Izuku stares at the TV. “Mum, what’s a Hero Duo?”

She ruffles his hair. “It means that the two of them are soulmates. They’re stronger together, so they fight together. They support each other.”

Izuku sighs dreamily at the screen. “I wish I could be part of a Hero Duo one day.” Someone who would always be there for him? It sounded like a dream come true.

Then of course, Izuku finds out who his soulmate is: and his dream suddenly feels a lot more like a nightmare.
Chapter 1

Izuku is vividly aware of the moment when he realised he had a soulmark.

He’s five; on the TV two heroes work together in a staggering display of skill and teamwork to bring down a villain that had flattened a city block. He gasps as the scene cuts to a blurry rendition of the final moments of the battle.

“Hero Duo Glintmark and Gingerback succeed in bringing down the villain Widemaw earlier this week, marking their fifth takedown this year…”

Izuku grins. “They’re so cool, mum!”

His mother smiles at him warmly. “They are.”

Izuku stares at the screen. He’d understood most of the broadcast, but: “Mum, what’s a Hero Duo?”

She ruffles his hair. “It means that the two of them are soulmates. They’re stronger together, so they fight together. They support each other.”

Izuku sighs dreamily at the TV. “I wish I could be part of a Hero Duo one day.” Someone who would always be there for him, who would fight beside him as a hero? It sounds like a dream come true.

His mother’s face does something funny. “You do have a soulmark, remember darling?”

“No!” Izuku screeches, delighted. He’s going to become a hero one day for sure. That means his soulmate should be one too, right?

His mother pulls him into the bathroom, where she uses two mirrors to show him his back. Nestled between his shoulder blades is a black, perfectly round circle. It looks like it’s about the size of Izuku’s palm.

“Soulmarks grow and change as you and your partner grow up.” His mother’s voice is soft and lulling. “It’s just a circle for now, but it will transform as you get older.”

Izuku stares at the circle. “But how will I know who my soulmate is?” he asks sadly.

“She has the same mark that you do,” his mother reassures him. “Not on the same part of her body, but it looks the same. That’s how you know.”

Izuku stares at the circle, hope curling warm in his chest. He’ll find his soulmate, and then they can be a cool Hero Duo together, and they’ll definitely be friends forever. He nods to himself, certain that this is how things will happen.

That is not how things happen: Izuku finds out who his soulmate is, and his dream suddenly feels a lot more like a nightmare.
Izuku wanders the streets, but not too close to his own block. He’s had more than enough of Kacchan for today. His notebook is still in his backpack, soaked and exploded and destroyed. He grits his teeth hard enough that he feels his jaw start to ache.

*What’s his problem?*

It’s a question Izuku has been asking for years. In some ways, he knows the answer – in other ways, Kacchan’s motivations remain frustratingly obscure. In this instance, he suspects he knows the source of his ire: Kacchan has spent the last ten years in a state of complete rejection of Izuku. He had likely seen high school as an escape – a way to get away from Izuku and from anyone who associated them together. Even the threat of Izuku coming to UA has his version of the future crumbling.

“You wanna be a hero so bad, huh? Well just forget about it! There’s no way a loser like you could ever get into UA!”

“Can’t he just…” He doesn’t even know how he’s supposed to end that thought. At this point in time, he has no idea what he wants Kacchan to do. An end to the siege that the other boy had instated, maybe? An acknowledgement that even if Izuku doesn’t know what his quirk is, that doesn’t automatically make him useless?

He flexes his fist, watching the skin move over the bone. Maybe that’s his quirk? Skin movement, flexibility. He looks at his arm really intently and really, *really*, imagines the skin moving.

Nothing happens.

He sighs. This isn’t unusual – ever since the doctor had told him that he had a quirk, he’s tried to figure out what it is. Normally ninety percent of people with quirks manifest them by age four. The ones who still hadn’t by then are people with invisible quirks – ones with triggers so obscure that they would never normally be used. Izuku has a quirk… he just has no idea what it is.

His lack of a quirk was the first wedge between him and Kacchan. They’d been friends, until the point when Izuku just didn’t manifest his quirk. By the time they were six, there was nothing but bitter uneasiness between them.

Even if Kacchan is his soulmate.

Izuku rolls his shoulders in an attempt to still the feeling of something crawling under his skin between his shoulder blades. He hasn’t looked at his soulmark in years. That’s fairly easy to do, since it’s on his back. Unless he makes a concerted effort to look, he never sees it regularly. Even if he did see it by accident, Izuku wouldn’t recognise it. He doesn’t know what the soulmark looks like, nowadays; how it had changed since he was twelve.

Still ruminating, he ducks into an overpass.

One choking, breathless eternity later, after he’s clutched onto All Might’s leg and begged his hero for answers and seen his weakness and heard his tale, Izuku walks down streets with no regard as to where he’s going. Even *All Might* doesn’t think he can become a hero without a quirk. Has he been wrong all this time…? Is this really the end of his dreams…?

It feels like everything that Izuku is *supposed* to have in life is tantalisingly out of his reach. *Got a soulmark? Well, your soulmate hates your guts. Got a quirk? Can’t use it if you don’t know what it is.*

He wants to scream his frustration out at the sky. *It isn’t fair!* What did he do to deserve this?
He’s so deep in thought that he almost misses the crowd gathered on the other side of the street. Habit has him dragging his feet towards the gathering of people. Hero watching has always given him something to focus on when everything else has gone to shit.

He elbows his way forward, uncharacteristically uncaring towards those around him. When he sees the sludge villain, his stomach drops, and he is suddenly, viciously, in the present, yanked out of his meandering and dark thoughts.

*It’s his fault! All Might must have dropped the bottle with the villain by accident when Izuku attached himself to his leg. I’m sorry! Whoever is in there, hang in there! Surely, a hero will…*

The sludge falls away to reveal Kacchan’s face.

Izuku learns several things about himself in that moment. First, he learns that he *never* wants to see his soulmate’s eyes look like that, ever again. He learns that he has the capacity to forget everything that Kacchan has ever done to him; he learns that it has no bearing on his actions. He learns that he will do *anything*, to save someone who needs help.

His soulmark *burns*.

He isn’t sure if what he does next to completely separate from the fact that Kacchan is his soulmate or intrinsically tied to it. In the stupidest and probably last action of his life, he runs forward and launches his bag at the sludge villain.

He locks eyes with Kacchan, and in that split second, *something* passes between them. Izuku has always been aware of Kacchan, in a way he is only just now realising. They have been tethered together for their whole lives. But this feels like a sudden strengthening of that bond – a plank in a bridge between them.

He wacks the villain in the eyes. Kacchan yells at him. All Might appears. The sludge villain is defeated, a bunch of adults yell at Izuku and Kacchan. Won’t. Look. At. Him.

When they’re finally let go, Kacchan finally turns in his direction.

“Don’t even think that it was you who saved me,” he hisses. “Don’t talk to me, or anyone, about this. Got it?”

He doesn’t even wait for an answer. It’s the most interaction that Izuku’s had with him in years. Kacchan hasn’t said more than three sentences to him in… Izuku doesn’t know how long.

He thinks that if he had just been quirkless, Kacchan would have been more overt about his bullying. But they’re soulmates – every time they touch Izuku can feel sparks flickering under his skin. So Kacchan drew attention to himself and away from Izuku. He didn’t address him, and anytime someone would talk about him, he would make his displeasure known. Kacchan had created an aura of isolation around Izuku just by letting it be known that he didn’t like anyone who talked to or about Izuku.

It made for a lonely childhood.

All Might finds him on his way home. Izuku can only stare at him when All Might says those words:

*“You can become a hero.”*

Tears falling down his face, Izuku can only wonder at the turn of events that this day has been.
When offered a quirk, one half of his dreams, Izuku can only say “Yes please!”

That night, he dreams a dream that is not his.

He isn’t quite sure how he knows it isn’t his, but it’s a bone deep certainty that fills him. Perhaps it’s got something to do with the fact that he knows he’s dreaming. That’s unusual for him.

The dream doesn’t have any light. Izuku knows, dispassionately, that it’s a dream filled with horror and claustrophobia, filth and fear. It’s separate from him – he can feel the terror, but he isn’t the one who is feeling it.

Gradually, Izuku realises that this dream is echoing the terrifying sensation that he had endured earlier in the day, when he had been captured by the sludge villain.

This isn’t his dream.

This is Kacchan’s dream.

The realisation jolts him enough to catapult Izuku out of sleep. He jerks up in his bed, staring into the darkness of his room.

A light in the hallway clicks on and his mum pokes her head through the door. Izuku wonders if she’s camped out in front of his door.

“Honey? Are you okay?”

It takes him a moment to get his mouth to move. “…Yeah,” he finally says. “Just – a dream.”

Not his dream.

She wrinkles her brow, worried. “Are you sure? Do you want some water?”

“No mum, it’s fine,” he says, but she disappears anyway. He sighs and twitches aside his curtains so he can see outside to the street. He can’t see Kacchan’s house from here, but he’s certain that they had just shared a dream. What’s going on? Is this something to do with their soulbond? Or is it something else?

How ironic would it be if his quirk manifests the same day that All Might promises to hand his power to him?

But something in him knows that this has nothing to do with his quirk, whatever it is. Kacchan is hurting, and that echoes across to Izuku. Even unbonded, Kacchan is feeling something that Izuku can sense. Perhaps it has something to do with what had happened earlier today – the moment when their eyes had met and he’d tangibly felt their bond get thicker.

Even knowing the reception that he’ll get, Izuku yearns to tear down the street to his soulmate. If only things between them could be mended so easily.

Training with All Might changes his entire life schedule.

All Might can’t be there a lot of the time: he has people to save and things to do, and Izuku is
down at the beach, clearing garbage, for hours every day. He wakes up at four in the morning, and tells his mother that he’d taken up jogging. It isn’t an entire lie – he runs to the beach, where he gets in a few hours of cleaning before he runs home, has a shower and goes to school. The UA exam is two parts – practical and written. It won’t do any good if he passes the practical exam, only to fail the written one. So he devotes time to his studies that is just as focused as the time he spends on the beach. Only the best get into UA, and he intends to be the best.

After school he goes back to the beach and cleans until seven. That’s mostly when All Might drops by to check on him. When he’s there, Izuku can almost ignore the burning of his muscles. All Might is talking to him. All Might is asking him questions about school and his life and his dreams and his mum and is telling him about UA. All Might is telling him behind the scenes gossip, when Izuku asks about villains that he’d seen the hero take down. Hours spent with his idol doesn’t tarnish his view of All Might – Izuku thinks that it’s a polish that makes him shine all the brighter in his mind.

So he pushes himself harder and harder, not wanting to disappoint All Might in any way.

Things are going great, until one day Izuku misjudges how much a microwave is supporting a pile of garbage and almost drowns as he gets buried underneath it. Luckily, All Might is there is dig him out, but it does mean he’s covered in several things that he does not want to identify.

After making sure that he’s fine, All Might huffs out a laugh. “Well, you won’t be winning any good smelling contests any time soon! Go and rinse off in the sea.”

Izuku is only too happy to comply. He does not want his mum asking any questions, so he pulls his shirt off and is extra thorough in rinsing it out, since it got the worst of it.

He leaves the sea and walks back to All Might, grinning a little sheepishly. Good job Izuku! Can’t even handle a pile of garbage without having to get rescued. He looks up, expecting All Might to still be smiling, but his expression is pensive.

“Young Midoriya,” he says, almost gently. “You didn’t tell me that you had a soulmark.”

Izuku makes a sound somewhere between a gargle and a sneeze. He’d completely forgotten to mention it to All Might.

“Umm,” he manages to say, rather shakily. “Yeah, I, er, do.”

It’s not exactly rare to have a soulmark – about ten percent of people do. But Izuku knows that it’s usually much rarer in the hero occupation.

All Might is regarding him intensely. “You know who it is.” It isn’t a question.

“Well, yes,” Izuku says, flustered.

They stand in silence for a few seconds. Izuku wrings his shirt anxiously and All Might looks at him from beneath lowered eyebrows.

“I’m sorry for not telling you,” Izuku blurts. With training and the fact that Kacchan has been avoiding him more than normal, he’d tried to push the whole issue to the back of his mind. He holds his breath for a second before stating his greatest fear. “Does this mean you won’t give me One For All?”

All Might sighs. “No, this doesn’t have an impact on that decision. It’s just something that’s good to know, like your quirk. I assume you haven’t made any progress on that front, either?”
Izuku shakes his head. Half an hour of every day is devoted to trying out new things that he might be able to do with his quirk. They’d discussed it and All Might had told him that it probably hinges on an outside influence, if he’d gone his whole life without figuring it out. But he still stubbornly tries, anyway.

“Usually people who are in contact with their soulmates can’t not talk about them,” All Might says lightly, but Izuku can tell that it’s from personal experience.

“It’s just not something I think about all that much,” Izuku says, looking at the ground and kicking the dirt a little.

“I see.” Izuku doesn’t know what to call the emotion in All Might’s voice.

“Do… you have a soulmate?” Izuku asks in a small voice.

“No,” All Might says. “I think that my duty left little space for anyone else. It wouldn’t have been fair to them.”

“Ah.”

“If there’s anything you need –”

“We’ve known each other since we were kids,” Izuku says almost desperately. If they’re going to talk about this, then he needs to do it on his own terms. “But he never wanted a soulmate. He wants to be a hero, too. And he wants to go to UA and…” He fists a hand in his hair. “He’ll get in, for sure, which just means that I have another three years to deal with him if I get in too, and…”

All Might’s hand falls on his shoulder. “I see that this is an area fraught with emotion for you,” he says. He pauses for a second. “Would you say that this young man is, in most ways, opposite to you?”

Izuku nods forcefully.

“Then let us leave this discussion for now.” The way that All Might says it leaves no room for argument. “If you would like to talk about it later, then we can. However, I think that it’s time for you to head home, don’t you think?”

It is, but Izuku is dissatisfied with the amount of progress he has made on the beach today.

“Well, be back.” He sighs. All Might chuckles.

“Would you mind terribly if I made a house call?”

“Um, sure?” Izuku asks. “You can go wherever you like. You don’t usually ask me, though.”

All Might’s eyes twinkle with humour. “To your house. I think it’s time I met your mother.”

Izuku’s brain stalls. Yes, he had told his mum that he is training and that he has a personal trainer who set the meal guidelines that he’d given her, and she can obviously see the results. They’d been training for five months now and Izuku has filled out in a way that he would have thought impossible a year ago. However, he hasn’t given his mum a name, or really any details besides the fact that it’s a guy who had just moved here and is giving Izuku advice in his spare time, aka for free. How will he be able to tell her that it’s All Might who is training him, plus won’t that lead to questions as to why? His mum isn’t dumb, and she’d catch that something is going on fairly quickly, and –
“We really need to work on your mumbling,” All Might says. Izuku forcibly shuts his mouth.

“Umm w-wouldn’t it be weird, and also make mum kinda suspicious…?”

“Not if I go like this,” All Might says, and deflates to his true form. Izuku gapes at him for a few seconds before nodding.

“Uh, that might actually work.”

“Good. I’ve been wanting to meet your mother for a while. Midoriya Inko, right?”

“Right.”

Izuku spends the trip home trying not to fidget. He opens his door and he can smell dinner being made.

“I’m back,” Izuku calls out.

“Come in, come in, don’t let the heat in,” his mum says from the kitchen.

“Um, we have a visitor mum,” Izuku says.

His mother moves so fast Izuku is half sure that she teleports in front of him. “Who is this?” she asks.

“Yagi Toshinori,” All Might introduces himself. Izuku nearly chokes in the middle of his hallway. “I’m the personal trainer who has been overseeing young Midoriya’s training.”

“Oh!” she says. Her eyes appraise him quickly. “Well then, come in. It’s cooler inside.”

Izuku bites his lip as they exchange pleasantries and test the waters out with each other.

“You can’t just bring people over without any warning, Izuku!” his mother scolds quietly. “Well, I probably made enough dinner for all of us.”

“There’s no need to worry yourself, Ms Midoriya,” All Might says. “I have special dietary requirements, and I’m sure young Midoriya is hungry.”

“Oh, well, if you say so,” she says. Izuku smiles a little bit; All Might had come up with an argument that even his mum can’t get around.

“Let me get you a drink at least,” she says.

This is not really what Izuku had been expecting, but he’ll take it.

They eat dinner while All Might asks questions about his mother’s life. His mum asks questions back that lets him know that she isn’t quite as okay with him spending time with All Might as he’d thought.

“How did you become a personal trainer?”

All Might laughs a little. “I know, I don’t look the type. To be honest, I was big on the scene, but I was seriously injured about six years ago.”

“Hmm.” Izuku isn’t sure if the sound means his mum accepts the answer or not.

“It’s true,” Izuku says, and she nods.
After dinner, All Might directs him up to his room. “You have schoolwork to do, young Midoriya. You cannot skip your homework.” His mum’s mouth quirks, and Izuku thinks that that is probably a mark in All Might’s favour.

“Okay,” Izuku sighs, even though it doesn’t look like All Might is about to leave. “I’ll see you soon?”

All Might nods, and Izuku reluctantly leaves, wondering what the two of them are going to talk about now.

Toshinori sizes up Midoriya Inko. She hasn’t let any of her questions slip into too personal territory, but she had demanded answers to all of them. She clearly cares about her son.

He needs to talk to her about his future.

“Ms Midoriya,” he starts. “I’ll admit, I had ulterior motives when I asked young Midoriya to let me meet you.”

Midoriya looks like she was expecting this.

“There are several things that I need to talk to you about, regarding his future.”

She lets out a sigh. “Is he talking to you about his future? I… He won’t talk to me about it. It’s very unlike him, and I’m starting to get worried. Where you go to high school is a big decision and it’s coming up very quickly.”

“It is,” Toshinori says. There’s a line here, between the truth and a lie, and it’s one he needs to tread very carefully, even though it leaves a bad taste in his mouth. “He intends to apply to UA.”

Very slowly, Midoriya takes a deep breath. “I know that he wants to be a hero,” she says softly. “But he doesn’t have a quirk.”

“Oh,” Toshinori says. Now find the line. “Now that’s where you’re wrong. He does have a quirk.”

Midoriya’s eyes shoot up to meet his. “Well, yes. But he doesn’t know… unless…”

“Due to how my quirk works, I can tell you that in the future he’ll show you his quirk. I’m teaching him how he can harness it,” Toshinori says gingerly. It is the truth… just without the context. “It’s not a short process, but I believe that by the exam, he will have enough control over it to participate.”

Midoriya’s eyes have grown very wide. “What? So you have a quirk detection quirk? I suppose that makes sense if you’re a personal trainer. What is it? Why didn’t he tell me?”

“I believe he wanted to surprise you with it when he had enough control to display it. I would appreciate it if you did not ruin his surprise.”

“Of course!” she squeaks. “I won’t tell him I know. But please, give me some details.”

“He’ll show a type of emitter quirk,” Toshinori says. “It will make him stronger and faster. I’m still not sure how it will look, but that’s the base of it.”
“An enhancement quirk…?” Midoriya trails off. “But those types of quirks usually show up quite early! Why hasn’t his?”

“The right conditions weren’t met,” Toshinori comforts her. “But I’m helping to bring it out. That’s a part of my job as well – showing young people how much they can improve.”

“Ah,” Midoriya says in understanding. The careful way he had danced around the truth makes him uncomfortable, but she needs some warning of what her son is planning on doing.

“That is only part of the reason I wished to talk to you,” he says. “As well as reassuring you as to what your son is doing for his future, I want to talk about the other part of his future. His soulmate.”

Midoriya lets out a sigh. “Katsuki-kun,” she says heavily. “I still don’t know how things got to be so bad between the two of them.” She stares at him. “What did he tell you?”

“Enough to know that he’s not dealing well with it. I didn’t want to press him for answers.”

“So you’re asking me instead,” she says wryly. “I understand. You want the best for him, don’t you?”

Toshinori nods, but it’s another half lie – he wants the best for Midoriya, but he also needs to know that his power is going to be used well in the future. An incomplete or unbalanced soulmate bond has brought heroes low before. He needs to see how he can fix this – if this can be fixed.

“I’ve known Katsuki’s mother for years, before the two of them were born. Katsuki was born first, and so of course I recognised the same mark on my own boy a few months later.” She gets up to pace the kitchen, absently boiling the jug. “Tea?”

“Jasmine, if you have it,” Toshinori says, mind churning over the facts. “When did they find out about each other?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Midoriya says, flustered. “Mitsuki and I were always covering for each other and watching the both of them. They had to know what a soulmark was before they knew they were each other’s soulmates – I think I explained that to Izuku when he was five or so, when it finally stuck. I suspect that it would have been soon after that. And then…” She sighs. “Izuku’s quirk never manifested. And Katsuki’s quirk is so powerful, perfect for the hero work that they both aspired to. Katsuki’s always been so competitive, so driven on always winning. He must not have been able to reconcile Izuku as a part of his future, so he pushed them away. I wouldn’t call them friends anymore, but I know that they can never truly move out of each other’s orbits.” She shakes her head. “Even though it pains me that Katsuki’s acceptance hinges on a quirk.”

“I see,” Toshinori says slowly. “You’ve given me a lot to think about, Ms Midoriya. Thank you for having me in your house.”

“Oh, it was no trouble,” she says, blushing. “But… may I ask you a favour?”

“Certainly,” he says, intrigued.

“Could you perhaps find someone to instruct Izuku in some hand to hand fighting?” she asks timidly. “If he’s going to go to UA… he’ll need to know. And if you’re a personal trainer, you should know someone good?”

Toshinori blinks. It’s a sensible request. He can’t believe that he hadn’t thought of it. I need to
work on my teaching skills.

“I can do that,” he says, mind already spinning with candidates. “You’re right. It is something he’ll need to know. I’ll get on it.”

“Thank you!” she squeaks.

Toshinori smiles at her. A lot to think about, indeed. A hand to hand fighting instructor, and... he needs to do something about this Katsuki.

All Might doesn’t meet him for a few days, until Saturday morning when Izuku is once more, unsurprisingly, hauling garbage. And he doesn’t come alone.

There’s a blonde woman with him, who’s even shorter than Izuku. All Might is in his hero form when he waves Izuku over.

“Young Midoriya,” he booms. “I’ve decided to add another dimension to your training.”

“Eh?” Izuku asks, staring at the woman. She looks like she’s in her mid-thirties, and she is ripped.

“This is Judy Cartwright,” he says. “I know her from when we worked together in America. She moved over here before I did though!”

“Shut your gob, you beefstack,” the woman says. The words are harsh, but her tone is playful. She’s looking Izuku over. “So this is him?”

“Unless you see another teenager hanging around cleaning garbage,” All Might grins.

“Hmm. He doesn’t know a thing, does he?”

“Not as far as I know,” All Might says. “Young Midoriya. You’ve been training for long enough that you have some muscle, but most of it is suited to moving garbage around. Those aren’t the muscles that you’ll be using in your future hero career! So I’ve recruited Judy here to help whip you into shape.”

“All right,” Izuku says. He’s impressed that his voice doesn’t squeak. Judy hasn’t even done anything yet and he’s still intimidated by her.

Judy huffs. “I don’t like it when my students slack off, and I only take the best, got it? If you know nothing now, then you’ll just have to be the best in hard work.”

“I will be,” Izuku promised fervently. “But ah, what are we working on?”

Judy smiles, teeth glinting in the light of the sun. “Taekwondo.”

So on Saturdays, Izuku’s entire afternoons are taken up by Judy’s lessons. He has no idea how someone so small can be so devastating. He goes to her when he trains, and all the other people there are completely terrified of her. He doesn’t blame them.

Judy doesn’t let anything stop her when she’s on the mat. Izuku practises everything she shows him, according to the at home exercises that Judy wants him to do. His mum seems pleased when
he tells her about his new workout routine. Izuku is just glad that she’s laid off the subtle questions about where he’s applying for high school.

It does mean that his time on the beach is cut down, so he starts stretching hours when he should have been at home. He has to make up the Saturday hours – he needs to clean the beach. All Might’s words about hard work and becoming a hero still resonate with him deeply.

All Might sees how tired he is, and calls him out. Izuku just tells him about how he needs to be the best. All Might redesigns his training schedule.

Izuku wrestles with all the parts of his new life, trying to put them into something organised. Every minute of every day is planned – all he has to do is follow it. In some ways it’s freeing. He always knows what’s going to happen next. He knows what’s going to happen for the next few months. It’s not like he has anything else to be doing, anyway. His new timetable has driven away the few acquaintances he’s managed to scrounge up in school, and it’s not like he can hang out with anyone after school or on the weekends.

Which is why he’s very surprised when he sees that he has company on the beach.

Izuku ducks behind a fridge and surveys the other person. His heart is thumping in his chest, but it has more to do with the person standing and kicking garbage than his run.

It’s Kacchan.

He’s muttering something, but Izuku can’t hear what it is from this far away. He obviously doesn’t know that Izuku’s here, otherwise he would have already yelled at him or left by now.

Izuku very rarely gets the chance to look at his soulmate with no one else around and without Kacchan knowing. Especially since he’s been avoiding Izuku ever since the sludge incident. His hair looks the same as it has since he cut it short, and his shoulders have filled out in a way that shows Izuku that he isn’t the only one training hard. He looks older – like he’s already in high school. And he might have gotten taller as well, which is definitely not fair.

What is he doing here?

Izuku moves to try and get a better look at what Kacchan is kicking, but dislodges some garbage in the process. Immediately he can feel Kacchan’s attention burning into his skin. Izuku catches his breath before standing up straight. There’s no one else here – there’s no one that either of them have to perform for. It’s just them, and Izuku refuses to cower before him anymore. He will be a hero, and heroes always stand up for what matters. And what is between them matters, no matter what Kacchan might think.

“Deku,” Kacchan growls. “What the hell are you doing out here?”

Izuku weighs up his answer. “I come out here every day,” he finally says. “What are you doing here?”

Kacchan’s scowl gets deeper. “None of your business.”

Izuku bites his tongue. Should he just… start cleaning, and ignore him? The thought hurts, even as a deeper part demands that he do so – let Kacchan deal with being ignored for once. But he knows that Kacchan can’t be forced to leave, or forced to do anything. Kacchan only does things that he wants to do. And Izuku doesn’t think he would tolerate being ignored for very long.

“What do you want?” Izuku asks, staring at his soulmate. Even now, he can feel his knees getting a little weak. He curses himself – just because it happens every time he’s around Kacchan, doesn’t
mean he’s okay with it.

Kacchan stares at him. “Are you really cleaning up this stinking dump?”

“Yes,” Izuku says through gritted teeth.

“Why?”

“None of your business,” Izuku says, even though the effort nearly sends him to his knees. This is the longest conversation they’ve had in years, and Kacchan hasn’t even threatened to explode him yet.

“You’ve got no hope of getting into UA,” Kacchan snarls as he stalked towards Izuku. “You know that, right? Stop deluding yourself.”

“I can do whatever I want to, Kacchan,” Izuku says lowly. “You have no right to make any of my decisions for me.”

“I can do whatever the fuck I want to do,” Kacchan says angrily. He comes to a stop right in front of Izuku. “And I’m telling you that you have your fucking head in the clouds if you think for a second that you have a chance at UA.”

“Then why are you here?” Izuku says. “If you really didn’t care, then you wouldn’t feel threatened by my mere application.”

“I’m NOT threatened by the likes of you, dumbass,” Kacchan yells. Izuku bites his tongue again.

Izuku has to lean on the nearby fridge for support as Kacchan comes in closer. “And I don’t fucking care. Get that through your thick skin.”

He shoves at Izuku’s shoulder, and storms off. Izuku sucks in a deep breath and watches him leave.

He can feel the place where Kacchan touched him for the rest of the day.

Kacchan keeps lurking.

It’s not every day – it’s not even once a week. But every now and then, Izuku will see a flash of blond hair or feel someone watching him. It takes a while before All Might and Kacchan are there at the same time, but when it happens his mentor picks up on his unease almost immediately.

“Young Midoriya! Do you have something on your mind? You’re unusually unfocused today.”

Izuku bites his lip. He can see Kacchan standing on the other side of the street that borders the beach a few hundred metres away. They haven’t talked since the first time Izuku caught him here.

All Might follows his eyes and his expression changes quickly before settling back into its normal position. “Do you know that young man?”

Izuku feels like All Might already knows the answer, but tries to deflect anyway. “Yeah, he’s just a guy from my school. It’s no big deal.”

“It’s a big deal if it’s putting you off your training!” the hero exclaims. “Would you like me to go and talk to him?”
“No!” Izuku half shouts. All Might isn’t in his hero form, and he has no idea how Kacchan would react to some stranger telling him to go away. “It’s fine. I’ll just ignore him.”

All Might stares at him. Izuku stares at the ground.

“That is young Bakugou, isn’t it?” All Might asks.

“Errrgg,” Izuku says. It’s not his best moment.

All Might is still staring at him. “I know that he’s your soulmate. Your mother told me.”

“Erggahha,” Izuku says. The moment keeps going.

“Has he been causing you any trouble?”

Izuku bites his tongue. “No,” he manages to say. “Just… standing around, sometimes.”

“All right.” All Might looks thoughtful. “Well, let me know if you would like me to do something about him, alright?”

“Alright,” Izuku says weakly.

All Might looks at him searchingly, but nods. Izuku feels a well of relief. Whatever is between the two of them is between the two of them. He doesn’t need anyone else interfering.

They will sort this out, somehow – between themselves.

Chapter End Notes

Whew! Okay, let's get this ball rolling. A few things: if it isn't clear already, our two favs have a bit of a different past in this verse. Swap out bullying for chilly silence, basically. And I changed it here so that Katsuki doesn't tell Izuku to kill himself like he does in chapter one, because I find that morally abhorrent and not something I feel is in character for Katsuki. If I don't mention something, then just assume it happens the same as in the manga, since I'm not interested in rewriting every single chapter. I know this first chapter was a bit jumpy, but I'm pretty sure that that'll even out as things go along. And yes, they will get together in the end, just... got a bit of working things out to go before we get there.

Also fun fact! Judy is based on someone I know who's 5'4 and DESTROYS 6 foot plus men regularly. She terrifies me just as much as Izuku is terrified of her.
The day of the exam, Izuku finally manages to clear the beach.

He stares at the sand, almost feeling like it’s a dream. He did that. His hard work means that this place is clean again.

“How eat this,” All Might says, and gives him a hair. It’s not how Izuku thought the transferral would go, but he manages to choke down the hair anyway. All Might gives him some last minute advice, and then Izuku rushes home to get ready for the exam.

He isn’t sure what he’s expecting. Something big and flashy – UA has the funding for it. He’s read about the exams from the past, but he doesn’t expect that any of them will be repeated. He’s as prepared as he can be for the theoretical exam, but he’s anxious about the practical. Will he be able to channel One for All? Or will he not be able to pass this last hurdle when he needs it the most?

The thoughts haunt him as he gets on the train. He doesn’t spot Kacchan, even though they’ll both be coming from the same direction. He doesn’t know what he’ll do if he sees the other boy – he’s fairly sure that Kacchan wouldn’t do anything like stop him taking the exam, but Izuku doesn’t want to push it. Their relationship is strained enough as it is.

He’s standing outside UA before he hears Kacchan.

“Fuck off, Deku.” Izuku spins around to see Kacchan scowling at him blackly. Izuku starts to feel his knees wobble. “I told you that this is just a waste of your time. Now don’t stand in my way!”

“Hi Kacchan –” He pushes past Izuku without touching him. Izuku stares at his back. The only time they’ve touched since the sludge incident was when Kacchan was at the beach with him. He aches for some form of touch, but Kacchan has always been a master of avoiding skin contact. Izuku suspects it’s because Kacchan feels the same way that he does when it happens.

Distracted by his thoughts, he trips over his own feet.

Well this is it. Sorry All Might, but I’m pretty sure this is the end.

He stares at the ground, waiting for it to come up and hit him in the face.

It doesn’t. In fact, things right themselves and then he’s standing on his feet again.

“Are you alright?” Izuku turns to see a girl smiling at him. “Sorry for going crazy with my quirk! I just think it would have been a bad omen if you’d tripped, you know?”

Izuku blinks at her. “Umm, thanks?”

“No problem! I’m Uraraka Ochako.”

“Midoriya Izuku,” Izuku says dumbly. There’s someone talking to him.

“Cool! Well, we should go inside. I’ll see you around, Midoriya.” She smiles cheerily at him and walks off.
Izuku stares after her. Someone had just talked to him! And introduced herself! Like he was a normal person! Yeah, he’s ready for high school.

The auditorium is already packed by the time he gets inside, and he edges around people as he tries to find his seat. When he does, his heart flips over in his chest, rising and sinking at the same time. Kacchan is sitting next to him. He shoots Izuku a glare when he sits down but doesn’t say anything. Izuku sits on the edge of his seat and keeps his head facing forward while he looks at him. Just being this close has his legs feeling weak. He’s glad they’re sitting down.

“Stop staring at me,” Kacchan grumbles.

“Sorry,” Izuku apologises and looks forward. The stage is currently empty. He chews his tongue. “Are you ready for the exam?”

Kacchan scoffs. “Am I ready? More like these losers aren’t prepared for me. I’m gonna wipe the floor with them.”

“I’m sure you will,” Izuku agrees, watching as a man came up onto the stage. “Oh my gosh, it’s the voice hero, Present Mic! I listen to him on the radio every week, this is incredible, the lecturers at UA really are pro heroes—”

“Shut up,” Kacchan gripes.

Izuku takes a breath and listens to the presentation – this is information that he’s going to need if he has any chance in hell of passing this exam.

“I really had no chance in hell of passing that exam,” Izuku says to himself as he looks up at the ceiling of his bedroom. “If it wasn’t for the rescue points…” He really is lucky. And so thankful, and grateful. All Might is going to be teaching at UA! It would kind of be like their beach meetings. Except somewhere else. That’s going to be a bit weird. But he can deal with it.

What he really wants to do right now is share his news with someone. If he had Uraraka’s number or email then he would have called her and thanked her for trying to split her points with him. But he doesn’t. He hopes that she got into UA as well – then he can thank her properly.

Mum had thrown a giant party for the two of them, making Izuku’s favourite (katsudon) and gushing and asking about his performance. Izuku had finally told her about his quirk – now that All Might had passed it on, there wasn’t any point in hiding it from his mother. She had cried, and he had cried. Then he’d gone out to meet up with All Might to talk over some things – all around, it had been one of the best nights of Izuku’s life.

But there is one other person he wants to share it with.

Izuku bites his lip as he looks at his phone. His mum had gotten Kacchan’s number from his mum, so he has the ability to text him, but he hasn’t had the guts to press send on anything that he’d typed out.

What will Kacchan think? Will he just ignore the text? Izuku is certain that the other boy would have gotten into UA as well. Would he have even gotten his letter today? How would he react if Izuku sent a message saying that he had gotten in but Kacchan hadn’t gotten his confirmation letter yet?

Finally deciding that Kacchan can’t hate him any more than he already does, Izuku slowly types
out a message and presses send.

You: Hey Kacchan! It’s Izuku. Your mum gave my mum your number. I just wanted to let you know that I got my acceptance letter from UA! I’m so excited. Have you gotten your letter yet?

