Deku? I think he's some pro...

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**Summary**

Yagi Toshinori watched the green haired boy walk away after saving his friend and shook his head. While the boy's actions were heroic, he was just too reckless. He walked in the opposite direction, thinking about a time he could meet the candidate Sir Nighteye put forward.

Izuku Midoriya goes home and decides that, even if he can't be hero himself, he can still help them with his analysis. Cue Izuku catching the attention of multiple heroes who are a little more open-minded and willing to see the potential in a quirkless kid.
Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Even after an hour-long shower, Izuku still felt the weight of the past 24 hours clinging to his skin. All Might looked down on him from every wall in his room, judgmental eyes staring straight into his soul.

_You can’t be a hero_

_Not without a quirk_

_Be realistic_

Izuku went to bed crying for his broken dream.

His room looked empty without all his All Might merch.

It wasn’t that Izuku hated All Might now, it’s just that every time he looked at the smiling hero, all he could think was _you can’t be a hero_. Just because Izuku was finally coming to terms with that fact didn’t mean he needed it playing on a loop in his head every time he’s at home. He still had a few posters up from some of his other favorite heroes, but he’d changed his sheets to a plain black set that he’d found collecting dust in the linen closet paired with a gold pillowcase. It wasn’t official merchandise, but it reminded Izuku of Eraserhead anyway.

It had taken a few days for him to gather the courage, but Izuku had finally sat down and updated his hero analysis notebooks, leaving out the parts on All Might’s secret weakness. It was… oddly comforting. He had thought it would be painful and it was in some ways, but it was mostly familiar, like his analysis was the only part of himself that hadn’t shattered alongside his hero dream. That was why he found himself, during his latest bout with insomnia, browsing a lesser known hero forum. He’d found it several years earlier and quickly figured out that a lot of underground heroes used it to communicate with each other, since it offered encrypted chats and accounts were only known by random numbers, rather than usernames. He’d spent about two weeks back then figuring out which accounts corresponded to which heroes, but he had never posted himself. As Izuku drowsily scrolled through old posts, a crazy idea occurred to him. If he couldn’t be a hero himself, why couldn’t he help the real heroes be better?

In the morning, he’d blame it on sleep deprivation and then promptly die of mortification, but that didn’t change the fact that, at two o’clock in the morning, Izuku Midoria sent ten underground heroes in depth analyses of their quirks and fighting styles.

**New Message**

12579: (Eraserhead)

Thank you for the analysis. It was eye opening to see my strengths and weaknesses from an outside perspective, not to mention the ideas for improvement.

Izuku was hyperventilating. Eraserhead, _the_ Eraserhead, had thanked him for his analysis. _The Eraserhead!_ It almost made up for the Kachaan and his lackeys beating him up again during lunch. Not quite, because the bullying had gotten worse since the sludge villain incident, but it came close! Several other heroes had also sent him messages thanking him, while others, who had
apparently heard of his analyses from their friends, had asked him to send them theirs. He was just finishing up verifying the identities of those who had requested analyses (to make sure he wasn’t accidentally helping any villains) when he saw a blinking notification in the bottom left corner of his screen.

New Message

12579: (Eraserhead)

Do you analyze villains?
Deku

Chapter Summary

What do the heroes think of this new "mystery analyst"?

Chapter Notes

Thanks for all the love for this story, guys! You're amazing! I am so excited! Hey, so on Mr. Brave. Originally, I was going to have this entire group be OCs with the exception of Eraserhead, but I don't really love reading OCs so decided to replace them all with canon characters! Mr. Brave has only showed up in like, one scene, and we don't really know a lot about him except his hero name and quirk, so I was able to make him fit the dynamic and personality I wanted this character to have. In the event he shows up in canon again and we learn more about him, he probably won't be anything like I've imagined him here.

Private Chat

58726: (Ms. Joke)

So… does anyone know who our mystery analyst actually is?

87657: (Mr. Brave)

Does anyone know who any of us are? We’re called underground heroes for a reason…

58726: (Ms. Joke)

Point taken.

72598: (Sir Nighteye)

It is a valid question though. He came out of nowhere, how do we know he’s not a villain giving us false information in order to defeat us?

58726: (Ms. Joke)
How do you know it’s a he?

12579: (Eraserhead)

So far, all the information he’s given me has been accurate and no villains have known information about me that they shouldn’t. Besides, if he was a villain, I think we would have already been targeted, considering he could have easily beaten any one of us using the information in the analyses he sent us. As strange as the situation is, I think he really is trustworthy, but only time will tell.

58726: (Ms. Joke)

It’s possible he’s a pro who’s new on the scene.

87657: (Mr. Brave)

With \textit{that} level of analysis? More likely he’s some veteran deigning to impart his infinite wisdom on the younger generation. He’s had an account on this site for years, I checked, but he’s never posted before now.

58726: (Ms. Joke)

Maybe it’s Nedzu?

12579: (Eraserhead)

No, I already asked him if he was behind it. I’m leaning more toward a retired pro.

72598: (Sir Nighteye)

What are we even supposed to call him? If he’s a hero, what’s his codename?

87657: (Mr. Brave)

Yeah, typing out \textit{Mystery Analyst} every time is gonna get old real quick.

12579: (Eraserhead)

Well, there’s only one logical way to find out.
It had been a little over a week since Izuku had impulsively started sending his analyses to pro heroes and he had quickly fallen into a new routine. Go to school, hide from Kachaan at lunch, more school, run from Kachaan after class, maybe catch a villain fight on the way home, do homework, eat dinner, complete analysis requests from the hero underground, go to bed. Most of the time, heroes simply wanted an analysis for themselves, but a handful had started sending him videos of villains in action for him to analyze.

Today, Izuku logged into his account hesitantly, with Kachaan's most recent jeers still echoing in his ears. It had been a bad day and Izuku had failed at both hiding and running, resulting in twice as many beatings. Why had he ever even thought he could be useful to actual heroes when he was just a weak, useless, worthless, quirkless deku?

Izuku shook his head and opened his inbox to find a new message from Eraserhead.

New Message

12579: (Eraserhead)

By the way, what's your codename?

Kachaan’s voice echoed in Izuku’s mind

Useless

Worthless

Deku

DEKU

DEKU

Private Chat

12579: (Eraserhead)

His name is Deku
Meeting the Pros

Chapter Summary

Deku meets up with the pros.

Chapter Notes

Here it is! The moment you've all been waiting for! It's a bit of a time skip. I might make some one shots about various shenanigans that happened during the time not shown, but no guarantees.

“Mom, I’m going to meet up with some friends tonight! I don’t know when I’ll be home, but it’ll probably be pretty late, so don’t bother waiting up for me.” Izuku yelled as he finished packing his laptop and tried to get his bright red shoes on the correct feet.

“Ok baby,” His mom smiled with tears in her eyes, “I’m so glad you have friends, you’ve seemed so much happier lately. Tell them I said hi and invite them to dinner sometime, I want to meet these friends you’re always talking about.”

Izuku hummed noncommittally as his mom pulled him in for one last kiss on the cheek before he ran out the door.

It had been almost seven months since Izuku had wormed his way into the underground hero community, but tonight would be the first time he would be meeting any of his friends in person. There was a massive drug ring they had been following for a while and a lot of heroes were coming together to take them down. They had even invited Izuku, well, Deku, to tag along and maybe even be onsite to help strategize when their plans inevitably went off the rails. He’d warned them that he wasn’t really ready for combat, but there were enough other pros that they didn’t think it’d be a problem. The raid itself wouldn’t be happening for another few months anyway, but everyone involved was meeting tonight in a secure location so they could make sure they all worked well together and start planning.

The meeting wasn’t in an area Izuku was highly familiar with, but since he’d gotten involved with the underground, he’d spent a lot of time studying maps to create better location analyses and plans for the heroes he helped. So when he exited the train, he confidently followed the mental map he’d memorized before he left. The rundown apartment complex didn’t look like much, but it was typical of the areas his friends worked in. He climbed the stairs to the second floor, found the correct apartment, and took a deep breath.

Then he knocked.

“We’re just waiting for Deku, right?” Ms. Joke asked, lounging back in her chair and putting her feet up on the scuffed table. Fourteen other underground pro heroes plus Detective Tsukauchi were all gathered around in the dingy apartment, idly snacking on refreshments as they waited for the
meeting to officially begin.

“He should be here soon,” Eraserhead replied flatly. There was a knock on the door, “And there he is now.”

Sir Nighteye rose and called through the door, “How were things in Tokyo?”

The group had chosen a question/answer password system to ensure that no uninvited guests crashed the party. Everyone inside waited with bated breath, prepared to attack or evade should the answer be incorrect.

“The weather was terrible, but the food was great.”

The heroes exchanged shocked glances. The password was correct, but the voice was that of a teenager, not an old man like they had been expecting. They waited one second longer, then Nighteye asked, “Who is this?”

“Deku?” It was stated as if it were a question and the person on the other side of the door was apparently young enough that his voice was still cracking. Nighteye looked to the others for confirmation and Shota shrugged, gesturing to open the door. May as well see where this leads.

The kid, because it was undeniably a kid, on the other side of the door was not what Shota was expecting. He was short and scrawny, with just hints of muscles starting to show on his arms, and his dark green hair looked as if he’d lost a battle trying to comb it. To complete the look of an innocent teenager, he was wearing jeans and a T-shirt with, Eraserhead squinted to read the writing, yep, that said pants. Deku was wearing a T-shirt that said pants on it.

It seemed that the rest of the heroes were just as shocked as Shota was, because the whole ensemble sat there silently staring at the kid until he started to awkwardly shuffle his weight between his feet. Finally, Mr. Brave broke the silence.

“ You’re Deku?” The kid flinched and Shota sighed. Mr. Brave was more brash than most heroes, but he did get the point across.

“Yes?” Again with answering as if it were a question. Every head turned to Detective Tsukauchi, who just nodded, confirming that the kid was telling the truth, but he looked just as shocked as everyone else. Everyone turned back to look at the kid, who apparently really was Deku, who was still standing awkwardly in front of the open door.

“I guess,” Ms. Joke started slowly, “we were expecting someone...older?”

The kid just shrugged. Well, Shota thought, that’s that. He sighed.

“Come in and let’s get started. It’s illogical for you to just stand there all night. And close the door behind you.”

The kid nodded frantically and practically tripped over himself in his hurry to close the door and sit down. Just who was this kid?

“Well,” Detective Tsugauchi started, “now that we’re all here, I guess we can get started on the mission.”

“Wait” Ms. Joke leaned forward in her seat, “Most of us haven’t worked together before, so wouldn’t it be a good idea to get to know each other a little more before we get down to business?”

Wouldn’t it be good to get to know Deku, our curiosity will distract us otherwise.
“Actually,” Deku spoke softly, “Most of you have worked together before, but only in groups of two or three, and no one here has worked with everyone else here with the exception of me and maybe the detective, but I don’t know if I count since I do most of my work virtually…” The kid seemed to realize that he was starting to mumble and shut his mouth in a tight line as if he were expecting to be scolded for it.

“Yeah,” Mr. Brave bit the bullet, “Despite the fact that we’ve all worked with you Deku, we don’t really know you. Seems kind of unfair when you know enough about each of us that you could probably kill us in our sleep if you wanted to.”

Deku’s eyes widened and his arms started flailing, “I would never do that! And I really don’t think I could anyway, my analysis isn’t really all that special, anyone could do what I do.”

Shota didn’t agree with that, but he decided to let it lie. “I think Brave makes a good point. What hero school do you go to?” Because obviously this kid is training to be a hero, considering he already helps them on a regular basis. Hopefully Nezu would at least be polite when trying to steal him from wherever he was attending.

“Um…I’m still in middle school, actually. I go to Aldera junior high. I don’t know where I’ll be going to high school yet, but I think I’m going to apply for U.A.’s general education department.”

Well, at least Nezu wasn't going to burn any bridges, but…

“Why not the hero course?”

From the way the kid hunched his shoulders, Shota could tell he was trying to appear smaller than he was, which was already pretty darn small. Interesting.

“Despite how much I’d like to, I-I can’t be a hero, I...” he took a deep breath, as if steeling his courage, “I’m quirkless”

The words seemed to echo in the small room despite the fact that Deku hardly whispered them. How? He had to have an analysis quirk, or at least one that altered his intelligence. He couldn’t be quirkless, could he? Though it would make some of his behavior make a lot more sense…

“We brought some footage of known drug ring members for you to analyze, Deku,” Apparently Tsukauchi didn’t know how to deal with the metaphorical bomb Deku just dropped either, “If you’re ready?”

The kid reached into the yellow backpack he’d brought with him and pulled out a standard notebook and a few pens before nodding. The detective turned on the small T.V. that had been set up at one end of the room and it started to play footage that a security camera had caught of the drug ring they were tracking. Almost instantly Deku started muttering while his pen started flying across the page.

“...obvious mutant type quirk, most likely some kind of fish? No, aquatic mammal. No scales. Most likely can’t breathe underwater, then, but probably still weak to fire quirks or dry environments, kind of like Gang Orca. Then some kind of darkness manipulation quirk, does it allow him to make solid objects, or just shadows? Could it be used to make someone effectively blind? How bright does light have to be to cancel out the ability? Most effective to corner in an enclosed space with bright light, or with other allies to make him hesitant to completely black out the area…”

Deku kept analyzing while the heroes stared at him wide eyed. Yeah, they’d all read Deku’s
analyses, but it was another thing entirely to see it in person. The video ended after about five minutes and the next started playing automatically. Deku hardly paused in his mutter storm, just continuing his notes where he left off.

Shota pulled his eyes away from Deku when he saw movement in the corner of his eye. Ms. Joke was gesturing to him frantically, widening her eyes and lifting up strands of her long hair before pointing at Deku. Shota looked at her in confusion and she rolled her eyes. Use your quirk, she mouthed. Ah. If he had some kind of analysis quirk he didn’t know about or was hiding for some reason, it might make sense. It wasn’t that Shota didn’t believe the kid was quirkless, Tsukauchi didn’t call him out on it at least, but it couldn’t hurt to have some additional confirmation. Making sure that Deku was still focused on the video and not looking at him, Shota activated his quirk. The rest of the heroes had already noticed the side conversation and were looking at the kid, waiting for any reaction to having his quirk canceled.

Deku didn’t even seem to notice Shota’s eyes on him, much less a sudden absence of his quirk. His mutter storm continued at the same pace as before and his pen didn’t slow down. The kid didn’t even stutter. It surprised Shota enough that he blinked and his hair fell in front of his face. The heroes traded glances and Shota could have sworn he saw Ms. Joke mouth wow. He agreed full heartedly with the sentiment.

The police had only managed to scrounge up about a half hour of footage from the cartel, but that was enough to fill almost half of Deku’s notebook. He put down his pencil and started massaging the stiffness out of his hand.

“Ok, I think I have a good idea of what we’re up against. This is a lot more footage than I usually have to work with, so that’s nice.”

“I’d never thought about that,” Mr. Brave said, “I guess we all guessed you were older, so we weren’t about how dangerous it must be for you to go out and supplement the videos we send. I am so sorry.”

Deku looked confused, “What do you mean supplement?”

Sir Nighteye spoke this time, “You know, hitting the streets, finding the villains in the videos and making your own observations. If I’d known Deku was a kid, I’d never have let you do that.”

Deku looked panicked and flailed his arms again, “I never do that! My mom would kill me and then ground me until I was 80! The videos you send me are usually more than enough, and sometimes I can manage to find some news footage, but I wouldn’t dream of following these guys myself, I promise!”

“You mean all the analyses you’ve sent us are based only on the videos we’ve sent you?” Shota said incredulously. He remembered a few times he only been able to find a minute or so of footage, but Deku had still provided a high quality analysis. From the faces around the table, he wasn’t the only one.

“The Shirakawa murders,” Ms. Joke sounded numb, “I only sent you fifteen seconds of video…”

Deku gave a shaky smile and rubbed the back of his neck, “Yeah, that one was kind of difficult, I couldn’t really find anything else in the news or online either. But the mission worked out ok and you caught the guy, so it wasn’t that bad.” Ms. Joke looked slightly nauseous.

Somehow, the meeting progressed without any more major surprises from Deku and they set up some tentative plans, but mostly things would depend on what happened with the cartel in the next
few months. It wasn’t until the meeting was wrapping up that Shota realized that this meeting wasn’t in a safe part of town, which wasn’t a problem for the pro heroes and professional detective in attendance, but _was_ a problem for the fourteen year old Deku.

“Kid, do you have someone coming to pick you up?”

Deku shook his head, “We don’t have a car. I just took the train here. You don’t have to worry about me.” Somehow that just made Shota _more_ worried.

Tsukauchi seemed to agree with him, “I’ll take him home.”

“You don’t have to do that detective, I’m fine, really.”

“This isn’t for you Deku. I, as a cop, don’t feel comfortable letting a twelve-year-old walk home alone at two in the morning.”

“I’m fourteen!”

“Not helping your case, problem child,” Shota hid his smile behind his capture weapon when Deku had the audacity to look betrayed. He couldn’t help himself, this kid had potential.

Tsukauchi was already grabbing his keys and heading for the door, “If I’m taking you home, I’ll probably need a real name.”

“I already told you that you don’t need to do that,” the kid muttered, but he gave a blinding smile anyway, “I’m Izuku Midoriya.”

As soon as the door was closed, all semblance of professionalism disappeared and Ms. Joke squealed, “He’s so adorable! Did you know he was so adorable Eraser? Why didn’t anyone warn me?”

“Maybe because that ‘adorable’ kid is a good enough analyst to take down a serial killer with only 15 seconds of video,” Nighteye deadpanned. Ms. Joke at least had the good grace to look embarrassed.

“What does it say about us that we legit thought that a fourteen year old was a retired pro for seven months?” Mr. Brave laughed, causing a chain reaction as each of the pros in the room started to chuckle.

Eraser raised one eyebrow, “I think that says more about him than it does about us,” but he still couldn’t stop his smile.

One of the heroes sobered as he realized something, “The fact still stands that Deku is a quirkless teenager and any plans that required him to be on site just went out the window.” The room went silent for a few moments as the heroes considered that.

“Not necessarily,” Nighteye spoke up, “Teenagers can still be onsite if it’s part of an internship.”

“I call dibs!” Ms. Joke yelled. Mr. Brave scowled, “You can’t just call dibs, Joke, he’s not even part of a hero course yet.”

“But he will be,” Shota said, “I have a hard time believing Nezdu would ever pass up a chance to teach someone like Deku, even if he had to get in through the sports festival.” Though that wouldn’t stop Shota from putting his name in for the recommendation exam. That kid needed every advantage he could get.
Reactions

Chapter Summary

Nedzu reacts to hearing about the quirkless kid who impressed over a dozen pro heroes. Izuku reacts to hearing he's been submitted for recommendations.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! Thanks for all the love, kudos, and comments! I am so happy! In other news, I decided to take an ASL class at school, so hopefully that doesn't kill me. But I know how to sign Batman now, so there's that.

Nedzu didn’t know what he was expecting when he opened his inbox that morning, maybe another complaint about Togata losing his pants again despite his massive improvement since the sports festival. It certainly wasn’t emails from 15 pro heroes, only two of which had ever recommended a student before, all requesting to recommend a single student to UA.

Nedzu sighed. Most likely this Izuku Midoriya had a technology manipulation quirk and was trying to increase his chances. It had been done before, but never this obviously. Oh well, it would be relatively easy to check. The student really should have looked at which pros taught at UA before including Eraserhead on his list of “recommenders”. He pressed the intercom, “Aizawa, would you come to my office please.”

A few minutes later, his door swung open right as Aizawa was about to knock. The teacher just looked at him unimpressed and said the second thing to surprise the principal that morning, “Is this about the student I submitted for recommendations?”

Nedzu’s eyes widened, “You mean it wasn’t a fake recommendation?”

Aizawa just glared at him, “Is it that hard to believe that I might take a liking to a kid?”

“No,” Nedzu smiled in excitement, “But would you like to explain why 14 other pro heroes also recommended the same student?”

Aizawa swore under his breath, “They all recommended him too?” Nedzu nodded. Whatever story was behind these recommendations was quickly becoming more interesting. Aizawa just shook his head, “I knew we should have discussed this last night. It’s illogical for everyone to recommend him.” He sighed heavily, “Do you remember when I told you about Deku?”

“I remember you asking if I was the one sending out mysterious analyses if that’s what you mean.”

Aizawa nodded, “Well, he’s gotten quite the reputation in the underground, but no one had ever met him face to face before last night. He’s part of the group that was invited to raid the Doraggo Cartel.”
Nedzu gestured for Aizawa to continue.

“He’s fourteen.”

If Nedzu had been drinking tea, he would have been tempted to do a spit take. He had read some of those analyses. A fourteen year old did that? He could see why so many pros had recommended Midoriya, if he had been there, Nedzu would probably have put in a recommendation of his own.

“I see. I take it he’s already planning on attending UA?”

“Yes, he told us he’s applying to general education, but I think he’d jump at the hero course if he had the opportunity. I can try to give him a pep talk if he needs more convincing, although maybe Mic or Joke would be better for that job. He doesn’t seem to think he can be a hero.”

Nedzu cocked his head to the side, “His analysis is already sought after by working pros, why wouldn’t he think he has what it takes.”

“I get the feeling that he hasn’t had a lot of encouragement from...well, anyone really. He’s quirkless.”

Now Nedzu was really glad he wasn’t currently drinking tea. It wasn’t often that anyone managed to surprise him, and here this Midoriya had managed to do so four times in one hour, and he wasn’t even here!

“Are you sure?” Nedzu had to ask.

Aizawa just looked tired, “I activated my quirk while he was analyzing a video and I honestly think he didn’t even notice. He didn’t pause, stutter, or even decrease the quality of his analyses, and Tsukauchi didn’t register anything he said as a lie.” He paused, “I know that there’s never been a quirkless hero before, but if anyone can do it, Deku can. But you and I know just how biased the entrance exam is and he isn’t exactly made of muscle. With his mind, I think he’ll have a better chance at passing an obstacle course and interview than an all out brawl against robots.”

“I agree, I’ll send him the invite for the recommendation exam. Does he know you recommended him?”

“No.”

“Well, I guess it’ll be a surprise then!”

It was definitely a surprise.

“Mom? Do you know why I have a letter from UA?”

Izuku looked at the envelope on the table like it was a bomb, which, for all he knew, it could have been. His mind was moving a mile a minute trying to figure out why in the world UA would be contacting him three whole months before the entrance exam. Was this normal? Was this just saying that they received his application? No, if that was the case then they would have sent it right after he submitted the application months ago. Was something wrong? Were they rejecting him because he was quirkless? That had to be it. Izuku felt his heart sink. Of course the policy allowing quirkless entry was probably a PR ploy. He could already feel the tears fighting to fall from his eyes, making it difficult to see the clear type of his name on the envelope. Of course he wouldn’t be able to go to UA. He was an idiot to think otherwise.
“Izuku? Izuku! What’s wrong? What did the letter say?”

Izuku’s voice was choked with tears, “I don’t know, I haven’t opened it yet.”

The alarmed look in Inko’s eyes softened, she knew how bad anxiety could make things seem. She’d struggled with it herself for years, after all. If only she’d been able to give her son a quirk rather than an anxiety disorder. She pushed that thought down along with the guilt that came with it. No use thinking that now, those kinds of thoughts weren’t going to do anything to help Izuku through his anxiety attack.

“Breathe with me Izuku. How about you open the letter before jumping to conclusions about what’s inside?”

Izuku didn’t respond, but he did calm down a little.

“Would you like me to open it for you?”

This time he took a deep breath and shook his head. He still reached out like he was expecting the letter to bite him, but it was better than him crying over a sealed envelope. Izuku was careful not to tear the envelope as he opened it, and Inko watched his face with concern as his eyes tracked along the paper and gradually grew wider and wider with every line.

“...uku? Izuku? Are you ok?”

“They want me to take the recommendation exam.” Izuku said numbly, “They want me to take the recommendation exam. Wha? How?”

“Well, that’s...good?” Inko tried to smile through her worries. She had been so happy the last few months since her son had finally seemed to come to terms with the fact that he wouldn’t be a hero. It wasn’t that she didn’t want to support his dreams but...she’d sleep a lot easier at night if she at least knew that he was safe.

“I...I think so, but Mom,” Izuku looked up at her, “The recommendation program is based on recommendations. Who would have...?” He trailed off, but Inko could practically see his brain making some connection or another before he whispered, “No...It couldn’t have been. But who else? They wouldn’t have. Not for someone like me. Would they?” He seemed to snap out of his reverie, “Mom, I need to message some of my friends, I’ll be in my room, ok?”

Inko just nodded, “o-ok, I’ll tell you when dinner’s ready…”

Izuku smiled but it seemed more like an afterthought. He was still shocked. “Thanks Mom. you’re the best,” before heading off to his room.

Inko picked up the forgotten letter and read it through. It may not be what she wanted, it definitely wasn’t safe, but...if it was really what Izuku wanted…

Could she really say no?

Izuku hurriedly logged on and opened a group message to all the pros who were participating in the raid.

New Group

12857: (Deku)
Would anybody care to explain why I got a letter from UA this morning inviting me to take the
HERO COURSE RECOMMENDATION EXAM?!?!?

Several users are typing…

58726: (Ms. Joke)
Yeah, I might have had something to do with that…

87657: (Mr. Brave)
Wait?! You did?! I recommended him!

12579: (Eraserhead)
We should have discussed it. Nedzu called me into his office and thought it was a prank. It was completely illogical for us all to recommend him.

12857: (Deku)
!!!!!!!!!!!!

72598: (Sir Nighteye)
I don’t think it’s that illogical Eraser. Afterall, he’s taking the exam.

12579: (Eraserhead)
While I see your point, he still would have been invited to take the exam if he only had one recommendation. Any more than that is just inefficient.

12857: (Deku)
Hyyuaslkfjasdjhaoefakjdiekasdeis

58726: (Ms. Joke)
Deku sweetie? Are you ok?!!?
72598: (Sir Nighteye)  
?  
12579: (Eraserhead)  
?

87657: (Mr. Brave)  
Oh shit guys. I think we might have killed him!

12579: (Eraserhead)  
Kid, you’re scaring us. We need you to tell us if you’re ok.

72598: (Sir Nighteye)  
Tsukachii took him home, so he knows where the kid lives, right? Who has his number?

12579: (Eraserhead)  
I’ll call him.

12857: (Deku)  
Sorry guys, my mom came in and I had to calm down and explain to her why I was screaming.  
Wait! Please tell me you didn’t call Tsukachii!

72598: (Sir Nighteye)  
Sorry kid. When you stopped responding we were scared something had happened.

12857: (Deku)  
@12579! Stop! I’m OK!!!! Please don’t call the detective.

12579: (Eraserhead)  
I explained what happened and that it’s a false alarm. Sorry for overreacting Deku.
87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Yeah, sorry dude.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Ditto

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

So why *were* you screaming? Did you see a spider?

12857: *(Deku)*

No! It’s just… do you guys really think I could be a hero?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Obviously. Your analysis is better than even most pros are capable of and you choose to use it to help heroes rather than hurt them. You’ve got more potential than my entire class this year.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

You expelled your entire class this year

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Exactly

12857: *(Deku)*

Why? What I do really isn’t that special. It’s just a hobby I’ve had since I was a kid...

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Deku, you had the entire underground convinced that you were a retired pro for like 7 months.
12857: (Deku)

I am so sorry! Did I make it sound I like I was a pro? Oh my goodness! I’m so sorry, I’m gonna have to read through all my old messages and make sure and I’m probably gonna get arrested for fraud and impersonating a pro and I am so sorry!

58726: (Ms. Joke)

OMG! He’s freaking out! It’s so cute!

87657: (Mr. Brave)

Hahaha! Dude. Deku. Stop freaking out. It was our fault for assuming. No one’s gonna arrest you over a misunderstanding...unless Eraser’s still on the phone with Tsukauchi?

12579: (Eraserhead)

If I was I’d have him arrest you, Brave, not Deku

72598: (Sir Nighteye)

I’m more concerned about why you don’t believe us?

12857: (Deku)

It’s just… nobody’s ever told me I could be a hero before...it feels...nice?

58726: (Ms. Joke)

...Who do I need to kill?

12857: (Deku)

What???

12579: (Eraserhead)

Joke, no.
58726: (Ms. Joke)

Joke yes!

87657: (Mr. Brave)

How many pitchforks do I need to bring?

72598: (Sir Nighteye)

Guys, if you make Deku scream again, his mom will be the one planning murder.

12857: (Deku)

Thanks guys. It’s been fun, but I need to go reevaluate my life now…

12857 has left the chat

72598: (Sir Nighteye)

Are you happy now?

58726: (Ms. Joke)

No, because people haven’t been giving my son the love and encouragement he deserves

12579: (Eraserhead)

He’s not your son

58726: (Ms. Joke)

Does that mean he’s yours?

12579 has left the chat

72598: (Sir Nighteye)
At this point, we can’t change how people have treated him. All we can do is make sure he knows we believe in him moving forward.

72598 has left the chat
87657 has left the chat
58726 has left the chat
The Recommendation Exam

Chapter Summary

Izuku begins the exam for recommendation students.

Chapter Notes

Hi there! First of all, thank you! I have been overwhelmed by the amount of love this story has been getting. You all are the real heroes.

Next of all, this is the recommendation exam, which is only briefly covered in canon and we don't really see any of the obstacles since Todoroki and Inasa just kinda blow past them all. I based the obstacles off of one shot where Present Mic is announcing and you can kinda see the course behind him, but mostly I just made it up.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Ok, kid, the recommendation exam is in a little over two months. It takes place about a month before the standard exam so that if a student doesn’t make the cut for the recommendation spots, they can still try again with the general population.”

Izuku looked up at Eraserhead from where he was stretching on the floor of the gym, “I guess that makes sense. How many spots are open?”

“Normally, four, although I think Nedzu is looking into making another spot this year due to...extenuating circumstances.”

Izuku frowned, “You mean because people would get mad if a quirkless kid took one of the recommendation spots.”

Aizawa sighed, but nodded, “It’s the world we live in, kid, but we’ll deal with it if we have to. For now, we just need to focus on getting you physically ready so you don’t die. What training have you done so far?”

Izuku thought for a moment, “Well, I mostly focused on my mental abilities, obviously. Then, when you guys started sending me videos, I realized just how physically fit heroes need to be. Even if I’d kind of given up by that point, it was still inspiring. I started lifting weights and jogging, I’ve even tried a little parkour and freerunning, even if I’m not every good at that yet. I’m a lot stronger than I used to be, but,” he hugged himself, “I’m still pretty weak. Sorry.”

Aizawa felt his heart break. This kid was doing amazing when you considered that everyone had told him it was impossible to even try, but he still had a long way to go, “Alright, I want you to keep doing what you’ve been doing. We’re not going to be able to make a huge difference in strength in just two months, but we can improve your speed and parkour, as well as get you some combat skills.” He gestured for Izuku to stand up, “So, Deku, do you know how to fall or how to take a hit?”
“I mean, I’ve been hit plenty of times before, so I think I know that one.”

Aizawa’s expression soured, “That is...not the same thing. I guess that’s what we’ll start with.”

When Izuku went home that night, he was sore and covered in bruises, but couldn’t keep the smile off his face. He could do it! He could be a hero! He might not be able to be like All Might, but, the more he thought about it, being an underground hero sounded like more fun anyway.

The next two months flew by. Izuku trained with a different pro-hero every day of the week. Eraser taught him hand to hand combat, Ms. Joke took him on parkour runs, Mr. Brave helped him with speed... it was amazing. Izuku felt so much stronger and even if he couldn’t hold his own against Eraser yet, he wasn’t falling into dumpsters as often as he had when he was doing parkour on his own. The morning of the recommendation exam, Izuku opened his computer to find dozens of good luck messages. Apparently, word had gotten around that Deku was a lot younger than anyone had thought, and they were all excited for him. It was contagious. Not that he wouldn’t have been excited without the messages, he still would have been, it’s just...he’d probably be a lot more nervous than excited.

Inko waved to Izuku as he left, then let her hand fall as soon as he was out of sight. Her baby, off to go be a hero. As she wiped the tears from her eyes, even she didn’t know if they were happy tears or sad ones.

“You’ll have three hours for the written portion of the exam. Begin!”

Izuku sat in the auditorium with the other students after the written portion. He didn’t think he got 100% because he probably got at least a few questions wrong in the English portion, but there had been a hero analysis essay at the end that, while optional, would probably bring up his score. But that wasn’t what he was worried about.

“Hello, listeners! Rock On! The written part of the recommendation test is over! The practical’s next, and then, finally, the interview!” Izuku resisted the urge to mutter like a fanboy as the voice hero explained, “This portion will be a three kilometer obstacle course run in groups of six. We will be looking not only at your times, but at your ingenuity and use of your quirks, so please go all out! As you leave the auditorium, please take a number from either Midnight or Snipe, these will determine what group you’ll be in for the race. Any questions? Alright! Let’s go!”

As they slowly filed out of the auditorium, Izuku looked around him and tried to evaluate the quirks of those around him. There were a few obvious mutant quirks, but there were some like a boy with a skull face and other with two toned hair that weren’t as obvious. Some didn’t appear to have physical manifestations of their quirks at all. Izuku tried to calm his breathing. No matter what, he knew that all of them had strong quirks, they wouldn’t have been recommended otherwise, and soon Izuku would have to face them. He counted his blessings that he wouldn’t be facing them in combat. Even with two months of training, he still ended up on his back most of the time and he wasn’t sure he was ready to face people using their quirks quite yet.

The first group was called up and went to the starting line. Present Mic nodded to Snipe, who pointed his gun to the sky and fired. The six were off quickly and Izuku felt his stomach sink as he saw their quirks. They were amazing! Izuku couldn’t possibly compete! One boy controlled the wind to blow him forward while leaving his opposition in dust. Another stayed neck and neck with him by skating on ice that he shot from his foot. To Izuku, it seemed like the race was over before it even began, with the wind user finishing just barely ahead of the ice guy. Even Present Mic
seemed shocked.

He forced himself to pay attention as the next group ran the course, thankfully much slower since
this group didn’t have anyone with quirks that allowed them to completely ignore all the obstacles. 
They all used their quirks creatively and Izuku tried not to think about what everyone else would 
think when he didn’t use a quirk at all during the exam.

“Hey, are you ok?” Izuku jerked up to see a girl with a high ponytail looking at him with concern, 
“You were breathing kind of fast.”

“Uhh...yeah,” Izuku said, “I guess I’m just kinda nervous. Everyone here has such amazing 
quirks.”

The girl laughed, “Yeah, I guess so. My name is Momo Yaoyorozu. You?”

“Izuku Midoriya.”

“Nice to meet you Midoriya. My group’s next, wish me luck.”

Izuku nodded as she left and went to the starting line. This time he watched carefully to see how 
everyone used their quirks to make it past the obstacles. Yaoyorozu apparently had some sort of 
creation quirk because she pulled a pair of roller blades from nowhere to breeze past the flat 
sections and made a spring loaded grappling hook to fly up the cliff. Another used her oil secretion 
quirk to slide more quickly down the slide and make the track more slick for the other examinees.

With each group that went, Izuku got more and more ideas on how to pass the obstacles and he got 
more and more excited. He even saw opportunities where students were underutilizing their quirks 
and got ideas to help them improve. Yeah, he couldn’t replicate any of their quirks, but he could 
take the best ideas from all of them and get a decent time.

Finally, it was Izuku’s turn to be called and he took a deep breath as he walked to the starting line. 
He bounced on his toes as ideas bounced around his mind on how to clear the obstacles. The 
moment Snipe’s gun went off, he ran toward the first obstacle, which looked like the first hill of a 
roller coaster. Other students were already starting to climb up the side as Izuku reached the base of 
it and looked around. He smiled as he grabbed a small board from the base and tucked it inside his 
shirt, then started climbing up toward the apex.

Most of the students were climbing straight across, rather than up, and they were already on the 
second half, while some had already cleared the obstacle. Izuku hoped this gamble would pay off 
and that Eraser wouldn’t kill him if he fell before he pulled himself up to stand on top of the 
wooden structure. He pulled out the board he’d brought and set it on thin metal track that lined the 
top, then carefully stood on top of it as if it was a skateboard, pinwheeling his arms as he almost 
lost his balance. With a quick prayer, he shoved off and began to slide down the hill, rocketing past 
the two students who were still climbing, putting him in fourth place.

He hit the ground with a roll when he reached the end of the track and looked at the next obstacle, 
which involved hopping from different sized pillars that ascended up to a thin wall. Unfortunately, 
there wasn’t anything he could do to speed this up, but he was grateful for his parkour training as 
he jumped easily, maintaining his place in the running.

The next obstacle was a thin cement wall about the width of a balance beam that students were 
running across. Izuku stood in shock for a moment as he watched the second place examinee, a 
blue haired boy with engines in his legs, literally glide across the wall on his heels. Was he related 
to Ingenium? Izuku shook his head and started running.
The next obstacle wasn’t so much of an obstacle as a slide that dumped into a pool of water. Izuku thought back to the engine boy who had been gliding on his heels. If he could reduce the surface that touched the slide, he could reduce friction and move faster! He also remembered the girl with the oil quirk from a few rounds before and looked quickly. A line on the left half of the slide was slightly more shiny than the rest from where she had made it more slick. Izuku laid down and pushed off, lifting his body so that only his heels and shoulders were touching the slide. The decreased friction combined with the oil and he managed to pass another examinee, putting him in third place.

He swam quickly toward the next obstacle, a cliff face that went straight up. He didn’t have a grappling hook like Yaoyorozu did, but he had seen her drop it when she’d cleared the cliff. He took a deep breath and dived. Sure enough, there it was, sitting at the bottom of the pool. He grabbed it and pulled himself up onto the ledge at the bottom of the cliff. He took a moment to familiarize himself with his new tool, then looked up. The obstacle after the cliff climb was a rope strung across two spires, then climbing down the second spire to arrive at the top of a plateau. Izuku thought for a moment before aiming. Hopefully he wouldn’t be penalized for this.

He smiled as he felt it catch, then braced himself and pressed the button to retract it. He was yanked from his location, flew past both the cliff climb and the rope bridge, and hit the side of the plateau. Hard. Izuku groaned as he pulled himself up and took note of where the other students were. He was now in second place.

He couldn’t see the first place examinee, but he’d seen all previous examinees disappear for a minute before reemerging from the waterfall, so he assumed there was some sort of cave. He paused as he saw a narrow fissure in the middle of the plateau, with rock climbing holds on both sides going down. The gap was only about four feet wide in most areas, and Izuku was just over five feet tall so… he nodded resolutely, then braced himself with an arm and a leg on either side of the fissure and shimmied down as quickly as he could.

At the bottom of the fissure was a short tunnel that Izuku would have to army crawl through and the first examinee had just entered it. Thankfully, the tunnel was wide enough for multiple people. Izuku got down on his stomach and moved as quickly as he could, passing the first place examinee at the very end of the tunnel.

There was a waterfall in front of them and Izuku ran straight toward it without pausing. He’d seen plenty of others run out of the waterfall in the previous rounds. The water was cold and almost knocked him over, but he kept running until he could breathe again.

From here it was a straight shot to the finish line. Izuku ran as hard as he could, hearing the footsteps of the other examinee as he struggled to catch up. There was a cry behind him and Izuku heard the sound of engines. No! Mini-Ingenium! Izuku pushed himself harder. Almost there…

But Mini-Ingenium was too fast on a straight-away and he zoomed past Izuku, who crossed the finish line a full five seconds after. Gasping for breathe and fighting tears. Second place. Good, but not good enough. He needed to be the best if he was going to prove that a quirkless student belonged in the hero course.

“Hey, Midoriya!” Yaoyorozu was at his side, “That was amazing! I hadn’t even considered that anyone else would try to use my grappling hook! I wish I’d thought to bypass an obstacle like that!”

“That was shameful!” Mini-Ingenium cried, chopping his hands through the air, “You are supposed to use your own quirk! Not coast by on the work of others!”
Izuku felt his heart sink. Mini-Ingenium was right, he wouldn’t have done half as well if he hadn’t paid attention to the other rounds and used them to his advantage. He really was worthless, wasn’t he? Why did he think he deserved this?

“Hey now, listener, don’t be so hard on him!” Present Mic interrupted, “We told everyone to go all out and this examinee showed great creativity and used the environment to his advantage, an essential trait for any hero. Not everyone has physical quirks, ya know?”

Mini-Ingenium straightened, “My apologies.” He bowed to Midoriya, “I see that I was in the wrong. On further consideration it really was truly impressive how you managed to get ahead of the other examinees. My name is Tenya Iida, what is yours?”

Izuku’s eyes widened. He didn’t think anyone had ever apologized to him before, “I-izuku M-midoriya!” he stuttered out, “Nice to meet you!”

Mini-Ingenium, Iida, smiled, “It is a pleasure to meet you as well!”

“All right!” Present Mic Yelled, “Now don’t get too down if you didn’t get first in the obstacle courses. We’ll be deciding who gets the recommendation spots based on a combination of the written, physical, and interview! So if you did poorly, don’t lose hope! And if you did well, don’t get too comfortable! Now go! Get to the locker rooms and get cleaned up! Interviews will be in Principal Nedzu’s office in 30 minutes. Don’t be late!”

Chapter End Notes

I think you all noticed that I had Iida take the recommendation exam! This is a personal headcanon of mine because he comes from a family of heroes! Of course he would be submitted for recommendations! But unfortunately, there are a limited number of recommendation spots, so he didn’t quite make the cut and had to take the general exam if he still wanted to go to UA.
Chapter Summary

The interview portion of the recommendation exam.

Chapter Notes

Wow, Iida sure got a lot of hate last chapter, didn't he? I'll have to come back to that and explore how he'll interact with Izuku once school starts.
Also, over 1000 kudos? I'm shocked!

All the examinees sat awkwardly in the lobby outside Nedzu’s office, waiting for their turn to be called. The atmosphere was tense not only because everyone was nervous, but because the boy with the wind quirk kept glaring at the boy with the ice quirk, who didn’t seem to notice and kept staring straight ahead. Izuku couldn’t think of why the Wind was so angry at Ice, considering that Wind won their round of the physical, but he figured there must be a good reason. Unless of course Wind was like Kacchan and just angry all the time, that was always a possibility. Better give him a wide berth.

“So…” A girl with green hair broke the silence, “That physical was something else, right?”

“Yeah,” another examinee laughed, “Some serious American Ninja Warrior stuff. Do you really think we’ll have to climb that much as heroes? My arms are still sore!”

“I think it’ll depend on what kind of hero you want to be,” Izuku hadn’t even realized he’d opened his mouth until everyone was looking at him. Oh no. He hurried on in a panic, “I mean, well, daylight heroes probably don’t have to climb as much since most daytime villains are on street level, but it’s very helpful for underground heroes to get a birds eye view of situations and they spend most of their time patrolling from the rooftops rather than the street. Daylight heroes stay on the street so that people can see them, so they don’t have much use for climbing, except for maybe in a rescue situation and...I’ll shut up now.”

Izu’s face was hot in embarrassment and he looked at the floor as the rest of the examinees stared at him.

“I’d never thought of it that way,” Yaoyorozu said, and Izuku shot her a grateful look, “I’m planning on being a spotlight hero myself. I never really hear about underground heroes, so I sometimes forget they exist.”

“That’s kind of the point of underground heroes, though, isn’t it? So that no one really knows they exist?” The green haired girl spoke up, “I’ve considered going that route, but I’m not really sure. My quirk is kinda gross, so I’m not sure I’d ever be very popular anyway.”

Izu perked up, “Your quirk involves disconnecting your limbs, right? I saw you use it a few times during the practical. How much muscle control do you have over a body part when it’s
disconnected? What would happen if a body part was injured or destroyed when it wasn’t connected…” Izuku realized he was rambling and quickly slammed his mouth shut.

The green haired girl sat in shock for a moment before responding, “Uhh... yeah. My quirk is called Lizard Tail Splitter and it allows me to disconnect any part of my body at will. I can split into up to 50 pieces at a time.” Her right hand disconnected and scuttered toward Izuku and up his arm, poking him in the cheek, “I can fully control them, even disconnected, and levitate them. If any are destroyed, I can regenerate them, but it takes a lot of energy, so I prefer to just call them back if I can.”

“That’s so cool!” Izuku gushed, “That would be great for underground work. Most villains wouldn’t think to look for an eye or an ear hiding in the corner of a room, so your quirk would be perfect for intelligence gathering. It would also probably be useful for sabotage, since a hand could easily fit into small spaces. You’ll make a wonderful underground hero if you choose, but don’t just do it because you think your quirk is gross.”

She smiled widely, “Thanks! I’d never thought of it like that!”

Izuku nodded, “Yaoyorozu, your quirk is some kind of creation, right? That grappling hook was really complicated, but you made it no problem. What kind of objects can you create?”

Yaoyorozu smiled, “My quirk is called Creation. I can transform the lipids in my body into any non-living thing I want, but I have to understand the molecular structure. I’ve been studying chemistry since I first developed my quirk, so I can produce any element on the periodic table fairly easily as well as most known molecules. It’s just a question of how they all come together.”

Most of the other examinees were paying attention to the conversation now and they were quick to pipe up with their own observations of Yaoyorou’s quirk. After that, another person piped up and soon everyone was sharing their quirks. Even Wind and Ice had been roped into the discussion.

“Yeah! My quirk is Whirlwind! I can control any wind and I am super passionate about hero work!” Izuku was almost physically blown back by the sheer energy that Wind put off. Ok, so being constantly angry like Kacchan was out, but if he said passion was so important, it was easy to see why he didn’t like Ice, who remained blank-faced and probably didn’t express passion for anything.

Now it was Ice’s turn. He paused for a moment, then said flatly, “My quirk is called Half-Hot, Half-Cold. I can produce ice from my right side and fire from my left, but I don’t use my fire.” His tone clearly communicated that he was done talking and everyone sat awkwardly for a moment as they digested his declaration. Wind was glaring at him again with even more intensity than before.

“Well, that’s cool then,” Yaoyorozu said finally, then turned to Izuku, “What about you Midoriya, what’s your quirk? It wasn’t really obvious from the physical round.”

Izuku’s stomach sank. Of course they were going to ask about his quirk. These were the first people that acted like they could be friends since he’d gotten his quirk, well, besides the underground heroes, but did they really count since they were all so much older than him? They’d reject him as soon as they knew, everyone did. How was he going to get out of this?

All of a sudden, the door to Nedzu’s office opened and an examinee walked out, followed by the principal himself, “Izuku Midoriya?”

Izuku nodded in relief and practically ran into the office. Nedzu smiled knowingly and shut the door behind him.
“Have a seat! So you’re the famous Deku I’ve heard so much about? To tell you the truth, I was quite surprised to hear that you were so young.”

Izuku sat down across from the principal and nodded, “I honestly wasn’t trying to trick anyone,” he laughed, “I freaked out when I realized how old Eraser and everyone thought I was! I thought it would be obvious from my analysis that I was just a fanboy.”

Nedzu poured two cups of tea and took a sip, “I’ve read some of your analyses. They are extremely impressive.”

Izuku shook his head quickly, “They’re really not. They’re just a fanboy’s rambling and I have no idea why heroes like them so much. Everyone else seems to think they’re creepy…”

“Well,” Nedzu clapped his hands together, “While we’re on the subject, perhaps you wouldn’t mind giving me a brief analysis of your fellow examinees?”

Izuku’s eyes lit up as he started to wander, “Well, um, there’s Yaoyorozu, she’s got a creation quirk that is super cool. It wouldn’t be easy to use, but she’s put in a massive amount of work learning chemistry so that she can create pretty much anything. The only weaknesses I can see are maybe how fast she can think under pressure. Also if she has to create a lot in a short amount of time, I’m not sure she has the fat stores for that. Then there’s the girl with the lizard tail quirk, she can separate her body parts, which would be perfect for intelligence gathering…”

The interview continued with Izuku rambling as Nedzu listened and sipped his tea, occasionally interrupting with an observation or question. Before Izuku knew it, a half hour had passed and there were two empty cups of tea sitting on the desk.

“Well, Deku, thank you.” Nedzu stood and walked around the desk, “You may go rejoin the other applicants outside, or you may go home if you wish.”

“Wait, the interview is over?” Izuku looked confused, “But I just did some analysis, which I was going to do for fun anyway? Isn’t the interview supposed to be difficult? Aren’t you supposed to ask why I deserve a place at UA? Why I deserve to be a hero?”

Nedzu looked at him curiously, “Your analysis is a valuable skill and I never doubted that you were ‘deserving’ as you put it. Would you prefer the interview were more difficult?”

Izuku waved his hands, “Well, no, it’s just…” He rubbed the back of his neck, “This just felt like tea with a friend.”

Nedzu’s eyes brightened and he smiled, “Then I hope we can do this again sometime, regardless of your results.”

Izuku returned the smile and Nedzu led him back out into the lobby and grabbed the next student and just like that, his entrance exam was over.
Acceptance

Chapter Summary

Izuku gets his letter from UA

Chapter Notes

We reached 10,000 hits, people! This is not a drill! I repeat! This is not a drill!
Also, I just made up Mr. Brave's civilian name. Thought you ought to know.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku had an anxiety attack everyday, right before the mail came. He tried to tell himself that it was just a letter, that it wasn’t important and wasn’t worth getting worked up over. But it wasn’t just a letter, was it? It was a letter from UA, a letter that would determine his future, a letter that would tell him whether or not he was worthy to be a hero. And… there it was, the anxiety attack was back. Izuku sighed. He thought he’d already done this today, why did he have to do it again?

It had been a week since the entrance exam and there still wasn’t a letter. Not that the letter couldn’t come later than a week after the exam. Present Mic had said in the introduction that letters normally came between five days to two weeks after, but...Izuku just wanted this over with already. It was torture just waiting, not knowing if he was good enough or not!

There was a knock at the door.

“Izuku!” His mom called out, “Could you get the door? My hands are full making dinner!”

“Ok, Mom!” He got up from the couch and opened the door, only to do a double take when he saw who it was.

“Hey kid,” Eraser said, “We brought you something. Can we come in?”

Izuku stood aside in shock, allowing Eraser, Ms. Joke, and Mr. Brave, all in civilian garb, to come inside.

“Sorry Nighteye couldn’t come,” Ms. Joke said, “He’s in the middle of a major case right now.”

“Yeah, right,” Brave laughed, “The old man’s just a spoil sport.”

“Mom?” Izuku said as he walked into the kitchen, the three pro heroes trailing close behind, “Um, these are my friends. This is Eraserhead, Ms. Joke, and Mr. Brave.”

Inko’s eyes widened, “These are the pro hero friends you told me about when you were recommended, right?” When Izuku nodded, she bowed, “Thank you all for being so kind to my son. I was so excited when he told me he had friends, so imagine my shock a few months ago when I learned that all his friends were pro heroes!”
Eraser raised an eyebrow. He suspected that Izuku didn’t get a lot of encouragement to be a hero, but all his friends? She was probably exaggerating.

“He’s a great kid, Midoriya-san.” Ms. Joke laughed, “We’re lucky to have met him. By the way, since I’m not in costume right now, you can just call me Emi Fukukado.”

“Nice to meet you Fukukado-san.”

“Yeah, me too!” Mr. Brave said, “My name is Haruto Nakamura.”

The other two looked at Eraser, who stared back for a minute before sighing, “I’m Shota Aizawa. Deku’s a smart kid, you must be proud of him.”

Inko’s face soured slightly at the nickname, but it was almost too fast for the pros to catch before she was smiling again, “I am! I wish he would pick a better career path though… heroics isn’t very forgiving for someone like Izuku.”

Izuku looked like he wanted to sink into the floor as the room went cold. Fix this, “Umm, so why are you guys, here? Um.. not that you’re not welcome, you totally are, it’s just that you’ve never come over before and you guys sounded like you planned it, but I didn’t know about it, unless i forgot. Oh no! Did I forget?”

Mr. Brave, Nakamura, laughed, “No Deku, you didn’t forget. We wanted to surprise you! Show him Eraser!”

Aizawa rolled his eyes, but had a small smile as he reached into his pocket and took out an envelope.

“My UA letter!”

Aizawa handed it to the kid, who looked at it with wide eyes, “Of course, kid. Did you forget I work at UA? We wanted to be here when you open it.”

Izuku looked to his mother, who smiled sadly, “You and your friends go open it in the living room. I’ll keep working on dinner and you all can come eat after, ok?”

Izuku nodded and went back to sit on the couch. Aizawa sat beside him, while Nakamura sat on the chair and Fukukado made her home on the floor. All three looked at Izuku in anticipation and he took a deep breath before tearing open the envelope. He then promptly started crying.

“Oh no! Eraser! I thought you said it was good news! I’m going to kill you!” Fukukado screamed!

Aizawa looked slightly panicked, “It is good news! I don’t know why he’s crying, I swear!”

“I-I’m just so happy!” Izuku choked out, saving Aizawa from being physically wrestled to the floor, “I-I made it! I’m going to UA! I’m gonna be a hero!”

“Congratulations, Deku!” Nakamura said, “You deserve it!”

Fukukado gave him a big hug, “Oh, I’m so excited for you! I kinda wish you were coming to Ketsubutsu with me, but you’re gonna need Nedzu to help you with that big brain of yours.” She sighed. "Oh well, there’s still internships, and I’m sure you’ll hear about me all the time since Eraser’s madly in love with me!”

“No, I’m not.” Aizawa denied, “Stop telling people that, Joke.”
“It’s not a joke, I am!” Fukukado laughed loudly and tried to mess up Aizawa’s hair, but he dodged and scowled at her. She responded by sticking out her tongue.

“I swear even Deku is more mature than you.”

“Maturity is overrated.” Nakamura said, then crossed his eyes and pulled a face, making Izuku giggle.

Aizawa looked dead inside, “You’re all impossible. I hate all of you.”

“Except for Joke!” Nakamura said, “You love her!”

Izuku laughed even harder. So this is what having friends really felt like. Somehow when Joke teased, it didn’t feel the same as when Kacchan did it. It wasn’t hurtful at all, it was just friends giving each other a hard time. It was nice.

“Dinner’s ready.” Inko looked to where her son was laughing on the floor with his friends. Even if she didn’t want him to be a hero, she thought she could deal with it if it meant he had friends like these.

“Thanks, Mom!” Izuku led his friends back to the kitchen and they all sat down.

“Thanks for the food, Midoriya-san!” Fukukado said as they dug in.

“Yeah, this tastes amazing.” Nakamura added.

Inko smiled, “It’s really the least I could do. And besides, we have to celebrate my baby boy getting into his dream school.” She leveled a serious look at Aizawa, “I trust you’ll take care of him and make sure he stays safe.”

Aizawa nodded solemnly, “Of course Midoriya-san, I would never send Deku into a situation he wasn’t prepared for. When we take him along on internships, we’ll always be with him to protect him if things get dangerous. Deku may be smarter than most pros, but he’s still a student, and he’ll be treated accordingly.”

“Good,” Inko sighed, “I’ll hold you to that, Aizawa-san.”

“So Eraser, I guess you can’t expel your whole class this semester,” Brave smiled, “because that would mean expelling Deku too.”

“You expelled a whole class?” Inko was wide eyed.

Aizawa put down his fork, “I only expel kids who have no potential. It’s cruel to let them continue when they’ll only end up getting themselves or others killed. I won’t expel Deku because he has potential. I wouldn’t have recommended him otherwise.”

“I find it hard to believe that an entire class was completely devoid of potential,” Izuku insisted, “They must have had strong quirks.”

“You’re living proof that quirks aren’t everything,” Aizawa said, “They might have had strong quirks, but their personalities convinced me they didn’t have what it takes. Spoiled brats every single one of them. No one had ever told them no and let them get away with murder just because of their quirks. That’s not how you raise a hero. Heroes have to be willing to protect people and give their all, not just coast by or be the best.”
Izuku couldn’t help but think of Kacchan. Everyone praised him no matter what he did simply because his quirk was perfect for heroics. But, Eraser couldn’t be talking about people like Kacchan, could he? Afterall, Kacchan would be an amazing hero.

