku said, he should have stayed in his room, and let his boyfriend get some sleep, but here he was, making the shorter boy stay up to comfort him after something completely stupid. He couldn’t even stand his own dreams, how could he- “Why do you put up with me?” Shouto asked, before immediately closing his mouth with a click. He hadn’t meant to voice that question.

Izuku twisted to look at him, looking some mix of totally surprised, and utterly baffled. “I don’t? Honestly, I don’t think you’ve done a single thing that bothered me since we started dating.” The greenette said, with every semblance of sincerity, despite how ridiculous the statement was.

“I’m keeping you awake right now.” Shouto countered.

“I told you, I wasn’t really sleeping,” Izuku said, “and even if I was, I would only have been annoyed if you hadn’t woken me.”

Shouto opened his mouth to argue further, before realising there wasn’t really anything he could say to that, not with the number of times Shouto had used Izuku’s own words against him- how bothered Shouto would be, if the shorter boy refused to ask for his help. He closed his mouth.

“Right.” Izuku said, when the silence began to stretch, before pausing, looking thoughtfully away, then nodding to himself, “we should probably do something that will help you get back to sleep, so no games, or movies...” He trailed off, seemingly trying to think of some way to help Shouto sleep.

“Do you think.” Shouto asked hesitantly, when the greenette turned his head so that the ice-user could see the burn on his right cheek, “you could show me how to cover my scar?”

Izuku bit his lip, looking at the scar more openly than he normally did. At least, Shouto thought that was what he was looking at, though he could as easily be intently staring solely into Shouto’s blue eye. “I guess,” he said, standing, and walking to his desk, “but I’ll have to take the makeup right off, since you really shouldn’t sleep with it on.”

“That way I can try it myself tomorrow… today.” Shouto said, prompting Izuku to laugh softly.
“If you can do it right tomorrow, you belong on Uraraka’s list,” the fire-user said, turning around with a number of brushes, and esoteric powders, and creams in hand, “I practised for a month, before I got get rid of my freckles properly.”

 Honestly, it was equal parts a desire to know, and a need to hide the inherent horror at the idea of Izuku covering over those beautiful freckles that made Shouto ask his next question. “Why weren’t you sleeping?” He hoped, once it was out of his mouth, that Izuku could read into his normal lack of tone that the question wasn’t meant to be accusatory.

 “I was… thinking, I guess?” Izuku answered, looking slightly guilty, putting down the little tubs, and then going back to retrieve more, since this was apparently a much more complex undertaking than Shouto had expected.

 “What about?” Shouto murmured, concerned about what sort of topic was giving his boyfriend sleepless nights, then immediately realised his mistake; this was Izuku, the answer to that could easily be a dozen different things at any given time.

 Izuku gave a little huff. “A lot of things,” he answered predictably, “I think this term is going to be really busy, for me anyway. I still need to ask Aizawa-sensei if I’ll actually be allowed to take the license exam, and I need to learn to stop overheating every fight, and I really need to learn to work with other people better, and trying to balance a quirk that does different things is-” The greenette suddenly cut off, giving a quiet laugh, “Sorry, rambling again, and you probably already know about dual quirks better than I do.”

 “I keep telling you that I don’t mind when you ramble, Izuku.” Shouto repeated, while Izuku busied himself with glancing between a palette of different coloured circles, and Shouto’s face. “But you are remembering to sleep, right?”

 Izuku grimaced lightly. “Yeah, I know. ‘Regular breaks are important’.” The greenette said, using the same intonation as he had with the masks quotes. Shouto’s opinion of Izuku’s old mentor immediately rose slightly. This was nothing like Endeavour’s way of thinking. “It’s just hard to relax, when you have so much to do. I keep feeling like I’m going to fall behind.”

 Shouto just stared at that. Honestly, most of the class would probably welcome the greenette relaxing a bit, since he seemed determined to take first place in absolutely everything, and often by a fairly wide margin. Looking at the bags beneath his eyes- nowhere near as bad as when he had first seen them, but still not ideal- Shouto decided to make it his mission to see to it that the fire-user did relax.
“We should go on more dates.” The ice-user said, leaving the fire-user blinking at the non sequitur.

“W-Wouldn’t that be kind of hard? We c-can’t really leave UA.”

Shouto huffed a soft laugh. “UA is big enough, and I liked that date that was just watching a movie in your room anyway.” UA was unreasonably huge, Shouto had no doubt that a suitably secluded location for something romantic could easily be found.

“A-Alright, h-how about Saturday? Another movie night would be nice.”

Shouto nodded. “Saturday works. Do you have any more centuries old films?”

Izuku grinned, picking up a hair clip. “Way too many,” he said, before growing a bit more serious, “um, this is going to involve a lot of touching, so just- let me know, if it gets too much, and I’ll stop, okay?”

Shouto smiled lightly, not in the least surprised by the question, and nodded his permission.

It was always fascinating to watch Izuku, when he was concentrating on something he enjoyed. Normally it was breaking apart quirks, or heroes, and it devolved into muttering, or scribbling, or both, but he did it with other things too. The sketching of his new costume design was a prime example.

This time, the greenette started wearing an intense, if not especially deep, frown, and he reached forward, lightly running a thumb across Shouto’s scarred cheek, before turning the other boy’s head gently, muttering something about skin-tones, lighting, and what seemed to be an explanation of the proper use of concealer.

“Should I be closing my eyes?” Shouto asked, wanting to check early on, rather than break Izuku’s concentration later by being unhelpful.

Izuku shook his head. “Not yet. The eye itself is going to be harder, so I’ll start with the further areas. Forehead first, I think.”
A moment later, Shouto found his hair held back by that hair clip, revealing far more of the scar than the ice-user had ever displayed in public. He might have been worried, he didn’t really like how the ugly pink mark looked, despite long since getting over being self-conscious of it, but Izuku was still moving so gently, doing everything carefully, seemingly fully engrossed in what he was doing.

Shouto had to admit, it was a strangely relaxing experience, and he soon found it harder and harder to actually retain the soft continuous noise of Izuku explaining what he was doing. Though part of that could have been that the ice-user really hadn’t had enough sleep, and was now slowly forgetting his awful dream, clearly able to see that Izuku was fine, unharmed, right in front of him.

“So are your dad’s eyes gold, too?” Shouto murmured, curiosity about that, ever since he had met Inko, and a desire not to fall asleep right then and there getting the better of him. He had been really curious about Izuku’s eyes for a while; that gold was something he had only ever seen on maybe three people, and only Hawks had that same metallic quality to his eyes that Izuku did.

Izuku gave a questioning hum, brush stilling for a moment. “No, his were…” he paused seeming unsure, “a sort of blue-grey, I think?”

Shouto fought not to frown, worried it would mess up whatever Izuku was doing. “You think?”

“Yeah, I never actually met him, but I asked my mum about it once. I think she said they were blue?” Izuku said easily, face unbothered.

“Oh,” said the ice-user awkwardly, “sorry.” Yet again, Shouto had stuck his foot in his mouth. He really should have taken the hint from the fact that Izuku never seemed to talk about the man.

“Don’t be,” Shouto got waved off again, “I-like I say, I never met him,” Izuku frowneded for a moment, “it doesn’t bother me, so long as he doesn’t try to come back.” Calm returned to his face, and then he smiled nostalgically, “The gold is something my quirk does. Before it came in, my eyes were green. It really freaked Kacchan out when they changed.”

If the other boy hadn’t been holding his head still, he was sure he would have ended up tilting it, studying his boyfriend. Green eyes… Shouto thought green would have suited Izuku, but then, as he had been told earlier, he was biased. He probably would think any colour eyes would work for Izuku. A pretty cool secondary mutation, though, he thought tiredly.
“Alright,” Izuku said, finishing the patch he was working on, “could you close your eye for me? Um, you can keep the right one open, if you like?”

Dutifully, Shouto closed his left eye, and Izuku immediately went back to working on it. It was a really weird feeling, having someone add something to his eyelid. “Hey Shouto?” Izuku asked suddenly, both looking, and sounding oddly nervous.

“Yes?”

“Do you think… we could do some practice together, some time?”

“Together?” Shouto asked, unsure if he just meant like those times Izuku had dragged him to the gym after school for extra quirk training, or…

“L-Like fighting together, um, as a team?”

Shouto smiled wryly. “I’m pretty sure workplace romance is supposed to be a bad idea.” He said jokingly.