There. Nice and neutral. And Kacchan can have his tantrum in his own house in the middle of the night, so Izuku won’t have to deal with it. He can’t imagine the scene that Kacchan would pull if he found out that Izuku was attending UA when they both got to school. It wouldn’t be pretty, that’s for sure.

His phone buzzes.

Izuku stares at it like it’s a poisonous snake. Slowly, slowly, he reaches over and reads the message he’d been sent.

Kacchan: I got in, obviously. Don’t text me again

Izuku stares at the text. Well, it’s a confirmation – he and Kacchan are going to the same high school. And he had sent a text back, even when he didn’t have to.

Smiling, Izuku holds his phone as he goes to sleep.

In the time he has before school starts, Izuku finds ways to keep busy. The beach is clean now, but that doesn’t mean he skimps out on his training – he had been given the opportunity to stand at the starting line, but that’s it. Like always, if he wanted something, it would have to be a result of his own hard work.

Judy congratulates him on his acceptance to UA and tells him that she expects him to continue with their lessons. Izuku doesn’t know what All Might worked out with her, but when he awkwardly brings up payment she just laughs. So Izuku spends a lot more time heading into the city to train with Judy and the other people at the gym who he was starting to become friends with. Since there is a ‘no quirks’ rule when sparring and Izuku had managed to deflect questions about his quirk in the past, no one there knew about his awkward handling of his new quirk, or his past quirklessness. It’s refreshing – he spends a lot of his time there.

He also manages to find Uraraka online. Izuku is very glad to find out that she also got into UA, and he thanks her for offering to share points. He can tell that she’s embarrassed that they told him about it, but she accepts his thanks with grace. She tells him that she’ll be moving to the city to go to UA, since it’s too far to commute, and so Izuku goes to the addresses she sends him and sends back additional photos of the surrounding areas and what he thinks of the apartments. Their messages build up a rapport between them that Izuku craves – he can’t really remember what it’s like to have a friend and Uraraka is so nice. He’s really lucky that he’s a total klutz who tripped over his own feet on the day of the entrance exam.

He ignores Kacchan’s order to not text him – he sends him photos of the parks and precincts that he visits for Uraraka, of the food he buys, of a stray cat that he pets, of the view out the train. Kacchan never sends anything back, but that’s fine. Izuku knows that he’s reading the messages – it’s like an itch at the back of his mind. He can tell when Kacchan’s attention turns to him.

The next time that Izuku talks to him, it’s by accident. He’s picking up some extra things for dinner, staring down at his phone as he reads the list that his mum sent him. He turns the corner of
the grocery store and runs into someone.

“Watch it, dumbass.”

Izuku startles at the familiar voice, and looks up to see Kacchan’s expression go from annoyed to stormy.

“Ahh, sorry Kacchan. You didn’t drop anything, did you?” He has a bundle of items in his arms, but no shopping basket. Izuku resists the urge to smile – of course Kacchan would see using a shopping basket as too much of a help.

“As if,” Kacchan grunts. “Get out of my way.”

Izuku follows him towards the milk. He can feel where their skin pressed together – his skin tingles from the memory. And if Kacchan hadn’t been holding a dozen things, Izuku might have pressed up against his chest – against his soulmark.

He shivers a little. He’s only seen Kacchan’s soulmark once, when they were very young, but he still remembers it. It had been a black circle, just like his. But there had been a touch of a white crescent inside the circle that Izuku hadn’t realised had begun to show. He’s checked his own mark when he’d gotten home, and sure enough, it was the same – a black circle with a slim white crescent around one edge.

Kacchan whirls in front of him and Izuku almost falls over trying to stop in time so they don’t run into each other again. “Stop it,” he hisses.

“I can hear you thinking,” Kacchan growls. He’s obviously torn between yelling at Izuku at the top of his lungs and making sure that no one knows about them. “And you’re making me itch. So stop it.”

As if it had been waiting for Kacchan to bring it up, Izuku is suddenly aware that his soulmark feels like there are a hundred ants crawling all over it. But – “You can hear me?” Izuku asks, not sure if he’s horrified or not.

“Not literally. Fuck, you’re so dumb. It’s just like your mumbling, but,” he waves his hand. “Inside my fucking head. I can’t make out the words but I fucking know you’re going on about something.”


“What,” Kacchan says, eyes narrowed and blood red.

“Err, nothing,” Izuku stammers. “Why are you talking to me, anyway?”

Kacchan stares at him. “I’m trying something,” he half snarls, turning away and stalking over to the milk.

“Trying what?” Izuku asks, because he feels like he should be included in this plan to some extent, since it’s most likely going to backfire onto him.

Kacchan grinds his teeth so hard that Izuku can hear it. “We’re going to the same high school,” he says, like it’s the worst thing he can imagine. “No one else we know is going there. So if we just act fucking normal, then they won’t know about –”
He waves his hand between them, like he’s too disgusted to say the actual words. Izuku bristles.

“So what, I’m just meant to play my part?”

“Yes,” Kacchan hisses. “Or I’ll fucking kill you.”

Izuku feels like he’s about to cry, but he shoves that feeling down as much as he can and ignores how his knees feel like they’re about to give out. “Well too bad,” he hisses back. “I’m not ashamed of us, even though I should be, since your behaviour is so terrible!” Kacchan snarls at him but Izuku isn’t done. “Even though you live every day in denial doesn’t mean I do! I just want us to be friends – is that so much to ask?”

Kacchan grabs his wrist with his spare hand and leans in so they’re nose to nose. Izuku’s stomach swoops and he can hear his heart in his ears. He leans back against the nearest shelf so he doesn’t fall over. “Yes, it is too much to ask, because I don’t want your useless ass around! How many times do I have to tell you?”

Izuku’s brain is short circuiting from the contact between them, but he isn’t going to let this go. “Well, guess what Kacchan! We’re going to the same high school, so we’re going to be around each other. You had better get used to that idea!”

“I don’t have to do anything I don’t want to,” Kacchan says stonily.

“Don’t be stupid!” Izuku cries out. “You’re not stupid!”

“Are you boys okay?”

Izuku flinches in surprise from the voice, but it’s just a woman who works at the store.

“Just peachy,” Kacchan sneers. He drops Izuku’s wrist and stomps away.

“Sorry,” Izuku says, staring after him. “My soulmate is just being an asshole!”

“Shut the FUCK up!” Kacchan yells at him from across the store.

The woman is blinking rapidly. “I see. Do you… need any help finding anything?”

“No, thank you,” Izuku smiles at her half-heartedly, still staring at the spot where Kacchan disappeared. His soulmark is still itching and his wrist is burning where Kacchan touched it.

Well. That could have gone better. He tries not to feel too disheartened as he finds the food his mum wanted and heads home quickly.

It looks like it’s going to rain.

Uraraka moves into the city a week before school starts. Izuku insists on showing her around, even as she says she shouldn’t start spending money so soon.

Izuku says that they don’t have to buy anything if she doesn’t want to, and she finally agrees. The apartment that she eventually picked is on the other side of UA compared to Izuku, so when they start school they won’t be on the same train lines. Uraraka insists on coming closer to Izuku since he is the one giving the tour, which means they mostly wander around his neighbourhood.

They spend the afternoon walking around and talking – Uraraka is really bright and funny and
Izuku might be a little bit in awe of her. She tells him that it’s very warm here compared to what she’s used to and Izuku laughs and tells her to wait for summer. They talk about heroes and quirks, and Izuku gushes a bit about how cool her anti-gravity quirk is. Uraraka’s cheeks are pink by the end of it, and she insists that no, his quirk is way cooler, citing the zero point robot as proof. She tells him a little about the town that she grew up in, and how she had used her quirk to make construction zones safer. Izuku tells her about the parts of town that they walk through, including his old middle school.

Uraraka admits that she was quite nervous to be coming here all by herself but that she feels a lot better now that she knows him. When she asks if he knows anyone else that’s coming to UA, Izuku hums.

“There’s another boy from my middle school,” Izuku says, because he’s not going to let Kacchan ignore him anymore. After all this drama between them, he can’t help but ironically think that they’ll be put in different classes. “But we aren’t exactly what I’d call close.”

Uraraka hums. “Well, now you know two people! There’s two classes for the heroics department, isn’t there? That means you have a pretty good chance of being in a class with one of us. And if you’re in a class with him, then you can get to know him better!”


Uraraka tilts her head at him. “So, you kind of do know this guy then?”

Izuku looks away from her wide eyes. “We… used to be friends, but we drifted apart.”

She clasps her hands over her heart. “That’s so cute! You’ve got to introduce me to him when we go to school, okay?”

Izuku agrees bemusedly, wondering what she would think of Kacchan.

The days quickly dwindle down, until it is the morning of his first day, and he’s racing to find the 1-A homeroom.

You: Are you around yet? I can’t find the classroom :8

Uraraka: I’m on the grounds!

Izuku looks up to see the big classroom door of 1-A. He sends a few quick directions to Uraraka before pushing open the door: and he can already hear Kacchan yelling. So they are in the same class, after all.

Inside, he’s dismayed to find that the person that Kacchan is arguing with is the boy who called him out before the practical exam started. Izuku’s entrance makes him look up, and he makes his way over, apparently glad of an excuse to stop talking to Kacchan.

He introduces himself as Iida Tenya, and Izuku can hardly focus on his rant about the practical exam and how Izuku read it better than he did, because over his shoulder Kacchan is staring at him.

Izuku locks eyes with his soulmate. Kacchan bares his teeth at him before turning around in his desk, giving Izuku a cold shoulder like he has been for most of their lives.

The door behind him opens again, and Izuku looks around only to find Uraraka standing there.

“Hey!” She smiles at him. “Looks like we both made it!”
Iida introduces himself to Uraraka. “I’m from Soumei Junior High School. Where are you from?”

“Just on the outskirts of the main city,” Izuku says. He knows that Uraraka can be a bit shy about coming from the country, so he covers for her. “Soumei is pretty upper class, though. Do you know anyone else here?”

“Not in this class,” Iida says, adjusting his glasses. “But there are several second and third year students that I do know.”

“Are you guys excited for our first day?” Uraraka says, smiling. “I can’t believe that this is real and I’m actually going to UA! Do you think we’ll meet our guidance counsellor today? Who do you think our homeroom teacher will be? Oh, I’m happy but anxious to find out!”

“If you’re here to make friends, go elsewhere,” a sudden voice says.

Izuku stares. In the hallway, there’s a man inside a sleeping bag lying on the floor. His eyes are bloodshot, and Izuku has literally no idea how he gets around like that. Rolling on the floor? But then how does he accommodate stairs? And corners? And his dignity?

The man pulls an instant breakfast smoothie out of the sleeping bag and drinks it in one slurp. Izuku tries not to feel immensely intimidated and fails. “This is the Department of Heroics!”

All chatter from inside the classroom has ceased as everyone wonders who the hell this guy is. Somehow, he stands up and shucks the sleeping bag off. “Hmm, it took you lot eight seconds to calm down. Life is short, kids. You’re all lacking in common sense.”

Izuku is struck with the realisation that this must be their homeroom teacher. But aren’t all the teachers at UA meant to be pro heroes? Izuku doesn’t recognise the man – perhaps he’s been out of the heroics scene for some time? But Izuku has spent years combing through archives and blogs to read about heroics history, and he has no clue who this guy is supposed to be.

“I’m your homeroom teacher, Aizawa Shouta. Pleasure meeting you.” He pulls out some gym clothes from within his bag – where is he keeping this stuff? – and waves it around. “Wear these. Immediately. Then shove off to the PE grounds.”

Izuku exchanges a glance with Uraraka, who looks as confused as he feels. He’d thought a lot about his first day at UA, and this is not how he’d imagined it.

Outside, Izuku feels himself break out in a cold sweat when Aizawa tells them why they’re out here.

A quirk apprehension test. When he can’t control his quirk without destroying his bones. Great.

Aizawa tosses a ball to Kacchan and tells him to throw it as far as he can. Even though he probably doesn’t need the encouragement, Izuku stares at him and hopes for him to do well.

The ball leaves Kacchan’s hand with a bang that has even Izuku flinching back. Has Kacchan been working on his quirk? That had seemed excessive, even for him.

Aizawa shows them the readout: 775.7m. Izuku is pretty sure he can hear some jaws dropping.

“Before anything else, one must know what they’re capable of,” Aizawa says tiredly. “This is a rational metric that will form the basis of your hero foundation.”

Izuku stares at the readout, a physical, tangible reminder of how far Kacchan is ahead of him. I’ve only been given a place at the starting line, he reminds himself. But don’t worry, Kacchan. I’ll
But then Aizawa says that the person who places last will be expelled, and that’s when Izuku’s day goes from bad to worse.

After school, Izuku walks towards the station, his head full of musings and observations from the day. He needs to get home and look up Aizawa-sensei’s quirk and his past in heroics. The man seems kind of unstable and Izuku wants all the information he can get his hands on so that he will be able to react appropriately in the future. Although he might do that after a nap. He’s exhausted after Recovery Girl had used her quirk on him. He has to get a handle on his quirk – there’s no way he can rely on getting rescued whenever he uses it.

Iida and Uraraka catch up to him and chat for a while, with Izuku only half keeping up with the conversation due to how tired he is.

“Oh, Midoriya, I forgot!” Uraraka says. “The boy from your middle school, who is he? You didn’t say, and well, we didn’t really have time to talk before Aizawa-sensei pulled us all out to the training grounds…”

“Oh, it’s Kacchan,” Izuku says. “Err, Bakugou Katsuki.”

“What!?” Uraraka exclaims. “But you’re so nice, and he’s so…” She trails off, clearly unsure how to end the sentence.

“He sure is,” Izuku agrees whole-heartedly.

“Well I guess that makes sense,” Uraraka mused. “Didn’t he call you Deku? Is that a nickname?”

“Err, actually Deku is the name that Kacchan uses to demean me,” Izuku mumbles.

“Oh, so it’s an insult,” Iida says.

“Oh, really?” Uraraka smiles a little. “I thought it was really cute! You know, it kind of gives me a ‘never give up!’ vibe.”

“Oh,” Izuku says. Truthfully, he’d never really thought of anything else his nickname might mean, or how other people thought about it. It was an issue between him and Kacchan. But now that she mentions it, Izuku thinks that it might be a good idea to branch out – and the ‘vibe’ that it gives her is definitely something that he’s looking to cultivate. “Well, I doubt that Kacchan is going to stop calling me that – if you want to use it as a nickname, you can too.”

Uraraka grins at him. “Thanks!”

They split up at the train station, all of them taking different trains. Even if it hasn’t really been a long day, it feels like it. Izuku stares out the window and tries not to fall asleep.

“Oi, Deku.”

This is possibly one of the worst times that Kacchan has ever chosen to speak to him. Izuku is in no shape for a verbal or physical sparring match.

“Are you going to make a scene?” Izuku asks tiredly. “Because I’m really not up to it right now.”
He keeps looking out the window. Kacchan flops down on the seat next to him. “Whatever,” he says.

The sit in silence for two stops. For once, Izuku is too tired to overthink and Kacchan isn’t saying anything. It’s kind of weird.

“Did you want something?” Izuku finally asks.

Kacchan grunts. “Surely one day of school didn’t mess you up this bad.”

“It’s Recovery Girl’s quirk,” Izuku mumbles. “It heals you quick but it takes up your own stamina to do so.”

“I can’t believe you fucked your hand up,” Kacchan says. “When did you figure out your quirk, anyway?”

“Err… a while ago,” Izuku says weakly.

“Well you should have a fucking handle on it then,” Kacchan growls quietly.

Izuku blinks at him. Is he so tired he’s hallucinating, or… “Kacchan, are you worried about me?”

“Fuck no,” he says. His knee bounces up and down. “I could just… feel it.”

Suddenly awake, Izuku jolts up. “What?”

“Shut up,” Kacchan snarls.

“But, how?” Izuku asks. “I mean, we haven’t…” Sealed the bond. He can’t make himself say the words.

Kacchan grunts. “We’ve been around each other long enough that it’s started to bleed through. I can deal with it, but I shouldn’t have to.”

It sounds a lot like the dreams that Izuku sometimes shares with him. His throat closes up, and he’s suddenly sure that he can never tell Kacchan about the dreams.

“So get a fucking handle on your quirk,” Kacchan says. “I don’t need to deal with that bullshit, got it?”

“Sure,” Izuku mumbles, but Kacchan has already stalked off.

Izuku sighs and slides down a bit in his seat, determined not to fall asleep and miss his stop.

What the hell was that about?

Chapter End Notes

There’s more Ochako here because honestly, the manga has sidelined her and that’s a CRIME. So yes, in this verse Izuku actually says words and introduces himself to her, so they can find each other on social media later. This is only the first of many changes!
I feel like I should also direct you to [this fic](#) which is better than this one and inspires me every time I think about it, and is one of the main reasons I’m writing this!! Give the author some love

Okay let me rant for a second, but – how the entire fuck did Izuku come last in the quirk apprehension test in the manga?? Like, not everyone in the class has physical augmentation quirks – Kaminari, Ashido, Hagakure, Koda, hell even Jiro, Mineta and Sero. Like Izuku has been WORKING OUT for months and months, you can see that he’s RIPPED so just like ??? did he (and the author) just not know everyone’s quirks yet or?? How did Kaminari’s electricity help him in the long jump. Hagakure’s invisibility would have had NO EFFECT on these tests. Did Koda summon a bird to take the ball far away in the ball pitch. Like, Ashido canonically came ninth!! HOW DID HER ACID HELP HERE. Look I know that Izuku says that because he wrecked his finger he did shit in all the other tests because he was in pain and tired but like… Why did he feel the need to use his quirk in the first place. I NEED answers, please, if you have them, tell me.

Finally, there’s a hint as to what Izuku’s (original) quirk is in this chapter, if you know the canon events that it’s based on. Look at the differences and see if you can figure it out!
That night, Izuku lays awake in his bed and stares at his ceiling.

He’d napped all afternoon, and he blames that for his lack of sleep now. It’s too late at night for him to leave the apartment – mum would have a heart attack if she woke up and found him gone. But it’s not early enough to get up and get ready for the day, either. So instead, Izuku broods.

His first day of school hadn’t gone anything like he’d expected it to. His search on Aizawa had turned up basically nothing – he’d found an old article that mentioned him as the lead hero for a raid on an underground fighting ring, and another that had a police officer mention him as an integral part of their success in catching a villain with the ability to fly. Izuku can almost imagine the villain’s surprised face as they fell from the sky, their quirk rendered obsolete by Aizawa.

From what he can tell, that means that his homeroom teacher likes his privacy. Izuku supposes that it makes sense – after all, if someone is forewarned of Aizawa’s quirk, they could round up a group of people with mutant based quirks, or just go really old fashioned and get a gun from somewhere. Izuku is thirsty to learn his techniques – after all, Aizawa’s quirk doesn’t really give him an advantage in a fight. It just puts him on even ground with the villains. It’s a little bit like Izuku’s analogy of being given a spot at the starting line. After all, Aizawa can neutralise someone’s quirk, but he still has to put them down in a fight.

He should put that in his notebook. It’s something he should think about more later. He flicks on his lamp and fumbles for the book – he’s still using the one that Kacchan exploded last year. It’s falling to bits, but it’s still got space in it. He hasn’t been doing as much quirk theorising with his training going on.

He grabs the book and is about to page it open before he pauses. It’s not full yet, but the title doesn’t fit anymore. *Hero notes for the future*. That’s not true any longer, is it?

He opens his desk drawer and pulls out a brand new book. Grabbing a permanent marker, he hesitates for a second before scrawling a new title across the top of it. Then he flicks to the first page and writes *Eraserhead* at the top, jotting down his thoughts before closing the book and staring at the title.

*Hero notes for the present #1*

He turns his lamp off and rolls back into bed, now thinking about school. He’s looked over the course structure and most of it had made sense. Normal lessons in the morning would mean that they would meet government standards as well as having a solid basis to relate to, if they don’t end up in hero work. It also means that they will have to do a decent amount of homework as well – they have five ‘normal’ classes, with three periods every morning. That means three classes per week on each subject – not enough to cover all the content they need. Izuku knows that UA is the most prestigious hero school in the country, and that means grades as well. He’s never been bad at bookwork, so it doesn’t really bother him that much – it’s just more homework than he’s used to. He’ll have to cut his workout routine back, which is annoying. He’s just going to have to study as hard as he can so he gets the work out of the way fast.

It had been good to see Uraraka again, and meet his other classmates. He’d barely gotten to talk to any of them though – he’d been too busy staring at whoever was currently doing a test, and then
worrying about his own performance. He twists his mouth into a strained smile – he’s sure that he impressed all of them with his own performance. Not.

But even so, he’d gotten a glimpse at what his classmates could do. Honestly, he’s still amazed by the girl who had made a motorbike and then destroyed everyone in the class to win the endurance race. A creation quirk is so cool! It’s just the type of thing that Izuku had wished for when he was younger.

Kacchan had done extremely well in the tests, but Izuku wonders how he’s feeling at coming third. The boy who could make ice had been extremely versatile when using his quirk, but now that he’s thinking about it, Izuku couldn’t remember if he’d seen him talking to anyone throughout the day. The girls had gathered around and had talked to each other even though the other events were going on, seemingly unconcerned that whoever came in last was going to be expelled. Izuku had envied their calmness.

In a setting where he’d needed a level head, he’d lost his. It’s a lesson, but a tough one. He can only be glad that Aizawa-sensei had only been employing a logical ruse, instead of being serious about expelling students. Well. Tomorrow is another day to meet with his classmates and try to dig up some more details on Aizawa. And somehow, get control over his quirk.

He lifts his hand up and spreads his fingers out. Concentrating, he calls One for All up, and his room lights up with the glow from his hand. This is fine – as long as he doesn’t move.

Sighing, he releases his quirk and his room flits back into darkness. He really does want to get a handle on it – especially if Kacchan can feel his pain. Had he been able to feel it on the day of the entrance exam? Izuku knows that some parts of a soulmate bond are limited by distance. Would that still be true, even if they didn’t share a bond?

For the first time in years, he wants to look at the soulmark on his back. The last time that he’d seen it had been when he was twelve – it had been a black circle with a slash of white taking up one side. Most soulmarks mean something, but Izuku hadn’t been able to make any sense of his. How would the mark have changed over the years? Kacchan would have no choice but to look at it, since it’s in the middle of his chest. Had he tracked the slow movement of the mark, the physical representation of their relationship? Had he seen the bitterness and the confusion and the distance between them splayed across his chest?

Izuku shivers and curls up into a ball. If only he would talk to him. Izuku knows that together, he and Kacchan could take on the world. But even now, even though he has a quirk, his soulmate still doesn’t want anything to do with him. Or does he? Kacchan had talked to him today, without even yelling. Sure, he’d just told Izuku to get a grip of himself so he’d stop distracting Kacchan…

He sighs. As always, Kacchan is an unknowable factor in Izuku’s life. Izuku’s analytical skills have never been any use when trying to understand him, the area where he needs them most. He supposes that the only thing he can do is wait, even though that’s the only thing he’s been doing for his entire life. They’re in the same class – and even sitting next to one another. Izuku is going to have to try and reign back his thoughts so that Kacchan can concentrate during class, if the other boy can hear the background mumble of his thoughts. Just thinking about it gives Izuku a headache.

Deciding that none of this can be fixed by thinking about it at 3am, he finally rolls over and tries to go back to sleep.
There is something odd about Midoriya Izuku.

Shouta sips his coffee while the kids scribble down the work he had set. Midoriya’s head is bowed over his desk, but even from here Shouta can hear his mumbling.

Shouta is still making his mind up about him. On day one he’d been entirely ready to expel whoever had come in last, until Midoriya pulled that trick with the baseball. Shouta had remembered the kid from the entrance exam – how could he not, when he’d taken down the zero pointer. Shouta looked for potential, and he’d thought that he’d found it, right until Midoriya had fallen from the sky, limbs broken from using his quirk.

That had left a bad taste in his mouth. Obviously, Midoriya isn’t suited for hero work. Quirks take practise to master, and he’d obviously had no practise, going around breaking bones like that. That means he’s lazy, or just doesn’t use his quirk. Both traits aren’t appropriate for hero work.

But he hadn’t expected the trick with the baseball. Shouta has been chewing over the situation for a few days as he learns the ins and outs of his new class. He hasn’t expelled anyone yet, which is surprising even to him. Yamada is starting to tease him about it.

He’d expected Midoriya to fail. He would have either used his quirk and broken himself, or not used his quirk and failed because he didn’t have the distance. Either way, Shouta had already dismissed him.

But Midoriya had surprised him.

Very few things take Shouta by surprise. He doesn’t like surprises. Surprises mean that things aren’t going to plan, and if things aren’t going to plan, that means that he doesn’t have control over the situation. It means that people could be hurt or killed because he was unprepared.

So he makes sure that he is prepared. He’d found all the information he could about his new class. That had turned up the fact that Midoriya had only registered his quirk a month or so ago. Odd. Especially for such a strong and destructive quirk like his. He has several facts and observations that just aren’t adding up, and that concerns him.

So he’s biding his time, always with a bit of his attention on the boy. So far, he seems like a perfectly normal teenage kid. He’s making friends, he mumbles, he’s a bit shy but knows his hero trivia inside out. Smart, too. If it wasn’t for his quirk, Shouta would have judged him to be quite the asset to this class.

There’s also the fact that All Might had taken notice of him.

Shouta is still puzzling over his encounter with the hero after the quirk assessment exercise. What had he meant, he could see Midoriya’s potential as well? The phrasing suggested that All Might is already aware of some ‘potential.’ But it had been the first day of school. That means that he had had contact with the boy before school started. But if he had, he’d made no mention of it to Shouta or Yamada.

So he’s keeping an eye on the boy, though sometimes it’s a bit difficult considering the rest of class. Bakugou is going to give him grey hair by the end of the year. So far he’d proven to be quick thinking and versatile in using his quirk, but completely, terribly, unable to work with anyone else. He’d exploded (literally) in almost every single student’s face so far, and they’d only been in class for three days.

He’s going to have to address Bakugou’s attitude problem. He decides he isn’t paid enough for this. He should throw him over to All Might. Shouta swears that man can convince anyone of
anything. No – he should expel the lot of them just to save himself the trouble.

Kaminari and Ashido are another problem. They’d both scored the lowest possible mark they could get in the theoretical exam to still get into UA, and he can already tell that this is where they are going to struggle the most. Both of their quirks had been extremely effective against the robots, so they had scored high marks there, which had made up the difference.

Todoroki is another headache. He’d barely said two words to anyone who isn’t a teacher in the time that he’d been here. Shouta knows a traumatised child when he sees one. He doesn’t want to think about what kind of ideas his father had beaten into him. That’s a curly situation that needs careful consideration.

Shouta sighs as the kids start muttering among themselves, the quicker ones already finished the work.

“All right,” Shouta says, trying not to let his tiredness show in his voice. “Who has the answer to question one?”

Izuku pushes open the classroom door on Friday morning ready for another day at UA. At the end of the first week, things have started to fall into a bit of a pattern, and that’s very comforting to Izuku. He likes patterns, and predictability. That’s probably why All Might’s training schedule had worked so well for him.

He’s going to meet up with Uraraka on Sunday morning before he goes to the gym, and he’s cautiously looking forward to it. He really likes Uraraka, and likes hanging out with her and talking to her. Iida is going to a family party on Sunday, otherwise he would have come as well. As it stands, it’s just the two of them.

But there is still a whole class day before the weekend even starts. And this afternoon they’re having a class taught by All Might! Izuku is so excited. It’s not like he hasn’t been taught by All Might before, but still – this is a class at UA, and All Might will be in his heroic form, in his hero costume… Izuku sighs dreamily.

Inside the classroom, most of the students are already in their seats. Uraraka isn’t here yet, but Iida is lecturing Mineta and Kaminari about something, and Izuku can tell that he isn’t going to get out of lecture mode until Aizawa-sensei knocks down the door.

Gingerly, Izuku sits in his seat. Kacchan is already here, legs up on his desk, leaning backwards with his eyes shut. Izuku traces the shadows that his eyelashes make on his cheeks, a deep ache spreading in his chest. His hands itch to reach out and touch.

Kacchan’s eyes fly open and Izuku’s heart isn’t strong enough for the poisonous glare his soulmate gives him. He moves his eyes to his desk and hunches his shoulders as if that could protect him from the anger that Kacchan is radiating towards him.

Izuku does his best to ignore Kacchan throughout the day, even though his very loud explosions and his somehow louder smouldering anger are almost ever present. Izuku knows that Kacchan has been going to therapy for years for his anger, but he can’t wrap his head around a Kacchan angrier than the one he knows.

Finally, the afternoon comes and the class buzzes, excited for their hero course. Izuku hasn’t seen All Might in several days, even though he’d tracked his hero’s progress across all his social media.
All Might bursts in through the door, and Izuku rears back with the rest of the class at the dramatic entry.

“It’s me!” All Might exclaims. “Through the door like a normal person!”

Izuku, who has been a witness to more than one of All Might’s ‘heroic’ entrances and exits, hides his laugh as a cough.

“Foundational Hero Studies!” All Might says. “For this class, we’ll be building up your hero foundation through various trials!” All Might surveys the class. “Let’s jump right in!”

He probably doesn’t want to waste any of his time, Izuku muses.

“The trial of battle!”

Izuku suddenly wishes that All Might had wasted a bit more time.

He doesn’t need to see Kacchan’s face to know that the other boy is ecstatic at this turn of events. Something has been eating away at Kacchan all day, and he probably thinks there is no better way to deal with his emotions than blowing a few of his classmates up.

All Might shows them their hero costumes, and Izuku is caught up in the rush and high emotion of the class. Everyone grabs their suitcases and sprints towards the changing rooms.

Izuku makes sure that like always, his back is to the wall when he pulls his shirt off. Across the room Kacchan goes into one of the changing stalls, so no one can get a glimpse of his chest.

His heart aching, Izuku fumbles on his hero costume and is the last one to leave the changing rooms. Sprinting towards ground beta, he emerges just in time to hear All Might’s words.

“Let’s see what you’re made of!”

Izuku’s palms are sweaty. Beside him, Uraraka looks nervous but determined. Iida and Kacchan have just headed inside the building, and Izuku’s thoughts are tumbling over each other as he tries to figure out a strategy.

He can’t use his quirk without destroying himself yet, and Uraraka’s quirk isn’t suited to combat without having things to float. Going up against two of the most offensive quirks in the class, and being on the offensive by trying to find the weapon? Yeah. Not exactly a great match up for them in any way at all.

The only thing that Izuku has going for them is that he knows Kacchan, and he knows that Kacchan is unlikely to take orders from Iida. That means that he would be devising their strategy, so – what would his strategy be? If Izuku can predict it, then they would have some sort of advantage in the fight ahead.

He narrows it down to two options, but he honestly doesn’t know which one Kacchan will employ. Option one: come after them from the start. That would appeal to the side of him that wants victory and control, on his terms. But it would also mean coming into contact with Izuku, something that Kacchan has been avoiding all his life.

Option two: Kacchan would stay away from both of them as much as he could, and send Iida after them.
That’s the option that Izuku would have picked if he was in charge of their strategy. With his speed, Iida has a clear advantage over both him and Uraraka in this game. He can prevent them from getting to the weapon in the time allotted, Izuku is sure. However, that would mean that Kacchan would have to put himself on the sidelines and sit out a fight, something that Izuku has never seen him do, and something he isn’t sure Kacchan’s pride can handle.

In the end, that’s what it comes down to – what would win out? Kacchan’s desire to avoid Izuku, or his pride?

In the past, Izuku would have said that Kacchan is going to avoid him – but now, with All Might’s eyes on him, he isn’t so sure. All Might is Kacchan’s hero just as much as he is Izuku’s hero. Plus, Kacchan had actually been speaking to him… Okay not in front of other people, but still.

Either way, there are some things in common that both outcomes have. “One of them will come after us,” Izuku says. “They’re both powerful, so if we get dragged into a battle with either of them, then I think that we’ll lose. So one of us will have to distract that person, and the other will go and find the weapon, okay?”

Uraraka nods. “If it’s Iida who comes and finds us…”

Izuku quirks a small smile at her. “Just do something crazy and he’ll start yelling at you.”

Uraraka giggles. “You’re right. Hmm… what should I pull off…”

“If it’s Kacchan that comes after us, I’ll distract him,” Izuku says stoutly. “He’ll have eyes only for me, so leave him to me.”

“You two have a weird relationship,” Uraraka says. “Like, really weird.”

Izuku snorts – she doesn’t even know the half of it. “Just – if Kacchan comes, let me deal with him, okay?”

“Then if Iida comes, let me deal with him,” Uraraka says firmly. “Got it?”

Izuku nods. “Okay. Sounds like a plan.”

The bell sounds, and both of them slip into the building. Izuku can feel Kacchan’s attention on him, but he doesn’t know where that attention is coming from. And he’s never felt Kacchan’s emotions outside of when they are both sleeping. There’s no advantage from their soulbond.

Acutely aware of their time limit, Izuku and Uraraka clear the floors as quickly as they can. They make it to the third floor before Izuku sees a tiny movement in her peripheral vision, and he throws himself into Uraraka’s side, slamming them both into a wall but dodging the attack.

Izuku spins to see Iida turning around to face them, engines smoking.

“Ide?” Uraraka says sternly, and Izuku manages to nod before he sprints away from the pair.

Pushing himself, he clears the rest of the floor as fast as he can before finding the stairs and heading up to the fourth floor. He can’t hear anything, not Iida or Uraraka or Kacchan, and he makes himself check the whole floor, but like he suspected, it’s empty. Kacchan has only ever been satisfied with the top – there’s no reason he would change that now.

Bracing himself, he slinks up to the fifth floor. He needs the element of surprise when dealing with Kacchan. He’s not going to be able to win in a head to head fight – in the very few times that
they’d gotten into a fight with each other, he’s never been able to get close. But he knows a lot more now, and he’s slowly gaining confidence. Kacchan always leads with a right punch. Izuku knows just the throw that will take advantage of that. All he needs to do is touch the weapon. Piece of cake. He takes a deep breath to steady himself.

Izuku finally finds him in the centre room on the fifth floor. Kacchan is pacing in a circle, swearing under his breath. The weapon is in a corner – he’s going to have to go through him if he wants to get at it.

The timer is ticking down. Kacchan is too far into the room for Izuku to surprise him, so that means that this is going to be a head to head fight. Where both of them are going to be avoiding touching the other as much as they can. Great. Izuku is sure that that won’t be totally obvious and make everyone curious. At least Kacchan has an excuse – he doesn’t need to touch anyone to explode them.

A sudden thought comes to him, and Izuku smiles grimly. Maybe there is an advantage that he holds against Kacchan, even in this situation.

Toshinori divides his attention between the different screens. On the third floor, Uraraka is deftly dodging Iida with the help of corners, stairs, and random objects that are left floating in her wake. All the while, she’s keeping him flustered by yelling out different phrases. Toshinori understands some of them, like the ones about leaving chewing gum under her desk, but others confuse him. Teenage lingo. When had he gotten so old?

On the fifth floor, his protégée and his soulmate are staring one another down.

He’s the only one with the ability to hear the students, and he’s suddenly glad for that. He’s sure that the two boys don’t want their business aired to the rest of the class on their third day of school.

He flips from Uraraka and Iida’s channel to Midoriya’s and Bakugou’s.

“… easy on you? Don’t be fucking stupid, Deku. You know that the only thing I’ll ever do is win.”