“Most teachers aren’t as strict on expulsions as Eraser here, Midoriya-san,” Fukukado explained, “I teach at another hero school and I probably expel maybe one student a year? Sometimes I don’t expel any at all, it all depends on the class. But then again, Ketsubutsu isn’t as competitive as UA.”

“Oh, that’s good I guess. One of Izuku’s oldest friends is going to be applying to UA as well, and I wouldn’t want to have to deal with Mitsuki if her son gets expelled!”

“Don’t worry about Kacchan, Mom. I’m sure he won’t have any problem getting in, and I know he’ll be the best hero!”

Inko smiled, “You’re right. It’s silly to worry! Who knows, maybe you two will be in the same class!”

Aizawa hoped he was imagining the tension that came into Deku’s shoulders at that, “Maybe…”

“No matter what, you’ll probably make some of the best friends you’ve ever had in hero school,” Nakamura said, “I know I did.”

“Maybe you’ll find someone you have instant chemistry with, like me and Eraser.” Fukukado said while Aizawa rolled his eyes.

“Oh, are you together?” Inko asked, “How did you two meet?”

“We’re not…” Aizawa started, but Fukukado interrupted him.

“Our agencies were nearby when we were first starting out. In between missions and drama, a mutual love blossomed!”

“No it didn’t” Aizawa muttered. Nakamura and Izuku snickered.

“That sounds so romantic.” Inko sighed.

“We aren’t dating, Midoriya-san.” Aizawa said.

“Not yet,” Fukukado said, “but don’t worry, Midoriya-san, I’ll win him over eventually.”

A mischievous glint came into Inko’s eye as she looked between the two and Aizawa gulped.

“It’s alright, Fukukado-san, I understand completely,” Inko said, “Did you know that I had known Izuku’s father for almost a year by the time he realized I was flirting with him?”

“Mom!” Izuku cried out in betrayal. Fukukado just laughed.

“Well, at least we’ve passed that stage of the courtship! I doubt Eraser could ignore my flirting.”

“Neither can anyone else, that’s the problem.” Aizawa said.

“Oh, so you want me to be more subtle in my affections! I can do that!”

Aizawa just sighed as everyone laughed at him, “Deku, don’t encourage her.”

“Why not?” Izuku said innocently, “You two are so cute together!”
This made Nakamura spit out his drink as Aizawa looked betrayed, “I trusted you, Deku. I trusted you and you stabbed me in the back and left me with her.”

“That was amazing, Deku!” Fukukado held out her hand for a fist bump, which Izuku took her up on, “And don’t be so dramatic, Eraser! I’ll win you over eventually and you know it.”

Aizawa just sighed and shook his head, “More like you’ll wear me down. Your way of flirting is like a war of attrition.” he turned to look at Izuku as he pointedly changed the subject, “So Deku, we need to talk about internship options.”

“Don’t internships happen after school starts?” Inko asked.

“Normally, yes. Your son, however, is a special case. He’s been working with us in an advisory role for several months at this point and there is a raid coming up that we invited him on before knowing how young he is. We still think that his input will be essential, but he’ll need to be part of an official internship in order to come.” Inko looked worried. “We will make sure he stays safe while still allowing him to contribute to the mission.”

“Internships for first years normally only last a week, and we’ve been arguing non-stop about who gets to take you.” Fukukado said, “One of the options we’ve thought of is having you do a few different internships in the next two months leading up to the raid. That way, you’d get more intensive training to make sure you’re ready and we can all stop fighting!”

Izuku’s eyes went wide, “That sounds amazing! Can I, Mom? Please?”

Inko looked at him for a long moment before caving, “You’re sure that these internships will help him be safe?” The three heroes nodded, “Then ok, but don’t put yourself in any more danger than you need to and listen to the heroes, ok?”

“Ok!” He hugged her tightly, “Thank you so much, Mom!”

“Thanks for dinner, Midoriya-san. Congratulations, Deku!” Fukukado said as the heroes left, “See you for training and internships.”

“And don’t forget there’s a planning meeting Saturday,” Nakamura said, “Detective Tsukauchi’ll be picking you up.”

“I still don’t understand why I can’t just walk…” Izuku said sullenly.

“It’s because you’re still a kid,” Aizawa ruffled Izuku’s hair, “Problem child.”

Chapter End Notes

Since my stories are becoming so popular, I thought you might like it if I shared my tumblr. Just so you know, I only have one blog, so it's multifandom. It's got a lot of miraculous ladybug, dragon prince, good omens, and of course my hero academia!
Is this supposed to be a Joke?

Chapter Summary

Izuku's internship with Ms. Joke.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Thought you might like to know that this is officially the most popular story I've ever written!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So, Deku, you ready for your first internship?”

Izuku nodded as Ms. Joke led the way into the agency she shared with several other underground pros. He couldn’t believe he was actually going to be staying the week, learning how to be a hero! Yeah, he knew he’d made it into UA, but this just felt more real, somehow.

“Ok, we’ll drop your bag off in your room, then our support department wants to meet you.”

“Support department? Like the people who make your weapons?”

Joke nodded, “That’s part of what they do, but there’s more too. The support department of a hero agency provides us with costumes, gear, and weapons, but they also do analysis, help us track down villains, and gather evidence to turn in to the police. Basically, kind of what you’ve been doing so far. That’s why they’re so eager to meet you.”

“O-ok.”

Joke led him up several floors to where they had several small rooms for internship purposes and let him drop off all his stuff before going to another floor and leading him down a long hallway to a dark room filled with various monitors and a team of people Izuku had never seen before.

“Hey everyone!”

“Hey Joke! Who’s the kid?”

“Oh him?” Joke smiled and pulled him out from where he had been trying to hide behind her, “This is Deku!”

Izuku gave a hesitant wave as the team stared at him.

“That’s Deku?”

“I heard Deku was young, it’s just...he’s tiny!”

Izuku shrunk in on himself as the whispers continued. Of course, even Deku was cooler than him.
He shouldn’t have come. Maybe it wasn’t too late to tell Joke he wanted to go home. He felt Joke put a hand on his shoulder and he looked up at her.

She was smiling, “Why don’t you go show ‘em what you got?” She said softly. “Hey, you got any videos Deku here can analyze?”

One of the support team pulled up a video from earlier that day and pressed play before Izuku could even get out his notebook.

“A bullet quirk…but why are the bullets ricocheting like that? They seem to be breaking the laws of physics. Maybe a telekinesis quirk? Is that her quirk or does she have a partner? She doesn’t look betrayed when she’s arrested, so probably no partner then. Most likely she brings along a limited number of bullets, then pretends to have a bullet quirk so people are more wary of her. Still, the speeds she’s able to move them are really impressive…”

“Wow…” Izuku stopped and tried to stomp down his embarrassment at being caught muttering, “It really is Deku…”

“What? Did ya think I’d lie to ya?” Joke laughed.

“I mean, you do have a tendency to pull pranks, so…”

“Ha! That’s fair! But I’m telling ya, the kid’s the real deal. Nearly gave us all a heart attack the first time we saw him though. We were expecting some grey beard, then in walks a baby!”

The team laughed and Izuku joined in. He really should be used to people being surprised at his age by now, but he still couldn’t figure out why. His analysis really wasn’t that spectacular, they were just being nice.

“So, Deku’s here on an internship and he’s not cleared for combat yet, but I’d like him to have an earpiece so I can talk to him during patrols.”

One of the support team members nodded and fiddled with something for a minute before handing it to Izuku, “That’s a standard Hero Commission earpiece, plus some. It will allow you to talk to the rest of the team, mostly just Joke and then probably one of us, and it will allow us to see your location at all times.”

Izuku put it in his ear and smiled at Joke, who laughed and put an arm around his shoulder, “Looking good, kid! You’re all official now!”

“So Deku,” someone asked, “I have to ask, when and how did you get started on analysis? Who taught you?”

“Well,” Izuku replied, “I first started when I was about four, I…” He was about to say he thought it would help make up for his quirklessness, but he wasn’t quite ready to have all that out in the open yet, “I thought it might help me become a hero. I had my heart set on it even back then. I guess it worked!” That made everyone laugh, “To answer your other question, no one taught me. I just watched the news and started making notes on what I saw.” He shrugged, “I don’t even want to look back at my first one. I’ve still got it, but I’m fairly certain I wrote at least half of it in crayon.”

There was complete silence and Izuku turned to see every member of the support team staring at him with open mouths, while Joke simply smiled proudly. What happened, did he say something wrong?

“Oh my goodness…” one of them grabbed a notebook and pen that had been sitting on the desk,
“Deku, I need your autograph. I don’t care that you’re going to be an underground hero, I just, that’s amazing.”

“O-ok?” Izuku looked up at Joke, who nodded, then took the paper, “Do I sign as Deku or my real name?”

“You go by Deku professionally, so I’d probably use that one.” Joke said, “I sign everything as Ms. Joke because no one knows who Emi Fukukado is!” She laughed.

Izuku smiled, “I did.”

“You don’t count.” She ruffled his hair as he signed the notebook and gave it back.

“I’d actually like to ask you guys a few questions while we’re here,” He said.

The head of the support team nodded, “That’s what we’re here for. Shoot.”

“So about Ms. Joke’s laugh mask, did you design it or did a support firm? Does it work by focusing her quirk like Present Mic’s directional speaker or does it completely neutralize the quirk. If it doesn’t, can it? How do you…”

They stayed for another hour or so while Izuku asked dozens of questions and the support team asked a few of their own. Ms. Joke just smiled proudly the whole time. She was thrilled to have gotten Deku first for internships, but the other heroes couldn’t argue. She had called dibs, after all.

Deku just looked so happy. In moments like this, it was hard to remember that no one had ever encouraged him, that he curled in on himself to make himself a smaller target, or that he stuttered and flinched whenever he realized he’d been rambling.

By the time they left the support room, Izuku had filled up half a notebook. In his arms, he held the earpiece as well as a plain black jumpsuit they’d given him. He didn’t have a hero costume yet, so he’d just have to make do with that until he figured out what he wanted. Izuku didn’t even know what he wanted for his hero costume. All his old designs had been heavily inspired by All Might, but that was too painful now and besides, he wasn’t going to be a hero like All Might.

“Ms. Joke?” He asked hesitantly, “How did you decide on your hero costume?”

Joke hummed and brought a finger to her chin as she thought, “Well, it wasn’t simple and my first costume looked almost nothing like this. At first, I thought I wanted something like a clown, but I just couldn’t get it to work. Honestly, I don’t know exactly what started me on the pirate motif, I just kinda stumbled on the stripes and it kinda grew from there. Besides that, some of it’s functional, like I didn’t start with a bandana, but my hair kept falling in my face during spars in hero training. Same with my gloves. I didn’t think I’d ever use brass knuckles, but the support department at my school suggested them and I found that they really gave me an edge, especially since I had boxing training.” She shrugged, “I guess you just start with something that sounds cool, then it grows from there as you get more experience and figure out what you need. Why? You thinking about what you want?”

Izuku nodded, “I had some ideas when I was a kid, but my goals are different now. I don’t need to be flashy, I just want to make people feel safe…”

“Except for the villains,” Ms. Joke teased.

“I wonder…would it be better to have an intimidating costume to scare villains, or something cuter to comfort victims…”
“Well, for underground heroes, it’s often better to scare the villains. You won’t be doing as much rescue work as heroes like the Pussycats or Thirteen, but that doesn’t mean you can completely ignore how the victims see you, either. I don’t mean to say your costume has to be cute, heroes like Edgeshot can be comforting to civilians while still looking cool.” she shrugged, “I don’t know what to tell you, kid. You kind of have to find a balance. What’s going to look intimidating to villains while comforting civilians?”

Izuku thought for a moment, “If I had to say...I’d almost want to say epic.”

Joke laughed, “Well, when you figure out how to transfer that into visuals, let me know.”

Izuku smiled. Yeah, epic seemed like a good start.

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“All right,” Ms. Joke put her hands on her hips and looked Izuku in the eye, “here are the rules. Interns are allowed to tag along on patrols, but you have to do what I tell you to, ok?” Izuku nodded.

“Rule number one is no combat, we’ll probably run into a few villains tonight, but I’m the one who’ll be fighting them. You’ll be staying on the rooftops or in the shadows, analyzing the situation and making observations but not fighting, are we clear?”

Izuku nodded, but hesitated, “What if you’re in trouble and need help.”

“Then you run and contact the support team. They’ll send another pro to assist me, but you stay away.” She sighed, “I know it sounds harsh, but even if you don’t have a quirk, you could still get in trouble if you step in. The only times you’re allowed to fight are if your life is in danger or I give you explicit permission in an emergency. Even if it weren’t the law, your mom would kill me if you got hurt.” She laughed, “And then Eraser would find some way to bring me back from the dead just so he could kill me again. But joking aside, do you understand.”

“Yes. If you are in trouble, another pro will be much more help than I would be and I won’t have to worry about getting hurt or in trouble.” He pouted, “Doesn’t mean I have to like it.”

Joke laughed again and ruffled his hair, “Don’t worry, kiddo, you’ll have your license soon enough.”

Izuku looked up at her, “So what other rules are there?”

Joke’s eyes lit up with mischief, “Keep up!” With that she ran up the nearest fire escape and onto the rooftops while Izuku scrambled to catch up.

“No fair!”

Ms. Joke was taking care of her third mugging of the night when it happened. Izuku was staying up on the rooftops like he’d been told, muttering a live analysis of the fight into his earpiece when he sensed someone coming up behind him. It was only years of dodging Kacchan and months of combat training with Eraserhead that allowed him to move out of the way as a spiked fist came crashing down.

“Some hero brat. You’re pretty creepy with your muttering, you know.” The villain backed Izuku against the wall and swung his fist back.
“Deku!” Ms. Joke cried, but the muggers on the street below came at her and wouldn’t let her leave.

Izuku flinched, knowing that the punch would hurt, maybe even worse than Kacchan’s. When he opened his eyes again, he was staring at the ceiling. He brought a hand up to his face, expecting blood and pain, but to his surprise he was fine. What happened?

“Hey there, handsome, what were you doing up here in the middle of the night?”

“Izuku?” He said in shock, “Did you knock out that guy?”

The heroine nodded, “Sorry it knocked you out too, but unfortunately my quirk just kinda goes everywhere. But that brings us back to what you’re doing on a rooftop in the middle of the night.”

“Kiddo! Are you ok? Did he hurt you? I am so sorry!” Ms. Joke climbed up onto the rooftop, having finally knocked out all the villains she’d been fighting. She was nearly frantic with worry when she finally saw Deku and Midnight.

“It’s ok, Ms. Joke! Midnight saved me just in time!”

“Oh thank goodness!” She turned to Midnight, “Thank you so much. I told him to stay on the rooftops while I fought the villains so that he’d be safe, I wasn’t expecting a villain to attack him. I don’t know what I would’ve done if he’d gotten hurt…”

“It’s really no problem, I only regret that I had to knock him out too.” Midnight looked between the two and her eyes widened, “Joke, you didn’t tell me you had a son!”

Izuku turned red as Joke sputtered for a moment, “I, he’s not…” Then she got ahold of herself and started laughing, “He’s not my son! He’s my intern! Why’d you think he was my son?”

“Well,” Midnight replied, “You both have green hair. His is quite a bit darker than yours, but if the father’s hair was black, like say, Eraserhead’s…”

Joke turned red and smacked Midnight in the arm, “Shut up, you tease!”

“Ah, but teasing is so exciting!” Midnight purred, “But aren’t you going to introduce me to this strapping young hero?”

Joke put her arm around Izuku’s shoulders, “Of course! Midnight, this is Deku, my intern for this week. Deku, this is the R-rated hero Midnight.”

“Deku?” Midnight was shocked, “Like the analyst?”

Izuku nodded, “It’s nice to finally meet you in person, Midnight. Did you catch the blood villain from the last analysis I sent you?”

Midnight shook her head, “You said the villain was probably a woman, so I handed the case off to Vlad King since my quirk wouldn’t work as well.” She squealed, “You’re Deku! Oh, you’re so cute!”

“I know, he’s adorable right?” Joke said.

“Adorable doesn’t even cut it! I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone so small and cute!”

“I’m right here…” Izuku grumbled.
“All right, all right,” Joke held up her hands in surrender, “we’ll stop.” She paused, “But you are adorable.”

Izuku groaned and Midnight laughed, “Well then, I’ll let you get back to your patrol.”

“Actually, I think we’re gonna head home. That was enough excitement for one night, thank you very much.” Joke said, “Thanks again for saving him.”

“You’re welcome.” Midnight waved to them as she left, “See you at UA, Deku!”

The two watched her leave before Deku couldn’t contain himself anymore, “That was Midnight! She’s so cool and her quirk is super useful. She uses her theme well too, even if it was controversial when she first came on the scene…”

Ms. Joke smiled and shook her head as Deku rambled the whole way back.

Chapter End Notes

Izuku will be doing four internships total before he starts UA. He'll be doing about one every other week until the planned raid on that drug ring, which is in about two months!
What's in a name?

Chapter Summary

Izuku hangs out with the heroes. His friends learn the origin of his name.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Thanks for all the love you're giving this story! It brightens my day every time I see new comments and kudos. You guys are amazing!
Guys! Guess what? I got fanart about a hypothetical "epic" hero costume for Deku! I seriously feel like I've made it as a writer.

“Come on, kiddo, we’re gonna be late!” Ms. Joke called behind her as Izuku scrambled to catch up.

“If you want me to keep up, maybe you could take some of my bags?”

Joke just laughed, but grabbed the duffel bag from Izuku’s outstretched hand. To celebrate the end of Izuku’s first pre-school internship, they were going to dinner with Eraserhead, Mr. Brave, and even Sir Nighteye. Izuku was having trouble wrapping his head around the fact that the heroes wanted to hang out with him. They seemed to genuinely enjoy his company which was...strange. Even before Kaachan had gotten his quirk, hanging out with him had required a fair bit of posturing, walking on eggshells, and telling Kaachan how amazing he was.

Hanging out with the heroes wasn’t like hanging around Kaachan. The heroes teased one another, but they didn’t mean to hurt each other. They laughed, joked, and talked about each other’s interests. The heroes had never cut off one of his mumble storms by telling him he was annoying or creepy, instead adding interesting insights and asking Izuku to speak up. The worst that had happened was the one time when they were in the middle of a meeting and they told him that they needed to move on, but that they’d like to hear his ideas later.

On the one hand, Izuku was the happiest he’d ever been, but however much he tried to ignore it, fear was bubbling just beneath the surface. It won’t last. They’ll grow tired of you soon enough. They’ll realize how weak you are and then they’ll hate you just like everybody else.

Izuku shook his head and followed Joke into the 24 hour diner they were meeting at. Eraser insisted they go there because of everyone’s patrol schedules, but Izuku knew that he probably just wanted to avoid being around a lot of people. But it worked out with everyone’s schedules, so they were going to dinner at 10:00 at night and then Ms. Joke would take Izuku back home and he’d spend a week with his mom before his next internship with Mr. Brave.

They were apparently the last to arrive, since the others were already sitting in a corner booth. Mr. Brave was telling a joke to Sir Nighteye, who was chuckling softly while Eraser brooded with a cup of coffee and a tired energy that was making the waitresses steer clear. When they saw them, Mr. Brave waved energetically and Sir Nighteye simply nodded. Eraser didn’t acknowledge them, but downed the rest of his coffee and looked slightly less broody than before.
“Hey everyone!” Joke said loudly as she pushed Izuku into the booth and slid in after him, “How was your week?”

“The same as every week, Joke,” Eraser grumbled, “You were the only one with anything interesting happening.”

Joke laughed loudly, “That’s fair! I guess I am really spoiled, after all, I had Deku all week long.” she bragged.

Mr. Brave rolled his eyes, “Yeah, yeah, we heard you the first dozen times.” He turned to Izuku, “She’s been bragging non-stop that she got the first internship, just because she called dibs.” He rolled his eyes, “It’s like she’s forgotten that he’s going to intern with all of us!” He called the last part at Joke, who simply stuck her tongue out at him while Izuku giggled.

“So how was the internship, problem child?” Eraser asked.

Izuku beamed, “It was amazing! I got to watch Ms. Joke fight and see how she used her quirk to take down the villains. I even got to meet Midnight!”

Eraser gave Joke a look, “You took a fourteen year old to meet the R-rated heroine?”

“She...ran into us while on patrol, and besides you know she isn’t that bad. They do let her teach at UA, don’t they?”

Eraser sighed and Izuku continued, “I got to hang out with the support department too. They were a lot of fun and they gave me a real hero commission earpiece too!”

“You should have seen them when I told them he was Deku,” Joke smile proudly, “They couldn’t take their jaws off the floor after they saw his skills in person. One guy even asked him for an autograph!”

Izuku turned a bright red while the others laughed and Eraser patted his shoulder consolingly, “That’s tough, kid. You’re already famous enough to sign autographs and you’re not even in high school yet.”

“I’m not famous,” Izuku grumbled, “Only heroes really know I exist.”

Mr. Brave shrugged, “Maybe not, but among heroes, you’ve got quite the reputation. We’re all waiting with bated breath the day that Deku becomes an official hero.”

Their food had arrived by that point, since the others had ordered for Joke and Izuku before they arrived, and they all started to eat.

Nighteye looked at Izuku, “That reminds me, why did you choose the name Deku as your hero name?”

Izuku looked surprised, “Deku’s going to be my hero name?”

The others just looked at him and Eraser sighed, “Yes, problem child. It’s kinda too late to change it now, since you’ve made all your connections with the name Deku and everyone knows who you are. That’s how I got stuck with Eraserhead. I honestly didn’t really care what I was called, so when we had to choose at the beginning of internships our first year, I just went with the first thing out of Present Mic’s mouth. Then I got a reputation during my internship and the name stuck. Sorry if you wanted something else kid, but that’s the way the world works.”
Izuku nodded, “I guess that makes sense, I just hadn’t thought of it like that.”

“You definitely chose an interesting name,” Nighteye said, “It means useless, doesn’t it?”

“I thought it was like dekiru,” Joke said, “You know? I can do it! Because if anyone can do it, Deku can.” Izuku blushed.

“I thought it was supposed to be ironic,” Brave spoke up, “like it’s useless to resist or something like that.”

Izuku laughed, “Not really, I’d never thought of it like that!”

“So…” Eraserhead prompted, “Why did you choose the name Deku?”

“It’s what my bullies called me because I was quirkless.”

Izuku was busy taking a drink, and so was oblivious to the looks of shocked horror on his friends’ faces.

Brave was the first to speak up, “Deku is an insult?”

Izuku nodded, “My best friend gave me the nickname when we were four because it’s an alternate reading of Izuku and I was useless now because I didn’t have a quirk. Pretty much everybody calls me that now, even the teachers.”

“We’ve been calling you by an insult all this time.” Eraser said angrily, “Why didn’t you say anything? Why did you tell us to call you that?”

Izuku played with his food for a minute before responding, “The day you asked if I had a codename was... a really bad day. I’m usually ok at ignoring all the voices that say I’m not good enough but...” he shrugged, “At the time, I thought you guys deserved to know exactly who you were working with, that I was just a worthless deku who would never be of any use to anyone.”

The heroes stared at him for a moment. It had never crossed their minds that Deku was using the name literally. They had never thought that maybe Deku called himself that because that’s what he thought. Eraser wanted to find everyone who had ever hurt him and make them undergo the same psychological torture that Deku had been subjected to for years.

“We can change it!” Joke said. The others nodded, “It would take a lot of work and normally I’d say it’s more trouble than it’s worth, but if it’s an insult...”

“Yeah,” Mr. Brave added, “You shouldn’t have to go by such a hurtful nickname for the rest of your career.”

Izuku shook his head, “Thanks guys, but really, it’s ok.” He sipped his drink thoughtfully, “I don’t think I mind it as much anymore. At first, it was really hurtful, but people have been calling me Deku since I was four and I’ve gotten used to it.”

“You shouldn’t have to be used to it,” Eraser said angrily, “We’ve been insulting you for months.”

Izuku looked at him in confusion, “But it’s not an insult when you guys say it.”

They stared at him for a moment and he sighed, “You guys don’t say Deku like it’s an insult. I can’t explain it, but it’s something in your tone of voice when you talk to me. To you guys, it’s just a name. I know that you guys respect me, so I don’t feel useless when you say it, I feel...” he
hesitated, “appreciated. I feel like you guys have taken something I hated for years and turned it on its head so that it means something completely different than it was meant to be. It makes me feel powerful to know that I’ve taken even my old insults and made them my own. Does that make any sense?”

There was a long moment of silence before Izuku yelped as Joke enveloped him in a hug. Brave and Nighteye didn’t hesitate, standing up and moving around the table to hug him as well.

“Get in here Eraser!” Joke glared at him and Izuku started laughing and crying at the same time.

Eraser just returned a glare of his own, “No.”

“Just get in here and join the hug!” Nighteye said.

Eraser sighed heavily and rolled his eyes in defeat, but wrapped his arms around Izuku and the others. They stayed there for a few minutes until Izuku managed to stop crying. Could anyone blame him, though? Izuku beamed and wrapped his arms tighter around the heroes he was proud to call his friends.
Izuku groaned as Mr. Brave used his hair like a whip to flip him onto his back. Again.

“Ugh. This just isn’t working!” Izuku stared up at the ceiling piteously, “I’m pretty good at hand to hand combat if I can get in close, but your quirk allows you to keep me at a distance. The way you can use your hair as a weapon even when it’s detached means I can never get close to your actual body. The only way I could plausibly defeat you would be to completely destroy all your hair and then attack you, but I’d be exhausted long before that’d be a possibility.” He rolled over and propped himself up on his elbows, “What do you think I should do Brave?”

Mr. Brave ran his hand through his hair, “Hmm, well, I haven’t ever run into that problem because my quirk is good for both ranged and close combat, but...maybe it’s time you start learning weapons?”

Izuku’s eyes widened, “Really?”

Brave shrugged, “I don’t see any reason why not. You were gonna have to learn how to use weapons and support items eventually anyway because you don’t have a quirk, so we may as well start now. Let’s talk to the support department, see what they’ve got lying around for you to try.”

Izuku failed miserably as he tried not to be overwhelmed as he stared at the buffet of weapons on the table. There were quarterstaffs, tonfas, knives, swords, guns, grappling hooks, grenades, and some things that Izuku couldn’t tell what they were for the life of him.

“Now you’ll probably want something for ranged combat and something for close combat,” Mr. Brave said.

Izuku nodded, “Like how Eraser has his capture weapon to keep people with mutant quirks at a distance, but also has a knife if he needs it.”

“I mean, I think he mostly uses his knife to cut his capture weapon if it gets caught,” Mr. Brave said thoughtfully, “But you’ve got the right idea. The goal is just to be safe and to make sure you have options for every situation. It’d probably also be good for you to learn how to use things like flash grenades and smoke bombs as well so that you can run away from fights you’re not ready for, especially while you’re on your internships.” He looked at Izuku, “So Deku, are you ready to try some of these babies out?”

“No.” Izuku shook his head and sighed, “But I want to do it anyway.”

Brave laughed, “That’s the spirit! What do you want to try first?”
Izuku awkwardly picked up the quarterstaff and gave it a few experimental twirls.

“Nice pick,” Brave yanked a few strands of hair from the back of his head and grew, twisted and hardened them until he was holding a black quarterstaff about the same size as the one Izuku had chosen.

Izuku stared wide eyed at the process, “Do you know how to use it?”

Brave nodded, “At least a little. Back when I was in school, I realized that I could use my hair to make basically any melee weapon I wanted, within reason, so I learned the basics of as many as I could. I prefer swords, myself, but,” He shrugged, “What can you do?” Then he charged.

Izuku tried to block Mr. Brave’s attack, but ended up awkwardly fumbling his staff, tripping over it as he tried to retreat, then hitting himself on the head as he fell. Brave dropped his staff to hold his gut laughing as Izuku glared at him, rubbing his sore head, “Shut up. It’s not as easy as it looks! I think I’m too short for a quarterstaff, anyway.”

Brave just held up a finger as he took a few minutes to compose himself. After a minute or so he sighed, “Ok, I’m done. But really, you can’t expect to be amazing at a weapon the first time you hold it. Weapons mastery takes time, just like other skills, and it’s always going to be painful at the beginning. That being said, you want to enjoy the feeling of the weapon you choose because otherwise you won’t want to practice it and you’ll never learn.”

Izuku sighed, “I think I want to try something else if that’s ok…”

Brave nodded and helped him up from the floor. They ended up spending the next few hours with Izuku trying all the weapons available with varying levels of success and Brave using his hair to make weapons of his own to fight back. By the time they were almost finished with the close combat weapon options, Izuku was frustrated, tired, and sore.

“Alright, Deku, this is the last one.” Brave said, tired himself, “Knives.”

Izuku groaned tiredly but took the knife from the table. Brave made his own and taught Izuku how to hold it before stepping back.

“You ready?” He waited for Izuku to nod before running at him. Izuku pivoted out of the way and slashed, using his dull blade to land a hit on Brave’s arm right where he knew there was a ligament that would make it difficult for his opponent to use that arm if this was a real fight. He smiled at Brave, who used his distraction to knock him on his back again.

“That felt different,” Brave observed, holding out a hand to help Izuku up, “You liked that one, didn’t you?”

Izuku nodded, “I think knives will mesh well with the hand to hand I’ve learned from Eraser and will help me target the weak points I see in my analysis. I could have easily cut your hair with a strong enough knife or given you shallow cuts on your fingers to make it more difficult for you to pull out your hair. I’ll have to be careful and study some anatomy so I know what cuts I can make without seriously injuring my opponent but,” he smiled brightly, “I think I’m up to the challenge.”

“That’s my boy!” Brave clapped Izuku heavily on the back, almost knocking him over, “Ok, let’s go an a short patrol. We can work on ranged weapons tomorrow, how does that sound?”

Izuku nodded and they both went to go change for patrol.
The next day, Izuku and Mr. Brave were back in the training gym at his agency trying to choose a ranged weapon in case Izuku couldn’t get close to his target.

“Midnight uses a whip, right?” Brave asked as Izuku picked one up.

Izuku nodded, “I think she chose it because it fits with her theme, but it would be useful to be able to grab opponents and bring them closer, although I think I’d prefer something like Eraser’s capture weapon if that were my goal.” He tried to crack the whip, but just gave himself a welt on the cheek, “Maybe I’ll come back to this one if I don’t find another weapon I like better.” He said sheepishly.

He ended up liking the bow and arrow decently well, but quickly realized that his hand to hand would suffer if he had to carry such a large weapon on his back. “I think I’ll leave that weapon to Native,” he said as he gingerly placed it back on the table, “What else have we got?”

Brave looked over his shoulder, “It looks like we’ve got some blow darts and shurikens as well as some guns. What do you want to try?”

Izuku thought for a moment, “Well, Snipe uses guns and he varies the kind of bullet he uses based on how much damage he wants to do. He mostly uses rubber bullets and bean bag rounds, but he’s also been known to use live ammo and tranq darts.”

“Ok! We don’t have a shooting range in this building, but the police station does and it’s just a few blocks away. Is that alright?”

It didn’t take them long to arrive, especially since Mr. Brave was in his civilian garb and not many people would have recognized him anyway, so they didn’t have to worry about being stopped for autographs like a daylight hero would. Detective Tsukauchi was standing by the front desk when they arrived and he waved when he saw them.

“Hello Mr. Brave, Deku. How’s the internship going?”

Izuku smiled, “It’s going really well, detective. Mr. Brave thinks it’s time I start learning weapons so I can make up for...everything.”

“Guns seem like a nice option if Deku can’t get close to his opponent for any reason,” Brave said, “We were wondering if we could use the shooting range here, see if he likes them.”

Tsukauchi nodded, “That’ll be fine, you’ll just need to sign some waivers and I’ll take you right back.”

After they read through the required paperwork, Tsukauchi handed them both earmuffs and led them into the basement where a few officers were already practicing their marksmanship. Tsukauchi grabbed some paper targets from a bin by the door and sent one out about three meters to start, then handed Izuku a pistol.

“Ok, so the first rule of gun safety is to always treat a gun as if it’s loaded, even when you know it’s not. Basically, don’t point the gun at someone unless you’re actually ready to shoot them.” Izuku nodded and Tsukauchi taught him how to load it and where to put his hands while Brave looked on proudly.

“Ok, now this little piece on the top is what’s called a sight. You aim by lining it up with your target, which will become second nature the more you practice. Now Deku, just try to hit the bullseye.”
Izuku nodded and took a deep breath, trying to remember everything Tsukauchi had told him as he aimed, then pulled the trigger. He looked at the detective who nodded and gestured for him to fire again. Once he’d emptied his cartridge, Tsukauchi called back the target and Izuku smiled.

None of the bullets had hit the bullseye, but none of them had completely missed the target either. Brave whistled and Tsukauchi smiled, “That’s a pretty nice grouping for your first time holding a gun. Would you like to try again?”

Izuku nodded enthusiastically and reloaded the gun as Tsukauchi changed the target. By the time they left two hours later, Izuku had gotten lucky and hit the bullseye twice and set up appointments to come practice twice a week. He massaged the soreness out of his hand as Brave gave the earmuffs back.

“Good work, Deku.” Tsukauchi said, “You’ll need to have an official firearm certification before you’re allowed to carry a gun in the field, but as long as you keep practicing, you should be able to get certified right before school starts in a few months. Either way, you should include the gun in your costume design and the support company will just add it when you’re ready.”

Izuku nodded and followed Mr. Brave out the door, “Thanks detective!”

Brave chucked as they left, “Everybody’s gonna be so jealous I got to teach you weapons.”

Group Chat

12579: (Eraserhead)

@87657 You gave him a gun?!

87657: (Mr. Brave)

Well…

12579: (Eraserhead)

Of all the irresponsible things you could have done this week, you gave him a gun?

87657: (Mr. Brave)

Calm down, Eraser, it’s not like I let him keep it! I took him down to the police station shooting range and Tsukauchi was there the whole time. He’s gonna help the kid get a certification so he doesn’t shoot his eye out. He won’t be able to carry it in the field for months, so stop being such a dad.

12579: (Eraserhead)

I’m just concerned and I am not acting like a dad.
(Ms. Joke)
Actually, you kinda are.

(Sir Nighteye)
I’m on Eraserhead’s side. I support the idea of Deku having weapons, but are you sure it had to be a gun, Brave?

(Mr. Brave)
Hey, we tried a bunch of different ones and Deku liked the gun best. He took to it like a duck to water too. It’s not that different from the knives he chose for close combat.

(Eraserhead)
You gave him knives?!?

(Ms. Joke)
This just in, Eraserhead strives to babyproof the hero industry to protect one (1) smol green bean!

(Eraserhead)
Shut up, Joke!

(Ms. Joke)
Not until you stop acting like a dad!

(Sir Nighteye)
As long as he learns how to use the weapons safely, I suppose it’ll be alright. There are a lot of quirks that are more dangerous than guns.

(Eraserhead)
Fine! You win! Deku’s got a gun and I’m going back to bed.
Just wait, the kiddo will show up to class the first day with a gun strapped to his hip and Eraser’l have to choose between being a proud papa and a sour grumpus.

You do realize I’m still here, right?

Obviously! It’s no fun to tease you when you’re not here.

You’re insufferable.

But you love me!

I really don’t.

You two, stop flirting and go to bed!

You heard the guy! Sleep well, Eraser! Remember, coffee doesn’t count as sleep!
12579: *(Eraserhead)*

We weren’t...whatever, good night.

12579 has left the chat.

Chapter End Notes

If you can't tell, I am obsessed with giving Izuku knives. I wasn't originally planning on giving him a gun, but then everyone in the comments really wanted to see Izuku with a gun, so... it was just too good to resist!
Kacchan runs into Deku on his way home from the UA entrance exam.

I'm sorry.

Katsuki Bakugo massaged out his wrists as he walked home from the UA entrance exam. He’d been pleasantly surprised that Deku hadn’t shown up, but that didn’t explain the changes he’d been seeing in the nerd the past few months. At first it was small, just Deku smiling more and always looking at his phone, as if the nerd had anyone to text. Annoying, but not a big deal at the end of the day. But then, about two or three months ago, Katsuki had stopped seeing the nerd outside of class at all. It wasn’t like they hung out socially or anything, but Katsuki could usually find Deku during lunch or after school and give him a beat down to make sure he still knew his place and wasn’t still trying to be a hero.

But lately, it was as if Deku had been disappearing into thin air whenever he didn’t have to be in class. Once, Katsuki and his lackeys had followed him into an alleyway that he was certain didn’t have any other exit, but the nerd was nowhere to be seen. The only sound or movement at all was some cat or something clamoring over the rooftops. And then school let out a month ago and he hadn’t seen Deku since. It was really starting to piss him off.

So when he saw a telltale sign of green hair turning the corner in front of him, Katsuki didn’t hesitate to follow. Deku was listening to something on his phone and muttering to himself like the creep he was, so he didn’t notice Katsuki gradually getting closer until he was grabbed by the collar and roughly pulled into an alley.

“Deku!” He growled and shoved the nerd against the wall.

“K-kacchan!” Deku squeaked out, “I-it’s been a w-while.”

Katsuki scoffed, “You’ve been avoiding me, nerd. You think you’re better than me?”

He smiled slightly as Deku’s eyes widened in fear, “N-no, Kacchan, that’s not it at all! I’ve just b- been really b-busy and…”

“Busy? As if a nobody like you has places to be.” He slammed Deku against the wall again, wincing a little when he heard the nerd’s head hit the brick, “Admit it! You think you’re too good to be around me!”

“K-kacchan…” Deku slurred, but Katsuki wasn’t listening. He threw a right hook at Deku’s face, eyes widening as the nerd grabbed his arm and pivoted as if he was trying to throw Katsuki over his shoulder. Something went wrong at the last minute though, because Deku swayed a bit, then
stumbled, allowing Katsuki to yank his arm free.

Katsuki saw red. *That damn nerd!* Was he really trying to fight back? After all the time Katsuki had spent teaching him his place? Who did he think he was?

He grabbed Deku’s shoulder with his left hand and set off a small explosion, causing him to cry out, but Katsuki wasn’t done. He kept his hand on Deku’s shoulder to keep him in place as he kneed him in the gut, then used his right to hit Deku in the jaw, which knocked him to the ground.

“P-please, K-kacchan, stop! I-it hurts! W-we’re friends, please, stop!”

Katsuki snorted, “Friends? With a useless loser like you?” He kicked him in the gut then let lose a few quirked punches that Deku tried to block with his arms, “Who would be friends with you?”

As soon as he deemed that Deku had learned his lesson, Katsuki stood up straight and looked down at the cowering nerd. Pathetic.

“I’m glad you didn’t show your worthless face at the entrance exam, Deku.” He said, “It seems you’ve finally learned your lesson about trying to be a hero.” He gave one last kick, then turned to leave the alley, “Don’t make me teach you again.”

Izuku dragged himself to the training gym he was meeting his friends at that afternoon, trying to ignore the nausea and the way his vision seemed to blur at the edges. They had all agreed to get together to see how he was coming along with his training, especially now that he was starting to add weapons. He wanted nothing more than to go home and sleep for a million years, but his discussion with Katsuki had already made him late. He couldn’t disappoint his friends by not showing up at all.

“Hey, Deku!” Joke cried out cheerfully when she heard the door open, “What took you so long?”

Deku tried to smile despite the pain in his cheek, but that soon turned into a frown when he saw the horrified looks on his friends’ faces. Izuku knew he should know why they were so horrified, but his brain was too foggy to come up with anything.

“...eku. Deku, can you hear me?” Eraserhead was kneeling in front of him and Izuku hissed as he touched the burn on his shoulder. Eraser yanked his hand away, but grabbed his other shoulder as Izuku started to sway. He was grateful for the support, since he felt like he was going to fall over any second.

“Hi, Eraser…” He tried to say, but it ended up coming out slurred and Izuku frowned in confusion. Why weren’t words working the way they were supposed to? He didn’t normally stutter around his friends.

“Joke, hold him, make sure he stays awake, I’m calling Recovery Girl.”

Izuku brightened, “Recovery Girl is such a great hero,” he slurred, “But I’m not that injured. I’ve had worse…”

Joke looked afraid, “Kiddo...just, ramble for me. What do you like about Recovery Girl’s quirk?”

Izuku nodded, but stopped when it felt like his head was about to split in two. He wanted to tell Joke about how the healing energy coming from the person’s own stamina allowed the heroine to heal for hours with hardly any breaks, but for some reason his tongue felt really heavy. He was really tired.
For all that Shouta tried to deny it when the others implied he saw Deku as a son, he didn’t think he’d ever been more terrified than when the kid had stumbled in with a massive bruise on his cheek and dirty tear tracks running down his face. The way he’d hissed in pain when Shouta tried to steady him broke his heart and drew his attention to his singed t-shirt and the shiny burns running up and down his arms.

It didn’t take him long to realize that Deku had a pretty bad concussion and needed medical treatment immediately. How had he even managed to walk here? The kid had to have a freakish pain tolerance, which didn't paint a pretty picture.

He called Ms. Joke over to steady Deku and keep him awake while he called Recovery Girl. He was trying to explain the situation when he heard Joke’s panicked voice and he turned around just in time to watch Deku pass out in Joke’s arms.

“That’s it, we’re taking him to UA, now!”

Sir Nighteye nodded, “You steady him and make sure we won’t be worsening any injuries, I’ll grab my car.”

“Hang in there, Deku. Please!” Shouta whispered, “Please. We’re gonna get you help.”

Izuku woke up blinking under harsh fluorescent lights. When he realized he didn’t know where he was, he bolted upright, only to fall back on the bed when he was hit by a wave of nausea.

“Don’t try to sit up too fast, dearie.” An old woman’s voice said, “You had a bad concussion. I managed to heal most of it, but you still shouldn’t move too quickly.”

Izuku obeyed the voice and moved more slowly. He felt the bed he was on raising up to help him and figured the owner of the voice must be controlling it.

He turned to look at her, “Recovery Girl!??” She chuckled and nodded, gesturing for Izuku to look around the rest of the room, “Eraser? Joke? Brave? Nighteye? What are you all doing here?” He paused for a moment, “What am I doing here? And where is here anyway?”

“You’re at UA,” Eraser said, “We brought you here because you had a concussion, multiple burns, as well as bruising on your face and stomach. You’re honestly lucky you didn’t have any internal bleeding.”

Izuku nodded along as he remembered the beating Kacchan had given him. That sounded about right. He looked at his friends' faces and was hit by a wave of guilt as he realized he’d made them all worry. He shrank in on himself, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to bother you, and it was probably really inconvenient and…” he looked up to find his four closest friends staring at him with so much concern he wanted to throw up and he started to hyperventilate.

“Slow down, kid.” Mr. Brave was suddenly kneeling at his side, “Breathe with me. In, out. Ok?”

After Izuku had managed to calm his breathing, he kept his eyes glued to the covers in embarrassment. He should have just gone home and hidden his injuries before meeting his friends so they wouldn’t have to worry about them. Why didn’t he do that? How could he have forgotten to do something so basic?
“I would’ve been fine, guys. Maybe these injuries seem a little bad, but I’ve always managed pretty well in the past. You didn’t need to take me to a doctor.”

Recovery Girl rapped him lightly on the head with her cane, “Don’t go saying things like that, dearie. Your injuries were severe and in other circumstances could have been life threatening. Your friends did the right thing by bringing you here.”

“Deku,” Eraser spoke softly, as if expecting Izuku to run away if he spoke too loud, “Who did this to you?”

Izuku stared down at his hands, “It’s not his fault.”

“What do you mean, kiddo?” It was strange hearing Ms. Joke so quiet when normally her very presence was loud enough to take over a room. Izuku took a deep breath and hoped his friends wouldn’t judge him.

“It was my fault. I, um, I shouldn’t have gotten in his way. He was right, I was avoiding him, which I guess means he thought that I was thinking I was better than him, which I’m not, I know that. I’ll never be better than him, but I guess that’s how I was acting because that’s what he thought and so it’s my fault because he had to teach me a lesson and he’s probably going to be super mad when he finds out that I still want to be a hero and then, oh no! And then he’s gonna do it again and it’ll still be all my fault.”

Shouta felt his heart break. This kid. He’d just gotten beaten to a pulp, but instead of blaming the guilty party he was trying to justify it, searching for any tiny thing he’d done to deserve it. And the worst part was that people don’t just start to do that overnight. The self blame that Deku was exhibiting had to be the result of years of abuse, both emotional and physical. Who would do that to a kid?

“Deku, who did this?”

He watched as Deku continued playing with his hands rather than looking up. He didn’t want to push the kid, but…

“I, um, it was my f-friend. K-kaccan.” Deku said softly, then hurried on, “But like I said, it wasn’t his fault! It was mine for thinking I was better than him.”

Nighteye raised one eyebrow, “First of all, did you actually think that?”

Deku’s eyes widened and he flailed his arms, “No! I would never! But he thinks I did, so I must have done something to make him think that, so it’s my own fault. I shouldn’t have gotten in his way, I should have just…”

Nighteye raised a hand to cut him off, “If you didn’t even do what he was accusing you of, how could it have been your fault? And even if you had ‘thought you were better than him’ as you put it, it would still have been his fault for lashing out. Does that make any sense?”

Deku thought for a moment, “Kinda. But he’s my friend. He wouldn’t hurt me if he didn’t have a good reason…”

“Sometimes, people don’t have to have good reasons to hurt other people.” Brave said hesitantly, “And sometimes, they hurt others because it’s what makes sense to them, but that doesn’t make it right.”

“It also doesn’t make it your fault, Deku,” Joke said, “If this boy decided to hurt you, it’s because
he wanted to hurt you, not because of anything you did.”

“B-but that doesn’t make any sense!” Deku sniffled as he started crying again, “If he hurt me, it must be because I did something bad! We’ve been best friends since we were kids!”

“Deku,” Eraser looked him in the eye, “friends don’t hurt each other.”

The room was silent for a long time as Deku digested that information. When he spoke again, his voice was fragile, “You mean, Kacchan’s not really my friend?”

“We’re your friends, Deku.” Joke said, “We care about you and would never try to hurt you or ‘teach you your place’. Friends help each other, like when you help us with your analysis, or when we help you with your training. Friends tease each other and lift each other up, they don’t put each other down or try to crush each other’s dreams.”

“Oh.” Deku said quietly.

“I know it probably hurts to hear this,” Nighteye said, “But Kacchan probably hasn’t been your friend in a long time.”

Deku nodded absently.

“But that’s ok!” Brave said cheerfully, “You’ve got us now!”

Deku gave a weak smile, but Shouta could tell he still didn’t really believe them. Not that he could blame the kid. One positive conversation wasn’t enough to override a lifetime of conditioning. He didn’t know how long it would take before Deku realized what an extraordinary kid he was, but Shouta did know one thing.

If he ever met this ‘Kacchan’, that kid was getting a piece of his mind.
Mutations

Chapter Summary

The beginning of Izuku's internship with Sir Nighteye.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! This chapter is a little longer than I normally make them, but it just didn't want to be split into two chapters, so you all got lucky today!

“Hey! I’m looking for Deku, is he here?”

Inko looked at the young man suspiciously, “Are you one of his friends?”

The young man smiled and Inko was reminded of All Might, “Yep!”

“Hmm,” She hesitated, “What’s your hero name?”

He put both hands on his hips and struck his chest out, “Le Million! Why?”

Inko gave a tense smile, “Most of Izuku’s friends are pro heroes. Someone his own age...let’s just say kids have pretended to be his friends as pranks before.”

Le Million frowned, “That sucks.”

Inko nodded in agreement as Izuku came up behind her carrying his duffel bag, “Thanks Mom.”

He looked at the newcomer, “You must be Mirio Toogata! Nighteye’s intern?”

The boy nodded, “That’s right! And you’re Deku, right? I’ve heard a lot about you.”

“Don’t believe everything you hear,” Izuku said blushing, “Nighteye and the others tend to exaggerate.”

Toogata laughed, “Sir told me you were too modest for your own good! Here, let me take that for you.” He grabbed the duffle out of Izuku’s hand.

“Have fun this week!” Inko waved as the boys left, “Be safe!”

“We will Mom!” Izuku called back. “Bye!”

“She worries a lot, doesn’t she?” Togata asked.

Izuku nodded, “Her heart’s in the right place though. I know she doesn’t really want me to be a hero, she’s pretty bad at hiding it actually, but she’s willing to support me even though it makes her worry.” He shrugged. “That’s more than most people can say, so I count myself pretty lucky.” He smiled. “So what’s it like being Nighteye’s intern?”
Toogata beamed, “Super fun! But also really difficult. I didn’t have a great handle on my quirk when I was recruited, but he’s put me through the wringer the last few months and now I’m one of the best students at UA.” He rubbed the back of his neck. “But actually, recently my quirk kind of...mutated, and I’m basically having to master it all over again. I was hoping you could help me with it this week, if that’s ok?”

Izuku nodded, “I’d love to. Analyzing quirks is really fun for me and I love coming up with ideas to help people improve. Your quirk is some kind of permeation, right? I remember you made a big splash at the sports festival.”

Toogata went slightly pink, “Uhh, yeah. I really should have listened to sensei when he suggested wearing a uniform infused with my DNA, but I thought that’d count as a costume or support item and give me an unfair advantage so…”

Izuku nodded, “I understand where you’re coming from, but that is a pretty big disadvantage.”

Toogata laughed again, “Yeah, you get used to it. I hardly even get embarrassed anymore, except when I’m naked on national television, apparently.”

Izuku pulled out a small notebook as they got on the train, “So, you said your quirk had mutated. What’s it like now?”

“Well,” Toogata paused thoughtfully, like he was trying to be careful about what he said, “It’s gotten kind of a...super strength aspect to it now? And some speed. But if I use it for more than a few punches at a time, I get hairline fractures in my bones.”

Izuku hummed thoughtfully, “That’s a pretty big mutation. It almost sounds like your quirk is too powerful for your body.”

Toogata chuckled awkwardly, “Yeah, we thought it might be something like that…”

Izuku was already taking notes and jotting down different ideas, “I think I’m gonna need to see your quirk in action before I can come up with anything concrete, but it’s probably better if we wait until we’re at Nighteye’s agency before we do that. Public quirk usage and all that.”

Toogata nodded, “So you’re gonna be starting UA this year, right?”

“Yep!” Izuku practically bounced with excitement, “It’s seriously a dream come true! I’ve wanted to be a hero ever since I was a toddler. I just can’t believe it’s finally happening.”

“Do you know what class you’re going to be in?”

Izuku nodded, “1A. Normally, I’m not sure they’d put in a class where I was already friends with the teacher, but I think they knew Eraser would be ok with teaching...someone like me.”

Toogata frowned in confusion, “Someone like you? You mean someone who’s already worked in the field?”

Izuku sighed, “I mean someone quirkless.”

Toogata’s jaw dropped, “You’re quirkless?”

Izuku fidgeted uncomfortably. Why’d he say that? Why’d he have to go and ruin it? And Toogata had been so nice too.
“Sorry dude,” Toogata said, shaking his head, “I’m not sure I’m worthy to be around someone was impressive as you. I for sure thought you had some kind of analysis quirk from what Sir told me about you. Has there ever been a quirkless hero before?”

Izuku stared at him, “You mean, you don’t think less of me because I don’t have a quirk? You think it’s...cool?”

Toogata nodded, “I guess you probably don’t hear that a lot, do you?”

Izuku shook his head slowly.

“Well you should.” Toogata said, clapping him on the back. “I was made fun of for my quirk too. Pretty much everyone told me it was too weak or had too many drawbacks. That there was no way I could be a hero. I almost believed them for a while. But then Sir took me under his wing and made me into who I am today. So, no, I’m not gonna judge you or tell you that you can’t be a hero, because I can see you’ve got what it takes in here.” He poked Izuku in the chest, then his eyes widened. “Oh, no, you’re crying. What happened? What did I do? Did I say something wrong?”

Izuku shook his head and wiped his eyes, “They’re happy tears, I promise. Sorry,” he laughed, “I’ve always been kinda a cry baby.”

“No problem,” Toogata said, “I think you’re pretty cool.”

It wasn’t long until they reached their stop and they walked the rest of the way to Sir Nighteye’s agency, chatting about heroes who had recently debuted. They walked in the door and were greeted by a woman with blue skin.

“Aww! You must Deku!”

Izuku nodded, “You’re Bubble Girl! It’s nice to meet you!”

Bubble Girl nodded, “Likewise. Sir asked me to show you where you’ll be staying this week, then you’ll be meeting him in his office. I think he has some cases he wants you to take a look at.”

“Aww…” Toogata sighed, “I wanted Deku to help me with my quirk!”

“I’m sure there’ll be time for that later, Le Million, but Sir takes first priority.”

“It’s ok!” Toogata smiled, “I’ll just be practicing in the gym.” He turned to Izuku. “Come find me when Sir’s done with you.”

Izuku nodded as Toogata left and Bubble Girl led him to Nighteye’s office. When he walked in, Nighteye was busy scribbling away at his desk, so Izuku took a moment to look around the room. He knew Nighteye used to be All Might’s sidekick but, wow, he was almost a bigger fanboy than Izuku used to be. He shifted uncomfortably under the number one hero’s gaze. Even through the posters, it felt like All Might was judging him.

Izuku shook his head and turned his attention to the bookshelves instead. He had people who believed in him now. He was Deku, a highly respected analyst who had worked with more pros than many people would ever meet. All Might was just one more in the list of people who told him he couldn’t, no different than Kacchan or his teachers. He took a deep breath.

“Sorry about that, Deku, I had to finish the paperwork from the case we closed yesterday.”

“The kidnapping case?”
Nighteye nodded, “The leader had a paralyzation quirk, just like you thought.”

“Bubble Girl said you had some other cases for me to look at…”

“Yes, but I don’t just want you to analyze while you’re here,” Nighteye went over the cabinet and grabbed a handful of files, “I want you to observe how to handle a case from beginning to end. For example, we received a report yesterday of a museum robbery.” He opened the paper-thin file in front of Izuku, “Here is the evidence we retrieved from the scene and we’ll be collaborating with the police. What would you do first?”

Izuku looked through the file, mostly a list of what was stolen, the damage done to the doors and display cases, and the data from the security cameras.

“The cameras were turned off?”

“Yes,” Nighteye said, “But none of the cameras were broken.”

Izuku thought for a moment, “We’re probably looking for someone with a jamming quirk or some sort of technology manipulation, so I’d ask the police to run a list of those, but there’s also the possibility of someone simply hacking into the system, so they should run a list of known hackers as well. If it is a hacker, we should look at the system history because they might have left a trail. With a high profile robbery like this, there’s a strong probability that the culprit has committed smaller crimes in the past, so cross reference the quirk and hacker lists with small robberies where the cameras were turned off within the past five years.”

He looked to Nighteye, who looked a little less stern than usual, “Good work. There are a few other possibilities that you could investigate, however…”

For the next few hours, Nighteye took Izuku through some of their current cases and educated him on the proper procedures for an investigation and how to work with the police to make sure all the evidence was catalogued and the villains were taken into custody. By the end, Izuku’s brain hurt a little, but his cheeks also hurt from smiling too wide, so he figured it was alright.

“Also, Deku, I think it would be a good idea for you to get a private investigator’s license. It will be redundant once you receive your full hero’s licence, but I believe you would find it useful in the meantime.”

Izuku nodded, “I’ll bring it up with Nedzu once school gets started, since I think he wants to have private lessons with me. I’m sure he’s got some resources I can use to get it quickly.”

Nighteye nodded, “That’s good. Just don’t forget that the purpose of those lessons will be to learn, not to take over the world.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” Izuku laughed. “If we’re finished, I promised Toogata I’d help him with his quirk.”

Nighteye waved him away and grabbed a few more files to work on, “I don’t often patrol like the other heroes you’ve interned with thus far, so I will simply see you tomorrow.”

Izuku smiled and left, closing the door behind him as he headed down toward where he thought the gym was. It took him a few minutes to find, since he took a wrong turn once and had to get directions from Centipeder, but soon enough he was peeking through the door to see if Toogata was still there.

“…You’ll get it, young Toogata, I know you will.”
Izuku hurriedly ducked back outside and held himself flat against the wall. What was All Might doing here? Didn’t he have a falling out with Sir Nighteye years ago? And why was he in his skeletal form in front of Toogata? Did he already run out of time today?