“Oh.” Izuku said, face falling, unusually for him, missing the joke entirely.

“Sure, we can do that,” the ice-user murmured, before actually yawning, shutting his remaining eye. Oh, he really was going to fall asleep at this rate. Damn Izuku, and his warm comfortable room, and gentle murmuring. “we have really compatible quirks anyway.”

Eye still closed, he couldn’t see whatever face Izuku made, but he could guess from the ecstatic way he spoke. “Really?” The greenette asked, as if he had just been offered the world.

Shouto didn’t really understand why Izuku seemed to think it was such a big deal, but he smiled anyway, just happy that Izuku was happy. “Sure,” another yawn, “just tell me when you want to.”
Izuku smiled down at Shouto, really pleased that despite everything, the other boy was apparently comfortable enough in his presence to just… fall asleep. Izuku himself had never found Shouto that intimidating- though he found precious few people that way- but looking at the boy now, curled on Izuku’s bed, red and white hair mixing for… he thought the first time he had ever seen, he really couldn't understand why anyone did.

Added to the way that he was curling into Izuku- adding to the greenette’s long-standing theory that the boy was part cat- totally relaxed, Izuku really couldn’t find it in himself to wake him up. *You really should wake him, Izuku. Sleeping with makeup on isn’t good for your skin.* Pointed out the voice, speaking for the first time since it was clear there was no emergency.

‘But look at him.’ the fire-user objected, gesturing as much as he could, from where he was being practically lain on.

*Don’t blame us, when he dries out his skin, and develops wrinkles.*

Izuku briefly considered this, not really wanting to make the scarring around his eye any worse, if he could help it. ‘It’s already…’ two-thirty-seven, ‘two in the morning, will it really be that bad, just this once?’

The voice sighed. *Fine,* it said indulgently, *but just this once, and make sure to give him some moisturiser in the morning.*

Izuku smiled, closing his eyes, happy to have at least been of some help in getting his boyfriend back to sleep. The relief about not being under attack, despite being woken from the not-quite-dream dream at two in the morning had been short-lived when he had been informed that the other boy was suffering nightmares bad enough to keep him up at night.

This was, weirdly enough, something that he had genuinely no idea how to really deal with. He could help with most things, but he just- didn’t know how much of a bad experience nightmares could be, because he never had them, so he didn’t know how to go about fixing the problem, or making Shouto feel better. “Just stop having nightmares” was not very good advice for most people, Izuku was guessing.

Still, he seemed to be sleeping soundly right now, and- judging from how Izuku wasn’t currently feeling in any way embarrassed by his presence- the greenette should probably go to sleep himself, or else Bakugou would probably glare at him for the whole day today. He could ask someone about how to deal with them later. His therapist, maybe? They seemed the best person to ask about that, so long as he could stop them getting the wrong idea.
Not making any effort to get below the sheets- he was still wearing a shirt, so getting under sheets as well would definitely be too much, given all the heat his quirk generated- he wiggled slightly to try to get comfortable, while carefully avoiding waking the koala he had somehow obtained, then started the habitually quick process of getting to sleep.

In an odd turn of events, he didn’t actually get enough time to get to sleep, because his phone buzzed at that moment, and he opened slitted eyes to look at the little box in confusion. *Who could be texting you at this hour?*

Blearily, he reached for the phone with his free arm, and turned it on, quickly adjusting to the light, then immediately paling when he saw what it said.

Gi-chan

T-kun is back in town, we should meet up, if you’re free. It’s been too long.
Shota took a deep breath, and briefly contemplated the viability of faking his own death, or just going into a coma. He had always known this day would come, ever since he had agreed to— reading reports, looking after twenty chaotic brats beneath the same roof. Honestly, he had expected the knock at his door sooner, if anything.

Letting the breath out, the hero rose from his seat, joints popping after a few hours hunched over reading reports, trying to read reports, it was getting to the point that even he was too tired to focus, and would have to take a nap soon. Damn, but he was getting old. He couldn’t remember being this creaky before, but here he was, stifling old-man noises just getting out of his chair.

Turning around, he wondered which teacher would be correct about which potential disaster had come first. The betting pool heavily favoured Kaminari blowing out all the lights in the dorm as the reason Shota would be being bothered at— he checked his watch— three in the morning.

Shota almost grinned at the sight of green hair. Looked like he was about to become a fair bit richer, even accounting for the odds of drinks being on him the next time the staff had a night out.

“What is it, problem child?” He grumbled, taking in with a practised eye how anxious the kid seemed to be, bouncing from foot to foot, biting his lip, and holding his phone to his chest. The whole picture was enhanced by the former vigilante’s— even more— chaotic hair, and backwards shirt. Given the sorts of messes problem child tended to get into, it was enough to worry Shota somewhat.

The fire-user looked at him, opened his mouth, then looked away guiltily. “Um, I—” he started, then stalled, before going on in a rush, “I got a text from an informant.”

Shota studied the teen, who had looked back up, seeming worried about how Shota would respond to that declaration. The erasure hero took a moment, face betraying nothing, to process that.

Pinching the bridge of his nose, and tilted his head back, eyes closed. ‘Please, any entity powerful
enough, grant me patience.’ He thought, though he doubted it would do any good.

Lowering his head again, he met the worried golden eyes of the infuriatingly recalcitrant student. Any other student, he might have activated Erasure, just for the sake of it, and he only just stopped himself, realizing that knocking the problem child out would be unlikely to help with getting an explanation. “And why,” he asked slowly, voice flat, “is this the first I’m hearing about informants?”

He needed to know these things, not just for the possibility of catching potentially dangerous criminals, but also for situations similar to this one, where former allies could make problems. Problem child saying nothing about them was extremely frustrating.

Problem child began to fiddle with his phone, nerves somehow impossibly getting worse. “I- um, I- I didn’t seem relevant?” He offered, barely audible by the end.

“Not relevant.” Shota said, in what he could proudly declare was the flattest tone any human being had ever achieved. He half considered activating Erasure on a nearby wall, however risky that might have been. That or shaking the kid.

Midoriya actually squeaked, before rushing to explain himself, tripping over himself in an effort to get the words out before some perceived explosion could actually happen. “I- I didn’t kn-know anything useful, we- we always used code-names, and I don’t know his quirk, a-and I didn’t think I w-would be able to contact him, after I got caught, and- and.”

The greenette cut off suddenly, staring at his unblinking teacher. The kid had gotten more worked up by the word, and now looked close to tears. Shota could actually see them building.

The hero wanted to be angry. He really did. He also wanted dearly to shake the problem child, see if there was some way to get sense into him that way. Unfortunately he could do neither. The latter was out, since he was a teacher, and obviously laying hands on a student like that outside of a training exercise, or dangerous situation was completely unacceptable.

The former, much as it burned him, he found he simply couldn’t achieve. Any other student, he could do it. Most other students, for something like this, would be getting so much detention as for it to be nearly comical. But, loathe as he was to admit it, the fact that he was getting told at all was progress for problem child, and getting angry would be nothing but self-gratification, which would ultimately only teach the kid not to tell him things in future.
Shota took a moment to centre himself, make sure he wasn’t going to do something he would regret, rubbing his eyes in gentle circles. “Midoriya, do you know why I’m annoyed about this?” He asked, aiming for gentle, not really succeeding.

The greenette sniffled. “Y-Yeah, I- I should have told you, so you could try to catch him.”

Shota sighed. Midoriya still was seemingly incapable of thinking about himself. “No,” the hero said- though that was a secondary thing, “you should have told me, because I need to know about anything that puts you in danger.”

If problem child thought his informant would know that quickly that he had been arrested, then what Shota would expect of them would be to immediately run damage control, in-case the kid actually sold them out, then try to get rid of the kid just to eliminate that threat, assuming they could. Or go for revenge, if it turned out Midoriya had told the police anything damaging.

“Oh.” Said problem child, eyes widening slightly, then bite his lip. “B-But I d-don’t think he c-could get to me here?” Problem child tried to argue, voice wavering.

Shota lowered his head into his hands. He was too tired for this. “Not the point.” he said, looking at the greenette through a gap in his fingers, “and your teachers not knowing about these things will make it much easier for threats to get to you.”

Shota drew a deep breath, raising his head again, and made a mental note to make sure and get the kid to reveal anything else that he might consider “not relevant” which very much was. First thing’s first, though.