“It’s all you ever wanted,” Midoriya says, and Toshinori grits his teeth at the sadness he hears in his voice. He had thought that he’d gotten to young Bakugou the last time that they talked, but he hadn’t brought the issue up to Midoriya, not wanting the boy to know about his meddling. Does he have to interfere in their relationship again?

His students make a few appreciative noises as Bakugou lunges forward, a strong right handed punch that Midoriya promptly takes advantage of by ducking under it and throwing him to the ground. Toshinori recognises the move as one of Judy’s favourite throws. It was a good idea to send his student to the older woman to learn from.

Bakugou’s explosions mean that the fight is hardly fair from the outset, but Toshinori picks up on the underlying patterns of the battle far faster than he expects the students around him to. Even though they’re fighting and Bakugou has destroyed half of Midoriya’s costume, he doesn’t think that he’s seen them touch skin yet. Toshinori had lamented to himself when he’d pulled those two pairs out of the boxes, because, seriously? The chances had to be pretty low to have matched them up, but here they are, duking it out. But he had gone along with it in the hopes that forcing them together in a harsh environment would bring out words that neither of them would say otherwise.
Bakugou pulls off one of his bracers and says something. Toshinori realises that he’d accidentally muted their channel in his stress. Quickly, he flicks it back on, only to hear Bakugou explaining the purpose of his bracers to Midoriya.

No… He can’t be going to blast that at his soulmate, could he?

“Bakugou, my boy, stop this!” Toshinori exclaims. “You’ll kill him!” Sickened, he watches as a disaster unfolds right in front of his eyes.

“If it doesn’t hit him, he won’t die,” Bakugou snarls.

Two TV screens fizzle out, the cameras inside the building destroyed. Around him, the students are stunned.

“What the hell…?” Kirishima mutters. Everyone else seems too shocked to say anything.

The smoke clears, and Toshinori leans forward, eyes focusing on the one camera angle he has of them now. He sees Bakugou first. The young teen’s teeth are bared in a snarl and very white compared to the smoke and ash covering his face. He’s favouring his right arm and leg, even though Toshinori can’t see any damage there. Had his blast backfired and hit him as well? Since this is likely the first time he had used it, Toshinori wouldn’t be surprised.

But then Midoriya stumbles out of the smoke, his right arm and leg blistered and burned, and eyes still bright, even if they are filled with tears.

“You…!” Bakugou growls.

Midoriya bares his teeth in his own snarl. “You can feel my pain, Kacchan. You thought I wasn’t going to use that against you?” The boy slowly straightens, standing up tall. “I’m not going to back off anymore, Kacchan.”

Several facts quickly snap into place in Toshinori’s head. It’s a desperate, risky plan, but without using his quirk, Midoriya can prevent Bakugou from hurting him. The risky part is hoping that that would dissuade him. From all that Toshinori has seen, it doesn’t seem like that’s very likely. But he still has to give him credit for his quick thinking. Using his own quirk against him is likely one of the strongest forms of attack that Midoriya has right now, even though it hurts them both in equal amounts.

“You asshole,” Bakugou pants. “Bringing that up here.”

“You’re the one who exploded me, Kacchan,” Midoriya points out. “So? What’s it going to be? Will you come over here and fight me hand to hand, or are you just going to stay away and keeping blasting both of us?”

“Shut up,” Bakugou hisses. Toshinori is surprised that they’ve managed to get this far without touching each other, but he can hear the rumble of some of the other students as they begin to notice that fact. They clash again, each of Bakugou’s explosions causing both boys to flinch in pain. They’re both yelling at each other again, and it makes Toshinori want to lie down on the floor. Had he ever been this young?

“Why do you think you can beat me? You’re beneath me!”

“Don’t you get it? I’ve always looked up to you! The only thing I’ve ever wanted was to be by your side.” Midoriya has tears in his eyes as he speaks. “But this time I’m going to beat you Kacchan! To show you that you can’t always win by yourself! I want to surpass you! Then, maybe, you’d finally look at me!”
Bakugou’s face twists. “You’re more of an idiot than I’d ever realised if you don’t think my eyes have been on you this whole time, stupid Deku.”

Midoriya’s shaken expression is interrupted by a transmission from Uraraka.

“Deku, I’ve incapacitated Iida!”

Uraraka’s tinny voice through the earpiece startles both Toshinori and Midoriya.

Midoriya’s hand goes up to his ear, and he speaks low enough that Bakugou, across the room, can’t hear him. “The weapon’s on the fifth floor in the middle room. I’ve lured Kacchan out, so be quick!”

“Got it!” Uraraka says.

Toshinori looks at the second floor, where Iida is floating, weightless. He can still somewhat manoeuvre due to his engines, but Toshinori is sure that he won’t be getting to the fifth floor anytime soon.

“What the hell are you mumbling about?” Bakugou snarls.

“Are you going to fight me or not?” Midoriya asked again.

“I wish we could hear what they’re saying,” a blond boy mutters. Kaminari, Toshinori thinks.

“I know what you mean,” Ashido says. “Look at Midoriya! He’s somehow stopped Bakugou from exploding him for a whole minute!”

“I’ll show you hand to hand fighting,” Bakugou says, mouth twisted. He’s still favouring his right side, just like Midoriya is. He goes in for a punch, leading right hand again, and gets thrown again. They exchange a flurry of blows, and Toshinori is proud of the moves that he can see young Midoriya has learned from his training.

Uraraka barrels straight past the two, eyes bugging out as she sees the damage done by the explosion from earlier.

“Hey!” Bakugou screeches. “Get back here!”

He leaps to his feet and goes to chase after Uraraka.

“Oh no you don’t!” Midoriya yells, and crash tackles him from behind.

Toshinori watches as they both stiffen before they can hit the floor, and sees Midoriya’s right, gloveless hand, tightly grabbing the bare skin of Bakugou’s shoulder.

He wonders what they’re feeling.

Izuku feels like fireworks are going off a millimetre away from his head.

He can’t see Kacchan’s face, but thinks that the other boy looks just as shocked as he does, because that’s what he can feel.

Izuku has always known that the bond is strengthened through touch, but they haven’t had
extended skin contact since last year when Izuku saved Kacchan from the sludge villain and their bond had deepened. Now, with his hand around Kacchan’s bare shoulder, he feels like he’s been poured into the other boy’s mind. Pain and anger and shock are roiling through him, the emotions already strange to Izuku and jumbled even more through Kacchan’s perceptions and thoughts.

Get OUT!

Kacchan uses their momentum to continue their roll and throws Izuku across the room. He cries out when his hurt side hits the wall, and he slides to the floor. He pries open his eyes to see Kacchan standing up, looking shaken and favouring his right side. Izuku feels a vicious satisfaction in that. He hadn’t dodged Kacchan’s giant explosion, and now they’re both feeling the consequences of him letting off such a reckless move.

Kacchan turns to go out the doorway and after Uraraka, and Izuku thinks what the hell.

Channelling One For All through his hand, he flicks his fingers and throws Kacchan into the wall with the shockwave that he creates by shattering the bones in his fingers.

His pain rockets through them both. He sees the flash of Kacchan’s pinched, white face before he rolls away, still intent on leaving. Then –

“The hero team win!”

Izuku lets out a shuddering breath and tries to fight the urge to faint.

He watches as Kacchan staggers against the wall. He doesn’t turn to look at him, even though Izuku is aching, eyes fixed on his back.

Kacchan turns, and limps towards him. Izuku doesn’t know whether to welcome him or feel terrified out of his mind.

“Goddamn,” Kacchan mutters. “You read me like a book.” He leans down and grabs Izuku’s uninjured arm, pulling him up. Izuku holds his hurt hand close to his chest and leans on Kacchan, unsure of what to think.

“Kacchan…?”

“I told you to get a fucking handle on your quirk,” he growls angrily. Izuku turns his head into the hard line of his neck, gasping in Kacchan’s sweet nitroglycerin scent as the contact ignites sparks between them, and he can feel Kacchan’s anger fear annoyance sha –

Kacchan grunts and jostles him until their skin isn’t touching anymore. Izuku doesn’t know whether to be relieved or not. Even just feeling Kacchan’s arms around him is a bit too much. That’s probably more than enough for now.

Izuku leans on him as Kacchan leads them out of the building. He looks up at one point to find All Might looming above them, but then the hero is gone and he can only see Kacchan’s pinched face and woozily thinks that right, the pain is still transmitting even though the match is over. He feels like a mess and probably looks like it. Kacchan doesn’t look much better, even though the blood on him mostly belongs to Izuku.

“Young Bakugou, let the bots take young Midoriya to the nurse’s office.”

Kacchan’s hands don’t move from him, and Izuku looks up to see All Might standing in front of them. Kacchan snarls at him, but there isn’t any thought behind his eyes, only animal pain and anger. Groaning, Izuku forces himself out of Kacchan’s grip and tumbles to the floor, jarring his
hand and his burns. He and Kacchan yelp in pain together, and All Might puts a hand on Kacchan’s shoulder and steers him away from Izuku. Izuku lets the bots load him up onto a stretcher, head turned to where he can see Kacchan disappearing through the doorway, still looking back at Izuku.

He eyes fall shut on the way to the infirmary, but all he can think about is that last expression on Kacchan’s face as he went through the door.

Chapter End Notes

!! so the trial of battle... did it turn out how you expected?

Okay so i found this fic and it made me have Emotions, so read it and have Emotions with me

Also, I'm doing femslash feb this month, so don't expect any more updates until March, probably. But hey, if you like Horizon: Zero Dawn, check out my profile!
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

I hope you're all ready for some capital A Angst

And I know that I said I wouldn't update until March but... surprise?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku wakes up slowly.

For a few minutes he lies on the bed and can’t open his eyes. A part of him is tempted to just go back to sleep, but then he remembers that he passed out in the middle of a school day. There are still classes going on that he’s missing, so Izuku reluctantly clings to consciousness.

He manages to pry open his eyes and is greeted with a white roof. He looks around and recognises the nurse’s office. Great – he hasn’t even been in high school for a week yet but he’s been in here twice already. Izuku has a bad feeling that this is just setting the tone for the rest of his high school career.

He blinks a few times and tries to sit up. As soon as he moves his arm, he winces – it’s obvious that it’s not healed completely. When he looks down, he can see that his entire right arm is bandaged. He’s got no idea how he’s going to explain that to his mum.

Slowly, his memory trickles in. The fight. Kacchan. Izuku sighs heavily.

They’d won, but – at what cost? If Kacchan hadn’t hated him before now, then he definitely does now. In their first battle class, Izuku had shown him up, outplayed him, and manipulated their soulbond. In front of everyone. Thinking about that makes his head hurt. Soulbonds are based on trust and consent. Whatever had happened this afternoon had been something, but it definitely had not been that.

Izuku isn’t stupid. He knows that their soulbond is out of balance because it isn’t whole. The research that he’d done on partial soulbonds mostly tended towards couples who had been interrupted in the process of forming a bond and hadn’t been able to complete it. Izuku recognises many of the symptoms that those people had reported, but he’s still frustrated by others. Why can he share Kacchan’s dreams? Kacchan can feel Izuku’s pain, but that’s an ability only demonstrated by fully bonded couples. Things don’t make sense, but since that feeling has characterised their entire relationship, Izuku doesn’t know why he’s surprised.

After bonding fully, all symptoms had disappeared in all cases.

Izuku shakes his head. As if Kacchan would ever fully bond with him. That requires intent and purpose and fully given consent, things that Izuku knows he is never going to get from Kacchan. The only thing he’s ever wanted is Kacchan’s acknowledgement and the right to stand beside him, and Izuku is going to be lucky if he ever gets that far.

Especially after today. He stares at the ground between his feet. Because he’d lost, Kacchan would think that the rest of the class looked down on him. He would think that they saw him as a loser, even if it isn’t true, even though Izuku knows that his victory today was a total fluke. It only
happened because Izuku knows Kacchan intimately, an advantage that no one else would have.

But Kacchan had set himself the task of defending the weapon, and he had failed in that self-appointed task. Izuku knows that there is no way that Kacchan is going to be alright with the outcome of this fight. Izuku’s stomach sinks. He’s only just begun to ever so slightly nudge his way into Kacchan’s defences. No doubt, this will slam them all back up again.

Izuku’s right hand isn’t bandaged like the rest of the arm, and slowly he flexes his fist. The fingers that he used One for All with don’t feel quite right, like the feeling he gets when he needs to crack them. He resists the urge to do so and gingerly prods at his arm.

The pain is immediate and recognisable. The burns under the bandages haven’t been healed all the way, and Izuku bites his tongue until the pain dies down again. He touches his ribs, but the skin there feels much better and isn’t bandaged. He can almost pretend that those areas hadn’t been blasted.

The door opens, and Izuku looks up to see Recovery Girl come inside.

“You’re awake,” she says. “Well, let’s look at you.”

Recovery Girl pokes at him for a while, and Izuku does whatever she tells him to.

“So… are you like, a certified doctor?” Izuku asks as she writes something on a clipboard.

Recovery Girl wacks him over the head with the clipboard. “Of course! What are you trying to imply, boy? I’ve been a doctor for my entire life, and before I worked at UA I was head of a hospital. And I’ve kept up with all the latest developments, so don’t you try and say anything!”

“I was just… making conversation,” Izuku says weakly.

“Hmph,” Recovery Girl says, sounding unimpressed. “You’re still recovering from the last healing I gave you, which is why I can’t heal you completely. But even then, my quirk doesn’t work very well on burns. I’ve wrapped your arm with a special gel that should prevent scarring and aid in recovery time, so don’t take it off, hear me? Come back on Monday and I’ll look at it again.”

“Okay,” Izuku agrees. “Can I head back to class?”

“The final bell is about to ring,” Recovery Girl says. “And I want to talk to you about something else.”

“Oh?” he says as innocently as he can. Izuku has a bad feeling about this. He swallows, his throat dry.

“I’ve already talked to All Might,” she says. “About the boy you were fighting. I saw the soulmark on your back when you were unconscious and I can tell that the two of you are soulmates.”

Izuku’s bad feeling makes like a couple of rabbits and multiples beyond belief in his stomach. “Umm,” he says, because well, what can he really say in response?

Recovery Girl scowls at him. “I have no idea what you, All Might, or Bakugou were thinking. Soulmates should never be pitted against each other like you two were. UA has strict guidelines about these types of things, and I don’t know how this wasn’t covered with All Might. Probably because all the students and half the staff think he can do no wrong. I’ve made sure that the principal and All Might both know that his actions were unacceptable. In the future the both of
you will not fight each other. Do you understand?”

“It isn’t Kacchan’s fault,” Izuku tries to say.

“It isn’t. It’s All Might’s fault,” Recovery Girl says. Izuku chokes on that – it isn’t All Might’s fault. It’s his fault – he knew what Kacchan was going to do. He could have sent Uraraka to fight him, or he could have lured Kacchan away somehow. It’s his fault that he has these injuries, and he has no one to blame but himself. If only he’d been smarter or faster or actually had control of One for All, then he could have avoided this whole situation.

He stares at the ground. He can feel Recovery Girl’s eyes drilling into his skull.

“That might be hard for you to admit,” she continues, voice a bit softer now. “But the both of you are just children, even though you obviously have history. But as the adult hero present, All Might should have known better. Expect an apology the next time you see him.”

Izuku feels his throat close up. Great. Now he’d get an apology from All Might for something he isn’t at fault for. And Izuku had thought that this day couldn’t get any worse.

“Is there anything else you want to tell me?” Izuku forces himself to ask.

Recovery Girl is silent for a long few seconds. “I would like to know if you’re aware of the long term impacts of denying a soulbond.”

Izuku bites down on his tongue until he tastes copper. “What, things like emotional instability, which can lead to anger issues or emotional sensitivity?” He smiles at her, sure that his teeth are red with blood. “I’ve been living those impacts for a long time.”

Recovery Girl’s eyes are dark with an emotion that Izuku doesn’t want to label as compassion. “I can organise for either yourself or Bakugou to be moved to class 1-B. It might be the best course of action for both of you.”

“No,” Izuku blurs. “Please, don’t do that. I know that we can work together, eventually. There’s no need to place us in different classes!” He swallows. “Especially if we’re both going to be heroes. Kacchan is just adjusting to how things are now that we’re both in UA and he didn’t expect me to be a hero before and I know that he has a hard time adjusting to things changing when he’s already decided on something. But he’s really dedicated to being the best hero he can be, and everyone knows that Hero Duos have the best take down and capture rates, so really he just needs to come around to the idea –”

“And he can come around to the idea in another class,” Recovery Girl says. “Perhaps next year you can be put in the same class.”

Izuku refuses to let his roiling stomach manifest as full blown panic. “Please, Recovery Girl. You said that this should never have happened. If it hadn’t, would you be thinking about splitting us up?”

Recovery Girl taps her cane on the floor. “You have a point there boy, but it still doesn’t negate the fact that your soulmate was willing to do this to you.”

Izuku refuses to look at his arm. “If you watched the tape of the fight, you would have seen that Kacchan fully expected me to dodge that blast. And I totally could have. It was my decision to not dodge it completely.”

“Another reason to split you apart,” Recovery Girl says. “Your self-destructive tendencies are bad enough with your new quirk, let alone dealing with a recalcitrant soulmate.”
“I’ve been dealing with Kacchan all my life,” Izuku argues. “Wait – you know about my quirk?”

“How do you think has been treating All Might for his illness? I know more about his quirk than either of you,” Recovery Girl says. “And just because you have known your soulmate for a long time doesn’t mean that being around each other is healthy, if your soulmate dynamic is toxic. In fact, it might be a good idea to separate the both of you so that you can learn to operate independently of each other before learning to operate together.”

Feeling like he’s on the losing side of the argument, Izuku plays his last, desperate card. “Just, please, don’t say anything for now. If in the future, this comes up again, and something like this happens again – I’ll ask to move to another class. We won’t fight again, but if we do, then…” He takes a deep breath. “I’ll tell Aizawa-sensei that I need to be separated from him.”

Recovery Girl holds his gaze for a long time. “Very well,” she eventually says. “I agree that it would be best for both of you to sort things out between yourselves so you can begin to work together. Hero Duos aren’t born as soon as a soulbond is sealed, you know. It takes years of hard work to get them to function efficiently.”

Izuku nods rapidly. “I know, which is why I’m going to talk to Kacchan. Today, or as soon as possible. About everything.”

Recovery Girl makes a sound in the back of her throat, like she doubts what he’s saying. “Well, that would be a step in the right direction. I encourage you to take it.”

The bell rings, and Izuku sighs. There went his chances at getting back to class before the day is over.

“Go and get the rest of your work off Eraserhead,” Recovery Girl says. “And I’m going to remember this conversation, understand?”

“Thank you,” Izuku says, standing up and managing not to wince. His school clothes are next to the bed, and Recovery Girl leaves so he can put them on and then leave the nurse’s office.

At least he’d managed to keep him and Kacchan in the same class. Izuku is sure that if they had been separated, this thing between them would have only continued to fester and grow worse. They have to confront it, together. Izuku knows that for sure.

His thoughts turn back to the events of today. Why would Kacchan even want to talk to me? About today, or about anything? He’s screwed up everything between them. He had just wanted to use the lesson as a way to show Kacchan that he doesn’t need to do everything alone, and that Izuku is right here, willing to help! But he’s certain that Kacchan won’t think of things that way. But what was going on at the end, after victory was called for the hero side? Kacchan had looked…

Izuku doesn’t have a word for it. All he knows for sure is that after today, Kacchan must hate him more than ever.

Katsuki sits sprawled in his chair and broods.

After the fucking mess that was his fight, all their other classmates had had their turns at the battle simulation. Normally there was no way he’d pay attention to that type of dumb thing, but today all he’d been able to see was how the extras in his class could probably have beat his ass.
Just like Deku had.

Katsuki grits his teeth and stares forward in a way that makes it look like he’s paying attention to whatever their permanent disaster of a homeroom teacher is saying. Whatever it is, Katsuki isn’t interested. There’s only one thing on his mind.

Fucking Deku.

He can’t get away from the nerd even in high school, and now he’s even ruining the one thing that Katsuki should be excelling at. He has a quirk that lets him kick ass, and he knows that he’s good at kicking ass. Except for when Deku is involved.

A lot of things go off a cliff when Deku gets involved.

Katsuki sinks lower into his chair, still scowling. The space in the back of his head where Deku’s mumbling thoughts normally reside is still empty, so he knows that the fucker is still passed out. His side is still itching from the pain that he’d inflicted with his explosions, but it’s annoying as fuck because he knows that it’s just his imagination. Deku isn’t in pain anymore. He’s already been healed by Recovery Girl, which means that he’s fine. If there is such a thing as ‘fine’ for the absolute dumbass. Katsuki still can’t believe that he hadn’t dodged the blast that he’d sent his way.

He’d never been particularly close to Deku when he’d injured himself. But this time Katsuki had been a few metres away, and the lightning bolt of pain had nearly sent him reeling. But Deku could move and talk and fight through the pain, and Katsuki isn’t a loser, so he’d matched Deku for every punch and every word. They’d both said some things that they wouldn’t have said if the agony hadn’t been making them half out of their minds, and he hopes that Deku forgets them, because Katsuki can’t.

*The only thing I’ve ever wanted was to be by your side. But this time I’m going to beat you Kacchan! To show you that you can’t always win by yourself! I want to surpass you! Then, maybe, you’ll finally look at me!*

God damn.

Katsuki likes the world to make sense. Even if he doesn’t like some facts, even if he struggles to change things, he still wants things to be laid out simply. He hates mysteries. Shitty police procedurals make him want to put his fist through the TV screen. It’s annoying and he doesn’t have the time to waste in figuring out some dumb bullshit when he could just be exploding things instead. So yes, sue him, he likes things to be simple.

Deku isn’t simple.

He used to be simple. There used to be two, straightforward facts about him, neither of which Katsuki liked much. Number one: Deku was quirkless. Oh sure, he had the extra toe bone, but if he didn’t know what his quirk was, then he couldn’t really use it, could he? Functionally quirkless.

Number two: Deku is Katsuki’s soulmate.

Both of these are undeniable facts that lead to a simple solution – avoid Deku and ignore the bond between them, because the consequences for doing otherwise are too steep a price to pay. There is a reason that heroes either acknowledge their soulmate and fight in Hero Duos, or refuse to divulge their soulmate’s very existence. The loss of a soulmate either kills the other half of the pair outright, or strips them of their quirk. Katsuki knows enough about history to know that soulmarks had begun appearing at the same time quirks had, but no one knows what the link between the
two is. Katsuki doesn’t care about any of that. All he knows is that Deku has no chance of being a hero, and thus Katsuki has no chance of being with him.

A soulmate is a weakness that Katsuki can never allow himself to have.

Deku knows his fucking hero trivia, so Katsuki could never understand why he couldn’t wrap his head around this. No hero with a quirkless soulmate can ever be with that soulmate. Katsuki might be self-centred, but he isn’t usually selfish. Deku can find another person to fall in love with. It isn’t like Katsuki needs him, anyway.

Of course, that was when they were six. Katsuki has come to the conclusion that no lifelong choices should be made at the age of six.

They’d grown apart but Katsuki could never not listen when Deku’s name was spoken. And maybe he’d been a little jealous of anyone Deku tried to befriend. Maybe. But he’d told himself that he wouldn’t do that in high school, and now Deku is already becoming friends with that round face girl and the preppy kid who wears nerd glasses. Whatever. It isn’t like it’s Katsuki’s business, anyway.

Or at least, it isn’t before Deku’s quirk appears literally out of nowhere.

Katsuki can’t imagine how he finally figured out his quirk, because it looks pretty damn straight forward to Katsuki. Strength enhancement. Katsuki can admit that it’s pretty cool… inside his head.

Fact number one had changed, but fact number two is still the same. That makes things complicated, and Katsuki hates complicated things.

What are they now, if Deku is coming to UA, and is probably going to become a hero? It makes all of Katsuki’s previous reasoning invalid and he hates that, too. The only thing keeping him from making up with Deku is his own pride, and that is just another layer of humiliation to ice his fucking cake.

Besides, there’s no way that Deku could ever want him now.

Katsuki grinds his teeth in frustration. After the fight this afternoon, even Deku’s happy go fucking lucky persona wouldn’t be able to deal with him, and deep down, Katsuki doesn’t blame him. He shouldn’t have sent that massive blast Deku’s way. It’d been a stupid thing to do, for the fight and for the situation they were meant to be playing out. He’d only done it because Deku’s nearness was beginning to grate on his nerves, and his mumbling was taking up all of Katsuki’s thinking capacity. Ugh. The idiot ruined everything.

Not to mention the end of the fight. The buzzer had sounded and for a second Katsuki hadn’t even cared that he’d lost. He’d only had eyes for Deku, where he’d been lying still and verging on unconsciousness. Katsuki had picked him up, and felt his pain and felt them mesh together. It had been disorientating. It had been confronting.

It had scared him. Katsuki slouches some more in his chair.

Katsuki feels more than hears a yawn, and then pain ripples down his side. He stares at the book in front of him and waits until it dies down a little. So the number one dumbass is up, and still hurting. Well, it’s his fault. He should have moved.

A part of him admires Deku’s strategy, and another is horrified by it. Katsuki compromises by trying not to think about it at all.
Mister I-haven’t-slept-in-two-weeks puts a slide up on the board, and Katsuki scrawls down the main points because he’s a good ass student, but even that doesn’t distract him from Deku’s lingering pain in his side. Katsuki breaks his pen in half, throws both bits towards the bin at the front of the room (both miss) and digs out another one out from his bag.

A soulmate is a weakness to exploit, and Katsuki doesn’t want to have any weaknesses at all. He doesn’t even understand how it’s Deku of all people who he’s paired with. They’re basically opposites in every way that matters. The thought just reminds him of the stupid soulmark emblazoned on his chest. His stupid fucking chest. Katsuki rubs at it angrily and copies down some more notes from the board.

Deku’s mumbling grows louder, and Katsuki wishes he can grab his phone and play some music to drown him out. The strategy usually works, but it’s hard to pull off in the middle of a dead silent class. He snorts as he thinks about that conversation.

“Bakugou, please turn your music down.”

“No, it’s blasting over the noise of Deku’s muttering.”

“Midoriya isn’t in this room.”

“Yeah well I wish I could get away from him so easily.”

Seriously, these guys don’t know anything about what he has to deal with on a daily basis.

After another few slides, the final bell rings. Katsuki stuffs his things in his bag and bolts for the door. He wants to get out of here and away from Deku as fast as possible, because he can just tell that the fucker is going to corner him if Katsuki gives him the chance.

Sure enough, he turns the final corner leading to the doors and freedom from UA, and Deku is coming up the corridor in the opposite direction. Their eyes meet, but Katsuki looks away as fast as humanely possible. He can’t deal with Deku’s bullshit anymore today.


“Let go of me,” Katsuki says in the most level voice he can manage, which still comes out as a growl. Katsuki isn’t dumb enough to try and pull away, because Deku’s got a stubborn glint in his eyes that Katsuki knows will mean he’ll rip his shirt before he lets go of it, and there’s no way he wants to explain that to his mum.

“No,” Deku says. “I need to talk to you.”

“I need you to back the fuck off,” Katsuki spits. “I don’t want to talk.”

Deku’s mouth turns down. “We need to talk about today,” he says lowly. Katsuki can spot a few of their classmates coming towards them, and he needs to leave right fucking now.

“Young Midoriya!”

Both boys turn to see All Might staring at them. Katsuki pulls away and Deku miraculously lets him.

“All Might,” Deku says. There’s something off about his voice, but Katsuki can’t be stuffed trying to figure out what it is right now. He’s eyeing his escape when All Might’s hand comes down on his shoulder.
“I need to talk to you both,” All Might says gravely. Katsuki normally would be over the moon to hear such a thing, but right now all he can hear is *talk to you both*. This is going to be a *thing*, he can already tell. Fuck.

“I need to go home,” Katsuki grits out, because it’s the least embarrassing end to this situation.

“It’s quite vital that I speak to you now,” All Might insists. “It won’t take long, I promise.”

Katsuki balls his hands into fists and just goes along with it, because maybe then he’ll be able to leave this never ending nightmare. Deku’s brain is going a mile a minute next to him, and Katsuki is probably going to make some bad decisions because of it, but whatever.

All Might guides them into a small room with a chair and a longue, and promptly takes the chair for himself. Katsuki wedges himself into the corner of the longue, as far away as possible from Deku, who sits on the other seat, looking at his feet.

“I am extremely sorry for what happened today,” All Might says. “It is my job as a teacher to protect you boys, and I failed in that duty today by pitting you against each other.”

“You didn’t control the team match ups,” Deku says. “It was random chance.”

Katsuki bites the side of his cheek and doesn’t say anything.

“Recovery Girl informed me that the two of you were soulmates,” All Might says, and Katsuki misses the look that he and Deku share, because he’s too busy staring at the wall and resisting the urge to explode something.

So today’s just great so far. He lost to Deku, he probably made Deku hate him, he failed in front of his idol and now said idol knows about the fact that he’s soulmates with Deku and is apologising to him because Katsuki couldn’t go half an hour without blowing something up. Great. Just so, so great.

“This school trains Hero Duos as well as solo heroes, and have policies in place to make sure that soulmates are never pitted against each other in a competitive environment,” All Might says, sounding like he’s reading things word for word out of a pamphlet. How many other people know about him and Deku now? Probably their shitty homeroom teacher and the principal, at least. Katsuki’s mood grows even blacker. Deku looks at him, and Katsuki can feel his concerned thoughts humming in the back of his head, but he bares his teeth at Deku and then looks away from him. “From now on, you will never fight against each other with the school’s permission. Do you understand?”

“Yes, All Might,” Deku says, looking like he just sucked on a lemon.

Katsuki nods jerkily. All Might sighs.

“Good. You boys are only in first year, so not much will change in your academic studies,” All Might says. “But we do have a specialised teacher on campus who deals with soulmate pairs, so I expect that Eraserhead will direct you to see her. Now if either of you have any other questions, feel free to ask me or Eraserhead, okay?”

“Yes,” Katsuki says. If he could explode things with just his eyes, the entire wall would have been demolished by now.

“Okay,” Deku echoes.

All Might stands, strikes a heroic pose, and leaves, slamming the door shut behind him. Katsuki
stares at the door blankly. That’s a fast exit, but he isn’t even going to complain, because if he’d spent one more second in this room with All Might he probably would have imploded.

“Well that was horrible,” Deku laments. “All Might didn’t even do anything wrong.”

Katsuki stands up. None of them did anything wrong. It’s this whole, fucked up situation that is at fault. There’s no one really to blame, which just makes Katsuki angrier. And like usual, his anger gets the best of him.

“He didn’t do anything wrong,” Katsuki seethes. “You, however, seem intent on fucking everything up.” If only Deku hadn’t pulled on their bond and gotten himself injured, then no one would have known about the two of them. But now they do, and Katsuki doesn’t know how he feels about it, so he defaults to anger, like he always does.

He hears Deku’s indrawn breath, but he’s already moving towards the door.

“I told you that I needed to speak to you, Kacchan,” Deku calls after him stubbornly, and Katsuki stares at the door, gritting his teeth.

“There’s nothing to talk about.”

“Oh, so I did everything wrong, but you exploded the building,” Deku says. Katsuki hates his voice when he’s like this, caustic and sarcastic. When they were smaller, words were the only defence that Deku had, and he’s always been able to wield them well against Katsuki. “So yeah, totally, I’m a hundred percent at fault here.”

Katsuki rounds on him. “Well MAYBE if you’d behaved like a normal human being for once in your life this wouldn’t have happened!”

Deku’s cheeks go red. “I was trying to win!”

“By injuring yourself?” Katsuki yells back. “I don’t know where to fucking start with you! You always say that you want to be a hero, but you’re so insistent on throwing yourself to the wolves that you’ll never get a goddamn chance to save anyone.”

“I was trying to get you to look at me, for once in our lives,” Deku says, his eyes filling with tears. Katsuki hates them.

“Well pay attention,” Katsuki snarls. “Getting killed isn’t the way to go about doing that.”

Deku jolts. Shock fills his eyes. “Is that what this is about?”

Katsuki hates that Deku can read him like this. After all this time, this is when he brings this up?

“Things are different now, Kacchan,” Deku says, almost spilling his words into each other, he’s saying them so fast. “I’ve got a quirk, and –”

“That doesn’t change the fact that you’ve been willing to throw yourself headfirst into every shitty situation you’ve ever found,” Katsuki bites. Now that he’s looking at him, the only thing Katsuki can do is stare at his arm, which is still wrapped in bandages. He did that. No one else. Him. How can he be telling Deku off for something that he did?

“I don’t,” Deku protests weakly.

“Talk to me when you’ve got your head out of your ass,” Katsuki says, and turns to leave the room. He can’t deal with – with this bullshit anymore. He needs to go home and scream into his
pillow for an hour. He needs to forget what Deku looks like, sitting there stranded and alone and injured, all because of Katsuki.

Katsuki has always made himself look Deku in the eye. He’s always forced himself too, because doing otherwise would just acknowledge that there was something different about how the two of them are linked. He’s always taken it as a point of pride, but today –

Today, Katsuki can’t look at him. Not when he can only see his failures reflected in Deku’s eyes.

Chapter End Notes

If I did chapter summaries, this one would be -
Izuku in the nurses office: Kacchan hates me
Katsuki in the classroom: Deku hates me

When I started this fic I told myself that it was going to be short, snippets between chapters ect ect, but then this chapter happens, a whole 5k over less than one manga chapter, and so I’m just going to quietly rescind my hopes for a short soulmate fic. I HOPE YALL ARE READY FOR ~LENGTH~

I'm really happy with this chapter! Drop me a comment if you liked it as well!

Anyway, have some cute young bakudeku --> married bakudeku that I read the other day

Next chapter!! Probably the only chapter of fluff in this fic. Spoilers, the fluff is not between our boys :( (don't worry, they'll clean up their act sooner rather than later.... probably :D)
Izuku waves goodbye to his fellow taekwondo classmates as they file outside at the gym. Izuku is just putting the rest of his things inside his bag, ready to bolt for the bus, when he hears his name called.

“Midoriya! Over here!”

He turns, and sees no one. It’s not totally a lie – there’s a person there, but he can’t see them, only their floating clothes.

“Hagakure-san?” he asks gingerly.

“Yep!” she says cheerfully. “Sorry I didn’t get the chance to talk to you this week! I recognised you from here, but we hadn’t had the chance to chat before now.”

Izuku checks his phone – there’s no way he’ll catch his bus now, so he might as well wait for the next one and talk with Hagakure.

“I didn’t realise that you came here as well,” Izuku says, shouldering his bag and waving to Jody. She waves back and then heads back into the deeper parts of the gym. “Sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Hagakure says, waving him off. Or at least that’s what he think she does – he can’t see her hand after all, only her long sleeved shirt. “An invisible person is hard to spot, ha.”

“Right,” Izuku says awkwardly. “So, how long have you been coming here for?”

“Ever since I convinced my parents that I wanted to be a hero,” Hagakure says. “Do you have somewhere to be? I’m headed to the train station.”

“I’m catching a bus from there,” Izuku says.

“Cool! Let’s walk together.” Izuku can hear her smile in her voice.

The streets are hardly packed at this time on a Saturday afternoon, so neither teen has to raise their voice to hear each other as they talk.