Izuku could still hear the conversation filtering through the walls.

“I know, it’s just so hard getting used to this much power. It’s so different than my permeation!” Toogata sighed, “But I’ve asked Deku to help me out, so hopefully he’ll help me work out some of the kinks.”

“Deku?” All Might sounded confused, “Who’s that?”

Izuku could practically hear Toogata’s smile, “He’s this super awesome quirk analyst that’s been helping out in the underground for almost a year now. He doesn’t interact with daylight heroes much, so I’m not surprised you haven’t heard of him, but Sir talks about him all the time.”

“Ahh,” All Might said, “I suppose that makes sense. When are you supposed to meet him?”

“Actually, I’m supposed to be meeting him right now. Well, as soon as Sir’s done with him, but they should have finished by now. I told him to meet me here.” He paused, “Maybe I should go look for him, make sure he didn’t get lost.”

“Very well, young Toogata.” All Might said, “I need to get to an appointment with Recover Girl, so I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Izuku quickly ran around a corner so he wouldn’t be seen and hopefully All Might would walk in the other direction. He almost sighed in relief when Toogata rounded the corner by himself. He really wasn’t ready to face All Might today.

“Hey, Deku!” Toogata said cheerfully, “I was just looking for you. You didn’t get lost, did you?”

“Only a little,” Izuku said shakily, “Centipeder helped me out. So, are you ready for me to see your quirk?”

“Yeah!” Toogata yelled and led Izuku into the thankfully empty gym. They made their way to the corner where a series of punching bags were set up.

“So, this is kind of what my quirk started as,” Toogata passed a hand through one of the punching bags, “I can turn my entire body intangible, but if I do that all at once, I’ll just fall straight into the floor, which will spit me back out once I turn tangible again. While I’m intangible, I can’t see, hear, or breathe because light, sound, and air just pass right through me.”

Izuku nodded and pulled out a notebook, “Ok, so you said you’ve pretty much mastered this part of your quirk, right? You know how to work around the drawbacks?” Toogata nodded. “Ok, what about the mutation you mentioned?”

Toogata nodded and concentrated. His veins started glowing red with power and he passed his hand through the punching bag again, but this time without turning intangible. Izuku shielded his eyes from the flying sand and braced himself to stay on his feet despite the massive wind.

“So...yeah,” Toogata said, “That’s the super strength aspect. I can do a few punches like that but any more than two or three and my bones start breaking. It’s just hairline fractures so far, but I don’t want to get into a fight where my choices are to break my body or fail to save someone, you know?”
Izuku nodded, muttering quickly as his hand flew across the page. “Ok,” he said after about a minute, “Do you know yet if you’re able to adjust your power output?”

Toogata shrugged, “I’ve never tried before.”

Izuku put his notebook away, “That’s what we’ll start with then. Try punching the next punching bag using your strength, but don’t break through it.”

Three punching bags later, and Toogata still hadn’t managed to throw a punch without destroying anything. Izuku rubbed the bridge of his nose, “Ok, I think we need a new approach. I noticed the last few times, the red veins only appear in the arm you’re punching with. Is that where you’re focusing your quirk?”

Toogata nodded, “I’m used to only powering parts of my body at a time, since that’s how I use my intangibility.”

“Ok, well then this is probably going to be counterintuitive, but try using your quirk to power your entire body at the same time.”

“Ok…” Toogata said skeptically, but shifted into a battle stance. Within a few seconds, red veins had appeared all over his body, but they disappeared a few seconds later, only to be replaced by crackling white lightning.

“What the…” Toogata’s eyes widened and he lost control of his quirk, the lightning fizzling out into nothing, “What was that?”

Izuku was smiling widely, “That was your quirk! Apparently, spreading out the power allows it to release more energy, almost in a static electricity kind of way. This slight release will probably also adjust to your capacity for your power and how much you’re using. It’ll be interesting to see once you learn to adjust your power output if the lightning disappears when you’re using 100% and increases the lower you go, because that would indicate that your quirk can autoregulate in order to not harm your body. That would be so cool!”

For the next hour, Toogata practiced spreading his quirk through his whole body until he could hold it for a full five minutes. He was sweating, but smiling, and Izuku felt like he had a pretty good concept of Toogata’s quirk now.

“You’re quirk is so cool, Toogata!” Izuku said when they decided to call it a day, “It’s almost like it’s two separate quirks entirely!”

Toogata’s eyes widened minutely and he laughed nervously, “I’m sure it’s nothing that special, right?”

Izuku raised an eyebrow, but brushed off Toogata’s weird behavior when he didn’t add anything.

“See you tomorrow, Deku!”

Izuku smiled and watched Toogata leave, “Yeah, see ya!”

Izuku couldn’t sleep.

The more he thought about Toogata’s quirk, the more it bugged him. According to everything he’d studied on quirk theory, it was theoretically possible to have an unrelated mutation appear later in life, but it was much more likely for a mutation to happen when the quirk first appeared in
childhood. If Toogata’s quirk did mutate at his age, it should have just been a more powerful version of permeation or something similar to it, not super strength. The more likely scenario was that someone in Toogata’s family had a similar quirk and it just hid in his genes until now, but he’d said no one in his family had a strength quirk of any kind when Izuku had asked. So why had Toogata’s quirk mutated in such a weird way?

Izuku sighed and swung his feet out of bed. If he wasn’t going to be able to sleep anyway, he might as well use the time to research similar quirks and see if something like this had ever happened before. Even if he didn’t find anything to satisfy his curiosity, he’d probably get some creative ideas on how to help Toogata.

The first half hour of searching didn’t bring up anything too interesting. Most strength quirks functioned similarly to Death Arms’s quirk, simply increasing strength and durability. They also all manifested in childhood, not as a mutation nearly a decade later. He was about to give up and try to go to sleep again when he noticed a promising article on a decades old hero.

**Nana Shimura was just beginning her hero career when her quirk underwent a rare mutation, increasing her strength and speed exponentially. This was odd enough on its own, but even more so when taking into account that her quirk, Float, had nothing to do with strength or speed.**

Izuku looked deeper into Shimura, analyzing her quirk Float, which wasn’t anything like Permeation, and trying to figure out how hers mutated because maybe that’d tell him something about how Togata’s did. He found an old photo and almost screamed when he saw a younger All Might in his skinny form draping an arm around her. He read the article and ran his hands through his hair.

“Nana Shimura taught All Might.”

Now that he thought about it, Toogata’s quirk was eerily similar to All Might’s and All Might seemed to be teaching him. It was probably that Nighteye reached after Toogata’s quirk mutated the way it did, because that would make sense.

But what if it wasn’t.

Izuku almost didn’t want to keep looking because he had to be wrong. What he was thinking just couldn’t be possible. He numbly entered more search terms until he tracked down the hero who trained Nana Shimura.

“...manifested a strength aspect to his quirk in his second year at UA...”

No. It couldn’t be. It wasn’t possible! He looked at who had trained that hero.

“...took a three year break from hero work when her quirk unexpectedly mutated.”

If there had ever been any possibility that Izuku would get to sleep that night, it was long gone. He tracked the line of heroes and their mentors, each suddenly manifesting a strength quirk that inexplicably got stronger with each hero mentored.

When he finally got to the dawn of quirks and the trail went cold, Izuku let out a deep exhale. As impossible as it seemed, as ridiculous as it sounded, he couldn’t deny it anymore.

There was a quirk that could be passed on.
Quirkless

Chapter Summary

Izuku has a crisis.

Something was different about Deku.

Mirio watched as Deku looked through case files with almost robotic precision and gave a few ideas for quirk improvement to him and Sir’s sidekicks, but the quiet muttering and the bright smiles he’d come to associate with Deku were nowhere to be found. He also kept looking at Mirio oddly. Sometimes it was like he was sad? At other moments, it was almost as if he was angry? But then the looks were gone and Deku was back to being almost normal, except quieter. Mirio couldn’t figure it out. Maybe Deku had a bad dream last night? Or maybe he just didn’t sleep well? Whatever it was, it had to have been big, but at the same time... how big could it have been if he hadn’t even left the agency?

Mirio thought for a moment. He should probably ask him or something, right? All Might was always telling him how important a smile was to being the next symbol of peace. He said that taking care of people’s spirits was just as important as taking care of their bodies, so... Mirio looked at Deku for a minute before walking up to him and clapping him on the back.

“Hey Deku, why so glum?”

Deku jumped in surprise and looked at him nervously, “Sorry, I was lost in thought. What did you say again?”

“I was just noticing you’re a bit off today.” Mirio explained sheepishly. “Did something happen?”

Deku’s eyes widened slightly before he forced a wobbly smile onto his face, “I just didn’t get much sleep last night is all.”

“Nightmares?”

“Research.” Deku said, “Speaking of, I’ve got some cases I wanted to go over again. I’ll see you later!”

Mirio watched in confusion as Deku practically ran down the hall.

Well, that was weird.

Izuku felt bad for avoiding Toogata, but he couldn’t help it! Every time he looked at him, all he could think was that Toogata had been born with an amazing quirk that would make him a wonderful hero and then decided that wasn’t good enough and was literally given another. All while Izuku, who had been wanting to be a hero his entire life, had to deal with everyone telling him he was worthless and incapable of being a hero simply because he didn’t have a quirk.

He took a deep breath as he closed the door to his borrowed room. Why did Toogata get to have two quirks? In what way was that fair? Izuku thought back to that day on the rooftop when he
asked All Might if he could be a hero too and had to quash down his anger before he screamed. All Might knew that there was a quirk that could be passed on, but still told a little boy that his dream of being a hero was absolutely impossible.

Izuku didn’t blame him for being reluctant to pass his quirk to a quirkless kid he’d just met, but did he have to give his quirk to someone who already had one? Why couldn’t All Might have gone around talked with groups of quirkless kids and picked his successor that way? He could have seen which ones had heroic potential, which ones would be grateful for the opportunity he was giving them, and which would make good use of his amazing quirk. He even had his skinny form so no one would know that All Might was even looking for a successor!

But instead, All Might had taken one look at Toogata, who was already one of the best students and UA, and decided to make him even more powerful. It just wasn’t fair! Izuku ran his hands through his hair, wincing when his fingers caught on the tangles. He knew he wasn’t being fair to Toogata. With how highly Nighteye thought of him, it was entirely possible it was Nighteye who reached out to All Might and suggested Toogata as a potential successor. It probably wasn’t like Toogata asked to receive All Might’s quirk. Izuku didn’t know if he wished Toogata had rejected it or not. On the one hand, it would have been better to give someone quirkless that opportunity, but on the other, who could reject an offer like that from the number one hero himself?

Izuku sighed and got out his laptop. He was tired, angry, and frustrated, but all of that was drowned out by the self-pity that he felt as he compared himself, the scrawny kid doomed to misery the moment he was born with two toe joints, to Toogata, the lucky hero with two amazing quirks. Could Izuku even worth anything if he didn’t even have one quirk?

Group Chat

12857: (Deku)

Guys, this probably seems like a random question, but would you like me better if I had a quirk?

58726: (Ms. Joke)

What’s this about, Deku?

87657: (Mr. Brave)

Is “Kacchan” giving you trouble again?

12857: (Deku)

No, it’s just...you guys are the first people I’ve ever met who don’t judge me because I’m quirkless, and I appreciate that. But I can’t help but think, if I had a quirk, wouldn’t I be more useful? Wouldn’t you like me better if I wasn’t so useless?
58726: (Ms. Joke)

You’re not useless, Deku! I know you’ve been told all your life that quirkless and useless are synonymous, but they’re not! You have so many useful skills that you’ve gained because you are smart and work hard, not because of anything you were born with. You don’t need a quirk to be useful and you don’t need a quirk for us to like you!

12579: (Eraserhead)

I think what Joke’s trying to say is that we would like you exactly the same whether you had a quirk or not. You are the same person with or without extra toe joints, so you don’t need to worry that we’d like you better if you woke up tomorrow puking rainbows.

87657: (Mr. Brave)

Yeah, Deku, you’re our friend because of who you are, your personality, and your amazing analysis. All of which would be the same even if you had a quirk, so to us at least, you’d be the same old Deku you are today.

12579: (Eraserhead)

So, are we gonna talk about what brought this up?

12857: (Deku)

It’s really nothing, guys. I was just thinking about how hard my life’s been and about how it’d be so much easier if I just had a quirk. Sorry to bother you guys.

12579: (Eraserhead)

You’re not bothering us, problem child.

58726: (Ms. Joke)

Yeah, we’re always here for you because we love you almost as much as Eraser loves me!

12579: (Eraserhead)

Joke!
Izuku stopped chuckling when he heard a knock at his door.

“Deku?” Nigheye’s voice said, “Is it alright if I come in?”

Izuku hurriedly wiped away his tears, “Yeah.”

Nighteye poked his head through the door. Anyone who didn’t know him well would think his expression was stern, but Izuku could recognize the concern hidden behind the scowl, “I saw the group chat.”

Izuku exhaled heavily, “I forgot you could see that.”

Nighteye came and sat next to him on the bed, “So, what’s wrong? You don’t normally struggle with your quirklessness.”

For a minute, Izuku considered lying. Considered saying something like that Kacchan had reached out or he’d seen an anti-quirkless post or something. Or maybe he should tell the truth. Tell Nighteye he knew about All Might’s quirk, assuming Nighteye knew about it, and that it was really unfair that Toogata gets two quirks while Izuku has to go without. Instead, he did neither of those things.

“I-i guess I’m just jealous?” he said softly. Izuku knew All Might’s quirk was supposed to be a secret and he didn’t want to deal with the awkwardness if Nighteye and All Might knew he’d figured it out. “Toogata’s quirk was already powerful before...before it mutated.” A look of guilt flashed across Nighteye’s face. So he did know. Cool. “I just, I always wanted a quirk so it would help me be a hero. I’m still going to try to be a hero without one, but it’d be so much easier if I just had a superpower, you know?”

Nighteye was silent for a long moment and Izuku was starting to regret ever speaking up. Of course Nighteye would probably feel guilty about recommending Toogata for All Might’s quirk instead of Izuku, he should have thought of that. Stupid.

“What would you do,” Nighteye said slowly, “if you got a quirk.”

The way he phrased it meant it could be interpreted as what would he have done if he had gotten a quirk like he was supposed to, but Izuku knew what Nighteye was actually asking. Should I talk to All Might and Toogata and tell them I was wrong?

Izuku shook his head slightly. It was Toogata’s quirk now and Izuku wasn’t about to take that away from him, but...what would Izuku have done if he had been offered All Might’s quirk before Toogata had gotten it? Izuku’s mind blanked at the idea. What would he have done? A year ago, he would have jumped at the opportunity, saying yes without any hesitation, all for the chance to be a hero.

But what if he had? If All Might had offered him a quirk of his own, he never would have reached out to the hero underground. He never would have become Deku the analyst. And he definitely wouldn’t be on track to become the first quirkless hero. He would have used the quirk well, he knew that. He would have found creative ways to use it and he would have been able to save a lot of people, more than he’d probably save quirkless, but...

But then, in ten years, a little kid coming home from a devastating doctor’s visit wouldn’t be able to google quirkless heroes and see someone like them with an actual license. That little kid would have to go through the same hell that Izuku went through going up, wanting to be a hero with no indication that it was even possible for someone like them.
“I don’t think I want a quirk.” Izuku said before he had a chance to overthink the whole thing. “My life hasn’t been easy, but it’s not any different than what other quirkless kids face. I want to be able to give hope to people like me and prove that quirkless doesn’t mean useless. I want little kids like me to have hope given to them, rather than have to stubbornly make their own like I did. Does that make sense?”

Nighteye smiled and nodded, looking relieved, “You’re a good kid, Deku. You’re going to make an amazing hero.”

Izuku smiled and let out a breath, “Now that that’s settled, I have a few ideas on how to help Toogata improve his quirk…”
Inko Midoriya had insisted on having Eraserhead, Ms. Joke, Mr. Brave, and Sir Nighteye all over for dinner before the planned raid next week. Shouta didn’t see the necessity of it, but she’d insisted she be able to spend time with the heroes who were responsible for bringing her son home alive and he hadn’t been able to say no. It shouldn’t be too painful, right?

“Oh dear,” Midoriya-san said with a mischievous glint in her eye, “I do believe I’ve forgotten a few key ingredients for the desert. Aizawa-san, Fukukado-san, would you mind running to the store and picking them up?”

Nevermind. Shouta caught Deku smirking out of the corner of his eye and turned to glare at him, to which Deku responded by pasting an innocent look on his face, an effect which was totally ruined by the way his mouth twitched at the corners. Traitor.

“Of course, Midoriya-san! We’d love to!” Fukukado said gleefully, “Come on Eraser, let’s go shopping like an old married couple.”

“The sooner we leave, the sooner we can get back.” Shouta said sullenly.

“Have fun you two!” Nakamura was trying not to laugh, but was failing miserably. Even Sasaki was smiling. Shouta sighed, how was this his life?

Deku gave them a list and Shouta rolled his eyes as they left. Yep, the problem child was definitely in on it.

“So Eraser,” Fukukado grabbed his arm as she walked, “Are you excited for your new class this year?”

Shouta hoped nobody mistook them for a couple, though he didn’t think anyone would, if only because of their different fashion sense. He was wearing a black shirt and bright pink sweatpants while she was wearing a white and blue striped romper with flowing sleeves. He thought it looked rather good on her, but he wasn’t going to say that out loud. Honestly, Shouta didn’t know how she thought this relationship would work when they were obviously so different. A relationship with her would take him so far out of his comfort zone it wouldn’t even be funny.
“I don’t know.” He stepped around a puddle. “Most of them have powerful quirks, but you know that’s no guarantee of success in the hero industry.”

She nodded, “Yeah, I’ve had a lot of students over the years who think being a hero will be easy just because they can shoot fire or bend metal with their minds. If that was all it took to succeed as a hero, the licensing exam would have a much higher pass rate.” She sighed. “I may not be as trigger happy with expulsions as you are, Eraser, but I do try to get in through my students’ heads that heroism isn’t just sunshine and rainbows like they’ve been taught to believe.”

“That’s why I always threaten expulsion on the first day.” Shouta said. “Even when I don’t end up expelling anyone, that threat stays with them. Whenever they’re tempted to think they already know what the hero industry is, they’ll remember that the first day of hero school was nothing like they expected.”

“Maybe it’s because we’re underground heroes,” Fukukado jumped over a crack in the sidewalk and Shouta rolled his eyes, “but I feel like we’ve got a unique perspective about what heroism is outside of fame and calling out special moves. It’s dangerous and difficult and you can’t save everyone.” She frowned. “Sometimes I wish the students understood that. As it is, it’s always a shock the first time they encounter actual danger or watch someone die in front of them. It’s something they have to experience to really understand, just telling them won’t cut it.”

Shouta thought back to his friends, one of them dying on an internship before he ever had the chance to become a real hero, “I didn’t understand either, at first…”

Fukukado brought both hands up to her mouth, “Oh, Eraser! I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean to…”

He shook his head. “It’s ok. It’s a part of what made me the hero and teacher I am today.” He thought for a moment, “It’s difficult, because I still miss him, but it’s not like it’s something I can’t talk about.”

She looked at him softly, “Still, I’m sorry for bringing up bad memories. Do you want to hear a joke instead?”

He glared at her as she grinned, “What do you call a fake noodle?”

“I really don’t care.”

“An im-pasta! Get it Eraser?” She laughed and grabbed his arm to pull him into the store they’d finally arrived at.

Shouta sighed heavily, but turned away to hide a hint of a smile, “Why did you even decide to go the underground route, anyway? With your loud personality, you could’ve easily been a daylight hero. Maybe you could’ve even had a side job as a comedian like Mic does as a radio host. It fits your quirk well enough.”

“Hmm,” Fukukado looked up from the shopping list she’d been studying, “I was always told I’d be a good comedian, but to me saving people was more important. I didn’t want to be a hero to be famous, because if I was worrying about how to be famous, I wouldn’t be worrying about how to be the best hero I can be.”

Shouta hadn’t been expecting that answer. If anything, he’d been expecting her to make a joke about it and move on, not give him a genuine answer stemming in her beliefs about fame and heroism. Maybe they weren’t so different after all…

“Me too.” He said awkwardly, “Mic always makes fun of me and says I chose to be underground
because I hate the media, which is definitely true,” he cut off Fukukado who’d been about to tease him, “but it was more because I didn’t want to deal with having to constantly watch how I was portraying myself when all I really wanted to do was save people.”

“Well, Eraser,” Fukukado said as she punched him lightly in the arm, “I think you’re doing a pretty good job so far.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Shouta rolled his eyes, “Now what were we supposed to buy?”

He couldn’t help watching Fukukado as she found everything on the list. He hadn’t known she was capable of taking things seriously. Her attitude had always made him think that everything was a joke to her, the same mindset that had made him expel many of his students, but here she was proving him wrong. She laughed, apparently, because she chose to, not because she didn’t understand that people’s lives were at stake every time she put on her hero costume. Shouta had known her for almost as long as he’d been a hero, but...it was starting to seem like he really hadn’t known her at all.

Shouta wasn’t quite sure how to feel about that.

“They’ve been gone for a while…” Izuku said nervously, “You don’t think they ran into trouble, do you?”

“Well, there’s two options here,” Nakamura said as he helped chop vegetables, “either Eraser killed Joke and is now hiding the body, or,” he slammed the knife down on the table, making everyone jump, “she killed him.”

“I’d prefer if she killed him, the world needs all the laughter it can get,” Sasaki sighed, “but unfortunately I think the other possibility is much more likely.”

“Oh don’t be so depressing!” Inko said. “Maybe they realized they’re both madly in love with each other and ran off to Tokyo to get married.”

“And didn’t invite us?” Nakamura put his hand to his chest in mock betrayal, “I thought I was going to be the best man!”

Izuku laughed, “Yeah, right, you’re more like the drunk uncle who gives an embarrassing toast.”

“Shut up! Like you wouldn’t be the ring bearer!”

“Actually,” Inko said with a smile, “I’m pretty sure he’d be the flower girl.”

“Mom!” Izuku yelped. Sasaki chuckled while Nakamura bent over in laughter and Izuku glared at them. “Nevermind. Everyone out! You’re all corrupting my mother.”

Just then the door opened, “Hey, what’s everyone laughing about? Don’t tell me I missed an awesome joke!”

“Don’t worry, Joke,” Nakamura yelled, “It was just Midoriya-san laying out a sick burn!”

Fukukado had a pout on her face when she entered the kitchen, “No fair!”

Aizawa entered, “Just as long as she’s not burning dinner.”

Everyone stopped and stared at him for a moment before Fukukado’s face split into a wide grin, “I didn’t know you had a sense of humor, Eraser.”
He raised an eyebrow, “If you didn’t than you’ve obviously never heard of my logical ruses.”

“I think she meant a sense of humor that other people would find funny.” Sasaki said blandly, causing everyone to burst out laughing again while Aizawa scowled.

During dinner, Inko quizzed each of the heroes on what they were going to do to keep Izuku safe. Izuku wanted to tell her she didn’t have to worry, he was getting really good at combat and each of the heroes had constantly drilled into his head the importance of hanging back and observing so that he wasn’t about to recklessly run into a fight. But at the same time, his mom was letting him do this, despite the fact that it was hard for her, so she deserved to know that he was going to be well protected.

Once everyone had been stuffed to Inko’s satisfaction, Izuku grabbed his duffle bag from his room. They’d decided it was easier for him to just leave with Eraserhead for his final internship, considering it was officially starting tomorrow. Inko stood by the door with tears in her eyes and scooped Izuku up into a big hug.

“Come home safe, ok?” Her voice shook as she hugged him tighter. “I love you.”

Izuku nodded and hugged her back as he started crying too, “I’ll be ok, Mom, I promise. I’ll show those villains who’s boss without doing anything stupid, ok?”

Inko sniffed and looked at her son proudly, “I’m glad you’ve found what makes you happy, Izuku.” She then turned to Aizawa. “I’m trusting you to bring him home safe.”

Aizawa nodded solemnly, “I care about your son and I would never let anything happen to him. Not if I can help it.”

Aizawa’s eyes widened as Inko launched forward and wrapped her arms around his waist. He looked helplessly to the other heroes, who were watching in amusement as he struggled to know what to do with his hands. Eventually he settled on lightly patting Inko on the back, “Ok, um, we should probably get going.”

Inko pulled back with a shaky smile, “Good luck!”

Izuku followed his friends out the door with a smile. He was finally going to be a hero.
What else do you need?

Chapter Summary

Izuku starts his internship with Eraserhead and makes some final preparations for the raid.

“Deku, I have something for you.”

Izuku looked up from where he was looking over the analyses for the villains they would be fighting tomorrow night to see Eraser standing in the doorway, holding a silver metal case. He walked over and set the case on the desk Izuku was working at.

“Normally we wouldn’t give you this until after school started,” Eraser shrugged, “but I think you’ll agree that almost nothing about this situation is normal, so we rushed the order.”

Izuku looked between Eraser and the case in confusion. Eraser rolled his eyes and gestured for him to open it. Izuku hesitantly complied and sucked in a breath when he saw what was inside.

It was his hero costume. It consisted of a sleeveless dark green bodysuit with black panels running down the length of the suit on both sides and an open collar. It had knee-high dark red boots with black armored sections on the thighs and toes. The fingerless gloves went all the way up to just above his elbows. They were the same dark red as his boots but the black armored sections were on his forearms so he could block attacks easier. They also had black knuckledusters built in to give more power to Izuku’s punches. The utility belt for his smoke bombs and flash grenades was black and red, while the knife holsters on his hips were all plain black. He had a holster on his right thigh that held a spring loaded grappling hook similar to the one he’d borrowed from Yaoyorozu during the entrance exam. There were empty holsters on each thigh and a green face mask with a black and red geometric pattern that made Izuku look at Eraser questioningly.

“The extra holsters will be for your guns, once you’re licensed,” Eraser responded, “And the mask is sound canceling, with a mic on the inside. When you’re wearing it, we’ll be able to hear you through the comms, but anyone outside the comm system won’t be able to. This way you can murmur as much as you need to without alerting enemies to your position. There’s a button on the side that will turn that feature off in case you need to talk to civilians.”

Izuku nodded. “That’s smart. I had a few problems with that on previous internships, so this’ll be good.” He looked at Eraser hopefully. “Can I put it on?”

Eraser gave him a look, “I wouldn’t have given it to you if you couldn’t, problem child. You need to get used to the feel of it before the mission, anyway. Meet me in the gym when you’re done and we’ll spar.”

Izuku nodded and got dressed once Aizawa left. He took a minute to look at himself in the mirror and smiled behind the mask. He looked like a hero.

Shouta hid a proud smile in his capture weapon when Deku walked into the gym in full costume. The kid really looked intimidating decked out in dark colors with weapons strapped all over him...
and Shouta felt a brief flash of pity for all the villains who’s first meeting with him would be in a dark alley.

Without any warning, Shouta grabbed his capture weapon and ran forward. Deku’s eyes widened slightly as he brought his arms in front of him to block a kick, then grabbed the capture weapon and wrapped it around his forearm, using it to pull Shouta closer. He threw a punch at Shouta’s gut, but hadn’t let go of the capture weapon, so Shouta dodged the punch and yanked hard, making Deku stumble and creating an opening for Shouta to throw him over his shoulder.

“Good,” Shouta said, “you’re moving pretty well. Is the costume causing any problems or impeding your movements in any way?”

Deku shook his head and waited for a moment, then his eyes widened and he pressed the button on the side of his mask.

“I forget you couldn’t hear me without comms.” He laughed, “Um...no, the extra weight on my feet and hands will take some getting used to, but nothing is chafing or digging anywhere, so I think that’s good, right?”

Shouta nodded, “All right, let’s go again and get you used to the extra weight when you’re fighting.”

They spent the next few hours sparring and by the end of it, Deku was moving as easily in his costume as he could move without it and had gotten a feel for how to grab all his weapons. After that, they spent most of the rest of the day experimenting with the grappling hook so Deku wouldn’t accidentally die if he had to use it.

“This is going to be so cool to use in the middle of a fight, not just to get around!” Deku rambled once they’d finished, “I could probably use it to fly at opponents and increase the speed and power of my punches and kicks. I wonder if there could be a way to control the velocity? I’ll have to look at the design and maybe talk to the support department when I get to UA…”

“You can worry about incorporating the grappling hook into your fighting style after school starts,” Shouta interrupted, “for tomorrow, just use it as a mobility aid.”

Deku nodded with determination, then looked up at Shouta, “Um...thank you. By the way.”

Shouta raised his eyebrow, “For what? Making sure you don’t die?”

Deku fiddled with his hands, “I mean, that too, but... Thank you for helping me be a hero. And for being my friend. I was pretty depressed before and...and then you guys reached out and basically rekindled my dream. Even if it was just that, it’d be more than enough, but then you guys actively took me under your wing and helped train me. I just...thanks.”

Shouta looked at Deku softly and ruffled his hair, “Go get dressed, problem child. You need to get a good night’s sleep and I’m sure you’re exhausted after today.”

Deku gave him a bright smile and he knew the kid had seen straight through his apathetic exterior. He watched Deku leave to go to the locker rooms and Shouta couldn’t help but feel grateful that the problem child had weaseled his way into his life.

Izuku’s whole body was buzzing with nervous energy. The past few months had been beyond his wildest dreams. Ok, well, not really. His wildest dreams involved him spontaneously developing a quirk and going on to become the world’s greatest hero, even better than Kacchan, but those
dreams were in the same vein as fantasy novels in that Izuku knew they were unrealistic and would never have the possibility of actually happening. Well, except if All Might had chosen him to receive his quirk apparently, but he was still kinda reeling from that discovery.

Izuku shook his head. Reality was much better than his dreams anyway. He was on track to become the first quirkless hero. He’d gotten into UA, he’d learned to use weapons, he even had a hero costume! Everything was falling into place and Izuku was the happiest he’d been since the doctor had told him to give up on his dreams when he was four years old.

But no matter how hard he tried, Izuku still couldn’t help but feel like Eraser and the others would wake up one day and realize that he wasn’t worth it. They kept telling him that he was skilled and would be an amazing hero, but they had to be wrong. Izuku was nothing, a nobody, just a pebble on the side of the road in someone else’s story. All this luck and success was just setting him up for devastating disappointment when his heroes inevitably realized how useless he actually was.

Izuku stilled as an even worse idea occurred to him. What if this was all just a practical joke? What if Kacchan and the others had somehow impressed Eraser and the others and they were all laughing behind his back as they built up his dream only to take it away at the last minute? What if they were just pretending to be his friends even though they really hated him and were well aware of how useless he really was?

He distantly realized that his brain was too tired to work correctly and was jumping to conclusions that wouldn’t make any sense if he’d slept properly, but at the moment that was just a simple observation two steps removed from reality. The hypothetical betrayal felt all too real as tears began to leak from Izuku’s eyes and soak the pillow as he struggled to breathe in the dark of his room. Why? Why would they do this to him? He really was worthless if he couldn’t see through such an obvious ruse to begin with. Why did he ever think anyone would actually want to be friends with him?

Izuku didn’t notice that his sobs had gotten louder until someone came in his room and turned on the light. He shoved a hand over his mouth to try to contain the sound. He really was hopeless wasn’t he? Now he’d woken someone else up with his stupid crying and he was being such a bother and why? Why was he so useless?

He felt the bed dip as another person came and sat down beside him and a hand gently carded through his hair.

“Deku?” Eraser’s voice was soft and full of concern, but Izuku couldn’t help but wonder how much of that was faked, “Hey kid, what’s wrong?”

Izuku let out another sob and Eraser pulled him up and into a hug. Izuku clung to him on instinct as he started babbling incoherently and Eraser whispered comfort as he continued running a hand through his hair.

“No, we’re not gonna leave you, kid.” He said softly. “We really do care about you. I don’t know where you got the idea that this is all a joke or if that’s even what you’re saying, but it isn’t. We would never do that to you. We would never betray you, Deku. Ok?”

Eventually, the reassurances managed to make their way into Izuku’s anxiety addled brain and his sobs gradually reduced themselves to sniffles. Now, with the lights on and Eraser beside him in ridiculous cat printed pajamas, his thought process made a lot less sense. He giggled and Eraser raised one eyebrow.

“What’s so funny, problem child?”
Izuku giggled again and gestured helplessly to Eraser’s pajamas. Eraser looked down at his outfit like he’d forgotten what he was wearing and sighed, “If you tell Joke about this, I will personally make sure they never find your body.”

“They,” Izuku hiccuped, somewhere between a laugh and a sob, “they have kittens on them!”

Eraser rolled his eyes, “Yes. They do. And unless you would like me to buy you a pair to match, I would advise you shut up about them.”

Izuku was full on laughing now, “Eraserhead, this big bad serious hero, sleeps in kitten pajamas!”

Eraser scoffed, “I can have kitten pajamas if I want, problem child.”

Izuku stared at him with wide eyes, “Do any of your friends know?”

Eraser glared at him, “Again, if you tell anyone, Deku, they will never find your body. I have a reputation to maintain.”

Izuku smiled, “That would be perfect merch! Imagine going to a hero convention and there’s a booth just selling Eraserhead brand kitten pajamas!”

Eraser groaned and shook his head, “That would be a nightmare. No. Never. That is not happening.” He sighed and looked at Izuku. “Are you feeling any better?”

Izuku stilled. He’d almost forgotten why Eraser was sitting on his bed in his ridiculous pajamas. After a long moment he nodded, “I guess I don’t know what came over me. I still feel like I don’t deserve you guys sometimes. Well, most of the time, actually. I guess it only makes when your brain isn’t working quite right.”

Eraser nodded, “I get it. You’ve been told your whole life that no one would ever care about you expect your mom and that attitude isn’t going to go away overnight.” He leaned back so he could look Izuku in the eyes. “But just know that we really are here for you. Not because we have to be, but because we genuinely like you. I know just words aren’t enough, but I hope someday you’ll be able to see how important you are to us, ok Deku?”

Izuku nodded. The anxious thoughts still clung to the back of his mind like a stubborn piece of sludge, but he could see past them now at least. He took a deep breath and smiled, “Thanks Eraser. I think I’m ok now. I think we’d better try to sleep, though. Tomorrow’s gonna be a long day.”

Eraser nodded and ruffled Izuku’s hair one last time before he stood up, “Good night, Deku. Don’t be afraid to wake me up if you need anything.”

Izuku nodded, “Alright, I’ll let you know if I desperately need to take a picture of your pajamas to send to the group chat.”

Eraser paused at the door and looked incredulously at Izuku, who was grinning widely. After a long moment he scoffed and rolled his eyes.

“Goodnight, problem child.” He said fondly.

“Goodnight, Eraser.”

Izuku buried himself deep in his blankets as Eraser turned off the light and closed the door. He was asleep long before his anxiety could take over again.
Izuku checked his weapons for what felt like the millionth time as he and Eraser waited at the police station for the other heroes to arrive. While the raid wouldn’t start for a few more hours, everyone was meeting here one last time to go over the plan and make sure everything was ready.

The Doraggo drug cartel was one of the biggest suppliers of black market opioids in Japan, and there was a risk that if they didn’t wipe it out all in one go, it would act like a hydra and grow back even stronger than before, so this was a much larger operation than most raids. The cartel had five main bases in Tokyo, so the heroes and police would be split into teams to raid each of them simultaneously. Most of the teams had only two or three heroes, depending on the size of the base, but the team assigned to the main base was much larger because that’s where they leaders were.

The police hadn’t been able to find any information on the leaders and their quirks, just that they would be in the building tonight so they needed Izuku to be on-site to give a live analysis to the heroes. Eraser was coming for much the same reason. It wouldn’t matter what quirks the leaders have if they couldn’t use them.

Nighteye had been assigned to read the head villain’s future to help make sure they weren’t missing anything important, while Mr. Brave and Ms. Joke volunteered to go with them. Nobody had wanted to argue because they were both close to Deku and everyone knew how protective they could get. All in all, their entire little group had been assigned to the same base and Izuku was practically vibrating in nervousness and excitement.

“Are you ok?” Eraser tried to mask his concern behind a raised eyebrow, “You haven’t stopped moving since we arrived.”

Izuku forced himself to stop bouncing in place, “I’m just a little nervous. I know I’ve been going on patrols with you guys for a while now, it’s just...this is the first time I’m really going to be facing villains, you know?”
Eraser glared at him, “I do not know, considering that you have been ordered not to engage.”

Izuku waved his arms wildly, “I know that! I’m not going to pick any fights, I swear! But I am going to be in close quarters with these villains and there’s a chance they might come after me if things go south.” He unbuttoned one of the pouches on his belt and re-fastened it almost immediately, just so he’d have something to do with his hands, “I’m excited, but I’m also scared, you know?”

Eraser’s glare softened, “I’d be concerned if you weren’t.” He sighed. “The fact is that what we do is dangerous. It’s worth it to protect people, but there is always the possibility that things will go wrong and we won’t make it home. It’s always difficult for students to learn that, especially ones who love the idea of being a hugely popular hero. The fact that you’re scared is a good sign that you’re prepared for what we’re going to see in there.” He looked away, “I’m proud of you.”

Izuku’s eyes widened, “What?”

Eraser scoffed, but smiled, “You heard me the first time, problem child. If you’re going to make me repeat myself maybe you have less potential than I thought you did.”

He stiffened as Izuku flung himself forward and wrapped his arms around him. He’d awkwardly lifted a hand to pat the kid’s hair when he heard a shutter click and looked up to see Ms. Joke and Mr. Brave standing in the doorway, grinning smugly.

Ms. Joke thumbed through her phone, “Oh, this is prime blackmail material right here!”

Izuku turned bright red as Eraser jumped up and glared down Joke, “Delete it.”

Ms. Joke, “What Eraser? You don’t want all your students knowing your a giant softy as heart?”

She ran away from Eraser as Brave finally collapsed on the floor laughing. Izuku joined in, enjoying the last lighthearted moments before he would finally embark on his first real mission.

“Ok, remember, Deku,” Eraser whispered, “You are supposed to stay with at least one of us at all times. Don’t go off on your own.”

Izuku nodded, “I understand. Don’t worry, Eraser, between all four of you and my mother, no one is going to let me do anything reckless.”

Eraser narrowed his eyes, “Problem child…”

Izuku rolled his eyes and sighed, “Fine, I won’t go off on my own, ok Dad?”

Joke had to practically suffocate herself to not give away their position with her laughter as Eraser turned a bright red and tried to hide his face completely in his capture weapon. Izuku smirked and high fived Brave.

“All right,” Nighteye cut in, “Deku, you and Joke will enter through the vents, Eraser and Brave will go through the front entrance, and I’ll cover the back in case anyone tries to leave. Keep your radios on and alert everyone of any problems you run into.” He looked at the others, who all nodded. “Let’s go.”

Izuku followed Joke up the fire escape and onto the roof, crouching next to a vent that was large enough for them to crawl through. Joke carefully unscrewed the cover and set it to the side, then got on her hands and knees and crawled in, Izuku following close behind. After a few feet, there
was a vertical shaft they had to go down, so Izuku grabbed his grappling hook and lodged it in the wall. Joke grabbed onto his legs and lowered herself into the shaft, pulling Izuku down along with her as he gradually let out the tension. When they landed, Joke shuffled into a side tunnel to allow Izuku room to land and he pressed a button on the side of his gear to release the hook from where it was lodged and retracted the line, then crawled after Joke.

According to his mental map, they were getting close to the center of the building, which was where the leaders were likely to be. Through the radio, they heard grunts and curses as Eraser and Brave entered the building and started to take out the muscle. They followed a faint light and soon arrived at a large vent. Joke looked through for a moment, then flattened herself against the side to allow Izuku to squeeze past just enough to see through the vent.

The vent looked out over a large room with a large desk covered in cash and questionable substances. Behind the desk were two men and a woman and the way they were surrounded by dozens of guards all looking toward the door made Izuku fairly confident that they were the leaders.

“Ok, I have eyes on the leaders,” He said, thankful for the mask that canceled his voice, “There are three of them, but they’re surrounded by about two dozen thugs, so proceed with caution.” Joke started working on unscrewing the vent while Deku observed the people below, “About half of the thugs have mutant quirks, but most of those are standing far away from the door, so they probably don’t know that Eraser is here. Most of the rest were included on the list of members we already gathered. The three leaders are standing away from the door, one of them is tall red-haired man who looks pretty muscular, but not enough to make me think he has a strength quirk. The second one is also male, but he has a wolf mutant quirk, so most likely fights close combat and uses his teeth as weapons. Be careful of his sense of smell. The last one is a woman with a high black ponytail, she’s short, but looks strong and doesn’t have any physical manifestations of her quirk.”

“Understood,” Eraser grunted, “We’re almost at your location.”

“I’ll engage the villains now and try to take out some of the mutant quirks.” Joke said, “That way they’ll be distracted when you burst in.”

Eraser gave the ok and Joke pushed the vent out. It fell to the ground with a large crash and all eyes turned to look as Joke jumped down and started to fight the nearest villains. Laughter filled the air as she used her quirk to pick them off easily and Izuku stayed in the shadows, muttering strategies and observations. The leaders were hanging back from the fight for now, but Izuku knew that probably wouldn’t last long.

All of a sudden, one of the villains slammed his hand into the wall, turning it to magma and Izuku let out an undignified yelp as he fell into the room. He landed in a roll, but was right in the middle of the fight.

“Deku!” Joke yelled and Izuku shifted into a battle stance and grabbed his knives. He had a lot more training than he had when he’d been attacked on his internship with Joke. A villain tried hitting him with a series of sparks from his hands, but Izuku dodged, then ran forward and slashed the man across his palms. He tried to let loose another stream of his quirk, but screamed as the sparks aggravated his injury. Izuku smiled slightly and used the butt of his knife to knock him out before moving on to his next opponent.

“You can’t win this, you know that.” A man said and Izuku turned to see the red-haired leader slowly advancing on him, “You might as well give up now.”

Izuku was filled with despair. Of course they couldn’t win! He was just a quirkless deku and he
was here with, what? Four heroes? What did they think they could do against one of the biggest
drug operations in Japan, especially when they all had such cool quirks. Before he knew what he
was doing, Izuku had dropped the knife and held up his hands in surrender.

Wait. Why was he surrendering?

He shook himself and looked around to see Eraser was glaring down the red-haired villain and it
clicked, “The red-haired villain has some kind of persuasion quirk. I think he can convince you of
any lie he tells. He told me that we couldn’t win and I didn’t even think to disagree. Keep your
quirk on him, Eraser, I’m gonna knock him out.”

“Deku!” Eraser yelled, probably to tell him to not run toward the stupidly dangerous villain. He
was probably right, but Izuku ignored him as he grabbed his other knife from it’s holster and
switched it into his right hand as he ran toward the villain, who was rambling, trying to convince
him to give up. Izuku used his small size to his advantage and crouched to slash at the man’s
stomach. When he jumped back to dodge the knife, Izuku leveled a kick at his knees, making him
stumble so that Izuku could reach his head and use the same trick he’d used earlier to knock the
man out with the butt of his knife.

“Note to self,” he muttered, “add some kind of tranquilizer to the costume.”

“Deku, are you ok?” Brave yelled, he was currently fighting the wolf mutant leader, who had
jumped in front of the woman leader, growling about how he needed to protect his boss.

“Yes, I’m just down a knife for now,” he replied. A movement in his peripheral vision caught his
eye and he saw the woman slipping out through the now-destroyed side wall, “Guys, the main
leader is getting away, I’m gonna follow her.”

“Deku!” Eraser swore, knocking out his villain and chasing after the kid, “Seriously, problem
child? What did we specifically tell you not to do?”

The woman led him through a maze of hallways before suddenly turning around and facing him,
“Big mistake, hero.” She jumped and bounced off the wall, coming around to kick Izuku in the
kidneys.

“Some, ow! Some kind of elasticity quirk.” He muttered as she continued bouncing around and
hitting him, “Most likely not very good at fighting without it, considering how, ow, engrained it is
in her fighting style.”

Suddenly she started laughing, “Nice of you to join us, Eraserhead.” Izuku looked behind him to
see Eraser standing in the hall. “However, you’re out of luck.” She stuck her bottom lip out in a
fake pout, “Too bad you can’t erase my quirk without erasing your friend’s as well.”

Izuku’s eyes lit up as Eraser gave a terrifying smile that was enough to make the woman retreat a
few steps, “Good thing my friend is quirkless, then, isn’t it?”

The woman’s eyes widened and she jumped, but immediately fell back to earth as Eraser activated
his quirk. Izuku took advantage of her stumbling to run forward and throw her over his shoulder
and she hit the cement with a cry. Undeterred, she jumped to her feet, but Izuku had been right that
she wasn’t used to fighting without her quirk. She would seemingly forget that she couldn’t use it
and try to jump around out of habit and would leave a wide opening for Izuku to take advantage of
every time that happened.

All of a sudden, she was wrapped in white fabric and her arms were pinned to her sides. Izuku gave
one last kick so that she was lying on her side on the ground and couldn’t get any purchase to get out of the bindings.

Eraser used one hand to keep the tension on his weapon as he put in eye drops with the other, “Good work, Deku.” He glared down at him. “Also, you’re grounded.”

“What!?” Izuku yelled incredulously.

Eraser nodded, “We told you not to run off on your own, and then you did. Hence, grounded.”

“You’re not my dad.” Izuku said. “You can’t ground me!”

Eraser raised one eyebrow, “I mean, if you’d prefer I can call your mother right now and give her a play by play of exactly what went down so she can ground you herself.”

Izuku waved his hands in front of him frantically, “Alright, alright, I get it, I’m grounded.”

Eraser smirked and they both turned as Nighteye came strolling down the hall, “The police have already arrested almost all villains onsite. Which one is the leader?”

Eraser gave a nod toward the woman on the ground and Nighteye crouched in front of her. He touched her cheek, then cupped her chin roughly to force her to look at him, “It appears our information was accurate. There does not seem to be any indication in the future that the cartel will recover.”

An officer came to retrieve the leader and wrap her in quirk suppressants before taking her outside to the fleet of waiting cop cars. Izuku and the other hero followed and met Joke and Brave outside along with Detective Tsukauchi.

“Thank you so much for your help, heroes.” He smiled. “Especially you, Deku, we couldn’t have done it without you.”

“But that doesn’t mean I approve of you running after a villain leader with zero warning, Deku.” Eraser said sternly.

“Oh, come on, Eraser!” Joke laughed. “Don’t pretend like you’re not proud of the kid.”

Izuku smiled widely when Eraser sighed, but didn’t deny the accusation, “Come on, problem child, it’s time to go.”

Izuku stumbled after him, “What do we do now? Just go home?”

Eraser turned around quickly and gave a terrifying grin, “Now it’s time for the absolute worst part of hero work.”

Izuku tilted his head in confusion and Eraser’s smile grew, “Paperwork.”

Izuku gulped.
Chapter Summary

The first day at UA begins!

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Izuku is finally starting UA! There is a lot that happens today, so it's going to be a few chapters long. I also decided it worked better for my plot if the first heroics lesson took place on the first day as well, even though I know that's not how it goes in canon.

Izuku took a deep breath before stepping through the front gates of UA. He was finally here! He hunched his shoulders slightly, trying to avoid as many other students as possible as he made his way to the main building. Maybe that nice girl Yaoyorozu from the entrance exam would be in his class? Maybe Kaachan wouldn’t be? Izuku shook his head, he shouldn’t get his hopes up.

As he climbed the front steps, he fiddled with the tie that he just hadn’t managed to get right before coming to school today. Unfortunately, with his eyes busy looking at his neck, he didn’t manage to see the last step. What a way to begin his first day at UA.

Izuku tried to maneuver his momentum into a roll like Joke always told him to do if he was falling on a parkour run, but instead of the familiar feeling of a cement landing, he found himself turning over and over again in midair.

“Oh! I am so sorry!” A girl’s voice said, “I was just trying to catch you using my quirk because I didn’t think falling on the first day of school was a good omen! I’m so sorry, I’ve messed everything up!”

Izuku had now managed to right himself and was floating in midair, sitting cross legged and smiling at the trippy feeling of hovering several feet above the ground, “You have some sort of anti-gravity quirk, right? That’s so cool!”

She looked at him with wide eyes, “You don’t mind?”

Izuku shook his head, “I’m a little dizzy, but otherwise, this is fun! You have such an awesome quirk!”

The girl smiled and pressed her fingers together and Izuku felt his gravity suddenly return as he landed in a crouch. Must be some kind of five point contact quirk…

“My name is Ochako Uraraka!” She said as Izuku stood and brushed himself off, “What’s your name?”

“Izuku Midoriya.” Izuku was thankful that being around Joke and her incessant flirting had
somewhat desensitized him to talking to women, otherwise he would be a mess right now! “Umm, where are you headed? What class are you in?”

Uraraka smiled, “Class 1A. I really only passed the exam by the skin of my teeth. That zero pointer was something else, wasn’t it?”

Izuku rubbed the back of his neck as they started walking. “Actually, I wouldn’t know. I was admitted on recommendations, so our exams were a little different. You guys fought robots, right?”

Uraraka nodded, “Yep, it was insane! There were different sizes and strengths of robots, all worth different point values, but then there was this zero point robot. You’d think it’d be tiny, right? Just something to trip over and get in the way, but it was the size of some of the buildings! I got trapped under some rubble and had already gone over my quirks limits.” She shuddered, “I managed to scrounge up just enough strength to use my quirk to escape and run away before it crushed me, but I ended up passing out for about five hours after the exam. The lecture Recovery Girl gave me was almost as scary as the zero pointer!”

Izuku laughed, “Yeah, she can be pretty intimidating when people don’t take care of themselves. I really never want to get on her bad side.”

They kept chatting idly as they tried to find the 1A classroom without getting lost. They got there a few minutes before the bell and Uraraka opened the giant door easily, probably using her quirk to help. She walked in without hesitation, but Izuku stood frozen by the door.

“It’s the first day and you’re already scuffing up school property, you cretin!”

“You’re kidding me, right?” Kacchan smirked. “Did your old school put a stick up your ass or were you just born that way?”

Iida sighed, “Let’s start over. My name is Tenya Iida and I went to Somei Private…”

“Somei, huh?” Kacchan leaned forward threateningly, “You must think you’re better than. I’m gonna have fun putting you in your place.”

Izuku gulped, he knew exactly how terrible it was to have Kacchan have to put you in your place. He seriously felt bad for Iida.

“Midoriya!” Yaoyorozu waved to him from where she was talking to the ice quirk user from the recommendation exam, “It’s so awesome you made it in! Did you end up having to take the normal exam as well?”

“No, he didn’t.” Iida said. “At least, I didn’t see him there.”

Midoriya stood frozen from all the attention, but smiled hesitantly at Yaoyorozu, “Umm...no, I got in on my first try. It’s good to see all of you again.”

“What the fuck are you doing here, Deku?” Kacchan growled.

Izuku flinched at Kacchan’s tone, but before he could respond, Iida was already speaking, “Oh! You’re the famous Deku-san?” He bowed deeply, “My brother Tensei speaks very highly of you.”

“Tensei?” Izuku tilted his head in confusion. He thought for a minute, did he know a Tensei that was related to Iida? A hero maybe? Wait, didn’t he think Iida looked kinda like a pro at the entrance exam? What was the nickname he’d given him...? Mini-Ingenium!
“Oh! Ingenium!” Izuku laughed, “Yeah, he’s fun to talk to. I tend to work more with his underground sidekicks than I do with him, though.”

Kacchan’s scowl deepened.

Shouta’s normal cup of morning coffee never seemed to be enough on the first day of school. Already, he’d had to stop four third year students from pranking the first years, and had to deal with several students accusing him of being lost and wandering into UA on mistake. Yes, he knew he looked like a hobo, but come on! UA’s security measures wouldn’t allow a random homeless person to just walk in!

He was almost at his classroom. Time to see how quickly this batch of newcomers would notice him. He was just about to grab his sleeping bag when he heard a series of small explosions coming from his class.

“What the fuck are you talking about, Deku?” A loud voice screamed and Shouta suddenly understood exactly what Deku had meant when he said he could just tell who was using his name as an insult, “Why would actual pro-heroes ever want to associate with a quirkless loser like you? Just who do you think you are?”

“Please Bakugo! Such behavior is unbecoming of UA students!”

“Shut up four-eyes!”

“Please, Kacchan!” Deku said, “Just calm down!”

Shouta didn’t wait for his students to notice him as he normally did on the first day of school. Instead, he slammed the door open with his quirk already activated and a glare strong enough to kill. Deku was hunching in on himself like he always did when he was feeling anxious and a blond boy was towering over him, hands still smoking from the use of his quirk only moments before. He was staring at his hands in confusion as the rest of the class looked on in shock.

“If this is how you think it is appropriate to treat your fellow students,” Shouta said, “then maybe you shouldn’t be at UA at all.”

Deku looked up at him and shook his head frantically, pleading with his eyes for him not to expel the boy, Katsuki Bakugo if Shouta remembered correctly from the class role he’d been given. Shouta grit his teeth. On the one hand, this kid was the reason that Deku would never truly realize how talented he was and had bullied him for at least a decade. On the other hand, if Shouta expelled the brat now, Deku would blame himself for his expulsion, which wouldn’t be healthy.

Shouta took a deep breath and released his quirk. He would give the brat until the end of the day. Hopefully by then Bakugo would have given him a concrete reason for expulsion and he could talk to Nedzu. He’d still probably have to talk to Deku and try to prevent him from blaming himself, but that would be more doable if Shouta had a specific instance that day to point to.

“Everyone in your seats. This kind of behavior will not be tolerated, nor will wasting time.” He strode to the front of the class. “Rational students would understand that.”

“Huh?” Bakugo sneered, “And just who the fuck are you?”

Shouta glared at him, but it was Deku who answered, “This is Eraser! I mean, Eraserhead! He’s our teacher!”
Shouta glanced at him softly, “Problem child, when we’re at school, you can just call me Aizawa-sensei.” He looked over at the rest of his students, “For the rest of you who don’t know me, my name is Shouta Aizawa, otherwise known as the pro hero Eraserhead. Deku knows me because we’ve worked together before. You’ll probably find that’s a pattern with him. Anyway, let’s stop wasting time and just get to it.” He pulled out his sleeping bag and retrieved a gym uniform from inside. The drama of that reveal had probably been lost since he didn’t arrive to class bundled up, but oh well. “Put these on and head outside, we’ll start with a quirk assessment test.”

He then turned on his heel and walked out of the classroom and down the hall, not waiting for the students to catch up.

Izuku shook his head and smiled as Aizawa explained that they couldn’t waste time on pointless ceremonies. Classic Eraser. He resisted the urge to chuckle when he saw the other students confused and terrified faces. They obviously hadn’t seen the guy give a stray cat half a sandwich to lure it into his capture weapon so he could take it to the vet.

“Here at UA, we’re not tethered to traditions. That means I get to run my class however I see fit. You’ve never gotten to use your quirks in physical exams before, that’s just not rational. Bakugo,” Izuku hoped he was imagining how his teacher’s voice was laced with hatred, “you got the most points on the entrance exam. What was your farthest distance throw with a softball in middle school?”

“Sixty-seven meters.” Kaachan’s eyes were lit with challenge.

“Try doing it with your quirk.” Aizawa handed Kaachan an electric softball and motioned for him to stand in a circle that was painted on the field. “Anything goes, just stay in the circle.”

Kaachan smirked, “All right, you asked for it.” He wound up the ball, letting it loose with a scream and an explosion, “Die!”

Izuku’s eyes widened, he’d known Kacchan was powerful, but that was something else!

“All of you need to know your maximum capabilities,” Aizawa drawled. His phone beeped as the ball landed and he showed the screen to the students, looking slightly disappointed. 705.2 meters. “It’s the most rational way of figuring out your potential.”

“Woah!”

“I want to go!” A lively student with pink hair and skin exclaimed, “That looks like fun!”

“Yeah!” Another boy said, “We can use our quirks as much as we want!”

“Fun?” Aizawa said seriously, “Idiots. Today you’ll compete in eight physical tests to gauge your potential. Whoever comes last has none and will be expelled immediately.”