“Alright, let’s see the message.” Shota said, prompting the kid to blink out of whatever dark thoughts he was running through, then fiddle with his phone for a second, before silently offering it to the taller man.

The erasure hero read through a bunch of seemingly innocuous texts, which on the surface all looked like simple messages arranging meetings between a few friends to go shopping, or just hang out. The only clearly out of place thing was that actual names were never used, it was always “nicknames” like G.

The second to last text was talking about getting sushi of all the odd things, and was dated a couple of days before Midoriya’s arrest. The last one had come only fifteen minutes ago. Shota was
guessing that T-kun wasn’t some childhood friend. “I’m assuming this is some sort of agreed code. What does it mean?”

No longer having a phone to fiddle with, Midoriya ended up wringing his hands together. “Um, so I p-paid Giran-” Shota filed the presumed alias away- “to let me know a-about a few things, i-if they ever happen. H-He’s asking for a meeting… b-because someone’s gotten Trigger into the country again.”

Shota suddenly felt as if he had been trying to eat large quantities of dust, from how dry his mouth went. Images of chaotic fights, often with people who weren’t even actual villains, the ruined streets afterwards, the hideous mess of trying to figure out which of the villains were actually simple victims, all flashed through his mind.

He didn’t know what he had been expecting the informant to be telling problem child about, but it had not been a potential catastrophe like someone trying to make a mess with Trigger again. This, he swiftly realised, was bigger than he was. He might have been able to make a decision about what to do, if it were something minor, but for this… “You’re grounded.” He informed the still fidgeting child.

Midoriya just gaped at him. “I’m- what?” He asked, uncomprehending.

Shota ignored the question. “Will your informant get suspicious, if you don’t answer immediately?” He asked, trusting the former vigilante to have a better handle on how his contacts would act than Shota did.

Problem child seemed to think about it for about a second. “Um, if I take too long, yeah. If I don’t answer for a few hours, it… should be fine? He’ll just think I’m sleeping.”

Right. Better than it could be, but still far from ideal. “Okay, here’s what we’re going to do. You are going back to bed,” problem child looked surprised by that, but Shota went on before he could ask anything, “then in the morning, we’re going to tell Nedzu about this.” Hopefully the mouse would know what to do, since Shota’s thoughts were currently going round in circles over the possible consequences of any of the actions he could see.

Shota waited for Midoriya to nod before going on. “The principal will decide what we’re going to do. Until then, do not say anything about this. Am I clear?” The fire-user nodded again, much more hurriedly this time.
Shota woke up from his nap, despite his fervent desires. Groaning, he turned off the alarm he had set, and dragged himself off the floor, and out of his sleeping bag. This was earlier than he would normally get up- early enough that he would still be on patrol, if it weren’t for the dorms messing with his schedule- but not much to do about it now.

The shuffling zombie that was just about recognisable as the erasure hero- to those few who could recognise him, anyway- shuffled through the halls, pleased to find them still empty. He didn’t especially want anyone who didn’t need to know finding out about problem child’s most recent attempt to give him grey hairs. The lesser risk of tipping Giran off by making decisions sooner was just a bonus.

Midoriya opened the door swiftly at his perfunctory knock, revealing a dim room that was noticeably warmer than the hall. Not sauna hot, but still much more comfortable than the early morning chill, judging from the warmth leaking out.

Shota began, again, to wonder how it was even possible that Midoriya always looked so alert. He couldn’t have had much more sleep than his teacher, and Shota felt like death. It didn’t make sense, especially when you factored in how much problem child trained.

One of the first things Shota had asked Nedzu for, when he had accepted this position, and figured out some of the more obvious problems that needed settled, was a system to notify him when any of his students booked the gyms. It was very helpful to judge how seriously students were taking their chosen career path, and how willing they were to lie to him about extra work they were putting in.

(It also helped him prevent students with a tendency to push their quirks in dangerous ways from doing so without supervision. For all that he hated making extra work for himself, letting a student injure themself in some stupid way would make even more than just keeping an eye on them.)

Midoriya seemed to train, constantly, at the very limits of what was actually beneficial. He was pretty sure that he booked more gym time than the next three 1-A students combined, so he should be completely exhausted, but there he was bright-eyed and bushy-tailed as ever.

It had gotten to a point that Shota had made plans to ban the kid from the gyms if he booked so much as fifteen minutes longer than his current norm in any given week- a decision he had come to, when the greenette started on extra quirk training with Yagi… oh, that could work.
“Good morning, Aizawa-sensei.” Midoriya said, some mix of nervous and chirpy, bringing Shota out of his plans to hit two birds with one stone in response to the kid’s most recent bout of poor decision-making.

“Debatable.” Shota said, voice rough before his first coffee of the day, before his eyes were drawn to movement in the room.

Turning his head, Shota had to take a second to come to terms with the fact that he had seemingly been transported to some bizarre alternate reality, in which Todoroki had had a happy childhood. The lack of that scar on his face was surreal. Then his- still not as awake as it could be, though when was it ever- brain twigged that he was in problem child’s room. It was probably just makeup.

Wait. He was in problem child’s room. And, from the bleary way he was looking at Shota, two-toned hair mixing for once, he had clearly been sleeping there.

Shota turned his eyes up, looking at the ceiling, trying to remember if this was against the dorm rules. Not explicitly, he decided after a bare moment, remembering the related rule about mixed-sex room-sharing. Since it wasn’t explicit, he wasn’t getting paid enough to deal with it.

Looking back at problem child, and the boy the greenette was slowly trying to turn into problem child two, he found the latter still as aware as a normal person at this time in the morning, and the former blushing furiously, seemingly having noticed where Shota had been looking.

“Not my department.” The erasure hero said, as Todoroki finally seemed to marshal a thought.

“Aizawa-sensei?” The ice-user asked articulately, levering himself up slightly, rubbing his right eye with a hand.

“Go back to sleep,” the hero told the taller boy, rubbing a temple, before turning to the shorter one, and fixing him with a bloodshot glare, “Do. Not. Make me move the sex ed. classes forward.” He instructed the fire-user firmly.

Nobody wanted that. Shota least of all, since- after “the incident”, of which the staff did not speak, where the dark-haired man had been convinced to let Nemuri do it- he had to teach it himself. If he was lucky, the students were awkward, and he was deeply, deeply uncomfortable.
(If he was **unlucky**, the students weren’t awkward, which was so much worse.)

Honestly, it was a sad state of affairs that the man who had no experience, or interest in that area of the human experience- and some amount of disgust at the whole prospect- had to explain how it worked.

Midoriya nodded, blushing and paling by turns, and Shota took it as a good sign that he wouldn’t have to bring his most hated classes closer. He doubted the class cinnamon-roll would pose a problem there, anyway.

“Allright, come on.” Shota ground out, after nodding once, and before turning on a heel, mind already on the pot of blessed caffeine that should be in the staff-room.

Todoroki made a questioning noise, since he had evidently ignored instructions to go to sleep. “I’ll be back in a while, Shouto.” Midoriya reassured, “Try to get back to sleep.”

The freckled kid caught up with Shota’s long-distance-from-coffee-eating strides just before he reached the end of the hall. The erasure hero felt no need to say anything further, so the mismatched pair made their way out the dorm building, and to the main campus, in silence. The dark-clothed man noted, from the corner of his eye, the way the greenette was fiddling with his hands.

Shota opened the nearest door into the school proper with a keycard- glad he had never had to deal with the vast keyrings that his own teachers had- then brought the problem child- to his clear surprise- to the staff-room, making a beeline for the coffee machine.

Izuku found himself gazing longingly at the still half-full pot of coffee in the staff-room, as Aizawa poured himself a second cup. He briefly considered if asking for a mug of his own would be a bad idea. He could pretend to be awake, could even function pretty well, but he couldn’t change the fact that he had had too little, and too interrupted sleep last night.

**Yeah, that’s not gonna work**, said the voice, watching the dark-clothed man, as he finished pouring his second cup, **he looks like that coffee is his baby. Look how he’s hunched over it.** Indeed, the man was pouring his coffee curled around the pot, as if someone might steal it from him at any
moment. Probably best not to threaten it.

Taking a sip from his second mug of life-giving bean-water—having downed the first, almost certainly scolding his tongue—Aizawa gave a curt gesture, and Izuku hurried after the man, the pair travelling the familiar path to Nedzu’s office in the same stifling silence that had been making Izuku’s distress increase by the moment since he left his room.