“Why did you decide on taekwondo?” Izuku asks her.

“Oh, I didn’t,” Hagakure says.

“Your parents pick, huh?” Izuku says wryly. He supposes that All Might picked for him, really.
“No,” Hagakure says. “I do a lot of different martial arts. Karate, boxing, taekwondo, judo and aikido, mostly.”

“Wow, um, okay,” Izuku says, a little bit stunned.

Hagakure laughs a little. “Yeah, I know. I would say that it’s a bit over the top, but hey, I don’t really have a quirk to help me out with fighting, right? So when I told my parents that I wanted to become a hero, my mum told me that I had to learn to fight. I figured that was a good idea, so she basically signed me up to every place in the city that took students. Over the years, I’ve decided on what I wanted to focus on and narrowed things down to those.” She shrugs a shoulder. “What can I say? I’m really into martial arts.”

“I can tell,” Izuku says.

“Do you only do taekwondo?”

“Yeah,” Izuku says, trying not to sound awkward. “I only started about a year ago. Even if I have a strength enhancement quirk, if I can’t use it then what’s the point in having it?”

“You’re totally right,” Hagakure agrees eagerly. “If you’re going to be a close range fighter, then you need to know techniques to deal with villains. Now I’m hoping to mostly be a reconnaissance hero, but my invisibility won’t be a total help if I don’t know how to get out of a sticky situation if I get found out.”

Izuku nods, mind churning with ideas. “Yes, your quirk is perfect for reconnaissance! And for fighting as well, no one would be able to see you so all your attacks are basically surprise attacks. Do you focus on making sure you’re quiet while you’re fighting? Because that would be your biggest tell.”

Hagakure laughs. “Yeah, I go running every morning for cardio. It won’t do me any good if I’m panting away in the middle of a fight so that my opponent can hear me.”

Izuku taps his leg absentmindedly. “Do you have trouble combining all of the different fighting styles? Or do you use one and then switch to another in the middle of the fight?”

“One of the advantages of knowing a lot of different disciplines is being able to mix it up and make up new moves by combining styles,” Hagakure advises. “But if you’re only learning one, then I’d say to stick with that.”

Izuku chews over that for a few seconds. During the fight yesterday, he’d mostly been using the kicks that taekwondo is known for. The only problem is that All Might has also been giving him lessons on how to use One for All, and the two conflict. All Might uses punches, while taekwondo focuses on his legs. He’d tried to assimilate them during the fight against Kacchan, but he’d felt wonky doing it. Obviously, that’s something that he’s going to have to work on.

“Of course one particular style might not cover everything you need to do as a hero,” Hagakure says. “That’s why I’m learning as many as I can.”

“Yeah,” Izuku says. “It’s good to have something to base my style off, but I don’t want to get locked into one thing. It might make me too predictable.” Like Kacchan’s leading right hook yesterday. Maybe Izuku should tell him about that.

“I agree,” Hagakure says. “You could always start to learn another discipline, if you want.”

“Maybe,” Izuku says, frustrated. “I don’t know.”
“Well, you can always ask me for advice,” Hagakure says. “I know a lot about this type of stuff, ha. Do you know that taekwondo has actually changed a lot since quirks first manifested?”

“Really?”

“Yes. It used to be a lot more… showy. Like, with points and stuff that decided matches. Of course, there’s still some gyms that practise that style, but Judy-san’s isn’t one of them. Now the style is a lot more combat focused. People want to know how to defend themselves, practically.”

“Hmm,” Izuku says. “I didn’t know. Strange, how quirks have influenced all parts of society.”

“It is strange,” Hagakure admits. “But we’re used to it now. I think that going back in time would be a lot stranger.”

Izuku wonders if he’d do anything differently if he were thrown back in time. “Things would be a lot stranger,” he confirms. “We can agree on that.”

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Izuku digs his spoon into his ice cream. Mint chocolate chip is the best, even though Uraraka had picked strawberry for her own ice cream. It’s definitely spring now, with enough warmth in the air that both heroes in training had agreed that ice cream was the ideal post movie food.

Izuku knows a good place, but it isn’t near the theatre, so they’d walked over here, discussing the movie on the way. Izuku had been in the thick of his analysis of the quirks of the protagonist and the logistics of the final fight when he’d stuttered to a halt.

“Is this boring?” He had asked the question uneasily. “Am I boring you?”

Uraraka had laughed at him. “I think it’s cute. You’re obviously passionate about this, and you’re making me see new things in a movie that I literally just watched. I don’t mind at all.”

Izuku had mumbled out something that might have been thanks, and had bought Uraraka her ice cream.

Across the table from him, Uraraka sighs around her spoon. “This is very good ice cream. It was a good idea to come here!”

“Ah, thanks,” Izuku says, hoping he isn’t blushing. “It’s mostly just because I live in this area, you know?”

“Don’t play down your ice cream knowledge,” Uraraka chides him.

Izuku is certain that he’s blushing now, and casts around for another subject. “You never got around to telling me how you beat Iida,” he says, and Uraraka taps her fingers on the table a few times.

“Because you got carted off unconscious?” she asks wryly.

This isn’t helping his earlier blush. “Err, yeah.”

“Well I’ll admit, I mostly relied on your idea of flustering him,” she began, staring at the table as she remembers. “I don’t think his heart was in it, you know? So I went with a full on assault by trying his school sensibilities.” She giggles. “I told him that I had turned in blank tests, heard some people kissing in the bathrooms once, stuck gum under my table, distracted my classmates during
class, wrote on my table, that type of stuff. And some innuendoes as well, that really had him
blushing!” She waves around her ice cream spoon to punctuate her words. Izuku follows the
movement half in a daze. Uraraka is so bright, so he consoles himself by thinking that no one
could really be immune to her charms.

“And how did you tag him?”

She snorts. “Was pretty easy, in the end. I’d been trashing the whole place by throwing everything
I could onto the floors and floating some stuff so that he had to manoeuvre around them to get to
me, and always running ahead. Well on one corridor where there was a sharp corner, I just hid
right around the corner and then got him as he tripped over an office chair.”

Her smile is contagious, and Izuku finds himself grinning alongside her. “That’s a pretty good
plan,” he says. “I don’t know if I could have come up with a bunch of things to fluster him with.”

“I’m sure you could have worked up something,” Uraraka says. “So now you have to tell me –
what the heck happened in your fight with Bakugou? Tsuyu-chan told me some of it, and it
sounds crazy.”

“Oh, you know,” Izuku tries to deflect.

“No I don’t,” Uraraka says strongly. “Give me every little detail.”

Izuku sweat drops. “Uh, okay. Well, I sneaked up to the fifth floor and found the room. Kacchan
was too far inside for a sneak attack so I just ran in there. Then we fought, I lured him out of the
room, you called and I told you where the bomb was. That’s pretty much it.”

Uraraka pouts at him. “That’s not every detail. I gave you a lot more than that.”

“Well, it was mostly just Kacchan exploding things and me dodging,” Izuku says. “Not really
exciting.”

Uraraka stares at him. “Oh yeah, getting exploded isn’t real exciting,” she says incredulously.
“Geez, you two really do have issues.”

Her words hit a little closer to home than Izuku is comfortable with. He hasn’t heard from
Kacchan since he stormed out of the room on Friday afternoon and Izuku hasn’t gotten up the
courage to text him yet. Tomorrow is Monday, so he’ll see him then, but that just feels a little like
a cop out. Izuku doesn’t want to corner him at his house, but he does live just down the road, so
it’s fast becoming the only option he has left.

“Deku? Hey, are you listening?”

“What?” he says reflexively.

Uraraka raises an eyebrow. “I know you like to get lost in your own world, but at least most of the
time I have your mumbling to tell me what you’re talking about.”

“Oh,” Izuku says. At least he hadn’t spilled the beans about Kacchan. But maybe… He gulps a
breath of air to steady himself. “I was just… thinking about my soulmate.”

Uraraka blinks rapidly. “Oh! Do you have one, then?”

“Yeah,” Izuku says cautiously. “He’s… not happy about what happened on Friday.”

“Well I don’t think anyone in our class was happy about what happened,” Uraraka snorts. “I don’t
blame him. So he doesn’t go to UA, then?”

“…he doesn’t want me to be a hero,” Izuku says, because depressingly, that’s true enough.

“Oh,” Uraraka says, more softly. “I’m sorry.”

Izuku shrugs a shoulder. “It’s risky to be a hero’s soulmate.” It’s true, but also a lie, because Uraraka will think that he’s talking about this fictional soulmate, when really he’s talking about Kacchan. Sighing, Izuku slumps in his seat.

“Well anyone would be lucky to have you as a soulmate,” Uraraka says. She leans over and lowers her voice a bit more. “Even though you probably shouldn’t have told me. You know that’s bad practise, and we’ve only known each other for a few weeks!”

Izuku blushes. “I needed to talk to someone about it,” he mumbles. “I don’t know what to do about our situation. It’s driving me nuts.”

“How long have you known him for?”

“Feels like forever,” Izuku finally says. “But he’s never wanted a soulmate, and he wanted me even less when he found out I wanted to become a hero. We don’t talk all that often.”

Uraraka covers her mouth with a hand. “I’m sorry to hear that,” she says. “That’s a shitty situation.”

“I know,” Izuku mutters.

“I’ll tell you a secret,” Uraraka says suddenly. “I’ve got a soulmate too.”

“Huh?” Izuku says intelligently. “Really?”

“Yes,” she nods. “I don’t know who it is yet, though. I hope they’re nicer than your soulmate.”

“That’s pretty rare, for us to both have soulmarks,” Izuku muses. “It’s normally one in ten people.”

“Well, there’s twenty people in our class,” Uraraka points out. “So you and I are two out of twenty. Spot on the money, and I don’t even like maths.”

And Kacchan, he thinks, but he doesn’t say it out loud. Instead he nods. “Yes, but I don’t know how many other students could potentially have them. The people I do know, do have soulmarks. That’s a pretty rare occurrence.”

“Where’s yours?” Uraraka asks. “Mine’s a ring of holly around my thigh.”

“It’s on my back,” Izuku says. Uraraka looks at him expectantly. “I don’t know what it is,” he finally admits. “When I was a kid, it was a black circle. But I don’t know how it’s changed since then.”

“You don’t look at it?” Uraraka asks, almost sounding scandalised.

“Well it’s in a pretty awkward place,” Izuku says. “If I don’t grab a few mirrors it’s hard to look. And I’ve given up being interested.”

Uraraka shakes her head. “As a kid, I would watch each new leaf develop, like, religiously. I don’t think about my age when someone asks when something happened, I think about how many leaves my soulmark had.”
Izuku has to laugh at that. “Tenth birthday?”

“Twenty three,” she says primly. Izuku shakes his head, and keeps laughing.

Later that day, Izuku stands outside the Bakugou household and fidgets.

He’d finally gotten up the courage to text Kacchan, but the other boy hadn’t responded. So Izuku had told him that he was coming over to his house. Still no response. But Izuku is still here, because he still has some words to say to him. He doesn’t want to leave things hanging for too long, because it would be too easy to pretend that nothing was wrong, when there is something wrong.

He needs to talk to Kacchan about their soulbond. They’ve put the conversation on hold for long enough.

He finally rings the doorbell. Heart in his throat, he waits until he hears feet on the other side before panicking. But Kacchan doesn’t open the door – his mother does.

Bakugou Mitsuki stares down at him before sighing. “The kid’s out. Has been all weekend.”

“Oh,” Izuku says, trying not to look terribly awkward even though that’s how he feels. “Okay.”

“You should still come in.”

Izuku gulps. The words don’t sound particularly like a threat, but Mitsuki has a way of standing and looking at someone like she’s about to deck them, so he goes inside even though he’s not particularly enthused about it.

“Would you like some tea?”

“Umm, no thank you,” Izuku says. Mitsuki stares at him. “J-just black tea,” he stutters, and she nods.

“Okay, well sit down while I get that.”

Izuku discretely looks around the kitchen as he sits at the counter. All the pictures on the walls are recent, from the last year or so, except for one hanging on the wall that Izuku startles at when he recognises himself in it. It’s a photo of him and Kacchan when they were five or so, both grinning and dirty. Kacchan is wearing pants and his hair is tied up in a rough ponytail. It must have been taken before Kacchan took scissors to his hair and cut it all off. The floor of the kitchen and lounge room is clear, the childish clutter of toys and books and games cleared away. Other than that, it looks about the same as it did when he’d last been here, years ago.

Mitsuki puts a cup down in front of him and Izuku jumps.

“Tch, I’m not that scary, am I?”

Izuku bows his head so he doesn’t have to answer. Honestly, being in this house is bringing back memories of a time when he was less inclined to stand up for himself. Swallowing, he looks Mitsuki in the eye.

“No, Bakugou-san. You just remind me of your son.”
Something dark moves across Mitsuki’s eyes, but she turns away before Izuku can pin it down. It makes him uneasy.

“My son and I are similar,” she acknowledges. “But we’re also different. I like to think that I’ve mastered a bit of patience, something that he seems to lack. But I also know how to confront uncomfortable subjects head on, which he definitely doesn’t know how to do.”

She turns around with another cup of tea in her hands. “Drink your tea,” she orders. “And tell me about the relationship you have with my son.”

Izuku tries not to splutter. “Umm,” he says. He sips the tea so he doesn’t have to say anything for a few seconds. It’s black, but has sugar in it. “There isn’t really any relationship?”

“You’re soulmates,” Mitsuki says heavily. “There is always going to be a relationship between you two.” She stares at him. “Katsuki came home in a foul mood on Friday, and I badgered him enough to make him tell me that something had happened at school, involving you. Please tell me what that was.”

“Err,” Izuku says. This was not the conversation he’d been expecting to happen. “Well, we had hero training, and part of that was the trial of battle. And we got paired up against each other, and we fought and he…” Izuku trails off, but he can’t help but look at his still bandaged arm.

Mitsuki follows his gaze and her eyes go stormy. “Did he do that?”

“Did he?”

“Yes,” Izuku mumbles. “But it wasn’t his fault, I –”

Mitsuki slams her hand down on the counter. Izuku jumps.

“No. Do not make excuses for my son,” she seethes. “I’ve told him that he shouldn’t hurt you in any way, and sent him to goddamn therapy and he still pulls this shit. It’s not good for either of you.” A beat. “You must know that I only want the best for you, Izuku-kun. I only want the best for both of you. And this is not the best.”

“I know,” Izuku says softly. “That’s why I was coming over. To talk to him.”

“Hmm.” Mitsuki straightens and turns back to the counter, rummaging around in one of the drawers. “And what were you going to talk to him about?”


“I don’t know.” Mitsuki says calmly. “That’s why I asked.”

Izuku sighs. “I just want to talk about what we’re going to do. We’ve never really had a talk about the future, and everything’s changed since my quirk manifested. Things aren’t the best right now, but I know that we can get through it.”

Izuku can remember the shining years of being at Kacchan’s side, before Izuku’s quirk had refused to manifest and Kacchan had rejected his soulmate. The inherent rightness of being at his side is a feeling that he still aches for.

“I know that you can,” Mitsuki says confidently. “But I think that you need to let Katsuki simmer off his anger first. He’s probably been out blowing things up all weekend to blow off some steam.
You know how he gets. Give him some space, and let him talk to you."

*Right. Let him talk to me when he’s avoided me for most of our lives. Yeah, that’ll definitely work.*

“I’ll find a time to talk to him, later in the week maybe,” Izuku says carefully. “It would probably help if he answered my texts.”

“He didn’t answer me until I threatened to call the police and file a missing person’s report, and then it was only with one angry emoji,” Mitsuki says consolingly. “He doesn’t want to talk to anyone at the moment. He can take care of himself, but I wish that he’d just come home.”

Izuku sighs. “Right.”

Mitsuki quirks the corner of her mouth into a smile. “Right. Now, would you like some cookies?”

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Monday morning is awkward.

There’s a large crowd of reporters outside the front gates of UA, and it takes Izuku about point three seconds to figure out that they’re there because of All Might. It’s a wonder that it’s taken a whole week for the fact that he’s teaching here now to leak to the press.

He gets past them by looking meek and stammering out an excuse, and bolting past as soon as he can. Iida conveniently distracts them with a rant, and Izuku has never been happier for his ability to talk about school subjects.

Before classes start, Izuku sprints towards the nurse’s office. He doesn’t know if having the bandages on or off will be more embarrassing, but the white bandages are difficult to hide. At least if they’re off, no one will have to ask about how his arm is doing – they’ll be able to see it.

He knocks on the door and opens it when Recovery Girl calls him inside. There isn’t anyone else in here, and Izuku wonders if he’s her only patient so early in the term.

“Let me see,” she says, not mincing any words. Izuku sits down and waits tensely for her to unwrap his arm.

It’s not… as bad as it could have been, he supposes. Running from the middle of his forearm to his shoulder, his skin mottled light pink and shiny. It’s obviously the result of a burn, but it doesn’t look like a particularly bad one.

Recovery Girl tuts over it for a few seconds. “Well, there’s nothing really that I can do for it, because this is just scar tissue, and my quirk doesn’t work on that.” She goes over to a cabinet and digs out a tube. Izuku takes it from her. “Put this on it every night before bed. Just enough to cover it, no need to lather it on there. That should help the healing process along.”


Recovery Girls huffs. “Well, put your thoughts into actions! Did you talk to that soulmate of yours?”

“Err,” Izuku says. “A little?” Did Friday afternoon even count? Izuku is fairly sure that it had just made everything worse.

Recovery Girl tuts at him. “Well, things have been arranged for you to meet with Hatake-san
tomorrow. So don’t miss that appointment.”

“When? And with who?”

“Just before school ends,” Recovery Girl says. “Hatake-san is our resident soulmate expert. She deals with all the soulmates enrolled in UA.”

“There’s that many, that they employ a specialised teacher…” Izuku mumbles. “That might mean that the soulmate population of UA is higher than I thought. Although with Kacchan and I and…” He’s tactful enough to not say Uraraka’s name aloud. He coughs a little into his hand. “Umm, can I go?”

“Go to class before the bell rings,” Recovery Girl says. “And don’t forget your appointment tomorrow.”

It isn’t until Izuku is sitting in his chair in the 1-A classroom that he realises that he didn’t ask where he was supposed to go for his appointment. Sighing to himself, he grabs his stuff out from his bag. He’ll figure it out later.

There’s a bad moment when Kacchan comes in and sees the shiny pink skin of his arm. Izuku tenses at the black look in his eyes, but Kacchan brushes past him to sit in his chair. He doesn’t look back at him.

Sinking low to discourage anyone from talking to him, Izuku opens his first book for the day.

That afternoon, after the alarm and the stressful press incident, Izuku can only think about going home and going to sleep. He’s just glad that he passed his role as the class president onto Iida – maybe next year he’ll want a role like that, but for now he feels like he has enough on his plate, what with trying to handle One for All and Kacchan at the same time.

He’s hoping to catch Kacchan on the way home, because he doesn’t want to let him escape back to his house again. Izuku finally spots him at the end of the platform on the train station, and gingerly makes his way over.

Kacchan gives him a flat stare. It’s not the best opening, but it’s not the worst either, so Izuku will roll with it.

“We should talk,” he says. “About Friday.”

“I’ve got nothing to say to you,” Kacchan grumbles. He’s looking straight ahead. Izuku resists the urge to cover his arm.

“Well I’ve got something to say to you,” Izuku says staunchly. Kacchan huffs, still not looking at him. Izuku plants his feet, determined to get him to face him.

“Well?” Kacchan asks, flashing angry red eyes at him. “I’ve already been lectured by my mum. I doubt that you’ve got anything as scary as her up your sleeve.”

Izuku shudders on instinct. Bakugou Mitsuki is pretty scary.

“Well, the school knows about us,” Izuku says quietly. “I’m supposed to talk to the soulmate counsellor tomorrow.”
“Aizawa-sensei said that I have to talk to her on Thursday,” Kacchan grumbles. “I’m not going though.”

“Kacchan!” Izuku says, scandalised. “You can’t just blow off a meeting!”

“Watch me.”

“They might just think that you couldn’t find the room,” Izuku tries to say. “And think that you didn’t miss it on purpose.”

Kacchan gives him a flat look. “They didn’t tell you where the room is?”

Izuku mumbles out an excuse as Kacchan fishes a note out of his bag. Izuku takes a photo of the address and realises that he has a notification from Uraraka. It’s a group chat invitation. Izuku opens it to find most of the class already there and sending memes to each other.

“Huh, Yaoyorozu set up a group chat for the class,” Izuku says. “I suppose that’s something you do when you’re vice-president. I’ll add you.” He types in Kacchan’s profile and sends the invite.

“Hn. I should have gotten to be president,” Kacchan growls. “It was dumb, how we did it.”

“You’re just upset that no one voted for you,” Izuku teases lightly.

The words fall between them oddly. Izuku shifts on his feet. Kacchan doesn’t look at his face.

“Have you been walking around the whole day like that? Damn.”

Izuku tries not to choke when Kacchan’s hands come up and undo his tie. He reties it quickly, doing the final knot perfectly in a way that Izuku hasn’t mastered yet.

Having Kacchan so close to him is doing Izuku’s head in. Thoughts spinning wildly, he holds completely still in order to not scare Kacchan away.

“I can still hear you thinking, dumbass,” Kacchan says lowly. His hands fall to his sides, and Izuku flushes. He wants to touch so badly, but –

They’re saved from the awkwardness of the moment by the train arriving. Inside, there are too many people to be able to talk about their private business, so Izuku just sits down and gets out his phone. Kacchan sits down next to him, slouching in the seat with his legs spread, taking up as much room as possible. Izuku doesn’t mind – it means that their legs are pressed together.

The group chat currently consists of Ashido and Kaminari exchanging memes, most of which Izuku doesn’t recognise. He obviously doesn’t spend enough time on social media.

Class 1-A Chat (#general)

3:37pm

Ashido: yo Midoriya!!! Added the angry boi lol

>>Ashido set the nickname for Bakugou Katsuki to angry boi

Electrikid: lol

Ashido: look its appropriate
Ashido: I WILL give everyone nicknames

>>Ashido set the nickname for Midoriya Izuku to curly green

Yaoyorozu: These seem more descriptive than anything

Ashido: well when we get our class in jokes we can change them

Ashido: just let me have some fun, will ya?

Ashido: especially since you locked anyone from changing your name >:(

Yaoyorozu: At this point I don’t regret that

Izuku sneaks a look at Kacchan. He has headphones in and is blaring rock music loud enough for Izuku to make it out clearly. His leg is warm where they touch.

When they get out at their station, Kacchan tries to duck away but Izuku sticks to him like a burr as they step out into the street. Kacchan scowls at him but at this point Izuku is half sure that it’s reflexive rather than because of any real annoyance.

“I’m serious about talking to you,” Izuku insists stubbornly.

“Well I’m serious about not,” Kacchan says, looking away. Izuku grabs his sleeve.

“What… what is the problem?” He sets his shoulders and stares Kacchan down. “Why don’t you want to talk?”

Kacchan glares at him, but there’s no heat behind it. “There’s nothing to talk about.”

“If there was, then you wouldn’t be avoiding it,” Izuku points out.

Kacchan’s eyes slide away from him and anger flares in Izuku’s chest. Kacchan always faces everything head on, except for this. He’s always avoided this, avoided him, and Izuku is sick and tired of it.

“Don’t look away from me,” Izuku seethes. “I know it’s hard because you only ever run away from this –”

Kacchan’s red eyes flare. “I don’t run away.”

“Yes, you do!” Izuku says. “Don’t lie to me. As soon as you found out that we were soulmates you just dropped me, even when you were supposed to do the opposite!” He chokes around the sudden lump in his throat. “And you never even told me why!”

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Kacchan snarls, leaning right into his space. Izuku is just glad that his knees don’t start to wobble. He’s pretty sure that he’d gotten over that on Friday while they were fighting. “It should be obvious to a nerd like you!”

“What does that mean?” Izuku cries out. “I don’t know and I’ve never known!”

Kacchan jabs a finger into the middle of his chest. “You were quirkless.”

The old word hits him harder than Kacchan ever has. Izuku stumbles a step back, eyes filling with tears. Kacchan sets his jaw, and steps after him.
“Are you that much of a dumbass that you could never figure it out?” Kacchan hisses, face so close their noses are almost touching. “You were never going to become a hero. We could never be partners.”

Izuku hates that he’s crying now, but he can’t stop it. “But I was! I am! I always told you that I was going to be a hero! Why didn’t you believe me?”

“Because it was crazy!” Kacchan yells. “You didn’t have a quirk! There was no fucking way that you could have done it.”

Izuku can’t look at him then. He whirls around and tries to cry as quietly as he can, because his original quirk never manifested – even if Kacchan thinks that One for All is his quirk, it isn’t. Kacchan still isn’t seeing him – only All Might’s power. Kacchan has never wanted him.

“And what about now?” he manages to ask, because he’s determined to have this out.

“Things are different now,” Kacchan says, quieter. “You’re right.” He’s silent, but Izuku can’t bring himself to turn around yet.

“So are you going to do anything about it?”

The question hangs between them, heavy.

“I don’t know,” Kacchan finally says.

Izuku tries not to let his despair swallow him. Kacchan makes a soft, pained sound. Quite suddenly, Izuku can’t stand to be near him anymore. He turns around viciously and plants his feet.

“Well figure it out,” he spits. “I’m going home. Don’t follow me.”

As he walks away, he tries to forget the haunted look in Kacchan’s eyes.

On Tuesday morning, Izuku heads to school early so he doesn’t catch the same train as Kacchan, and he (doesn’t hide) waits outside of the classroom until one minute before the bell so there’s no chance for them to interact. They never talk during school hours anyway, but throughout the day Izuku can feel Kacchan’s attention heavy on his shoulders.

Kacchan is still thinking about him when Izuku gets permission from Aizawa to slip out of their last period early. He can’t look his teacher in the eye as he presents the note to him, but Aizawa just nods for him to leave. Izuku refuses to meet Kacchan’s burning eyes on his way out the door.

The whole situation is a mess, and Izuku probably shouldn’t have run away yesterday after accusing Kacchan of running away, but he hadn’t been able to deal with anything else after the words that had been flung at him.

So the meeting that he was about to have is definitely going to go well. A whole forty minutes where he’s going to do nothing but think about Kacchan. Grimly, he sets himself the goal of not crying for the next hour. That would just be embarrassing, and he’d cried enough in his room yesterday afternoon.

He knocks on the door and then opens it. The room is near the nurses’ office, so it hadn’t been too hard to find. It’s obviously not a classroom, because it’s much smaller and has a homely feel to it that Izuku associates with his mother.
There’s a woman sitting in the desk under the window on the far side of the room. She has short, rumpled white hair and looks to be in her mid-to-late twenties. She turns around and smiles at him, revealing pointed canines and grey eyes.

“Ah, you must be Midoriya-kun. Please, come in and sit down.”

Izuku closes the door behind him and sits on the couch in the middle of the room. There’s a giant single seat on the other side of the coffee table, a plush American monster. Hatake sits down in it.

“I’m glad to meet you, Midoriya-kun. Please, call me Airi. I don’t like to stand on formalities too much.”

“Okay, Airi-san,” Izuku says awkwardly. There’s two glasses and a jug of water on the coffee table, so he pours a glass for himself and one for Airi. He pushes her glass towards her and picks his up.

Airi is looking at him consideringly. “Well, you’re the first person from your class that I’ve talked to so far. How is everyone settling in? How are things in 1-A?”

“I’m okay,” Izuku hedges. “There was a bit of a mess with the press incident yesterday, but Iida managed to calm mostly everyone down. Everyone’s getting to know each other, and we’ve picked out the class president and deputy. We had a trial of battle on Friday, and there’s another practical tomorrow afternoon.”

Airi picks up her glass. “Yes, the trial of battle. You know that the school asks on their enrolment forms for you to specify if you have a soulmate?”

“I left mine blank,” Izuku says awkwardly. “It’s optional.” He stresses the word.

“It is,” Airi notes. “But it’s still interesting to see who ticks it and who doesn’t. You left yours blank. So did Bakugou.” She leans forward. “I’ve been looking at your records, and you two have been mostly in the same classes for years, but you aren’t bonded. Can I ask why?”

“How can you know that we’re not bonded?” Izuku deflects.

Airi’s mouth twitches. “My apologies. I haven’t told you yet – the reason I’m employed here at UA is because my quirk gives me the ability to discern soulmates. I can look at a person and know if they have a soulmate, and if they’re bonded or not. If I see their soulmate, then I also know that the two of them are soulmates. I’ve seen Bakugou, and now I’ve seen you – so I know that you’re soulmates, and that you’re unbonded.”

Uneasy, Izuku looks to the side. He usually likes quirks, but this one is a bit too intrusive for him to fanboy over it.

“This first meeting is just to let me get to know you a bit,” Airi continues. “All my meetings with soulmates are single, at first, until I decide otherwise. Sometimes that’s after one session. Sometimes it takes longer. Everything you say to me here is confidential, even to the principal and your soulmate.”

“Like a therapist,” Izuku says awkwardly.

“Kind of,” Airi agrees. “But not totally. You can talk to me, but UA also has a professional therapist on the payroll that I encourage you to talk to if you need to.”

Something moves at the back of the room, and Izuku watches a black and white dog come out of a back room. It comes up to Izuku, who pets it. The fur is extremely soft.
“Ah, forgive Ichimaru,” Airi says, sounding a bit embarrassed. “She normally stays out back.”

“It’s fine,” Izuku says. Ichimaru puts her head on Izuku’s knee. Izuku keeps patting her.

“Okay. Well, really in a first lesson I like to get to know my students a bit better.” She rubs the back of her neck. “My class isn’t like the others on campus – I only have a few students, all of which need specialised attention. Most of my first year content is theory, anyway.” She stands up and goes back to her desk, picking up three books that were sitting separate to the side. She comes back and puts them on the table. There’s a single sheet of paper on the top with a list of questions. “Those are for you. I’d like the books and the questions back by the end of this term, alright?”


“It depends on each student,” she says. “Every soulbond is different. Generally, during the first year I teach theory, and in the second year I teach students how to comfortably navigate all aspects of their bond. Then if they know how to manifest their soulsword, I teach that during the third year.”

Izuku shivers lightly at the mention of the soulsword – the manifestation of a soulbond and part of the reason that Hero Duos can be so devastating in battle.

“How many students do you have?” he asks gingerly.

Airi raises an eyebrow. “Including you and Bakugou, fifteen pairs and three solos, spread across the school. Although I haven’t looked at most of the first years yet.”

“To use your quirk,” Izuku mutters to himself.

“Yes,” Airi says. She narrows her eyes slightly. “Does that make you uncomfortable?”

The resounding answer is yes but Izuku isn’t sure how to make her know how much he doesn’t like the idea without being rude.

“Don’t… you think it’s a bit of a privacy breach?” he finally asks. “Some kids might not want others to know that they have a soulmate.”

“The paradox of my job,” Airi says wryly. “To out a student, or to not give them access to the tools and skills that they will need later in life?” She sighs. “If this were a normal school, then I would agree with you. But you are training to be heroes, one day. And that matters for two reasons. One: Hero Duos have high success rates in their roles as heroes. The goal of UA is to provide as many capable, skilled heroes as possible. And secondly, to prevent any incidents similar to the one that happened on Friday. Soulmates should not be pitted against each other for any reason. This situation isn’t found in other schools, but is regular in UA. Those are the reasons that I have to breach the privacy of students – and it is a breach of privacy, you’re right. But to protect them, I have to do this.”

“And who knows?” Izuku challenges her. Her reasons are sound, but he’s still unsettled that she has the ability to see soulmates.

“Myself, your homeroom teacher, and the principal at the moment. For your practical sessions, the teacher in charge is given a list of students that aren’t to fight each other. Your names will be added to that list. So while they might suspect, they will not know for certain. Names are added to that list for many reasons. And after your performance on Friday, I think that any teacher seeing your two names will attribute it to that.”
“I see,” Izuku finally says. “Thank you for being honest with me.”

“My position is based on trust,” Airi says, leaning forward. “I know something about you that you would prefer to keep secret. So in exchange I will give you a secret.” She digs her phone out of her pocket and taps the screen several times. “This is my wife.” She hands the phone over. The woman in the picture has dark spiky hair and isn’t smiling, though her eyes are soft. A livid scar runs down her left cheek. “She’s whip smart and loves being in a fight. She’s also my soulmate.”

Izuku lifts his eyes to her for a few seconds. Airi’s face is exactly the same as it’s been the whole time that he’s been here – pleasant and open. But her eyes might have been slightly more guarded than earlier.

“She’s beautiful,” Izuku says, because it’s true. He hands back the phone.

“I think so too,” Airi says, smiling. “Now, I think that’s enough for today. Get started on those books so you’ll understand a bit of what I’ll be talking about next week, okay?”

“Same time and place?” Izuku asks. Airi nods.

“Every week. Pretty easy class compared to some of the others, if you ask me. I could never go back to school, ugh.”

The bell rings just as Izuku leaves her room. Time wise, Airi is right about this being his easiest class. But in the end, it might just be the one that matters most.

Head full of things to consider, he edges through UA’s crowded hallways. He needs to get home so he can get started on these books.

Chapter End Notes

I successfully finished femslash feb!! whew, 61k in 28 days wasn't easy and I've had a break for the last week, but now we should be back to fairly regular updates of this fic :D

Hmmm, so they're still refusing to talk to each other. smh. Well if this chapter wasn't angsty enough for you, here is some Good Angsty Bakudeku Stuff that I found that you should definitely read. Anyway, thanks for reading and I'll see you next time!!
Katsuki had been looking forward to the trial of rescue and a chance to show everyone up. Of course, that would be too easy. Of course, everything goes to shit when a massive group of villains appear.

He stands back to back with Kirishima and keeps the villains away with small explosions that are more noise than fire. He searches for an opening and when he sees it, launches himself forward.

“DIE!” he screams, exploding some fucker’s face. Annoyance and anger are warring in him for supremacy, and he’s not even trying to hold his anger back because there’s no way these villains deserve that type of effort from him.

He can’t believe that this shit is happening. How the hell had the villains gotten inside UA? Isn’t this place meant to be top tier? Does it have any security at all? He grits his teeth and aims an explosion right into another person’s face. These villains aren’t even a challenge – they’re all lackeys, he can tell, and that pisses him off even more. He lets off a volley of explosions and looks around for anyone else to vent his anger on.

A lightning bolt of pain shoots down his arm, focusing on his right middle finger. Katsuki curses up a storm as he pushes through it, because he isn’t the one feeling the pain right now. Fucking Deku. He’s messing things up, just like normal.

Finally there’s no villains left standing. Kirishima goes through them and makes sure that they’re all knocked out. “Is this all of them?”

Katsuki is vaguely impressed that he isn’t messed up from the fight, but then shakes the feeling off. He’s got bigger things to worry about right now, and he’s already pegged Kirishima as being tough.

“C’mon, we gotta go save the others!” Kirishima insists.

“Who knows what shape they’re in,” Katsuki growls, his finger throbbing. He knows how one of them is feeling, anyway.

“Yeah, that’s why we gotta hurry,” Kirishima says, looking out the window. “This is still USJ, so I reckon the rest of the class are going to be here as well. I’m worried about the people who don’t have many battle moves!”

“We should head back to the main area,” Katsuki says shortly.