The students gasped and Izuku covered his mouth with his hands to hide his smile. Aizawa was trying to scare them into doing their best and make sure they took the exercise seriously. If the last place could still prove they had potential, Aizawa wouldn’t expel them, but they didn’t know that.

Izuku was tapped on the shoulder by an invisible hand and he looked over to see a floating uniform, “Deku, right? You knew Aizawa-sensei before. Is he really serious about this?”

Izuku carefully schooled his expression and shrugged, “He has the highest expulsion rate of any teacher in the history of UA. He doesn’t have any patience for students with zero potential.”
Yaoyorozu looked at him oddly with one eyebrow raised. Apparently she’d caught onto the fact that he hadn’t really answered the question. He smiled slightly and winked and she nodded and returned the smile. They both turned to look at Aizawa-sensei again.

“Wait a minute, ribbit.” A girl with green hair raised her hand, “Bakugo implied earlier that Deku is quirkless. How is it fair to have all of us use our quirks when he won’t be able to?”

Izuku curled in on himself. He’d hoped to keep his quirklesses a secret for a while longer, now they were all going to think he didn’t have any right to be in the hero course, especially if he managed to come in last on the assessment test.

Aizawa only smiled, “Hagakure,” The invisible uniform stood up a little straighter, “is your quirk going to help you run faster?”

“N-no, Aizawa-sensei.”

He nodded, “And Mineta, is your quirk going to help you throw a ball farther?”

A short boy with purple balls for hair shook his head.

“You’ll all realize that while quirks are helpful and influence your potential, they are not everything and will not be useful for every situation. You have to train both your body and your mind to make up for that. I personally do not think that Deku will get last place even if the rest of you use your quirks, but that is neither here nor there. His strengths lie in his mind. Therefore, at the end, there will be a ninth test. Deku will try to create a strategy for you, as a class, to take me down. If this strategy works, he will be proven to have potential, even if he comes in last in the physical exams. In addition, if any of you do poorly in the physical exams, this strategy exercise will be your last chance to prove to me that it’s no mistake that you’re here. Understand?”

The students nodded and glanced at Izuku in pity, apparently already writing him off. There was no way that a group of students would be able to defeat a pro. Izuku simply ignored the stares. He wasn’t planning on getting last in the physical tests. Aizawa wanted the students to go all out, so that was what he’d get.
Izuku leads his classmates in a strategy exercise.

The students looked up at the list Aizawa had projected with the students names, ranks, and scores in shock. Izuku had narrowly beat Mineta, even though he’d been able to use his quirk in at least the repeated side-step. Mineta burst into tears, only stopping when Ojiro hit him over the head with his tail and reminded him about the strategy exercise.

“Allright Deku, do you have a good understanding of your classmate’s quirks?” Aizawa asked. When Izuku nodded he turned to the rest of the class, “I will go inside for five minutes and when I return, you will try to take me down.” He turned and walked away. “Good luck.”

All eyes turned to look at Izuku, who smiled, “Ok, so here’s what I have in mind…”

“Why should we listen to you, Deku?” Bakugo stepped forward, explosions popping from his hands, “You’re just some quirkless nobody.”

Izuku took a deep breath, “I may not have an awesome quirk like you do, Kacchan, but,” he screwed his eyes shut, “that doesn’t mean I’m useless!”

There was a long moment of silence before Bakugo huffed, “Whatever nerd.” He turned away from the group, “There’s no way I’m taking orders from you. If any of you other extras know what’s up, you’ll refuse to follow this useless freak, but whatever. I’m out of here.”

Kacchan went over and sat underneath one of the trees at the far end of the yard. Izuku's eyes lit up. Sitting where he was, Kacchan would be the first thing Aizawa would see when he came out, which meant that he, whether he knew it or not, could serve as a distraction to make the rest of the plan work.

Iida tossed a flare toward where Kaachan was sitting, then turned to the rest of the group, “That was uncalled for. Deku has quite the professional reputation and he is far from useless. Although,” he turned to Izuku, “the fact that you are quirkless puts your performance during the entrance exam into an entirely different light. I must apologize again for my rudeness that day.”

“It’s not a big deal!” Izuku waved his hands placatingly, then rubbed the back of his neck. “You didn’t know I was quirkless and I try not to tell people if I can help it!”

“Still,” Iida pushed his glasses up his nose, “it was very impressive.”

“Dude,” Kaminari interrupted, “are you really a recommendation student, even though you’re
quirkless?"

Izuku nodded, “I had the good luck to get to know a few pro heroes in the last year. They recommended me because of my skills in analysis and strategy.”

“Do you know why there are three of us in this class?” Todoroki’s expression was hard to read, but Izuku figured he was confused, since his position as a recommendation student wasn’t exactly normal.

“Politics,” he gave a small, nervous smile, “Nedzu figured there’d be a mutiny among the parents if a quirkless kid took one of the four normal recommendation spots, so he petitioned the school board to add an extra one this year. They officially approved it after seeing my performance in the exam.”

“Not that this isn’t interesting,” Jiro said brusquely, “but Aizawa-sensei is going to be coming back any minute.”

“Oh, right!” Izuku said, “Jiro, you can hear really well, right?” She nodded. “Ok, go near the door and listen. Warn us when he’s coming back.” Jiro nodded and headed off. “Koda, you communicate with animals, correct?” Koda nodded nervously, “Ok, could you get some birds to see where Aizawa-sensei is now? Go stand on the other side of the door as Jiro so that Aizawa can’t see you both at the same time. That way, even if he cancels one of your quirks, the other will still have theirs and will be able to warn us when he comes.”

“What about the rest of us, dude?” Kirishima asked and a few people took an involuntary step back at the wide grin that spread across Izuku’s face.

“Here’s the plan…”

As soon as the five minutes were up, Shouta headed back outside. It would be interesting to see what the problem child would come up with and would be even more interesting to see if his other students were willing to put aside their biases and listen to him. This was as much a test of his other students to see if they could cooperate as it was a chance for Deku to prove himself, not that Shouta would ever tell them that.

He walked out the doors with his quirk already activated, just in case they were planning a blitz attack, but there was no one there, just Bakugo sitting moodily under a tree. Shouta narrowed his eyes. Where were they?

All of a sudden a few objects were thrown at his face from the tree line and exploded when they were just a foot from his face. Flash grenades! Yaoyorozu must have made them. He closed his eyes as soon as he saw the light, then opened them as soon as he thought it was safe, only for them to start watering tearfully. Did the problem child seriously just use tear gas on him?

As Shouta squinted around, he could slightly see Tokoyami’s dark shadow spread out by the main building and could tell he was hiding other students, but couldn’t tell who. All of a sudden, a patch of thin air pushed him over. Nice try Hagakure, but he’s a trained pro-hero. It’s going to take a lot more than that to take him down. He tried to regain his footing like he always did when someone tried to throw him off balance, only to find the ground beneath his feet slick with acid. He sighed, an inconvenience, but not something he’d never faced.

All of a sudden, his muscles tensed as an electric shock coursed through him. Crap, acid was conductive. Where was Kamanari hiding? This would be so much easier if he just knew where to
look to cancel out their quirks, but the students were all being careful to hide from him.

A shower of small pebbles started pelting him from the tree line. He looked over in that direction and some of the pebbles slowed down and dropped to the ground as their gravity returned. As if that was a cue, Ojiro, Kirishima, Sato, and Shoji all rushed out from behind trees, equipped with sunglasses and gas masks, and started attacking him, trying to surround him so that he couldn’t cancel all their quirks at once.

Shouta smiled and readied his capture weapon to take them down, only to find it wouldn’t move like it was supposed to. He looked down at it to find that Mineta had thrown his sticky balls all over it while Shouta was distracted by Uraraka’s pebbles. He activated his quirk, which was getting painful since the tear gas hadn’t dissipated yet, and the balls fell off. He turned back toward the close combat team as they reached him, only to be blinded again by Aoyama’s navel laser. Fine, even if he couldn’t effectively use his quirk, he still had enough battle experience to combat his students based on their movements alone.

The close combat team kept up a steady stream of attacks which combined with the laser and tear gas to disorient Shouta just enough that he didn’t realize Sero’s tape was reaching out toward his ankles until it was already wrapped around him. He was yanked off his feet and he saw Iida running with the other end of the tape as he slid down an ice path, apparently made so that he wouldn’t get hurt by being dragged at super speeds across the rough grounds.

Shouta slid to a stop at Deku’s feet, who smiled down at him proudly as he stuck a foot on his chest, “Hey there, Eraser! Give up?”

He sighed heavily and nodded, his body going limp in surrender, “Good work, problem child, very impressive.” He glared at Deku, “But did you have to use tear gas?”

Deku rubbed the back of his neck nervously, “You’re always saying to not be afraid to exploit any weakness in an opponent.”

His other students were all yelling and high fiving each other as they gathered around their downed teacher.

“That was awesome!” Ashido yelled.

“Yeah, super manly!”

Shouta extricated himself from the tape and stood, putting eye drops in, “Yeah, yeah. Good work, brats. Don’t let this go to your head, though. You’ll never have a twenty on one fight in your hero careers.” He stood up straighter, “And now for the expulsions.”

The group went silent, with the exception of Mineta who started crying again as he stared up at Shouta with fear.

Shouta gave a deranged smile, “It was a logical ruse!”

Several students started crying along with Mineta, who had switched to tears of relief as Deku practically fell over from laughter.

Yaoyorozu shrugged, “I thought that was obvious from the beginning.”

A bell rang in the school, signalling lunch time and his students practically ran toward the building.
“Deku!” Shouta called out. Deku paused and looked up at him with wide, worried eyes, but Shouta just smiled softly. “You did good, problem child.”

Deku gave a smile so bright that it should be illegal, “Thanks Eraser!”

“Whatever,” He raised one eyebrow, “you’d better get going unless you want to miss lunch.”

“Oh, right!” Izuku started to run to catch up with his classmates and waved over his shoulder, “See you later, Eraser!”

Shouta chuckled and shook his head, heading toward his office to get his super extra strength eye drops and rest his eyes for the next lesson.

Izuku walked through the too-full cafeteria balancing his tray and trying to find an empty table, as had been his habit since he’d been diagnosed quirkless. Trying to sit with other people was just asking for trouble.

Which was part of the reason he was so confused when Uraraka enthusiastically waved at him and motioned for him to come sit by her and Iida. He looked behind him, expecting to see Ashido or maybe Jiro behind him, but the only other person she could have been waving at was some kid with purple hair that Izuku didn’t know. Judging by the slightly raised eyebrow the purple haired kid was giving him, he didn’t know Uraraka either. Which meant she was waving at Izuku. Oh no.

Izuku slowly went to go sit next to her, wondering if this was some kind of trick. It had to be, right? He was quirkless and Kacchan had made sure everyone knew it, so why would anyone be nice to him?

“Deku!” Uraraka said cheerfully. “That was super cool how you came up with a plan to beat Aizawa-sensei! You’re super smart!”

Izuku chuckled nervously, waiting for her to mock him, but she never did. Instead she turned to her food as if nothing else needed to be said. Izuku just looked at her in shock. What was happening?

“Yes. It was very impressive, although we did have to use some underhanded tricks to win.” Iida frowned. “However, it does appear that was the only way to win.”

Izuku nodded, “Yeah, Eraser’s hard to counter because he can cancel your quirks, so you kinda have to be willing to fight dirty if you’re going to beat him. It’s the same with some villains.” He shrugged, “I’m planning on being an underground hero, so fighting dirty is just kinda part of the package.”

“Still,” Iida said, “I wish we didn’t have to resort to such tricks.”

“Oh, lighten up Iida! We won, didn’t we? And no one got expelled!” Uraraka hit him softly on the shoulder and Iida looked like he didn’t know whether this was normal or if he was supposed to scold her for it.

“Yo! Deku!” Kirishima clapped him on the back as he, Ashido, Sero, and Kaminari passed by on their way to another table, “That was super manley how you beat Aizawa-sensei! We’re looking forward to getting to know you better this year!”

Izuku blushed and looked at him with wide eyes, “O-ok? Um, I really didn’t do much, I mean, I left most of the fighting to you guys.”
“Don’t be so modest, dude.” Kaminari laughed, “Compared to a bunch of hopeless idiots like us, you’re a regular genius!”

“You’re not…”

Sero cut Izuku off by laying a hand on his shoulder, “It’s ok. We have other strengths, but intelligence just isn’t one of them and there’s no use in denying that.”

“Oh!” Ashido smiled, “Let’s go sit next to Bakugo! He’s trying to be all surly over by himself!”

Izuku genuinely hoped Kacchan didn’t explode them immediately. They were too nice to die young.

Shortly after their group left, Yaoyorozu caught Izuku’s eye from across the cafeteria and headed over with her tray, dragging a blank-faced Todoroki behind her.

“Hey Midoriya!” She said as they sat down. “Or do you prefer to be called Deku? It seems to be what Aizawa-sensi and Bakugo both call you, and they seem to have known you the longest.”

Izuku shrugged, “I don’t really care at this point. Deku is the name I use for the analysis work I do for underground heroes, and it’s going to be my hero name, so that’s why Eraser calls me that. You can just call me whatever you want, I guess.”

“I like Deku!” Uraraka said. “It has a you can do it vibe to it!”

Izuku laughed, “You know, you’re not the first person to tell me that.”

“You already know your hero name?” Iida said in surprise.

Izuku nodded, “As weird as it is to already have one, I already have a reputation, so it wouldn’t make any sense to change it. I’ve even already been asked to give an autograph or two.” He immediately slapped his hands over his mouth. Oh no! Why did he say that? They were going to think he was bragging and then they’d hate him and…

The others were staring at him wide eyed and then Uraraka started laughing, “You’re gonna go underground and you’re already famous? Sign me up!”

The others, with the exception of Todoroki, joined in on the laughter. Izuku turned bright red and tried to splutter out some sort of excuse, but the others just ignored him. The lunch hour continued like that with Izuku gradually getting more comfortable around these...friends? Was that what they were? Izuku didn’t know, it still felt like he was waiting for the other shoe to drop.

They were going to walk together back to the classroom, but Izuku let the others go on ahead as he used the restroom. As he headed back, he spotted Aizawa off in a side hallway.

“Deku.” Izuku was glad that Aizawa’s eyes looked a little less red than they had. He still felt really bad for having Yaoyorozu make tear gas during the exercise. “How was lunch?”

“It was great!” Izuku grinned, “Everyone’s really nice. It’s so different from middle school.”

Aizawa scowled but let it slide, which Izuku was grateful for. Instead, Aizawa just frowned at Izuku’s tie, “Problem child, what did you even do to make a piece of fabric look like that?”

Izuku smiled sheepishly, “Well, my dad’s not really around to teach me and Mom never learned so...let’s just say that while you can learn anything on youtube, some things are more difficult than
others. Don’t worry though, I’ll get the hang of it.”

Aizawa just huffed and grabbed Izuku’s tie, untying it and retying it much neater while Izuku looked at him in shock, “Problem child.” He shook his head as he tucked the end of the tie under Izuku’s blazer and squeezed his shoulder. “Get to class. You wouldn’t want to be late for your first official heroics lesson.”

“Yes sir!” Izuku said and Aizawa tilted his head like he did when he was trying to hide a smile.

Izuku slipped into the room and went to his seat, unfortunately right behind Kacchan. He still wasn’t quite sure how to feel about him. Kaachan had been his first friend, but ever since he’d made other friends, it had kinda tossed his whole perspective of their relationship on its head, especially since Aizawa and the others insisted that no one who treated him like Kacchan did could really be his friend. Kacchan glared at him as he passed, letting off a few intimidating pops of his quirk before huffing and turning to face forward as the bell rang.

Izuku wondered who their heroics teacher would be. Probably one of the more combat oriented teachers like Snipe or Ectoplasm. Oh, this year was going to be great! A loud bang sounded and everyone flinched as the door was slammed open. Izuku’s eyes widened at the sight of their new heroics teacher, who was grinning at the class in all his muscled glory.

“I am here!”
Katsuki scowled as he got dressed in his brand new hero costume. Many of the other boys were
gawking at Deku’s outfit, especially the variety of weapons strapped all over his body, including
two pistols. How did he even get those? More importantly, how did a quirkless loser like him even
get into UA?

Yeah, he’d admit that the strategy he’d used to beat the teacher was somewhat impressive, but the
nerd didn’t even do any of the work. It was the people with quirks who did all the fighting, and that
was how it’d always be, so where did the stupid teachers get off on letting a useless loser like Deku
into the top hero school in the country! And getting in on recommendations? What kind of a joke
was that? This was supposed to be *his* epic origin story, and Deku was ruining it on purpose!

Whatever. Hopefully he’d have an excuse to beat the nerd up during battle training. If not, well,
there’d always be after school.

“You all look like heros!” All Might declared proudly as they all stepped out of the tunnel.

Katsuki thought it was odd that Deku wasn’t fanboying like everyone else in class. In fact, he
almost seemed nervous, like he was trying to avoid looking All Might in the eye or something. Not
that Katsuki cared, but it seemed way out of character. On the other hand, All Might’s eyes kept
lingering on Deku, like he knew he recognized him from somewhere, but couldn’t quite place him
or something. It was really pissing Katsuki off.

All Might explained that they’d be fighting indoor battles in teams of two and Katsuki tuned him
out. Indoor battles, teams of two, don’t forget the bomb, got it. Now stop yammering, he wanted to
fight already!

He rolled his eyes when he was paired with the four-eyed freak. What was that extra’s quirk again?
It couldn’t have been anything too cool if he hung out with Deku at lunch. All Might pulled out the
first two teams to fight with a flourish and Katsuki smirked. Looks like he’d get to pound Deku
into the ground sooner rather than later.

His smile widened as he saw Deku gulp and glance over at him with fear in his eyes, but fell when
the nerd suddenly clenched his fists and turned to him with determination. Katsuki gave Deku his
best glare before stalking off into the building with four-eyes. This time, he’d make sure that loser
learned his lesson.

The fake weapon was in a room on the third floor and didn’t take long to find. Iida strode up to it
and knocked on the side. The bomb made a hollow clanging sound.

“So this is the weapon we’re supposed to protect…”

Katsuki scoffed and clenched his fists. He could care less about the stupid weapon, “Hey four-
eyes,” he kept looking at the door, “do you really think Deku deserves to be in the hero course?”
“You saw how well he strategized.” Iida said. “And he *did* get on on recommendations, a feat which escaped even me, so I believe he has earned his spot in the hero course. Why do you seem so angry when it comes to him?”

Katsuki saw red. That nerd was tricking him all these months! Pretending to give up on being a hero, pretending that he’d finally learned how useless he really was, when all along he was training with pro heroes! Why didn’t those heroes take an interest in Katsuki? He would obviously be a better hero than *Deku*, everyone said so! So why did the loser get in on recommendations and get a cooler origin story than he did? Deku didn’t even have a quirk!

If there was anything that Katsuki was sure about in this exercise, it was that he was going to kill that damn nerd.

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“Do you think they want us to memorize the floorplan?” Uraraka asked.

Izuku shrugged, “I don’t know, I already did anyway. It’s helpful to have a mental map so you don’t get lost.”

Uraraka stared at him with wide eyes before changing the subject, “You know, All Might’s just as cool in person as he is on television! I’m glad he’s not threatening to expel us like Aizawa did.”

Izuku sat silently for a minute, the paper in his hand becoming hopelessly wrinkled from how tightly he was gripping it. Between realizing that he’d have to deal with the hero that had tried to crush his dreams for the whole semester and being faced with Kacchan who he knew would try to kill him, his nerves were shot. Suddenly, Izuku remembered that it was probably appropriate to say something when a girl asked you a question, “Yeah. Sure.”

Uraraka looked at him with concern, “Are you ok, Deku? You look kinda tense.”

Izuku sighed, “It’s just we’re going up against Kaachan. Plus Iida’s pretty strong too. We should be on our guard, who knows what they’ll pull.”

“Oh right, Bakugo’s the one who’s always making fun of you.”

Izuku nodded, “He can be a pain, but his strength, his confidence, his ambition, not to mention his quirk, they’re all so much greater than mine.”

“He’s pretty mad that you’re at UA, isn’t he?” Uraraka asked.

Izuku gave a breathy laugh, “Yep. That’s why he’s going to come after me as soon as All Might says go. It doesn’t matter that the safer strategy would be for him to guard the bomb and send Iida out to find us. For him, this is personal and nothing anyone says is going to convince him otherwise.” He stood. “But that’s why I have to do better. I refuse to lose today.”

Uraraka got a strange glint in her eye, “So it’s a fated battle between rivals, huh?”

“Not that I’m trying to get you wrapped up in my fight or anything!” Izuku waved his arms in denial.

“Are you kidding?” Uraraka laughed and hit a fist against her palm. “Let’s win this!”

All Might’s voice came over the speaker, making them jump, “Your time starts now!”

Immediately, Izuku snapped into analyst mode, “Ok, so they’re probably expecting us to come in
through the front door. Can you use your quirk on yourself?"

Uraraka grimaced, “Only as a last resort. It makes me really sick.”

Izuku nodded, then grabbed his grappling hook from its holster, shot it so that it lodged into the wall right above the fourth story window, and handed it to Uraraka, “Ok, so this button will retract it and this one will dislodge the hook from wherever it is. If you need to shoot it again, just aim and press this button right here. Got it?”

Uraraka looked overwhelmed, but nodded, “Is it strong enough to handle both of us?”

Izuku looked up at the building, “It doesn’t need to be. I’ll be going in through the front door and leading Kacchan on a wild goose chase. You’ll find Iida and the bomb. Get it if you can, but if not, just tell me where it is and I’ll try to beat Kaachan and come help you.”

“Are you sure you can handle him on your own?” Uraraka asked worriedly.

Izuku smiled, “Kaachan may have bombs,” he patted the holster on his thigh, “but I have guns.”

Uraraka smiled and nodded before pressing the button to retract the hook and swinging through the open window, pulling the hook through behind her. Izuku waited a moment before walking in through the front door. He’d taken a lot of notes on indoor battles over the years, but even more so since he’d started working with underground heroes. He’d even done an indoor battle during the drug cartel raid, so the setting didn’t scare him. His opponent, however, did.

Suddenly, Kacchan rounded a corner, aiming an explosion right at Izuku’s face. He rolled out of the way, just in time, thankful for the fast reflexes he’d gotten from his specialized training. Thick smoke and dust filled the hallway and through his comm, he heard Uraraka quietly ask if he was ok.

Kacchan emerged from the smoke with a sneer on his face, “What’s the matter, Deku. If you’re afraid to stand up and fight me, maybe a quirkless coward like you shouldn’t be at UA.”

Izuku stood up tall and looked him in the eye, “I knew you’d come at me first and try to take me by surprise.”

Kacchan grinned, “I don’t wanna hurt you so bad that they have to stop the fight,” he yelled as he prepared to throw a quirk loaded punch, “but I wanna come close!”

Izuku grabbed Kacchan’s arm and flipped him over his shoulder, “You always use a big right hook to start a fight, Kaachan.” He panted. “I know because I’ve watched you for years. Maybe you should have paid more attention to that notebook you burned and threw away. Those analyses are what caught the attention of the heroes that recommended me.” He grit his teeth as Kacchan began to get up, “You can call me Deku, but I’m not the same defenceless helpless kid anymore! From now on, Deku is the name of a hero!”

Kacchan lowered himself into a battle stance, “Deku,” he growled, “you’re shaking in your boots just looking at me, but you want to fight me anyway.” His hands started popping with explosions. “That’s why I hate you!”

Kacchan launched himself at Izuku who tried to wrap the capture tape around his ankle. Next, Izuku knew that Kacchan would get impatient and try to end the fight with a big punch, which he dodged. Kacchan was starting to mix up his moves, so did that mean he was worried?

If he couldn’t easily predict his moves, it wouldn’t be smart to fight him in close range. Izuku
Izuku knew that if he went and helped Uraraka now, Kacchan would just follow him. So he had to take him down here. He’d taken down actual villains though, something Kacchan hadn’t ever done, so he knew he could do it, just as long as he didn’t get too close to Kacchan’s hands.

“Stop hiding, Deku!”

Izuku thought back to all the times he’d tried to assure Kacchan that he wasn’t trying to compete with him or be better than him, only to get bruises and burns for his troubles. His eyes lit up with determination. Maybe it was time to change his attitude.

“Deku?” Uraraka’s voice came over the radio. “Iida knows I’m here, sorry. He’s monologuing right now, though.”

Izuku nodded and gripped the capture tape. They were probably running low on time. It was time to stop messing around and beat Kacchan. He heard footsteps behind him and turned around to see Kacchan smiling at him as he slowly walked closer.

“Since you’re such a stalker, you probably already know that my quirk works by exploding my sweat, so just imagine what I could do if I had a lot of it.” Izuku’s eyes widened as Kacchan slowly pulled the pin on his gauntlets. “That’s right, these babies aren’t just for show!”

“Bakugo!” All Might’s voice came over the radio, “Don’t do it! You’ll kill him!”

“I’ll be fine as long as he dodges!” Bakugo grinned widely and finished pulling the pin, letting loose a massive explosion.

“Come in! Come in, Midoriya!” All Might was practically screaming through the radio and Izuku hissed in pain. He’d managed to roll behind a pillar just in time to dodge the explosion, but it had done nothing to shield him from the heat. He knew he probably had at least first degree burns all over his body just from being too close to that blast. Who had approved that thing? He’d had to train for months to be able to carry a gun and Bakugo just comes in with enough firepower to blow through the wall?

Kacchan had just tried to kill him! Something finally clicked in Izuku’s brain and he remembered what Nighteye had said. He was right, Kacchan...no, Katsuki, hadn’t been his friend in a long time. Izuku smiled as an idea occurred to him and he silently held himself closer to the pillar as he drew one of his guns from its holster.

“These gauntlets are awesome!” Katsuki cackled. “Even if you give it all you’ve got, you’ll never beat me!”

Izuku waited for the smoke to clear, so he could aim properly. Katsuki would be expecting him to be curled on the ground in the fetal position. It would throw him for a loop when he was nowhere to be seen.

“Huh?” Katsuki looked around then ran over to the hole in the wall and looked down to see if Izuku had been thrown from the building in the explosion, “Deku, where’d you go?”

Two gunshots rang out clearly as Izuku fired, hitting Katsuki with a rubber bullet to each bicep, right where Tsukauchi had taught him would cause enough pain to temporarily paralyze the arm. Katsuki’s eyes widened as Izuku ran at him and swiped his legs out from under him, landing him
flat on his back. Quickly Izuku took the capture tape and wrapped it around each of Katsuki’s wrists before standing.

“Bakugo has been captured by the hero team!”

“You’ve always been amazing, Katsuki.” Izuku looked down at Katsuki as his eyes widened at the lack of nickname. “That’s why I had to beat you. I’m coming, Uraraka. Where are you?”

“Fifth floor, hurry! Iida cleared the room of everything except the weapon, so I don’t have any ammo for my quirk!”

Izuku turned and ran, making his way up the stairs as quickly as he could. He could hear Iida laughing evilly and monologuing. He opened his pocket and grabbed a small box of rubber bullets that he kept on him in case he had to reload. He tossed a smoke bomb inside the room to cover him as he ran toward Uraraka and shoved the box into her hands, then pulled out his gun and ducked behind another pillar. Uraraka immediately started pelting Iida with weightless bullets, turning the room into a giant pin-ball machine and forcing Iida to spend all his energy dodging.

“Where are you, hero?” Iida yelled, “You may have taken down my partner, but there is no way I will go down so easily! Hiding is an act of cowardice.”

“Or an act of intelligence,” Izuku said cheekily as he stepped out from behind the pillar and shot Iida in the leg. Oh, Brave would be so proud. Uraraka released her quirk and all the ricocheting projectiles fell to the floor as their gravity returned. She ran over and touched the bomb as Izuku tied Iida up with capture tape.

“The hero team wins!”

“Deku!” Uraraka cried as she flung herself at Izuku and wrapped her arms around him. “We did it!”

Izuku hissed in pain as she squeezed his burns. He’d hardly felt the pain during the fight, but now that the adrenaline was going down he realized just how much having first degree burns over his whole body hurt.

“Deku?” Uraraka jumped back. “Are you ok?”

Izuku gave her a shaky smile, then promptly passed out.
You Reap What You Sow

Chapter Summary

Katsuki Bakugo/Consequences

When Izuku woke up in Recovery Girl’s office, Aizawa was standing over him with an expression that was an odd mix of relieved, afraid, and absolutely pissed, “Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t expel him right now.”

Izuku bit his lip. This was what he was worried about since he’d learned that Aizawa had expelled an entire class of first year students for being just like Katsuki, but he just couldn’t expel him. His entire life, there were only two things that Izuku had known with absolute certainty and those were that all men were not created equal and that Katsuki Bakugo would be an amazing hero. Izuku just couldn’t bring himself to be the reason that one of those truths came crashing down around his ears. He opened his mouth to say so, taking a deep breath before closing it again.

Would Katsuki be an amazing hero? Truely? Izuku paused, remembering all the times Katsuki had put him in his place simply because he had been born weaker. Was that someone who would be able to protect the weak, like a hero was supposed to do? Or was that someone who just wanted a license to beat people up? What about all the teachers who had just watched, praising Katsuki’s quirk and pushing all the blame on Izuku for causing trouble? What had they done to make sure Katsuki would be a great hero, besides assuring him that he was better than everyone else? Wasn’t it their responsibility to guide him, not Izuku’s?

“Because it’s not his fault.”

Aizawa let out an angry exhale, running his fingers through his hair, “It’s not yours either, problem child.”

Izuku looked up at him, “I know.”

That threw Aizawa for a loop. He looked at Izuku with wide eyes for a long moment before sitting next to him on the bed, “Then why, after everything he’s done to you, why does he deserve a place at UA?”

Izuku took a deep breath, speaking slowly as he tried to untangle what he was thinking, “It’s not his fault that he is the way he is. Did you know that the teachers knew he was beating me up? They never told anyone, especially my mom, even though everyone knew. Katsuki still has a spotless record because it was easier to blame me and they didn’t want to ruin their chances of being associated with such an amazing hero. No one has ever told him that what he’s doing is wrong. They’ve taught him that it’s his right as the strongest to prey on the weak and that there are people in this world that no one should care about.” Izuku looked at Aizawa, “You shouldn’t expel him because he’s never truly had the chance to succeed. He’s still young and it’s not too late. If someone tries...maybe Katsuki can still be a great hero.”

Aizawa scowled and clenched his fists a few times, “Fine,” he said, “But I’m making him go to mandatory anger management therapy.”
He stood and headed toward the door to talk to Nedzu, but Izuku grabbed his hand, “Eraser…” He looked up at Aizawa with a small smile, “Thank you.”

Aizawa rolled his eyes and ruffled Izuku’s hair, “Whatever, problem child.”

He had his hand on the door when Izuku realized one last thing, “Eraser wait!”

Aizawa looked at him with one eyebrow raised.

“Don’t tell him that I didn’t want him to be expelled….” he frowned, “it won’t go over well.”

Aizawa nodded and opened the door, heading down the hall. Izuku sighed and ran his fingers through his hair again.

Hopefully he’d made the right decision.

“Bakugo, would you and your parents follow me, please?”

Aizawa led the three into Nedzu’s office where the principal was already waiting. He’d already talked to him about what Deku had said and they’d come up with a plan. As Deku’s friend, Aizawa would really rather expel the brat, but as a teacher he had to admit it made a grudging sort of sense. It wouldn’t be rational to expel Bakugo when this kind of behavior had been ignored and even encouraged in the past, if Deku was to be believed.

If the brat messed up, however, he’d kick him to the curb.

Bakugo glared at everything in the office as if it had personally offended him, which maybe, from his perspective, it had. He certainly seemed to think that Deku was trying to offend him, even when the kid had done nothing wrong. His mother was just as loud as he was, just less angry, while Aizawa would almost forget his father was there if he didn’t physically take up space. It was definitely an interesting family dynamic and it made Aizawa wonder if the schools were entirely responsible for what Bakugo had become.

He stood silently in the corner watching as Nedzu smiled pleasantly at the family, “Thank you so much for coming in. We apologize again for pulling you away from work, but this issue is better addressed immediately.”

Mistuki nodded, “It’s alright, principal, sir. What’s this about, anyway? You were kinda vague on the phone.”

Nedzu clapped his hands together, “Well, it seems as though some rather troubling patterns in your son’s behavior have come to light and we would like to discuss how these will be addressed moving forward.”

“What kind of patterns?” Mitsuki looked at the principal suspiciously, but it was Aizawa that answered.

“His behavior is excessively aggressive and even violent.”

“Oh, that’s just Katsuki!” Mitsuki smiled. “He’s an explosive boy, comes with his quirk.”

Aizawa scowled, he saw what Deku meant when he said it was the adult’s fault Bakugo’s behavior hadn’t been checked, “In a battle exercise earlier today, your son knowly used an attack that could have killed or seriously injured his opponent. It is only due to that student’s training and quick
reflexes that he was able to dodge.” Bakugo scoffed and Aizawa glared at him. “It has also come to our attention that he has a history of assaulting that same student in the past.”

“Deku lies.” Bakugo practically spat the words and it was all Aizawa could do not to strangle him right then.

Nedzu raised an eyebrow at Bakugo, “That may have been what your teachers have chosen to believe in the past, but let us assure you that we will not be guilty of their same failures.”

“What does this have to do with Izuku?” Mitsuki asked. “What about the other student in the exercise?”

“Izuku Midoriya was the other student in the exercise.” Nedzu said cheerfully. “He was admitted to the hero course on recommendations. I met him before the school year and suspected that he had problems with bullying, which was only confirmed by your son’s behavior. Were you aware, Bakugo, that such behavior could prevent you from becoming a hero?”

Bakugo’s eyes widened in shock and Mitsuki practically started vibrating in rage, “You can’t keep Katsuki from being a hero! He’s perfect for hero work and he’s been working so hard! It’s been his dream since he was a kid!”

Aizawa wanted to scream about how her son tried to crush Deku’s dream for a decade, and what was she doing then? Masaru looked like he was trying to become one with the chair as his wife stood and leaned over Nedzu’s desk, veins clearly visible on her forehead.

Nedzu just held up his hands placatingly, “We are not planning on expelling your son. At least, not today. If you will please return to your seat, we will discuss our next course of action.”

Mitsuki sat back down, but didn’t stop glaring at Nedzu, who was still smiling.

“Perfect! Now, as we said before, these patterns are very concerning and will not be allowed to continue. If young Bakugo here wishes to remain enrolled here at UA, he will be required to attend anger management therapy with Hound Dog, our school counselor, twice weekly during his free period.”

Bakugo jaw dropped, “What?! Why the fuck should I have to talk to some stupid shrink? I’m not fucking crazy!”

“Changes need to be made, Bakugo.” Nedzu said calmly. “And therapy will be the most effective way of assisting you to make those changes as well as monitoring your progress.”

“I’m not going to fucking therapy!” Bakugo slammed his smoking hands on Nedzu’s desk.

“Then you’ll be expelled and may face criminal charges for assault.” Aizawa said simply. “Same goes for if you attend therapy but don’t make any progress. We don’t need heroes running around who are going to abuse their power.”

Bakugo scowled, hands smoking, but sat down. Mitsuki cuffed him upside the head, “Come one, brat, it’s your own fault, apparently.”

“I’m sure it won’t be that bad, Katsuki.” Masaru said softly.

Bakugo just scoffed, “We done here, or what?”

“You just need to sign this stating that you understand the conditions of your continued enrollment
and that you agree to them and then you’ll be free to go!” Nedzu said cheerfully.

The family left as soon as the paperwork was done and Aizawa groaned as soon as the door closed, “Is it wrong that I want him to mess up so I can expel him?”

Nezu hummed and sipped his tea, “His behavior up until now has been cruel, but I believe Deku was right in saying that no one has tried to correct his behavior before. He might have genuinely thought he was in the right, or might simply have not known how to change.” He set down his cup and sighed, “I just hope we’re not too late.”
All Might

Chapter Summary

All Might voices his concerns.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Toshinori didn’t know what to think. When he’d first seen a little boy with green hair in the first year hero class, he hadn’t thought much of it. The boy was familiar, but he’d been so busy training young Toogata in the last few months that he was having trouble placing him. Toshinori’s first thought was that the boy must be a fan or something, someone he had run into at a convention or autograph signing. It would be odd that he’d remember a face from something like that, but it would explain the uncomfortable feeling of recognition that he felt.

But there was a problem. The boy didn’t act like a fan. Someone who Toshinori would have run into at a convention would most likely be ecstatic to see him as their teacher, smiling brightly or even asking for an autograph like the other students. Instead, this boy frowned and tried hard not to catch his eye, practically running from the room the moment Toshinori told them to go get dressed.

Then came the battle exercise. Honestly, Toshinori hadn’t thought much of having the boy, Midoriya he’d learned, go first. It was just the luck of the draw, but he hoped that maybe seeing the boy fight would help him figure out where he recognized him from.

Watching Midoriya fight the boy with the explosion quirk, Bakugo, was...concerning. All Might listened to their conversation through the radios he had given them and didn’t like what he heard. The two seemed to know each other, but weren’t friends if the intense way they attacked one another was any indication. And then Bakugo had let slip that Midoriya was quirkless and suddenly it clicked.

Is it possible to become a hero even if I don’t have a quirk?

He looked different from the scrawny kid that had clung onto his leg almost a year ago. He had filled out, for one thing, and for another he carried himself with much more confidence than he had a year ago, but he was undeniably the same boy Toshinori had almost considered giving One for All to.

Toshinori had almost stopped the fight right then. He remembered how it had felt to be quirkless, to not be able to do anything because he didn’t have any power. Someone without a quirk couldn’t dream of facing down such a powerful opponent, but the boy had already done the smart thing and run away. Hopefully he’d have the sense to stay away from the fight and leave the fighting to those who were actually capable of fighting back.

But then Bakugo had cornered him and unleashed an explosion against Toshinori’s protests. He felt his heart sink when the smoke cleared and there was no sign of Midoriya on the cameras. This was why it was too dangerous for someone like him to try to be a hero. What had Nedzu been thinking letting him into the hero course?
Midoriya had reappeared, injured but alive, and taken Bakugo down quickly and effectively, although Toshinori wondered just how he’d gotten permission to use a gun. It wasn’t long after that that he was able to execute a winning strategy with Uraraka to take down Iida and recover the bomb. The class had even been a 50/50 split on who the MVP had been, Midoriya or Iida.

So, in short, Toshinori didn’t know what to think. On the one hand, Midoriya had won and Toshinori remembered from his notebook that the boy was intelligent, but at the end of the day he was still quirkless, which would always be an insurmountable liability in the field. Surely the other teachers would see it that way too?

All the teachers were gathered in the teacher’s lounge to celebrate a successful first day. Powerloader had told him that it was a tradition to come together and talk about their students, making predictions for the upcoming year, and Midnight had even brought a bottle of wine which was being distributed liberally. Nedzu and Aizawa had said they were going to be late, something about taking care of an issue with one of the new students, so Toshinori decided he’d wait until they arrived to breach the subject of young Midoriya.

“Yep!” Midnight laughed, “I’m pretty certain the second years hate me right now. I assigned them to find a piece of pre-quirk hero art and write an essay comparing it to a more modern piece. I’m sure they’ll love it after it’s done, but you should have seen some of the looks they gave me! Happens every year!”

Powerloader sighed, “At least you didn’t have one of your first-years blow something up on the first day. We weren’t even supposed to be making anything today! I don’t even know how she managed it!”

The door opened and Nedzu and Aizawa walked in. Toshinori thought Aizawa looked a little more tired than usual, but he hadn’t known the man very long so he wasn’t really sure. What could have exhausted him that much on the first day?

“So what did you guys have to take care of?” Mic yelled from the couch. “Don’t tell me you expelled a student already!”

Aizawa sighed, “I wish.” He sat down and accepted the glass of wine Midnight offered him. “One of my students is the kid that’s been bullying Deku for most of his life.”

Toshinori thought the name Deku sounded somewhat familiar. Wasn’t that what Bakugo had called Midoriya? Wasn’t it also the name of some underground analyst Toogata and Nighteye were working with? What a coincidence! It didn’t seem like a very common name.

“What?” Midnight’s jaw dropped. “And you didn’t expel him?”

Nedzu clapped his hands together, “Deku insisted we give him a chance to clean up his act before kicking him out and I was inclined to agree. We’ve made therapy a mandatory requirement for his continued enrollment here.” He looked at Hound Dog. “I hope it will be ok that we’ve made him bi-weekly appointments with you?”

Hounddog nodded, “Sounds good. Talking to these kids is my job after all.”

“Perfect.” Nedzu smiled. “Now that that’s out of the way, does anyone have any good stories to share?”

Toshinori was silent for a moment as he debated how to breach the subject of the dangers of having a quirkless student and Powerloader had already launched into a story before he’d figured
Powerloader talked about his hyper student who had somehow managed to cause an explosion with a paperclip, a vial of saltwater and a pack of matches, “She just laughed and said explosions were vital for progress. I swear I can already feel my hair turning grey!”

Shouta rolled his eyes. He knew Powerloader was secretly proud, it happened every year. A student would come along, blowing things up left and right and inevitably they’d end up at the top of their class. Powerloader had even once joked the bigger their explosion, the bigger their potential. Shouta didn’t understand it himself, but then again, he didn’t know anything about support items, so he supposed it must make sense to someone in the thick of things.

When Powerloader had finished, Midnight laughed and turned to All Might, “What about you, All Might? Any students catch your eye?”

All Might coughed up a little blood in surprise at being addressed directly and sat frozen for a minute.

“I have some…concerns.” He said slowly.

“Hmm?” Nedzu set down his tea cup. “And what would those be?”

“One of the students in the hero course is quirkless.”

The room went silent.

“And that is a problem because…?” Shouta knew he sounded angry, but this was his student All Might was talking about. Had he even seen Deku completely annihilate his opponents in the combat exercise, or had he written him off completely as soon as he learned he was quirkless?

All Might looked at him incredulously, “It’s incredibly dangerous! The student almost died because he was put in a combat situation with quirked students!”

“He almost died because his bully was let into UA!”

“Wait,” Mic held up a hand, “are we talking about Deku?”

“Of course we’re talking about Deku! Who else is quirkless here at UA?” Shouta was practically yelling. Deku hadn’t asked to be viciously attacked, yet here All Might was acting like it was all his fault.

“The fault for today’s incident, All Might, lies only with the student that attacked him with excessive force.” Nedzu said calmly. “And that student has already been disciplined. It won’t happen again.”

“How do you know that?” All Might turned to the principal, “Every time he is in a fight he’ll be outmatched! It’s dangerous and unfair, to both young Midoriya and those training to be heroes.”

“Don’t talk as if Deku is somehow less than the other students.” Aizawa growled. “He has more potential for heroics than most first years I’ve taught and he definitely has more than the student who attacked him!”

“Enough!” Mic used his quirk to be heard above the bickering heroes. Shouto glared at All Might, who was glaring back. “What makes you so concerned about Deku becoming a hero, All Might?”
All Might looked between the teachers like he couldn’t believe he had to explain something so obvious, “Quirkless people can’t be heroes. They’ve never been able to, it’s not their place.”

“Are you even hearing yourself right now?” Shouta said, “How can you be so prejudiced? A few decades ago they said animals couldn’t be heroes either, but I don’t here you speaking out against the principal!”

All Might crossed his arms, “Well, what are you basing your opinion off of, huh? It sounds to me like you just want to be inclusive, even if it puts Midoriya and the other students at risk. That’s not kindness, that’s stupidity.”

“Oh that’s rich coming from you.”

“Now, now, Aizawa.” Nedzu said. “All Might raises a valid point. If Deku had not shown potential for heroics, we would not have let him in. Maybe you can explain to All Might why Deku is a good fit for the hero course.”

Shouta laughed humorlessly, “Where do I start? Maybe the fact that he can break down and figure out how to counter a quirk within seconds? Or the fact that he already has his gun licence due to all the hours of training he’s spent with firearms? Training that, need I remind you, somehow wasn't required for Bakugo's gauntlets. Or, I don’t know, maybe the fact that Deku convinced the entire underground he was a goddamn retired pro for seven months until we finally met him? Is any of that good enough for you?”

“Oh, I agree with you that he’s intelligent.” All Might said, “But that doesn’t mean he shouldn’t stay behind the scenes where he’ll be safe.”

“Safe my ass!” Shouta yelled. “Being a hero is dangerous for anyone, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t do it! You should know that better than anyone.”

“I do know that better than anyone.” All Might said. “That’s exactly why I’m so against this! If even someone with a powerful quirk like mine can be injured so badly in the line of duty, a quirkless kid wouldn’t last a day.”

All Might apparently hadn’t realized he’d powered up his muscle form until Shouta canceled his quirk and he deflated. Shouta smirked at the confused look on the idiot’s face.

A loud rattle of china interrupted them and they both turned to look at Nedzu, who had slammed his tea cup down on the saucer, “That is quite enough of that.” he said, “All Might, Deku has been accepted to the hero course and nothing you say is going to change that fact. This is not an inclusion initiative, but rather the simple fact that if I did not believe he could become a hero, I would not have let him in. Aizawa,” he turned to Shouta, “I understand that you are upset, but you need to control yourself as well. The last thing UA needs is infighting among it’s teachers.”

Shouta took a deep breath and sat down as All Might did the same. He glared at All Might, who scowled back at him, and Shouta looked away. He could keep things civil.

“I wish the kid had taken my advice…” All Might grumbled and Shouta felt ice in his veins.

“And what advice would that be?”

All Might looked up in surprise, apparently he hadn’t planned on being heard. He glanced between Nezdu and Shouta, but it seemed Nedzu was also curious since he made no move to stop the conversation.
“Well, um…” All Might cleared his throat, “I actually met young Midoriya for the first time almost a year ago. He stopped me after I saved him from a villain and asked me if he could be a hero.”

“And what did you tell him?” Shouta knew he wasn’t imagining the hint of horror in Midnight’s voice, but All Might didn’t seem to notice.

“I told him it was impossible, of course.” All Might said innocently. “It would have been cruel to say anything else. I encouraged him to try to be a doctor or police officer if he was really being honest about wanting to help people.”

Shouta stood up and walked out of the room. He didn’t need the murder of the number one hero on his resume.

Toshinori watched Aizawa storm out of the room and shook his head. Aizawa would come around eventually. He turned back to his fellow teachers, who were staring at him with a mixture of anger, horror, and disgust and he furrowed his eyebrows in confusion.

“What?”

Chapter End Notes

You have no idea how emotionally hard it was for me to write that chapter! The way I see All Might is that he has internalized a lot of the quirkism that he experienced growing up, but never had to surpass that since he was thrust into the "abled" majority. Unfortunately, this also means that his attitudes won't change in just one chapter. On the bright side though, writing this chapter helped me figure out the emotional root of the original novel I'm working on, so there's that.
Chapter Summary

Eraser complains to his friends.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Group Chat

12579: (Eraserhead)
Who wants to go out for drinks?

87657: (Mr. Brave)
Long day?

12579: (Eraserhead)
Let’s say it this way, if the sun doesn’t set right now, I will take Deku’s gun and shoot it.

58726: (Ms. Joke)
That bad, huh?

12579: (Eraserhead)
Remember Deku telling us about “Kaachan?”

72598: (Sir Nighteye)
Please say you know who it is.

12579: (Eraserhead)
He’s in my class.
(Mr. Brave)

Don’t you mean *was* in your class?

(Eraserhead)

No.

(Ms. Joke)

You didn’t expel him?!

(Eraserhead)

Deku convinced me not to because their old teachers actively encouraged the brat’s behavior, but we’re making him go to anger management therapy twice a week. If he doesn’t improve within the semester, I’m kicking him to the curb.

(Ms. Joke)

As a teacher, I want to say that was the best decision, but as a friend I want you to tell me this kid’s address so I can punch him in the face.

(Sir Nighteye)

We’re heroes, Joke. We can’t just beat up children.

(Mr. Brave)

She never said she’d tell Kaachan she was a hero.

(Eraserhead)

Nobody’s beating him up… yet.

(Eraserhead)

Also, that’s not the only thing that happened.
58726: (Ms. Joke)

Oh? What other juicy details do you have?

12579: (Eraserhead)

I think it’s probably best to discuss it in person. I don’t necessarily need my opinions of the number one hero immortalized in the group chat.

72598: (Sir Nighteye)

What did Toshinori do this time?

58726: (Ms. Joke)

What bar are you at? I’m on my way.

87657: (Mr. Brave)

Me too, I’m always down to hang out.

12579 shared their location

72598: (Sir Nighteye)

Am I invited as well?

12579: (Eraserhead)

Sure, but I have to warn you that I will be complaining about All Might the whole time, and I’m not gonna edit it. I know how close you two are, so if that makes you uncomfortable, don’t come.

87657: (Mr. Brave)

Don’t worry old man, we won’t hold it against you.

72598: (Sir Nighteye)

In that case, I think it would be best for me to sit this one out. Joke can give me the cliff notes version tomorrow.
Will do!

Shouta put his phone in his pocket when he saw Fukukado and Nakamura walk in. They looked around for a minute before spotting him at the bar.

“Hey Eraser,” Fukukado slid into the seat next to him while Nakamura sat on his other side, “So, do you want to talk about it?”

Shouta sighed. Normally he wouldn’t talk about what was stressing him he’d just… stew for a while until it went away. He didn’t even know really why he’d gone to the group chat but… if anyone could understand the unmitigated disaster his day had been, it was these guys. He swallowed the rest of his drink.

“So, Deku’s in my class, right?”

“Right.” Fukukado nodded. “And you said his bully is too?”

Shouta nodded, “I was just walking to class, preparing to teach them about situational awareness like I do every year…”

“Wait, is this the trick you do with that stupid sleeping bag of yours?” Nakamura asked as he grabbed a handful of peanuts from the bar. “I’ve heard horror stories about that thing from interns.”

Shouta scowled, “It’s practical.”

“Doesn’t stop you from looking like a caterpillar!” Fukukado laughed.

Shouta glared at her, “Anyway, I was walking to class when I hear explosions and,” he ran a hand through his hair, “the way the kid said Deku’s name… he said it like he was talking to a bug so disgusting he couldn’t even be bothered to squish it. I had to activate my quirk just to keep him from exploding Deku.”

“Exploding him?” Nakamura tilted his head, mouth full of peanuts.

Shouta nodded, “Remember those burns all up Deku’s arms?” The other two nodded. “The brat’s name is Katsuki Bakugo and his quirk is Explosion, so his hands are basically grenades. His old teachers apparently didn’t want to ruin his chances of being a hero, so did nothing to curb his… violent tendencies. In fact, from what we could tell, they actively encouraged him and purposely created opportunities for him to torment Deku.”

“Those little…” Fukukado was practically vibrating in rage, “That’s not what a teacher is supposed to do!”

“I swear,” Shouta shook his head, “the only reason I didn’t expel him on the spot was because I knew that Deku would blame himself for it and we already have a hard enough time convincing him that not everything is his fault without throwing the expulsion of his childhood friend into the mix.”
“Ok...I get that.” Nakamura rolled his eyes. “But is it bad I still kinda wish you’d expelled him?”

Fukukado reached over and cuffed him over the head, “Don’t pay attention to him, Eraser. He doesn’t know the difficulties of raising the next generation.”

“That’s because he is the next generation.” Shouta muttered. Nakamura gasped in betrayal as Fukukado laughed and clapped him on the back.

“Alright Eraser, so what happened next.”

“So, I decided to give Bakugo until the end of the day and took the class out for the quirk assessment test, which Deku totally aced by the way. I had him come up with a strategy for the class to take me down and they managed it in less than five minutes. I swear it was one of the most impressive things I’ve ever experienced.”

Fukukado pretended to wipe tears away from her eyes, “That’s our boy!”

“But then he went to heroics.”

Nakamura raised an eyebrow and gestured for him to continue.

“He was paired against Bakugo in a battle exercise.”

Fukukado gasped, “No! Is he ok?”

Shouta rubbed the bridge of his nose, “Now he is. He was brought to Recovery Girl with burns all over his body from an explosion large enough to blow out a wall. Why Bakugo thought that was a good idea is beyond me, but I don’t have any idea how that kid’s brain works.” He took a deep drink of the beer the bartender had just brought him. “Deku still won, by the way. He actually shot Bakugo and another student. Multiple times.”

Fukukado laughed, “Good for him!”

Shouta chucked, “Yeah, and apparently it was a good wake up call for Deku too. He’s stopped calling him “Kacchan” at least.”

Fukukado and Nakamura cheered and Shouta shook his head at their dramatics. “I was ready to expel him, obviously, but Deku insisted we give him a chance to change.” He rolled his eyes. “I get where he’s coming from, but part of me wants Bakugo to mess up so badly that we’ll have no choice but to expel him” He sighed. “But if he does manage to clean up his act, that’s theoretically better for everyone, right?”

Fukukado pouted, “A lot less satisfying though.”

Shouta nodded solemnly, “A lot less satisfying.”

“But,” Nakamura leaned toward him, “you promised beef on All Might and you haven’t even mentioned him yet.”

Shouta scowled so deeply that both Nakamura and Fukukado leaned back instinctively, “Oh, that’s coming. All Might is the heroics teacher this year.”

“Really?” Nakamura said in surprise. “For some reason I can’t really envision him in a classroom.”

“I didn’t even know he had his teaching license.” Fukakado said.
Shouta grit his teeth, “He doesn’t. That idiot doesn’t even have his teaching license and yet he had the audacity to suggest that Deku doesn’t deserve a place in the hero course simply because he’s quirkless.”

There was a beat of silence before Fukukado stood up. “Where does he live?” She asked, rolling up her sleeves. “I swear, I just want to talk.”

Shouta growled, “Trust me, if it wouldn’t destabilize Japan, he would already be dead. Both Nedzu and I tried to convince him that Deku was more than capable of being a hero, but it was like he couldn’t even hear us. He kept pointing to the fact that Deku got hurt in the exercise as proof that he was weak, despite the fact that Bakugo was clearly trying to hurt him and the fact that it was his own damn responsibility as a teacher to make sure no one got hurt!”

“That jerk!” Fukukado slammed her fist onto the bar, earning a halfhearted glare from the bartender. “Who does he think he is?”

“That’s not even the best part.” Shouta laughed humorlessly and took another drink. “Turns out, All Might first met Deku a year ago, I think around the time he reached out to us. All Might had just saved the kid from a villain and Deku took the chance to ask if he could be a hero even though he was quirkless.”

Fukukado’s face twisted in sympathy, “Until he met us, no one had ever encouraged his dream. He was probably desperate for any positive reinforcement at that point.”

Nakamura nodded, “Of course he’d ask the number one hero for encouragement, All Might is always encouraging kids to chase their dreams in interviews, telling them to reach for the stars.”

Shouta shook his head, “Apparently, he doesn’t live up to his own hype. That idiot thought that the kindest thing he could do for this child, who I’ll remind you had just been through a highly traumatic experience, was to violently crush his dreams. Even if he didn’t know about the bullying, he should have at least had more tact than to tell the kid to his face that he could never be a hero.”

“Seriously?” Nakamura scoffed. “Did All Might even ask if the kid had any skills or did he just hear the word quirkless and write him off?”

“I’m pretty sure it was the second one.” Shouta said. “He admitted that Deku’s smart, but tried insisting that it’d be far too dangerous for him in the hero course. It was ridiculous!” He shook his head. “ Thankfully Nedzu stood up to him. He made it clear that Deku was in the hero course and that fact wasn’t going to change, but we’re going to have to keep an eye on them and make sure All Might doesn’t try to crush Deku’s spirit again.” He sighed. “After the life that kid’s had, I’m not sure how much more he can take.”

Fukukado put her hand on Shouta’s shoulder, “That sucks.”

Shouta nodded numbly.

“Dang it!” Nakamura scowled as he looked at his phone. “I’m so sorry Eraser. My agency just texted me and they need me to come tonight and cover another guy’s patrol cause he got sick. Are you gonna be ok?”

Shouta shrugged and Fukukado draped her arm over his shoulders, “Don’t worry Brave, I’ll take good care of Eraser here.”