By the time they reached the door, which had never felt this imposing, except the very first time he stood before it, his thoughts were nearing incoherent gibbering. ‘They’re going to throw me in jail I don’t want to go to jail what’s going to happen to mum oh no I’m going to end up living in a cave to avoid getting caught again once I escape and I’ll have to hunt rabbits to survive and I’ll never be a he—’

_Izuku! Kid!_ cut in the voice, finally shifting its tone to shouting, when it realised that Izuku wasn’t stopping, despite its efforts to get his attention. The thoughts stopped, as he jumped, attention turning to what his past lives were saying, but the fear didn’t lessen.

Taking a moment to make sure it had his attention, the voice spoke again, tone returning to “normal” as far as a half-dozen voices speaking in unison could be normal. _Relax, you’re not going to jail. You haven’t done anything wrong, and you’re doing what your teachers would want now, anyway._ It said, as Aizawa knocked on the terrible door.

“Come in.” said Nedzu’s voice, the same as it always sounded when Izuku came here for lessons.

Izuku followed Aizawa into the room, still not entirely convinced by the voice’s reassurance. Though its calm tone did kind of help? Nedzu was sitting at his desk, instead of their table, sipping a cup of tea as always.

“Ah, Aizawa-san, and Midoriya-kun, take a seat,” the mouse said, gesturing to the chairs opposite his desk. Izuku sat, but his teacher only leaned against a nearby wall. Nedzu didn’t seem to mind the man’s aversion to seating himself, “so what could have happened for you to request this meeting so early?”

The fire-user twisted to look at his teacher, surprised that he wouldn’t have told the principal in advance, only to find the dark-haired man staring back at him, logical-ruse smile on. ‘Oh no, he wants me to explain,’ Izuku thought already remembering the horrible experience it had been the first time.
Izuku turned back, seeing that Nedzu had come to the same conclusion, and was looking at him. *Go on, it’ll be fine.* Said the voice, which was easy for it to say, it never got nervous, not to mention being much less affected by anything happening in the living world than Izuku would be.

“Um, I- I- got a message f-from one of my old informants, s-saying… saying that trigger was back in the country.” Izuku said, finishing in a rush, desperate to get it out before his throat closed up entirely under his shortest- and easily scariest- mentor’s scrutiny.

Nedzu’s smile didn’t falter. If anything, it widened, though he did blink in surprise, swiftly covered up. “Now that is a troublesome development.” The tiny hero said, voice cheery.

*See,* the voice said, *look, he even seems happy that you’ve given him a new problem to solve.*

“I’m assuming you wanted to get my advice on how to proceed, Aizawa-kun?” Nedzu asked, turning to the tired man, who nodded, “Alright, I can help there, but ultimately you are Midoriya-kun’s sponsor, so the choice is yours.”

The erasure hero gave a sharp- amused?- exhale. “Problem child is grounded.” He told the principal, causing him to laugh brightly, as Izuku turned to him, just as confused as he was the first time he said that.

*Huh,* said the voice, *didn’t think he was being serious there, but what does…*

“And what would that entail, in this context?” Asked Nedzu, voice still tinged with his laughter. That terrifying grin came back.

“I was going to ban him from the gym for the next week.” the dark-clothed man said casually. Izuku’s eyes widened with panic, even as both the voice and Nedzu laughed.

“What?” The greenette yelped. He couldn’t stop his training for an entire week, he would fall behind, and it would really slow his experiments with One-For-All, “But sensei-”

“Two weeks.” Aizawa said, cutting him off. He shut his mouth with a click. The voice laughed harder.
'Stop laughing, this isn’t funny,’ Izuku thought, ‘I might not even be able to use twenty percent by the exam, if I’m trapped out of the gym for two weeks.’

The voice didn’t stop laughing. *Yeah, like not having the gyms will stop you,* countered the voice, Yugo leading, then shifting to Aoi, *plus it won’t even slow your dream training, and you need the rest anyway.* Izuku felt betrayed. His own past lives were siding against him.

“That seems reasonable,” Nedzu said, turning to Izuku, “on the other hand, I will say thank you for telling us about this, I appreciate that you didn’t try to deal with this on your own.” Izuku nodded mutely, not trusting himself to speak, and knowing that he wouldn’t be able to get out of his gym ban.

*At least it isn’t actual grounding,* comforted Ichigou, *no more house arrest.* That was something he supposed.

“So,” Nedzu said, returning Izuku to reality, “what can you tell me about your informant. Anything you know will likely help us make a decision.”

“U-um, G-Giran is…” Izuku started, not sure where to begin.

*Physical description.* Prompted the voice, Ren leading.

“H-He has grey h-hair, and eyes, a-about five foot six. He smokes a lot,” honestly, Izuku had never known anyone to smoke as much as Giran did, “I d-don’t know what his quirk does.”

For the first time since they had arrived, Nedzu- who up to now had been smiling encouragingly- shot Izuku a look of *profound* disappointment. “You worked with a broker without knowing their real name, or quirk?” The mouse asked, as if it was a greater sin than working with villains at all.

The voice gave a bitter humourless laugh at the question. *He wouldn’t have survived in that line of work, if he wasn’t reliable.* It said, despite how much effort it had made Izuku go to before their first meeting to make sure it was safe.

“H-He h-has a really good reputation,” Izuku offered, looking away, knowing it sounded lame right then as a defence, “h-he wouldn’t turn on a client.” Which was frustrating in itself at times, even if Izuku relied on it to an extent.
Black eyes watched him for several moments, still not happy with the explanation, but Nedzu seemingly decided to let it go. “Alright. Any signs that his quirk is a heteromorphic type, then?” Izuku shook his head.

Nedzu lapsed into silence, considering. “I would recommend,” the mouse finally said, turning to Aizawa, “that Midoriya-kun meet with him, and try to get the information.”

“You want to send Midoriya on his own, just for some information, shouldn’t we be trying to capture the informant?” Aizawa asked flatly, obviously displeased.

Izuku opened his mouth to interject, say that he wanted to do this- wanted to help- but Aizawa’s gaze flicked to him, clearly anticipating what he was about to say, and not wanting to hear it.

Nedzu shook his head sadly. “If he didn’t know that Midoriya was working with heroes, then maybe. Now, he will almost certainly have contingencies in place, which will make that… risky.”

“Risky?” Aizawa ground out, “You’re planning to send Midoriya in alone, it’s too dangerous.”

Nedzu grimaced apologetically. “We can give him a panic button, in-case it turns out to be a trap. You should be able to deal with his contact, in that case, since his quirk is non-heteromorphic. Long-term, failing to arrange a meeting might not be safer.”

The erasure hero sighed, running a hand over his face. “I don’t like this.”

Nedzu nodded in satisfaction, as Midoriya sent a reply to his informant. Aizawa was still glaring at him, as protective of his students as ever, but he hopefully understood Nedzu’s reasoning. There weren’t really any totally safe paths here.

Giran had to be testing the waters with the former vigilante, seeing how he would react. Refusing to engage would be burning that bridge, which posed no fewer risks than letting his student go- as well prepared as Nedzu could arrange- to the meeting.
Not to mention that there was every chance— even if the information was bait— that the threat of Trigger resurfacing was genuine, which the heroes needed to know about as early as possible.

“Now then,” Nedzu said, clapping his hands together, the more time-sensitive issue taken care of for now, “since that’s done, I think we should have a little chat, Midoriya-kun.” The greenette shrunk in on himself, seemingly already aware where this was going.

“It looks like you’ve guessed what I’m going to ask,” which came as no surprise, he had been teaching the boy for months now, “but I’ll ask anyway. Is there anything you know, either from your work as Amber, or from the network, that we should know?”

Midoriya bit his lip, unsure. “I don’t… I don’t r-really know w-what’s relevant to tell you?” The greenette said, glancing at a stoic Aizawa.

Nedzu hummed. They didn’t really have enough time to pump the greenette for everything he knew about the criminal underworld— that could wait— but some things were more urgent than others. “Why don’t we start with anything you might know about the league, then?” The principal prompted gently.

Truthfully, he expected— having read the transcripts of the kid’s post-Kamino testimony— that Midoriya had shared essentially everything pertinent he had known, but evidently that was hard to judge.

The ex-vigilante opened his mouth to speak, but remained silent, microexpressions flickering rapidly, seemingly talking to his alters— Nedzu stood by his theories there, but that at least he would leave alone, since it was personal so long as it didn’t actually interfere with his ability to function.