“We can regroup with everyone there, yeah! If we hadn’t rushed forward then maybe Number 13-sensei could have fought instead. It’s manly to take responsibility –”

“You can look out for them if you want,” Katsuki says. “I’m just going to murder that warp fucker.”

Without their escape, the villains could be brought low. There’s no way that this can go on for long without the other pros at the school noticing. If Katsuki can deal with the warper, then the rest of the villains fall as well.
“Huh? You come out with a line like that now of all times? Plus, how are we gonna fight him, since physical attacks —”

“Shut up,” Katsuki says through gritted teeth as he looks for an exit. It’s hard to think through the pain in his finger, but he has to manage. “He’s the escape route – their entrance and exit. If we deal with him, then the rest of them can’t escape! We’ll just have to find some way to counter him…”

One of the villains leaps up at him and Katsuki launches an explosion at him, channelling his anger and frustration and fake pain through his palm.

“If he assigned useless villains like this to us, then it’ll be fine,” Katsuki says. “Now come on.”

“Heh, you got it,” Kirishima says, punching his palm. “You’re looking real manly, Bakugou!”

“Peh,” Katsuki snorts, even though the words make his stomach flutter. Sweet, sweet validation. “Whatever.”

They find a way down to ground level, and the sounds of fighting in the distance makes it obvious as to where the main courtyard is. Katsuki curses his bubbling stomach – he’s not fucking nervous or anxious or worried about any of them. Especially not Deku.

He runs faster.

The main courtyard comes into sight, and Katsuki sees Deku sprinting towards some weird fucking guy who All Might has in a hold, but also has All Might in its hold? Snarling, Katsuki throws himself forward and explodes the thing with a massive blast from his gauntlet.

“OUTTA THE FUCKING WAY DEKU!”

He does a flip and grabs the warp fucker, and makes sure he pins him by the nerd’s side, because Deku was charging in with no plan and Katsuki has to stop that bullshit because honestly Deku can’t think for shit in situations like this.

“Kacchan… everyone…” Deku murmurs the words so that Katsuki is probably the only one to hear them. He shoots a sharp grin up at him for a split second, success bursting in his chest as Deku’s face goes slack with surprise, before turning his head to the villains that are still free.

The icy dude and Kirishima are standing between them and the rest of the villains. There’s ice covering the tall black villain, and in a flash, All Might breaks free of its hold.

“The symbol of peace won’t go down as easy as you clowns,” icy dude says.

“You’ve pinned our escape route,” creepy hand guy says. “Well now… this is quite the cinch.”

“Just as I thought,” Katsuki says. “This idiot was never that smart! The bit on your body that you use to go all misty got sealed, motherfucker! You gonna tell me you don’t use a warp gate to hide your true body?! Huh?!” Victory strumming through his veins, Katsuki leans in. “If the shadow mist was your true body, then you would have never called any attack dangerous.” The warp fucker groans. “Don’t you move! If you twitch, I’ve got an explosion for you, right here and now.”

Creepy hand guy starts a monologue and Katsuki rolls his eyes. He’s about to point out that there’s no way that the weird tall muscly guy can even escape from where icy dude has him pinned, when the guy *rips himself out of the ice and walks away like it’s nothing*. Katsuki tries not to let his jaw drop as it starts to move towards Katsuki and its arm and leg starts to regrow.
Katsuki’s stomach drops out as it gets closer, and then there’s a whirl as it launches itself towards him.

“Kacchan!”

All Might diverts the attack so quickly that Katsuki doesn’t see it. The knockback unseats him from where he has warp fuck pinned, and as soon as his hands are off him, warp fuck sinks into the ground and disappears.

“Kacchan? You dodged that?”

*I couldn’t see him at all,* Katsuki thinks dazedly.

“No, you fucking idiot,” Katsuki grits.

Creepy hand guy points at All Might. “We had no choice. We had to save our ally, didn’t we? Not long ago, one of the kids over there, hmm, which one… The plain looking one. He tried to beat me up with all his strength, right?”

“You didn’t even manage a hit?” Katsuki asks, enraged, because how useless can Deku be?

“The Noumu blocked it,” Deku says quietly. “It’s so fast…”

Katsuki grunts, because he’s just seen the weird tall thing – the Noumu – move faster than he can see. Maybe Deku has an excuse… this time.

“The symbol of peace? Give me a break! You’re nothing more than a bludgeon of oppression yourself! Violence only breeds more violence. And once we kill you, that’ll only be made known to the world!”

“You’re mad,” All Might says. “You ought to keep your anti-social views to yourself. Besides, be straight with me. You only want to get your kicks in.”

“It’s three versus five,” icy dude points out.

“And Kacchan exposed the shadow guy’s weak point!” Deku says loudly.

“We’ll send them packing, no problem,” Kirishima grins.

“NO!” All Might exclaims. “Please, escape now!”

Ice guy stammers out something, and Deku starts mumbling but *louder* and it’s just worse when it’s not in the back of Katsuki’s head.

“All you need to do is let a pro hero show you how it’s done!” All Might exclaims. Katsuki grits his teeth, because he hates running from a fight, but he’s not stupid – against warp fuck he’s victorious (obviously, as he’d already won against him) and he can stay away from the creepy hand guy, but the Noumu is out of his league.

He grabs Deku’s arm and is about to yank him away from the fight, when All Might launches himself forward in a flurry of attacks that has everyone on the battlefield reeling, even though only the Noumu is getting punched. Katsuki can only stare in shock as All Might wails on the Noumu and then launches him up into the air, and through the glass ceiling that surrounds the USJ.

*So this is the world of the pros,* Katsuki thinks, shocked. Even with shock absorption, All Might was able to put *that much* force into his movements, that he was able to win out against the
Noumu. The amount of power that he must possess is overwhelming.

The giant cloud of dust slowly begins to clear. Katsuki shakes his head. “Come on, Deku,” he says, tugging at his arm.

Kirishima and icy dude have gotten the memo and are already drawing back.

“That’s All Might for you,” icy dude says. “Looks like we’re not even players anymore.”

“Midoriya, we should draw back!” Kirishima shouts. “We don’t want to get used as hostages.”

Deku looks back at him, panic in his eyes. Katsuki stares at him, trying to parse the thoughts running through the back of his mind. What is the nerd so worried about…?

Katsuki tightens his grip on Deku’s arm. “Come on,” he hisses.

Deku’s head whips back around to where All Might is standing. “Let me go,” he says, voice panicked.

“No fucking way,” Katsuki says, so Izuku turns around and punches him in the face.

Not expecting it in any way, Katsuki reels, hands going to his nose. A split second later he’s glad for an excuse to fall on his ass, because it feels like Deku has just snapped both his fucking legs, and there’s no way Katsuki can stand up while feeling that.

Dizzy and feeling like he’s about to throw up from the pain, Katsuki stares cross eyed into the distance. Fuck Deku for pulling this shit. How has he not got control over his quirk yet…?

Kirishima is crouching over him and saying something, but Katsuki makes himself look to where Deku has gone, towards All Might. He’s lying in a puddle on the ground, and there are several teachers around him…? When did the teachers get here. What’s going on…

Grimly, he shakes himself awake. There’s nothing wrong with him besides the punch Deku landed on him, and it doesn’t feel like that even broke his nose. Fuck, how embarrassing.

Snarling, he shuts off the part of him that’s connected to Deku. He’s fine. Fine. Deku can fuck right off with his bullshit. Katsuki doesn’t need to deal with that. He grapples with the pain and shoves it down, then stomps on it. This is his head. He gets to control what happens here. No one else.

In the face of his anger, the pain recedes. Katsuki sits up, almost head butting Kirishima.

“Man, are you alright?”


“The villains left after all the other teachers arrived,” Kirishima says.

Katsuki looks over to where All Might, Deku and the villains had been. The space is empty, and his heart rate spikes.

“Midoriya and All Might have already gone to the infirmary,” Kirishima carries on, regardless of Katsuki’s blood pressure rising. That idiot does nothing but throw himself into dangerous situations, even after everything that Katsuki has said to him over the last week! He’ll kill him with his own two hands, damn it.

Fuming, Katsuki staggers towards the gathering of students and teachers, and when they get there
he definitely doesn’t lean against Kirishima for support. Someone proclaims them all to be fine, and Katsuki glares daggers at Kirishima before he can move to protest it.

With a suddenness that leaves him lightheaded, Katsuki can walk again. Deku’s either given painkillers or been healed – either way, it means that Katsuki can move.

“Bro, are you sure you’re alright?"

“I’m just peachy,” Katsuki says stiffly. Kirishima looks doubtful but Katsuki feels ready to deal out some murder, so he sensibly steps back.

Furious, Katsuki stalks after the rest of the students as they head back towards class. He doesn’t mutter like the others when Aizawa says that they can all have an early mark and go home. He’s more than happy to get out of here.

Today has been a complete and utter mess.

Izuku wakes up suddenly.

Groggily, he brings a hand up to hold his head. The clock on his bedside table reads 1:47. It’s the middle of the night and he would much rather be sleeping after everything that had happened – well, technically yesterday. The trial of rescue was supposed to have been a fun prac that would allow 1-A to start exploring the different uses of their quirks. Instead, villains had attacked.

Izuku wonders if that’s why he’s awake – if that’s why Kacchan is having a nightmare.

He can still taste Kacchan’s emotions on his tongue, and they’re not good ones. Frustrated, he kicks his blankets off and creeps into the kitchen to grab a drink of water. His mum had been frantic after he’d gotten home and explained everything. Luckily UA’s uniform meant that he didn’t have to tell her about his legs and how messed up they’d become. He’d glossed over the part where he’d gotten injured by saying that All Might had scared the other villains off. It hadn’t been too far from the truth – after all, Izuku had mostly been a distraction that All Might hadn’t really needed. He’d managed to keep up his hero form until both of them were in the nurse’s office. Izuku’s cheeks heated as he remembered how All Might had swept him up in his arms and leapt through the air to get them back to the school extremely quickly.

He’s going to have to apologise to Kacchan for punching him in the face – and in front of Kirishima and Todoroki, too. Izuku buries his head in his hands. Well, no time like the present.

Me: are you awake?

It takes a few minutes for Kacchan to respond, but Izuku can feel the lightening of emotions that means that he’s not dreaming anymore.

Kacchan: No thanks to you. That text woke me up, dumbass.

Izuku seesaws on what he should say next. Imply that Kacchan woke him up with his nightmare? Say something about the fight? About punching him? About them.

Kacchan: Fuck, stop thinking so loudly. It’s too late for that bullshit.

Me: sorry
Me: and sorry for punching you. That wasnt cool

Izuku sighs. He can’t just stop thinking, though. Unless he goes back to sleep, but he doesn’t feel like he’s going to do that for a while. He’s slept off his drowsiness from being healed and now he’s feeling a nervous energy sing through him. It still feels like he’s in the middle of the fight – fear pounding through his veins. He can’t stop thinking about the Noumu – and from what Izuku can tell from Kacchan’s dream, neither can he.

Kacchan: No school tomorrow. They sent an email out. Just telling you because everyone else was in class when Aizawa told us.

Sure enough, when Izuku looks in his inbox there’s a message from the school, saying that there won’t be any school tomorrow while security is investigated.

Me: thanks. Wait does that mean your meeting with Airi is cancelled?

Kacchan: ;)

Izuku shakes his head before sending a riskier text.

Me: wanna hang out?

Kacchan doesn’t respond to that. Izuku sighs. It’s not unexpected, but it still stings.

He closes his bedroom door and turns his desk light on. If he’s going to be awake, then he’s going to at least do some work.

There’s a few questions from English that he needs to get through, and that takes him almost forty minutes. Just as he’s finishing the last question, his phone buzzes.

Kacchan: Are you doing fucking schoolwork????

The text is followed by a string of angry emojis.

Me: couldn’t get back to sleep

Kacchan: Me either.

Izuku blinks at the response.

Me: mum was scared when she heard about everything. tired me out more than the healing

Kacchan: My mum rang the school and went off. I told her not to bother but she didn’t agree with me. As soon as he got home Dad was being stupidly protective too.

Me: well its not like they dont have a reason. Were not supposed to be fighting villains until we get our internships, and even then it wouldnt be high level stuff like what happened

Heroics is a dangerous profession. Izuku has always known that – even though when he was small, he tended to focus on the saving part of it. Well, he’s always focused on the saving part of it. But the saving is intrinsically tied to danger – there has to be something to save from, after all.

USJ hasn’t put him off heroics, but it definitely has him thinking. He needs to get a grip on One for All. He’d shattered both legs trying to give All Might some help, and that hadn’t exactly been the ideal situation. After that, he’d been useless. And he’d rendered Kacchan useless as well.
Seeing him collapse had almost hurt as much as his legs. If he wants to be capable in any way as a hero, he can’t be helpless after using his quirk one time, especially if he’s going to take Kacchan out of the fight as well.

They hadn’t been able to do anything about the Noumu. He’d even punched it with 100% One for All and nothing had happened. He’s nowhere near All Might’s power –

Wait.

Izuku blinks rapidly. How had he forgotten that? He’d punched the Noumu with One for All and nothing had happened.

Mind racing, Izuku pushes aside his English homework and grabs his nearest notebook. Even with its shock absorption, Izuku should have been affected by his punch. The power had been in his arm – it had to get out to be absorbed. And it gets out by shattering his arm.

But it hadn’t shattered. Which meant that he’d been thinking about One for All wrong. He’d assumed that, like All Might, he needed to get stronger to contain the power of his quirk. But if 100% force had somehow left his arm without leaving him damaged, that means that really it has nothing to do with how muscled he is. He supposes that makes sense – after all, All Might’s true form is hardly muscly, but he could still channel 100% of his quirk. Technically, Izuku sees no reason why he can’t do the same. He just has to learn how to.

Izuku flexes, but his arm feels normal. Any residue would have likely been healed along with his legs, at any rate. Frustrated, he starts making notes – why would shock absorption allow him to come out of that situation unscathed?

He must have connected his punch before he’d released the power, and then all the power had been sucked away. But how? Izuku stares at his arm.

One for All isn’t limited to his own physical power. By himself he could never have destroyed the zero pointer in the exam – he could have never thrown a baseball over six hundred metres. One for all isn’t just an augmentation quirk – it’s a power source that he can tap into. That’s why his body can’t handle it – it’s too much power. Augmentation would just push him to the extremes of what his body was already capable of. Not break his limbs every time he uses it.

He taps his pen against his desk. He’s going to have to ask All Might more questions.

His phone buzzes. Izuku flips it over.

Kacchan: STOP THINKING

Me: I thought you wanted me to work out my quirk

Kacchan: Can’t you do that at a normal time and not 3am????

Me: it's only 2:30

Another string of angry emojis.

Me: sorry

Kacchan: If you’re sorry go to sleep.

Even if they don’t have school tomorrow, it’s probably a good idea. Reluctantly Izuku closes his books and flips his lamp off. He can think about these things later. For now, he’ll give Kacchan a
He hopes that Kacchan doesn’t dream again.

Izuku sleeps in and wakes up to over five hundred messages on the class group chat. He squints at the last few, determines that it’s Shouji, Kaminari and Tokoyami arguing over which top forty band is the most emo, and mutes the chat.

He quickly sends a friend request to everyone in class that he hasn’t friended yet, and his phone buzzes with acceptance notifications as he pulls on his running clothes.

His mum is already hovering around the kitchen when he comes down. “I’m going for a run,” he says, downing a glass of water before grabbing his earphones. He still feels tired, probably because of his broken sleep cycle in the middle of the night. Maybe running will distract him from thinking about what happened yesterday.

She wrings her hands. “Do you have to? After everything that happened yesterday…”

So much for being distracted.

He pulls her into a hug. “It’ll be fine, really. I’ve been running around here for almost a year now, and I’ve never run into any trouble.”

“Can’t you ask one of your friends to come over and run with you?” she asks. “It would make me feel a lot better.”

Izuku scratches his head. He doesn’t know if anyone in his class runs except Hagakure, and he doesn’t know if she lives nearby or if she’d even want to run with him.

“I could ask Kacchan,” Izuku says dubiously, because he’d already asked him if he wanted to hang out today, but he hadn’t replied to that text so the answer is probably a resounding no. Although, if his mum is the one that’s asking, and not him…

But Inko looks relieved. “Oh! That’s a good idea. I’ll ring Mitsuki and she can tell Katsuki and get him ready while you walk over.”

“Err,” Izuku says, but she’s already got her phone out and is clicking away determinedly.

Izuku slinks towards the door as his mum talks to Kacchan’s mum. She’s making a lot of pleased sounds so Mitsuki is probably agreeing.

She hangs up. “Mitsuki said that she’ll get Katsuki out of bed and ready by the time that you get over there.” She hugs Izuku again. “I’m so glad that you’re on speaking terms again.”

Izuku is sure that they’re something but speaking terms probably doesn’t cut it. “Right,” he manages to say. “I’ll just go over, then.”

He makes it out of the house without his mum plying him with an extra water bottle and a bag of snacks, so he considers that a success. He can hear the chaos within the Bakugou house from down the street, and inwardly cringes a bit as he comes up to the door and rings the doorbell.

Bakugou Masaru answers the door. “You’re just in time to witness the spectacular end to this fight,” he says wryly as something flies across the room behind him and smashes into the wall.
Izuku flinches. Masaru just sighs.

Kacchan comes stomping into the room and Izuku’s heart nearly stops because he’s pulling his shirt on over his head and he sees, for the tiniest moment, a flash of black on his chest that must have been his soulmark poking up above his sports bra.

“WELL YOU CAN’T MAKE ME!” he screams, presumably towards his mother. He storms past his father and grabs Izuku’s shirt, dragging him away from the door. Izuku makes a startled noise and Masaru just waves at him before closing the door.

“K-Kacchan,” Izuku stammers, almost tripping over his own feet before he can keep up with the pace that he’s setting. “Are you okay?”

“You want to run? Well let’s fucking run,” Kacchan snarls, letting go of his shirt and settling into a speedy pace that Izuku has to sprint to catch up to.

He hadn’t known if Kacchan did much running regularly, but this answers that. Kacchan’s face is set determinedly and Izuku doesn’t want to disrupt his thoughts as he works through whatever argument he was having with his mum. So he just falls into step beside him, heart warming. This is all he’s ever wanted – just for the two of them to be able to coexist peacefully and beside each other. If they’re together, then they can do anything. And running with Kacchan doesn’t make him forget what happened yesterday, but it makes him feel a little better about it.

Kacchan pushes him past his normal running routes and deeper into the main city than he would normally go. They reach the beach and Izuku manages to turn his steps towards the spot where he had cleaned up the entire beach. When they get there, Kacchan slows down to stare at the pristine sand.

Izuku puts his hands on his knees and pants for a bit before stretching his legs. Kacchan is still staring at the beach.

“You really did this?”

Izuku leans down to touch his toes. “Yeah,” he finally says. “You saw that I was doing it.” Kacchan grunts. Izuku chews his lip. “Is everything fine with your mum?”

Kacchan waves him off. “Yeah. That’s just a normal morning.”

“Including the flying bowls?” Izuku asks carefully.

Kacchan shrugs. “She says that buying new dishes allows her to experiment with what designs and colours she really likes.”

Izuku struggles with that for a second before giving up. He kicks at the sand a bit and Kacchan sighs.

“Let’s just go back home.”

“Okay,” Izuku says, and sets off at a slower jog towards a back street that he knows is a short cut back to their street. It’s getting towards the middle of the day and he’s definitely noticing that it’s getting close to summer. It’s getting quite hot, and he hadn’t put any sunscreen on this morning.

Kacchan follows him without complaining, which Izuku is fairly surprised at. Although, Kacchan must know that he’s spent a lot of time at this beach. If he isn’t that familiar with the surrounding area, then it would make sense to let Izuku lead them home.
They’re just about to go past an alley when Izuku hears a sharp, scared sound coming from within.

Both he and Kacchan skid to a halt and peer into the alley. Izuku sets his mouth when he sees a man leaning over a smaller woman, who is shrinking against the alley wall.

“Hey!” Izuku calls out. The man whips his head around.

“Get back to the schoolyard,” he sneers.

“Oi fuckhead,” Kacchan says, tucking his thumbs into the waistband of his pants. It makes him look effortlessly cool. “Why don’t you leave? The lady obviously doesn’t want you around.”

The man steps away from the woman, and Izuku sees that he’s brandishing a knife. He can see Kacchan’s muscles tighten in anticipation of a fight. Izuku shifts his feet so he’s ready to move.

“Aw, how cute. Two little teens skipping school and playing at being heroes, huh? Well guess what. You’re not heroes, and I’m the adult. So why don’t you both fuck off and mind your own business, huh?”

“No way,” Izuku says. “Put that knife down.”

The man boggles at him. “And then what? You’ll ‘let me go’? How considerate.”

“Just because we’re in school doesn’t mean we can’t call the cops,” Kacchan drawls.

The man’s face twists. “Well I’m guessing that they’re gonna take the word of an adult over two kids that are skipping school. Especially when I have another witness on my side.”

He looks behind him, but the woman is gone. She must have fled down the other end of the alley. Izuku knows that this one opens out onto a main road. The man hisses.

“Look what you’ve done now. A nice little prize, and you’ve ruined everything.”

“Yeah, I’ve had just about enough of your bullshit,” Kacchan says, voice going sharp.

The man sneers at them. “Whatever. I’ll find some more prey.” He bends his knees and jumps, four stories, onto the roof of the building beside them. Izuku stares up in shock at his disappearing shadow.

“Well that was shitty,” Kacchan mutters.

“We should actually call the police,” Izuku says.

Kacchan looks at him out of the corner of his eye. “No shit.”

Izuku makes the call while Kacchan kicks at the rubbish in the gutter. The lady on the line says that they’d met a known criminal and thanked him for alerting someone to his location. Izuku tries to ask if there’s anything else that she wants to know or that he can do, but she firmly tells him to not chase the criminal in any way and that the police would be notified of the sighting. Izuku hangs up with a bad taste in his mouth.

Kacchan joins him as he makes his way out of the alley. Izuku clenches his fist. He knows that they’re not allowed to use their quirks in public until they get a licence to do so, but they had done nothing to stop that man. He’d gotten away, and the police probably wouldn’t get told about it for a few hours and then they wouldn’t be able to use the information. If only they’d been older – if
only they’d had their hero licences and had been able to do something. If only they’d been heroes...

“We can’t solve every problem in Japan just yet,” Kacchan says.

Izuku shoots him a dirty look. “You know, I actually think that it’s pretty rude of you to just read my mind like that.”

Kacchan snorts. “I didn’t need to read your mind to know what you’re thinking, dumbass. It’s all over your face.”

Izuku sighs. “It’s not fair. We could have done something to stop that man.”

Kacchan shrugs. “Sure. But the rules mean that we couldn’t.” He bumps his elbow against Izuku’s side. “Besides, we helped that woman. I think she’s thanking us right about now.”

“I guess,” Izuku mumbles. “But he said that he’s just going to go and find someone else.”

“And he probably will,” Kacchan says grimly. “But like I said. We’re not old enough to beat up every villain in Japan. But one day, we will be.” Something like a smile ghosts over his face. “One day I’ll triumph over every person out there.”

“Right,” Izuku says. The words don’t make him feel much better. Kacchan sighs loudly.

“Look,” he says, starting to sound annoyed. “This is what we’re training to fix, right? So just think about it like that. Fuel for your fire.” He huffs. “That guy’ll get caught. He’s way too slimy to not get caught. Don’t worry about it.”

Izuku still broods over the encounter for the rest of the journey home. Today and yesterday, he could do nothing. He’s a hero in training, but only in training. He can’t actually do anything yet, besides train. He clenches his fist. He needs to be stronger, faster, better.

They get to his front door first, and Kacchan pushes him towards the door unceremoniously. Izuku turns to thank him for coming out with him, but Kacchan is already walking down the sidewalk towards his house.

Inside, his mum fusses over him. Izuku checks his phone and sees a few messages from Uraraka.

“Mum? Can I go out with Iida and Uraraka?”

“Where to?”

“Just the shops.”

Inko tuts worriedly. “Can they come here? They’re more than welcome. And you’ll be safe, and where I can keep an eye on you.”

Izuku knows that she’s worried, so he messages the others with the invitation. Uraraka agrees quickly, and Iida also sends through his acceptance after a few minutes. Izuku texts them both his address.

“I’ll have a shower before they get here,” he says.

“Will they stay for lunch?” Inko asks. “Oh, of course they will, it’s almost lunch time, and you kids are always hungry.”

“Uraraka lives by herself,” Izuku points out, making sure it comes across as casual. “She’s renting
a place because her parents live too far away to commute.”

He watches as her face transforms. “Oh no! Is she eating right? Does she have a kitchen, what are her shopping habits? Oh she probably doesn’t take as much time as she should with her food, I’ll have to make extra so that she can take some home…”

Smiling to himself, Izuku leaves the kitchen feeling a bit lighter.

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Class 1-A Chat (#healthandwellbeing)

5:40pm

Yaoyorozu: Okay guys. How is everyone doing after yesterday?

Lord of Darkness: we should all be fine. No one got hurt except Midoriya.

Alien Queen: @curly green how you going

watt the fuck: yeah @curly green bro how are you??

rock hard ;): yeah!! You looked real messed up man

curly green: I’m okay guys!! Recovery girl healed me up so I’m feeling normal. Even went for a run with Kacchan this morning ha

Alien Queen: :O spending time with Bakugou… How did you swindle that???, He ignores all my invites D:<

curly green: oh we live on the same road so I just walked over there

watt the fuck: tf?? Since when??

curly green: like our entire lives

rock hard ;): wow I didn’t know. Gotta grill Bakugou a bit harder at school huh

Alien Queen: if we ever go back!! Honestly I didn’t even do anything cool today just drowned in homework D:

Yaoyorozu: It’s my job to make sure that everyone’s feeling okay. If anyone wants to talk about what happened yesterday then you’re all more than welcome to PM me.

rock hard ;): honestly I’m just worried about Aizawa

curly green: do any of you know anything else about how he’s doing??

Yaoyorozu: Oh right, you weren’t there yesterday when they debriefed us Midoriya. Aizawa-sensei is in a stable condition and they were sure that he’s going to be fine.

curly green: !!! thank you for telling me I was really worried
Coming back to UA on Friday morning is weird.

There’s no cameras or press outside the gates. Izuku had marvelled over the carefully worded press release that the school had put out. They had made it seem like the press had allowed for the initial intrusion, which had been linked to the villains being able to get in. By doing that, they had scared off the press around the school, and they had stopped any press from writing negatively about the break in because they wouldn’t want to be potentially thought of as a villain sympathiser. Izuku had thought that it had been handled masterfully, and because of the statement, the news cycle had moved on after twenty four hours of sympathising with the school.

Most of the class is there early, except for Tokoyami and Kouda, who catch the same (late) train and always sprint into class a few seconds before the bell. Iida is up the front of the class telling people to sit in their chairs, except he’s the only one who’s not sitting down.

Iida and Uraraka had come over yesterday and had stayed all afternoon and for dinner. They’d watched a movie and played some card games and Izuku had bashfully shown them his room. It had been… weird. Izuku thinks it might have been normal. He’s friends with both of them, he thinks. Truly the most wild part of high school so far, and he’s broken both his legs this week.

The door opens and Izuku turns to see who their sub will be, but it’s Aizawa-sensei who is standing in the doorway.

“Morning,” he says, as if he didn’t have bandages wrapped around his entire head. Izuku goggles at him as he slowly makes his way towards the front of the room.

“Sensei, you’re all right!”

“Can you really call that ‘all right’?” Uraraka says, echoing Izuku’s thoughts.

“Don’t worry yourselves over me,” Aizawa says. “After all, the battle hasn’t really ended for you yet.”

Izu feels a jolt go through him. “You don’t mean…” more fighting? His legs are still kind of screwed up from Wednesday. There can’t be more villains around, surely…?

“UA’s sport’s festival is approaching!” Aizawa says.

Izu almost melts into a pile of relief. An actual normal school related activity. Right. He can do that. In front of him, he sees Kacchan’s shoulders relax slightly.

Aizawa cuts through the babble of the class. “Since we’re going ahead with the festival, it means that the school is confident that it can handle any situation that occurs. Police presence will be five times higher than normal. But you shouldn’t be worrying about that – what you should be thinking about is what a huge chance UA’s sports festival presents for you all. This isn’t some event that can be brought to a halt by the likes of villains.”

Of course! All the people of Japan and a lot of other countries as well would be watching, and that meant all the heroes would be as well. This was their chance to make a first impression on older heroes – a chance to be scouted, to get noticed, to make their first mark.
Aizawa sighs, bringing Izuku’s attention back to the front of the class. “Naturally, entering a squad of famous heroes will get you higher status and more experience. Remember, time is limited. If you get noticed by a pro, that gives you the standing for a brighter future. You’ll only get three chances to get noticed… If you aim to be a hero, this is an event that you can’t overlook!”

Izuku drifts through the rest of the day in a daze. Their teachers seem to be a bit forgiving today, at least – they’re not asking the class many questions, so he can get by on scribbling down whatever’s on the board without having to think too critically. The sports festival. What does that mean to him…? Is it so important to always be aiming for the top?

All Might wants to use it as a way to show that he’s arrived. What does that even mean? How would he even begin to be able to show that? If he’s being honest with himself, he’s not sure he even wants to arrive yet. USJ had given him a serious reality check. He needs to sort out All for One before he starts painting a target on his back.

When the final bell rings to signal the end of school, Aizawa has them go through a few more quick slides before letting them leave. It’s enough time to let a large group of students gather outside the 1-A door.

Kacchan is snarling and spitting at some purple haired kid while Izuku tries to calm down Mineta. He’s just glad that Uraraka’s by his side – with her support, he feels heady with the knowledge that he could probably pull off anything. Shoving their way through a few kids is easy when he thinks about it like that.

The purple haired kid flips his hair. “Based on the results of the sports festival, people can even come under review to be transferred to heroics. And the reverse is also true. So scoping out the competition? Nah. A gen ed kid like me, I’m thinking, ‘why don’t I try to pull the rug out from under those heroics kids while they’re on their high horses?’ Consider this a declaration of war.”

Izuku tries not to reel in the face of that. This guy is totally in their faces about not liking the heroics department – Izuku wonders how that’ll go for him if he does manage to get transferred.

A kid with wild eyes jumps up and starts yelling. “Hey! I’m from class B! I heard you knocked around villains or whatever so I came to hear it direct! But not from some snot nosed kid! Don’t embarrass us during the main event!”

Is he calling Kacchan a snot nosed kid? Izuku wonders, half outraged and half confused. The guy obviously isn’t seeing things right if he’s seeing Kacchan like that.

“Ooookay then…” Uraraka mumbles.

“Hey! Wait a second, what did you just do?” Kirishima calls out as Kacchan flips off the rest of the people outside. “Now we’re gonna get haters coming after us!”

“It doesn’t matter,” Kacchan says, flippant. “None of that matters, once you’re at the top.”

Izuku stares at the back of his head. Around him, his classmates start to get fired up – just by listening to Kacchan’s words, they’re suddenly pumped and ready for the sports festival. That’s the effect that Kacchan has, knowingly or not – the ability to draw people to him, and to inspire them with his actions and drive.

Izuku huffs a little to himself. *I can’t believe I’ve been such an idiot. Of course there is a difference between someone who is always aiming for the top and someone who settles. Everyone is trying their hardest – there’s no way that he can’t step up and try his hardest as well. Iida is here...*
to make his brother proud; Uraraka wants to become a successful hero so that she can support her parents.

*Remember how you felt on the beach that day.*

Has he really gotten so used to having a quirk that he’s taking it for granted?

Izuku stares at the back of Kacchan’s head and makes a promise to himself – he will put in the effort and he will show the world that he’s arrived. He’ll try his best to win the sports festival and make All Might proud.

And *maybe*, aiming for the top will get Kacchan’s attention as well.

Chapter End Notes

I blatantly stole Kaminari’s group chat name from [this series](https://example.com) which isn’t bakudeku but is still excellent and honestly has the best group chat memes I’ve ever come across in any fandom and it updated yesterday with ‘watt the fuck’ and I knew instantly that I was never going to find a better nickname for Kaminari

Also [LOOK AT THESE AMAZING MEMES MY FRIEND MADE FOR THIS FIC](https://example.com) they’re so good I love them
Thursday afternoon finds Katsuki sitting in some dumb looking single seater while a woman with grey hair pours herself water from the jug on the table between them. He’s unimpressed with her so far, and he’s unimpressed by the guerrilla warfare that Deku has been waging on him for the last couple of days to get him to come see her. Seriously, continually waking him up at three am is a dick move.

He’s been trying to focus on his training to distract himself from the fucking mess that is their soulbond, but Deku hasn’t been making it easy. He’s weaselled his way into Katsuki’s household more than once over the last week and both of his parents seem more than happy to welcome him in. There’s a storm cloud of emotions hanging between them that Katsuki knows will only get worse if they aren’t addressed, but just thinking about it makes his head hurt and a confusing mess of emotions pool in his gut.

The woman smiles at him. He’s not sure if it’s contrived or not, which annoys him. A teacher shouldn’t smile like that.

“So, Bakugou-kun. I’m sorry that we missed our first lesson last week because of the school closing. Please, call me Airi. I don’t like formalities too much.”

Katsuki grunts in response.

“I’ve talked to Midoriya-kun twice now, and he seems quite willing to learn what I have to teach,” she says shrewdly. “Midoriya-kun also warned me that you were hesitant to come and see me.”

Katsuki takes a moment to curse up a storm inside his head before shrugging. “I’ll top whatever the nerd’s doing.” Bookwork is easy. Read a set number of pages and remember shit, and then regurgitate it later. Katsuki can remember things when he wants to. When he pays attention to things he knows that he’s smart.

Her eyes are sharp where they dig into his skin. Katsuki doesn’t want her to get under it, so he glares right back. Yeah, there’s no way that he’s losing a staring contest with her. Katsuki lifts his chin up.

“Good,” she finally says. She pushes a stack of books towards him. There’s a piece of paper on top with a list of questions. “I’d like for you to finish these before the end of the term so we can discuss them.” She takes a sip of her water. “Your soulmate already returned them to me after I gave them to him during our first lesson. He had some interesting thoughts to share with me during our meeting on Tuesday.”

Katsuki’s anger burns under his skin and he barely resists the urge to explode the pile of books. She’s a teacher. A teacher. That just makes his desire to explode the books increase. If he can’t take it out on her, then he wants to take it out on something inanimate. She has no right to address
him or Deku like *that*. He’s (*very*) grudgingly at peace with the fact that the school knows about them. Whatever. But this lady has no business being all up in *his* business.

Her sharp eyes are still stabbing him.

Katsuki swallows his growl and tames his scowl. The more defensive he is, the more she’ll push. He recognises the type of person she is.

“You’re the type who likes nerds, huh?” Katsuki finally mutters.

“I like people who devote themselves to their learning and can talk intelligently,” she says. “Midoriya has proved himself to be that type of person.”

*Are you?* hangs between them, and Katsuki gnashes his teeth.

“Why’d they put someone like you in charge anyway?”

Airi takes a sip of her water. “My quirk allows me to see if someone has a soulmate, and if they are bonded or not. That led me into the field of soulmate theory, and thus to this job.”

*So she’s just an all-round sneak*, Katsuki thinks. It fits her and her dagger eyes.