Nakamura snorted, “Now I’m even more concerned.” He shook his head and waved goodbye. “Good luck Eraser. Don’t leave any traceable evidence when you kill All Might!”
Fukukado laughed and Shouta scowled as Nakamura left. When he was gone Fukukado looked at Shouta, “How are you holding up?”

Shouta let out a puff of air, “I don’t know.” He said honestly. “I’m angry, but part of me knows I’m probably blowing things out of proportion because I’m tired. So I either need to punch All Might or sleep. Maybe both.”

Fukukado chuckled and nodded, “Yeah, I get that. Maybe you can dream about punching All Might, that way you can kill two birds with one stone!”

Shouta scoffed, “Yeah, wouldn’t that be great? But is it really satisfying if I’m not punching his actual face?”

Fukukado laughed again, then her expression turned soft, “It’s understandable Eraser.” She said. “You’re allowed to be angry right now. Deku is more than just a student to you, he’s your friend, and I know you see him as a son.” Shouta scowled at that, but Fukukado simply flicked him on the nose and continued. “Don’t even try to deny it Eraser.” She stared at him in mock seriousness. “I see everything.”

That made Shouta roll his eyes and Fukukado only managed to maintain her expression for a few seconds before she burst out laughing.

“No, but seriously.” She weezed as she finally calmed down. “You’re allowed to feel hurt.”

Shouta sighed, “It’s irrational.” he said. “Being hurt and angry doesn’t help anything, it just makes you sloppy and makes you make stupid mistakes.”

Fukukado hit him over the head, “Stop that! Emotions are not irrational Eraser. Yeah, if anger is the only thing you’re focused on then you’re gonna have a hard time, but as long as we keep things in perspective, emotions can make life more interesting and satisfying.” She looked at him softly. “You’re angry because you care Eraser, and that’s a very good thing.”

Shouta shrugged, “I don’t know. Doesn’t mean I have to like it.”

Fukako laughed at him and patted his back, “So, are you gonna be ok?”

He sighed, “We’ll have to see tomorrow. I still might decide to kill either Bakugo or All Might as soon as I see their stupid faces.”

She chuckled, “If you get arrested, I’ll make sure to feed your cats.”

Shouta glared at her halfheartedly as she stood, but she just stuck her tongue out at him.

“Come on Eraser, let’s get you home.” she said. “Tomorrow’s gonna be another long day.”

Shouta sighed, but finished his drink and paid. He didn’t even tell her to go away as she walked him home, talking his ear off about her students and their first day. She had a second year class this year, apparently, so she was having to make sure they didn’t get too big for their britches now that they were no longer at the bottom of the totem pole. He just nodded along, occasionally humming or giving one or two word answers when she asked a question, oddly content to listen to her meaningless chatter.

When they reached his apartment, Shouta unlocked the door and stepped inside, “Goodnight Joke.”

“Goodnight Eraser! Be sure to take good care of Deku for me.” She smiled softly and kissed him.
on the cheek. He stared at her for a long moment before she seemingly realized what she’d just
done, which made her blush and practically run down the stairs. Shouta’s mouth hung slightly open
as he watched her leave, his hand still frozen on the doorknob. When Fukukado had made it to the
bottom, she glanced back and gave him a shy wave, which he returned numbly.

Shouta didn’t close the door until she was gone.

Chapter End Notes

So, I went ahead and created a series for my fics. So far it's just this and Mastermind:
Strategist for Hire, but I really like writing stories that explore what could have
happened if those first two episodes went slightly differently.
Therapy

Chapter Summary

Katsuki meets with Hound Dog

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Hey Bakugo!” Kirishima came up to him after English. “Do you want to hang out with us during free period today?”

“Yeah right, shitty hair, like I’d ever hang out with you.” Katsuki scoffed. “Even if I wanted to, I’ve got shit to do.”

Kirishima smiled and shrugged, “It was worth a try. Hey Ashido, wait up!”

Katsuiki rolled his eyes as he watched Kirishima leave with those other high energy extras he’d eaten lunch with the first day. They probably wouldn’t even want to hang out with him if they knew he had to go to fucking therapy during free period today. He scowled. Stupid Deku. If it weren’t for him, Katsuki could be sleeping or doing literally anything else right now rather than stomping his way toward some stupid shrink’s office.

The door was plain, tucked away in a less-trafficked part of UA, and had Hound Dog written on a metal plate in the center. What kind of hero name was Hound Dog anyway? He considered straight up blowing the door off its hinges, but considering he was supposedly there for anger management, that probably wouldn’t go over too well. He settled for pounding on the door instead.

“Come in!”

Katsuki opened the door and looked around until he caught sight of Hound Dog standing by his desk. Ok, he could admit the guy looked pretty badass, but that still didn’t mean he had to like him.

“Hey,” Hound Dog said. “You must be Bakugo.”

Katsuki scowled, “What’s it you, mutt?”

Hound Dog let out a barking laugh, “Yeah, they warned me about you. Why don’t you close the door and sit down? Or would you rather sit there catching flies.”

Katuski slammed the door and stalked over to the couch, throwing himself down heavily. The soft material was probably meant to make him feel comfortable or peaceful or something, but jokes on them. Katsuki didn’t do soft.

They sat silently for a minute as Hound Dog typed something into his computer. Katsuki tried to get comfortable, but he kept sinking into the couch, so he ended up just clenching and unclenching his fists until he couldn’t take being ignored any longer.

“So what?” Katsuki sneered. “You want me to fucking talk about my feelings?”
Hound Dog shrugged, “I want to talk about your life, and eventually, sure, your feelings, but this visit is for me to get to know you more than anything else.”

“Why do you even have to get to know me?” Katsuki scowled. “You’re just gonna try to change me anyway, so why do you need to know who I am?”

Hound Dog tilted his head slightly, “What do you mean?’

Katsuki scoffed, “You fucking know what I mean. You’re trying to make me into some vanilla cookie-cutter weakling. You don’t really care about what I want, you just want me to be nice.” He glared at Hound Dog. “I don’t do nice.”

Hound Dog nodded, “You’re afraid we’re trying to make you into something you’re not.”

“I’m not scared!” Katsuki yelled. “And you are trying to make me into something I’m not. I have to act exactly how you want me to or else you’ll kick me out! You’re trying to get rid of my entire fucking personality!”

“Ah.” Hound Dog grinned. “So you see yourself as an angry person so now that you’re in anger management therapy, you feel like we’re targeting who you are as a person, rather than an emotion you feel.”

Katuski opened his mouth to disagree, but then thought for a moment. Wasn’t that kind of the point? They were trying to change him. They were targeting his personality.

Weren’t they?

“Tch, whatever.” He crossed his arms and slouched deeper into the couch. “It’s not like you’re gonna actually be able to change anything. Soon enough everybody’s gonna realize Deku’s a loser and then they’ll just forget about this whole thing and everything’ll go back to normal.”

Hound Dog nodded, “That has been what’s happened in the past, hasn’t it?”

Katsuki didn’t answer. He just glared at the wall, wondering how much trouble he’d get in if he blew it up.

“We don’t have to change your personality, if you don’t want to.”

Katsuki looked at Hound Dog in surprise, but quickly schooled his expression back to a scowl, “What? Isn’t the entire point of this to have me singing kumbaya by the end of the semester?”

“Not necessarily.” Hound Dog shrugged. “The point is to make sure you don’t hurt other people. But the things that make you who you are, like the swearing and yelling, aren’t bad in the right context.”

Katsuki looked at him skeptically, “What are you saying? That I can be nice,” he spat the word, “and still be a jerk? You must be a bigger idiot than you look if you think that’s possible.”

Hound Dog chuckled, “Bakugo, there’s a big difference between being brash and being abusive. Take me for example,” he gestured to the muzzle covering his face, “I’m not really a nice guy. I get so angry sometimes that I forget human speech, and I’m definitely not gentle, even when I’m just with my friends. My aggressive personality comes along with my quirk, same as yours does, but it’s not a bad thing because I don’t use my personality as an excuse to hurt people, does that make any sense?”
“No.” Bakugo scoffed, but it kind did. Maybe therapy wouldn’t be so bad if he wouldn’t have to change everything about him. It would still be pretty bad, though.

“Let me put it this way.” Hound Dog said. “How would you like to be on the receiving end of one of All Might’s full power punches?”

“The kind that changes the weather?” Hound Dog nodded, smiling, and Bakugo stared at him. This guy wasn’t just an idiot, he was insane! “That would fucking kill me!”

Hound Dog laughed, “Yep, getting a full punch from All Might would hurt like hell and probably kill you to boot, so why does he still punch villains?”

“He holds back, you idiot!”

Hound Dog nodded and hummed, “So? Objectively, he’s still violent. I mean, he doesn’t try to bring villains in by offering them flowers and holding their hands and singing kumbaya.”

Katsuki threw his hands up in the air, “I guess!”

“So how is that different from your anger?” Hound Dog asked. “Bakugo, if you learn what you do that genuinely hurts people, you’ll be able to hold back on those behaviors just like All Might holds back on his punches, while at the same time maintaining the fierceness and, yes, even the rudeness that makes you who you are.”

Katsuki sat silently for a minute. “So… I really don’t have to lose who I am?”

Hound Dog shook his head, “No, you don’t. You’re in control here, I’m not here to force you to become something you’re not, just to make sure you aren’t going to keep hurting people like you have in the past.”

Katsuki glared at him, “I’m not going to be nice.”

Hound Dog shrugged, “I’m not asking you to be. You’re a brash person, Bakugo, just like me, and if I don’t have to be nice, you don’t either.”

Bakugo scoffed, “So you really think I can be myself and still stay at UA, huh?”

Hound Dog grinned behind his muzzle, “It’s just a matter of honing your bark, but reserving your bite for the villains you fight.”

Bakugo rolled his eyes and laughed, “Shut up, mutt, don’t try to have a sense of humor just cause you think it’s funny.”

Hound Dog laughed again, “Oh, but I am funny.” He stood up and opened the door. “I’ll see you in a few days, Bakugo. Don’t forget what we talked about, ok?”

“I’ll forget if I want to, mutt!” Katsuki yelled. “You’re not the boss of me!”

Hound Dog chuckled and waved as Katuski stomped down the hall, back toward class 1A. That guy obviously didn’t know what he was talking about. Katsuki couldn’t be nice and angry at the same time, it was just impossible. Besides, even if it was possible, Aizawa and that stupid rat faced principal wouldn’t be happy until they’d squashed his personality.

Kirishima was waiting in the hall by the time Katuski got back to the classroom a few minutes before the bell.
“Hey Bakugo!” He smiled with sharp teeth and Bakugo rolled his eyes, “How was your free period?”

Katuski just scoffed and shoved past Kirishima, “Get outta my way, shitty hair.”

Kirishima laughed and stepped aside, “Glad you had fun, dude.”

Katsuki glared, “I didn’t have fun.”

Kirishima shrugged, “Whatever you say, dude. Good luck next class, by the way, I hear Midnight’s a total sadist when it comes to art history.”

“I don’t need luck.” Katsuki huffed, but Kirishima just patted him on the shoulder and went to go sit down. Katsuki found his own seat and put in earbuds for a few minutes. Maybe that stupid mutt was onto something. Probably not.

But maybe.

Chapter End Notes

Adding a note because I’ve seen a few of comments on it. Yes, I know about the app. Yes, it sucks. Please don't support them. I absolutely hate updates that aren't actually updates, so I avoid doing that if at all possible.
Reputations

Chapter Summary

Izuku begins his private lessons with the principal.

Izuku gratefully took the offered cup of tea and held it between his hands as he waited for it to cool down to a drinkable temperature. Nedzu was smiling at him across the desk over his own cup, a variety of files and loose papers spread out in the kind of organized chaos Izuku was more than used to from his own room.

“Well Deku,” Nedzu chirped, setting down his cup, “I must say that it’s a pleasure to finally be able to begin our private lessons. It’s not often I find a student I’m excited to teach, so I’m happy you were able to fit me in during your free period.”

Izuku nodded eagerly, “I’m really excited to be learning from you, sir! High Specs sounds like such an interesting quirk and you do a lot of interesting work behind the scenes of the hero community by finding difficult villains or the ones who prefer to stay in the shadows…”

He hurriedly shut his mouth when he realized he was rambling, but Nedzu didn’t seem to mind, “Yes, that is correct. It’s a role you’ve filled yourself, is it not?”

Izuku rubbed the back of his neck, “I mean, not really. I mostly focus more on quirks and combat, not on tracking people down like you do. I did a little work like that on my internship with Nighteye, but I’m not very good at it yet.”

“That’s of no importance.” Nedzu said. “We can’t expect you to be perfect at everything you try without practice! Remember that you have been analyzing quirks for much longer than you’ve been doing other aspects of hero work, so you can’t expect to have reached the same level of excellence.”

“I wouldn’t call it excellence…” Izuku muttered, but Nedzu ignored him.

“That being said, one of the reasons you are here is so we can work on developing that magnificent mind of yours and honing it into a truly terrifying weapon!” Nedzu clapped his hands together. “So this semester, I’ll be teaching you about strategy.”

Izuku nodded, “I’m in your hands, sir, please take good care of me.”

Nedzu smiled, “Perfect. Now, I would like to apologize, first of all, because I took the liberty of looking deeper into your past, especially in light of yesterday’s incident.”

Izuku shrunk in on himself. Now Nedzu was going to find all of his teacher’s old notes on him being a disruption and practically begging to be beat up because he didn’t have a powerful quirk. Teachers always sided with Katsuki, Aizawa was just an exception to that rule.

“I must say that your old school’s treatment of you is shameful.”

Izuku looked up so fast he almost gave himself whiplash, “What?”
Nedzu looked at him seriously, “Your middle school is guilty of gross negligence when it comes to their treatment of you. They hardly even bothered to hide that they fully knew of the mistreatment you were receiving at the hands of your peers, and they appeared almost proud of the fact that they allowed the abuse to continue. You did not deserve any of that, Midoriya. You are highly intelligent, a fact that should have been obvious far before now, but they turned a blind eye to your strengths because of their own discriminatory biases.”

“I’m sure they didn’t mean…” Izuku tried to say quietly, but Nedzu held up a hand to cut him off.

“You tend to give people the benefit of the doubt far too often, Midoriya. No doubt because you have always been treated as if others were in the right for hurting you.” Nedzu stared at Izuku with fire in his eyes. “I beleive you will understand why I, of all people, do not have any patience for discrimination.”

Izuku swallowed heavily and nodded. Nedzu smiled again, “So you can see why I would like to see some justice done on your behalf! I would like to use your old middle school as a case study this semester to teach you about human psychology and how to destroy a reputation.”

“Umm...I admit that learning psychology will be interesting,” Izuku said nervously, “but why would I ever need to know how to destroy a reputation?”

Nedzu took a sip of his tea, “Most villains don’t rate very high in public opinion polls. Say what you will about our society, but there is something to be said that most people recognize that robbing and hurting people is wrong. However, every once in a while, a villain comes along that is able to shift public opinion in their favor. They often try to portray themselves as doing the wrong things for the right reasons, or by saying that their victims deserve it for whatever reason. In these cases, it can be very dangerous to go after the villain directly. Do you know why?”

Izuku thought for a moment, “Well, if the villain is able to convince people they’re doing the right thing, then the public will mutiny when the police and heroes go after them. It’s almost like by going after a villain like that, the heroes themselves start acting like villains and the villain is the persecuted hero.” He looked up at Nedzu who was staring at him proudly. “Is that right?”

Nedzu nodded, “Exactly, Midoriya. When villains manage to get some semblance of a good public reputation, it is often most effective to target that first so that the public sees them for what they are, rather than what they claim to be. In these cases, it is often most effective to completely destroy their reputation before capturing them, otherwise, even if you manage to lock them up in Tartarus for the rest of eternity, you’ll never truly be rid of them. Why do you think that is?”

Izuku hummed, “Well, especially if they claim to be doing the wrong things for the right reasons, they’ll probably inspire followers. Their influence will still be felt, probably even more keenly since the media might be tempted to make them into a martyr, so then you’ll have to deal with an army led by the villain’s ideals, not just the villain himself.”

Nedzu smiled, “Perfect. I must say that I am ecstatic that the reports of your intelligence were not exaggerated at all! So, now that you know why this skill is necessary, I would like to help you completely destroy your old middle school to help you gain the knowledge and skills you’ll need to defeat such villains in the future. And of course the sprinkling of good old fashioned revenge doesn’t hurt either.”

“Isn’t this going a little far?” Izuku asked. “I mean, I get that the way they treated me...wasn’t the best...but do they really deserve to have their reputation destroyed?” He shrunk down in his chair. “After all, I’m just one quirkless kid. I’m not really worth making a fuss over.”
Nedzu nodded, “You are worth giving a fuss over, Midoriya, as I’m sure Aizawa and the others have tried to help you realize.” He held up his hand when Izuku tried to protest. “And even if you weren’t it would still be worth taking them down. Can you think of any reason why?”

Izuku shook his head. If it wasn’t about him, there was no reason to go after the school. They treated the students with wonderful quirks fairly and they might not be a top ranked school, but they weren’t a bad one.

Nedzu sighed, “Let me pose a question. If your middle school willfully allowed you to be abused for years because of your lack of quirk, do you think it’s possible they have allowed, or will allow, abuse in similar situations? Say a student with an undesirable heteromorphic type quirk, or a weak quirk, or even someone with a more powerful quirk, but one more stereotypically associated with villainy?”

Izuku’s eyes widened. He wanted to say no, of course Aldera Junior High wouldn’t allow kids like that to be bullied, that he was just different because he was quirkless and that the teachers treated all the quirked students fairly. But… hadn’t some of the kids he’d tried to stop Katsuki from bullying fit those descriptions? Hadn’t one of them had a rat quirk? Hadn’t that other one had a weak quirk that only allowed her to change her eye color? Had the teachers ever stepped in to help them? Izuku had just assumed they hadn’t because Katsuki had switched to him, but what if that wasn’t the case? How many kids were being hurt right now, just because the school never tried to help them?

“Let’s say I agree with you.” he said hesitantly, “Wouldn’t it be easier to let the police or the parents resolve the issue? Why should I be the one to take them down?”

Nezu smiled, “Because you’re a hero.”

Izuku’s jaw dropped slightly at the warm feeling in his chest. That was what he was training to do, wasn’t it? He wanted to be a hero to give hope to the quirkless, but couldn’t he be a hero to the weak and abused as well? He looked into Nedzu’s eyes and realized the principal knew exactly what he was doing when he said that. Didn’t make it any less effective, though.

“Fine.” Izuku sighed. “I’ll learn how to bring them down, but that doesn’t mean I’m totally on board with destroying them yet.”

Nedzu nodded, “I don’t expect you to be, as long as you promise you’ll think about it. For now, we’ll stay at the level of the hypothetical. I’ll teach you different methods we could use to systematically destroy their reputation, but it will be up to you if you decide to put them into practice or not. How does that sound?”

Izuku nodded and picked up his tea, “I think that’ll be ok. It’ll be useful to know either way, right? For the future?”

Nedzu smiled, “Extremely. Remember, Midoriya, that some villain fights aren’t fought on the streets or even in dusty warehouse bases. Some villain fights take place in the front pages of newspapers or in the back pages of hero forums. These are the fights that matter most, though, because these are the battles for the hearts and minds of the people.” He took a sip of his tea. “Which is arguably even higher stakes than even their lives.”

“Does that mean that there are some villains who aren’t seen as such?” Izuku asked curiously. “Are there some people who have managed to completely turn public opinion in their favor so that the people don’t even realize the crimes they’re guilty of?”
Nedzu looked at him proudly, “Yes, Midoriya. It’s a part of our job as heroes to be on the lookout even for those invisible villains. They are much more difficult to take down than the stereotypical villains you see on the news,” his smile grew, “but that just makes it so much more fun!”

Izuku chuckled and stood, “Thanks for having me, Nedzu! See you tomorrow.”

Nedzu nodded and stood to show him out, “Perfect, Midoriya! I’ll gather the documents we’ll need to begin. Who knows, maybe I’ll even be able to rope Detective Tsukauchi into this!”

Izuku rolled his eyes, “I think the detective is busy enough as it is. Have a good day!”

Nedzu smiled and waved as Izuku ran down the hall to get to his next class, then closed the door so he could start working on his plans for their next lesson.
Fight!

Chapter Summary

Alarms and a joint training with 1B.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku had decided he didn’t really do well in crowds. It was one thing if he was just another person elbowing for room in front of a hero fight, but it seemed to be another entirely when dozens of eyes were trained on him, all waiting for some sort of eloquent response.

“What’s it like having All Might as a teacher?”

Ok, yeah, he totally got why Eraser called them vultures, now. He didn’t even like All Might that much, but he couldn’t say that because then everyone would hate him because who doesn’t like All Might and, oh, he just should have stayed home today.

“Umm…” he managed finally, “it’s fine….”

The reporter in front of him huffed in frustration at his non-answer and tossed her ponytail over her shoulder, “Then maybe you can help us with some other rumors we’ve been hearing. You’re a hero course student, right?”

“Yes…”

The reporter got a wicked gleam in her eye that made Izuku take an involuntary step back, “Is it true that there was a quirkless student admitted to the hero course this year?”

Izuku’s eyes widened. How did they know that? Were the admissions records public? They couldn’t be, right? Then how did they know that there was a quirkless student in the hero course? Did one of his friends blab? One of his classmates? One of his teachers? Did they know they were talking to the quirkless student or was this just a terribly unlucky coincidence? What if…

“Aren’t these uniforms tres chic?”

Izuku whipped his head around to see Aoyama practically posing for the media, something that the photographers were eating up. The reporter glanced at Izuku before shoving her mic into the face of a much more willing victim.

“What’s it like having All Might as a teacher?”

“Well, I’d say it’s absolutely spectacular.” Aoyama gave a dazzling smile and Izuku wondered if his belly button laser could give sparkle to other parts of his body? Would it be possible for him to learn to shoot lasers from his teeth or eyes? “He’s such a beautiful hero. A bit too muscley in my humble opinion, but that is an unfortunate side effect of strength quirks, isn’t it?” He gave a tinkling laugh and Izuku took the opportunity to run past the UA gates. Aoyama caught his eye and winked as he passed him before turning back and continuing to answer the media’s questions like it was what he’d been born to do.
Once Izuku got inside the school, he stopped running and sighed. Yeah, maybe it was a good thing he didn’t get a quirk. He didn’t think he’d be able to handle being a daylight hero, and he probably wouldn’t have even realized underground was an option if he’d gotten an amazing quirk like All Might’s. Or All Might’s quirk. He shook his head. Hopefully Toogata was really good at interacting with the media.

Morning classes weren’t that interesting, just picking a student rep, which Izuku wasn’t interested in at all, especially not after trying to talk to the media this morning, but he did have a productive lesson with Nedzu about identifying weak points in public opinion, which was fun. Katsuki stayed away from him, ignoring him for the most part while glaring straight ahead, which Izuku could deal with much easier than him coming after him palms blazing like he had the first day. He still seemed angry, but Izuku figured that he’d only had one or two therapy visits by now, so he probably couldn’t expect any meaningful changes yet.

Before Izuku knew it, it was time for lunch again. Iida, Uraraka, and Yaoyorozu still insisted on joining him, which confused Izuku to no end, but he wasn’t complaining. Yaoyorozu also usually dragged Todoroki along with her, but he didn’t seem to care where he sat either way, so they tried to include him in their conversations as much as they could. His one word answers ranged from polite to hilariously wrong, but Izuku hadn’t gotten up the courage to laugh at him yet, not when Todoroki was powerful enough to destroy him with just a thought, but he figured that if things kept going the way they were, he might be able to tentatively call Todoroki a friend somewhere in the middle of their second year.

They were just congratulating Yaoyorozu on her win as student rep when an alarm went off.

“Level three security breach. All students please exit the building in an orderly fashion.”

Izu looked at the others in confusion, “What’s a level three security breach?”

Uraraka shrugged and the others didn’t seem to know either. A student who was eating at the table next to them had apparently overhead their question and turned to them, “It means somebody managed to get inside the gates. I’ve been here three years and this is the first time it’s happened!”

They hurried to the doors, only to get caught in a bottleneck at the entrance to the cafeteria.

“I’m getting crushed!” Uraraka shouted.

“Hold onto each other!” Yaoyorozu tried to grab at the others, but a massive wave passed through the crowd and they got separated. Izuku tried to keep sight of the others, but all his energy was going into not being trampled and making sure he didn’t trip. He was starting to panic, but the other bodies just kept pushing and trying to get out, so it wasn’t like he could actually do anything besides maybe not die.

All of a sudden Iida slammed into the wall above the door hard enough that everyone stopped moving.

“It’s ok! It’s just the media outside. There is no reason to panic. Please move more slowly so no one gets hurt!”

Izu smiled. Iida seemed like a natural born leader, even if he was a little more uptight than his brother. The crowd started moving more carefully, at a crawl instead of the frantic push that was happening before. Kirishima and Kaminari reached up to grab Iida when they reached him and he didn’t start floating again, so Izuku figured Uraraka must have returned his gravity.
They all gathered outside on the lawn and the class reps made sure everyone was accounted for as
the students watched the media get escorted from the premises. Kaminari and Ashido decided to
make a game out of it, rating each reporter on how much they resisted and how unrepentant they
seemed, yelling it out and commentating it like a sports match. Izuku had the distinct feeling that if
there had been popcorn available, the two would have been pelting it at the poor guys.

Aizawa came over shortly after the media was cleared off, his expression the weird mix of
exhaustion and annoyance that Izuku knew meant that he was losing patience with human stupidity
and that all he wanted to do was sleep, cuddle with a cat, or possibly both. Sometimes even coffee
wasn’t enough to get him out of one of these moods.

“Yo Aizawa!” Kaminari yelled. “Is school canceled the rest of the day because of the break in?”

Aizawa sighed heavily, “No. Because we have already managed the threat, we’ll be holding
afternoon classes as normal. Go get your gym clothes on and meet back out here, we’ll be doing
joint training with class 1B.”

The class hurried to obey and by the time they got back out to the field, the rest of the school had
gone back to class just leaving them and the students of class 1B. They were all huddled together
sitting on the grass as Vlad King talked to Aizawa. So far, none of them had come over to talk to
class 1A, and no one from 1A had gone over to talk to them. As Izuku tried to figure out their
quirks, he wondered if it was normal to have joint training this early in the year. Wouldn’t they
normally keep the classes apart until their skills were more developed? But, then again, it was
probably better to have them together as much as possible to develop camaraderie and to prevent
artificial divisions from forming between them…

“Shut up, Deku! You’re muttering again!”

Izuku flinched at Katsuki’s glare, but he just huffed and turned away rather than coming after him.
Maybe the therapy was starting to kick in? Or maybe he was just being careful not to do anything
overtly violent in front of the teachers since he was on thin ice right now?

“All right everyone.” Aizawa activated his quirk to make sure he had all the quirked student’s
attention. “This training is mostly so you get training going against a wide variety of quirks early
on. You’ll be doing one on battles where you can pin, immobilize, or knock out your opponent. No
support items allowed unless they are required for you to safely use your quirk.”

He pulled out his sleeping bag and fell asleep on the grass as Vlad King nodded, “The way this is
going to work is through a series of challenges. First, someone from 1A will challenge someone
from 1B, then that person will challenge someone from 1A, who will challenge someone from 1B
and you get the idea. The class rep of 1A will start us off.”

Izuku wished he had a notebook as he watched the fights. Class B had such cool quirks and it was
interesting to see how the students tried to counter each other, especially since most hadn’t had
much training in one on one combat and it was infinitely different than fighting robots. Izuku
already had a lot of ideas for how everyone could improve and use their quirks more effectively,
and they weren’t even halfway through the students!

Todoroki had just gotten called up when Izuku heard a groan from among the class B students.

“Ugh, I wanted to challenge him, all the others are going to be boring.”

Izuku turned slightly to see a blond boy glaring at Todoroki.
“Why did you want to fight him so bad?” A girl with red hair asked. “He looks pretty powerful, Monoma.”

“That’s the point, Kendo.” Monoma said. “And it’s not so much that I wanted to fight him in particular, but I didn’t see him at the exam, which means that he’s a recommendation student, which means he has a powerful quirk that I can copy. The more powerful my opponent is, the more powerful I am, it’s as simple as that.”

Izuku perked up, a copy quirk? How did it work exactly? Did Monoma have to know what their quirk was in order to copy it? Did he automatically have mastery of the quirk he’d copied? Could the person still use their quirk while it was copied or was it more like their quirk had been stolen? Could he copy multiple quirks at once? Izuku had so many questions.

“Actually, 1A has three recommendation students this year.” Izuku recognized the girl as the one with the lizard tail quirk from the recommendation exam.

“What?” Monoma asked. “Does 1A really think they’re that much better than us? Why do they get an extra recommendation student?”

“Yeah Setsuna,” Kendo said, “it seems kinda weird. I thought there were always four recommendation students.”

Setsuna shrugged, “I mean, yeah, usually. They didn’t really tell us why there was an extra student this year, just that there was. Don’t look, but the extra recommendation student is that kid with curly green hair and freckles.”

Izuku pretended to be very busy watching the matches as the other students glanced in his direction. Maybe he shouldn’t be eavesdropping, but it was kinda impossible not to since they were talking about him, plus Izuku wanted to learn more about Monoma’s quirk.

“Him?” Monoma said incredulously. “He doesn’t look like much.”

“Keep your voice down!” Setsuna hissed. “And besides, looks don’t always equal power. He almost won a race against someone with a speed quirk. Only lost by a few seconds.”

“Hmm,” Izuku could feel Monoma’s eyes on him as Todoroki challenged his next opponent. “What’s his quirk.”

“He never really said.” Setsuna said. “But I think it’s some kind of enhanced agility. Either that or something that affects his intelligence. He completely destroyed the obstacle course.”

Izuku felt a mix of pride and mortification. On the one hand, it felt good to have others recognize how well he’d done at the entrance exam, but on the other, they still didn’t know he was quirkless, so they’d probably change their tune pretty quickly once they figured it out. He shook his head and went back to watching the battles. Eventually, Monoma got challenged by Tokoyami and Izuku leaned forward in anticipation. This would be the perfect chance to see his copy quirk in action and maybe even answer some of his questions about it.

As soon as Vlad King said go, Monoma ran at Tokoyami, but was blocked by Dark Shadow, who tried to grab him. Monoma dodged at the last minute and ran at Tokoyami again. The fight went on like that for a few minutes, with Monoma gradually getting closer to Tokoyami, who didn’t seem to notice. Suddenly, rather than dodging to the side like he had been doing, Monoma ducked under Dark Shadow and grabbed Tokoyami’s ankle before jumping back as a dark blue bird burst from his chest and flapped wildly.
Izuku’s face lit up. So Monoma’s quirk was activated through physical touch, most likely skin to skin, since he’d grabbed at the sliver of exposed skin on Tokoyami’s ankle rather than anywhere else, and he hadn’t seemed to be able to copy the quirk by touching Dark Shadow. Monoma’s Shadow was still flapping wildly and throwing him off balance as the rest of the students watched in shock.


So his quirk didn’t grant him automatic mastery of any quirk he copied. Nice to know, though Izuku figured that’d make it kinda difficult to use it in combat. Maybe there was a way to store quirks for later use so he could learn to use them? The fight didn’t last much longer since Tokoyami took advantage of Monoma’s distraction to have Dark Shadow immobilize him.

Vlad King called the match and Dark Shadow let go of Monoma, who was growing increasingly frantic as his Shadow started trying to claw at anyone close enough, including Monoma himself. There was a groan as Aizawa sat up and glared at Monoma with his quirk, making the Shadow disappear as Monoma sighed in relief. Aizawa just rolled his eyes and layed back down, except now Izuku was starting to doubt he was actually asleep. Pretending to be asleep just to spy on his students totally seemed like something he’d do, actually, now that Izuku was thinking about it.

“You fought admirably.” Tokoyami said. “Dark Shadow is notoriously difficult to tame.”

“Whatever.” Monoma scoffed. “Just because you can’t control it doesn’t mean I can’t.”

“But you couldn’t control it.” Tsu said helpfully.

Monoma opened his mouth to offer a scathing reply, but Vlad King cut him off before he could, “Alright, Monoma. It’s your turn to pick your opponent.”

“Oh, that’s easy.” Monoma laughed haughtily and pointed at Izuku. “I pick him.”

Izuku’s eyes widened in shock and he pointed to himself, “Me?”

Monoma rolled his eyes, “Nice to know even the recommendation students in 1A are idiots.”

Oh, Izuku grimaced as he stood, Monoma probably thought he had a powerful quirk just because he got in on recommendations. This wasn’t gonna end well. He stood up slowly and walked over to Monoma. He should probably tell him, right? At least give him a chance to actually use his quirk in the fight.

“Hey, um, you might wanna copy one of your classmates quirks before the fight.” He said softly as soon as he was close enough, “I won’t be mad or accuse you of cheating or anything.”

Monoma glared at him, “What? You don’t think I’m good enough to control your awesome quirk? You think you’re better than me?”

Izuku’s jaw dropped, it was like he was talking to Katsuki.

“No, um, I’m trying to help you.”

Monoma chuckled, “I don’t need help to beat you. I’ll win fair and square.”

Izuku sighed. He tried, but if Monoma really was like Katsuki, he probably wouldn’t listen to a word of what Izuku said, even if he straight up told him he was quirkless. Izuku glanced over at Aizawa, who had actually woken up to watch Izuku’s fight, and he smiled slightly. Well, if
Monoma was going to be stubborn about it, he may as well use his opponent’s ignorance to his advantage.

“Your student just made a huge mistake.” Aizawa cracked his neck as he stood beside Vlad King and watched Deku talk to Monoma.

“What do you mean?” Vlad King asked.

“Well, your student can copy the quirk of anyone he touches, right?”

Vlad nodded.

“Well, I’m guessing he challenged Deku because he’s a recommendation student. He probably assumes he’s got a powerful quirk like Yaoyorozu and Todoroki.”

Vlad’s eyes widened, “But Deku’s quirkless.”

Aizawa nodded with a smile, “Your student’s about to learn an important lesson about making assumptions.

Vlad sighed as the two students prepared to square off, “Normally, it wouldn’t be a terrible assumption. You have to admit, Deku is an exception, not the rule.”

Aizawa grinned, “He’ll still win.”

Vlad gave the signal and Monoma ran at Deku, just like he’d run at Tokoyami, but this time, there wasn’t a Dark Shadow to block him and Monoma slapped Deku on the arm.

“Ha! Even knowing how my quirk works, you still left yourself wide open...wait, what the…”

Deku smiled and swept Monoma’s legs out from underneath him before he could get his bearings, pinning him to the ground.

“You’re Quirkless?!” Monema screamed as Deku pressed his face into the dirt.

“I warned you that you might want to copy someone else’s quirk.” Deku said with a smile.

“Deku wins.” Aizawa said, hiding his proud smile under his capture weapon. “Let Monoma up and choose your next opponent.”

“How did a weak quirkless kid even get into UA?” Monoma yelled.

Aizawa was about to send him to the principal when Todoroki stepped in.

“Didn’t that quirkless kid just beat you?”

All of 1A and some of 1B started snickering as Monoma’s face turned bright red.

“The fact that he’s quirkless only makes his accomplishments more impressive.” Yaoyorozu said. “He earned his place at UA, same as the rest of us.”

Aizawa noticed that Deku was starting to blush from the praise and figured he should probably save the kid from further embarrassment, “I don’t think I need to remind anyone here that bullying of fellow students will not be tolerated, nor will discrimination of any kind. You’re trying to be heroes, so attitudes like that will only hurt you in the future, not to mention the inexcusable damage
you will do to others.” So he was still a little bitter about All Might, sue him. Shouta was just grateful that it was All Might’s day off so he didn’t have to see the guy or worry about keeping him away from Deku.

Monoma glared at Deku as he sat down, and some of the other 1B students looked skeptical, but he figured they’d get over it when they saw what Deku was capable of.

“Allright problem child, stop wasting time and choose your opponent.”

Aizawa shook his head and retreated back into his sleeping bag as Deku soundly beat his second opponent and the class cheered. That kid was gonna go far.

Chapter End Notes

Did I write this chapter partially as an excuse for Izuku and Monoma to fight? Why yes, yes I did.
Uraraka patted Iida on the back as he whined about the bus’s open layout. Izuku shook his head, hopefully Iida would calm down a little as time went on. Izuku thought it’d be very stressful to be so uptight when most of the other students were so lax, but then again, he’d insisted on being a hero for years even when everyone around told him to give up, so he didn’t really have room to talk.

“Hey Midoriya,” Asui said, “did you really work with pro heroes before coming to UA?”

“Umm, yeah.” Izuku smiled sheepishly, “But, um, it really wasn’t intentional. I just kinda reached out to give them quirk analyses, and it grew from there....yeah.”

“That’s so manly!” Kirishima said. “But why did you decide to be a hero rather than just being support?”

“Yeah,” Kaminari said, “doesn’t seem to make much sense cause you’re…”

Jiro hit him in the eye with one of her jacks, “Don’t pay any attention to him, Midioriya, you don’t have to explain yourself if you don’t want to.”

“But it is kinda a question.” Kirishima said. “Even those of us with quirks might not make it. Take me for example, my quirk’s strong and good in a fight, but it’s not flashy at all, so I’ll probably never be very popular.”

“Well, I’m not trying to be popular.” Izuku said quickly. “And besides, I think your quirk looks really cool!”

“You think so?” Kirishima grinned. “Sure seems like it’d be easier if I had a flashier quirk.”

“Like mine you mean?” Aoyama sparkled as he struck a pose and Izuku vibrated in excitement as
he realized that passive sparkle probably was really part of his quirk. Did Aoyama realize he was
doing that? The sparkle dimmed slightly when Ashido mentioned his quirks drawback, did that
mean that aspect of his quirk was linked to his emotions? What emotions would make the sparkle
brighter? Happiness? Or could fear potentially do the same thing?

Katsuki pouted in the back of the bus. Seriously, why was there always so much fuss over Deku?
Hadin’t he always been useless? He didn’t even have a quirk, much less a flashy quirk perfect for
being a hero like Katsuki. All he had was way too much stubbornness for his own good.

“Well,” Kirishima sighed, “if any of our classmates have pro quirks, it’s Todoroki and Bakugo.”

“Yeah,” Tsu said, “but Bakugo will never be popular with his temper.”

Katsuki was about to blow up at her, show her what a temper really looked like, but stopped.
Aizawa was sleeping at the front of the bus, but there was no guarantee he wouldn’t wake up if
Katsuki exploded. But what had Hound Dog said? He was allowed to be a jerk, but couldn’t hurt
people? Something like that? Why did this have to be so complicated?

“Shut up frog-face!” There, that wouldn’t get him in trouble, would it?

“Yeah, Bakugo.” Kaminari laughed. “We’ve only known you a few days, but we already know
your personality is a flaming pile of garbage.”

Katsuki grit his teeth and jumped to his feet. So much for not being hurtful, this idiot had to know
his place! “I’ll kick your ass, you idiot loser. You’re going to regret ever applying to UA!”

“Bakugo…” Aizawa said warningly and Katsuki huffed, sitting back down. Whatever, these idiots
were just obstacles in his path anyway.

Izuku stared at the exchange with wide eyes. There was something different about Katsuki. Yeah,
he’d blown up at Kaminari, but, while he’d been rude to Asui, he was much tamer than Izuku had
ever seen him. It was almost as if he’d been trying to hold himself back...or maybe it was just
because Asui was a girl? That’d make sense, but Izuku didn’t think he’d ever seen Katsuki hold
back before, regardless of who his target was. What was going on with the world? Katsuki was
getting teased and holding himself back while Izuku was getting praised. Had he been dropped in
some sort of alternate universe by accident where nothing worked like it was supposed to?

The bus slowed to a stop in front of a giant training facility and the class piled out to see Thirteen
standing on the steps and Izuku grinned widely. Thirteen was one of the heroes he’d never had the
chance to work with, since they were a rescue hero and didn’t need his analysis.

“Oh my goodness!” Uraraka squealed. “Thirteen is one of my favorite heroes! Do you think they’d
give me an autograph if I asked?”

“Hello students!” Thirteen gestured for the students to follow them inside. “I created this training
facility to help you deal with different types of disasters, you can call it the USJ, or the Unforeseen
Simulation Joint.”

“Hey, shouldn’t All Might be here already?” Aizawa slouched lazily as he walked up to Thirteen,
who pulled him to the side and said something Izuku couldn’t hear while raising three fingers.
Izuku felt his heart sink, he’d thought there were too many articles on All Might this morning. He
knew he couldn’t tell All Might to just not save people, but he also had a responsibility as a teacher,
didn’t he?

Aizawa sighed loudly, “We should just get started.”
“Excellent!” Thirteen sounded like they were smiling. “Before we begin, I’m sure you’re aware I have a powerful quirk, Black Hole, that can suck up anything and turn it to dust. I use it to save people from all kinds of disasters, but it could just as easily be used to kill. With all the regulations on quirks in our superhuman society, we often forget how deadly they can be, so make sure you keep in mind not only the good you can do, but also the harm if you aren’t paying enough attention or make a wrong move. But today, you’ll be learning to use your quirks to help people, because that’s what being a hero is all about!”

“Alright, settle down.” Aizawa’s tired voice cut through the class’s applause. “Now that that’s over…”

The class gasped as the lights went out and the fountain started to malfunction as a dark purple mist gathered in front of it. Izuku’s eyes widened as he noticed a pair of yellow eyes and far too many hands emerging from the mist.

“Stay together and don’t move.” Aizawa ordered. “Thirteen, protect the students.”

“What is that thing?” Kirishima asked.

“It looks like some sort of warp quirk.” Izuku made sure his muttering was loud enough for Aizawa to hear. “It doesn’t appear to have any limit on space and from here it’s impossible to tell if it has limits on distance, but I don’t think it does or else villains would have to infiltrate inside UA’s walls first and the alarms would have gone off. Speaking of alarms, they’re probably using a quirk to jam the signals and that’s why the lights went off. That person was probably warped over first and could be hiding anywhere.”

Aizawa nodded as he took in the info. Most of the students were still confused and hadn’t quite realized they were under attack yet. There were some whispers that they hadn’t known the training would start quite so soon and wasn’t it supposed to be a rescue training? A few of the braver students tried to step forward, only to stop as Aizawa yelled at them.

“Stay back! Those are villains.”

The class gasped and looked at the intruders with new eyes, but Izuku was already too busy forming his analysis and figuring out weaknesses he and Aizawa could exploit.

“Perplexing.” The mist villain said. “It appears our information was wrong. All Might should be here.”

“So you used the press as a cover and sneaked onto campus.” Aizawa gripped his capture weapon.

“But we went through the trouble of bringing so many friends.” The villain with all the hands seemed to be in charge. “Maybe he’ll show up if we kill a few kids.”

“They chose this isolated facility at a time a class was being taught.” Todoroki said. “They’ve thought this out, so they must have an objective, but what is it?”

“Kaminari.” Aizawa didn’t look away from the villains. “Try contacting the school. Thirteen, get them out of here.”

Izuku ran up to join Aizawa, “I’m coming to fight with you.”

Aizawa glared at him, “No, Deku, it’s too dangerous. You’re leaving and that’s an order.”

“But your fighting style…”
“I said no.”

They glared at each other for a long moment before Izuku huffed and looked away, “Fine, but if you die, I will kill you myself.”

Eraser nodded and leapt down the steps, taking down all the villains in his way.

Izuku turned to Thirteen, “We need to get out of here. Is there a closer exit?”

When Thirteen shook their head, Izuku cursed and led the class in running toward the doors, but the mist villain cut them off before they could leave.

“Hello, we are league of villains. I know it’s impolite, but we invited ourselves here to say hello. Isn’t this a fitting place for the symbol of peace to die?”

Kirishima and Katsuki didn’t waste any time as they ran at the villain, but when the smoke from Katsuki’s explosion cleared, the villain was still standing tall.

“Hmm, that was close…” he muttered. “You live up to your school’s reputation.”

“The mist villain has a weakness.” Izuku muttered. “His real body is protected by metal plating.”

“You two, out of the way right now!” Thirteen yelled, but it was too late. The mist villain had already surrounded them with tendrils of dark smoke, then Izuku was falling. He just barely had time to take a deep breath before he plunged deep into the rescue pool. He immediately started swimming upward, but his eyes widened when he saw a shark swimming toward him and he froze. There wasn’t anything he could do. He wasn’t used to fighting in water and he was starting to run out of air. Izuku flinched as the shark opened his jaw, but then Asui managed to kick the villain in the face and wrap her tongue around Izuku. She was already holding Mineta under one arm.

She tossed Izuku up to the deck of the ship wreck, then tossed Mineta up a few seconds later, much less gently. Izuku shook his head, it wouldn’t surprise him if Mineta had managed to say something inappropriate even in a life threatening situation. It was only the first week of school and Izuku had already noticed all the girls hated him. Hopefully being around the strong women of the hero course would teach him a little respect.

Asui crawled up the side of the ship and Izuku smiled at her, “Thanks Asui, you saved my life.”

“I told you to call me Tsu!” Asui croaked.

As Izuku frantically apologized, Asui looked out at the villains who were gathering in the water, “This is turning out to be a terrible day of class.”

“Yeah,” Izuku frowned, “I keep thinking about what that villain said. They planned this to kill All Might.”

“But that doesn’t matter!” Mineta smiled. “As soon as All Might shows up, they’re toast!”

“I’m not so sure,” Asui said thoughtfully. “If they planned this to kill All Might, they probably have a way to kill him. We should probably focus on not getting tortured to death, though.”

“No!” Mineta was starting to panic. “Tell Frog-boobs to shut up!”

Izuku glared at him. Even Katsuki’s nicknames weren’t that bad, and at least he wouldn’t panic and make an already difficult situation worse. Mineta responded by screaming again when he saw
“how close the villains were getting to the ship.”

“There’s just one thing that doesn’t add up though.” Izuku pinched his lower lip in thought. “They sent you here, Asu...I mean Tsu!”

“Why does it matter that she’s here!?” Mineta screamed.

Izuku looked at the other two. Mineta was starting to cry, but Asui was looking at him curiously.

Izuku took a deep breath, “It means they don’t know your quirks.”

“You’re right.” Asui pointed at the fire zone. “It would have been better to send me there, but they didn’t.”

Izuku nodded, “Maybe we can use that to our advantage. For all they know, the three of us could be super powerful.”

“But you’re not super powerful!” Mineta yelled. “You’re quirkless! What are you supposed to do?”

Izuku froze. Mineta was right, wasn’t he? What could he do? He was a quick thinker, but how was that going to help here? Was he really useless in this situation?

Asui slapped Mineta over the head with her tongue, “Be quiet. Midoriya has to think if we want to get out of here and he can’t do that if you’re insulting him.”

Mineta opened his mouth to protest, but shut up when Asui slapped him again. Izuku took a deep breath, “Alright, let’s talk quirks. What can you two do?”

“I can jump far, cling to pretty much any wall, and stick out my tongue about twenty meters.” Asui said. “I can also spit out my stomach so I can clean it and secrete a poisonous mucus that just stings a bit.”

Mineta had started drooling when Asui mentioned mucus, but he came back to earth with another slap from Asui.

“These sticky balls on my head pop off and stick to anything, but their strength depends on how I’m feeling that day. They don’t stick to me, though, I just bounce right off them.” He stared at the others for a minute before he started sobbing again. “This is why I told you we should wait for the real heroes! My quirk is useless for combat!”

The boat shuddered as a hard blade of water cut through it, then started to sink.

“I’m starting to get bored!” One of the villains yelled.

Asui looked skeptically at Mineta, who had started screaming again and was launching his balls at the villains in panic, “Mineta, are you sure the hero thing is right for you?”

“It’s weirder not to be scared right now!” Mineta cried. “I can’t believe I’m gonna die without ever touching Yaoyorozu’s boobs!”

Asui sighed and Izuku looked at the villains, “Wait, they’re afraid to touch them...and they’re sure of their victory, which means they’re bound to make a mistake...”

“What are you talking about?” Mineta sniffed.

Izuku smiled, “I have an idea. Mineta, give me your scarf!”
Asui pulled the scarf off his cape when Mineta hesitated and handed it to Izuku. Izuku pulled out his grappling hook and wrapped the scarf around it, “Alright Mineta, create a chain using your balls and stick it to the scarf. We’re going to shoot out the line with the stick chain attached, then bring it back to capture the villains and stick them to the boat.”

“Hmm,” Asui frowned, “I think it’d be better if I jumped out into the water and swam around the periphery with the chain before shooting the gun at the grip to tighten it. That way we can capture all the villains, not just a few.”

Izuku nodded, “It’ll be dangerous though. Are you sure you can swim faster than they can?”

Asui shrugged, “I can try. And if I can’t, I’ll just shoot the gun back at the boat early and ride it back up.”

Mineta made a chain about the length of the boat, pulling it tight as Asui jumped down into the water and started swimming. Mineta kept adding balls as fast as he could pull them off as Asui swam farther, rocketing past the villains, who were jeering at her for leaving her classmates behind. Most of them were so busy jeering that they didn’t notice the chain, but the ones that did notice just swam a few feet back so they weren’t touching the balls.

When Asui finished her loop around the villains, she shot the hook back at the boat, which tightened the loop suddenly, catching most of the villains by surprise and immobilizing them as they got stuck. Izuku looked out over the water as Asui unwrapped the scarf from around the hook and hopped with it once around the boat to tighten the loop further. There were a few villains who had escaped, but not enough that they couldn’t beat them in shallow water. Asui shoved Mineta unceremoniously under her arm and wrapped her tongue around Izuku, then jumped as far as she could toward the shore. A few villains followed them, but Izuku shot them with rubber bullets before they could get too close.

“Let’s get back to the entrance.” Asui said. “We can go around so we don’t run into the villains Aizawa is facing.”

Izuku clenched his fist, “I know how Eraser fights. He won’t last much longer against a big group like that and he’s just going to get hurt because he was trying to keep us safe. I’m gonna go help him.”

Mineta stared at him incredulously, “Are you trying to get us killed or something?”

“I’m not saying we should jump into the middle of the battle or anything.” Izuku said. “But maybe we could find a way to pick off some of the weaker ones so Eraser doesn’t have to worry about them.”

They crouched behind the lip of rock on the shoreline once Izuku promised that they’d run as soon as things got dangerous. Eraser was still doing ok and he still looked as intimidating as ever, but Izuku could tell he was slowing down, panting between villains and letting his hair stay down for a few milliseconds longer between erasures. As Izuku watched, the hand villain rushed him and laid a hand on his elbow right when he blinked. Eraser’s elbow began to flake away as the sleeve and skin disintegrated under the villain’s touch. A disintegration quirk? Probably five point if the hands were any indication.

Eraser managed to keep fighting, even though his injured arm was flapping uselessly at his side, but the hand villain just laughed, “You really are so cool, Eraserhead! But I’m not the final boss here, Nomu is.”
A giant man with a bird beak slammed Eraser into the ground with one punch and broke his already injured arm.

“Eraser!” The hand villain looked over at him and Izuku swallowed as he saw Eraser’s panicked expression as he struggled to lift his head up, only to have his face ground into the floor again by the villain. Asui was tugging at his arm, trying to get him to crouch back down, but Izuku didn’t even remember standing up.

“Ahh.” The hand villain grinned beneath the strange hand mask on his face. “You must be Deku. Sensei gave me a side quest for you...”

Chapter End Notes

Yes, I googled it and guns can still fire after being submerged. It only really becomes a problem if you're firing them underwater or if they've been underwater for a few hours.
Chapter Summary

The conclusion of the USJ incident.

Izuku stared at the hand villain in shock and fear. A side quest? What did that even mean? How did this guy even know who he was?

“I guess I haven’t introduced myself, have I?” The hand villain sauntered closer, “You’re supposed to do that for non-NPC characters. My name is Tomura Shigaraki. You’re pretty famous, Deku, did you know that? All sorts of people are in prison because of you.”

Izuku swallowed hard and looked to where Eraser was lying broken on the ground, still underneath the Nomu. He didn’t know if backup were coming, but there was a good chance All Might was on his way by this point. If Izuku could stall the villains, even temporarily, he might be able to keep them from hurting Eraser even more.

He gave Shigaraki a shaky smile and stepped up into the plaza, “Yep, that’s me.”

Shigaraki grinned, “Sensei says you’re pretty smart.”

“That’s what they keep telling me.” Izuku shrugged. “But I really don’t think I’m anything special.”

Shigaraki scratched at his neck, “That’s not what Sensei says…” he growled.

Izuku froze. Downplaying his intelligence was obviously stressing Shigaraki out, which might make him more likely to attack, “Umm...I mean, I don’t actually know my IQ, so I can’t tell you objectively that I’m actually smarter than anyone else, but if I wasn’t, I probably wouldn’t be at UA so...”

Shigaraki stopped scratching and smiled, “Yeah, that’s what Sensi said. Sensei’s even smarter than you are, Deku...”

The mist villain appeared next to Shigaraki, “My apologies, but despite my best efforts, a student escaped. The heroes are no doubt on their way.”

Shigaraki scratched violently at his neck, “Kurogiri, you idiot! If you weren’t our warp gate, I’d kill you right now.”

Izuku tried to calm his breathing and keep his hope in check. Heroes were on the way, but that didn’t mean they were out of the woods yet. His best bet was to keep stalling Shigaraki and keep him from doing anything too violent until All Might arrived.

“Maybe we should kill...”

“Shigaraki.” Izuku said loudly. “You said something about a quest for me. I’m sure your sensei wouldn’t be too happy if you didn’t let me know about it.”
“Ahh, yes!” Shigaraki turned to look at him again. “Sensei is so excited to meet you!”

“Who is your Sensei?” Keep him talking....

Shigaraki pointed at the Nomu, “I’m sure you’ve noticed my Nomu isn’t exactly normal, right?”

Izuku nodded, keep him talking, “I’ve noticed he’s pretty powerful, and that he seems to obey your orders.”

Shigaraki nodded, “He is pretty powerful, but Sensei makes him seem like a mid-level boss!” He cackled. “Nomu here has multiple quirks. He’s got regeneration, shock absorption, not to mention super strength. The quirks mess with his brain a bit but,” he shrugged, “what can you do?”

Izuku’s mind spun, he wanted to say it was impossible for someone to have that many quirks, but...Toogata had two quirks, didn’t he? If there was a quirk that could be passed down like All Might’s, was it possible that there was a quirk that could bestow multiple quirks. Oh, dang, he was probably supposed to respond, wasn’t he?

“Umm... how did Nomu get all these quirks?” Izuku did his best to look intrigued, “I’m assuming he wasn’t born with them?”

“Nope!” Shigaraki grinned. “That’s my Sensei’s quirk! He can take quirks from whoever he wants and give them to his loyal followers. That’s where you come in, Deku.”

Izuku felt slightly nauseous, he hoped he was wrong about where this was going, “Me?”

Shigaraki nodded, “Sensei promised that if you come with us and use that big brain of yours to help the league, he’ll give you a quirk. Wouldn’t it be nice to not be quirkless anymore?”

“Shut up!” Tsu shouted from behind him. “He’s a villain, Midoriya, you can’t believe a word he says.”

Izuku cursed and tried to wave her away. Why were they still there? He had to keep control of the situation. Izuku glanced toward the door. Just keep Shigaraki occupied a little longer, “What kind of quirk are we talking about? I don’t think I’d need an intelligence quirk. Like you mentioned, that’s already in my arsenal. And I’m a decent quirkless fighter. What quirk could Sensei have that could tempt me?”

Shigaraki shrugged, “Any quirk you want. Sensei’s got a lot of options, but I bet that even if you pointed out a random quirk off the street, Sensei would be happy to steal it for you.”

“Don’t listen to him!” Mineta screamed. “What he’s saying is impossible, everyone knows that!”

Shigaraki scowled and started scratching at his neck again and Izuku wished his classmates would stop trying to help, “No, he’s not lying.” He looked Shigaraki in the eye, "I know that it’s possible.”

Shigaraki smiled, “Then you accept?”