“When I used to be a teacher,” Nedzu said, when Midoriya remained silent, “I would tell students to treat whoever was marking their essays as an idiot, who knew nothing about the topic—” which was always a wise practice, since otherwise they ended up writing essays that assumed too much knowledge from the reader, and became largely useless— “so why don’t you start with anything you might assume I have already figured out. Please don’t consider that you are wasting our time.”

Midoriya paused for a brief instant, considering this. “Y-You know t-that the league p-probably has an agent at UA, r-right?”
Nedzu tsked, unhappy, and proud at once, that Midoriya had figured that out. Aizawa jerked away from the wall he had been leaning against. “I suppose it was too much to ask that you wouldn’t have realised that.” The mouse said wryly. “Have you told anyone else about your suspicions?”

Midoriya shook his head hurriedly. No surprise there then. “N-No,” he said, before pausing, “Um, b-but Tokoyami-kun thinks so too.” Nedzu sighed. He should probably have guessed that both of the students who were actually kidnapped would have come to that same conclusion. Hopefully Tokoyami had likewise kept silent.

“That shouldn’t be much of a problem,” Nedzu said, turning to Aizawa who stood ramrod straight, staring between the two of them, as if they had gone crazy, “do you think you could send Tokoyami-kun to my office after homeroom?”

Aizawa just stared at him in silence for a couple of seconds. “You agree with Yamada?” The dark-clothed teacher finally said, ignoring the question entirely, sounding almost accusatory.

“Of course,” Said the mouse plainly, “I had my suspicions since the USJ, but the attack on the camp was practically confirmation. I haven’t said anything, since that sort of witch-hunt would be extremely counterproductive.”

And that was putting it lightly. It would destroy morale, having the teachers constantly watching each-other like that, not to mention driving the traitor underground even further.

Leaving the erasure hero as close to sputtering as he ever got, Nedzu turned back to his student, tilting his head quizzically. “But that raises the question: have you not considered the possibility that one of us is the traitor?”

Aizawa actually did splutter at that, face reddening from anger at Nedzu suggesting the possibility that he had sold his students out. Midoriya just blinked at him, as if the question didn’t make any sense. “Neither of you could be the traitor.” He said, as if it was obvious, and conveniently moving on before Aizawa could explode at the principal.

Nedzu smiled with much more genuine warmth. “Thank you, the trust is greatly appreciated.”

Midoriya returned a wobbly smile. “Y-You’re welcome?”
Nedzu nodded, considering if he wanted to ask. Yes, he decided, Midoriya was clever, and a different perspective could prove helpful. “If you have any, I would love to hear your thoughts on who could be the traitor.”

Midoriya blinked, surprised. “I-I don’t really… I’m sure you have a better idea than I do.”

“Nonsense,” Nedzu countered cheerily, “another perspective could prove extremely valuable.”

Midoriya- who Nedzu really had to help improve his self-esteem at some point- considered this, before answering hesitantly. “It… the league didn’t know our quirks at the USJ, I think, a-and they had to break in to get our schedule, s-so it can’t be you, or Aizawa-sensei, or Thirteen-sensei, o-or All Might.”

Nedzu nodded encouragingly. That fit with Nedzu’s own views on the matter- though he did have to consider that Shigaraki simply hadn’t bothered to ask for the students’ quirks. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Aizawa gaping comically, looking mildly horrified, despite his efforts to hide it.

“That should also remove suspicions from the rest of 1-A,” Nedzu added, not bothering to explain his misgivings. Strangely, Midoriya bit his lip there, rather than agreeing.

“It… it could be Tsuyu,” he said reluctantly- to Nedzu’s surprise. This whole conversation was not good for Eraserhead’s blood pressure.

“Go on,” Nedzu said, shooting a warning glance at the younger man, not wanting him to discourage the already uncomfortable greenette.

“S-So the flood zone w-was the worst place for me, a-and for Shinsou-kun, a-and a few of the others ended up i-in really bad places, like Tokoyami-kun, and Kouda-kun, b-but Tsuyu ended up in the safest zone for her to be.” the fire-user said slowly, occasionally tugging on his bottom lip in thought, before jerking his head up to look at Nedzu, “B-But I still don’t think it’s her! She saved both of us, and only a couple of people ended up in really bad zones. It was probably a coincidence.” He hurriedly countered himself, clearly distressed at casting aspersions on one of his classmates, and genuinely seeming not to believe them.
“Yes,” Nedzu agreed, deciding that continuing in this vein wasn’t good for anyone’s peace of mind, “it seems unlikely that Asui-san is the culprit.” If she was, she really didn’t need to go the extra mile to help her classmates. “Though that does still leave class 1-B, most of UA’s staff, and the Pussycats.”

“You can’t seriously think a pro hero would do this.” Aizawa demanded, finally seeming to find his tongue.

“Those are the only remaining people who could have known the location of the camp,” Nedzu countered as dispassionately as he could, “unless you are suggesting that Kouta-kun was responsible?” That brought the erasure hero up short.

“It can’t be the Pussycats,” Midoriya objected, scandalised, “Ragdoll lost her quirk, a-and they wouldn’t know how to get class schedules.”

Nedzu inclined his head. “A good point. Can you think of any other candidates that can be safely eliminated?”

Midoriya shook his head, and looked away, shamefaced. “Awase-kun isn’t likely,” the greenette mumbled frustratedly, “since he helped Yaoyorozu-san track the Nomu, b-but it really could be anyone.”

Nedzu nodded in understanding. The mouse really could understand the ex-vigilante’s frustration, since he was feeling much the same, his own lack of progress in uncovering the turncoat being what it was.

(Shota ground his teeth for that whole conversation, despite his fervent wish to stop whatever the hell Nedzu thought he was doing.

His boss had decided it was a good idea to make problem child dwell on the possibility of any one of his teachers, or classmates working for the league. Instead of, you know, not letting the kid know you agreed, or better yet, trying to get him to think he might be safe at school?

Then, the rat had the audacity not only to thank him for it in the same cheery tone he said
everything, but to tell him to try to avoid worrying himself over it.

Obviously the problem child would worry himself about it, and for once Shota couldn’t blame him. That was it, Shota was going to start leaving mousetraps around the school. Very large mousetraps.)
mistakes were made

Chapter Summary

mostly by Giran

Chapter Notes

1) Hawks can fly while lying on his back because I say so
2) equally, my running HC is that Giran didn't initially want to be working with someone as likely to kill his own guys as early!Shiggy, so presumably AFO is twisting his arm in some way.
3) I've said it before, and I'll say it again, I really, really dislike the way the teachers react to the baku-mido interactions
3.1) especially the final exam arc.... *angry muttering*
4) what do you mean it's been two weeks since i uploaded a chapter? *looks at calendar* ...how did that happen?
5) if anyone knows where I'm going with the Giran subplot, let me know, because I don't
6) *oprah voice* you get ptsd, and you get ptsd, ptsd for everyone to ever go to UA!

Izuku opened his dorm room door, regretting everything. Well, not really regretting, he knew he had done the best thing he could have, when he had gotten that text, but now he had missed his morning jog, and the mounting dread of all the gym time he was about to miss was already getting to him.

He really, really hoped that today’s hero lesson would be intense. With so little activity, he wouldn’t be able to sit still during morning classes, and if All Might, and Aizawa didn’t do something about all that excess energy in the afternoon he might be forced to resort to drastic measures. Spending his evening devising an intense bodyweight regime, with lots of handstand push-ups maybe.

Oh… he was going to have to delay joint training with Shouto, which was enough to finish the job of thoroughly ruining his mood. He had been really looking forward to that, and he thought that his boyfriend would be nearly as disappointed.

Chin-up, Izuku, said the voice, Yugo leading, you could just take a na-
Izuku jumped, and the voice cut off— not exactly in surprise— when the golden-eyed teen caught sight of the other boy who was unexpectedly sitting on the bed. Shouto snorted at the exaggerated response, smiling softly. “Hey, Izuku.” The ice-user said.

The fire-user smiled wanly, still not really up for exuberance, but not exactly capable of proper misery around Shouto. The other boy was wearing his uniform, leading Izuku to realise that he must have changed, then come back here to wait for him. “Hey,” Izuku answered, closing the door, “were you waiting for me?”

Shouto nodded, standing to walk closer to the shorter boy. “I was worried,” he explained, “why did Aizawa want you?”