“Whatever,” Katsuki says. There’s no way he’s letting on how unsettling he finds her quirk.

She arches an eyebrow. “Well, since we missed last week’s meeting, do you want to go over that content now?”

“…whatever,” Katsuki mutters. It’s just another dumb lesson. He can get through it fine, just like he does all the other dumb lessons that don’t deserve his time.

All he has to is grit his teeth and bear it.

Izuku kicks at the sidewalk and tries not to feel on edge. He’s around the corner from his house, in front of the Bakugou household, but behind a tree so Mitsuki can’t look out and see him waiting. It’s bad enough that he’s going to corner Kacchan like this – he doesn’t need to drag his family into it as well.

It’s the Thursday before the week of the sports festival, and the event hangs over all their heads as the days pass and it draws closer. Izuku can’t decide if it’s a threat or an incentive, or what he’s even feeling threatened or incentivised by. He finally settles on the fact that he’s intimidated, but excited. After all, he’s watched the UA sports festival on TV so many times, but this year he’ll actually be *in it*. He feels like he’s allowed to have a few mixed feelings.

Classes have continued like normal. Sometimes he wonders if the teachers are trying to make them all forget about what happened at USJ, or if it’s just him who can’t get it out of his head. Even with the teacher’s very determined efforts, and the mid semester exams, the threat of the villains hangs in the back of his mind. Izuku had asked Aizawa for more details on the planning of the sports festival, and Aizawa had given him a quick rundown of how things are going to go. The new security is impressive. Not that any villain would even think about disrupting it in the first place – after all, the stands would be packed with pro heroes as well as other spectators.

So no, he’s not worried about villains attacking again. He has other things to think about – All Might’s decreased time limit, One for All, Kacchan’s awkward distance. He can’t do anything
about the first thing, and he’s been training his quirk every day, so that only leaves one thing hanging over his head. And while it might seem like the easiest thing to address on his list, it’s probably the one that he’s most stressed about.

There’s less than a week until the festival, and he wants to clear the air between him and Kacchan before then. Or at least attempt to thin the smog of misunderstandings that are clouding their opinions of each other. He’s not sure if he’ll succeed, but he has to at least try.

Kacchan has his meeting with Airi-sensei after school on Thursdays, and Izuku knows that he’d been angry after his first meeting with her last week. Maybe this isn’t the best time to try and talk, but there’s never going to be a good time to try and talk. Might as well get the explosions over and done with, and maybe take a tiny step towards each other.

He repeats that to himself a few times, hardening his resolve. And when he looks up, he can see the slouched form of his soulmate walking down the street.

Izuku steps out of the shadows of the tree he’d been hiding behind and fixes his attention on Kacchan. The other boy notices him immediately, but doesn’t change his pace or direction. Izuku jumps up and down on the spot a few times as he waits for a car to pass before he can cross the road.

“Kacchan!” he calls out, steps hurried so he can catch up to him. Kacchan has his hand on his gate and Izuku is almost sure that he’s going to walk inside and ignore him. But instead Kacchan heaves a sigh and turns to face him, leaning against the gate like he can fall through it to the relative safety of his house at any time.

“What,” Kacchan says flatly.

Izuku comes to a stop in front of him, breathing more hurried than normal. He meets Kacchan’s eyes determinedly. Kacchan isn’t scowling at him, which Izuku takes as a win. Maybe Airi-sensei is making him see some sense.

“… Can we talk?” Izuku asks awkwardly, not used to the flat expression that Kacchan is wearing.

“Can I stop you?” he asks, looking unimpressed.

Izuku sighs. “Well, I would like you to talk back.”

“That’s a different question then, isn’t it?” Kacchan looks away. “Look, just, let me get changed and then we can go on a run.”

“Err,” Izuku says, because this is not what he’d expected and he’s still wearing his school clothes too. “Right, okay, so I’ll go and put on some different clothes too.”

Kacchan shakes his head as he turns to go inside. “You better hurry, nerd. I’m not waiting for you.”

Izuku takes that as a threat that Kacchan will leave him behind, and then they won’t talk at all, so he sprints back to his house and into his room as fast as he can.

“SorryMumgoingforarunwithKacchanbebacksoon!” he yells into the kitchen on his way out, almost tripping and landing flat on his face as he puts his shoes on as he shoves the door open.

But when he gets outside, Kacchan is leaning up against his fence, staring moodily into the distance. Izuku fights the urge to tip toe past him and awkwardly clears his throat.
Kacchan looks at him, but doesn’t say anything as he takes off. Izuku falls into step beside him. It’s not as desperate as the last run they’d gone on, but there’s a determination to Kacchan’s expression that let’s Izuku know that they’re not going to be stopping soon.

Sure enough, by the time Kacchan slows to a walk, the sun has already dipped below the horizon. They actually aren’t too far from their neighbourhood so Izuku isn’t particularly worried about it getting dark, beyond worrying his mum. He sends off a quick text to her to make sure she knows he’s fine, and then sits down next to Kacchan, who’s perched on the edge of the gutter and scowling at the road like it’s personally offended him. They’re on a smaller road, so there shouldn’t be much traffic going by.

Izuku chews his tongue for a few seconds. “How was your meeting with Airi-sensei?”

“Dagger eyes?” Kacchan growls. “Same as ever. She’s annoying. I hate it when people try to get into my head.”

Izuku doesn’t have to look away from him at that, because Kacchan isn’t looking at him. So he can note the way that he clenches his fists before threading his fingers together and letting them hang between his knees. He can watch the angry curl of his shoulders. He knows that Kacchan doesn’t like his anger management, and that he went to see a specialist doctor after he came out. Izuku supposes that someone like Airi could be generally put in the same area as that. All want Kacchan to talk openly with them.

“I think you’d like the content a lot more if you didn’t dislike her so much,” Izuku says gingerly.

“Well maybe she should stop being such an asshole then,” Kacchan says. Izuku can make out the glint of his teeth as he bares them in a half-hearted snarl.

“You know, she makes me uncomfortable too,” Izuku says, as lightly as he can.

“What,” Kacchan states, whipping his head around to finally stare at him. “She doesn’t make me uncomfortable, dumbass. Where’d you get that idea from, anyway.”

“I don’t like how her quirk lets her see soulmates,” Izuku continues, acting as if he hadn’t heard anything. “I think that it’s intrusive. But… she can’t stop it. It’s her quirk, and she can’t turn it off, so it’s not her fault that she can see soulmates.” He looks at Kacchan out of the corner of his eye. “She didn’t choose it. But she does accept it.”

Kacchan riles at that, like Izuku had known he would. “What the fuck are you trying to say?”

“I’m saying that there are some things that you can’t just ignore,” Izuku says, head up, looking straight ahead. He refuses to bow it when he’s saying something so important. “You can’t move around them, or give them away, or not acknowledge them, because they’re always going to be there. So you have to move with them – you have to accept them.”

“Fuck that,” Kacchan snarls. “I’ll accept whatever I damn well please. No one gets to force me to do anything.”

Izuku sighs, because of course that’s what he took away from that. “I’m not trying to say that. I’m just saying that you wouldn’t argue about the sun rising, or the rain falling. It just is.” Finally, achingly, he turns to look Kacchan in the eye. “We just are, Kacchan. You can’t get away from that.”

Kacchan holds his gaze for a few seconds before he looks away. Izuku thinks it’s the first time he’s ever won a staring competition with him. It doesn’t make him feel very good.
“Maybe I can’t,” he finally says. “I’m not an idiot. I go to the stupid lessons, and I know that you’re my soulmate.” He pauses, and Izuku can only hear his heart beating in his ears. “But…”

Neither of them say anything for a minute. Izuku has to fight not to fidget, but Kacchan sits like all the fight’s been drained out of him. It’s weird and bad and makes Izuku want to squirm and push at him, anything just to see the fire light up his eyes again.

“But what?” he finally asks, not able to bear the silence.

Kacchan shakes his head. “You know, reading everything that Airi is giving me, and talking to her, and doing more research online has only made me more certain that ignoring you was the right choice, back then.”

Izuku can’t stop a choked sound from coming out of his throat, but Kacchan doesn’t acknowledge it. He just stares across the road, like Izuku isn’t even there.

“I always knew what I wanted to do. I am going to become the top hero. No one is going to stop me from doing that – not even you.”

“I would never,” Izuku says, aghast. “I mean… I want to be number one, too, but…”

“That’s not what you’re talking about.”

“No, it’s not,” Kacchan says. Izuku tries not to react to the easy response to his thoughts. “I’m talking about –” He cuts himself off, waving a hand between them. Even now, they’re sitting so there’s no chance of them touching by accident. “It’s like I said before. You were quirkless.”

Izuku grits his teeth, but for some reason it’s a bit easier to handle the word now. Maybe it’s because Kacchan has just stated it like a fact – and Izuku can’t get around that. For years, he didn’t know what his quirk was.

“Functionally quirkless,” he stresses instead.

Kacchan shakes his head. “Does it matter?”

“Yes,” Izuku says stubbornly, because it does. There’s no way that he’s going to be able to hide the truth about One for All from Kacchan forever, but when he does find out Izuku wants him to know that his other quirk is still there, waiting in the wings for Izuku to find out what it is.

“No. Functionally quirkless. Whatever.” Kacchan takes a breath. “You didn’t know what your quirk was, and I already knew that I wanted to be a hero. At first, you were… probably right about what you said, before. I… ignored you, and I shouldn’t have.”

It’s almost an apology, but not quite. Kacchan’s face is twisted up and some emotion that Izuku can’t parse is running through him.

“So? What changed?”

Kacchan’s knuckles go white as he clenches his fists. “I grew up a little, started thinking a little more critically. Before that, it was just kid stuff. But then I realised that if I was going to become a hero, then no one could know that you were my soulmate. Because you were a weakness.”

Izuku can’t breathe for a second, Kacchan’s words cutting through him. He thought that Izuku was just something that could be used against him. So he cut Izuku out of his life, in preparation for his future. A future that didn’t have Izuku in it.

Kacchan keeps talking, the words coming fast and hitting hard. There aren’t any more pauses –
it’s like he’s finally saying something that he’s been thinking about for a long time.

“You couldn’t become a hero with me, so I had to leave you behind. That just - made sense. I didn’t see another way that we could work around things, because I was just a kid, and I was used to being right and thinking in binaries only. If I couldn’t have a part of you, then I couldn’t have anything at all. And I was glad to have an actual excuse to keep avoiding you, because I think that a part of me knew that it was wrong. But if I had a genuine reason, it was fine. Things weren’t okay between us, but I’d done that, and accepted it, and what the fuck ever, because you weren’t a part of my future. I’d go to UA, and you’d go to some nerd high school, and we’d never see each other again. I just told myself that if I could get to high school, then this whole fucking mess would go away. But it didn’t, because then you had a quirk, and it was fucking amazing and you got into UA too, and that just made everything much messier, and I hated you a little bit for not making things easy. But… I suppose that I’ve never wanted things to be easy. I’ve never wanted things to be given to me. But I don’t know if you’re something I deserve to earn.”


“I was a dick to you,” Kacchan shrugs. “Why the hell would you want to reconcile with me, anyway?”

Izuku struggles with that for a long moment. “Wow, Kacchan… I didn’t know you could be such an idiot.”

Izuku watches as Kacchan blinks. The other boy opens his mouth, closes it, blinks again, and then rounds on him, red eyes glowing with anger. Izuku doesn’t lean away from him like he might of in the past, instead jutting his chin forward and challenging Kacchan to take him up on his statement.

“What the fuck are you talking about,” Kacchan grits out. Izuku can hear his teeth grinding. That can’t be good for them.

“Well, it sounds like you were scared of having a soulmate when you were younger,” Izuku says quietly. “Understandable. I think that something as big as having a soulmate should scare you. And after that… Kacchan, you’re talented and determined and skilled. You’re going to become a famous pro hero, and you knew that. By avoiding me… that just sounds like you were protecting me from anyone who would want to come after me to get to you.”

For the first time in his life, Izuku sees Kacchan shocked into silence. Kacchan stares at him, mouth hanging open, eyes wide and vulnerable in a way that makes him look younger than he is.

“Didn’t you hear me?” Kacchan finally says. “I wanted to stay away from you because I thought that you were a weakness. Not… that other crap.”

“Those two things aren’t entirely separate,” Izuku points out. “The soulbond is a weakness for both people. But I know you, Kacchan. You do worry about me.”

“Maybe if you weren’t so fucking reckless I wouldn’t have to,” Kacchan says, anger lining his words. Izuku weighs up letting the conversation continue. They haven’t really worked out their past, but that’s not the real problem – the present is. And while Kacchan has to work through his guilt for how he treated Izuku all those years, Izuku is actively involved with their problems in the present.

“I want to be a hero,” he says carefully. “I want to save people.”

“At the expense of yourself?” Kacchan presses, jabbing a finger at him. “Look. Even if we got
over everything else, if you’re just going to go and get yourself killed, then I don’t want anything
to do with you. This isn’t a fucking one way street, alright? You keep smashing up your body, and
it’s going to get you killed. You leapt in to try and help All Might at USJ. You tried to help All
Might. That’s not anything but plain stupidity, Deku. Do you want to die?”

“Of course not!” Izuku gasps.

“Well, I don’t know,” Kacchan snarls at him. “I know you’ve always been like that, but now that
you’ve got a quirk, it’s like you think the world’s given you permission to be self-sacrificial. Well
guess what, loser? You fucking don’t. So stop acting like you do.”

Izuku jerks to his feet, breathing heavily like he’s just stopped running. Kacchan stands as well,
staring him down. Izuku sets his feet and doesn’t let himself look away.

“I don’t do that because I want to,” he says. “I just want to help people. And All Might –”

He cuts himself off before he can say anything damning. Kacchan’s eyes are unforgiving, but he
can’t just tell him All Might’s secret. He can’t say that the reason he jumped in was because he
knew that All Might’s time was up and that he had barely been holding onto his muscle form.
He’d have to tell him everything then, and it’s not his secret. He can’t tell Kacchan about All
Might – he just can’t.

So he has to stand there, and watch as Kacchan’s mouth turns downwards into a frown. It’s not
even his customary scowl. Izuku can see the disappointment flash in Kacchan’s eyes a second
before he turns and starts walking away.

“Whatever. If you’re determined to get yourself killed, that’s your problem.”

Kacchan says the words dispassionately, as if his voice doesn’t break in the middle of the
sentence. Izuku resists the urge to curl into a ball as he walks away, and tries to convince himself
that he’d made the right decision.

The morning of the sports festival, Izuku has to drag himself out of bed. Inko is running around
like a mad thing, checking his uniform and shoes and stressing about the fact that she hasn’t
packed him lunch, even though Izuku has told her about ten times that they’ll be given lunch at the
stadium. He doesn’t need to take anything today besides his train pass and his phone, so he finally
manages to extract himself from his mother’s embrace by promising her again that he would be
careful and that he would do his best. She’s already half way through a tissue box and he hasn’t
even left the house yet, so he half expects her to have drowned in tissues by the time he gets back
this afternoon.

He doesn’t see Kacchan on the train, which is a good thing. They haven’t spoken a word to each
other since last Thursday. Izuku is still struggling with All Might’s secret, and Kacchan has made
it clear that he doesn’t want to have anything to do with him. It kind of feels like they’re back in
middle school, which makes Izuku feel terrible, but he doesn’t know what to say to Kacchan
anymore, or how to respond to his questions. It’s just a bad situation, and he knows that he’s
having trouble with it. But on the outside, he pretends that nothing’s wrong – and that feels just
like middle school as well.

Uraraka is already in their designated meeting room for the day, along with most of the class. He’s
early, but so is everyone else – they’re all hyped up about the tournament, and he can see
excitement mixed with stress on most people’s faces.
He honestly doesn’t know how he feels. He wants to make All Might proud, and he wants to do well today. But he’s no longer sure if making Kacchan notice him is going to improve their relationship or not. He’s a mess, which just isn’t a good thing, going into such an important event.

“Are you feeling okay?” Uraraka asks him, worry creasing her forehead. “You look a little off.”

Izuku tries to laugh a little, but it comes out as an awkward chuckle. “Yeah, I don’t know. It’s just a really big thing, right?”

Uraraka looks at him searchingly. “Yeah, it is,” she finally says. She purses her mouth and then nods to herself. “Deku. We’re gonna smash this outta the park today.”

“We are?” he asks, slightly thrown by her change in attitude. Uraraka has an extremely determined look on her face.

“Yes,” she says firmly. “We are. We’re gonna excel, because this is an important event! I’m gonna show my parents how much I’ve learned! I’m gonna show off to all the pros that are here today! I’m gonna make a great first impression!”

“I’m going to arrive,” Izuku says. He blinks a few times, before shaking his head. There’s a world that exists outside of Kacchan. They’re not talking to each other right now, but that’s been the normal state for them for most of their lives. Right now, he needs to focus on himself, and what he’s going to do today, because there’s no way he’s not going to put in one hundred percent effort.

“I’m going to make a good first impression too,” Izuku says, promising her. *I’m going to arrive. I’ll make you proud, All Might.*

Uraraka grins at him brightly, and Izuku finds it in himself to grin back. The UA sports tournament. One of the events that he’s followed for his entire life. And now he gets to be in it – he gets to be the one on TV.

Yeah, he’s excited now.

“To the person who placed first in the preliminaries, go TEN MILLION POINTS!”

*Oh geez,* Izuku thinks. *That’s me.*

He’s suddenly hyper aware of the focus that all the other students are giving him. He’s also certain that most of the cameras in the stadium are focused on him right now, so he nods and tries not to break down.

*I’ve managed to land a spot at the top, but it’s not something I’ll take for granted. I’ll make you proud All Might!*

Midnight explains the rules, but Izuku’s mind is in overdrive. What team members does he want? Cavalry battles are all about teamwork and how quirks can support each other. Izuku still can’t use his quirk at anything except one hundred percent, so he’s going to make up for that in the teammates that he chooses.

*I definitely want Uraraka and Iida,* he thinks. Uraraka can make their ‘horse’ weightless, and Iida will be the speed that they’ll need. It’s a good team up, that focuses on evasion. With the ten million points, they won’t need to steal anyone else’s headband to move onto the next round.
Everyone else is already forming teams… and since he didn’t use his quirk, no one’s confident in him, despite the fact that he came first.

He meets Kacchan’s eyes for an instant across the field. There’s a challenge there that Izuku can’t back away from.

“Hey Deku!” Uraraka’s cheerful voice cuts through his thoughts. “Team up with me!”

Izuku turns to her and barely resists the urge to burst into tears, he’s so grateful. “Are you sure? Everyone will be going for us for the ten million!”

“I’m sure!” Uraraka grins. “Besides, I’d rather team up with people I’m friends with.”

Izuku grabs her and hugs her tightly for a second. Uraraka lets out a little pleased sound, that is almost drowned out by the sudden anger from Kacchan. Izuku lets her go and whips around to see Kacchan’s back – but there’s no way he’d mistaken that...

Kacchan, are you jealous? The thought is mind boggling and there’s just no time to deal with it now, but he will think about it later. He shakes his head.

“There’s one more person we need!” Izuku tells Uraraka, leaning close so no one else will overhear them. “Someone who we know well, and who’s quirk is extremely well matched to us for this battle!”

It only takes Izuku a second to find Iida, and then he and Uraraka approach him.

“Tidak!” Izuku calls out.

“Hmm?” The other boy turns to face them.

“Let’s make a three man horse!” Izuku says, and outlines his plan for using Uraraka’s quirk and Iida’s speed. With the two of them on his side, he’s certain that they’ll be able to hold onto their headband.


Izuku blinks, taken aback. Beside him, he can tell that Uraraka is surprised as well.

“You’re an amazing friend, but since the entrance exam, I’ve done nothing but lose to you. If I only ever follow you, I’ll never grow myself.” He pushes his glasses up. “Bakugou and Todoroki aren’t the only ones who see you as a rival, you know.” With that, he turns and heads towards where Todoroki, Yaoyorozu and Kaminari are standing. “So I’ll definitely be doing my best to challenge myself against you!”

Izuku feels himself break out into a sweat. So this is what it’s like to be at the top. He exchanges a look with Uraraka.

“Let’s team up, Mr First Place!” Izuku flinches back as a girl with pink hair suddenly presses into his personal space. He can hardly make her words register, but when they do he stares at her.

“Who are you?”

“Hatsume Mei, from the Support Department!” she crows. “We haven’t met, but I’d like to use the visibility of your position. If I join up with you, the amount of attention I would get would be unparalleled!”
Hatsume lists off the items she has, and looking at them makes an idea start to brew in the back of Izuku’s mind.

“Okay!” he says. *Now, to find the power that our horse lacks. Who should be our last team member?*

He looks around to see who hasn’t joined a team yet, and starts grinning when he sees the perfect choice.

“Hey, Tokoyami-kun! Over here!”

Ochako adjusts her grip on Midoriya, trying not to let her smile split her face. This team up is *awesome*, and there’s no way they’re going to lose. She’s already made all three of her teammates float, so her stomach is a bit bubbly, but she can definitely ignore it. And hey, maybe it’s not the result of her quirk at all! Maybe she’s just excited about the cavalry battle.

“3… 2… 1… START!”

Immediately they have employ their escape move as half of the teams dart towards them, intent on the ten million points. Uraraka grips tightly onto her teammates as they shoot up into the air, the jetpack that Midoriya is wearing aiding their escape.

They come out of the giant jump, and Uraraka lands carefully, letting her boots take most of the impact. Since she’s likely to be jumping and falling a lot because of her quirk, her boots are specially designed to absorb the impact from falls. As they come out of the falls unharmed, she supposes that they’re doing their job, which is good. She hasn’t had much time to test them out yet.

Ochako sprints around with her team as Midoriya directs them and Tokoyami fends off as many teams as he can. Hatsume calls out when a team comes up from Midoriya’s blind spot, and together they avoid every team that’s trying to come after them. It’s all going fine, and Ochako is starting to feel giddy with relief that they’ll do it, they’ll make it through, when they come face to face with Todoroki’s team.

“The time has come,” Todoroki says. “I’m taking it.”

Ochako has to fight not to laugh, because did he have to say it in such an ominous way? Can’t he see how dramatic he is? Seriously, was that necessary?

*Dramatic gay,* her mind supplies for her.

*Now is not the time for memes!* she tells herself sternly, while trying not to lose it. She’s in the middle of a fight!

“The match is only half over!” Midoriya shouts. “Keep moving! The ones coming after us aren’t just a single team!”

Ochako looks up just in time to see Kaminari light up, and she’s frozen in place as electricity zaps through her. When it ends she shakes her head to clear it, and looks up just in time to see Todoroki’s team charging towards them.

The jetpack coughs, and Hatsume yowls about her projects having room to improve.
“We can’t escape now!” Ochako cries in despair. And they’d been so close, too! But she can’t see any way for them to get away from Todoroki’s team now.

“I’ll stop them!” Tokoyami declares. But when he sends Dark Shadow forward, Yaoyorozu blocks it with a sheet of metal that she pulls from her skin.

Ochako finds herself meeting Yaoyorozu’s eyes, seeing the gleam of determination there. Heat prickles across her skin and for a moment she almost finds herself forgetting where she is.

Then Yaoyorozu looks away, and Ochako blinks to clear her head.

“We’ll have to make a feint,” Midoriya says, and Ochako shakes her head and then listens intently. There’s no way she’s letting her team down!

Midoriya directs them around the small arena that Todoroki has made with his ice, somehow managing to keep themselves out of reach of Todoroki’s ice and Kaminari’s electricity. Ochako follows his directions and tries not to pant too loudly. She really needs to step up her running game if fifteen minutes of running around like this can tire her out so much! Maybe she’ll start jogging …

Then there’s a sudden rush of air and Todoroki’s team isn’t in front of them anymore. Ochako looks around wildly, only to find them racing away behind them, and… a headband clutched in Todoroki’s hand. Iida’s engines are smoking – she hadn’t realised that he could go that fast!

“After them!” Midoriya cries out.

“With Kaminari there, we can’t go on the attack!” Tokoyami tries to say. “It might be better to go after another team.”

“I don’t know who has points anymore,” Midoriya stresses. “And we can’t find another team in time! There’s no other option!”

“In that case, we go get it back Deku!” Ochako calls. She can hear the stress in his voice, and knows that he needs a confidence boost. “Without fail!” They can’t lose, not now!

“Uraraka!” Midoriya says, his gratefulness clear in his voice. They all run forward, and Ochako braces as they clash with Todoroki’s horse. They come away with one headband, but it’s only 70 points, not their ten million. Distress building in her chest, Ochako turns with the others to face Todoroki’s team again, but even as they run forward, the count down over the loudspeakers inevitably announces the end of the match.

“TIME UP!”

Ochako is about to try to suppress the wave of disappoint she feels… until she spots the headband that Dark Shadow has clutched in his beak.

“AND IN FOURTH PLACE, TEAM MIDORIYA!”

Ochako laughs and shakes her head at Midoriya as he bursts into tears of happiness, but she can’t blame him too much. After all, she’s resisting the urge to do the exact same thing.

They passed! They’re into the next round! She’s done it!

Ochako releases her quirk and laughs as her team members stumble onto the ground. They did it! They did it!
In her excitement, she doesn’t realise that she hasn’t felt nauseous since the cavalry battle begun.

Chapter End Notes

Large apologies for the wait for this chapter. I've fallen into the hole that is Fullmetal Alchemist, and have probably consumed like, a couple million words of fanfic for FMA over the last month and a half. I literally wrote 99% of this chapter today, so yeah. The sports festival arc is my least favourite in BNHA, so if there's a scene from it? IMPORTANT TO THE PLOT. I was going to try and finish it in one chapter but then this got a bit too long sooo yeah. Two chapters!!

Also if you think that Katsuki is bein a little ooc, well he's been Thinking real hard lately. This is the result of that.

I haven't been reading much BNHA lately (due to aforementioned FMA) besides YUTS but like if you haven't read that then what are you even doing. Though I also read this fic yesterday which is a canon AU where Izuku has an empathy quirk so check that out lol. Also I'm glad that people are liking that I rec fics at the end of my chapters!!! I was starting to wonder if I was just annoying you all with them r i p
Here's where I start to live up to my 'more violence than the manga' tag guys

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ochako looks up at the board and bites her lip.

She’d been on the edge of her seat during the Midoriya and Shinsou fight, but thankfully Deku had advanced. Todoroki had blown Sero away with his ice, and then Yaoyorozu had created an insulation sheet to block Kaminari’s electricity and batted him out of the ring with a pole. She’d laughed her way through Iida’s fight as Hatsume had used him as a show pony, then watched as Ashido knocked Aoyama out with a punch to the jaw and Tokoyami won over Shiozaki by using Dark Shadow to bite off her vines until she had no weapons. Kirishima and Tetsutetsu had knocked each other out, and now –

She’s standing in the arena, facing down Bakugou Katsuki, about to fight him for real.

She’d turned down Midoriya’s help, and she’s determined to make things work out without whatever plan he’d come up with. Just like Iida, she needs to stand on her own, or she’ll never grow at all. But now that she’s actually standing here, staring at Bakugou’s angry eyes?

She’s really scared.

There’s no way she’s going to go down quietly, and she has a plan, but she can already tell that it’s going to be brutal. Growing up in a construction company means that she’s no stranger to injuries and blood, and she knows the danger of falling concrete. But that doesn’t mean that she’s been pushed that far before – she doesn’t know when she’ll crack under Bakugou’s explosions, when she’ll crumble like a piece of rubble put under too much stress.

Well, here’s her chance to find out.

“You’re the one who floats stuff, right?” Bakugou asks, eyes dark. Ochako swallows. “Oi, round cheeks. I’m talking to you. If you’re gonna withdraw do it now – saying ow during the match isn’t going to cut it.”

“You’re not going to get rid of me that easily!” Ochako says, and is proud of the fact that her voice doesn’t shake.

Bakugou’s lip curls. “You teamed up with Deku during the cavalry battle, didn’t you?”

“Yeah,” Ochako says slowly, even though she’s sure that he already knows the answer to that.

If possible, his eyes go darker and angrier. Ochako tries not to let out a whimper. Before she’d come down, Deku had grinned at her and had given her an awkward hug and told her that he wanted her to do her best, and that there’s no way she can let him down.

She won’t let him down. Even if she has to bleed for it.

“Start!”
Ochako leaps forward. She needs to tag him as soon as possible – if she can surprise him at the beginning of the fight, then she stands a chance at winning. He leads with a right swing… she remembers Deku telling her that.

Sure enough, an explosion comes from his right hand. In a flash of inspiration, Ochako flings herself close to the ground while making herself weightless so she just skims under Bakugou’s explosion but above the ground.

She reaches out to touch him, but he jerks away at the last second, and she releases her quirk to tumble to a stop. She’s already grazed and bleeding slightly, but she rolls to her feet and sprints back towards Bakugou. She has to use the smoke from his explosions to her advantage.

He sees her and she vaults over his head this time, trying to keep him off balance, making sure she isn’t predictable. Another explosion and she grits her teeth as she feels her arms light up in pain, the skin going tight and hot.

She isn’t sure if the people in the stands are silent, or if she’s just blocking out any sound that isn’t Bakugou’s sneakers on the concrete. She rips her shirt off and floats it, spinning it in Bakugou’s direction before jumping around to surprise him from the back.

She’s hit with a massive blast as Bakugou sends one behind him in a wide arc to hit all of his blind spot. It’s not directed so it’s not very strong, but it still hits her head on, sending her tumbling back away from him. She floats herself before she hits the ground, and touches down lightly, releasing her quirk and moving fast.

But no matter how fast she moves, Bakugou is there to push her back with an explosion. He doesn’t hold back, and before long her arms are peppered with burns, and she’s had to roll twice to put out flames on her clothes. Bakugou follows her around the arena, but he never blasts her out of it, even though Ochako is fairly certain that he could if he really tried.

He’s toying with her.

Ochako doesn’t know why, but there’s anger burning in his eyes and he follows her around the arena steadily, sending explosions her way when she gets too close. Ochako stays low to the ground, and he’s already taller than her – so all the explosions are aimed downwards. The smoke and the dust makes everything a little bit blurry, and it’s hard to see but that’s good. That’s what she wants.

She touches the rubble that he leaves, and sends it floating up into the air. Bakugou doesn’t seem to notice anything, seeing as he’s intent on chasing and exploding her around the arena.

“You’re lucky that they didn’t let us have any equipment,” Bakugou snarls, low enough that no one else would be able to hear him. “Because then you really would get burned.”

Ochako bites back the urge to point out that she’s plenty burned already, thank you very much, and tries not to let fear nudge its way into her throat at his threat. Bakugou lunges closer suddenly and before she can tap him, he lets off a concentrated explosion over her right leg.

She shouts from the pain but swipes her hand forward and Bakugou dances back out of range of her hands. Ochako limps away from him, but her darting attacks are pretty much over now.

She looks up and takes a few steps back from where most of the debris is floating.

“It doesn’t matter why you’re angry,” Ochako says, determination bubbling in her chest. “Because I win!”
Bakugou lifts his lip, but Ochako presses her fingertips together and releases her quirk. All at once, the rocks and pieces of concrete that she’s been floating are falling, right over Bakugou’s head.

He head snaps up and his eyes widen as he takes in the falling concrete. Ochako knows how deadly it can be – she’s lived around construction sites her entire life, and falling pieces of equipment and materials is a regular hazard. She hasn’t floated anything too massive, but still – any rock can knock him out easily.

Bakugou aims an explosion up and deflects some of the debris, but not all of it. Ochako feels her stomach turn over and she suppresses the urge to throw up as her quirk is released, but… she doesn’t fall over.

She had been certain that the amount of concrete she had lifted was above her weight limit, but she’s still standing even after the attack. Her eyes find Midoriya in the crowd. He’s standing up and leaning forward with an intense expression on his face, and his eyes are locked onto her.

Bakugou bursts out of the rubble that he hadn’t managed to explode or dodge. There’s blood dripping down his forehead and his snarl is more feral than ever.

“You bitch!” he yells, and Ochako makes herself weightless and rolls out of the way as he approaches. Bakugou follows her with a scream and an explosion, and Ochako keeps her weightlessness up as she pushes herself around the arena, simply trying to dodge Bakugou’s attacks and think of another strategy on the fly.

She waits until he’s made another explosion, and then forces herself to run through it, the fire licking at her arms and the burns already there. Her leg screams at her, but she still manages to put her weight on it long enough to float some of the larger debris and then duck behind the small pile that she’d left untouched.

“That isn’t going to work, you –”

Ochako darts out and taps the back of one of his arms as he explodes her floating decoys. She kicks out at him with her injured leg and sends him flying into a spin, but only for a moment. In mid-air, Bakugou orients himself with his explosions and then starts flying towards her.

“This ain’t gonna stop me!” he screams, but Ochako can’t listen to him anymore because she’s falling flat on her face. So she’s finally reached her weight limit by floating Bakugou. Huh.

“Uraraka is unable to move. Bakugou advances to the next round!”

She doesn’t wait any longer before closing her eyes and falling into the blackness waiting for her.

Katsuki waves off the bots that try to come over and bring him to Recovery Girl. He doesn’t need to follow round cheeks there. She probably doesn’t want to see his face right now. Plus, Deku is about to go out and face off against icy dude. Fuck. He needs to get somewhere he can be by himself.

He stomps up the stairs and comes face to face with Deku at the top. Something curdles low in his stomach, but he ignores it in favour of scowling at him.

“What the fuck is wrong with you, huh? Did you put that shitty plan into her head? Trying to
spread your recklessness?” As if that fight had needed more pushing. Katsuki had been furious at
her for touching Deku like that in front of everyone during the cavalry battle. A tiny part of him
says that feeling is jealousy, but he’s been screaming at it inside his own head ever since it popped
up, so it’s well and truly drowned out.

The jab at their argument makes Deku’s face close down. “Uraraka came up with those plans
herself. I had nothing to do with it.”

Katsuki can’t look at him any longer, so he walks past him, sticking to the side of the corridor so
he stays as far away from him as possible. He doesn’t head back up to the stands where the rest of
the class is, instead heading deeper into the depths of the stadium. Deku is going down to fight
that Todoroki kid, and Katsuki knows that he won’t go down without a fight, and that means that
Katsuki has to find a room with a lock on the door.

After trying a few, he comes across some sort of conference type room. It’s bigger than he’d like,
but it doesn’t have any windows and has a lock on the door, and he doubts that anyone’s going to
be using it now anyway. So he clicks the lock and flops down in one of the chairs.

He almost feels rather than hears the roar of the crowd – those two idiots had probably come out
into the arena. Cementoss hadn’t needed much time to get things back in order, then.

Deku’s mind is almost completely clear of his mumbling for once, but the reason for that becomes
clear when Katsuki’s right middle finger jerks, and he curls around it, swearing up a storm. A
second later and his right index finger goes too. Katsuki forces himself to uncurl and sits back in
the chair. His hand is throbbing, and he’s unsettled that he can’t feel blood dripping from it, but –
he isn’t the one hurt. His hand is completely fine. There’s no reason for it to be bleeding.

How much Deku is bleeding is another question altogether.

Right ring finger, then right pinkie go, and Katsuki grabs his collar to bite down on to stop from
yelling. He saws the fabric between his jaws and hopes that it doesn’t leave teeth marks. It feels
like a car has just run over his hand, destroying the bones inside. It feels like he’s just dropped one
of his weight disks on all his fingers.