Izuku took a deep breath and hesitated. He could keep playing along and say yes, but he didn’t think it was smart to let the villains think they’d won him over. They might try to kidnap him or even seek him out after this if they thought he was interested in joining up. But All Might was on his way so Izuku wouldn’t have to deal with Shigaraki’s wrath for too long. Hopefully.

“No.” he said finally. “I’ve gotten this far quirkless, and I don’t think I want a quirk anymore.” Izuku clenched his fists. “I don’t need to be powerful to be useful, Shigaraki!”
Shigaraki’s face twisted in rage and he screamed as he ran at Izuku, who rolled to the side just in time, but Shigaraki was already attacking again. Izuku grabbed a handful of dirt and threw it in Shigaraki’s face, scrambling to his feet and grabbing a knife as Shigaraki growled and rubbed his eyes.

“You little brat!” The sand didn’t distract him for as long as Izuku hoped, but this time when Shigaraki ran at him, he was prepared. He gripped his knife a little harder in preparation for what he was planning and ignored the little voice in his head that screamed he was going too far, that there had to be another way. But Izuku didn’t know what else to do. He was outmatched, his opponent was faster and stronger than he was, and five point disintegration quirks needed five points to work.

As soon as Shigaraki reached for him, Izuku pivoted and swung his knife, flinching at the blood as he sliced through the muscle and bone of Shigaraki’s left pinky. Izuku almost threw up when he saw that the finger was still hanging on by only a small piece of skin and muscle. He’d done that. He’d hurt him, and likely caused permanent damage just to disable a quirk.

Shigaraki screamed in rage and pain, reaching for Izuku and grabbing his forearm with his uninjured hand. Izuku gasped at the pain as his skin and muscle slowly flaked away. He tried to yank his arm away from Shigaraki’s tight grasp, but was unable to until Shigaraki was distracted by a loud bang.

“I am here, to save you!”

There was a rush of wind and Izuku found himself standing outside the USJ with All Might looking down on him with concern, “Are you alright, my boy?”

Izuku nodded, “I’m injured, but fine, go fight the villains, but beware of the Nomu, he’s got multiple quirks.”

All Might frowned, “You’re injured, maybe I should…”

Izuku grit his teeth, “I’ll be fine, but the other students are in danger. Save them!”

“But you…”

Izuku hit All Might’s chest with his uninjured arm, “They are here to kill you, All Might, which you would know if you didn’t waste all your time this morning when you were supposed to teach today. Go save the others, they need you just as much as I do.”

All Might’s face hardened, “The others can take care of themselves.”

“No they can’t!” Izuku screamed, “They’re students, All Might! Now stop wasting what little time you have left and get in there! Leave me and go!”

All Might hesitate another long moment before disappearing back into the facility. Izuku scowled and made his way back into the USJ. He needed to make sure Eraser and the other students were safe.

Ashido and Uraraka were trying to patch up Thirteen when he saw them, and he ran to help Asui and Mineta, who were struggling to carry Aizawa up the stairs as All Might traded blows with the Nomu. They laid him next to Thirteen and Izuku could feel tears welling up as he took in his injured friend.

“Midoriya?” Asui put her hand on his shoulder. “Are you alright?”
Izuku nodded, “I can hardly feel the pain right now, but we need to find the others and get out of here. Hopefully All Might can handle the villains.”

“Umm…” Mineta pointed a shaky finger down at the plaza. “I don’t know if he can.”

Izuku looked to see All Might bleeding from his side and slowly being pulled through a portal after he’d apparently tried to supplex the Nomu. Izuku grimaced and started running back down to the plaza as the others yelled for him to stop. Hopefully Aizawa would forgive him, but the world couldn’t lose it’s symbol of peace yet!

There was an explosion right as he reached the plaza and Izuku stopped as he saw Katsuki pin Kurogiri and Todoroki freeze half the Nomu, allowing All Might to escape as Kirishima ran at Shigaraki, who was still cradling his injured hand, “Kids these days really are amazing. Can’t have that. Nomu!”

The Nomu pulled itself back though the warp gate and tore off it’s frozen limbs, regrowing them in seconds. Izuku nodded, if he’d created something with multiple quirks, regeneration would definitely be one of them. The others, though, were shocked.

“What is this?” All Might was still clutching his side. “I thought you said his quirk was shock absorption?”

Izuku scowled. He’d warned him that Nomu had multiple quirks. Had All Might even listened to him?

“Nomu’s been engineered to take you on even at 100% of your power.” Shigaraki said, gritting his teeth through the pain. “He’s basically a highly efficient punching bag that hits back! First things first, though, we need to free our method of escape. Nomu, get him!”

Izuku gasped as the Nomu ran for Katsuki and a massive cloud of dust billowed from the impact, “Katsuki!”

“I’m right here you idiot!” Katsuki was sitting beside Kirishima dusty and bruised from being tossed, but ok.

“But then…?” Kirishima looked over toward the Nomu, “How’d you get over here?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Todoroki pointed to where the dust was clearing to reveal All Might, his arms still raised to block the punch.

“These are kids and you didn’t hold back?” Blood was starting to leak from the corner of All Might’s mouth.

“He was pinning my warp gate, so it’s not like I had much choice.” Shigaraki said. “And besides, these kids are no angels.” He held up his mangled hand. “That one even tried to cut my hand apart. What kind of hero does something like that?”

Katsuki looked at Izuku incredulously and he grimaced. Yeah, it really did sound bad when Shigaraki put it like that.

All Might cut off Shigaraki’s monologue about heroic violence, “I think you’re just doing whatever you want and trying to hide it behind values.”

Shigaraki chuckled, “You figured me out, huh? Nomu! Kill him!”
Dust filled the plaza as Nomu and All Might started fighting, “If he’s designed to defeat me at 100%,” All Might grit his teeth, “then I’ll just have to go beyond that! Plus Ultra!”

He sent the Nomu flying through the ceiling, then turned to Shigaraki, “I guess I really am getting weaker, that took more than 300 punches!”

Shigaraki was scratching at his neck with his good hand, “Cheater! How did he beat Nomu?”

“What, villain?” All Might looked as powerful as ever, but Izuku could see steam mixed in with the dust. He was out of time. “I thought you were going to kill me?”

Shigaraki screamed and threw himself at All Might and Izuku knew this was how it was going to end. All Might probably couldn’t move or he’d reveal his true form, and he was probably willing to die to keep that secret, considering how long he’d kept being a hero despite his condition. But if the symbol of peace were to be killed here by villains, crime would sky rocket all over Japan. The world couldn’t lose their symbol like this!

Izuku cursed and started running. All Might might not reveal his true form to save himself, but he would to save someone else. And who better than the kid he already thought was weak and defenseless?

“Midoriya, no!” All Might grabbed him and rolled to the side in a puff of steam as Izuku ran into Shigaraki’s line of fire. All of a sudden, gunfire rang out and Shigaraki screamed again. Izuku looked to see him disappear into a warp gate right before his view was obscured by one of Cementoss’s walls.

All Might glared at him as the steam of his transformation finally cleared, “That was incredibly reckless, young Midoriya.”

Izuku met his eyes, “So was letting yourself die just to keep a secret.”

All Might’s face softened, “I’m just glad you’re alright.” He put his hand on Izuku’s shoulder, “After today, young Midoriya, I hope you’ve seen how reckless it is for you to be a hero. There’s no shame in dropping out of the hero course now that you’ve seen what real villains are like.”

Izuku knocked All Might’s hand away and his eyes hardened. Up until this point, Izuku figured he’d kinda been in the denial stage of grief, mourning the loss of the hero he’d grown up admiring. But he’d forgotten that anger was a stage of grief too, and that’s all Izuku felt as he looked at a hero who would crush his dream, even after he’d saved his life. Good thing Izuku had new heroes now.

Izuku stood and started stalking back toward the entrance before stopping and looking back at All Might, who was still standing there, pleading with his eyes for Izuku to just give up and stay safe.

“I already knew what really villains were like, All Might,” he said lowly, “but you’d know that if you’d ever bothered to get to know me, rather than deciding I’m weak just because I’m quirkless.”

Toshinori watched Midoriya’s back as he walked away. What had the boy meant when he said he already knew what villains were like? How had he remained so calm when other students were panicking? Had Midoriya really been the one to cut off Shigaraki’s finger? He couldn’t have. He was quirkless, right? Helpless, just like Toshinori had been before Nana gave him her quirk?

Or was he?
Hospitals and Research

Chapter Summary

Izuku researches the league of villains while waiting for Eraser to wake up.

Izuku rubbed his eyes as he stared at the screen of his laptop. As tired as he was, he knew he wouldn’t be able to sleep until he knew Eraser was alright, and besides, he needed to do something to distract him from his overwhelming anger. He glanced over at his teacher, unconscious on the hospital bed as Joke dozed off in the hard plastic chair pushed against the wall. He should probably offer her the couch, but then he’d have to wake her up and she might not be able to fall asleep again.

Izuku itched at the bandage on his forearm. Recovery Girl had said he was lucky the disintegration hadn’t gotten to the bone, so he’d escape with just a scar, but even with her quirk, it would still take a few days to heal completely. He shook his head and picked up his notebook. Information on the villains they’d arrested was easy to find, but that wasn’t what Izuku was interested in right now. What he wanted was info on Shigaraki, Kurogiri, and the one they’d called Sensei.

So far, Izuku didn’t have much. He knew a lot about Shigaraki’s quirk and how it worked, but that was only because he’d seen it in person. Even after Tsukauchi gave him access to the government’s quirk files, Izuku couldn’t find any record of a person with Shigaraki’s quirk. At least, not one that was alive. There had been a woman with a nearly identical quirk, but she’d died nearly 50 years ago.

Kurogiri’s quirk was even worse. Izuku only saw Warp Gate being used a few times, so didn’t get the chance to really see what weaknesses and limitations it had. Did Kurogiri have to be able to see where he was warping? Did he have to have been there? Was there any limit, however large, to the size of his warp gates? After what he found on Shigaraki’s quirk, Izuku broadened his search to any warp quirks recorded since the dawn of quirks on a hunch, just in case Warp Gate wasn’t the quirk Kourogiri had been born with but nada. Sure, there were some other warp quirks, but none of those exactly matched what he’d seen. It was so frustrating!

And it all came back to Sensei. Izuku sighed and started combing through online forums, looking for any mention of a man who could give and take quirks. A couple people mentioned someone called All for One, but they were always shot down pretty quick because All for One was a legend, a boogeyman. He couldn’t be a real person.

Could he?

Izuku made a note and decided to look deeper into All for One. There were stories about him going back for years, even centuries. Izuku had originally thought that was because he was a legend created around the dawn of quirks, but if he were real... well, he could be dead, or he could have a longevity quirk, or All for One could be an inheritable quirk like All Might’s and the name just fell to whoever had the quirk. There were just too many options.

He decided to start by researching the earliest references first. That way, even if it was a different person with the same quirk or claiming to have that quirk, Izuku would still be able to understand the history. There were lots of stories from around the dawn of quirks, but many of them had to
have been exaggerated. It was easy to see where the legends came from. Superpowers had still been so new then that not many people knew how they worked. Being quirkless seemed normal at that point, so some people with quirks didn’t want them, but others wanted the power that came with having superhuman abilities. A man who could give and take quirks must have seemed like a miracle worker in that environment.

According to the stories Izuku could find, All for One had created a veritable yakuza with hundreds of loyal followers. There were just as many stories of people saying he “made us gods” as there were saying he “cured us of our mutations” so Izuku figured he had loyalty among both the quirked and quirkless. He also seemed more comfortable in the shadows, letting his lackeys do more and more of the dirty work as he gained more disciples.

Izuku was about to move on from that original All for One when an article caught his eye. It was just a gossip magazine expose on the man behind the quirk and what contributed to his rise to villainy and Izuku almost didn’t bother reading it, but the photo printed alongside the article seemed familiar for some reason. Izuku stared at it for a long minute, trying to figure out where he’d seen it before. Oddly enough, it wasn’t All for One who seemed familiar, but the young man standing next to him that the caption identified as his quirkless younger brother. Where had Izuku seen him before?

Wait…

Izuku dug through his old files and entered the password to view the encrypted file he’d made on All Might’s quirk. He’d hit a dead end when researching because one of the holders had a quirkless mentor but… He clicked on an image of the first holder smiling alongside his serious mentor then looked back at the photo included with the article and...yep, it was the same guy. But All for One’s brother had mentored a man to be a hero and started a whole line of heroes, so shouldn’t All for One have been a hero too? Or maybe his brother should have been a villain? Maybe…

Izuku cried out as Joke grabbed his laptop off his lap, “Alright kiddo, you’ve been sitting there since the doctors let us in. You need to sleep!”

“But,” Izuku reached for his laptop, but Joke held it out of reach.

“No.” She shook her head. “What you need to do is save your work and close your eyes for a while, even if you can’t sleep. Don’t forget you were injured too, or would you like me to get Recovery Girl over here to wack you over the head with her stick?”

Izuku sighed, “Fine, but if I can’t sleep after a half hour, I go back to my research, ok?”

Joke smiled and gave him back the laptop. Izuku saved his work, encrypting his All for One file just like he’d done with his research on All Might’s quirk before setting it down on the floor next to him. Joke handed him a blanket and ruffled his hair, making Izuku roll his eyes. Izuku knew he wouldn’t be able to sleep, but layed down and closed his eyes anyway to make Joke think he was at least trying.

Apparently he was more tired than he thought, though, because he was out almost immediately.

Shouta groaned as he opened his eyes only to find that he couldn’t really see. He tried to move his hands to see if there was something covering his eyes, but they hurt and felt like they were tied to his chest. What was going on? Was there really something covering his face or was he blind now? He started hyperventilating as the memories started filtering in. the attack on the USJ. Shigaraki. Nomu. Deku! Where was Deku? Was he ok?
“Eraser? Crap! Shouta, breathe with me! You’re ok, you’re at the hospital, you’re safe!”

Shouta found himself melting with relief at Fukukado’s voice and he tried to match her breathing. He was safe. He was in the hospital. Ok, but, “Deku. Is he ok? The last thing I remember, he was facing down the villains.”

Fukukado chuckled, “See for yourself.”

Shouta frowned, “…my eyes…”

“Oh, crap! Sorry!” Shouta felt hands brush gently against his face and then he was looking at Fukukado’s face as she pulled the bandages out of the way. “The doctor says your orbital floor was damaged, so you should probably rest your eyes as much as you can. I just didn’t think about how freaked out you’d be waking up and not being able to see anything. I’m sorry Eraser.”

Shouta tried to nod, but stopped when the movement sent a jolt of pain through his neck, “Deku? Is he alright?”

Fukukado rolled her eyes and stepped to the side slightly, letting Shouta see Deku passed out on the couch, notebooks and loose papers crumpled around him as his laptop sat on the floor next to him.

“He’s been researching the league of villains ever since Recovery Girl healed him, trying to track them down.” Fukukado sighed. “I forced him to go to sleep about an hour ago, but I can wake him up if you want to talk to him.”

Shouta wanted to shake his head, but figured that’d go about as well as nodding so he didn’t, “No, let him sleep. He must be exhausted, especially if Recovery Girl healed him. Has he found anything yet?”

Fukukado shrugged, “I don’t really know. He was kinda ignoring the world, honestly, and was muttering so fast I didn’t catch all of it. He said All Might a few times and something about the dawn of quirks, but I really don’t know.” She grabbed a plastic chair from against the wall and sat on it backward, so her folded arms were draped on the back of the chair and she was facing him. “Honestly, I’m fairly certain at this point he was just trying to channel his anger…”

Shouta sighed, “Yeah, I’m pretty angry at those villains too.”

Fukukado gave him an unreadable expression, “That’s not…I mean, yeah, he’s angry at them too, but…”

“What?”

Fukukado sighed, “He won’t talk about it, but apparently All Might cornered him after the attack. Told him to give up being a hero.”

“That no good son a…”

“Ahh, don’t get up Eraser!” Fukukado pushed him gently back into the bed. “Don’t worry, we’ve already sicced Nighteye on him, but he was in pretty bad shape too from what Recovery Girl said, so it might be a bit before he’s allowed to have visitors.” She gave him a look. “And those visitors won’t be allowed to kill him.”

Shouta huffed, “I don’t think I’m in any condition to kill anyone…at least not right now.”
Fukukado laughed, then looked at him softly, “We were really worried about you, you know?”

Shouto looked down at the bed, “Yeah. It was just...so scary. I thought I was going to lose them, Joke. I...they outright said they were going to kill the students a few times and I...I tried so hard to protect them and then Deku was facing down Shigaraki and I... I couldn’t do anything. I was pinned and I...I just felt so hopeless.”

Shouta knew he sounded broken, so he couldn’t bring himself to look at Fukukado until she rested her hand gently on his knee. She smiled at him softly, but her eyes were wet with tears, “I know, Shouta. I can’t even imagine how scared you must have been for your students. But you fought anyway, and none of your students had major injuries. You did good.”

Shouta frowned, “It doesn’t feel like it.”

Fukukado sighed, “No. No, it doesn’t.”
Nighteye visits All Might in the hospital

“What were you thinking?”

Toshinori winced as Nighteye threw open the door to his hospital room, “Hello to you too, Mirai. Aren’t you at least glad I survived the fight with that monster?”

He devolved into a coughing fit and Mirai frowned at him. He looked conflicted for a long moment before he sighed and sat down in the chair beside the bed.

“Here.” Mirai handed him a handkerchief. “Don’t hurt yourself.”

Toshinori took the handkerchief and gave Mirai a weak smile, “We did it though, Mirai. We changed the future. I didn’t die by the hand of a monster like you foresaw.”

Mirai sighed, “We don’t know that, Toshinori. You know as well as I do that the surroundings get more and more fuzzy the farther into the future I look, so there’s no guarantee this Nomu was the monster I saw at your death.”

Toshinori coughed again, “Can’t you just take a moment to be happy I’m alive?”

Mirai raised an eyebrow at him, “You’ve been asleep for most of the past 24 hours. How do you know I haven’t already taken that moment and moved on?”

Toshinori laughed, but stopped when he realized how badly his ribs hurt, “Good point. I assume that you’re here to chew me out for being reckless? If so, you’re a little late, Recovery Girl already gave me an earful.” He rubbed the back of his head, still feeling the phantom pain from her cane. “And a headful.”

Mirai glared at him, “You deserved it. You should have been there, Toshinori. Those students were counting on you, and you failed them because you were late.”

Toshinori sighed, “I know. I should have prioritized my teaching rather than my heroics, but…” he groaned. “How was I supposed to just walk by when people needed my help?”

“By knowing your limits.” Mirai said. “You got lucky with One for All in that you’ve basically had enough power to do whatever you put your mind to your entire career, but most people aren’t that lucky. Most of us have to know our limits and do what we can within them, but that doesn’t make us any less.”

Toshinori frowned, “You’re talking about young Midoriya, aren’t you?”

“I don’t understand it, Toshinori! You were quirkless! You know firsthand how difficult that is and yet you still tried to get him to drop out of the hero course!”

Toshinori grimaced, “He told you about that, huh?”
Mirai huffed, “Why wouldn’t he? He was pretty angry, Toshinori. And from what I heard from Eraser, this wasn’t even the first time you’ve tried to crush his dream. I’m not sure if he’ll ever forgive you. I don’t even know if I can forgive you.”

Toshinori frowned in confusion, “What? Why wouldn’t you be able to forgive me? Are you close to young Midoriya or something?”

Mirai raised his eyebrows, “Midoriya is Deku, the analyst who has been helping the hero underground for the last year or so. I’m surprised you didn’t know that, it’s not like we were trying to hide his identity or anything, Eraser says that even the students know at this point. Were you even paying attention, Toshinori”

“Young Midoriya is that Deku? I thought he had an analysis quirk!” Toshinori said in shock.

“Of course you did.” Mirai muttered. “How many Dekus did you think existed, Toshinori? Useless isn’t a very common code name.”

“I just thought it was the two of them. I didn’t think...” Toshinori muttered.

“There’s just the one Deku, Toshinori.” Mirai glared at him. “So I’m sure you can understand why I’d be angry with you right now. I’ve grown close to Deku and can vouch for his skill, but from what I’ve been told you’ve been against him from the very beginning.”

“I was just trying to protect him!”

“By what?” Mirai asked. “By treating him like he’s less than the other students?”

“No! I wanted to protect him by keeping him alive! You’ve never been quirkless before, Mirai, you don’t know what it’s like.”

“And now I’m questioning whether you do.” Mirai said, meeting Toshinori’s eye. “Nana gave you that quirk decades ago, Toshinori, so how much do you really remember about being quirkless.”

Toshinori held his gaze without flinching, “Enough to remember that I would never have been able to be a hero if she hadn’t.”

“So that’s what this about then.” Mirai glared at him. “You think there’s no way Deku is capable of being a quirkless hero just because you weren’t. Think, Toshinori! Think of how you would have felt if people back then told you that there was no way you could be a hero, just because you were quirkless.”

“You seem to be forgetting that people did tell me that.” Toshinori said. “Multiple times, in fact, for years. I never could have achieved my dreams of being a symbol of peace if I hadn’t met Nana when I did. And you’re right! I did get lucky, but that doesn’t change the fact that someone without a quirk can never stand against someone with superpowers! I’ll admit I realize the extent of what young Midoriya was capable of, but I was just trying to...”

Mirai held up a hand, “It doesn’t matter what you were trying to do, Toshinori. In the end, you made him feel as if he were less than the other students.” Mirai glared at him. “The exact opposite of what a good teacher is supposed to do. I’m disappointed in you, Toshinori.”

Toshinori felt like he’d gotten a punch in the gut. What was he supposed to say to that? He’d just thought...but then young Midoriya had survived the attack, hadn’t he? He’d even been facing down the villains when Toshinori had arrived. The silence dragged on to the point where it was beyond awkward, but he still didn’t know what he was supposed to say. He didn’t want to lose his friend
again, not when Mirai had just barely started speaking to him again. But what was he supposed to do?

After a few minutes, Mirai stood, “I think that you’re going to have to accept that Deku is going to be the quirkless hero that you weren’t capable of being. He might never be a symbol of peace like you are, and he’ll have to know his limits, like you seem to be incapable of doing, but he is going to be a hero, and you’re just going to have to deal with that.” He sighed and turned back to Toshinori with his hand on the doorknob. “Just...promise me you’ll give him a chance, ok? If not for his own sake, for the sake of that quirkless boy you once were, the one everyone told he couldn’t be a hero. Because I think you’ll find you two are much more similar than you realize.”

Toshinori stared at Mirai for a long moment before nodding hesitantly. Mirai gave him a small smile and walked out the door, leaving Toshinori to sink back into his bed in exhaustion. He still didn’t think young Midoriya would survive all three years in the hero course, but he supposed he could give the boy a chance, if only for his friend’s sake.

He just hoped the boy would prove him wrong.
Izuku laughed when he saw Aizawa walk into the classroom literally mummy wrapped from head to toe. Yeah, he’d seen him in the hospital, but that had looked like he belonged. Here, he seemed to be pretending he was fine, he was even wearing his hero gear like normal, but at the same time looked like he was cosplaying as an ancient Egyptian. Izuku grabbed his phone and snapped a picture, quickly sending it to Joke, who sent back an unintelligible string of emojis.

“Ahem.” Izuku smiled sheepishly at Aizawa, who was glaring at him. Don’t ask how Izuku knew he glaring at him, considering Aizawa’s eyes were almost completely covered in bandages and there was no way anyone would be able to make out any facial expressions underneath all those, but Izuku could just feel it. Kaminari and Sero had started giggling and Izuku’s grin just got wider, overshooting innocent and landing squarely in shit-eating territory.

Aizawa stared at him for another long moment before he seemingly gave up and sighed, “The UA sports festival is in two weeks. This is your chance to impress pros, which will lead to internships and opportunities in the future, so don’t mess it up.”

“Excuse me, Aizawa-Sensei!” Iida raised his hand high. “Is it really wise to hold the sports festival right after an attack?”

“It wasn’t my decision.” Aizawa said dully. “I think it’s irrational, but the school has decided we need to show we’re not intimidated by the actions of these villains, so it’s happening. Your responsibility is to be ready.”

“Yes sir!”

By the time lunch came around, everyone was a lot more excited than fearful. Izuku smiled as he saw his classmate’s determination to show off their quirks to the pros, even if they all took very different approaches. Uraraka especially was more determined than Izuku had ever seen her. For his part, Izuku wasn’t concerned about being scouted by pros. He was going underground and most of the pros he would work with for internships already knew who he was, so the sports festival wouldn’t make a huge difference for him professionally like it would for his classmates.
What Izuku was worried about was proving that a quirkless kid like him could stand on equal footing as the kids with powerful quirks. Many people were still under the impression that Deku had an analysis quirk, and there were bound to be more heroes like All Might who insisted on believing that the quirkless had no place being heroes, so it was important that Izuku proved them all wrong.

So the major question was whether he should apply to bring some support gear. Would going into it with his gear even the playing field, or would it be a red flag that people would take as proof that the quirkless really were lesser? Izuku debated each side as he made his way to Nedzu’s office for his personal lesson, which was a whole other moral dilemma. The more he and Nedzu delved into his old middle school, the more Izuku realized he wasn’t the only victim of their neglect, but could he really justify destroying them? Was there a better way to make sure they didn’t hurt anyone else, or was Nedzu’s way the most effective course of action? What was the right thing to do here?

The door opened on its own as Izuku raised his hand to knock and he smiled as he walked in to find Nedzu already sitting at his desk, pouring tea, “Hello Midoriya! How are you today? Is your arm recovering well from Shigaraki’s attack?”

Izuku nodded and lifted his sleeve so Nedzu could see the bandages still covering his forearm, “Recovery Girl wants me to keep it covered for the next week or so, but it’s already scarring over, so it’s mostly just a precaution.”

Nedzu nodded, “Good, I am happy to hear that. I am also sorry that you and your classmates had to go through that. Warp quirks are always tricky in terms of tightening security.”

Izuku nodded, “Especially unregistered warp quirks.”

Nedzu tilted his head, “What?”

“Oh, um, I was just looking into quirk records, Tsukauchi gave me access don’t worry, to see if I could track the leaders of the league down based on their quirks, but I couldn’t find anything at all on Kurogiri’s.” Izuku took a sip of tea and frowned. “It’s like the quirk itself shouldn’t exist. I still need to think about what quirks could realistically combine to create Warp Gate though, before I really say anything else. Maybe his parents are in the records, even if he’s not.”

Nedzu nodded, smiling, “Very good! I’m sure that will be a very interesting endeavor. Did you find anything else interesting?”

Izuku was silent for a moment. Did Nedzu know about All Might’s quirk? Because All Might and All for One were definitely linked, or they would be if Izuku could prove his theory that All for One either had an immortality quirk or was an inheritable quirk like All Might’s. Maybe he could ask Tsukauchi to let him use the department’s facial recognition software to disprove the immortality theory. But even if All Might was teaching at UA and using it to mentor Toogata, there was no guarantee that Nedzu knew that and if not, Izuku didn’t want to give him any hints, but…he couldn’t just keep something this big to himself.

“Well, um, you know how Shigaraki offered…”

“Offered you a quirk?” Nedzu finished.

Izuku nodded hesitantly, “Well, um, I was thinking about what he said, that his sensei could give and take quirks. It’s theoretically possible, if that was his quirk. And that would make this Sensei the true leader of the league, not Shigaraki, which is even more likely due to Shigaraki’s temperament.”
“I was beginning to suspect as much.” Nedzu said. “This Sensei must be powerful indeed if he was able to convince so many to follow a volatile manchild such as Shigaraki.”

“Exactly! So far actually it’s been easier to find info on who Sensei might be than it is to find info on Shigaraki and Kurogiri, but it’s also almost impossible to separate the truth from the legends.”

“Well, I have found that legends are often based on truth.” Nedzu leaned forward, not bothering to hide his interest. “So what have you found?”

“Well, the story goes that back when quirks first appeared, there was a man who went by the name of All for One who had Sensei’s quirk. I think that part’s true, at least, I could find a lot of sources before he accumulated enough support to disappear into the shadows. I’m still not sure how exactly Sensei connects to that original All for One, but I’m fairly certain there’s a connection. The quirks are too big of a coincidence to be anything else.”

Nedzu stared at him seriously, “If so, that would make him a very powerful villain. I’m concerned that you’ve stumbled across a very dangerous piece of information, Midoriya. Perhaps it would be wisest if you did not look into it further.”

“With all due respect, Nedzu, I don’t think it’s going to make much of a difference whether I know about All for One or not. I’ve obviously already caught his attention and made an enemy out of Shigaraki, so it’s not like I’m going to be in any more danger just because I know too much. Actually, my best bet is probably to know as much as I possibly can about my enemy before I have to face him.” Izuku smiled. “I’m living proof that knowledge is power.”

“That you are! Well, I must ask that you keep me informed of what you find, because this is dangerous information, but I will trust your judgement for now. Is that agreeable?”

Izuku nodded and Nedzu responded by clapping his hands together, “Perfect! Well, in that case, perhaps we should continue our lessons where we left off before this unfortunate attack. Now where were we?”

“We were talking about safety rhetoric.” Izuku said. “That many times, popular villains will argue that their wrong actions are actually necessary to keep people safe. Like how an abusive boyfriend will defend his jealousy by saying he doesn’t want his significant other to get hurt by other men.”

“Good example.” Nedzu grinned. “Now, how do you think your old school used this rhetoric to their advantage?”

Izuku thought for a moment, “Well, that’s kind of difficult, because they never really tried saying they were protecting me, but...I guess from their perspective, they probably thought they were protecting the kids with quirks, the ones with strong quirks especially.”

“Can you expound on that a little more?”

“Well,” Izuku pinched his bottom lip as he sorted through his thoughts, “if they had punished Katsuki for his treatment of me like they were supposed to, it probably would have gone on his record and he wouldn’t have been able to get into UA. If they had been called on it, they probably would have said they were protecting Katsuki’s future and prioritizing the children with the most potential. Is that right?”

Nedzu took a sip of tea, “Well, it is morally reprehensible, but that is a good example of how people will often try to use protection as a tool to justify their own wrong doings. Good work. Now, how do you think we could combat this.”
“We’d have to find ways to poke holes in their logic.” Izuku said. “If we could show that they are not protecting anyone, then their entire argument would fall apart.”

Nedzu nodded, ‘Good. Now practice doing that with the argument you just put forth on your old school’s behalf that they were protecting Bakugo.”

“My first thought would be that I, as a quirkless person, deserve protection too.” Izuku began. “But I’m not sure that would be the best way to do it.”

“I am inclined to agree with you, but can you explain your reasons?”

“People don’t let go of their prejudices easily and if society didn’t have prejudice, then this wouldn’t have happened in the first place. While there will be some people that will agree that my well being is just as important as Katsuki’s, there will probably be even more that will agree with my school, even if they wouldn’t say so out loud.”

Nedzu nodded, “So…”?

“So we need to make the strength of their argument into its weakness!” Izuku smiled. “Their main argument is that they were protecting Katsuki, so what if we could prove that they were doing the exact opposite and make it about the quirked students, not the quirkless ones! We could point out what we’ve already realized: that their “protection” of him was actually harmful because it enabled harmful behaviors and anger issues that are going to have to be resolved now, rather than being resolved when they first appeared back in elementary school. They put Katsuki behind socially and emotionally, so they didn’t have his best interests at heart at all. If we spun it right, we could even say they were simply using these strong kids as tools to abuse children, which would cause public outrage!”

Nedzu smiled proudly, “Very good, Midoriya. I dare say you’re getting the hang of this! Have you given any thought to if you would like to go public with this information?”

Izuku nodded, “I’ve thought a lot about it, actually, and I think taking them down is the right decision. They’ve hurt a lot of people, not just me, and will continue hurting people if they’re allowed to, so it’s my responsibility as a future hero to make sure they stop, right?”

“Very good! Then for your next assignment, I would like you to create a post that just barely scratches the surface of the issues we’ve discussed. It’s much better to go slowly in these kinds of things, afterall, so the effects are more permanent. Then research which would be the best forums and times to post such a thing anonymously, and then when we discuss it next week, I’ll let you know how you did and if there’s a way to do it better. Does that sound agreeable?”

Izuku nodded eagerly.

“Very well!” Nedzu smiled and stood, walking Izuku to the door. “Good work today, Midoriya. You had better get going to heroics. You may be ahead of many of your peers, but it is still important that you prepare well for the sports festival.”

“Yes sir!”
Therapy

Chapter Summary

Katsuki works though his guilt from the USJ.

Chapter Notes

Yay! Here's my voice recording, so listen to me ramble!

“So are you just gonna sit there in surly silence for the whole session, or are we actually going to talk about what's bothering you?”

“Nothing’s bothering me, mutt!” Katsuki snapped. “Maybe I just don’t want to talk to an idiot like you, ever thought of that?”

Hound Dog chuckled, “Yeah, I thought about it brat, but I figured I don’t really care. Besides, you just went through your first real villain attack…”

“Second.”

Hound Dog tilted his head, “Second?”

Katsuki was silent for a moment, “The sludge villain. It was like a year ago. I was on the news and everything. Everybody saw.”

“Hmm.” Hound Dog thought for a moment, “I think I remember something about that. Two kids got caught up in the attack. Who was the other?”

“Deku.”

Hound Dog nodded, “One of the kids ran in to try to save the other. I take it you ran in to save Midoriya?”

Katsuki silently stared at the floor.

“Ahhh...I see.”

“Yeah.” Katsuki huffed. “And then I was just another weak-ass victim again at the USJ.”

“Are you sure? Because I heard you managed to pin the warp gate. That doesn’t sound like a victim to me.”

“Thirteen got hurt because of me!” Katsuki yelled. “If I hadn’t run in at the beginning, they would have been able to suck up that stupid warp villain. And then I got warped away with shitty hair, so it would have been my fault if he got hurt too.”
“Shitty hair?” Hound Dog tilted his head slightly.

“Kirishima.” Katsuki grumbled.

“Oh, so he’s your friend?”

“We’re not friends, mutt!” Katsuki glared at him. “He’s just some stupid extra who follows me around.”

Hound Dog grinned behind his muzzle, “And yet you know his name.”

Katsuki opened and closed his mouth a few times before slouching back into the couch, “Shut up, you stupid mutt.”

Hound Dog’s laugh sounded like a bark, “Fine brat, we can talk about something else. But just for the record, I’m glad you’re making friends.” Katsuki gave him a dirty look, but he just laughed again, “Ok, dropping it! But I did want to dig deeper into your guilt about Thirteen getting hurt. Why not blame the warp villain? He is the one that actually hurt them, right?”

“I still got in the way. I was worse than useless.”

“Yeah, maybe at that point, you were. I can give you that. You ran in without thinking, and someone got hurt. There’s no point in trying to pretend that didn’t happen.” Hound Dog said. “That being said, it’s your choice where we go from here. We can try to work through some of the guilt you feel about Thirteen’s injury, or we can talk through some strategies to make sure something like this doesn’t happen again.”

“What?” Katsuki looked at Hound Dog skeptically, “You’re not gonna force me to talk about my feelings?”

Hound Dog shook his head, “I already told you, brat, I’m not here to force you to do anything. If you feel like strategies are going to be more useful for you right now than trying to figure out that tangled ball of emotions you feel, I’m just along for the ride.”

Katuski thought for a moment, “So what? How do I make sure nobody gets hurt because of me?”

Hound Dog shrugged, “I’ll be honest, you’ll never be able to completely. We’re heroes, people get hurt in our line of work, but that doesn’t mean we can’t target what led to this disaster and fix it. So what happened?”

“You said it yourself,” Katsuki grumbled, “I ran in without thinking and someone got hurt.”

“Running in without thinking, hmm.” Hound Dog wrote something down. “That seems like something you do a lot. You’re a smart kid, brat, I’ve seen how you fight, but the fact is that when you act without thinking, people get hurt.”

“What?” That seemed way too general. “How did we get from Thirteen to whatever the hell it is you’re talking about?”

“Did you ever stop to think when you were bullying Midoriya?” Hound Dog asked pointedly.

Katuski thought for a moment. Had he ever thought about it? Had he ever really stopped to decide to be mean to Deku, or was it just something he did because it felt good in the moment?

“Fine, you stupid mutt.” He said finally. “Let’s say that’s part of the problem. How do I fix it?”
Hound Dog smiled, “You stop to think.”

Katuski scoffed, “I can see why they pay you the big bucks.”

Hound Dog laughed, “I know it sounds simple, brat, but it really isn’t. It might be the hardest thing you’ll ever do, and you’re going to fall a lot of times before thinking first becomes a habit. So I guess it just comes down to if you’re up for a challenge?”

Katsuki grinned, “I’m always up for a challenge, you stupid mutt! That’s what makes me the best!”
Preparations

Chapter Summary

Preparing for the Sports Festival.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! So you know how I slowed down because of midterms? Yeah, well, that's not really working for me, so I'm speeding back up to every other day. Yes, I know I'm insane. Yes, I will warn you if I start getting burned out and need to slow down again. The thing is, I do really well with routine, but what with the quarantine and everything, my entire schedule got pushed off the rails entirely overnight. I need something consistent and that something just happens to be writing and posting, so you guys get to benefit from this whole situation!

In other news, happy St. Patrick's day. If you aren't wearing green, pinch yourself for me, since social distancing means no one else is going to do it.

All for One leaned back in his chair as his computer read the article aloud again. It had been published anonymously on several major hero forums a few days ago and had gone viral almost immediately.

“Is Discrimination Hurting The Gifted?”

The writer didn’t go into much detail, but they provided some troublesome statistics that seemed to prove that students with strong quirks were actually worse off because adults treated them as better than their peers. Even though the argument was counterintuitive, it had already sparked major controversy and even inspired a few activist groups to take up the cause. He would have to find whoever wrote the article and put an end to them. It just wouldn’t do if society realized that their own hero system was responsible for most of the villains on the street and took steps to fix it. If the weakings were no longer oppressed, there would be fewer desperate people for him to manipulate and add to his army. He much preferred the current hero system, all things considered.

Which, of course, brought him to his next problem: Deku. The boy was intriguing, and definitely had a lot of potential, but if a quirkless weaking like him was able to become a hero, it would disprove the right equals might mentality that made so many wonderful villains and might spark annoying changes. All for One had thought the boy would jump at the chance to have a quirk because it should have been his greatest weakness and insecurity. Giving him a quirk should have put Deku’s valuable mind under All for One’s control and added a powerful pawn to his army.

But not only had Deku apparently soundly rejected the offer, he had damaged his masterpiece! It was a smart move that might have made All for One proud if Deku had been on his side, but he had had to temporarily transfer his self-healing quirk to Tomura just so his finger would reattach, and even then it had been severed too long and Disintegration would always be weak and finicky on his left. If All for One hadn’t spent so much effort making sure Tomura’s true identity would be
a devastating blow to All Might, he would have been tempted to throw the boy away and start over, but as it was, the boy would have to do even in his weakened state.

So that left what to do with Deku. If Tomura wasn’t still healing, he would just ask him to kill Deku as he walked home from school, but unfortunately that wasn’t an option, even if Tomura would jump at the chance. All for One could always have someone else commit the murder, but that just didn’t have the same poetic quality and it wouldn’t have the same effect on All Might as one of his students being killed by a villain he let get away.

All for One sighed as the article finished. Maybe he should wait until after the sports festival? There was always the chance Deku would do terribly and take himself out of the running, in which case the problem would go away, and even if he did well, it wouldn’t be too much longer until Tomura healed. Either way, he wasn’t going to let this minor inconvenience grow for too long.

“Well done, Midoriya!” Nedzu poured tea for them both as Izuku sat down for his usual lesson. “I was skeptical about combating the issue separated from the school, but I believe it’s gone over rather well, don’t you think?”

“You were skeptical?” Izuku asked. “Then why’d you let me do it?”

“I wanted to see how it turned out!” Nedzu sipped his tea. “This is, afterall, your project, and you seemed convinced it would work out. Things like this often seem to work better when the public has a clear enemy that they can crucify, enemies tend to unite people you know, but in this case it appears to be different, why do you think that is?”

“Hmm,” Izuku thought for a moment, “actually I don’t think it is that different.”

“Go on.”

“Well, the main reason I decided to address the issue thematically first was because I finally realized that Aldera probably isn’t the only school where this is an issue. I was afraid that if Aldera was the only enemy from the beginning, the issue would end as soon as they were shut down or forced to reform, but the deeper issues that led to their abuse would remain unaddressed. But now, people are seeing the issue, not a scapegoat, which has led them to see society as the enemy, which is more accurate anyway. Does that make sense?”

Nedzu smiled, “It seems as though your goal has changed, then. You are no longer simply focused on bringing down your abusers, but on creating meaningful change. That is a lofty goal you’ve set for yourself.”

Izuku smiled sheepishly, “Yeah, I guess. But it needs to be done and if I don’t do it, who will? Besides, I’m already trying to change the system by becoming the first quirkless hero, so I guess it makes sense that I’d be the one behind other major changes too, right?”

“Very good! I congratulate you on the success of this first endeavor, but of course, it is going to take more than one inflamitory article to create the lasting change you’re going for.”

“I’m ready!”

“Good!” Nedzu clapped his hands together, “But speaking of you being the first quirkless hero, how are your preparations for the sports festival going?

“Really well!” Izuku smiled. “The spars we have in hero class are really helpful, and I’ve also been working on my analysis and making sure I can not only identify weaknesses in a quirk, but I can
figure out how to exploit them quickly. But,” Izuku bit his lip, “umm, I was wondering if I could get some advice.”

“Of course!” Nedzu smiled. “That is my duty as an educator, afterall.”

Izuku nodded quickly, “Um, I was wondering whether or not I should apply to be able to use my weapons. You see, I don’t want people to see me with a weapon and think oh, the only reason he’s able to win is because he has weapons, because then I’m afraid they’ll just see me as a quirkless weakening that’s only able to be on par with the other kids because of my weapons and I really want to prove that…”

Nedzu held up a hand to stop Izuku’s rambling, “Ah, I see the issue here. You of course want to prove that you’re just as capable as the other students, even though you’re quirkless, and you believe that using weapons to make up for the difference would get in the way of the message you’re trying to send. Is that correct?”

Izuku nodded, “But I’m also scared that if I don’t use weapons, I won’t be able to beat some of the stronger students, especially in the individual rounds. What if I get paired against someone like Todoroki? If I lose to a student with a strong quirk because I don’t use a weapon, they’ll see the fact that I lost as proof that the quirkless can’t be heroes.”

“This is quite the pickle.” Nezu took a sip of his tea. “Well, are you worried about the first two rounds?”

“Not really. I beat your obstacle course in the entrance exam no problem, so whatever the first two rounds end up being, I think I’m smart enough to get past them, even if I don’t have any of my weapons.”

“Hmm...have you considered applying to be allowed weapons, then only using them in the one on one battles? That way, you could prove you’re capable without them, while still giving yourself the greatest possible chance of success.”

“That’s brilliant! It’s like the best of both worlds! I think I’ll do that.”

Nedzu chuckled, “Glad I could help.”

Izuku pinched his bottom lip and started to mutter as he stood and headed for the door to get to his next class, “I still think I should probably limit my weapons to just one gun and one knife, though. I don’t want people to say I had an unfair advantage or was overcompensating for my lack of quirk, maybe…”

Nedzu shook his head fondly as he watched his student almost run into the door before remembering he should probably open it. If nothing else, the sports festival this year would definitely be interesting.

Hitoshi Shinso didn’t hesitate as he joined the crowd outside 1A’s classroom. This would probably be his best chance to see his competition and figure out what made them tick before the sports festival. He needed to know what would annoy each of them, what would make them talk. He smiled slightly as the door opened and a few students reared back in shock at seeing themselves trapped in the room. Ok, so the guy in glasses was a bit uptight, he might be able to get him to talk by being flippan, the green haired one seemed insecure, so he could probably use that, and...man that blond guy was a jerk. Maybe it was time to get involved, get up close and personal so he knew what buttons to push in the festival.
Hitoshi shouldered his way through the crowd until he was standing right in front of the blond guy. “Is everyone in the hero course delusional, or is it just you?”

The others seemed scared, so the blond one had a temper. Nice to know.

“How disappointing. I wanted to be in the hero course, but like many others here, I was forced to pick a different track. Such is life. But now I have another chance because if any of us do well, they’ll transfer us to the hero course. Of course, that means they’d have to transfer someone out to make room.” Hitoshi smiled slightly as 1A gasped. Maybe he should say something else to put them on edge? They’d probably be more likely to respond if they were already uncomfortable around him and saw him as a threat. “I’m here to warn you that if you don’t do your best, I’ll steal your spot right out from under you.”

He let himself fade into the background as a very loud 1B student started yelling. He watched the students’ reactions carefully, paying special attention to who their friends were in case getting them to talk about themselves wasn’t enough. He’d made them nervous. Good.

Now all he had to do was follow through on his threat.
Nervous

Chapter Summary

Let the sports festival begin!

Thankfully the stadium was large enough to give each class their own locker room. Izuku wasn’t quite sure what he would’ve done if they’d been forced to share a space with the other classes, especially since Katsuki made them all want to murder their class with his behaviour a few days ago.

Pretty much everyone was sitting in nervous silence and those that weren’t were filling the space with small talk. This was going to be their chance to really let the world see them, it was...their debut in a way. The sports festival was always like this, but it was worse for 1A because the world was expecting great things from the class that had survived the USJ attack. And it was even worse for Izuku because he had to show that a quirkless kid was capable of being a hero. It was just so much pressure!

“Midoriya.”

Izuku looked up to see Todoroki standing in front of him, looking as passive and determined as ever. Todoroki had a strange fire in his eyes, though, that Izuku hadn’t really seen before. What was this about?

“From an objective standpoint,” Todorki said, “I’m stronger than you.”

Izuku hunched his shoulders slightly, “Um, yeah. Everyone here is, really.”

“However, you’ve got the backing of a lot of heroes, not to mention all the experience you had before even coming to UA. I think you’re the only one here that has their own reputation already built. I know most of us wish we had that, rather than being known by our quirks or who our parents are, so know that I will beat you.”

“Whoa!” Kaminari smiled. “What’s with all these declarations of war lately?”

“We’re not here to be each other’s friends.” Todoroki swept the room with a glare.

Izuku forced himself to stop trembling. Yeah, Todoroki was stronger than him, and he had kinda hoped he’d be able to start the festival without any glaring reminders that he was biologically weaker than everyone else, but that didn’t matter!

“Todoroki, I don’t know what’s going through your head, or why you feel the need to tell me that you’ll beat me, but you’re not the only one with something to prove. The other courses will be coming for us and we’re all going to have to fight to stand out. I’ll be aiming for the top too, so if this is a declaration of war, I accept.”

Shouta really didn’t want to be here. Not that he was mad about having to attend the sports festival, even though he thought it was a case study of everything that was wrong with the hero system, but why had he let Mic bully him into being an announcer? Well, at least he’d get to see Deku showing
off and wouldn’t have to deal with the crowds in the stands, so it wasn’t all bad.

There was a knock on the door of the announcer booth and Shouta looked at Mic skeptically, “I thought no one was allowed to be up here but us?”

“They aren’t!” Mic stood to answer the door, both because Shouta wasn’t supposed to be moving around a lot during his recovery and because he probably wouldn’t have stood to answer the door even if he had been completely healthy. “Oh! Ms. Joke, what are you doing here?”

“Shouta!” Fukukado swept past Mic and hugged Shouta. “I can’t believe this cockatoo talked you into announcing!”

“Ow…”

Fukukado jumped back, “I am so sorry! You know I’m just a touchy person and I forgot, but I really shouldn’t have forgotten, I mean I visited you in the hospital…”

Shouta readjusted in his chair, “Don’t worry about it Fukukado, you’re rambling almost as much as Deku.”

Fukukado chuckled, “Yeah, I guess the kiddo’s habits are kinda contagious, aren’t they? How are you Shouta?”

Mic caught Shouta’s eye from behind Fukukado and mouthed, “Shouta?!”

Shouta shot him a glare, then turned back to Fukukado, “I’m fine, Fukukado. Everything hurts and I’m stuck in here with someone even louder than you, so I don’t know who I pissed off in a past life, but there’s more room in here to nap than there is in the stands, so there’s that.”

Fukukado laughed and Shouta didn’t know when he’d started enjoying that sound so much. By all means, it didn’t really make any logical sense. Her laugh was loud, almost explosive, and Shouta was quiet and introverted, so her laugh should be annoying and make him wish life had a mute button like it used to, so since when did he want to hear more of it?

“Did you find a good seat Ms. Joke?” Mic asked.

Fukukado nodded, “Yeah, I’m sitting with Brave and we’ve got a pretty good view of the first years. Boring old Nighteye decided to watch the third years.”

“Yeah well, it’s his intern’s last year, so he probably wants to watch him.” Shouta pointed out.

“So? He’s already seen Toogata in two sports festivals, and trained him personally so he already knows what he’s capable of!” Fukukado huffed. “Deku, on the other hand, always seems to find a way to surprise! Brave and I are sitting with some other underground heroes and you should hear the chatter!”

Shouta smiled slightly, knowing she couldn’t see it behind the bandages, “Oh? And what are they saying about the problem child?”

Fukukado smiled brightly, “Just that he’s sure to win the whole thing! No, but really, most heroes still haven’t ever seen him in person, so they’re super excited to see him.” Fukukado frowned. “But I’m kinda concerned too. There are rumors running around that he’s quirkless, which of course he is, but the reception to that has been kinda mixed. Most of the underground heroes don’t mind, because we don’t have powerful quirks either, but some of the daylight heroes are staunchly denying that it’s even a possibility. They’re the same ones that are arguing that if he is quirkless,
there’s no way he’ll make it past the second round. They say it’s an unfortunate truth. Huh! The nerve of them!”

Shouta scowled, “I agree. What is it about a powerful quirk that automatically makes people into bigots?”

“Hey!” Mic said loudly. “Some of us aren't that bad!”

Fukukado laughed, “I don’t know, Mic...maybe you’re just bad in a different way?”

Shouta nodded solemnly, “Yes, there are two categories of daylight heroes, hopeless bigots and hopelessly annoying.”

Mic stared at Shouta for a moment before laughing, “Oh my, Joke, how did you infect him with a sense of humor?”

“Oh Shouta’s always had a sense of humor, I think.” Fukukado laughed. “It was just buried deep down, right next to his will to live.”

Shouta glared at his friends as they laughed their heads off, “You come into my space…”

“Actually, it’s technically Mic’s space.” Fukukado gasped.

“What she said!” Mic smiled.

Shouta tried to glare harder despite knowing that they’d just ignore him, “You two are insufferable.”

“Aww!” Fukukado pouted, “But you love us anyway!”

“Are you sure?”

Mic laughed, then glanced at the clock, “Oh crap, we need to start hyping for the festival. You’d probably better get back to your seat, Joke, the kids’ll be coming out soon.”

“Oh, you’re right!” She opened the door. “I’ll be listening for your commentary! Bye-bye Shouta!”

Shouta was already taking his seat, “Goodbye Emi.”

Shouta froze. He hadn’t meant to do that, it’s just that she’d been calling him by his first name since the hospital and then he just got caught up in the moment and...he hesitantly glanced up at her. Her entire face was covered with a light blush and when she saw him looking, she gave him a soft smile.

“Bye, Shouta.”

He nodded and she ran out of the room. Mic closed the door behind her, then turned to Shouta with a smug look that Shouta knew meant he was trying not to laugh.

“Oh, shut up, Mic.” He grumbled, turning back toward the stadium. “She calls me by my first name, it’s only logical I should call her by hers.”

“Right…” Mic drawled. “I’m sure logic is deffinatly the only reason why… not to mention it was only logical for her to come out of her way to visit you here, or it was only logical of you to crack dumb jokes to impress her. Mhm, logic.”
Shouta glared at him, “Don’t you have anything better to do?”

Mic laughed, but turned on the mic in front of him, “Good morning everybody! Can I get a *Plus Ultra!*?”
Obstacles

Chapter Summary

The obstacle course

Chapter Notes

Ok, so you guys have chosen to read my story, a poor decision really, because now you must be subjected to my weirdest theories and headcanons. So, I was originally going to just skip the first two rounds of the sports festival, since they pretty much go exactly according to canon, and if you wanted to watch that, you'd just re-watch the show. But then I got the brilliant idea to mess with the POV and well, I hope you enjoy!

Momo kept an eye on Todoroki as they stepped out into the arena. He kept glaring at the stands like they had personally offended him, but considering that his father was here, she guessed they kinda had. Her own father was sitting in the front row, the best money could buy and her mother… Momo glanced up at Midnight on the stands. Most people didn’t really know Midnight had a family and those that had caught on didn’t believe it. Her mom had always been independent, which was why she had never taken her husband’s name.

Momo’s quirk was more similar to her father’s since he could transform one object into another by holding it in his fist if he knew the chemical makeup of both, but the inner workings of her quirk came from her mother. Her mom’s quirk worked because the lipids in her body had a sleep inducing compound in them, so when she vaporized those cells, it created a potent sleeping gas. There were reasons both of their costumes relied on maximum skin exposure, afterall.

Her parents had fallen in love because Dad cared more about her mom’s personality than her body, which Mom thought was a nice change of pace. He had a comfortable career in manufacturing, but most of their family fortune was actually from Mom’s hero pay and merchandise sales. When Momo had been born, they decided that she should be a Yaoyorozu like her dad, not a Kayama like her mom so that she wouldn’t have to follow in her mother’s footsteps if she didn’t want to.

From the little Todoroki had told her about his family life, Endeavor was the complete opposite. He wanted Todoroki to carry on his legacy, so had started training him as soon as he got his quirk. It was completely foreign to her. Her parents had always been very clear that she was allowed to pursue whatever career she wanted and supported her when she decided she wanted to be a hero like her mom, if not quite as sexy.

She didn’t think Todoroki ever got that, and she’d known him most of her life since his father had always dragged him to the same parties and galas her parents had taken her to as a kid. They were both the children of pro-heroes, so they had something in common and had become...well, she wasn’t sure if best friends was the right phrase, since she could never remember him coming over for playdates, but they were definitely close. Momo had been so happy when she’d shown up the
first day and found out they were in the same class.

There were a lot of whispers as Bakugo took the stage to give the welcome speech. She understood why recommendation students weren’t in the running to give the speech, but did it have to be Bakugo? He had been a little tamer recently, but there was still no way he was the best person to represent their class, much less their entire grade!

“I just wanna say, go at it with everything you’ve got…” Hmm, maybe she’d been nervous for nothing. Encouraging everyone to do their best was the perfect… “Because I’m gonna win.”

Was it bad of her to want to take back those nice thoughts? Well, admitting when one was wrong was part of being a hero too, right? She wasn’t being impolite to Bakugo, she was just privately admitting that she had made a temporary error in judgement. Yes, that was it.

“Alright! This qualifying round is to bring the pain! The first fateful game of the festival is…” Mom cracked her whip, “an obstacle course!”

The students all shuffled over to the entrance to the course and got ready to run as Mom kept talking.

“As long as you stay on the track, you’re free to do whatever your heart desires! Begin!”

Almost instantly, it was like Momo had been teleported back to the day when the press broke into UA, only this time, Iida wasn’t going to be flying over their heads telling them not to panic. Bodies pressed in on her from every direction as she realized that the door itself was probably the first obstacle. Suddenly a chill passed over the crowd and her feet were encased in ice. She looked up and saw Shouto taking the lead. Momo didn’t waste any time sliding her feet out of her shoes and creating a pole so she could vault over the frozen crowd, creating new shoes around her feet while she was in midair, “Nice trick, Todoroki!”

She glanced behind her to see that pretty much everyone from their class as well as quite a few other students had managed to either escape or evade the ice. Looks like Todoroki’s trump card wasn’t as effective as he’d hoped. Bakugo was yelling something as usual, and Mineta was actually showing some creativity for once as he used his balls to avoid slipping. Momo had to cover a smile as the pervert was literally slapped out of the air by a robot. Yes, it probably wasn’t nice to smile at her classmate’s misfortunes but…well, Mom had always said one had to be respectful to gain respect.

There was a tell-tale chill in the air right before Todoroki froze the robots in place and she was about to run forward when she heard him speak.