Izuku opened his mouth to give the answer he was supposed to. Then he shut it again. The fire-user was a liar, who had been coached by a bunch of other liars to convincingly sell all sorts of outrageous falsehoods— if for a lot of good reasons. He didn’t like it, and it wasn’t quite to the point of being compulsive yet, but believable stories, and putting on the right mask, right tone of voice, right face, right everything came too easily these days; just the amount he had lied to his own mother over the years often left him thinking of himself as a horrible, horrible person, until the voice talked him down. But this was Shouto.

The greenette could keep secrets from Shouto, if barely, but lying to the other boy, who had told him— as far as the greenette could tell— all his darkest secrets, and who had always been there for him emotionally? Izuku just couldn’t lie to Shouto, not with him looking at him with that open, trusting face. (Others might not have called it open, but that was just because the ice-user had had to hide his emotions so long, and he had been making so much progress).

“I- C-Can you keep this a secret?” Izuku asked, nervous despite how calming Shouto’s mere presence was. The fire-user took the silence from the voice as a lack of any objection to telling his boyfriend the truth here. Not that he would have listened to it, if it did object.

The ice-user tilted his head slightly. “Of course.”

Izuku found himself smiling up at the taller boy. Shouto had answered as if it was nothing, that keeping secrets for Izuku was something he would gladly do without being asked. “Thanks, Shouto,” the greenette said gratefully, “I got a message from an old contact- someone who knew me as Amber- and I’m in trouble for not telling the police about him before.” Izuku paused, then went on in a rush, seeing Shouto’s budding worry, waving his hands, “Not a lot of trouble, Aizawa-sensei just banned me from the gyms for a couple of weeks!”
Shouto looked relieved, as Izuku bowed his head, looking at the floor. “I’m supposed to tell everyone I’m in trouble for overdoing it at the gym.”

The ice-user hummed. “Makes sense. You do spend an awful lot of time at the gym. I guess we won’t be able to train together for a while, then?” He asked, causing the greenette to shrink in on himself slightly. He didn’t think Shouto was really looking forward to working together as much as he was, but he liked to think the taller boy enjoyed spending time together as much as he did.

“Sorry.” Izuku mumbled, guilty.

“Hey,” Shouto said gently, slender fingers entering Izuku’s field of view, as the ice-user reached forward to gently lift his head, “don’t apologise; it’s not your fault. I don’t mind anyway. It’s not like we won’t be able to spend time together, even if we have to do something else.”

“I know,” Izuku said—though it really was his fault, if nothing else—as Shouto began to run a thumb over his cheek, Izuku leaned into it without really intending to, “I just- I don’t like cancelling plans on you.”

Shouto shrugged nonchalantly. “It’s not like you cancelled our date, or anything. We can just watch a movie, or something.” The other boy pursed his lips consideringly, moving his hand away, “Though… I don’t envy you the lecture you are going to get from Iida when you tell him why you’re banned from the gym.”

Izuku would probably be embarrassed later, thinking back on the high-pitched sound he made. He hadn’t even considered what Iida would say. The voice actually broke its strictly imposed “Shouto silence” just to laugh at him. It probably would laugh through the lecture as well, now that it knew how well-meaning Iida was about them. “Oh no.” The greenette whined, hiding his head in his arms. Shouto just smiled, as if the display was endearing, despite the fact that it was obviously anything but.

Hawks had made a horrible, horrible mistake. Curse him for thinking with— with… things other than his brain. Hiring Todoroki had been all sorts of a bad idea, and it was giving him a headache.

Honestly, he was liking the man more, and more, and despite his surly demeanour, he seemed to be getting along well with most of the other staff—though he could be pretty prickly with the other
sidekicks. He had seen the white-haired man giving the middle finger to his manager’s retreating back more than once, which was both suicidally brave, and damned hilarious. The woman hadn’t noticed the gesture, but Hawks had gotten in trouble for snickering.

It was kind of weird, how much effort Todoroki took to scowl at everyone in the agency. Honestly, the only time anyone had seen him soften his grouchy face was when he was texting his siblings-probably not something he should be doing, when he was on patrol, or doing paperwork, but dammit Hawks had worked hard to make the Aerie as close to his level of easygoing as he could.

Luckily, he had been able to convince the fire-user to stop calling him boss, so now he enjoyed the special honour of being called all the most stupid bird puns Todoroki could come up with- at least when the older man forgot to at least pretend to be professional.

He stood by his initial thoughts about the older man, though. He really was hot, and not just in the literal sense. The blond was spending entirely too much of his time trying to find a way to ask him out without it being workplace harassment. He obviously didn’t want to pressure the guy, which having his boss asking him out easily could.

So yeah, that was the first problem, but that was more of a personal thing, which he would get yelled at by everyone in the agency, if he complained about it. They might actually form a queue again- not an experience he wanted to go through again.

No, the main problem was his work ethic. Hawks had a bad work ethic himself, so the agency staff could deal with more “bare minimum effort” heroes without too much issue- the brutal taskmasters that they were. The fire-user was not that sort of hero.

It was a bizarre state of affairs, that Hawks found himself describing someone who glared pure venom at anyone who had the gall to coo at him for those soft sibling-exclusive smiles he had as an All Might type hero, but here they were.

Azure was definitely going to burn himself out- pun intended- sooner, rather than later. The rate at which he got through paperwork- once he turned up the glares enough to make people leave him alone to do it- was kind of scary, but it was the way Todoroki treated training that was genuinely frightening.

Hawks probably wouldn’t have noticed it, at least for a few more weeks, since the white-haired man had unholy pain tolerance. Thank heaven that one of his sidekicks- Wolfgang- had wolf mutations, and she had happened past the room Todoroki was training in that day.
“Yo, Azure.” Hawks greeted, wandering into the bull-pen- one of the few positives of having the ability to hear everything going on nearby was being able to avoid searching too long for people. Someone had made the mistake of calling him Todoroki day one, and now everyone called him Azure, even off-duty.

Immensely distracting blue eyes flicked up from the report Todoroki had been reading, looking immensely unimpressed by the interruption. “What’s up, Pigeon?” Touya asked, slouching back in his chair. Hawks was pretty sure the older man was making fun of the casual way the winged hero always talked, but he still had to remind himself that Pigeon probably wasn’t a pet name in this case.

“You got a minute to talk?” Hawks asked quietly, drawing closer. He didn’t really want to feed into the gossip-mill too much.

Azure raised an eyebrow, all cool disinterest, but it was kind of ruined by the sudden increase in his heart-rate. “What about?” He asked, still trying for calm.

Hawks cradled the back of his head in his hands. “Nothin’ serious, just wanted a chat.” The hero said, as if he was just feeling bored- unlikely, given how busy the Aerie had been of late.

Touya studied him warily, then shrugged. “Whatever. Anything’s better than all these reports.” He griped.

Hawks laughed. “Can’t argue with you there.” He agreed easily, pretending he didn’t hear the other man complaining that Hawks never did any paperwork. Which was totally unfair. He did. Sometimes.

Touya stood up, immediately towering over the hero, who was nearly half a foot shorter, as he stretched. Hawks was half-tempted to flare his wings just to seem bigger.

Still cradling his head, the winged man turned on a heel, and wandered out, the taller man following after a moment. Hawks could hear the man’s anxiety, but he really didn’t think the fire-user would appreciate talking about this where the rest of the sidekicks could hear.

“I’ll bite,” Touya said lowly, when Hawks finally opened a door, “why do you want to talk in a training room?”
The blond smiled widely, turning to face his newest, and most self-destructive hero. “Wanted to talk to you about your training, of course.” He answered flapping his wings to gain a bit of height- he could almost feel the scathing comment, accusing him of compensating forming in the white-haired man’s mind. He hoped the other man would feel comfortable enough to voice it soon.

Oh, Hawks did not like how Azure’s expression closed off, even more scowl-heavy than normal. “Am I not going fast enough for you, Boss?”

Hawks gave a pained groan at being called boss again, but powered through. He could do this. “Nah man, you’re doing really well.” And he was. If the man could just calm down, Hawks would have no complaints about his progress, and more tellingly, neither would anyone else at the Aerie. Something had really lit a fire- pun intended- under his newest intern.

Touya crossed his arms, looking up at the hovering bird-man. “Then why do you want to talk about it?” He griped, defensive.

Hawks hummed. “Thing is… I was kinda hoping you could cool your jets.” He said flippantly.