Even though Deku is a real piece of shit for putting him through this, Katsuki can’t help but
quietly admire his stubbornness. That idiot is still fighting, he can tell.

Then his whole left arm shatters and Katsuki can’t help but scream, even as he clamps down on
his collar. *Fuck.* If he were the one fighting at least he’d be able to know what the fuck is
happening! Trapped in here, the suddenness of the pain makes it worse than it really is.

Lightning shoots through his right hand, making white take over his vision for a second. When it
clears, he’s on the ground, curled up tight in a ball. And he’s dropped his collar.

*I’ll kill that asshole as soon as I can lay my hands on him,* Katsuki fantasises. *Explode his head
right off his shoulders.* He can’t make himself move his hands, and that’s what tips him over the
edge. This is fucking ridiculous.

He takes a deep, shuddering breath and tries to remember what he did at USJ. There, with fear
and anger fuelling him, he’d been able to dull the connection between him and Deku. So he
should be able to do it again.

Gritting his teeth, Katsuki roots through his head to try and find the part that’s tied to Deku. His
hand jolts again and forces him back to the floor, but he just closes his eyes and refuses to let
himself just *lie there* like a useless piece of shit. No fucking way. That isn’t who he is.
He can feel the familiar anger building in him, stemming from the pain and the situation. He’d known, hadn’t he? He’d come, and found this stupid fucking room, because he’d known that this would happen. And this isn’t who he is – Deku is making him into something he’s not. Forcing him.

No one forces him to do anything.

Get a fucking grip on yourself, Katsuki snarls, and then he refuses the pain that Deku is sending him. It’s not his. Deku can fucking keep it, for all Katsuki cares. He fights and spits and snarls at the pain, and excruciatingly, it recedes.

The sensation of an arm cracking into pieces pours over him, but it’s strangely distant. Katsuki finds himself staring at one of the legs of the chair he’d been sitting on, feeling detached. Most of his concentration is going towards keeping the block up on what Deku is going through. With what little thought he has free, he acknowledges that this is probably a bad thing to be doing, but the rest of him does not give a single fuck.

As the minutes tick by, he can feel where Deku’s new hurts are, but they’re more pressure than anything else. Katsuki studiously stares at his chair leg and traces the grain of the wood with his eyes. There’s no way this can continue for much longer. He’s honestly surprised that the teachers haven’t stepped in yet – they seemed like they wanted to keep student injuries to a minimum, but what Katsuki is feeling can hardly be called a minimum.

He feels a hard knock to the head, and then nothing new comes for a while. In a sudden heady rush, the debilitating pain dissipates, leaving only the deep ache of broken bones. Katsuki broke his left arm when he was nine and his right arm when he was eleven, so he’s familiar with this feeling, at least.

What’s more disconcerting is that the pain doesn’t completely go away. Recovery Girl must not have been able to heal Deku fully, and that leaves Katsuki feeling something bad that he can’t really describe and doesn’t want to try. What a load of crap. The next time he sees Deku he’s going to beat his ass into the next week, even if Katsuki has to feel every punch as well.

Finally able to move, Katsuki forces himself to stand, leaning on the back of the chair for support. He wipes a hand over his forehead, grossed out by the amount of sweat that comes away with it. He feels like he’s just sprinted a few kilometres at full speed without stopping.

He stamps down Deku’s pain and shakes his head. He feels a bit woozy, but that’s about it. He should be fine to go out and about now.

He unlocks the door and opens it. Standing on the other side is icy dude, that Todoroki asshole who is the reason that Katsuki has just spent who the fuck knows how long curled up in a ball yelling with pain.

His anger solidifies and he throws a punch without any thought behind it. Todoroki is too surprised to do anything but stand there and take it, and he staggers back a few steps, hand going to his cheek.

Katsuki burns to let the explosions in his palms have a go at him, but that would draw attention and questions that Katsuki has no intention of answering. So instead he stands there and gives Todoroki one of his best glares, hoping that the burning anger he feels in his gut is shown clearly enough. No matter what this asshole has just done to Deku, he can’t take it out on him here. Not until the final.

“Get the fuck out of my way,” Katsuki spits at him, not even giving him another glance to
determine his reaction. Fury simmering in his gut, Katsuki heads back up to the stands. He does want to see some of the fights, and he suspects that Kirishima is probably going to try and find him or some shit if he takes too long. Again – he doesn’t want anyone to be asking any questions. Fuck that.

He’ll probably find a bathroom before he makes his way over to them, though. He needs to wipe some of this sweat off.

Izuku leans over the railing of the stands and squints to try and make out the figures below a bit more clearly. Cementoss has just cleared the arena after Kacchan and Tokoyami’s fight, so next is the final.

“How did the other fights go, that I missed?” he finally asks, trying to find a way to pass the time before the final starts. He’s feeling fidgety and he’s had to forcefully make himself stop bouncing his knee four times since he came back up from the clinic.

Uraraka looks at him, her concern written clearly across her face. “Well, you missed Iida and Yaoyorozu’s fight, but Iida just knocked her out of bounds in the first second, so it didn’t take very long. And Tokoyami knocked Ashido out pretty quickly as well, so you didn’t miss much…” she bites her lip, and Izuku tries not to find the action endearing.

“Well, that’s good,” Izuku says. “I can always watch the tapes later though, right?”

Uraraka nods. “Yeah, of course.”

Izuku spots movement below them, and Todoroki comes out of the stadium. On the other side, Kacchan emerges as well.

Izuku meets his eyes for a second, even across all that distance. Something zips between them, something that feels a lot like simmering anger. Izuku swallows. He hasn’t talked to Kacchan since just after his fight against Uraraka, but obviously something has happened to upset him in the last two hours.

Izuku carefully forms a fist with his right hand in its cast, not flinching when pain crackles in it. He’d known that Kacchan could feel his pain too, but he’d been so determined to win against Todoroki… And he’d thought that Kacchan would probably hate it even more if Izuku didn’t fight because it would hurt both of them. Izuku knows that he would have hated it. That stinks of Kacchan’s old argument. It wouldn’t have felt like he was holding back his quirk, it would have felt like he was quirkless and a weakness, just like he’d been for so long. Going into that fight, there was no way that he was going to hold back, but he still wishes that Kacchan hadn’t stormed off and had let him explain that to him.

But Kacchan hadn’t come back to up to sit with the others. Maybe he understands better than Izuku thinks.

Todoroki and Kacchan face each other down in the middle of the arena. Todoroki says something, and whatever it is, it just makes Kacchan angrier than he already is. Izuku sees him clench his right fist, just like he’s about to take a swing. Izuku grits his teeth and leans forward. He wants to grab the barrier, but can’t with all the bandages he’s wearing. This fight is going to be explosive, he can already tell.

Todoroki opens with a massive ice attack that Kacchan blows through, and from there there’s a
flurry of explosions and ice walls that prevent either of them from leaving the arena. Neither has gotten in a good hit yet, and Izuku can tell that Kacchan is getting frustrated.

Todoroki isn’t using his fire.

Izuku frowns. He’d thought that he’d gotten through to Todoroki, but maybe he hadn’t. That’s… frustrating, to say the least. He’s going to have to find time to talk to Todoroki after this and ask him why.

Kacchan starts screaming, and even from up here in the stands Izuku can hear him.

“I’ll beat you! I want to win! But what’s the point of beating someone who won’t use his full power?! That’s proving nothing! Why’d you fight Deku at full power but not me?!”

Suddenly grasping the source of Kacchan’s frustration, Izuku looks at the others out of the corner of his eye. They’re all fixated on the match. Izuku clenches his fist, even when it starts hurting. After their fight, if Todoroki doesn’t go all out against Kacchan, then Kacchan is just going to see that as him being viewed as below Izuku. Izuku wants to yell at him that that isn’t the case at all, but he doubts that Kacchan will see it that way.

Kacchan creates an enormous explosion that has everyone in the stands reeling. Izuku leans forward, trying to see what’s going on, and when the smoke clears he can see Todoroki, outside the arena, and Kacchan gripping the front of his shirt, yelling at him. Midnight puts Kacchan to sleep with her quirk, and declares him the winner. If it had been possible, Izuku would have put his hand over his face. Why did Kacchan always have to be like this?

“Well, that went quickly,” Kirishima says, looking surprised.

“I expected their fight to last longer than that,” Uraraka replies, eyes fixed on the mess of an arena beneath them.

“Not necessarily,” Izuku points out. “In high level battles, fights are often quite short unless the opponents are equally matched in strength.” And while he thinks that Todoroki is probably more than a match for Kacchan… His heart hadn’t been in it. After fighting him, Izuku can’t exactly blame him. That fight had been emotional for both of them.

Iida comes back into the stands and stands between him and Uraraka.

“Midoriya, Uraraka… I’m afraid I have to cut out ahead of schedule,” he says, voice tense. Uraraka looks at him, puzzlement turning into worry. Izuku peers at him, worrying as well.


“My brother was attacked by a villain,” Iida says, voice stiff and level. “I’m going to the hospital to see him.”

“Oh no!” Uraraka gasps.

“Is he okay?” Izuku asks, shocked. Ingenium is a skilled pro. For him to be taken down, the villain must be tough.

“I’m going to see him,” Iida says in response, and Izuku tries not to shiver. That’s not an answer.

“He already knows,” Iida says. “I will see you both later.”

Izuku watches him leave, stomach turning over uneasily.

Cementoss recreates the arena for like, the sixth time today, this time also making three podiums. Tokoyami leaves to go and take his place as third, and after fifteen minutes both Todoroki and Kacchan have woken up and are standing on their respective platforms. Todoroki is quiet, and Kacchan is as well, but Izuku can tell that he’s seething with anger. He refuses to look in Todoroki’s direction.

Izuku feels a headache starting to appear. All Might gives the medals to the three winners, and Izuku would have loved to be down there to hear what he might have said to Kacchan. Whatever it is, it only blackens his mood. Izuku’s headache gets worse.

All Might leads them in a cheer, but instead of saying ‘Plus Ultra!’ he cries out “Thanks for all the hard work!” Izuku shakes his head.

“What do we do now?” Jirou asks.

“We have to go back to class,” Kirishima says. “Aizawa-sensei told me.”

The rest of them shuffle out of their seats and down the nearby stairs, but Izuku can’t bring himself to look away from Kacchan. Today’s been a mess for both of them.

“Deku?”

He looks over at Uraraka. She’s beat up too, and Izuku doesn’t like that either. Kacchan had been the one to do that to her. Ashamed, he looks back down to the arena.

“I’ll come down in a second,” he tells her. “Just… go ahead.”

Uraraka puts a hand on his shoulder. “Okay. Don’t take too long, alright?”

“Right,” Izuku mumbles. She waits for another second before leaving as well.

Tokoyami hops down from his podium and Todoroki is dragged off by a reporter. All Might is still talking to Kacchan, and waves off the woman who comes up to speak with him, a notepad and recording device in her hand.

They need to fix what’s between them, but Izuku feels very underequipped to do such a thing. Airi-sensei has been forthcoming with some tips, but she doesn’t really know Kacchan. Izuku has to be the one to approach him, and he has to come up with the idea of how to do it. Airi has a soulmate, but she never talks about her, besides that one time on the first day that they’d met.

After the sports tournament, students are nominated by different heroes to come and complete an internship under them. Izuku doesn’t know if his rather lacklustre performance will draw any attention at all, but he does know that it won’t draw the type of attention that he wants.

An idea starts to form in his head, and he nods to himself. He’s heading back to the school now, so hopefully he’ll be able to put his plan in motion.

The sports tournament lasts three days. Day one has the first years complete their scheduled events, day two the second years, and day three the third years. So Thursday morning finds Izuku
back in room 1-A with the rest of his classmates, trying to ignore the simmering anger he can feel from Kacchan. He doesn’t envy Airi her appointment with him this afternoon.

Aizawa doesn’t have any bandages on anymore, which Izuku is grateful for. He’d hated the bandages and what they reminded him of – that hopeless moment, standing in front of Shigaraki while Aizawa had defended them even though he was being beaten into the ground. Taking a deep breath, Izuku shakes the memory off. Aizawa is fine, and the villains had been defeated.

He’d been right about no one wanting to nominate him – he isn’t on the board, and Kacchan and Todoroki have hogged most of the nominations between them. Kacchan is at the top, but Izuku doesn’t know if he’s taking much pleasure in his victory. He still feels angry.

Midnight is going around the classroom asking if anyone needs help with their hero names. Some, like Kirishima and Uraraka, wrote down something at the beginning of their allotted time and are now peering at other people’s boards.

He doesn’t know what to write on his.

Before he’d met All Might, he’d come up with so many different variants on his name. All Man, Super Might, Mighty Boy, Captain All Might... There’d been many, and looking back on them, none of them are good. But that’s not the reason that Izuku discards the idea of naming himself after his hero. It would tie them too closely together, and he knows enough now to know that he’s nowhere near All Might’s level.

Kacchan stands up, and reveals his name to the class, who all cringe slightly. Izuku ducks his head to keep his curl of a smile secret. Kacchan has taken the word for explosion and replaced the second half of it with the kanji for kill, and then added –o on the end, which sounds like the suffix for king while also making his hero name sound eerily similar to his real family name. ‘Bakusatsuo’ is a clever bit of wordplay that shows that he’s been thinking about this for a while, even if ‘King Explosion Murder’ isn’t exactly appropriate for a hero name.

Midnight rejects the name, and Izuku tunes out Kacchan’s complaints to stare at his own board.

There is one thing that he thinks might be appropriate. There’s a lot of meaning attached to it, but Izuku is willing to take the bad along with the good. After all, it’s the name that Kacchan gave him, and the name that Uraraka changed for him. It’s what he wants to embody as a hero.

He writes down ‘Deku’ on the board, and presents it to the class.

“Eh? Are you sure, Midoriya?”

He is. He gives them his explanation, but his eyes are fixed on Kacchan. Slowly, as if unwilling to see what he already knows, Kacchan raises his head to stare at Izuku’s board.

Izuku meets his eyes defiantly. I’m still here. You can’t make me forget about you, and I won’t let you forget about me. The anger that Kacchan’s been feeling for the last three days fluctuates and stutters.

Feeling good, Izuku nods. “This will be my hero name.”

In his seat, Kacchan looks like he’d rather be anywhere else.

Midnight leaves after telling Kacchan to come up with a better name than what he has, and the class drifts as they wait for the next period to start. Aizawa hands out forms to every one of the potential agencies that they can choose, and Izuku gives the list a cursory glance before tucking it into his bag. He already knows where he’s going.
Around him, his classmates gossip and ask each other where they want to go.

“Have you decided yet, Deku?” Uraraka asks, smiling at him.

Izuku grins back. It’s kinda weird to hear her say that, now that he’s claimed Deku as his hero name. But… it’s good, actually. Really good. He likes it.

“Yeah,” he tells her. “I’ve already got mine sorted.”

“Even though you had no nominations?” Asui asks.

“Err, yeah, about that,” Izuku says, rubbing the back of his neck. “Well, I approached an agency and asked them to take me on. Even though they didn’t nominate me, they still agreed, thankfully.” Due to Airi-sensei’s influence, he’s sure.

“Wow!” Ashido exclaims. “Now that’s confidence!”

“Who is it?” Ojirou asks.

“Err,” Izuku stalls, nervously leaning back in his chair. “You know…”

“You don’t have to tell us if you don’t want,” Uraraka says, who’s picked up on something in his hesitation. “Now, I know what type of hero I want to go with! Someone who can help me with my fighting skills!”

“Fighting? Don’t you want to be a rescue hero?” Asui asks.

“Well, yeah, definitely,” Uraraka says. “But after the sports tournament… well, I want to know how to fight, too!”

“Bakugou really lit a match under your butt,” Ashido giggles.

Izuku huffs out a laugh and reminds himself to thank Uraraka later.

The rest of the school day is normal, but just before school ends, All Might drags him off towards a deserted corridor.

“What’s going on?” Izuku asks, frowning. Nothing has really happened over the last few days… Unless he wants to talk about the sports tournament some more.

“Someone has drafted you!” All Might declares to him, when they reach a point where they won’t be overheard.

“Umm,” Izuku says awkwardly. He hasn’t seen All Might in a few days, which means that he doesn’t know about his talk with Airi or how he’s already organised to intern under a hero. “All Might, I’ve already accepted a position as an intern. Well, I asked, and they answered yes, so it’s all confirmed and everything.”

“Oh!” All Might turns and faces him. “But I thought that you didn’t get any recommendations!”

“Yeah, I didn’t,” Izuku says awkwardly. “But I asked for some advice and then approached the agency on my own, and they accepted me.”

All Might reaches out to ruffle his hair. “I am glad that you’re taking your education into your own hands, young Midoriya.”
“Who was it that sent something in for me?” he asks, because he’s only human and he wants to know.

“All Might begins. “His name is Gran Torino, and he once taught at UA for one year as my homeroom teacher. He knows about the situation of One for All, and I suspect that it might be the reason that he reached out to you.”

“So there’s someone else who knows about this quirk!” Izuku says, excited. “Oh… but I already arranged…”

All Might shakes his head. “I think that if Gran Torino has reached out, he has something to teach you. But that doesn’t have to be within the constraints of an internship, if you’ve already accepted another offer. If… he went to all this trouble… then I strongly encourage you to train with him…”

All Might pulls a piece of paper out of his pocket and gives it to him. “Has he only reached out because he doubts my abilities..?”

*All Might is literally shaking in his boots!* Izuku can’t help but be a little glad that he’s already arranged something, even if that means that he’ll have to call this Gran Torino person for training at another time.

All Might shakes himself out of his stupor. “Never mind! If you can arrange an internship on your own, then I’ll let you talk to Gran Torino… ha.” A bead of sweat runs down the side of his face.

*No way,* Izuku thinks, shocked. Is *All Might too scared to call him himself*?!

“And don’t forget that your costume is repaired now!”

Right. He’ll need that for his internship.

All Might bounds off, and the bell rings, signalling the end of school. Izuku hurries out to the front of the school, hoping to catch someone before he leaves school grounds.

He sees Tokoyami and Shouji talking, and Yaoyorozu and Jirou walking together, but he doesn’t want to talk to them. However, he *does* see Todoroki near the front gates, so he hurries his steps until he catches up with him.

“Todoroki!”

Todoroki pauses and turns. He looks vaguely surprised, like he Izuku is the last person who he had expected to talk to him.

“Midoriya,” Todoroki says hesitantly.

“Hey,” Izuku says. “Um… how are you?”

“I’m healthy,” Todoroki says, sounding confused.

“Well, I meant like, after everything we talked about,” Izuku tries.

“In front of the entire country?” Todoroki says wryly.

“Err, umm, yes,” Izuku fumbles. “So…”

Todoroki snorts. “I’m doing as well as I can be, under the circumstances.”

Izuku looks at him. “I noticed, in the final… you didn’t go full out against Kacchan.”
Todoroki shrugs a shoulder. “I was still thinking about the things that you said. And honestly, Bakugou was… quite forceful, that day. I could have fought more seriously against him, but I don’t think that I could have won, and it would have ended up… messy.”

Izuku remembers the look in Kacchan’s eyes, and can’t help but agree.

“I just wanted to know that you’re doing okay,” Izuku says, trying to make himself sound upbeat.

“I should ask you that,” Todoroki says. “I didn’t break both my arms.”

Izuku flexes his right hand into a fist and looks down at it. The scars are… new. And odd. He’s not used to them yet, and every time his mum sees them she tears up. They don’t hurt or anything, but he hasn’t used One for All since the sports tournament. He doesn’t think that using his quirk will hurt, but he’s… just going to give it a few days, anyway.

“Recovery Girl healed me up,” Izuku makes himself say. “So I’m fine. Really.”

Todoroki looks at him disbelievingly. “Right. Totally fine.”

Izuku clears his throat. They’re at the train station now, and there’s a train on his line in a minute. He can see Kacchan standing down at the other end of the platform.

“I’m getting on this one,” he says, nodding at the platform. “Which…”

“Platform three,” Todoroki says. “Look, I’ll see you around.” He lifts one side of his mouth in something that could be a smile.

Heartened by it, Izuku bounces on the spot. “Yeah! Definitely.”

His train comes in, and Izuku wedges himself into a seat. On the platform, Todoroki stands thoughtfully, watching as the train departs the station.

Chapter End Notes

Katsuki I'm so sorry for all the shit I put you through here

Okay so! There are people ALMOST guessing at what Izuku's quirk is, and I think there's enough breadcrumbs scattered through here to figure it out. As of this chapter, there's also three hints as to who Ochako's soulmate is!

Okay so I figure that a few of you might be interested as to what might have happened if Izuku had won his fight with Todoroki and ended up in the finals against Katsuki, even though soulmates aren't supposed to fight each other. Basically if a soulmate pair isn't out for some reason one of two things will happen. 1) They reveal that they are soulmates then share the first place position (I haven't gone into it too deeply yet but soulmates are basically seen as sharing EVERYTHING in this verse) and the two people they fought in the semi finals will duke it out for place 2 and 3. All soulmate pairs would be put in different brackets so that they wouldn't meet up before the final round. OR 2) the teachers will say 'if you don't want to reveal that you're soulmates, then someone is going to have to resign from the match' and then the two people they fought in the finals would fight for third place. So yeah if Izuku and Katsuki had reached the finals in the sports tournament they Would Not have
been happy with those options, would they?

As for fic recs, I dug out this old one *which is super angsty but still v good*

So!! Finally finished the USJ and the sports tournament arcs!! These last few chapters have been a bit rushed because those two arcs are my least fav in the manga, but now we can REALLY get into some good stuff. Oh geez, I have so many plans....
Izuku stands in front of Graceling Agencies and takes a deep breath. For the thirtieth or so time, he wonders if this is the right decision.

He’d been confident enough to approach Airi to help him in his quest, but that was before Gran Torino had put a draft in. Should he have gone with Gran Torino? He needs to figure out One for All, but he’s been training under All Might for months now, and there’s been little progress on that front. And All Might can’t help him with what he needs to learn, as quickly as possible.

No. This is the right choice, he’s sure of it. So he squares his shoulders and opens the door.

There’s a small reception area with a counter bordering one wall. Behind the counter is a young woman in a hero outfit. Izuku recognises her as Amnesia, a sidekick that works at Graceling. He’d looked up all the heroes that he’d be working with for this week, not wanting to go in completely unprepared.

“Oh, you must be the UA student!” Amnesia says cheerfully. “You’re right on time. I think Duality just went out to get coffee, but Grace is in the gym. She said to show you in as soon as you got here, so just go down the hallway, it’s the second door on the right.”

“Thanks,” Izuku says, turning to the hallway. Most of the doors are closed – the ones that aren’t contain a kitchen and an office. The second door on the right is closed, but Izuku can hear the repetitive sounds of someone hitting a punching bag echoing from inside.

He opens the door gingerly. Inside is a large room with a sparring ring in the middle, with some gym equipment scattered around the edges. A woman with dark hair who’s wearing short shorts and a sports bra has her back to him and is beating up a punching bag.

She turns when the door swings shut behind him, and looks him over.

“Midoriya?”

“Uhm, yes. You’re the persistent hero, Grace, aren’t you?” Excited, Izuku bounces on his toes. “I’ve followed you ever since your debut four years ago! Your battle with Sharkfin blew my mind, I couldn’t believe that anyone could take down someone like that underwater in his natural element!”

Taeru Katsu, the hero Grace, raises an eyebrow. “I’m a good swimmer. Did you bring something to train in, like I asked?”

Izuku nods, and Grace points at a bathroom and tells him to get changed. When he comes back out, she’s stretching on the floor, but bounces up when she sees him.

“Ohay,” she says, falling into a fighting stance. “Show me what you’ve got.”

Izuku takes a deep breath. He adjusts his stance like he’s learned from his taekwondo training, and sizes up his opponent. Grace’s eyes sharpen as she takes in his stance, and she whirls into an attack.

She’s blisteringly fast, and Izuku throws himself wildly to the side to dodge out of the way. Grace
follows and he tries to duck a punch but she still clips his temple and sends him sprawling on the floor. He rolls with it and stands but Grace is on top of him again.

*I need some space,* he thinks. She’s faster than him, so he scrambles away desperately, leaving her behind. He turns around when he’s at the opposite edge of the gym and watches her come closer. She’s fast and skilled and if he wants to land a hit he’s going to have to outthink her. He ducks into a roll to get past her as she gets closer but she’s already turned around to face him by the time he’s standing again, and she taps his chest in a way that lets him know that she could have struck much harder if she’d wanted.

He uses the wall to rebound past her to try and attack from behind, but she avoids his fist and grabs his shoulders in a throw, angling him so he lands on his back, the air rushing out of him as he hits the ground.

“Hmm,” Grace says thoughtfully. Izuku tries to gasp in some air as she taps her finger on her chin thoughtfully. “You can think on your feet and you aren’t scared to use your environment to your advantage. You have some training, but it’s not ingrained in you, so you probably only started recently. For your first year at UA, I don’t think you’re doing too badly, kid.”

“Thanks,” Izuku manages to wheeze.

“There’s something about the way you move…” she says thoughtfully. “Hmm. I’ll ask Duality about it, he’s better at analysing these types of things than me.”

“Amnesia said he was getting coffee,” Izuku says, slowly standing up.

Grace pauses for a second. “He’s at our favourite café now – do you drink coffee?”

“No usually,” Izuku says. “I drink tea, more.”

Grace sniffs. “I’m American, so I’m more used to coffee. Duality’s all about his traditional Japanese though… it’s green tea all the way for him.”

“I like black tea,” Izuku says.

“Milk, sugar?”

Izuku nods to both, and Grace pauses again before continuing. “Okay. He’ll be back in about ten minutes, so I’ll show you around before he gets back.”

She leads him out into the hallway. “That’s Duality and mine’s office. The next one down is Bitterblue’s office – she’s my niece, and handles all the paperwork that goes through this place. Then here’s the bathroom, and the gym of course, and next to that is the lounge, where all my good for nothing sidekicks like to hang out.”

There’s someone sleeping on one of the couches, and Grace walks over and kicks the couch. The boy jerks up, peering around in confusion. “Eh?”

“Razoredge. Wake up.”

“I am awake,” the boy moans.

“No you’re not,” Grace says ruthlessly. “Duality’s about to come back with coffee, and if you don’t get your ass up I’ll drink yours.”

Razoredge lurches to his feet, even though he looks like some kind of coffee zombie as he
staggers out to the reception area. Grace sighs.

“We try to keep interns to a minimum here, but Razoredge impressed Duality so he works here. He also goes to UA – he’s a third year. You two can talk about that,” she says.

“Why do you have so little sidekicks?” Izuku asks as Grace heads back towards the front of the agency. “You’re the number 33 hero, but you have the least registered sidekicks out of the top 100 heroes.”

Grace shrugs a shoulder. “Duality and I work better alone. You’ll find that with most Hero Duos, their agencies have less sidekicks than other agencies.”

And there it is. For a moment he feels like he can’t breathe. For so long he’s kept the secret of his soulmark hidden deep inside him, not talking about soulmates at all for fear that someone would ask if he had one. He knows he’s not a good liar – they would have seen through him. So he’s avoided talking about it at all, avoided thinking about it, avoiding looking at his own damn soulmark.

For most people, soulmates are just a fact of life. Some people have them, some people don’t have them. Some soulmates are platonic, some are romantic. They’re usually private, but if they’re in a hard to hide spot then they’re just politely not commented upon. They just are.

He’d seen Grace’s soulmark, a snowflake on the back of her hand. She doesn’t feel the need to cover it up, and Izuku wonders if some of that will rub off on him during his week here.

Izuku has trouble talking with Airi about soulmates, and she knows everything. If he treats it as a purely academic exercise then it’s much easier to read the books that she gives him, much easier to memorise facts and discuss them with Airi. It’s just easier to pretend that things don’t relate to him, because otherwise he’d have to think about the fact that he’s talking about his soulmate, something that he’s fought so long against doing. It’s a habit, and not a good one.

But here – he feels like an idiot. Why shouldn’t Grace casually mention her soulbond? She has a soulmate. She’s part of a Hero Duo. She’s a public figure, and has to deal with a lot of people knowing who she is and who her soulmate is.

For most people, soulmates are just a fact of life.

Izuku struggles with this sudden realisation alongside his usual treatment of the fact that he has a soulmate. Of course Grace knows, because he asked Airi-sensei if she knew any Hero Duos that would take him in so he could learn more about how they worked in the hero industry. Airi had told her, because Izuku had told her to. But it’s so strange to hear things just said out loud like that.

Grace looks back at him, her eyes evaluating. Izuku ducks his head and hurries after her. He doesn’t cry, because that would be embarrassing, when she hasn’t said anything at all.

They come out into the reception area just as a man comes through the door. Izuku doesn’t recognise him out of his hero costume, but when he looks over and smiles, it’s obviously Kin Poru, the silver hero Duality. And Izuku can see where his both his names came from – for one of Duality’s eyes is silver, and the other is gold.

“Ah, the new intern!” Duality says, and Izuku is almost blown away by the warmth and humour in his tone. He’s heard Duality on TV before, of course, but in person he’s somehow more than that.

Duality’s smile grows even bigger. Izuku is reminded of All Might when he sparkles.
“He’s not useless,” Grace says, going to the counter and flicking through a folder that Amnesia hands her.

Duality takes in Izuku’s ruffled appearance and puts a hand over his face. “Katsu. Don’t tell me that he arrived and you immediately started fighting him.” He doesn’t remove his hand.

“Well, why not?” Grace asks, an edge of annoyance in her tone. “He’s only here for a week. If we’re going to do anything with him, I need to get his measure early on.”

Duality drops his hand from his face, and Izuku sees that he was hiding a smile. “Of course. We want our young intern to receive the best experience possible.”

Izuku bows. “Thank you for taking me on this week!”

Grace sniffs. “Just behave yourself and we’ll get along well enough.”

Duality picks up one of the cups that he’d brought and brings it over to her, dropping a kiss on her cheek as he does so.

“Don’t mind her, she’s just grumpy before her morning coffee,” he says in a loud whisper. Behind the desk, Amnesia giggles.

Oh, Izuku thinks. He’s funny. Izuku gives him a small smile. Duality winks at him.

“Well, Katsu’s already had a go at you, so let me kidnap you to my office for a bit.” Duality picks up two more cups and gives one to Izuku. “One black tea with milk and sugar,” he says as he gives the cup to Izuku.

Izuku stares at him. Grace and Duality must have the ability to telepathically speak to one another over distances. It’s another casual use of the soulbond that has him biting his lip.

Duality leads him into his office. There are two desks inside – one piled with papers stacked haphazardly and messily, and another that’s almost completely clear. Behind the clear desk there’s a large bookcase with files neatly arranged.

Duality sits down behind the desk that’s mostly clear and Izuku pulls over a spare chair and sits down in front of him. Duality flicks open a file and skims it for a second before looking up again.

“So. I wasn’t sure about taking on another intern, but Airi told me that she thinks you’d be a good fit for the week, if I was willing to take you on.”

“Thank you for agreeing, but I’d like to ask… why?”

Duality leans back in his chair, silver and gold eyes on Izuku. “Airi is a close friend of mine. We grew up together, and I know that she wouldn’t ask me if she didn’t think that you were going to waste my time.”

So he’d taken Izuku on as a favour. He’s going to have to really thank Airi-sensei next week… hmm. Maybe he could bring her some chocolates.

“Airi didn’t tell me the specifics of your situation,” Duality says. “Just that you want to learn more about how Hero Duos function in practise.”

Izuku nods. “Airi-sensei does a good job of covering all of the theory, but she isn’t a registered hero. I wanted to come here and see how everything works.” And hopefully find some way to
reassure Kacchan as to their future. Izuku drops his gaze. He does kind of feel bad about not telling the Graceling Duo everything, but his problems with his soulmate are hardly their business. He doubts that Duality wants to hear some teenage angst at him about his love life anyway. There’s a lot of angst, as well – where would he even start? Oh yeah, when I was six my soulmate basically disowned me…

When he looks back up, there’s a slight curl of amusement to Duality’s mouth. “Airi also told me that you aren’t bonded with your soulmate yet.”

“Err,” Izuku stammers. “Yeah. I mean, I’m not. Bonded.” The weirdness of talking about soulmates combined with his love for pro heroes is combining in the worst way… It’s still weird to be talking to someone else who has a soulmate. The only other person he knows who’s bonded is Airi-sensei.

“That’s not uncommon,” Duality muses. “Katsu and I got along terribly at first. She punched me in the face when she found out that we were soulmates. We met seven years ago, so we were both adults when it happened. Dealing with that when you were much younger would have been much more difficult. Children are often unequipped to deal with these sorts of things.”

Izuku remembers Kacchan’s flat almost apology for how he’d treated him when he was younger and resists the urge to sigh. Although… Airi had spilled a lot more to Duality then he’d thought. She must have called him back later when he wasn’t there to hear her talk. That didn’t make him feel very good, but he supposes that it’s fine. He just would have appreciated being told first.

“Actually,” Duality says. “Airi only called me once.”

Izuku stares at him. Duality raises one eyebrow (the one above his silver eye).

“W-what?!” Izuku says, stunned.

“I would say that it’s hardly fair of me to use my quirk on you when we’ve only just met, but the truth is I cannot turn it off,” Duality says apologetically. “When around pro heroes that you don’t know the quirks of, especially Hero Duos, I would advise you to guard your thoughts. There are far more who can read minds than you might suspect.”

Izuku goes red. He heard the angst anyway…

“Yes,” Duality says, sounding more amused by the second. “I cannot read all your thoughts – only ones that pertain to me. So when you pictured yourself ranting to me… I saw it all.”

Izuku resists the urge to bury his face in his hands. “I’m… sorry.”

Duality waves him off. “You are hardly at fault, although I would ask that you refrain from such in the future if possible. You asked Katsu why we have so few sidekicks? One of the reasons is that having more than a few people thinking about me when I can hear them gives me quite the headache. Part of Amnesia’s quirk allows her to mask all of her thoughts from anyone who would read them, and Razoredge has the amazing ability to block out any thoughts than what he’s focusing on, which is rarely me. Our other sidekick is Crystal Clear, but she only comes in every few weeks.”

“Ah, okay,” Izuku says, rubbing the back of his neck. Guard his thoughts… how the hell is he meant to do that?

“Now, very few people know about my quirk, so I’d like you to keep it a secret. I’m heavily involved with police work because if I interrogate someone I can tell if they’re lying, and I can also usually tell what the truth is without them knowing that I know.”
Izuku perks up. “That’s a really interesting use of your quirk! That would also allow you to have less sidekicks as well, since you would work closely with the police, wouldn’t you. And don’t worry about me telling anyone your secret.” Especially since he already keeps All –

Izuku forcefully derails that thought and stares at the top of the desk, thinking intently about the grain of wood. Duality nods slowly. “You’re a quick learner. Good. I don’t like to keep around anyone who isn’t. Now this week you’ll be working with us, and I do expect you to work. Amnesia or Bitterblue will check your paperwork, and Grace or I will watch over you when we’re in the field. I expect you to obey all directions in every situation. While here, you are representing our agency and I will not allow you to do anything that might tarnish our reputation. Understand?”

“Yes,” Izuku says, wondering if he should salute or call him sir or something.