“Careful, I froze them while they were off their balance…”

That was all the warning they got before the two giant robots crashed down onto the course. Had anyone been under there? Yeah, it was a brilliant defensive move on Todoroki’s part but…

“Hey!” Kirishima popped up from the downed robot, “If it was anybody else trapped under there, they’d be dead!”

Good, it was just Kirishima and…his twin? Wow, what were the odds, no wonder those two had been put in different classes! As much as she wanted to look around and see how her classmates were fighting these robots, she knew they’d fought them before and so had an advantage over her. Right now, she needed to concentrate. Ok, so what was she going to need? An iron alloy, gunpowder…and of course either a match or a lighter. She unbuttoned her shirt quickly before the
cannon could rip through it. She’d created it preloaded with a few different cannonballs that would shoot out automatically every few seconds as soon as it was lit, so now all that was left was… Momo created a lighter in her hand and lit the wick, then took aim at the biggest robots. If she took them down, she could dodge the smaller ones in the chaos.

The cannon had a slight kickback, but she still managed to take down three robots before she was out of ammo, “Piece of cake!”

She ran forward and dodged through the dust until she got past the robot field. She really hoped the next obstacle wouldn’t require such a big object. She’d stashed some high fat snacks in her locker, but they wouldn’t help her if she ran out of lipids halfway through the first round. There was a crowd up ahead of her, what were they waiting for?

“This is the perfect chance to show off my babies to any companies that might want to recruit me!” A student with pink hair laughed maniacally before jumping off...was that a cliff? Momo saw a wire glinting in the sunlight and followed it down until she saw where it attached to the crazy girl. Oh thank goodness, she must be a support student.

Momo glanced at some of her classmates already on the ropes. Asui was using her quirk to her advantage, Midoriya was simply crawling upside-down with some sort of metal strapped to his back, and Shoji...Shoji was using his arms like a flying squirrel to almost fly between the various outcroppings of rock. Was there enough of an updraft for that? Momo put her hand out over the ledge to feel the breeze and smiled. Lightweight aluminum, polyester and… ready! It took a moment, but soon she was pulling a hang-glider from her torso. She gripped the handles and backed up, took a running start and jumped off the cliff.

The breeze ruffled her ponytail as she flew over the obstacle. She even got halfway to the next before there wasn’t enough wind to keep her airborne anymore. Momo tossed the glider to the side and ran as she listened to Present Mic announcing the final obstacle. A minefield. How was she supposed to get past that? Was there anything she could make?

She shook her head. No, the best strategy was probably to just go slowly and try to avoid as many as she could. She ran, keeping her eyes on the ground and trying not to flinch as explosions went off all around her. If only there was enough of an updraft here for her to use her hang-glider again. There was a shout behind her and suddenly, she felt like she was wearing a backpack. She turned around, but no one was there trying to hold her back. She kept running, but she was getting tired since the extra weight hadn’t gone away. What was happening?

Momo jumped as a huge explosion went off behind her.

“That was way bigger than it was supposed to be!” Present Mic shouted. “What’s that? Midoriya has taken the lead!”

“So what!” Mineta said. “Midoriya’s crazy!”

Momo looked around. Since when had Mineta caught up? Where was...wait a minute. She started forward, and...yes that extra weight was still there. If she had a quirk that allowed her to stick to anything and she had to use it in a creative way, well, she probably wouldn’t latch onto a classmate’s back, but there didn’t seem to be much of a limit to what Mineta was willing to do.

She hesitated a moment. The polite thing would be to let him hitch a ride, he was using his quirk creatively afterall, but that would just slow her down. She thought back to Midoriya and when he benefited from her quirk back during the entrance exam. This was the same thing, right? She looked forward in time to see him literally kick Todoroki and Bakugo to the ground to make sure
he stayed in the lead.

No! Midoriya used other’s quirks to his advantage, yes, but he hadn’t hurt her performance in the entrance exam like Mineta was here. And besides, if even someone as nice as Midoriya was willing to knock a few heads in the name of competition, politeness had nothing to do with it! Momo grinned as she shrugged her arms out of her shirt and tossed it aside.

“Ahh!” Mineta scrambled to hold on and Momo scowled as she realized that he had stuck one of his sticky balls on her pants. Mineta was grabbing everywhere and drooling as he realized she was now only in her sports bra, “Boobs...Butt...So many beautiful choices!”

Actually, nevermind politeness, it was payback time, “Get off of me you pervert!” Momo reared back her fist and Mineta wasn’t fast enough to dodge the punch to the nose that finally dislodged him and sent him skidding into a row of landmines that exploded as Momo started running forward again. She glanced back one last time to see that the combined force of her punch and the landmines had knocked him out. Good riddance.

He should have known better than to mess with Midnight’s daughter.
Cavalry

Chapter Summary

The cavalry battle, this time from Hitoshi's perspective.

Hitoshi looked around the field as everyone started to split off into teams. He had hoped that the other gen-ed student would be willing to team up, but he had made a point to stand as far away from Hitoshi as possible and look away whenever he tried to catch his eye. Guess he didn’t want to be on a team with the villain. All the hero course students were trying to team up with one another and avoiding him without even knowing his quirk, so Hitoshi figured they’d run away as soon as they knew.

Pretty much everyone was already teamed up except for that kid with 10 million points, but Hitoshi didn’t want that much attention. The best option for his quirk would be to steal all of another team’s points right at the end so no one had a chance to figure out his quirk. So he just needed to find a two or three member team to join. There.

There was the guy with a tail from 1A as well talking to the kid he’d seen shooting lasers from the same class. The third member of the team was a short kid from 1B, but Hitoshi didn’t know what his quirk was. If they were willing to mix 1A and 1B, maybe they’d be willing to accept someone from gen-ed.

He jogged up to them, “Hey guys, do you need a fourth member?”

The 1B looked at the other two nervously, “Umm, I think we’re good, thank you. It’s just too big of a risk to have a gen-ed student on the team since we have no idea what you’re capable of. You understand, don’t you?”

Hitoshi fought to keep the smile on his face, “Aren’t you at least going to ask about my quirk before rejecting me?”

The tail guy looked at him sternly, “Look dude, he was trying to be polite. I’m sure you could find another team, there’s a couple other students that aren’t from the hero course, aren’t there?”

Of course there was, but he shouldn’t have to segregate himself from the hero course, especially since that’s where he was trying to get. Whatever, if they were going to judge him before even knowing him, it was nothing new. He would rather work with them, rather than using them, but if he wanted to achieve his dream, he couldn’t afford to be worried about what people thought of him.

He turned to the last member of the team, the laser kid. If he responded, Hitoshi would be on the team whether they wanted him or not, “Alright then, do you know what other teams might be willing to work with me?”

The laser kid shrugged, “Ah, mon cherie…”

Hitoshi didn’t wait for him to finish before activating his quirk on all three of them, “Alright. You three will be the horses, I’ll be the rider. Laser-boy you’re on the left, Tail-boy, you’re on the right,
1B, you’re in front. Wait here while I get our headband.”

Midnight was lounging on the stage with a small device she was using to print the headbands. There was a small line of other riders ahead of him, as it seemed like he was one of the last to find a team. The 10 million point kid jogged over from his team to stand behind him. It looked like he’d managed to snatch up that girl from support, so it’d be interesting to see how that turned out. Hitoshi didn’t call any attention to himself as he waited his turn, finally getting to Midnight, who looked him up and down.

“Where’s your team, handsome?”

Hitoshi pointed over to where his team was still standing dazed. Thankfully no one had run into them or tried to talk to them, but he didn’t think they would. Everyone was too busy worrying about their own teams to talk to their friends. Midnight nodded, tallied the points and handed him a headband with a large red 295 printed on it. It was a good number of points, not that he’d keep them for long. It’d be best to lose them early so no one saw him as a threat.

“You the rider?” Midnight asked. Hitoshi nodded. “What’s your name?”

“Hitoshi Shinso.” He replied.

Midnight smiled, “Alright, you’ll be known as team Shinso on the board. Good luck!”

Hitoshi nodded again and headed back to his team. He ordered them to pick him up, since climbing up might jostle them enough to break the brainwashing, and looked out over the other teams. Pretty much everyone had stuck to their homerooms and other gen-ed student had joined some 1B kids. He put the headband on as Mic started announcing again.

“It looks like we have 12 calvary teams heading into battle!”

“I see some unexpected student combinations…” That must be Eraserhead, the other announcer. Hitoshi pushed down the lump of fear in his throat. Hopefully his idol wouldn’t judge him too harshly for brainwashing his teammates. He just...hadn’t seen another option.

“Let’s get this party started!” Mic yelled. “Three! Two! One!”

Midnight cracked her whip, “Begin!”

As expected, most teams charged straight for team Midoriya, Shinso learned his name from the scoreboard, and his 10 million points. Shinso ordered his team to start running around the periphery of the field. Standing still in a battle like this would call too much attention, but he didn’t need 10 million points to move on.

He honestly didn’t think Midoriya would have much luck running away until he launched his team into the air. Whatever support items that girl had brought were definitely impressive. Maybe if he got into the hero course, he’d have to have her cook something up for him. Hitoshi shook his head. When! When he got into the hero course.

A few teams had already lost their headbands and Hitoshi noticed that most of them had gone to one team of 1B students with a blond rider, team Monoma. If they kept going like this, they’d be the perfect mark for when he made his move at the end of the game. He’d have to keep his eye on them.

Midoriya’s team had taken to the sky again after being assaulted by three different teams at once, including one that seemed to only be one member with…a long tongue coming from between his
arms? Weird.

Hitoshi saw team Monoma heading his way. He could probably evade, but if he dodged the wrong way, he risked waking up his team. Better to simply act like he was running away, since he didn’t need his own points to win this. Besides, if Monoma had more points, that was more points for Hitoshi to steal back from him at the end.

He ordered his team to run. But, when he saw that Monoma was close enough, they stopped and he pretended to be distracted by that rude blond, Bakugo, that had somehow abandoned his team to chase Midoriya in a mid-air battle.

Monoma’s team rushed past him and yanked the headband from Hitoshi’s head before smiling smugly at him, “Sorry Shoda, but it serves you right for teaming with 1A!”

Shoda must be his puppet from 1B’s name. He hadn’t really had the chance to ask names before brainwashing them, so it was nice to know. Mic called attention to the scoreboard and Hitoshi smiled as he saw how many teams were sitting at zero points. He took note of who had the most. Midoriya, of course, Monoma, he already knew that, Tetsutetsu...which ones were they?

He glanced around until...oh that’s right. Tetsutetsu was that guy with the steel quirk. Hitoshi honestly kinda hoped to avoid that team, if he could. That vine girl and the mud guy could keep him at a distance, so if he wanted to get their points he’d have to brainwash all of them at once, which might be difficult. Hopefully Monoma continued doing well.

“Your class is too small minded, you need to think bigger.”

Nevermind. Monoma apparently had a death wish. Anyone with eyes could see that Bakugo had a temper, so taunting him was just asking to be destroyed. Oh well, it seemed like he’d be going after Tetsutetsu afterall.

“We decided to stay in the middle of the pack for the obstacle course and observe your quirks.” Monoma bragged. It was a pretty decent strategy, one that Hitoshi himself had used, but it seemed that Monoma was trying to steal the spotlight earlier than Hitoshi was. “Only an idiot would try to place first in the qualifier!”

Yes, and only an idiot would provoke someone with rage issues. Hitoshi could practically feel Bakugo’s bloodlust from here. His team tried to talk sense into him, but that obviously didn’t work and Bakugo’s team charged after Monoma.

Hitoshi felt a weird tingle go through the air and glanced over toward Midoriya’s team, only to find an entire area of the field coated in electricity. As soon as the light faded, the temperature dropped and every single team that had been gunning for Midoriya’s headband was frozen in ice. Hitoshi gulped and glanced down to make sure the sensations hadn’t been enough to break his hold on his team. Ignoring Midoriya had been a good call. If he’d been any closer…

He kept his distance as Bakugo and Monoma faced off. A copy quirk. That was interesting. All these hero course students were just born lucky. Bakugo with his flashy quirk, Monoma who could take any quirk he wanted. Why was life so unfair? Why were these bastards born with a ticket to success while Hitoshi had to fight tooth and nail for even a chance to stand next to them? Why did he have to be born with a villain’s quirk?

Hitoshi couldn’t see Midoriya and Todoroki anymore, since they were surrounded by an ice wall, but he noticed that Midoriya hadn’t taken to the sky again. That electric attack must have shorted out the tech he was using to fly. Monoma was actually managing to hold his own against Bakugo,
at least for now. And Tetsutetsu had long since switched strategies and started going for points from the lower ranked teams.

“Sixty seconds left in the game!” Mic shouted.

Hitoshi grinned, time to make his move. He ordered his team toward Tetsutetsu as Bakugo finally finished destroying Monoma. Now what could he say to get all the members of the team to talk? He didn’t want to get too close until they were under his control.

“Hey, your classmates seem to have made some stupid decisions! Wanna team up in the time we have left?”

There, if they wanted to team up, they’d say something, but if not, they’d speak up to defend their classmates.

“Alliances are...”

“What did you...!??”

“Why should we…?”

“Who are...”

Hitoshi smirked, “I win.”

He ordered his team to run past them so he could swipe their headbands. He could feel his control starting to slip and the lights seemed too bright as the strain of his quirk made him lightheaded. It took a lot of effort to control this many people for this long, but he couldn’t let go yet, not until this was over.

“10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1! Time’s up!”
Lunch and some important conversations.

Ok, so I just need to get a few explanations out of the way. First, about what happened in the cavalry battle, I am assuming that it was practically identical to canon. The only differences here are that Mineta didn't make it to the second round and Izuku is quirkless. So, the boot didn't break, but they stopped flying because of jet-pack problems, not boot problems, so that ends up pretty similar. The only time that Izuku used his quirk was to blow out Todoroki's fire, but in this story, he'd trained with pro-heroes and his reflexes are faster, so he's able to either dodge the flames or knock his hand aside. He might have gotten some minor burns doing this, but nothing Recovery Girl couldn't fix.

Sorry for the monologue, just wanted to make sure you knew what happened with Izuku last round.

“And the fourth team advancing to the finals is…” Midnight checked the scoreboard one final time, “Team Midoriya!”

“Wow! Midoriya is really on fire today! Winning first in the first round, then only losing his lead in the final minutes of the cavalry battles.” Mic screamed. “If you hadn't figured it out already, ladies and gentlemen, this student is one to watch! Any comments Eraserhead?”

“Only that Deku is known for his intelligence. He may not have a flashy quirk, but he more than makes up for it in skill and exploiting his opponent’s weaknesses. It will be interesting to see what he does in the next round, as well as how his opponents deal with someone who can outthink them.”

“Ohhh! I’m so excited I’m getting chills! We’re gonna have a break for lunch, but don’t party too hard people, preparations for the final round begin in an hour!”

Izuku didn’t really know what was going on. Todoroki had stalked over to him right as he’d finally managed to control his celebratory tears, told him they needed to talk, then walked away. Izuku had followed him, of course, but Todoroki had led him to a shady tunnel, then proceeded to just stare at him. It had already passed the okay stage, landed solidly in weird and was fast approaching creepy.

“You made me break my oath.”

“umm...I didn’t mean to...What?”
Todoroki scowled and looked at his left hand, “That moment when you came after me in the cavalry battle, I felt so overwhelmed that I broke... I made a promise to myself a long time ago that I’d never use his fire. My father is the pro-hero Endeavor. With how much you know about everything, I have no doubt you’ve heard of him and must know he’s the number two hero. Since you’re involved with so many pro-heroes, that means I have even more reason to beat you. My old man is ambitious, but he was never able to best All Might. He’s determined to beat him though, one way or another.”

Izuku frowned. On the outside it seemed like a typical hero rivalry, pretty common, especially among the upper ranks, but something about the way Todoroki was talking made it sound like there was something Izuku was missing, “What are you trying to say Todoroki?”

“Have you ever heard of quirk marriages? They were popular back at the dawn of quirks and were clearly unethical, but that didn’t stop my old man. He’s got plenty of money to throw at his problems and paid off my mother’s family so he could get his hands on her quirk. From the moment I was born, he’s seen me as a tool to usurp All Might.”

Izuku was horrified. Was this what Nedzu had meant when he said that some villains were able to hide their true nature? Izuku had thought that meant people like his old school, or even some of the more popular vigilantes, but if Todoroki was telling the truth, then…

“In every memory I have of my mother, she’s crying. She called my left side unbearable before throwing boiling water on my face. My father doesn’t think fighting you is worth my time, since you don’t have a powerful quirk. While it’s true that you’ll never be number one, you’re skilled and well-connected. You’re the top student in our class when it comes to strategy. I picked a fight with you to prove that I don’t need his damned fire quirk to be the best. I’m going to show him that I reject his power and I can take first place without using it.”

“I…” What was he supposed to say to that? Yeah, Todoroki ate lunch with them, but Izuku didn’t think that was a close enough relationship to share childhood trauma. But... it hurt to see Todoroki holding himself back, just because his father was a villain. “Did you know that the villains offered me a quirk, back at the USJ?”

Todoroki’s eyes widened, “No. What does that have to do…?”

Izuku chuckled, “I understand why you’re hesitant to use your fire quirk, Todoroki. But the thing you need to remember is that it’s your quirk. I have my own reasons for wanting to be a quirkless hero, but when Shigaraki said that his boss could give me a quirk, there was a moment where I was tempted. If he’d offered it to me a year ago, I might have even said yes. If I had accepted that, do you think my quirk would have been a villain’s quirk?”

Todoroki thought for a moment, “…No. knowing you, whatever it was, you’d find a way to use it for good.”

“But it would have been given to me by villains.” Izuku argued.

“But what matters is...what you do with it…”

“Exactly.” Izuku smiled as Todoroki processed his revelation. “Todoroki, your father might be a villain in disguise, and yeah, maybe you inherited his quirk, but if I had been given a quirk by the league of villains, it would still be my quirk and I could have still used it to become a hero. Your left side is yours, not your father’s, Todoroki. Your fire is your quirk, not his.” Izuku chuckled as Todoroki looked at him in shock. “So you can see why someone like me, who has been kicked down my whole life for not having a quirk might be a little upset when someone who has not one,
but two amazing quirks holds themselves back simply because they don’t like where they got their power. I’m not saying that you have to use your fire, Todoroki, but I hope that eventually, you can use it for good without even thinking of the man who gave it to you.”

Izuku nodded and walked off to go join the others for lunch, leaving Todoroki propped up against the wall to think about what he had said.

“Hey Kirishima!” Kaminari jogged up to him as they were about to go to lunch. “I need your help with something!”

“What is it man?”

“Well, before the festival, Mineta and I came up with this awesome plan to trick the girls into wearing cheerleading outfits! We were going to go up to ‘em during lunch and tell them it was all Aizawa’s idea, but Mineta’s still in Recovery Girl’s office from how badly he got hurt in the first round and there’s no way they’ll believe me if I try to pull this off alone. So what do you say? Help a brother out?”

“Kaminari, dude, tricking people isn’t manly at all.”

“Come on!” Kaminari groaned. “Don’t you wanna see those hot babes in those skimpy outfits?”

Kirishima shrugged, “Honestly man, I’m not even sure I’m into girls. Let’s just go to lunch and leave the girls alone. Maybe if we eat quickly enough, we’ll have time to visit Mineta before the next round.”

Hitoshi stood slightly apart from the other finalists as they waited for Midnight to give the instructions for the final round. He’d made it, it felt so surreal! Now all he had to do was win.

“Congratulations to the four teams that made it to the final round.” Midnight purred. “Come closer and draw lots to see who you’re up against.”

“Excuse me!” All eyes turned to Ojiro. “I’d like to withdraw.”

“What?!”

Ojiro looked down at the floor, “I barely remember anything from the cavalry battle until the very end of it...I think it was that guy’s quirk.”

Ojiro glared at Hitoshi, who looked away. He’d been afraid something like this might happen when he brainwashed his own team, he’d been expecting it even, but it still hurt. Why couldn’t the guy just accept his place in the tournament and be grateful?

“I was just someone’s puppet!” Ojiro continued. “I don’t wanna advance if I don’t even know how I got here. This is about my pride!”

The Shoda kid from 1B also stepped forward, “I think I should withdraw for the same reason. This isn’t how I wanted to get here.”

You can’t make an omelette without cracking a few eggs. Hitoshi reminded himself. It didn’t matter that he had to take advantage of a few people to move on, and he couldn’t afford to feel guilty about it. This was just the price he had to pay to get into the hero course...right?
“How incredibly naive, boys.” Midnight cracked her whip. “It turns me on! You’re out!”

In the end, it was decided that two members from team Tetsutetsu would move on instead. Hopefully they didn’t remember how he’d managed to brainwash them, but then again there was also the possibility each of them would lose their matches and he’d never have to fight them. Either would be fine.

The sixteen of them drew numbers from a box Midnight was holding and Shinso drew number one. Did that mean he’d be going first? Was he ready for this? Who would he be facing?

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“Yes, by not giving him the chance to use it.” Ojiro said. “He asked me a question before the second round, so I think he got into my head when I answered.”

“So if I say anything, I’ll lose.”

Ojiro shrugged, “Even if he gets you, there’s still a chance. I woke up when I bumped into someone at the end of the cavalry battle. It’s only a guess, but I hope it helps.”

Izuku nodded, “Thanks Ojiro, you’re a really great guy.”

By the time Ojiro left, it was already time for Izuku to grab his weapons and head down to the tunnel to wait for the match. If Shinso were a villain and Izuku had time to prep, he’d wear some sort of watch that would vibrate hard enough to wake him up every thirty seconds or so, but he didn’t have time or skills to make something like that right now and even if he did, the only weapons he had approved were a gun and a knife, neither of which would wake him up.

“Hmm, maybe if I hold my knife loosely by the blade,” Izuku muttered, “there’s a chance that my hand might clench around it when he takes control, so that can be a failsafe…”

It’d still be better to just avoid talking though. It shouldn’t be too hard, right? But what if he got caught anyway? What if he couldn’t win?

“Hey kiddo, ya nervous?”

Joke laughed when Izuku jumped a foot in the air, “I’ll take that as a yes. Sorry for scaring you, I just wanted to wish you luck.”

“You didn’t scare me.” Izuku denied. “I was just…lost in my own thoughts, I guess.”

Joke nodded, “If my brain was that big, I’d get lost too. But seriously, are you ok?”

Izuku sighed, “It’s just… what happens if I lose?”

“Hmm, I’m not gonna lie kiddo, it happens sometimes.”

Izuku glared at her, “Real helpful, thanks.”

Joke laughed, “I know, but competitions are like that. This is the UA sports festival kiddo, and these students you’re up against are the best of the best. You’ve got to give it your all, but at the end of the day, somebody’s going to lose and that somebody just might be you.”

“But if I lose, then it’ll just be proof that a quirkless kid can never be a hero!”

Joke flicked him on the nose, “Stop that! Whether you go out there and win this or go out there and trip on your own shoelaces, you are capable of being a hero. You proved that when you went literally flying into first place during the obstacle course, thanks for the heart attack there by the way, and you proved it again when you held onto your handband minutes longer than anyone expected during the cavalry battle. I’ve been in the stands this whole time, kiddo, and you’ve managed to impress people despite the high expectations they already had for Deku the analyst. So don’t go getting it into your head that no one will believe you can be a hero if you don’t get first place. The only people that are gonna think that after what you did today are the ones that wouldn’t believe you could be a hero no matter how many times you proved yourself. You got that?”

Izuku wiped tears from his eyes, “Yeah, loud and clear.”
“Good.” Joke smiled and ruffled his hair. “Now knock ‘em dead, Deku. I gotta get back to the stands.”

Izuku watched her leave before turning back toward the field. He had already proved that he could be a hero and he had some of the best heroes he’d ever met cheering him on. He could do this!

“Let’s cut to the good stuff, alright?” Mic’s voice echoed over the cheers as Izuku stepped out of the tunnel onto the field. “Please welcome our first fighters! It’s the kid who’s made a name for himself helping heroes, Izuku “Deku” Midoriya from the hero course vs. Shinso Hitoshi from General Education, who really hasn’t done anything to stand out yet!”

“Is everybody ready?” Midnight asked. “Begin!”
Shinso really was intimidating, wasn’t he? From where Izuku was standing, he just looked bored, almost as if he already knew he was going to win. Izuku grabbed the knife from his hip and held it loosely in his left hand, making sure a few of his fingers were touching the blade so it’d cut him if his hand tightened suddenly. Not the best back-up plan, but he didn’t know a lot about Shinso’s quirk, so it was the best he could do for now.

Shinso scowled at him as Midnight announced the beginning of the match, “Using weapons, huh? It’s not enough that you’ve got that amazing quirk you refused to show us during the other rounds, now you think you can just ignore the rules? I heard recommendation students were entitled, but this is something else.”

Izuku opened his mouth to correct him, but slammed it shut again as he remembered he was supposed to stay silent. Shinso was just trying to bait him.

“In a way,” Shinso drawled, “this is a test of how strong your spirit is. If you know what you want your future to hold for you, you can’t care what other people think. That monkey was going on about his pride earlier, but I just think he’s an idiot.”

“Don’t talk about him that way!” Izuku growled and ran forward before a chill ran through him. He froze and the knife fell to the floor as his hand went completely limp. So much for that idea.


“What’s this?!” Mic yelled. “Could this be a quirk at work? Shinso seems to have Midoriya completely stunned!”

Izuku tried to move his fingers, his face, anything, but he obviously wasn’t in control anymore. Ugh! Why hadn’t he kept his mouth shut?!

“This is the perfect example of why the entrance exam isn’t rational.” Aizawa said. Izuku felt his heart drop, Eraser was going to be so disappointed in him. He didn’t even deserve to be here, did he?

“Since we’re onto the individual rounds, I had some information compiled about our final competitors.” Aizawa continued. “Shinso failed the practical examination to get into the hero course, but he probably knew that would happen, so he applied to general education as well. His quirk is incredibly strong, but since that test consisted of fighting robots, Shinso never stood a chance. Deku himself only managed to get into the hero course because the recommendation exam was slightly different. He wouldn’t have been well suited to fighting robots either, despite the skill we saw from him in previous rounds. This particular match-up was never going to result in a flashy battle.”

“You’re lucky to have been so blessed, Midoriya.” Shinso said. “Now walk out of bounds like a
good little hero.”

To his dismay, Izuku obeyed. His brain felt foggy, but he knew that even if he was thinking at full speed, he wouldn’t be able to get out of this. Why had he fallen for it, even after Ojiro warned him? Now no one was ever going to believe he could be a hero!

Wait...that wasn’t quite right, was it? He thought back to his conversation with Joke before the match. She believed in him, as did Brave and Nighteye and Eraserhead. And according to what she’d said, the other heroes believed in him too! He’d shown he was capable of being a hero in the obstacle course and the cavalry battle, but Shinso hadn’t really had a chance to stand out in the same way, had he?

“Even with a quirk like this, I have my own great dreams of becoming a hero.” Shinso said. “So, lose for me.”

Izuku tried one more time to stop walking, but of course that didn’t work. He didn’t understand what Shinso meant about his quirk though, this quirk was perfect for hero work and...it honestly felt kinda cool. Joke was right. In a competition, there was always going to be a winner and loser and this time, it was his turn to lose.

Izuku’s feet stepped over the line.

“Midoriya is out of bounds. Shinso advances to the next match!”

Hitoshi let his control fall. He’d done it. He’d beaten a kid from the hero course! His eyes widened and he took a step back as he realized Midoriya was literally running at him. Oh no, that wasn’t good. Midnight wouldn’t let him be beat up after the match was over right? Or did that not apply to gen-ed students.

Wait, was Midoriya smiling?

“Oh my goodness, that was so cool! I have so many questions! How many people can you control at once? How long can you control them? I wish I had a notebook right now! How complicated can your commands be?”

...what?

“You...you’re not mad?” Hitoshi stared at him in disbelief.

“What? No! Your quirk is just really cool…”

“Deku,” Eraserhead’s voice sounded amused over the speakers, “can you find someplace else to geek out over Shinso’s quirk? We need the field for the next match.”

Midoriya looked up at the announcement booth and gave a full-arm wave, “Sorry Eraser!”

He grabbed Hitoshi by the arm and dragged him back into the student areas. He followed along limply, first because he wasn’t entirely convinced that Midoriya wouldn’t beat him up if he fought back and second because he really didn’t know what was happening. Why was Midoriya so happy? Didn’t he realize that he’d lost?

It wasn’t until they reached one of the prep rooms that Midoirya seemed to realize that kidnapping a classmate probably wasn’t the best thing to do and quickly let go of him, “I am so sorry! I didn’t even realize, I was just really excited and…”
“Why are you acting like this?” Hitoshi snapped. “You’re supposed to be angry with me for brainwashing you and making you lose the match! You should be dragging me away to beat me up, not to…to have a conversation!”

Midoriya tilted his head, “But it’s a competition. You were supposed to try to beat me and you did. Why would I be mad at you for that?”

Hitoshi stared at him, “Because you lost.”

Midoriya shrugged, “I mean, I’m sad I lost, obviously, but between the two of us, I think it’s probably better that you won. The main point of the sports festival is to impress the pros, right? Since I’ve already worked with a lot of pros and did well in the first two rounds, I won’t have any problems getting an internship. You on the other hand, don’t have any of that. So while I do wish I’d made it further in the tournament, I’m glad that you get more chances to show everyone what you can do!”

“You’re a weird kid, Midoriya.”

“Yeah,” Midoriya chuckled nervously, “kinda…”

Hitoshi was quiet for a moment, “So what is your quirk anyway? I think it’s strange that someone born with a perfect heroic quirk refused to use it at all in the first two rounds.”

Midoriya blinked at him, then started laughing so hard Hitoshi almost wondered that that one hero with the laughter quirk, Ms. Joke, had managed to sneak back here and use her quirk on him. Was Midoriya…making fun of him? And he’d just been starting to think that Midoriya was one of the good ones.

Hitoshi glared at him as he struggled to get himself, “If you don’t want to tell me, that’s your choice, but it sure is rude to mock me for asking.”

“No! It’s just,” Midoriya gasped, “I’m quirkless!”

“…what?”

Midoriya held his sides as he finally managed to stop laughing, “Yeah. I’ve got an extra toe joint and everything. Sorry for laughing, I just…”

“No.” Hitoshi stared at him in disbelief. “There is no way you are quirkless. How did you even get into the hero course?”

“Well, the practical exam for recommendation students was an obstacle course and I don’t know if you noticed,” Midoriya smirked, “but I’m pretty darn good at those.”

Hitoshi chuckled, “How did a quirkless kid get recommended anyway? Sorry, is that rude to ask?”

Midoriya shrugged, “It’s okay. It’s kinda a weird situation. I’ve wanted to be a hero my whole life but, for obvious reasons, nobody really believed in me. Sorry, that probably sounds like I’m looking for pity or something.”

“No, I get it.” Hitoshi said quickly. “I, uh, get a lot of hate for having a villain’s quirk, so yeah…I can’t even imagine what it must be like for you.”

“If it means anything, I think your quirk is perfect for heroics.” Midoriya said. “But then again, I think any quirk would be good for heroics. If I’d been born with the ability to change my eye-
color, I’m pretty sure I still would have found a way to be a hero with it. Anyway, I started analyzing hero fights hoping that it would make up for my lack of quirk. On a whim, I reached out to some underground heroes and offered them some of my analyses and it just kinda snowballed from there. I got really lucky.”

“Yeah you did, just not in the way I expected.” Hitoshi stopped. “Wait a minute, why were you so worried about getting to the finals if you weren’t worried about getting an internship? Are you just super competitive or something?”

Midoriya chuckled and rubbed the back of his neck, “Uh, no. I wanted to prove to everyone that I was able to compete on the same level as the kids with quirks.”

“Oh.” Hitoshi said eloquently. He’d just blown Midoriya’s one chance to prove everyone wrong. “Sorry.”

Midoriya shook his head. “Like I said, don’t worry about it. If I had to lose to anyone, I’m glad it was to someone like you. With your quirk, I would have lost anyway, so nobody will be able to use my loss as proof I shouldn’t be a hero. What about you? I’m assuming you’re trying for the hero course.”

Hitoshi nodded, “I…”

He trailed off as the door to the prep room slammed open and Todoroki, the one with the ice quirk if Hitoshi remembered correctly, stalked in and stood in front of Midoriya.

“You were supposed to win.”

Midoriya smiled sheepishly up at him, “Sorry Todoroki. What are you doing here, I thought you had a match?”

“It’s already over. It was a fast match, but they’re taking a break to finish melting the ice.”

Midoriya nodded, “I was wondering why it was so cold.”

“Don’t change the subject, Midoriya.” Todoroki seemed to be glaring at Midoriya, but his expression hadn’t changed the whole conversation, so that might just be his natural expression, Hitoshi didn’t know and he felt kinda like an outsider in this conversation. “I was going to beat you.”

“I’m really sorry Todoroki. But,” Midoriya smiled brightly and Hitoshi found himself being pushed forward, “this is Shinso! He’s the one who beat me, so you’ll just have to transfer your declaration of war to him instead!”

Oh no, this was not what Hitoshi signed up for. Was this Midoriya’s plan? Act all buddy buddy so his guard was down, then recruit the strongest kid in the grade to kill him?

Todoroki looked him up and down, “You’re strong.”

Was…was that a question? Was he supposed to answer? Hitoshi glanced over at Midoriya, who smiled encouragingly. He gulped, then turned back to Todoroki and nodded.

“Good. You’re not the only one with something to prove, so no matter how strong you are, I will beat you.”

Hitoshi nodded, because what was he supposed to say to that, and Todoroki turned around and
walked out of the room.

Midoriya gave him a brilliant smile, “I’d better get going so you can concentrate. Good luck on your next match.”

He followed Todorki out the door and Hitoshi was left gaping at nothing. Had the guy who could freeze their entire grade just declared war on him? He almost wished he’d lost to Midoriya, then he wouldn’t have to worry about what he was going to do in his next match.

He was so screwed.
Katsuki flexed his hands as he waited for the match to be announced. The Mutt would probably have a few words to say about his behavior in the last round. Whatever, it’s not like he actually hurt those 1B losers, and they deserved what they got. What was he supposed to do, just roll over and take it? No, he needed to teach them a lesson. But wasn’t that what he’d said about Deku? Ugh! This whole anger management bullshit was confusing.

But it was apparently necessary, since he didn’t want to end up like Endeavor. Katsuki was still reeling from the fact that the asshole was apparently secretly abusive. He shouldn’t have eavesdropped, but what else was he supposed to do when Icy-Hot insisted on giving declarations of war to Deku of all people. He’d just been trying to track ‘em down and insist Todoroki give him a declaration of war instead, not uncover the scandal of a century.

“He was kinda a hot-shot in middle school, Katsuki Bakugo!” Mic screamed. “Then, the one I’m personally rooting for, Ochako Uraraka!”

Katsuki scoffed, way to be unbiased. Whatever. If people were rooting for Roundface, that was on them, but he was still going to destroy her. She hung around with Deku, which meant she was a loser, but also meant she was probably smart, since Deku wasn’t a complete idiot. Besides, his mom had taught him what a force of nature a determined woman could be, so if Roundface was going to give it her all, then so was he.

“If you’re going to give up, Roundface, do it now, ‘cause I’m not gonna hold anything back.”

Uraraka got a determined look on her face, “Giving up isn’t an option for me.”

Katsuki smiled. Good, that meant this would actually be a fight, not a one sided beat-down like he used to give Deku. If he wanted to be the best, he had to beat people who were actually giving it their all. And the Mutt couldn’t even get mad because he had the school’s permission. This was gonna be fun.

“Let the eighth match begin!”

Uraraka ran at him immediately. She was probably going to try floating him out of bounds as fast
as she could. An explosion to the face should stop her, though. Hmm, she must be weaker than he thought if she couldn’t even dodge.

A movement caught his eye through the smoke. He should end this quick if Pink-Cheeks wasn’t even going to put up a fight. Just pin her with an explosion like he did to that mist-bastard back at the USJ.

“There’s no way you can beat me!” He pinned her with enough force to give her some pretty nasty burns, but...she wasn’t \textit{that} small, was she? The smoke cleared and he found himself pinning a jacket instead of the person who was supposed to be inside it. Damn, smart move.

But where was she now? If it were him...he’d come up from behind. He turned around and blasted behind him, smirking as Uraraka went flying backward. Apparently she \textit{was} strong enough to be a good opponent, cause that was close.

What followed was like a smoky game of whack-a-mole. Almost as soon as he exploded her, she’d come at him from a different direction, forcing him to counter as she dodged and used the smoke as cover. He’d never had to fight this hard against those extras in middle school. It was fun! She was gonna die, though.

“Hey! If you really want to be a hero, stop acting like a bully!” Katsuki froze momentarily as a voice echoed from the stands and the crowd started booing him. Was he being too harsh on Roundface?

He shook his head as Uraraka forced him to counter with another explosion. No, he knew firsthand what bullying was and this wasn’t like that. Uraraka was forcing him to counter at every turn, so this wasn’t the beat-down it probably looked like from the stands. This was a \textit{fight}.

“Whoever started this uproar should be ashamed.” Katsuki caught his breath as Aizawa started talking. He didn’t think he’d ever heard the hobo sound so passionate. “Bakugo’s fierceness is an acknowledgment of his opponent's strength.”

Heh, so the hobo did know what he was talking about sometimes. For the first time since the fight started, Uraraka stopped coming at him for long enough for the smoke to clear. Even after all that, she still wasn’t dead. This wasn’t over.

She wiped a trace of soot from her cheek, “Thank you, Bakugo, for keeping your eyes focused on me.”

What? What was pink cheeks talking about? Of course he’d been focused on her, he’d had to keep her from touching him? What…

“Release!”

Wait, what was she releasing? She’d never touched him! So what...he glanced around and noticed that the entire arena was suspiciously clear of debris, which meant...Katsuki looked up. Shit. He ignored Uraraka running at him as he braced his wrist. This was gonna hurt.

Katsuki had only let loose a few giant explosions in his life, since they always took a while to recover from and he wasn’t known for being patient. But he \textit{had} to blow that rubble to smithereens, there was no other way for him to win! He had to prove he was the best!

The crowd gasped at the sheer size and heat as he vaporized her finishing move. Damn, Roundface had gotten pretty close to beating him there. He turned back to face her at the now tiny rubble fell like hail around them.
“I figured you’d have some stupid plan to beat me.” He growled. “You’re friends with that damn nerd, after all.”

He grinned as Uraraka got to her feet. So she still had some fight in her, good.

“All right, then. Time for us to get serious!”

He ran at her, but stopped when her legs gave out and she fell to the floor. No! It couldn’t end like this! They were just getting started!

Katsuki watched in shock as she tried to crawl forward and keep fighting before finally passing out. That kind of determination…

“Uraraka is unable to continue.” Midnight announced. “Bakugo advances to the next round.”

Katsuki didn’t like the word brooding. He always figured there was no point in holding in his rage, since it may as well be everyone’s problem, but that didn’t change the fact that he was brooding as he walked back to the stands after that last match. He didn’t know how he felt about that fight. On the one hand, Uraraka was strong enough that he’d been able to undeniably prove he was the best, on the other…did it have to be Uraraka? Of all the extras in his class, he wasn’t expecting Uraraka to be the one to give him a run for his money. She looked so weak, but she’d still come so close to beating him.

He saw Deku walking down the hall as he climbed the stairs and suddenly everything was clear. It was all Deku’s fault! He was able to come up with a strategy for their class to beat Aizawa, a pro-hero, so that whole meteor-shower bullshit was obviously his idea. Yeah, the principal said he wasn’t really supposed to interact with Deku that much, but it’s not like he was going to beat him up.

“What the hell are you doing here, Deku?”

Deku froze, “Hey, K-katsuki. I was just going to go visit Uraraka in the locker room. See how she was doing, you know? C-congrats on winning your match, s-see you around!”

“It was your idea, wasn’t it?”

Deku turned around, “What?”

“That stupid, desprate plan of hers. Only you would come up with something so…”

“You’re wrong. Uraraka came up with that move all on her own. So if that battle was harder than you thought it’d be, it was because of her strategy, not mine.”

Katsuki growled as Deku walked away and he had to forcefully remind himself why he wasn’t allowed to beat him up. Stop to think, like the Mutt said, that way people didn’t get hurt and he got to stay in UA. It was so annoying.

He got back to the stands just as Cementoss started prepping the arena for the next set of matches.

“Hey Bakugo, playin’ the villain, huh?” Soy-sauce face gave him an annoying smile. “Musta been tough.”

“Even if it was because of who you were up against, you did make a convincing bad guy.” Frog-Face pointed out.
Why hadn’t anyone ever told him that before UA? His old teachers always told him his temper was the sign of a great hero, but here everyone just saw him as a villain. So which was fuckin’ true? He wasn’t in the mood to deal with this.

“Shut up, you idiots, or else!”

“I don’t know how you were able to aim a powerful blast at a frail girl like that.” Dunce-Face said.

These idiots, didn’t they realize just how close Uraraka came to beating him? And he was strong, so someone who almost beat him definitely couldn’t be called weak. He sat down and looked out over the arena so he wouldn’t be tempted to blow up any of his classmates.

“There’s nothing frail about that girl.”
The second round of the sports festival begins!

Izuku paused with his hand on the door to the locker room. It sounded like Uraraka was talking to someone, maybe on the phone. It’d taken him a bit longer to reach it than he’d planned because of that whole thing with Katsuki, and he didn’t want to intrude…

“I failed.”

What? Just because she lost didn’t mean she failed! She held her own against Katsuki and almost won! She’d even managed to put Katsuki on edge, which Izuku hadn’t ever seen before. She was amazing, so why did she think she failed?

“I know...I just wish I’d gotten more chances to show what I was made of.”

Maybe he should leave and come back later? But it sounded like Uraraka was crying, he didn’t want to leave her alone!

“Thanks Dad. Love you, bye.”

Izuku hesitated another moment before knocking on the door and pushing it open, “Umm, Uraraka, are you ok?”

Uraraka frantically wiped her cheeks, “Oh hi Deku. What’re you doing back here?”

“I just wanted to make sure you’re alright. Katsuki can be pretty brutal.”

She smiled shakily, “Recovery girl fixed me right up, so I just have a few scratches!”

Izuku sat down beside her, “You don’t have to be ok, you know. We’re all here to prove ourselves, so it’s understandable to be frustrated that you lost.

Uraraka stared at him for a moment before tears started running down her cheeks again, “It’s just, I didn’t realize how powerful Bakugo was. He wiped the floor with me!”

Izuku didn’t really know what to do. He wanted to comfort her, but...what were you supposed to do when a girl was crying? He resisted the urge to text Joke for advice, since she’d probably just laugh at him, then yell at him for texting rather than being there for his friend. He was on his own for this. What had his mom done when he was crying? Hugs! Hugs were good.

He hesitantly reached out and pulled her gently to his chest, then wrapped his arms around her. She sobbed harder, but didn’t pull away, so he guessed he hadn’t ruined the friendship yet, “You did really well. That meteor shower was a really cool idea.”

Uraraka sniffed and looked up at him, “You really think so?”

Izuku nodded, “It was really smart. You managed to keep Katsuki on the defensive the whole fight,
which is pretty much impossible. Even then, you only lost because you ran out of stamina at the end and now you know what to work on!”

Uraraka sniffed and nodded, “You’re right! This just shows me how much harder I need to work! How are you doing? I know you didn’t really get the chance to show what you could do.”

Izuku shrugged, “It was just the nature of Shinso’s brainwashing. I’m just lucky that I got to shine in the other rounds.”

“You probably think I’m a mess.” Uraraka pulled away. “Here I am crying my eyes out and acting like it’s the end of the world that I lost. You lost too and you’re not even upset.”

“No!” Why did he miss the feeling of her leaning up against him? He must still be wanting to comfort her, that was it. “Just because I’m not upset doesn’t mean you don’t have the right to be. And I am sad about losing, it’s just that I know I already have connections, so it’s not the end of the world, not that it is for you! It’s just...I’m just gonna leave now.”

Uraraka giggled, “It’s fine Deku. It’s probably time to get back to the stands anyway. Don’t wanna miss Todoroki’s match, you know?”

Izuku nodded, “Just...I’m here for you Uraraka, if you ever need it.”

Uraraka smiled, “Thanks Deku, I’ll be sure to take you up on that.”

“This guy won his last match by a landslide and literally left half the audience frozen! From the hero course, Shoto Todoroki! And this kid managed to take out his last opponent without even touching him! The dark horse from the general course, Hitoshi Shinso!”

Shouto didn’t know much about Shinso, but he was strong enough to decisively defeat Midoriya, so he needed to be careful. His quirk allowed him to brainwash his opponent, but when he’d asked Midoriya about how it was activated, he’d simply smiled cryptically and wished him luck. He supposed it made sense, He’d declared war on Midoriya so helping him wouldn’t be in line with the spirit of true competition. Still, it was annoying going in blind. It’d be better to not give him the chance to use it, which meant freezing him right from the beginning, like he had with Sero.

“So, you’re Endeavor’s son.” Shinso drawled. “Must be nice having such a famous old man. Funny, though, how your quirks seem to be complete opposites. What’s up with that?”

Shouto glared at him, but didn’t respond. He was just another person who thought he was lucky to have Endeavor as a father, nothing new there. Besides, the match hadn’t started, so he didn’t have an excuse to freeze him. Yet.

“What? You’ve got this amazing quirk and you don’t even care where you got it?”

No, because it was his quirk, just like Midoriya had said. It didn’t matter where he got it, because he chose what to do with it.

“Begin!”

Shouto didn’t waste any time freezing Shinso in a miniature glacier. It wasn’t as large as the one he’d used on Sero, but it was more than enough to encase Shinso from the neck down. He’d won.

“Shinso,” Midnight asked, “can you move at all?”
Shinso smirked, “I can still run my mouth, can’t I?”

Shouto raised an eyebrow, “You can’t win by…”

A chill passed over him and he wondered if this was how it felt to be encased in one of his glaciers. What was going on? Was this Shinso’s quirk? It must be voice activated.

“What!?” Mic’s scream echoed through the stadium. “In an interesting reversal, both Shinso and Todoroki appear to be completely frozen! If it wasn’t for Kirishima and Tetsutetsu’s fight last round, I’d say this is the closest to a tie I’ve ever seen in the sports festival! What’ll happen next!?”

“Turn around and walk out of bounds.” Shinso shivered.

Even though he was expecting it, Shouto was still shocked when he obeyed. How was he going to get out of this? Was there a way around the quirk? Midoriya hadn’t been able to find a way but...wait, at the beginning of the match, he’d been holding a knife by the blade...so maybe pain had something to do with it?

“What are you doing Shouto!?” He felt bad for the people sitting around his father. He knew from experience how hot his father’s fire got when he was angry. “Snap out of it!”

Shouto was tempted to lose just to spite his father, but in the end, this fight had nothing to do with that bastard. He was going to win this, not to please his father or to spite him, but because he wanted to be a hero. He hadn’t gotten the chance to beat Midoriya, so he refused to lose to Shinso!

If the secret to breaking the brainwashing was pain, he knew how to win. Even if he couldn’t stop himself from obeying Shinso’s orders, he probably still had enough control to activate his quirk and lower his body temperature. For the first time in his life, Shouto was grateful for the hypothermic effect of his quirk.

He was only a few steps away from the line, he was running out of time. Shouto grimaced internally as he pushed his quirk far enough for frost to start forming on his arm. He had to get colder!

His foot was raised to take the final step when he finally shivered. He activated his left side to warm him up as he set his foot down inside of the line, for once not caring that he was visibly using his fire in the middle of a fight.

“How!?” There was a note of panic in Shinso’s voice before he got himself under control. “Oh, and here I was thinking you were the family disappointment for not getting a fire quirk. Is your dad proud? Or is he the one who wouldn’t let you use your fire? How does it feel..”

Shouto put his hand over Shinso’s mouth and covered it in a layer of ice. He wasn’t going to fall for his brainwashing again, it’d been hard enough to break the first time. He stepped away from Shinso as Midnight approached them.

“Shinso, can you move at all? One blink for yes, two blinks for no.”

Shinso’s eyes watered as he blinked twice.

“Shinso is immobilized. Todoroki advances to the next round!”

Shouto immediately put his left hand on Shinso’s shoulder and began melting him out of the ice. His win was a testament to how painful hypothermia was, “It’s clear how you managed to defeat Midoriya so easily. Good match.”
Shinso shivered as he was finally able to pry himself from the ice, “H-how did you b-break my hold?”

“I was still able to activate my quirk, even if you had control of my limbs. I gave myself hypothermia.”

Shinso stared at him as some robots came over to lead him to Recovery Girl, “Impressive.”

“Thank you. I look forward to fighting you again.”

Shinso nodded and followed the robots as Shouto went back to the student areas through the opposite tunnel.

“I’m glad you’re finally seeing reason, Shouto.” Endeavor was leaning against one of the walls. He must have left the stands as soon as the match was over. “Now that you’ve publically abandoned your childish rebellion, we can get back to what’s important. I’ll lead you down the path of the mighty, Shouto.”

Of course his father would see him use his fire and think he was content being his masterpiece, “You’re a fool to think my feelings could be so easily reversed. Instead, for that one moment, I forgot all about you.” He refused to meet his father’s eye as he walked past him and left him in the darkness, “Whether that’s good or bad, I don’t know, but it’s beginning to look like maybe I don’t need you.”
Decisive Matches

Chapter Summary

Bakugo vs. Kirishima; the semi-finals.

Icy-hot had managed to beat that purple fucker, which honestly didn’t surprise Katsuki that much. Yeah, Eye-bags had beaten Deku, but Deku was a quirkless weakling so that didn’t count for much. What really surprised him, though, was that Icy-hot had used his fire in the fight, even if it was just to warm himself up.

It pissed him off. The guy refuses to use his fire all year, didn’t even use it at the USJ and then, what? He has one conversation with Deku and he’s cured? Did Icy-hot think Deku was better than him or something? Did he use his fire against Eye-bags just because he’d been the one to beat Deku?

Whatever, it was better that Icy-hot was at full strength because when Katsuki beat him, no one would be able to deny he was the best. If he beat the bastard when he was still only using his ice all those heroes in the audience would think that if they fought all out, Icy-hot would win. So really, he should be thanking Deku, not that he was going to.

But before he could beat Icy-hot, he had to beat Shitty Hair, who he definitely wasn’t friends with, no matter what the Mutt said. The problem was that Kirishima could easily withstand his explosions, which was annoying. If he wasn’t the best, he would have wished he had some way to cancel Kirishima’s quirk like Aizawa could, but he was the best, so he’d beat him anyway. At least Kirishima wouldn’t be trying to crush him with falling rocks like Roundface had.

“He’s rock hard and surprisingly good at arm wrestling! Eijiro Kirishima! His opponent is known for his explosive personality and for notunderestimating women! Katsuki Bakugo!”

Katsuki cracked his neck. This would be a fun challenge. Shitty Hair ran at him with a smile and launched a hardened fist at his head. What the hell? Where was the super nice, kinda annoying, kid who wouldn’t leave him alone? This guy was willing to do whatever it took to win. Good, they had something in common.

An explosion right now wouldn’t do any good because Kirishima had hardened his whole body, so Katsuki settled for dodging. Kirishima responded with another punch. Hmm, he seemed to be trying to end this fight quickly, which shouldn’t be the case, considering the point of this whole thing was to show off for the pros. Wait, how many times had he seen Kirishima harden his whole body? There were definitely a few times, like at the USJ, but he never kept completely hardened for long and he normally preferred to harden just one part at a time.

Katsuki dodged again and thought back to his last match. The only reason Roundface had lost was because she’d overused her quirk, so maybe the same tactic would work on Shitty Hair. Katsuki didn’t need to blow up solid rock, he just needed to wait until Kirishima exhausted himself, then go for the kill. It was going to be a war of attrition.

For the next few minutes, Katsuki was on the defensive, which probably looked bad to the pros, but as long as he won, they’d still know that he was still the best. Occasionally he’d hit Kirishima
with an explosion to the ribs to test if he was getting softer, but so far he wasn’t. Maybe he’d have to reevaluate his strategy, he was starting to get tired.

Kirishima launched another punch at his face which Katsuki wasn’t quite fast enough to dodge and he was left with a long scratch on his cheek and the next explosion told him that Kirishima was still as hard as ever. Damn, Shitty Hair was strong. Katsuki dodged for another few minutes before hitting Kirishima with another explosion. He winced and grunted and Katsuki smiled. Time to die.

“You’ve been trying to keep rock hard this whole fight, right Kirishima? That means you’re overusing your quirk, and sooner or later, you’ll fall apart!”

He ended his sentence with a massive explosion. Kirishima still had enough juice in him that it probably wouldn’t take him down, but it would give Katsuki another opening. He didn’t wait for the smoke to clear before letting off another big explosion to Kirishima’s face, then another, then another. Shitty Hair had had his chance to shine at the beginning of the fight, now it was Katsuki’s turn.

Now that Shitty Hair was tired, it only took 30 seconds of continuous explosions to knock him out. Yeah, he could see why Kirishima had been trying to avoid a drawn out match with him, but too bad. Katuski had been in control since the beginning of the fight, Shitty Hair just hadn’t known it.

“Kirishima has been knocked out!” Midnight announced. “Bakugo advances to the next round!”

Izuku didn’t know why he’d been worried about Katsuki, of course he’d win, he was amazing. But still, Kirishima had put up a good fight, and he could see from Katsuki’s face that Kirishima had clearly impressed him. As far as Izuku could tell, there were only a few things that Katsuki cared about, but strength and being the best were some of them. He even let Kirishima hang around him without beating him up, which meant he’d impressed him before at some point or another, maybe even at the USJ.

Well, they had their final four. Izuku was kinda sad that Shinso had lost to Todoroki, but he’d definitely put up a good fight. As fast as the fight had been, it had kept Izuku on the edge of his seat. The fact that someone could still activate their quirk under Shinso’s brainwashing was something they could use if he got into the hero course. Yeah, the rules for a sports festival transfer were mostly unknown and highly subjective, but he knew there was no way Shinso hadn’t impressed Aizawa, so he was holding out hope for a new classmate.

And Todoroki had used his fire! Sure, that didn’t erase the trauma that had led him to ignoring his left side in the first place, but it was progress! Izuku was so proud of him but...he wished he was more surprised that Endeavor was abusive. After Katsuki though, he supposed abuse was a side effect of the system. All the more reason for a quirkless hero to come in and change things. Hmm, would Nedzu help...

Present Mic announced the next match between Todoroki and Iida. It was so hard when his friends faced each other because he didn’t know who to root for! Todoroki started off with an ice attack, obviously. Izuku didn’t know how he’d use his fire against a fast opponent like Iida, or how much control he had over that side of his quirk, but it was better to use ice to fence him in like he was doing.

It looked like Todoroki was going to win. There was literally nowhere left for Iida to run. Just then, Iida jumped completely over the ice. Could he use his quirk to help him jump or were his legs just naturally that powerful? Was there a way to use his quirks to enhance his jumps? That would be super useful in a fight on uneven terrain!
He watched as the flames from Iida’s engines turned blue. He was using that finishing move that he’d used in the cavalry battle. Risky, but against an opponent like Todoroki who could limit his mobility, he probably didn’t have any other options. The kick was too fast for Todoroki to dodge, which meant that Iida was the first to seriously land a hit on him in the entire festival.

Iida grabbed Todoroki by the shirt and moved to throw him out of bounds when his engines stalled. Was that an effect of his recipro-burst or had Todoroki done something? Either way, it was the end of the match. As soon as Iida stopped running, Todoroki encased him completely in ice.

“Iida is immobilized, Todoroki advances to the next round!”

“Poor Iida.” Uraraka said.

Izuku nodded, “He was really looking forward to telling his brother he won.”

“Oh, is his brother not watching?”

“No, Iida said he was on a mission.” Izuku said. “But I hope Ingenium will be proud of him for getting this far. His brother is super important to him.”

“What are you doing up, Shitty Hair? Didn’t I knock you out?”

Kirishima laughed, “I wanted to wish you luck on your next match Bakugo!”

“I don’t need luck,” Katsuki huffed, “I’m the best.”