That caught Touya unawares, and the wall briefly went down- long enough to show his surprise. “Huh?” The taller man asked, blinking and tilting his head in bafflement. It was adorable.

“Have you ever tried making your fire colder?” Hawks asked, smirking- he wasn’t sure if Cremation let him do that, but he was hopeful.

“Colder?” Touya repeated, as if the thought had never occurred to him, “The hell for? Heat’s pretty much the only thing I’m good for.”

Hawks paused for a moment, filing away that in the “worrying comments by Todorokis” drawer. “Look man,” Hawks tried to explain, trying with limited success not to look at the scars, “you’re gonna hurt yourself, if you always use your quirk like that.” According to Wolfgang, he had come out of one of the longer training sessions smelling like cooked meat. Kind of put a damper on his progress actually shaping his fire.

And~ there the walls were, coming right back up. “I’m not weak.” Azure insisted, full-on glaring now. Did Hawks ever like Endeavour? No sir, you must be thinking of someone else. Hawks
obviously couldn’t like anyone who could instil this sort of mind-set.

“Didn’t say you were,” Hawks sniped back, moving to lie down in mid-air, wings beneath him, “but you shouldn’t push yourself that hard.”

Touya raised his eyebrows, but the glare went down slightly, so Hawks took it as a win. “That doesn’t sound very plus ultra.”

Damn, he really hated that motto. One of the few advantages of going to Shiketsu was that he didn’t have to put up with his. “Have I ever struck you as ‘plus ultra’ material?” Hawks asked, grinning easily at the ceiling, before becoming a bit more sombre, as he went on- Hawks really couldn’t do properly sombre, but he could try, “Besides, there’s ‘going beyond’, and then there’s trying to cook yourself.”

Touya looked like he was going to actually growl at him, when he looked back over, so maybe he shouldn’t have put it quite like that. Sue him, he was actually really worried. Smelling like he was cooking himself meant he might actually be. Cooking. Himself. Nothing about that was healthy. “I cant help how my quirk works.” Azure snapped, nearly as touchy as Hawks had ever heard someone be about their quirk.

Probably had Endeavour to blame for that as well. The sooner that man was behind bars, the better. “Nothin’ wrong with your quirk, man, but you’d be able to last longer in a fight, if you didn’t always use your hottest fire. Plus, you don’t really need fire that hot, most of the time.” Hence the unspoken decision to make sure Touya was with one of the few responsible sidekicks whenever he patrolled, just to make sure he didn’t end up killing some purse-snatcher. Just until he knocked the rust off, given how long it had been since he dropped out of UA.

Touya just stared at him for an uncomfortably long time. Eventually he huffed irritably, and looked away. “I can’t really make it much colder.” The fire-user admitted finally, sounding beyond unwilling to let Hawks know about the limitation of his quirk. The blond probably shouldn’t consider the mildly childish behaviour so endearing.

“No worries,” the winged man said, despite his disappointment. He would just have to convince the man to start using better support gear… which would probably be its own challenge. Again, damn him for not thinking it through, before just adding new interns to his agency. This was not helping him take it easy, “training rooms are for training. Show me how cold you can manage now?” He prompted, trying to strike the careful balance of gentle, but not patronising. None of them wanted to remind Touya of Enji, and equally none of them wanted to let him know they were trying to avoid that.
Touya still looked like he suspected this was some sort of trick, but he at least remembered that Hawks was technically his boss- sometimes- so he dutifully raised a hand… only for his phone to immediately ring, interrupting him before he could make so much as a spark.

Ah, Murphy’s law, Hawks’ one true nemesis. Touya took the phone from the pocket of his costume- read black jacket, and trousers, with some indigo flame patterns. At least he already had that habit- though whether it was because it was a good one for a hero, or because he was totally willing to blow off work was another question.

The fire-user frowned at the ringing device, gently blasting some classical music “Hot N Cold” Hawks thought it was called. “It’s my brother.” Touya said, glancing a question at his boss.

“Go ahead,” Hawks said smiling indulgently, “we’ve both got ages until our next patrols.” Assuming no fresh disaster dragged the winged man out of his warm nest- which it probably would- and his manager didn’t figure out he was hiding from actually filing his reports here, instead of one of his normal hiding spots. Mr Satou didn’t get tipped enough for his role in stalling her, when she checked the sushi restaurant.

Saying so, the blond glided further away to give at least the illusion of privacy. It was surprisingly difficult not to hear what people were saying in the same room as him, unless there were multiple conversations ongoing, and he had been officially banned from inane humming around the office, so he just had to bear it, and try to minimize how creepy it was.

Touya watched the flighty hero gliding to the far side of the training room to alight on some bit of equipment Touya was pretty sure was for chest exercises. Now the fire-user didn’t have too much experience with gainful employment, but his new boss had a- just plain weird attitude to what he should, and shouldn’t be doing on the job.

Not that he was complaining. Shouto calling him at work was unusual in itself, and it left him slightly worried, despite the fact that he would have heard about it by now, if the brat’s class had been attacked. “What’s up, Shou? You never call.” The white-haired man said, as soon as the phone was at his ear.

“I just wanted to ask you something. I can call back, if you’re busy.”
“Don’t you dare, you’re getting me out of quirk training with my boss.” Touya answered, eyeing said feathered biped, who was scrolling through his own phone.

“Oh, sorry, I forgot you would be at work.” Said the ice-user, and Touya’s mouth twisted wryly. Clearly he had spent too long in the house, getting on Fuyumi’s nerves. “I’ll just-”

“Nope,” Touya interrupted, popping the p, “you’d have texted, unless it was important-” though Shouto’s definition of important could be pretty damn weird- “so you should just ask.”

Silence for a second or so, giving Touya enough time to contemplate- again- how on earth he could ask his baby brother about setting up a meeting between the kid’s boyfriend, and his new boss. “Fine,” said sibling huffed finally, “did Endeavour ever teach you anything about how Flashfire works?” He asked, and Touya immediately froze, considerations about Hawks’ weird request instantly halting.

Blue. Everything he could see was consumed in blue. The walls, the ceiling, the floor, his own arm, as it reached towards the one dwindling point of yellow right in front of him, clawing at the floor. The whole room was on fire, he was on fire. He couldn’t breathe. It hurt. His tears flash boiled in the flames beneath his eyes.

Touya couldn’t scream, couldn’t cry out. A ceiling beam had landed on him, and he couldn’t get enough air, even without his out of control quirk searing his throat. “Dad.” The fire-user said, begged, pleaded- tried to say. Even he couldn’t hear it, over the sound of the flames, desperately trying to steal all the air from the dojo, even as they ate the room itself. The yellow point had turned away, and was shrinking.

Everything smelled of smoke, and cooking meat, as the tatami blackened and crumbled. Touya tried to turn Cremation off, but the quirk had been let loose, and it had no intention of going back on its leash. He tried to push himself up from the floor, but shaky arms couldn’t even budge the heavy wooden beam.

He was going to die, he realised. His quirk was going to kill him, stuck in this tiny room where he had been forced to train it until it was strong enough to do so, and where his father had left him to its mercies, walking away, and shutting him in with it.

Was the whole house on fire, or was it just this one room? The dojo had to be pretty fire-proof, or it wouldn’t still be burning, so maybe his pyre would stay this small? Surely Endeavour at least cared enough about Shouto to get him out before it spread, and Natsuo, and Fuyumi’s rooms were on the other side of the house entirely, so they could escape on their own.
Touya tried again to lift the beam, meeting no more success than before, and returned to coughing and retching on the floor, each breath filling his lungs with more smoke, as the room filled with it.

The fire-user gazed around the blue-black haze, desperately searching for a way out. One of the walls collapsed, he heard it fall, crashing behind him. He had to- had to-

“Touya,” someone said, urgent, “Touya, you need to breathe.” Which didn’t make sense, he couldn’t breathe in this, the air was so hot and the smoke- “Touya,” said the voice again, and he felt something on his shoulder.

Looking over, he saw a hand, inexplicably not blackening in the blue flames that covered them. Had Endeavour come back? Following the arm, he found not cold blue, and furious red, but wide, concerned gold, and calm sandy yellow. The fire had vanished as if it had never been, and he was staring at a man with wings, holding him by the shoulders, repeating his name, and saying something about breathing.

‘Why am I on the floor?’ Was the first thing he thought, but it didn’t seem that important, as the man kept talking, tone careful, soothing. “Breathe in, two, three.” The calm voice instructed, as Touya belatedly realised that he was breathing in quick gasps, feeling a desperate need for air after all the smoke.