Kirishima gave him a bright smile, “Don’t I know it. By the way, you were super manly during our fight. It was super smart of you to wait for me to get tired before attacking.”

Kirishima sure had a weird way of giving compliments, didn’t he? He acted like manly was the highest praise anyone could get, even the girls. Katsuki didn’t necessarily aspire to be manly above all else, but...coming from Kirishima, it was pretty impressive. Not that he’d let Shitty Hair know that.

“Tch,” Katsuki turned away, “even an idiot could see that was the best strategy.”

Kirishima laughed again, loud and happy. Katsuki bet that Kirishima never had to go to stupid therapy for anything, much less for anger management. All the more reason he should keep his distance from these extras. If Kirishima knew he went to therapy, there was no way he’d think Katsuki was manly.

“Well,” Kirishima shrugged, “I’d better let you prep. You’re up against Tokoyami next, right?”

Katsuki nodded and Kirishima went to leave, “Wait.”

Kirishima turned back to him and Katsuki scowled, why had he kept Shitty Hair from leaving? The conversation was over!

“Good work in the last match.” he said finally. “It was pretty...manly of you.”

Kirishima grinned, “Thanks man! Win your next match for me, ok?”

He left and Katsuki stared accusingly at the empty prep room. What had gotten into him?
“Why isn’t Tokoyami attacking harder?” Ashido whined. “He didn’t hold back like this when he was against us!”

“It must be all the light.” Uraraka muttered. “Dark Shadow can’t go on the offensive.”

“Yeah,” Izuku said, “this match up really couldn’t be any worse for him. But there’s always the chance that Katsuki hasn’t figured out Tokoyami’s weakness yet.”

Just as he said that, the field was engulfed in a bright explosion and the air got so thick with smoke that no one could see Katsuki or Tokoyami.

“If he’s smart, Tokoyami will use the smoke as a kind of darkness to recharge dark shadow…” Izuku muttered, “Oh...Nevermind.”

The smoke cleared and Katuski was pinning Tokoyami to the ground with one hand and making continuous small explosions with the other. Dark shadow had shrunk to a fraction of his size and appeared to be crying, so it didn’t surprise Izuku at all when Midnight announced Tokoyami’s surrender.

“Alright everyone! Stay tuned for the finale!” Mic screamed. “Bakugo vs. Todoroki!”
Katsuki was on his way to his prep room when Endeavor found him.

“Bakugo, correct? Your power is pretty impressive. Of all his classmates, I believe you’re the one closest to my Shouto in terms of power.”

Katsuki scoffed, “Obviously. If I wasn’t the best, I wouldn’t have made it to the final round.”

“True. It is my Shouto’s duty, however, to surpass even All Might. His fight with you will be a good test for how much training he has left. Don’t disgrace yourself or him by holding back.”

What was up with this guy? It was one thing to want to be the best, Katsuki understood that better than most, but to use your kid to try to prove that? That was a weak-ass move. If Endeavor wanted to be the best, then he had to do it himself, not force Todoroki to do it for him. And what made him think Katsuki would even think about holding back? He didn’t even hold back against Uraraka!

Katsuki made eye contact with Endeavor, “You’re a grade-A asshole, you know that?”

The flames on Endeavor’s face grew hotter and his eyes widened in rage, “Excuse me?”

“You wanna be better than All Might, I can respect that, but Todoroki isn’t you. If he beats All Might, that doesn’t say shit about you. And you know what, I’m glad he’s using his fuckin’ fire now because I’m going to prove that I’m the strongest, you got that?”

“Why you insolent…”

Katsuki didn’t wait around for Endeavor to say anything else. If the Mutt were here, he’d probably give Katsuki an earful about thinking before you talk back to the number two hero, but he couldn’t bring himself to regret it. The bastard deserved it.

He didn’t bother checking the number of the prep room before barging in. He knew his way around and if some extras were busy hanging around in his room, they were just asking to be kicked out. Unfortunately, it wasn’t an extra in the room.

It was Todoroki.

“What are you doing here, Icy-Hot? This is my room to…”

Katsuki glanced at the door. Crap. Well, whatever, he was here, so he might as well take advantage of it. If Icy-Hot wasn’t going to declare war on him, then he was going to declare war on Icy-Hot.

“Alright, so I may have walked into the wrong room, but don’t think I’m not going to be on the top
of my game.” He let loose a small explosion on the table in front of Todoroki. That’d always worked to intimidate Deku. “You better bring all you got to this, Icy-Hot!”

Icy-Hot didn’t even react, “Midoriya.”

Katsuki grit his teeth. He was the one declaring war on Icy-Hot! Who did that fuckin’ nerd think he was?

“What does Deku have to do with this? I’m the one you need to fight! That nerd didn’t even get beyond the first round!”

Todoroki stared at his hands. “He told me the same thing, that I shouldn’t hold myself back, even though he didn’t have to. You’ve known him longer, has he always been so helpful?”

Yeah, the nerd had always been fuckin’ helpful. Too helpful, always looking down on Katsuki like he fuckin’ needed his help. He didn’t! He was stronger than some stupid, quirkless Deku! He deserved Todoroki’s flames more than that bastard did!

“This fight is between you and me now! Focus on the match, Icy-Hot, that’s the only thing I give a damn about! Whatever your family problems are, whatever you’re feeling,” Katsuki spit, “don’t you dare hold back! Use your flames on me! I want everyone to know I beat you at your best!”

With that he stalked out of the room and slammed the door. He’d...probably gone too far, honestly. It wasn’t his fault Deku made him so angry! Whatever, Icy-Hot could take it, and if it got him to use his flames during their fight, it was worth it. He was going to show the world what a champion really looked like!

“Is everybody ready!?!?” Mic screamed. “You already know our finalists, so it all comes down to this! Shouto Todoroki vs. Katsuki Bakugo! Begin!”

Shouto wasn’t about to underestimate Bakugo, so he started the fight with an ice wave. If he could bury him completely in ice then…

He couldn’t see Bakugo anymore. Had he done it? Was the fight already over? No. The glacier started shaking as muffled booms sounded from inside, Bakugo was still kicking. Suddenly a portion of the ice cracked and shattered as Bakugo finished tunnelling through. Shouto jumped back. So, he wasn’t going to be able to bury Bakugo like he had his first two opponents, that was fine. He had other moves in his arsenal.

“You’ve got some powerful attacks, Icy-Hot, but they’re not going to be enough to beat me!”

Bakugo ran at him and jumped, but right as Shouto went to freeze him, he used an explosion to change his trajectory and land on Shouto’s left. Was he targeting his left side deliberately like Midoriya had done in the cavalry battle?

“Are you underestimating me?!?” Bakugo grabbed onto the collar of Shouto’s uniform and used an explosion to try and launch him out of bounds, forcing Shouto to create an ice wall to prevent himself from crossing the line. Yes, Bakugo was powerful, but Shouto already knew that coming into the fight.

Bakugo reached to attack his left again, this time with an explosion at the ready. He could hear his father screaming at him to use his left side, but he didn’t. Instead he grabbed Bakugo’s forearm and used his own momentum to try and toss him out of bounds. Bakugo, of course, managed to switch his trajectory at the last minute to land inside the line.
“Stop screwing around.” Bakugo growled. “What? Do you think I’m not worthy of your fire? I need to prove that I’m the best student at the sports festival, but that’s only possible if you come at me with everything you’ve got! Show everyone you’re trying to destroy me!”

He should use his fire. If he didn’t, there’s no guarantee he’d win. Midoriya was right, it was his quirk, not his father’s. Shouto had even managed to forget about his father when he used his fire in the fight with Shinso, which he hadn’t even thought possible. But...had that been the right thing to do? What did his left side even mean to him after all these years of rejecting it?

“Don’t give up Todoroki!” Shouto flinched as Midoriya’s voice echoed in the nearly silent stadium. “Do your best!”

Do your best. That’s right. Shouto was here to be the best hero he could possibly be, so why shouldn’t he use his quirk? Steam rose off him as the frost evaporated and his left side burst into flames. Bakugo grinned and launched himself forward, using his explosions to rotate his body so he was spinning like a bullet.

“Yes, Shouto!” He didn’t know what it was about his father’s voice that cut through even the sound of Bakugo’s explosions, but as soon as he heard it, it was the only thing he could focus on. “Use the power I gave you!”

In every memory I have of my mother, she’s crying.

He...he couldn’t. Shouto couldn’t...that power had made his mother’s life a living hell, had been what doomed him to his father’s torture, he…

Shouto let his arm fall as the flames died out. Wait, wasn’t there something he was supposed to be doing right now?

“Howitzer Impact!”

Oh, that’s right. Bakugo.

“Whoa!” Mic screamed. “Bakugo combined speed and rotation with a huge blast like the one he used against Uraraka, turning himself into a human missile! But Shouto didn’t end up firing off that flame attack he’d been preparing, so what’s become of our two competitors!”

That asshole! Katsuki had been so close to proving that he was the strongest, only for Todoroki to abandon his fire at the literal last second! Icy-Hot had better be fuckin’ okay so that Bakugo could beat him at full power! Katsuki waited for the smoke to clear, only to see ruined ice in every direction and Todoroki sprawled out on one of the glaciers on the wrong side of the line.

“Todoroki is out of bounds,” Midnight announced, “Bakugo wins!”

No! Not like this! Katsuki dragged himself to his feet and rushed toward Todoroki, his energy returning with every step. No! He hadn’t gotten to prove he was the best! He needed to show how strong he was! It couldn’t end like this!

He reached Todoroki and grabbed him by the front of his shirt, not caring that Todoroki was limp in his hold. The bastard must be faking unconsciousness, because there was no way he was allowed to pass out without giving Katsuki the fight he deserved!

“Stop messing around!” He screamed. “This isn’t a real win for me unless you try harder! Now get the fuck up!”
The air started smelling sweet, but it wasn’t the familiar scent of his quirk that Katsuki was used to. He was starting to get light headed, “Don’t…”

Midnight took a step forward to make sure that Bakugo was really asleep, then nodded up at the announcer’s booth.

“Well there you have it, ladies and gentlemen!” Mic yelled. “The winner of this year’s sports festival is...Katsuki Bakugo!!”

Chapter End Notes

I made a discord for my bnha writing! Feel free to check it out and scream at me, but a warning that I'm still pretty new to discord, so you'll have to be patient with me!
The Best

Chapter Summary

The medal ceremony.

Katsuki woke up with a headache and immediately sat bolt upright as he remembered what had happened in his last match, “Fuck! Shit! That fucking bastard!”

He looked around to see he was in a plain cement room which was empty except for Midnight and Recovery girl, who were looking at him warily.

“Good Morning, dearie.” Recovery Girl said. “You’d better get up, the medal ceremony will be starting soon.”

“No.” Katsuki growled. “I’m not going.”

“What do you mean you’re not going?” Midnight sighed. “You won the sports festival, you have to go.”

“I didn’t win shit! Now get Icy-Hot in here, I need a rematch!”

“You won fair and square, dearie, I really don’t know why…”

Before he knew it, he was in Recovery Girl’s face with explosions popping in each hand, “Get his ass in here or I’ll…”

He didn’t even see Midnight move before he got lightheaded again. He was really starting to hate the smell of that fucking quirk.

When he woke up again, Midnight and Recovery Girl were gone, but Hound Dog was sitting on a crate on the other side of the room.

“What are you doing here, you mutt? I thought I told you idiots I want a rematch with Icy-Hot!”

Hound Dog sighed, “Yeah, that’s what they said you wanted, but that’s not how life works, brat.”

“Then make it work!” Katsuki screamed. “I didn’t win! I didn’t!”

“Yeah, you did.” Hound Dog said. “And the sooner you get that through that thick skull of yours, the sooner we can get to what’s actually making you mad.”

“Oh yeah?” Katsuki scoffed. “And what the fuck is that?”

Hound Dog fixed him with an intense stare, “Why don’t you tell me? What was it about that fight that pressed every single button you’ve got? Cause I’ve never seen you this worked up before and your anger is my job.”

“Tch,” Katsuki scowled, “the win doesn’t count. He was holding back.”
“Hmm, it’s his right to hold back if he wants to, isn’t it? Why does it bother you so much?”

“Because he wasn’t giving it his all!” Katsuki yelled. “He wasn’t giving it his all and I was, so now everyone’s gonna think he’s stronger and the only reason I won was because he wasn’t taking things seriously!”

“I don’t think that.”

Katsuki paused, “What?”

“I think you won because you’re strong and have brilliant technique. You don’t have to believe me if you don’t want to, but that’s what I think. And I know I’m not the only one.”

Katsuki huffed and turned away, “Whatever.”

“I mean, we’re definitely going to have to talk about this later. I didn’t know feeling inferior was such a huge issue for you, so we’re gonna come back to that, but…”

“I don’t feel inferior!” Katsuki snapped. “I’m the best! I’ve always been the best and I’ll always be the best!”

Hound Dog looked at him sadly, “Yeah, I don’t know how your old teachers ever thought giving you all that pressure was a good idea. You’ve always been the best, Bakugo, but the thing is that you’ve been told your whole life that if you’re not the best, then you’re worthless, which isn’t true. Everybody fails sometimes, Bakugo, but that doesn’t mean that everybody is a useless waste of space. We learn from our failures and we even learn from those who are better than us. That doesn’t make us terrible people and it doesn’t mean we’re not strong.”

Katsuki stared down at the floor and Hound Dog sighed, “You don’t believe me, that’s fine, but I want you to think about it, okay? It’s gonna take a lot of work, but I personally don’t have any trouble believing that you can do it. Now, let’s go, it’s time for the medal ceremony to start.”

Katsuki glared at him, “I don’t want to get a medal that doesn’t mean shit.”

Hound Dog sighed, “We all have to do things we don’t want to do, Bakugo. You don’t have to like it, you don’t have to accept it, hell, you can even flip All Might off when he goes to give it to you if you want, I don’t care, but technically, you won first place in the sports festival, so you’ve got to go stand up there on the podium and let people cheer for you. Deal?”

Katsuki scoffed, but stood and followed Hound Dog out the door. Midnight and Cementoss were already waiting on the other side along with Todoroki and Tokoyami, though Iida was nowhere to be seen. Cementoss was sculpting a cement podium on some kind of lift and Midnight was messing around with some chain and muzzle combo. Why was she so weird?

Midnight looked up as they walked in and she blinked a few times in shock, “How did you get him to calm down?”

“What are the chains for?” Katsuki asked.

The Mutt laughed, “That was the original plan to make you attend the ceremony. I insisted I get the chance to try and talk you down first.”

Katsuki looked between Hound Dog and Midnight, who looked sheepish, “What the fuck?”

“Well, since you’re here now, we can finally begin.” Cementoss said. “Midnight, you go on up,
boys, take your places. Everyone’s waiting.”

Shouta watched the podium rise from the floor and was surprised that Bakugo was actually standing in first place. Sure, he was glaring at everyone, but considering that Midnight had said he’d tried to attack them when he woke up, glaring was much better than Shouta had expected. He’d had his doubts after Bakugo’s behavior, both in the cavalry battle and his battle with Todoroki, but maybe Hound Dog actually was managing to get through to him.

“Tenya Iida actually shares third place with Tokoyami.” Midnight announced. “But he had to leave early for a family emergency. Gotta love those familial bonds!”

Shouta sighed. Midnight was inappropriate as always. And a family emergency was a serious understatement. He hadn’t been told exactly what had happened, just that Tensei was in the hospital after a villain attack, but...hopefully he’d be alright. Heroism was dangerous, but heroes did get injured frequently and most of the time it wasn’t too serious. Shouta hoped that was the case this time, if only for Iida's sake.

“There’s only one hero worthy of giving out these medals! All Might, the number one hero!”

Shouta sighed at All Might’s overly dramatic entrance. Did the man have to do a flip in time with his own theme music when he couldn’t even go a day without coughing up blood? This was why Shouta was an underground hero.

All Might took the third place medal from Midnight and put it around Tokokami’s neck, “Young Tokoyami, congratulations. You showed great strength out there!”

Then All Might moved onto Todoroki. Shouta knew Endeavor probably didn’t agree, but he was proud of everything Todoroki had accomplished. He’d been talking to the other teachers since the beginning of the school year to try and figure out a way to bring out Todoroki’s fire, but he’d managed to overcome it on his own, if only in a small way. It was progress and a development that Shouta fully planned on nurturing.

All Might placed the medal around his neck, “I’m assuming there was a reason you didn’t use your fire, though it cost you the match.”

Todoroki looked down at his medal and Shouta couldn’t hear what his reply was, since unlike the teachers, the students weren’t mic’d. He’d have to stomach his distaste for All Might and ask him what Todoroki said later. Anything to help his students.

Then All Might turned to Bakugo and Shouta leaned forward. This would be the moment of truth. Would Bakugo actually accept the medal or would he try to attack All Might?

As it turned out, Bakugo did neither of those things. As All Might reached forward to place the medal around his neck, Bakugo reached up and grabbed the medal out of his hands, then kept it clutched in his fist as he dropped his hand to his side. A simple, but powerful, statement that he didn’t fully accept his win. Interesting. So Hound Dog apparently hadn’t tried to convince him that his win meant something, just tamed the initial anger. It would be interesting to see how that worked long term. Hopefully Bakugo could control himself enough that Shouta wouldn’t have to separate him and Todoroki during combat exercises.

“Here they are!” All Might boomed. “The winners of this year’s sports festival!”

Finally! That’d been exhausting, even more exhausting than the sports festival usually was. He’d be sure to not let Mic talk him into commentating ever again. Oh well, time to go talk to his
“Why do we even have to come back to class?” Mineta whined. “Can’t they just let us go home after the sports festival? I want to talk to all the hot babes I impressed!”

“What hot babes?” Sero laughed. “The ones that stopped watching before the end of the first round?”

Izuku shook his head as the class took their seats and joked around. It’s not like they were actually going to have a lesson or anything, they just needed to wait for Aizawa to officially release them. Everyone had done really well and Izuku had seen so many creative uses for everyone’s quirks. They still had a long way to go before they could really call themselves pro-heroes, but Izuku thought they were well on their way.

The class went silent as Aizawa walked through the door. Nobody wanted a repeat of one of his don’t waste my time lectures. Izuku sat up a little straighter. Sure, he didn’t think Eraser would be disappointed with him for getting eliminated so early, but...he couldn’t be certain.

“Nice work.” Aizawa said. “You have the next two days of school off to recuperate. I’m sure the pros who watched the festival will want to recruit some of you, but we’ll talk about the draft when you get back, so don’t worry about that now. Get some rest, you still have a lot of training.”

There was a rush for the door, but Izuku decided he wasn’t in any hurry. When he finished gathering his things, he stood and smiled at Aizawa, “Good job commentating. You could tell your heart was really in it.”

Aizawa snorted, “Yeah, sure problem child, just like All Might’s power is in his brain.”

Izuku rolled his eyes, “Yep. Smartest hero on earth.”

Aizawa smiled at him, “You did good problem child.”

Izuku frowned and scuffed at the floor with his foot, “I didn’t make it very far, though.”

“You made it farther than Mineta.”

Izuku snorted, “Everyone made it farther than Mineta.”

Aizawa smirked, “Your point?”

Izuku smiled, but let it fall too quickly, “I’m sorry. I know that I didn’t need to win because I have connections already, but I probably disappointed you and…”

“Hey.” Aizawa grabbed his shoulders and turned Izuku to face him, “You did amazing. Everyone was impressed with your quick thinking and Emi said that a ton of people were gobsmacked that a quirkless kid could even get beyond the first round, so don’t you think that you disappointed me, because you didn’t.”

“B-but you spent all this time training me…”

Aizawa nodded, “Yes, and look how far you’ve come. Or do you not remember our first practice when you couldn’t even throw a punch? Or that time when Emi took you out and you fell into three dumpsters in under two hours? Now listen closely because I’m only going to say this once. I am proud of you. Now get going before your mom starts calling me asking where you are.”
Izuku wiped the tears from his eyes and nodded, “Thanks, Eraser.”

“Anytime, problem child.” Aizawa said.

“So…” Izuku smiled mischievously, “Emi, huh?”

Aizawa groaned, “Don’t you even start.”
Chapter Summary

Izuku tries to figure out what to do with himself until UA starts again in two days.

Chapter Notes

Now featuring 500% more made up statistics!

Izuku was getting restless. Aizawa had told them to use these two days off school to rest, but...he’d already done that! He’d slept in until 11 that morning and spent a few hours watching the news but now he was bored. And what made it worse was that since the heroes all knew he was a UA student now, no one was sending him any analyses to give him a chance to rest! He was going insane!

He opened his computer and started browsing the hero forums. Maybe someone would mention a villain he could track down or something? He could just find the guy, then send the information to the group chat! That would be a good idea.

To his surprise, people on the forum were actually still talking about that article he’d released a few weeks ago. Izuku hadn’t really thought it would make that big of an impact and he hadn’t been thinking about it recently because he’d been focusing on the sports festival, but...maybe it would be good to write a follow up? Especially since after what Todoroki told him at the sports festival....

Well, he needed something to do anyway, so why not?

Are schools weaponizing their strongest students?

A little girl has a quirk that allows her to move any object with her mind and she has excellent control over it. Her teachers constantly praise her for her strength and her quirk, teaching her, whether implicitly or explicitly, that she is better than her peers. She, of course, grows to believe these adults because why wouldn’t she? Teachers are meant to teach us, and adults are meant to be trusted.

The scene is a familiar one, but what happens when those adults, the ones our children are supposed to trust, take a dislike to a weaker student? Sure, they could purposely give them a lower grade, or put them in detention for no reason at all, but that would reflect badly on the teacher and harm their future chances of promotion. Wouldn’t it be so much easier to let the students do the work?

So when our little girl with a strong telekinesis quirk is mean to a little boy who can change his eye color, the teacher looks the other way. Maybe they even send the little girl a smile before they do so, letting her know that it’s ok to act that way because the boy is weaker than she is. So the little girl keeps being mean, desperate for the praise and validation that the teachers give her when
she’s strong. She gets meaner to prove that she is the best because the teacher has taught her that anyone below the best gets hurt. She has to hurt others so that no one hurts her.

If the bullying ever comes to light, well, that’s just kids being kids. Kids are cruel, there’s nothing we can do about that, now is there? And besides, those weak students just need to toughen up, life isn’t easy, you know. It’s not the teacher’s fault, obviously not, kids are just like that. And so our strong little girl ultimately shoulders all the blame for the crimes that her teacher encouraged her to commit.

Is it right that the teacher manipulated that little girl? Is it right that an adult she trusted turned her into a human weapon to avoid accusations of discrimination? Looking at the current school system in Japan, it must be, because that is the way our schools are run. There are thousands of children like that little girl who have been weaponized and manipulated into harming the same children who, if the adults preferred, could have been their friends.

There are thousands of cases of bullying reported in elementary schools every year, but by the time those same kids reach middle school, those cases have dropped to the hundreds and by high school they’re almost non-existent. According to the schools, it’s because the students are maturing and becoming less cruel, but anyone who has walked through the halls can tell you that that can’t possibly be the case.

The truth is that by the time students get to middle school and high school, they have been taught that this is the way the world works. This cycle of abuse and victimization has been so encouraged that it is now so deeply ingrained in a child’s psyche that she can’t possibly understand any other way of seeing the world. The strong become bullies and the other students are forced to suffer in silence by the malicious inaction of their teachers.

Some of you reading this right now are probably questioning my claims. Surely, you say, things can’t be that bad! We trust our teachers to care for our students, so the idea that they are turning their best students into cruel weapons is absurd! This article is simply trying to undermine the society that we have worked so hard to build!

If that describes you, then perhaps you’d be interested in a real life example. Musutafu is home to Aldera Middle School. It’s an average school in almost every sense of the word. It’s students often go on to average high schools and live average lives, just like most schools. So it shouldn’t come as any surprise that their attitudes and behavior are quite average as well. In the last year, there were 87 cases of bullying reported. This, in and of itself, is not damning. After all, kids will be kids, right?

Where it gets interesting, however, is the distribution of that number. Of those 87 cases, 64 of them were reported by seventh graders. For those of you too lazy to do the math, that’s 73%. Of the remaining 24 cases, 16 were reported by eighth graders, which means that by their final year of middle school, students are only reporting 10 incidents of bullying for the entire year.

But, maybe you’re right, maybe these students are simply getting more mature and less incidents are actually occurring. A decent school like Aldera couldn’t possibly be discouraging students from reporting the abuse, could they?

So let’s look at how those 87 cases were handled. Of the 87 incidents, no disciplinary action was taken in 20 of them, which leaves us with 67. A verbal warning was reportedly given in 42 cases, which leaves us with 25. This is where it gets interesting. In 18 of those 25 cases, a detention or suspension was given not to the student who was reported as the perpetrator, but to the student that reported the bullying. In the incident reports, it is always noted that, “upon further investigation, we discovered that the accusations of misbehavior were false and thus the student in
question was disciplined for lying and for purposely trying to cause trouble for their better-behaved peers."

That was the report in 18 cases. 18 out of 87. That is 20% for those of you that are keeping track. If Aldera Middle School is to be believed, 20% of their students are chronic liars who are intent on maliciously ruining the reputations of their innocent peers. Of course, there is always the possibility that these students were, in fact, telling the truth, but were silenced so that their stronger peers would retain spotless records, but obviously something like that would never happen in a good school like Aldera, right?

In the end, only 7 perpetrators actually received punishment. The strongest students’ violent behavior is encouraged by the fact that they are almost entirely untouchable. Their teachers, the same ones that have turned these students against their friends and peers and weaponized them to prey on the weak, protect them and allow them to continue being abusers rather than moulding them into upstanding members of society.

So what is to be done? To be honest, I don’t know, but I do know that this pattern cannot continue. The teachers responsible for guiding our children are poisoning their minds and weaponizing them against one another and the people who are suffering from this are the children.

Something needs to change.

12857: (Deku)

Hey Nedzu, I wrote another article. Would you mind looking it over?

Attachment

62020: (Nedzu)

Ah! This is brilliant Midoriya, as always. How did you get a hold of the statistics?

12857: (Deku)

Most of them are public record, if you know where to look, but the names have obviously been excluded for privacy reasons. The rest...I may have had to ask Tsukauchi.

62020: (Nedzu)

Good work using your connections to your advantage! You are improving in that aspect, though I do believe it would be beneficial to learn how to hack. Perhaps that can be the focus for our next lesson? For now, though, when were you planning on posting this article?

12857: (Deku)

I was thinking tomorrow morning. Most people browse the forums on their way to work, so if I were to set it up to post around 7:00, I could take advantage of the rush hour traffic.
62020: *(Nedzu)*

Perfect! And you were planning on using the same anonymous accounts you used to publish your last article, correct?

12857: *(Deku)*

I don’t know. Do you think it would be more impactful that way?

62020: *(Nedzu)*

If you use the same accounts, this article will automatically be associated with your last and will enjoy the same popularity. I would recommend building on the traction you have already established.

12857: *(Deku)*

Alright! I’ll do that then! Thanks, Nedzu!

62020: *(Nedzu)*

Anytime, Midoriya. I look forward to the chaos you’ll cause tomorrow!

*62020 has left the chat*

12857: *(Deku)*

Wait...chaos!?
Teachers

Chapter Summary

UA holds a staff meeting.

Group Message

12579: (Eraserhead)
Problem child, I thought you were supposed to be resting.

12857: (Deku)
I’ve hardly left my room since the sports festival, Eraser. I am resting!

12579: (Eraserhead)
Then perhaps you’d care to explain the article that immediately went viral this morning?

12857: (Deku)
...I was bored?

58726: (Ms. Joke)
Wait, Deku wrote that?

72598: (Sir Nighteye)
We’re talking about the one about schools weaponizing children, correct?

87657: (Mr. Brave)
Damn, kid, good work!
12857: (Deku)
Thanks, I know I came on kinda strong in some parts....

72598: (Sir Nighteye)
I think some strength was needed, considering the topic.

58726: (Ms. Joke)
Yeah, I gotta agree, but why are you even writing inflammatory articles to begin with kid?

12579: (Eraserhead)
It’s part of his private lessons with Nedzu.

87657: (Mr. Brave)
...What is that rat teaching the kid!?

12857: (Deku)
How to ruin a reputation and use public opinion to my advantage.

58726: (Ms. Joke)
Good one...wait, you are joking, right?

12857: (Deku)
...

58726: (Ms. Joke)
Oh my god, Shouta, no! Why are you letting that rat corrupt our sweet innocent son!?

12579: (Eraserhead)
He’s not our son, Emi, and Nedzu isn’t corrupting him.
Umm...do I get any say in this?

Shhh, sweetie. The adults are talking.

Aww! They’re fighting like an old married couple!

We are not a couple.

Of course not, Eraser. And on a completely unrelated topic, how long have you two been calling each other by your first names?

Busted!

...I hate you all.

Except for Emi, you love her.

Have you forgotten that I have the power to give you detention?
12857: (Deku)

...Point taken. You always were my favorite, Eraser!

87657: (Mr. Brave)

Ahh, but Eraser’s favorite is obviously Joke.

12579: (Eraserhead)

Why do I even put up with you guys?

“Alright!” Mic said loudly. “What about Aizawa’s phone is currently the most annoying thing in the world? Everybody take a guess!”

“It’s one of those updates that makes everything worse.” Snipe suggested.

“Hmm,” Thirteen thought for a minute. “Maybe he got a message saying he’s famous now.”

“No,” Nedzu took a sip of his tea, “it’s much more likely that the message is about his favorite cat cafe closing down.”

“Ooooh!” Midnight’s face lit up. “Maybe Joke finally confessed her love!”

“She does that all the time.” Shouta muttered.

“No.” Oh no, the look on Mic’s face was not good. “I don’t think *Emi* confessing her love would annoy him at all!”

Shouta groaned, “Not you guys too.”

“Wait,” Vlad leaned forward slightly, “Aizawa are you *dating* someone?”

“Aizawa’s got a girlfriend?” All Might asked

Shouta glared at him, “I do not have a girlfriend.”

“She calls you by your first name.” Mic grinned.

“She’s just like that.”

“You call her by hers”

“Doesn’t mean we’re dating.”

“Oh, they’re on a first name basis!” Midnight squealed. “That’s so cute! Oh my goodness, you are totally together!”

Shouta sighed, “Look, Emi and I are close friends, but that’s it! I mean we haven’t even been on a single date.”
“Well then, maybe you had better ask her!” Nedzu said cheerfully.

Shouta’s face got hot and he wished Recovery Girl hadn’t taken the bandages off yesterday. If he was still a mummy, no one would be able to call him out for blushing.

“Don’t tell me that you’re waiting for her to ask you!” Recovery Girl hit him on the head with her cane, “Kids these days have no respect for tradition!”

“I’m not a kid.” Shouta wasn’t pouting as he rubbed his head. He wasn’t. That would be illogical.

“Still,” Thirteen said, “if you like this girl, you should ask her out. What does she like to do?”

“Aren’t we supposed to be looking over the draft papers?”

“You are quite right!” Nedzu chirped. “Now, have we finished sorting the offers for all the students? Good, let’s start with the first years then. Who got the most offers?”

“That would be…” Midnight sorted through some of the piles in front of her, “Todoroki. He got over 4000! Impressive.”

“Yeah, I’m not surprised.” Snipe said. “That kid’s quirk is something else and that’s not even taking his control into account. He probably would have gotten more if he’d actually shown off his fire, though.”

“But he did use it.” Thirteen pointed out. “After how stubborn he was at the beginning of the year, that’s quite the accomplishment.”

“What did he say to you All Might?” Aizawa sighed when All Might simply stared at him blankly. “At the medal ceremony? You asked him about his fire, what did he say?”

“Oh, well, he said that he was still unsure about a lot of things...and that he had someone he needed to talk with? I’m not sure, I’m sorry, I don’t really remember.”

Aizawa took a deep breath. This man really had no idea what it meant to be a teacher did he? One of his students had a major breakthrough and he couldn’t even bother to remember the conversation long enough to tell the other teachers? It was the height of stupidity.

“I’ll follow up with him.” Aizawa said finally. “I’m his homeroom teacher, so hopefully I’ll be able to get through to him. It would help if we knew why he refused to use his fire in the first place.”

Nedzu nodded, “That it would. If anyone discovers the reason, please bring it up immediately so it can be adequately handled. Hopefully he’ll choose an internship that will help him with that control.” He clapped his hands together. “Very well, next student!”

“That would be Bakugo.” Snipe said. “He got only about a hundred less than Todoroki did. Pretty good considering he tried to fight his classmate after he was defeated?”

“Do you know what that was about, Hound Dog?” Shouta asked. “You talked to him before the medal ceremony, right?”

“I’m still just impressed you got him to calm down!” Midnight exclaimed. “I thought he was going to explode the whole stadium!”

Hound Dog sighed, “There’s some deep seated issues there, I’m not gonna lie. The jist of it is that
his whole life, his teachers have been comparing him to Midoriya, basically telling him that he’s everything that Midoriya isn’t and that he’s the best. So, if he’s not decisively the best…”

“Then he may as well be a worthless deku.” Shouta finished.

Hound Dog nodded, “Because Todoroki wasn’t fighting at full strength, Bakugo couldn’t truly prove he was the best, and since he couldn’t prove he was the best, he was worthless. It’s a complicated mix of both a superiority complex and an inferiority complex, most likely with a healthy dose of imposter syndrome thrown in, but it does make a lot of sense, considering.”


Shouta agreed. No wonder the kid reacted so violently. He was constantly trying to prove to everyone that he deserved to be treated with basic human decency, since no one had shown that decency to Deku. The kid wasn’t able to recognize his own worth unless he received validation from the outside. That...sounded absolutely miserable.

“We’re gonna work on it.” Hound Dog continued. “But for now, if there are issues like this again, send him to me before you punish him for blowing up. It’s gonna take a while before he’ll be able to have a healthy sense of confidence, but he can get there. I believe in him.”

“Very well. We’ll trust you to handle Bakugo’s considerable temper for now, Hound Dog.” Nedzu said. “Now moving onto the third highest offer count…”

“That’s Deku.” Shouta said quickly. “He got just under 900 offers.”

“Isn’t that a bit high?” All Might asked. “He only reached the top 16.”

“Actually, it’s lower than I expected.” Cementoss said. “Normally, with a reputation like Midoriya’s, offers would be pouring in.”

“It is most likely because he is quirkless.” Nedzu said bluntly. “Until the sports festival, most heroes who had worked with Deku assumed he had some kind of analysis quirk, but word of his quirk status spread fairly quickly after the first round. Most underground heroes don’t place a lot of weight on quirks, but daylight heroes do. Most of Midoriya’s offers are from underground heroes, correct?”

Shouta nodded, “Almost all of them, in fact.”

“I’m not surprised. Not that it truly matters, since he’s already been spoken for.”

Shouta raised his eyebrow, “Oh? And who has that kind of authority?”

Nedzu grinned, “Me! I’m not going to pass up a chance to mould a mind like Midoriya’s, and you have already had your chance to work with him. Besides, if I’m not wrong, you put in a request for a different student, Aizawa.”

Shouta sighed. It was going to be an interesting internship week.
The train to UA was always crowded, but Izuku didn’t really mind. He just grabbed his phone and browsed the hero forums, smiling as he saw people talking about his article. He still felt bad about calling out his old middle school, but Nedzu was right, they were just going to keep hurting people unless somebody did something. This way, people were actually comparing the statistics he’d shared with some from other schools and were realizing that this was a more generalized problem than anyone had assumed. But then again, they hadn’t assumed that it was a problem at all. Change would still take time, obviously, but at least…

“Psst, hey aren’t you Midoriya? From class 1A?”

Izuku jumped and craned his neck to look behind him at the man who’d recognized him, “Uuh, yeah, that’s me…”

The man smiled, “Good job at the sports festival.”

“You got to the final round, didn’t you?” another man asked. “That’s really impressive.”

“Did you say Midoriya?” a woman asked. “Didn’t one of the commentators also call you Deku?”

“Uh, yeah.” Midoriya fidgeted as he realized how many people were looking at him. “Deku is my hero name, actually. I’ve done some analysis work for some pros already, so they announced that name so people would know who I was.”

“Wait…” an older woman with a stern face frowned at him. “I heard rumors that Deku was quirkless.”

“No way!” Someone else said. “UA would never let somebody quirkless into the hero course.”

Izuku hesitated. He didn’t have to confirm his quirklessness. He could just laugh and not say anything, let them each believe what they wanted to about him. It’d be easier, especially since these guys seemed to be rooting for him and that would change as soon as they realized he didn’t have a quirk, but…how was he supposed to give hope to the next generation of quirkless kids if he was too afraid to even acknowledge who he was?

“Umm,” Izuku took a deep breath, “actually, there’s no rule preventing people like me from applying. As long as I’m able to pass the test, I qualify for the hero course.”

The car went silent.

“It’s true? You’re actually quirkless?”

Izuku gave a shaky smile, “Yeah, I, uh, I just wasn’t born with any powers.”

As he expected, the mood in the train car immediately shifted. Some people started glaring at him
while others looked shocked and the rest looked at him in pity. He’d have to get used to this, though, he’d be dealing with it his entire career.

“Sorry…” The man who’d recognized him put a hand on his shoulder, probably in an attempt to comfort him.

Izuku smiled, “It’s not a big deal. Yeah, it might make things a little harder sometimes, but I don’t let it hold me back.

“Why would you even try to be a hero without a quirk?” another man asked.

“I want to help people.” Izuku responded. A lot of kids did it for the fame or the power, so maybe his reason might seem a little lackluster, but it was enough for him.

“There’s other ways to help people…” A woman said after a long pause, “safer ways.

Izuku nodded, “I know, but I want to be a hero. Don’t worry, I’ve had enough training that I know how to not die the moment I get out in the field.”

“Useless!” Izuku flinched as an old man practically growled at him. “Leave the opportunities for those who actually deserve them! Do you know how many kids with quirks would kill for a seat in the hero course? And yet you’re filling it up with your useless ass!”

The other occupants in the car glanced at one another awkwardly. Apparently they didn’t know whether they were supposed to step in or not, which Izuku understood. He just had to be strong enough to take it. There were always going to be people who hated the idea of a quirkless hero.

“You may as well go home kid.” Someone else said. “You’re just gonna get yourself killed.”

“Good riddance, I say.” The old man muttered. “Then at least his spot’ll be filled with someone who actually has a chance of being a hero.”

No one really knew what to say to that, so the rest of Izuku’s ride to UA was spent in awkward silence. Izuku sighed in relief when it was finally his stop and he stepped off the train.

“Midoriya!”

Izuku turned around to see a woman he didn’t recognize running toward him, “Umm, what can I do for you?”

The woman took a moment to catch her breath, “I, um, I’m sorry I didn’t say anything on the train...I’m just...I’m such a coward.”

Izuku shrugged, “It’s ok, it was a pretty weird situation, but I’m used to insults, so you don’t have to apologize.”

The woman frowned, “You shouldn’t have to be used to it…"

“Umm,” Izuku said, “if that’s all, I’d probably better be getting to class…”

“Wait!” The woman grabbed his arm, then quickly dropped it again. “Um, I just wanted to thank you. You see, my daughter’s quirkless and it’s been really hard on her. When we realized after the sports festival that you were too…” she laughed, “well, let’s just say she’s watched the festival seven times in the past three days.”

Izuku stared at her in shock. There was a kid...who was inspired by him? He smiled brightly,
“That’s amazing! Well, you tell her that being quirkless isn’t the end of the world. I know she probably has a lot of people that tell her that she’s worthless or that she can’t contribute anything to society, but, well, I know she can do anything if she puts in the work.”

The woman smiled, “Thank you so much! It just...it meant the world for her to be able to see someone like her competing on the same level as the kids with quirks. Though I’m kinda scared for that guy with the brainwashing quirk. If my daughter ever sees him, I’m fairly certain she’ll attack him on sight just to defend your honor.”

Izuku laughed, “I’ll be sure to tell Shinso to watch his back.”

“Also, I get a heart attack every time she watches the obstacle course.” She said. “It’s her favorite part, but...maybe in the future, could you not be so reckless? I don’t want her getting any ideas…”

“Oh.” Izuku hadn’t really thought about that. He was an example now. “I’m sorry, I’ll try to be more careful. Tell your daughter I said hi, ok?”

“Actually,” the woman rifled through her purse until she found a notebook and pen, “could I get your autograph?”

Izuku smiled and took the notebook, “What’s your daughter’s name?”

“It’s Aia.”

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**Dear Aia,**

_I know it’s hard sometimes, being like us, but just know that I believe in you! You’ll have to work hard, but you can do that. I hope you can join me in showing the world that quirkless does not mean worthless._

*Sincerely,*

*Deku*

---

Izuku arrived at the lockers just as Iida finished putting away his things, “Iida…”

Iida smiled, “If it’s about my brother, everything will be fine, I’m sorry I made you worry.”

Izuku frowned as Iida left. Nothing had been released to the public yet, but from what Ingenium’s sidekicks were saying to other heroes on the forum he used, there was a good chance Iida’s brother had been permanently paralyzed by the hero killer. That wasn’t _fine._

Izuku shook his head and went to class. If Iida needed help, he’d ask, Izuku just had to be there for him and trust him to know what he needed. That’s what friends were for, right?

When he got to the classroom, everyone was talking about their newfound fame. Apparently he wasn’t the only one who’d been recognized on the way to school.

“Everyone wanted to talk to me on my way here!” Ashido gushed.

“Me too!” Kirishima said. “It was kinda crazy.”

“You’ll never guess what a group of elementary school brats yelled at me!” Sero whined.
“Nice try?” Tsu suggested. The rest of the class laughed.

“Yeah, well, at least they didn’t tell you they’d be happy if you died.” Izuku said casually. The class turned to him in horror and he suddenly remembered that death threats weren’t really the norm for quirked students.

“What?” Uraraka’s eyes were wide and Izuku just shrugged awkwardly.

“Apparently some people don’t take too kindly to a quirkless kid getting into the hero course.” He said simply. “Don’t worry about it guys, I’ve gotten death threats before, I’m used to it.”

Katsuki glanced back at him, then huffed and faced forward again. He was probably remembering the death threats he’d delivered himself, but...he was actually doing a lot better recently. Izuku had hoped that the therapy would work, but in all honesty, he’d known there was a possibility that Katsuki was too far gone. But he wasn’t, so that was good!

“Guys,” Kaminari looked around the room, “does anyone know where Mineta is? He’s not usually this late.”

“Mineta has been transferred to class 1C.” Aizawa announced as he strode through the door. He was followed by Shinso, who looked bored, but Izuku didn’t miss the extra tension he was holding in his shoulders. “After his poor performance in the sports festival, not to mention his obvious groping of Yaoyorozu that was caught on camera, we decided that his spot could be put to better use. Shinso, you’ll be taking the seat behind Deku.”

Shinso looked at Aizawa in confusion, so Izuku smiled and raised his hand, “He means me. Deku’s my hero name.”

Shinso nodded and made his way to the empty desk as Aizawa continued, “Speaking of hero names. You need to pick yours.” He activated his quirk as the class erupted into whispers. “This is of course related to the hero draft picks I mentioned last class. Normally, you wouldn’t have to worry about being drafted until your second or third years, but your class is obviously different. Here are the totals for those of you who got offers.”

Izuku looked up at the board and gasped when he realized just how many offers he’d gotten. Of course, he was nowhere near Todoroki or Bakugo, but...wow.

“I…” Shinso sounded just as shocked as Izuku felt. “I got offers? I wasn’t even in the hero course yet.”

Izuku glanced at the board again and, although he was at the bottom of the list, Shinso had three offers, “Good job, Shinso!”

Aoyama pouted, “How come he got offers, and not moi!”

“Maybe because he made it farther than you did.” Tsu said helpfully.

“Despite these results,” Aizawa said loudly, “You’ll all be interning with pros. All of you except for Shinso experienced real villains at the USJ, but it will still be helpful to see pros in action.”

“And for that, we need hero names!” Uraraka yelled.

Aizawa nodded, “These hero names will most likely be temporary, but take them seriously or…”

“You’ll have hell to pay!” Midnight threw open the door and sauntered in. “What you pick today
could be your codename for life. So be careful, or you’ll be stuck with something utterly indecent.”

“Yeah, if you get a reputation on your internships, you won’t be able to easily change your name. Midnight’s going to have the final say on your code names, it’s not my forte.”

Izuku turned and whispered to Shinso, “That’s how he got stuck with Eraserhead. Present Mic…”

“Ahem.” Izuku turned back forward to see Aizawa glaring at him. “If you forgot, that’s also how you got stuck with the name *Deku*, so you don’t have any right to talk. The name you pick is important. It shows what kind of hero you want to be.”

Midnight passed out some whiteboards as Aizawa passed out. Izuku turned to Shinso again…it probably wasn’t a good idea to have a friend so close. How did Iida and Uraraka manage sitting right next to each other? Or Yaoyorozu and Todoroki? Izuku didn’t think he was that much more social than them.

“So, Shinso, do you have any ideas yet?”

Shinso stared blankly at his board, “I didn’t even know I was in the hero course until I showed up to school this morning. How did you pick your name? Aizawa said that it should represent the kind of hero you want to be, so why did you pick a synonym for useless?”

Izuku chuckled awkwardly, “I didn’t actually think it was going to be my hero name when I picked it. In fact, at that point I didn’t think I was going to be a hero at all. *Deku* is a name…my bullies used to call me. I guess it’s kinda come to represent where I come from, you know? So even after I’ve achieved my dream, I won’t forget how hard it was to get here.”

Shinso blinked at him, “You didn’t even hesitate to respond to my question.”

“Why would I…” Izuku asked. “Oh, your quirk! Don’t worry, I’m sure you have excellent control, and if you brainwash me on accident, it’s not a big deal, you can just let me go.”

“But…aren’t you afraid I’m a villain or something?”

Izuku was confused for a moment before he remembered that Shinso had mentioned he’d been bullied for having a villain quirk. He shook his head, “No. You’re here to be a hero and so am I. It doesn’t matter what anybody else says, right?”

Shinso thought for another long moment before writing something down and showing it to Izuku, who smiled.

*Mindblank*. 
Great Minds

Chapter Summary

Izuku talks with Nedzu about Todoroki's...situation.

Chapter Notes

It is finals week at my university, so I will be switching to my "slow" update schedule which is every four days rather than my "normal" update schedule which is every two days. Thanks for being understanding and be warned that this week might be a bit wonky as I switch over!

Nedzu sipped his tea and scrolled through the news as he waited for Midoriya to arrive for his lesson. When he had suggested Midoriya get some good old fashioned revenge on his middle school, he hadn’t anticipated just how far the boy would go. Especially after their first lesson when Midoriya had been hesitant to even consider the idea of ruining someone’s reputation, Nedzu had expected that they would take down Aldera, then Midoriya would politely say that he wasn’t at all fond of the experience and that would be the end of it.

Instead, Midoriya had surprised him by not only deciding that society at large was at fault for his abuse, but also by taking steps to change the system. And what was most surprising was that it was working. Midoriya’s first article had made waves simply by suggesting that society might be broken and hurting both the strong and the weak, but his second article was causing outrage.

Nedzu made a mental note that he needed to teach Midoriya more about rhetoric, because he already seemed to be a natural at it. Imagine how powerful Midoriya’s words could be if that skill was honed! His word choice alone was enough to produce the effect he was looking for, with words like manipulation and weaponizing children, anyone who read it would immediately be up in arms. The fact that Midoriya had used statistics to back up his vitriol was simply the icing on the cake.

Some journalists were also wondering if the abuses Midoriya had pointed out in the school system were the reason so many people turned to villainy. Midoriya had been careful to put the focus of each of his articles on powerful, quirked children to force people to care, but his article had been worded in such a way that it was clear that the system was hurting both the strong and the weak. It wasn’t a large jump in logic, therefore, to assume that both those groups were being pushed toward villainy.

The proximity alarm outside his office beeped and Nedzu looked at the cameras to see Midoriya approaching the door. He smiled and hopped off his chair to open the door right as Midoriya raised his hand to knock. What could he say, it was the simple things that made him smile.

“Good afternoon, Midoriya,” he chirped, “how were your morning classes?”

“How do you always do that?” Midoriya muttered as he walked in. “Um, morning classes were
good, just hero names and stuff, so kinda repetitive for me. I was happy to see that Shinso made it in though! What made you decide to transfer him? He didn’t end up making it to the podium.”

“Yes, that’s true.” Nedzu sat back down behind the desk and poured Midoriya a cup of tea. “But in the fights he did have, he showed remarkable skill and ingenuity. Aizawa especially pushed for his admittance after proclaiming that he had much more potential than Mineta, who probably shouldn’t have been allowed in the hero course in the first place. Though of course the entrance exam only shows us quirks and fighting ability, not sexual harassment and selfishness. Theoretically, that’s what one’s academic record is for, but...”

“But most of the time, incidents remain unreported as long as you have a strong enough quirk.” Midoriya finished. “Yeah, I know. That’s what I’m trying to change.”

“And you are doing a very fine job!” Nedzu grinned. “Have you been tracking the fallout from your latest article?”

Midoriya shook his head, “Not really, no. I mean, I did check a little yesterday, but today’s been kinda busy.”

“Well then, let me tell you!” Nedzu pulled up some of the more interesting reaction pieces he’d found and showed the screen to Midoriya. “First of all, Tsukauchi has actually opened an investigation into your old school as a result of this article. That part hasn’t made it to the news quite yet, but I figured you’d want to know.”

Midoriya stared at him with wide eyes, “R-really? People can really get in trouble with the law just because of some negative press?”

“A more accurate way to say it would be that the press sometimes brings issues to law enforcement’s attention.” Nedzu chirped. “The police can’t arrest a villain if they do not know of their crimes, afterall.”

Midoriya bit his lip and looked like he wanted to say something, but wasn’t quite sure how to bring it up. Well, Nedzu’s interest was piqued. Whatever Midoriya had to say, he hoped that it would lead to just as much chaos as their lessons had so far.

“You have something on your mind, Midoriya.” Nedzu prompted. “What is it?”

Midoriya hesitated for another long moment, “what if...well, I mean, I wanted to finish our campaign against Aldera now so that...it’s probably weird and maybe we shouldn’t go after...”

Nedzu frowned for a moment as he tried to make sense of Midoriya’s mumblings. Whatever was on his mind was obviously causing him great anxiety, “Midoriya, you said you wanted to finish smearing Aldera. Is that because you have a new target in mind?”

Midoriya smiled sheepishly, “But, I mean it’ll probably work, but we’d have to be really careful to not completely destabilize society so it’d probably be really dangerous...”

Nedzu grinned in excitement. Teaching Midoriya would never be dull, would it? Nedzu didn’t even know what Midoriya had in mind, but he was already looking forward to it. Besides, the destabilizing of society sounded like just high enough stakes to make their next project interesting!

“I’m all ears, Midoriya.”

“Well, you know how Todoroki didn’t want to use his fire at the sports festival?”
Nedzu nodded, “Yes, he was quite adamant that he would never use his fire in battle.”

Midoriya took a deep breath, “I found out why.”

Nedzu getsured for Midoriya to continue and took a sip of tea.

“Endeavor’s abusive.”

Nedzu choked a little on the tea and Midoriya rushed to grab a tissue to hand to him as Nedzu recovered.

“I’m so sorry, Nedzu. I probably should have waited until you were done drinking, I have terrible timing and…”

“It’s quite alright, Midoriya.” Nedzu said. “It was simply...an unexpected revelation. Would you mind explaining how you know this? Endeavor can be quite harsh with the villains he faces, but that does not mean that roughness extends to his own family.”

“Todoroki told me.” Midoriya looked small as he played with his hands. “He said that Endeavor forced his mom into a quirk marriage so that he’d have a kid with a perfect blend of ice and fire so that he could surpass All Might. It goes way beyond a simple rivalry, Endeavor is forcing his own child to fight his war!”

Nedzu’s brain kicked into overdrive as the pieces belatedly fell into place. Todoroki refused to use the fire side of his quirk, and only the fire side. Endeavor’s wife, who by all accounts had decent mental health before her marriage, had been hospitalized for brutally attacking her own son, and yet Todoroki had no problems using the ice side of his quirk that he inherited from her. Endeavor’s wedding, which should have been a major event with how high he had been in the hero rankings even then, had almost qualified as an elopement and his in-laws lived well above their station. Nedzu had assumed they were being paid under the table for something, but he’d thought it was drugs, not…

“I wish I could say that I was surprised.” Nedzu said finally. “But what do you expect us to do about this? As much as I know that we need to help Todoroki, accusing the number two hero of child abuse would…”

“Destabilize the hero system and most likely the japanese government.” Midoriya finished. “I know, which is why we can’t arrest him. But that doesn’t mean we can’t bring him down.”

Nedzu poured himself another cup of tea to replace the one that had been lost to his spit take, “Color me intrigued, Midoriya. Care to explain?”

Midoriya nodded eagerly, “If Endeavor’s abuse were to come to light right now, people would lose faith in heroes as an institution, rather than in the one hero that is guilty. However, if we gradually make people lose faith in Endeavor, both as a hero and a person, then when his abuse eventually comes to light, no one will be surprised. They’ll simply say we knew it all along and keep their faith in the hero system.”

“Hmm,” Nedzu took a sip of tea, “interesting idea, Midoriya. So you are not saying that Endeavor cannot be arrested, but that he cannot be arrested right now.”

“Exactly!”

“And how would you propose destroying the people’s faith in Endeavor?” Nedzu prompted. “It’s going to be extraordinarily difficult to make people believe badly in the number two hero.”
“Well, I was thinking we could start by pointing out his temper?” Midoriya said.

“Are you sure that’s going to work?” Nedzu asked. “Endeavor’s temper is well known and there are people that love him not only in spite of his anger, but because of it.”

“I don’t know…” Midoriya thought for a minute. “I still think it’s the best place to begin, actually, and that’s precisely because everyone already knows about his temper. If I ask people to believe that Endeavor is a horrible human being right out of the gate, people will just laugh me off, but if I start with something they know…”

Nedzu grinned, “Then they’ll be more likely to swallow what comes after. It seems you’ve been paying attention to our lessons, Midoriya. That’s good. But Endeavor’s temper is just the beginning, so what next?”

Midoriya’s eyes gleamed with intelligence and determination and Nedzu felt a thrill as he realized the boy had already thought that through, “Next we deal with his collateral damage until people are convinced that it’s the highest in the industry. That will probably take several articles to drive the point home. Next, we deal with his overkill toward the villains he fights.”

“Excellent.” Nedzu said. “But I believe you should switch those two points. Can you tell me why?”

“No…” Midoriya frowned and began muttering, “It can’t be because of severity because hurting a human being is obviously worse than hurting a building or a road, but then again, many people don’t necessarily see villains as human beings, at least not in the same way as a…oh.”

Nedzu smiled again as Midoriya’s eyes widened in realization, “Yes?”

“Endeavor’s behavior toward villains is objectively worse than his collateral damage.” Midoriya said. “But it’s also pretty far removed from the average person’s everyday life, just like Endeavor’s temper is. The damage that Endeavor does to buildings and infrastructure, though, impacts civilians directly. We could even point out that civilians could be in those buildings that Endeavor burns down to really make it hit close to home. And since we’re starting off small and highlighting more dangerous offenses as time goes on, putting civilian damages after villain damages only makes sense.”

Nedzu nodded, “Very good, Midoriya! I do believe that this plan of yours has potential. Do keep an eye on Todoroki, however. We don’t want Endeavor taking his frustrations out on his son when his reputation starts to plunge.”

Midoriya frowned, “I hadn’t even thought about that…”

“Don’t worry about it too much,” Nedzu winked, “perhaps by the time that Endeavor begins to see a meaningful dip at the polls, hurting Todoroki won’t be an option anymore.”

Midoriya shot him a look, “You just enjoy being cryptic, don’t you?”

Nedzu simply cackled.

End Notes
I've had this idea running around in my brain for a while. I was going to try to finish the story before publishing any of it but *shrugs* I got impatient. Hope you enjoy!

Works inspired by this: *podfic* [Deku? I think he's some pro...] by [bloodydarkangel, I'll Show Them](https://archiveofourown.org/works/3241984) by [DemiwitchWinchester](https://archiveofourown.org/users/DemiwitchWinchester)

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