When Hawks finally managed to talk Touya down from what had to be the scariest flashback sequence he had ever seen someone have, he picked up the phone the man had dropped, careful not to take his eyes off of him. He seemed mostly aware of what was going on right now, but better not to take risks. He’d keep an eye on him for a little while.

The screen hadn’t cracked too badly, despite its impact with the floor, though Hawks wasn’t sure if it was a good, or a bad thing that the call hadn’t disconnected. “Hey, kid,” Hawks said chirpily, finally interrupting the steady-unsteady, increasingly frantic-repeated questions about what was going on that he had heard for the whole minutes-long episode, “this is Hawks.”

“What happened?” Shouto demanded, using exactly the same covering anger that Touya used when he was feeling vulnerable, panic swiftly hidden, “Where’s Touya?”
“Touya’s fine,” Hawks lied, but at least the other man should be fine enough soon, as long as no-one mentioned Flashfire again, “but I think he’s going to have to call you back.”

“Why? What happened?”

“Nothing happened, he’s just...” Hawks looked at the still somewhat dazed hero-in-training, “going to need a minute.”

A long silence from the other side of the phone. “Alright,” Shouto finally said, in a voice that sounded concerningly understanding, “just… tell him to call me back when he’s feeling better?”

“Sure thing, kid, I can do that.” Hawks assured, glad despite his deep, deep concern about why the younger brother seemed to know exactly what had just happened.

“Mm. Thanks.”

“No problem, ta-ta for now.” Hawks finished, before hanging up the phone.

Breathing a sigh of relief, the already seated hero leaned back, palms on the ground behind him, confident his wings were long enough to keep protectively curled around the fire-user. Well that sucked.

‘Probably shouldn’t be complaining about that,’ he reminded himself, ‘since it was so much worse for him.’ Plus he had actually gotten pretty lucky there. His palms were a bit sunburnt, where the fire-user’s temperature had gone haywire, but there hadn’t actually been any fire, despite that being a distinct possibility.

Only thing to do now was wait until Touya was slightly less out of it, then deal with the inevitable. Hopefully, Azure wasn’t going to bite his head off for witnessing this.

In a third-storey room, Giran took a drag on his third cigarette of the last half hour, waiting for his… client, after a fashion.
Giran had a number of problems with what he was currently trying to do, and he really didn’t understand why he was doing it… well, he understood why he was doing it; refusing an order from All-For-One was not something you did if you had any hope of surviving much longer.

What he didn’t understand, though, was why he had been told to contact Midoriya at all. It didn’t make sense. Giran was a broker, and a pretty cautious one at that. Brokers had to err towards the risk-averse side of the scale for villains, meaning they chose their clients as carefully as they could, and they took precautions.

Fat lot of good that had done him this time, forced to plan a meeting with a hero, and one he had been wary enough of before he knew about that. He’d been perfectly happy, as soon as it became obvious that the former vigilante hadn’t sold him out, to let bygones be bygones, and never have any contact with the kid again, and the kid hadn’t contacted him once, either.

Heck, he was pretty grateful to the kid for not selling him out… though he did have to wonder who had been sold out, to get Midoriya as much freedom as he seemed to have nowadays. Not his problem, really, he could just take joy that he could slowly start using his old haunts again… until he got the message from Kurogiri, and ultimately from All-For-One.

He glanced at the little box sitting on the table. All-For-One had given the order a couple of days before he decided to flatten half of Kamino ward, but- despite mounting pressure from other associates of the king of the underworld- Giran knew Amber well enough to know that he couldn’t just entice him in with any old info.

Amber had always been all sorts of weird, even by the standards of Giran’s clients, but the main way he was different from, say, the League, was that he made it pretty clear that he didn’t value anything Giran offered, unless he asked for it himself. There was a pretty minimal risk of Shigaraki trying to kill him- so long as Kurogiri was there- even if he offered something the brat didn’t want.

So, he couldn’t just message the kid, offering gear, or gossip, or for a chat, that would throw Amber’s guard way, way up, and he had been told to actually start working with him again, so that was out. Meaning he had to wait for one of their agreed ongoing contracts coughed something up, and Amber didn’t ask for running updates on too many things, meaning finding one that could tempt the twitchy pyromaniac back was… challenging.

Honestly, he’d half expected Midoriya to ignore him, even with Trigger, and he was still confident this was going to turn out to be a trap- hence Kurogiri was on call, if needed. Asking for gear right away was… too normal.
Suddenly, the door opened, and Giran jerked his head to look up, one hand still in his pocket, thumb inches from the button to summon his getaway portal. Golden eyes met him, and he was half-tempted to push it, despite not seeing any cops, or heroes rushing in to take him down.

The broker had always thought the dark-eyed vigilante was bad enough, but somehow, without the colour contacts, it was even worse. He didn’t really look like Amber, beyond the height, but his expression was exactly the same. Too focused, too calm. And now his eyes had an odd metallic quality to them, as if Giran was face to face with Hawks. It was not a pleasing comparison.

“You’re early,” Giran said, trying to calm himself down, as the greenette closed the door.

As usual, Midoriya ignored the comment, turning to stand in front of the table, arms uncrossed, posture relaxed, watching him. Giran was jealous of the teen’s lack of concern. “I wasn’t expecting your text.” Amber said- and it was Amber, not the kid he had seen at the festival- studying the broker, tone firm.

Giran shrugged, trying to emulate a calm facade. “Way I see it,” he said, before pausing to take a steadying puff on his cancer stick, “there’s no reason we need to change our relationship.”

Amber blinked, seemingly for the first time since he entered the room, slowly. Then, he raised one eyebrow, waiting for the older man to explain himself. “Can’t say I’ve ever worked with a hero before, but I doubt your minders will be happy to learn you’re here,” Giran explained, carefully not cringing when the golden eyes sharpened even more, “so it’s still not in your interests to turn me in.”

Midoriya continued judging Giran’s soul for a moment. “That’s why you trust me. Why am I trusting you?”

“Same reason as always.” Giran said, putting his cigarette down long enough to rub his thumb and fingers together. It might not be worth as much as trust- or certain sorts of favours- but money really was the name of the game, in his business.

The golden-eyed teen nodded, as if that was the answer he expected. “You said you had news on Trigger. What do you want for it?”

Giran named his price, and Midoriya impassively reached into a pocket, pulling out a wad of notes.
Where the money came from was none of his business, he supposed. The grey-haired man smiled; the way he paid without ever quibbling was one of the few things he liked about this client.

“Right,” Giran said, money safely stowed away, “there’s a couple of groups that have been working with illegal quirk enhancers, but the ringleader in the whole thing is an old Yakuza group, ‘the eight precepts of death’— pretentious name, in Giran’s opinion, but whatever— “they’ve started making this stuff- not Trigger, but its close.”

Amber’s expression seemed to darken, without ever actually changing, when Giran admitted that this wasn’t actually Trigger. Giran shook his head, going on. “they’re keeping it internal- members only- so far, so it’s not easy to get much about it. Not sure what they’re actually calling it, but it’s a more advanced product. Weaker, but less side-effects. No aggressive giants, but it only causes euphoria, and a small crash.” Well, small compared to the nasty things Trigger could do to you.

Midoriya didn’t react for a worryingly long time, but it seemed to pass muster. The vigilante was clever enough to see the sorts of messes the Yakuza could make with drugs that could make quirks stronger without destroying their own men. “This what I asked for?” The kid asked, motioning to the box on the table.

Giran nodded. “Number three package, complete with enough sedatives to bring down an elephant. You can check it, if you like.”

Midoriya shook his head, grabbing the case without opening it. “Is that everything?”

Giran smirked. “Yeah, that’s everything. I’m looking forward to getting back into a good partnership.” He lied.

Amber turned and marched out the door, not saying another word, and barely pausing on the threshold to nod.

The broker let out a relieved breath, once the kid was gone. That wasn’t as bad as it could have been, despite how brisk Amber visits always were. Plus, if everything went well, he could create a huge mess for the eight precepts. With All-For-One gone- ha!- they had been causing too many waves, messing with Giran’s clients, so them going down could only be good for him… unless the agent of chaos All-For-One had shackled him with the last year or so did something incredibly stupid.
It seemed unlikely though. Shigaraki didn’t even know the Yakuza group existed, so he shouldn’t interfere.

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