“Not necessary,” Duality says breezily. “My hero name works well enough. Now go back out and talk to Amnesia. She has the first file that you need to look through.”

Izuku blinks a few times and then nods. Something tells him that this week is going to be eventful, in every meaning of the word.

Izuku feels the breath rush out of him again as Grace throws him to the ground.

“Umph.”

“Do better,” Grace says ruthlessly. “I pulled that same trick the last time I put you down. Don’t let yourself fall for it twice.”

“Yes,” Izuku says, because he had been dumb to let her do it twice, but he’d been wanting to try something out. It hadn’t worked.

“Here,” Grace says, and pulls him up. She’s got a water bottle in one hand, and she gives that to him. Izuku guzzles half the bottle quickly. Grace is stretching her arms out but when he puts the bottle down, she beckons him out onto the mat again. Izuku joins her there. This is similar to what he usually does while sparring at the gym, but more one on one. Except Grace has more stamina than even Judy – she doesn’t even look like she’s sweating yet.

“Again,” she demands, and there’s a good ten seconds before she throws him to the floor again.

Izuku wheezes. Grace hums.

“Why aren’t you using your quirk?” she asks. “You know that I don’t care about any holes in the walls.”

He does know that, after she picked up one of the weight disks and flung it at him and it had stuck in the door. But he’s not sure he has enough of a handle on One for All that he wouldn’t kill her if he did manage to land a hit, and he definitely doesn’t have enough control that he’s confident in small spaces with it, if he isn’t using his quirk in a sweeping motion.

“Why aren’t you?” he asks instead, because he hasn’t seen a hint of Grace’s quirk all day.

Grace laughs at him. “You think I’m not using my quirk? Duality told you that he can’t turn his quirk off – well neither can I. I’m always using it.”
“Oh,” Izuku says, feeling awkward. “Um. What is it?”

“It makes me a good fighter,” she says, which isn’t a full answer. He hasn’t missed how she’s more hesitant with sharing information with him than her soulmate. “It makes kicking your ass extremely easy.”

“I’ve noticed,” Izuku says wryly, and stands up.

Grace looks him over. “I hope you haven’t been holding back because of that. Your quirk is an inherent part of you. You should treat it as such.”

Izuku feels like she’s just dumped a bucket of water over his head.

*Your quirk is an inherent part of you.* Except… is that how he really feels about One for All? No. He still thinks of it as All Might’s quirk – still thinks about when and how to use it in a fight, still has to *think* to use it.

Images of Kacchan flow through his mind – the effortless way that he uses his explosions to manipulate a situation, how he doesn’t think to *use* his quirk – how he just *does*.

Of course. No wonder One for All has been so brittle when he’d tried to use it – he’d not only had it at 100%, but he’d tried to further confine it to just his fingertips.

Izuku looks up at Grace. She’s grinning. “Worked something out?”

“Something,” Izuku says, feeling breathless. Screw turning one part of his quirk on – he’s about to flip all the switches at once.

It’s heady and exhilarating how the power fills him. Izuku grins at Grace, aware of the sparks dancing off his skin. And – he can feel the tipping point that All Might has been trying to get him to grasp for weeks, the difference between nothing and one hundred percent.

Grace’s eyes are alight with curiosity, but she just beckons him to the mat again.

Izuku obliges her.

He shoots off the ground, speed blinding to him as well as Grace. They trade blows in a flurry, and he can control their power. Giddy, he bounces off the ceiling a little too hard and cracks the floor when he lands.

He still doesn’t beat Grace, but he lasts almost thirty seconds this time.

Razoredge pokes his head through the door. “Bitterblue says if you keep putting holes in the walls in favour of neglecting your paperwork she’s going to hurt you. I’ve seen her knife collection – you don’t want her going after you.” He directs the last sentence at Izuku.

Grace scowls at him. “Training is important.” She huffs. “But I suppose we just had a breakthrough… so we should do a little bit of paperwork. Even though it’s the worst part of this job.” Her expression turns speculative. “Although I do have this new intern here to do paperwork for me…”

Izuku gulps. A part of him wants to do a more work with One for All, excitement buzzing through his blood. Finally, he’s starting to get a grip on it! He’s finally starting to work things out, finally starting to live up to All Might’s expectations. He can’t wait to get back to school and show All Might what he’s figured out. He takes a deep breath. He’s done it once. He knows what he’s been doing wrong, all this time – so he can practise later, by himself. Right now, he should focus on
learning the things that he won’t be able to do later. Which is… paperwork. Hmm.

“Come on!” Grace says. “I’m not the best at follow a paper trail, but I can show you the ropes… get you started on one of those demonic towers of paper…” She laughs, almost manically.

Izuku follows her back to her office. This type of work is important, as well. If he wants to be a hero, he should at least know the basics of police work and how to go about tracking and catching villains. After all, not all villains start chaos in the streets – some of the most deadly villains never get their hands dirty at all.

Duality is still at his desk, whittling down the few papers that are on it. Grace’s desk looks like someone put as many folders and notes as physically possible on it, then piled even more on top. He’s not sure how the stacks are still on the desk and not on the floor.

“Babe,” Grace croons, picking up one of the larger stacks. “You love me, so you can take some of this off my hands, right?” She dumps it on Duality’s desk. He sighs. Grace winks at Izuku, who puts a hand over his mouth to rub away his smile.

“We’ve got a few open cases at the moment,” Grace tells him, sorting through her papers to pull out a thick folder. “Look at this and get a feel for the reports and such. Tell me what you think when you’re done.”

Izuku opens the folder to find a summary paper on top. It details the villain that they’re looking for, last known location, all event locations, and a few personal details. It’ll take a while to read the whole folder, but he still takes a moment to marvel over it. He’s here, holding real case work and is about to read a real case file, in order to help catch a real villain. He smiles to himself as he sits down.

Izuku had known that Graceling Agency is one of the rare hero agencies where heroes take a more active role in tracking and finding villains rather than waiting for calls from police or the public to take down a villain. It had been another reason why he’d been so excited about this week.

Determined, he begins to read.

Class 1-A Chat (#latenight)

1:34am

Alien Queen: hey guys Whomst is still up at this hour of half past one

Lord of Darkness: I’m about to start my patrol.

Alien Queen: ohhh my gosh!!! It’s so cool that you got to go with Hawks im jwealous *pout* I want him to do Things to me yanno... w those feathers...

rockn ears: ashido I will kill you with my own two hands

watt the fuck: valid

breaks both legs *yeet*: what are you guys doing still up??
Alien Queen: oh way too excited to sleep sfkjasdahd

Alien Queen: in the morning I’m going on a REAL LIFE PATROL like shit!!! It’s so awesome

Alien Queen: what about you?

breaks both legs *yeet*: just got to bed. Been getting my ass kicked and looking at files all day

watt the fuck: lol what?? You’re already out fighting villains??

Alien Queen: :O

Alien Queen: Midoriya

Alien Queen: where are you

Alien Queen: I need to get me a piece of this action

breaks both legs *yeet*: ha, no villains

weed birthday: Good because I’d have to kill you myself.

breaks both legs *yeet*: yet

Alien Queen: :O

watt the fuck: lollll

rockn ears: drama

weed birthday: Deku where the fuck are you.

breaks both legs *yeet*: ummm i have to go to sleep guys, busy day tomorrow you know

weed birthday: Just know that I will find you.

Alien Queen: wow bakugou, its cute that you care about us

weed birthday: The rest of you can choke.

rockn ears: naww, it’s just Midoriya? Still cute soz

watt the fuck: what do we have to do to upgrade to Friends That You’d Care If They Choked

Alien Queen: know him for like 15 years probs

watt the fuck: rip

weed birthday: Fuck off.
Me: Deku you piece of shit.

Me: Did you think I was kidding about shit?? Well I wasn’t.

Deku: Kacchan, you’re across the city from me. Calm down, I doubt that there’ll be any actual fighting this week. I mean, we’re not even proper interns. I think the hero who’s taking care of me just sees me as a way to get through paperwork faster

Deku: where’s this coming from anyway?

Me: None of your fucking business.

Deku: okay first of all you’re talking about me, which is like. Completely my business

Deku: secondly YOU are my business

Deku: like, always

Me: Shut up.

Deku: you only say that when I’m right

Me: Fuck off, no I don’t.

Deku: how was your first day, anyway?

Me: Fine. Best Jeanist seems to think I’m some pet project of his or something. It doesn’t matter, I’m just here because he’s the highest hero that nominated me. I’ll learn what I can.

Deku: well I know that you’ll learn everything fine

Me: What about you?

Deku: Like I said, a lot of paperwork.

Me: Then what the fuck was that about getting your ass kicked?

Deku: my hero doesn’t like paperwork and prefers to beat up interns apparently. But its all good I learned a lot including something important about my quirk

Me: Stop saying ‘my hero’ and tell me who youre fucking with.

Deku: that’s a weird way to put things, you know. And I won’t tell you, because I don’t want you traveling across the city

Me: As if I even would.

Deku: that’s literally what you opened this conversation with, Kacchan

Me: Just tell me an area, asshole.

Deku: what, so you can look up all the agencies in that area?
Me: So I know where to go if your dumb ass gets into trouble.

Deku: are u serious

Me: When do I say something I don’t mean?

Deku: geez, okay. I’m in Abuta

Me: Isn’t that just north of Hosu?

Deku: yeah

Deku: but it’s got pretty low crime rates

Me: Whatever. Just don’t go looking for trouble.

Deku: I don’t go looking for trouble!

Me: That’s the biggest lie you’ve told in your entire life.

Deku: You’re so mean Kacchan

Me: I just speak the pure truth. Not my fault if you can’t take it.

Me: On another note.

Me: I saw Aizawa in a cat café today.

Me: He had about 10 cats sitting on him.

Deku: aww!!!!!!! So cute!!!!

Me: Shut up, nerd. I’m only telling you because the pure sweetness of it was rotting me from the inside. Now it’s out, so I don’t have to deal with it anymore.

Deku: don’t worry, I won’t tell anyone that you thought it was cute ;)

Me: No seriously, where are you, because you obviously need a good knock to the head.

Deku doesn’t reply to that. Katsuki puts an arm over his face and sighs. Why couldn’t the dumb internships be more than a week after the sports tournament? He’s still trying to get through all the stupid drama that had come out of that one dumb day. The mere suggestion that Deku is out in the city fighting a real villain has him on edge. Fuck. As if he isn’t already stressed enough over him.

He groans. He can go a whole week without seeing Deku. This isn’t a big deal.

He tells that to himself until he falls asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Izuku: Don't worry, I won't fight any villains this week!!
I hope you liked the worldbuilding/OCs here! I'm so excited to get the first internship arc started asdsahadhj. If Grace and Duality sound familiar, it's because I ripped them out of Kristin Cashore's Graceling series. The first time I read BNHA, I was like 'hey, all these people basically have graces!!' Katsa and Po are just *clenches fist* so good and I strongly recommend you read these books.

If you're more interested in BNHA fic recs, then read this excellent trans bakugou fic which is just... so valid.
Izuku is poked awake by Razoredge, who looks like he’s half a step away from death or sleep, whichever comes first.

“Boss got a tip a few minutes ago,” he yawns. “Get up, get dressed in your gear and meet out front ASAP.”

Izuku bolts out of bed and checks the time on his phone. 5:24. He’s had less than four hours of sleep and he feels off kilter. He pulls on his hero gear as fast as he can and then runs a hand through his hair in an attempt to stave off his bedraggled look.

Grace and Duality are in their office, along with Razoredge and Amnesia. Duality looks much the same as he had the last time Izuku had seen him, while Grace looks like she’s ready to kill the next person who looks at her the wrong way. Amnesia looks cheerful, but the bags under her eyes belie her smile.

“Deku,” Grace says, waving him over. “Look through this.” She shoves a file into his hands. “We didn’t go over it yesterday, but flick through it.”

Izuku opens the file. It details two villains that have been behind a string of violent robberies over the last few weeks, some of which have turned into murders. One has a strength enhancement quirk while the other has a speed enhancement quirk. It makes for a deadly duo – even more so when Izuku sees the note in the file that says that the two are soulmates.

“I think we should come in from the east,” Grace says, tracing a line along the map on Duality’s desk. “That will cut off the escape route to the highway.”

“It would, but these two have shown a propensity for running for the woods,” Duality argues. “We should come in from the south instead.”

“That would just drive them towards the red light district,” Grace scoffs.

“We can split up into two groups and corner them,” Amnesia butts in. “Grace and I, and Duality and Razoredge, like normal.”

“And the kid?” Grace asks.

“Strength enhancement, right?” Amnesia asks, tapping her finger against her chin. “You should go with Duality and Razoredge. Grace doesn’t need any strength back up.”

Duality shakes his head. “I don’t need any extra thoughts distracting me if we’re going into the city. Deku, you go with Katsu.”

“Don’t be a dumbass,” Grace scoffs. “You’re going into the city so one more mind isn’t going to
make a difference. Amnesia is right, I don’t need any fighting back up.”

“Fine,” Duality says. “You come from the east, we’ll come in from the south. If any of us get separated, make your way back here. Break.”

Grace and Amnesia head out the front door while Duality leads Izuku and Razoredge to a back door that turns into a garage. Inside there’s an immensely normal looking car that Duality starts. Razoredge gets in the back, and Izuku does as well.

He’d recognised the map area as at least a ten minute drive away, but with little traffic this early in the morning and with Duality verging over the speed limit, they’ll probably make it in less than that.

Izuku uses the watery morning light to take his first good look at their hero costumes. Duality is wearing light tactical armour that doesn’t hinder his movement while providing protection, and has a belt with all sorts of gear around his waist. Normal enough, except for how it’s all done in swirling patterns of silver and gold.

Razoredge is wearing something even more eclectic. His cloak is black on one side and rainbow on the other, while the rest of his outfit is a beige colour that looks like it could easily blend in to about any background. He’s wearing two belts and a bandolier, and all of them are packed with different items of increasing obscureness. Izuku spots two lighters next to a tangled string of headphones next to a yoyo next to a vial of glitter next to a ping pong paddle. There’s a pair of dark goggles resting on the top of his head.

“Razoredge, look after Deku,” Duality instructs. “If they’re together, this might come down to a circle fight.” He looks up at Izuku in the rear view mirror. “I don’t know what three separate soulmate sets will do if they meet in the middle, and I don’t want to. You keep back, okay?”

Izuku nods. He doesn’t want to find out either. His soulbond is already messed up enough as it is.

Duality parks and Izuku follows him as he paces up the sidewalk quickly, but not running.

“Katsu and Amnesia are in place,” Duality says quietly. They turn the corner of the block, and Izuku sees the building that was marked out on the map in the office. There’s a huddle of people on the sidewalk and Duality mutters something under his breath.

As they get closer, Izuku sees that it’s several police officers. They’re wearing dark trench coats and hats and they turn to Duality when he gets into speaking range.

“What’s happened?”

“No movement,” the tallest police says. “But confirmation that the two are inside.”

Duality nods. “Grace is on the other side of the building, we’ll go in at the same time. You all wait here until we’ve given you the signal.”

The police nod grimly, and Duality moves past them.

“Stick with me,” Razoredge mutters to him. “Duality is stupid fast and he won’t appreciate you getting in his way. Especially if this is a soulmate pair.”

“Right,” Izuku says, even as he fidgets to leap into the fight. There’s no one he needs to protect here though, so he’s fine with staying a few steps back.

“Shit,” Duality mutters. “They just left the building going south. Katsu is engaging.”
Duality starts sprinting around the perimeter of the building and Razoredge and Izuku follow hot on his heels. They turn the corner and Razoredge screams “DUCK!”

Izuku flings himself to the ground instinctively, just because of the sheer panic in his voice. Half a second later a car flies ten centimetres over their heads. If they’d still been standing, it would have killed them all.

Izuku boggles at the car for a few seconds, and when he pulls himself together enough to look away, he boggles again at the fight that’s currently happening in the middle of the car park.

Grace is fluidly fending off the two villains. One is a tall muscled man who picks up a car and throws it at Grace. She flips out of the way and comes down in a punch that a lithe woman speeds out of the way of.

“Katsu!” Duality yells. Grace doesn’t acknowledge his arrival, but she smoothly falls into step with him when he lands next to her.

“Together!” Katsu yells, and Izuku sees his first soulmate circle constructed.

It’s blindingly bright. Izuku brings his hands up to cover his eyes, but even then he can still see sparks. After a few seconds he gingerly opens his eyes.

A perfect circle has been inscribed into the tarmac of the car park, walls mostly invisible except for where the streetlights reflect off them, like glass. He looks up just in time for Grace to bare her teeth in a snarl and pull her soulsword out of thin air, a beam of light solidifying into shining gold and gleaming silver that twist together into something that resembles a short sword. Izuku can just see that the silver parts resemble crashing waves, while the gold looks like leaves and branches. It’s gaudy and looks out of place in the grungy setting, with Grace’s deadly intent clear in her eyes.

Duality shines with his own light, and his soulsword appears with a metallic sound. It’s longer and resembles a pole more than a sword, and is the dull silver of steel, efficient and capable of whatever Duality wants to do with it.

Their opponents are wielding their own soulswords as well – the man has a sword that looks like a knife in his oversized hand, and the woman with the speed quirk has a club in her hands.

Razoredge sighs next to him. “And now we wait.”

Izuku knots his fists and nods grimly. He’s never seen a soul circle personally before, but he knows the theory well enough. Only those inside are able to break the circle. No one else can enter.

If he’d thought that Grace was brutally fluid before, now she’s a whirling dervish of hands and sword, a flurry that chases the woman around their created arena. Izuku can only feel his nails bite into his palms as she keeps up with the villain who has a speed quirk.

Duality faces the man with super strength. Knowing his quirk means that Izuku can see how he’s reading the villain’s movements and evading the massive punches that are putting holes in the ground.

At a glance, it looks like two fights that just happen to be going on at the same time next to each other. But the longer he watches, the longer he sees a pattern start to emerge. Grace trips up the larger villain. Duality ducks and her soulsword flashes over his head to block a blow from his knife. Grace then does a backflip to land just behind the speed villain, a move that she couldn’t
have accomplished if Duality hadn’t been giving her an outside perspective on where things were.

It’s almost sickening to see Duality’s soulsword slice through the man’s arm, but there’s no blood or physical injury at all. Instead the villain lets out a grunt of pain.

Soulswords attack the soul, not the flesh.

In another few seconds, it’s over. Grace pins the speed villain by straddling her torso and putting her blade to her neck. Duality trips the larger villain and moves so that his soulsword is almost touching the tip of his nose.

Next to him, Razoredge stiffens slightly.

They’re too far away to hear, but Izuku can tell that the Duo are demanding that the villains lower the circle. A soul circle only breaks if all the people inside it want it to open.

A long few seconds pass. Izuku can palpably feel the tension in the air. Razoredge grinds his teeth. Amnesia comes around the corner of the building and starts walking towards them.

The larger villain bucks and swings his sword around, clipping Duality heavily. Grace throws her soulsword and it arcs across the circle before burying in the villains head. The woman screams shrilly before going nauseatingly limp.

“Po!” Grace screams as the circle falls. Razoredge and Amnesia dart forward, and Izuku follows hot on their heels. He expects to feel something when he crosses the boundary of the circle, but it’s just like every other road that he’s ever run on. That almost makes him feel more on edge than if he’d been able to feel the remnants of the circle.

Duality is milk white, but he still has enough energy to smile shakily at his soulmate. “I’m fine, Katsu,” he says, then passes out. Izuku resists the urge to say something along the lines of how that doesn’t seem fine to him, but Duality is already unconscious and he doesn’t want to stress Grace out any more than she already is. Grace hovers by her soulmate’s side, but she’s fine, so he’s fine as well. Izuku tells that to himself a few times.

Izuku flicks his eyes over to the villains. Both of them are still, despite their being no outward wounds on them. Izuku’s gut twists. Grace’s soulsword went right through the head of the villain. If they’re not moving, and if the heroes aren’t paying them any attention (because they’re not a threat) then they must be…

“Go and get the police,” Razoredge instructs tersely, and Izuku is only too happy to comply. The police swarm over the scene, taking photos and storming into the building. One of them gives Grace a blanket, and she awkwardly drapes it over Duality.

Duality wakes up before the police are done, which means that they don’t have to call an ambulance. There’s nothing that a hospital can do for him, anyway – a soulsword damages the soul, and only time can heal that. The head of the investigation thanks the heroes for their services before sternly telling them all to go and rest.

“I’ll call Bitterblue to pick us up,” Amnesia says, already getting out her phone.

“Let me do it,” Razoredge says suddenly, and Amnesia gives him a black look.

“Stop using your quirk. The danger’s over.”

“Not when Duality is down,” Razoredge says. Izuku looks at him. He’s beginning to look just as bad as Duality, pale and sweaty. He still gets out his phone and calls the Agency.
One of the police officers corners him for questioning, since Razoredge looks like he’s about to fall over and Amnesia is trying to help Grace convince Duality to let Grace carry him back to the street so they can go back to the agency. Izuku recounts the fight in as much detail as he can remember, and the officer jots down notes as he does. Going through the fight again calms his frazzled nerves. Yes, they got here, and they fought, but both Grace and Duality are fine, and the rest of them didn’t even fight at all. He’s been in no danger at all since he got here. Well, apart from avoiding that flying car that would have killed him, but he’s still alive. So all of the heroes are fine.

“Thanks, kid,” the officer finally says. “You’ve got a good eye on you. Look forward to hearing about what you can do in the future.”

Izuku nods awkwardly and scurries back over to where the heroes are piling into a car. Amnesia waves him over and pushes him into the back of the car.

“I’ll drive the bike home,” she says. “You go with them.”

Bitterblue looks him over from the driver’s seat, and is apparently unconcerned with what she finds, because she goes back to staring at Grace and Duality. Izuku can hardly blame her, since the two of them are her aunt and uncle.

When they walk into the agency, Izuku looks at the clock and is shocked to see that it’s only quarter past seven. The come down from the adrenaline rush and the early start has him feeling like he needs to go to sleep for another seven hours.

Grace lugs Duality into one of the back rooms and Razoredge motions for him to come into the kitchen. There, he puts water into a jug and gets out some cups.

“Grace normally prefers brewed coffee, but when she’s stressed she’ll take anything,” Razoredge tells him. “And a lot as well. Do you want anything to drink?”

“I’ll just get some water,” Izuku tells him, and Razoredge gives him another cup.

“So,” Razoredge says, after he’s doled out four cups of instant coffee. “Your first action. Even if you didn’t get to fight anyone. Which, let’s be honest, neither of them were going to let you do. Soulsword injuries normally put them down for a few days, so I doubt we’re going to do any more villain chasing this week. Hooray, paperwork.”

“Does this happen often?” Izuku asks, still feeling kind of shaky.

Razoredge shrugs one shoulder. “There are less soulmate villains than you might think. And Grace and Duality are very good at what they do, so when they do engage a soulmate duo, they always come out on top. If someone gets injured it’s Duality, but that’s pretty rare. I’ve seen him pass out two times now, and I’m pretty much here 24/7. But we came back here, so he’s going to be alright. Grace would have dragged him to a hospital if he needed to go.”

“What about school?” Izuku asks. “Don’t you go to UA?” Razoredge’s words settle his vague panic. Grace would know her soulmate’s situation far better than him. If she thinks that he’s going to be alright, then he’s going to be alright. It loosens the knot in his chest, and he finally feels like he can breathe again.

“Yeah,” Razoredge nods. “But I’ve already got my full hero license, so as soon as I turn eighteen Grace and Duality will take me on as an official sidekick here. It’s what I want to do, so I don’t really see the point in studying. The only reason I haven’t dropped out is because Grace says that being a UA graduate looks good on my resume if we have a falling out and I want to go and work
somewhere else. I told her that there’s a fat chance of that happening, but then Duality upped the ante by saying that they wouldn’t hire me if I couldn’t graduate.” Duality puts a touch of milk in two of the cups just as Grace walks in. He gives the two cups to her and she walks out.

“You must work well with them, if you already know that you’re going to be hired,” Izuku notes.

“My quirk works extremely well with both of them,” Razoredge admits.

“What is your quirk?” Izuku asks, because Amnesia had said that he’d been using it, but Izuku hadn’t noticed any change in him.

Razoredge scratches his head. “Well, I call it ‘limited foresight’ but Grace says I’m just extremely good at guessing. Basically when I activate my quirk, I can see the outcome of a situation if there’s two distinct paths to choose from that I personally affect. It’s pretty tiring though, because I live through each choice when it happens. In the middle of the action, there’s a lot of choices to make, so I’m basically running at double time in fights.”

“Huh,” Izuku says, already thinking over the implications. Razoredge could see the outcome of an unknown situation before it happened – like what would happen if you pulled the support out of a collapsed building.

“That’s why I carry around a lot of things,” Razoredge continues, pulling at one of his belts. “The more ways I have of influencing a situation, the more use I can get out of my quirk.”

Izuku eyes the rubber ducky hanging from his bandolier. How many had he even used –

“Oh, I’ve used all of them,” Razoredge says flippantly. “And my quirk has already saved your life, so you can’t judge my rubber ducky!”

Izuku stares at him, slightly thrown, before shaking his head to centre himself. “When?”

“When I called for us all to duck under that car,” he says, far too calmly. “The outcomes of that situation were either us all dying, or us all living.”

“Hmm,” Izuku says. “I think I need to eat some breakfast.”

“Good idea,” Razoredge says, digging some cash out of the cup on the bench. “Go two blocks down south and ask for a Graceling buffet. But change out of your hero outfit first! You aren’t supposed to be in it without the pros around.”

“Right,” Izuku says, and ducks back into his room to rummage through his things for street wear. He pockets his phone and the money and sets out to find the café that Razoredge had told him about.

There’s a line, so he opens up the class group chat to find a hundred messages that he’d missed last night after falling asleep. The last few are from Tokoyami and are about the patrol that he’d just come back from.

Class 1-A Chat (#general)

7:36am

breaks both legs *yeet*: guess who just had a near death experience

rock hard ;): Midoriya, you DIDN’T
fluffy bunnies are VALID: without me? :(

rock hard ;): hagakure I feel like that isn’t the appropriate response here

Uravitea: Deku!!! Are you okay???

breaks both legs *yeet*: yeah I’m fine. I wasn’t involved with any fighting but there were cars being thrown around, so…

Uravitea: well as long as you’re fine <3 <3 <3 did the villains get arrested?

Izuku looks down at his phone. He’s finally at the register, so he cautiously asks for a ‘Graceling buffet’ and the woman behind the counter scrawls something down and hands it to the barrister, who starts brewing coffee frantically.

“Thanks darling, that’ll be done in about fifteen, so just go and have a seat.”

Izuku nods and perches on one of the stools in the small space. While there’s a lot of foot traffic going through, most people are grabbing coffee or breakfast on their way to work, so not a lot of people are sitting down at the few tables in the café.

breaks both legs *yeet*: I’m fine and the villains won’t be bothering anyone else. How is everyone else doing?

Uravitea: I’m learning some really cool battle moves! It’s super fun, I’m really enjoying myself

Tsuyu-chan: Flood recovery for me. Luckily there isn’t any floods happening at the moment, but that leaves us just doing theory and paperwork.

rock hard ;): Tetsutetsu and me are both here, so we’re doing alright. You know, he’s actually a pretty manly guy

fluffy bunnies are VALID: have you got any goss on 1-B

Tsuyu-chan: Just because you thrive on blackmail doesn’t mean the rest of us do

fluffy bunnies are VALID: hey it’s called an intersection of my professional and personal lives, and I’m pretty sure that it’s going to save yalls asses one day

fluffy bunnies are VALID: besides after the sports tournament don’t lie to my face and say that you don’t want to know what’s going on in 1-B

fluffy bunnies are VALID: like wtf is up with that Monoma guy

rock hard ;): he did challenge Bakugou to a fight

fluffy bunnies are VALID: right, I’ll just note down that he’s insane

rock hard ;): hey, Bakugou isn’t THAT intimidating

fluffy bunnies are VALID: hey just because you can harden yourself doesn’t mean that everyone else is fine with being literally exploded.
Uravitea: well you know Bakugou hasn’t really exploded anyone
Uravitea: he just. Threatens to. A LOT

fluffy bunnies are VALID: false, he’s exploded both you and Midoriya and Kirishima. That’s three out of the five people who are chatting right now. Too high of a percentage to be ignored

Tsuyu-chan: Statistics are often used to deceive and make facts look differently. Three out of five is high, but three out of twenty is not

breaks both legs *yeet*: yeah you’re right
breaks both legs *yeet*: and he’s exploded people in one on one fights
breaks both legs *yeet*: where he didn’t have another option to win
breaks both legs *yeet*: Kacchan doesn’t do well with losing
Tsuyu-chan: He’s exploded a lot of things in training, but otherwise Midoriya is right
fluffy bunnies are VALID: hmmmnnn well idk if I’m up for taking that chance.
fluffy bunnies are VALID: Like I know he’s got a massive crush on Midoriya and he still exploded him.
breaks both legs *yeet*: w h a t
breaks both legs *yeet*: he does not have a crush on me
breaks both legs *yeet*: are u crazy
fluffy bunnies are VALID: right, right, you keep telling yourself that. It’s what I’d do if I had someone as terrifying as Bakugou crushing on me
fluffy bunnies are VALID: or you could just embrace the chaos and date him for a few months
fluffy bunnies are VALID: don’t lie to me Midoriya. I’ve seen you eyeing him up
breaks both legs *yeet*: wow you are crazy
fluffy bunnies are VALID: Look I’ve got more data to prove my point but that’s blackmail material lads!!

Tsuyu-chan: I suspect that Bakugou might read these messages, so I’m just going to go now, goodbye

fluffy bunnies are VALID: Look even Tsuyu knows what’s up
Uravitea: no heart eyes on main
fluffy bunnies are VALID: adiewhrigfedsad omfg
“Graceling Agency!”

Izuku stands up and then has to shove his phone into his pocket to juggle the many bags that are carrying his order. It takes some stacking and then some rearranging on the way back, but he does make it through the doors with all packages intact.

Amnesia grabs the top few, and then winks at him. “Go and put the rest in the kitchen and then eat whatever you want.”

“Okay, thanks!” Izuku says.

In the kitchen, Grace is sitting at the table with a cup of coffee in front of her, looking exhausted. Razoredge is sitting as well. They both look at him when he comes in.

“So there is a reason to get another intern,” Grace says, almost ripping the tray of coffees out of his hands. She downs the remnants of the one she’d been drinking and starts on the new one immediately.

Izuku deposits the other bags, and Razoredge digs through them until he brings out one with a bagel, which he begins buttering. Izuku pokes around until he finds an egg and bacon sandwich and eats that quickly.

Between the three of them, they somehow manage to put away all of the food that Izuku had brought. Grace sits back in her chair with a sigh, cradling her last coffee. Razoredge looks like he’s half a second away from putting his head on the table and going to sleep. Izuku feels about the same.

“Well!” Grace says. “Razoredge, why don’t you go and spar with Deku for a while. He needs to fight against different people.”

“Yes Grace,” Razoredge says, sighing as he stands. Izuku looks over his shoulder as they leave. Grace sits still at the table, cradling her coffee and eyes staring unfocused into the distance.

Razoredge opens the gym door and stretches his hands over his head. “Duality told me a bit about your quirk, so lets see it.”

Izuku nods, sets his feet, and calls up One for All.

Half an hour later and he’s actually won a few fights against Razoredge, because of his ‘sheer tenacity.’ Apparently even if Razoredge can see him coming, if he can’t get out of the way in time that doesn’t help much.

“You’re not as fast as you should be,” Grace says.

Izuku startles and turns to look at her. She’s leaning against the door edge, frowning at him pensively. “What?”

“You’re hesitating with some moves,” she says. “Like you’re torn between what you’re going to do next, and then you always alternate between punches and kicks. Are you trying for one style in particular? Or just trying to be even? Because that can become predictable.”

Izuku blinks at her, and then curls his hand into a fist. All Might uses punches with One for All, but his taekwondo training tells him that his legs are far stronger.

“Well… I guess I’m not sure whether to lead with a punch or kick,” Izuku says slowly.
“Legs,” Grace sniffs. “Those are stronger. Razoredge, Bitterblue wanted to talk to you.”

Razoredge escapes the gym with a wave. Grace comes out onto the mat. Izuku raises an eyebrow at her – doesn’t she have other work to do? But he sets his feet as well.

“That’s taekwondo, right?” Grace asks. Izuku nods. “Taekwondo leads with the legs, so you must have gotten the instinct to punch from somewhere else.”

She leaps forward and Izuku barely has time to call up One for All before she can flatten him in less than a second, which would be embarrassing. He’s learning her tells, most of which just let him know if she’s going to punch or kick him to the floor. His measly attempts to block her hits have just ended up bruising his arms and being more painful than if he’d just taken the hits.

Even so, her words itch at him. The *instinct* to punch. That’s a strange choice of words, but Grace is normally quite direct. Is it an instinct? He chooses whether to punch or kick depending on the circumstances of the fight, doesn’t he?

He throws a punch, which Grace dodges around easily. He follows it with a roundhouse kick, textbook perfect. Grace catches his leg and flips him to the ground. Izuku grunts but stares at the ceiling, still thinking.

Grace leans over him. “You sure do think a lot.”

Izuku meets her eyes. “I’m still figuring out my fighting style, so it’s important to analyse my moves.”

Grace nods. “True, but I do believe in practise over theory.” She winks at him and flies into action again. He flips over her head to avoid her kick, but she’s on him again. He’s still certain that she could level him in half a second and there would be nothing that he could do about it, but she’s going easy on him because he wouldn’t be able to learn anything if she didn’t let him move.

She kicks his feet out from under him and then huffs as he stares at the ceiling again. “Are you going to fight? Or should I leave you here by yourself?”

He jumps to his feet. “Sorry! I’m just…” he trails off.

Grace sighs, then points at him. “Burpees. Start doing them. I’m going to stand here and you’re going to think of a question and I’m going to answer it.”

Izuku drops into his first push up. “… Are you avoiding work right now?”

Grace laughs at him. “Ah, you cut right to it, don’t you?” She doesn’t say anything for a few reps, and Izuku starts to feel the burn in his legs. “To be honest, Bitterblue can handle all of the paperwork that goes through this office. And with Duality down, I wouldn’t be any use to her anyway. I tried to look at some things before I came in here, but she shooed me off. Next question.”

“What *is* your quirk?”

Grace is silent. He looks up at her from a push up.

“I would advise you not to ask that of any hero,” Grace finally says. “It’s quite rude, you know.”

“Sorry,” Izuku says, blushing. Grace shakes her head.

“My quirk is survival. I think I’m skilled enough to survive just about everything.”
Izuku pauses in a squat. “Like… you’re really good at building fires?”

That startles a laugh out of her. “Yes, actually. Now for an invasive question, let me ask an invasive question. You know who your soulmate is. Why aren’t you bonded?”

Izuku stares at the ground during his push up so he won’t have to look at her.

“He doesn’t want me,” Izuku says shortly.

“Huh,” Grace says. “That’s not what I would have guessed.”

Izuku shoves down the frustration he’s feeling. “What would you have guessed?”

“That you were thinking about the age thing,” she says. “Some people think that if you bond too early it can warp how you think. I think the people who say that are nuts. Bonding only opens your mind, not closes it.”

“Well, that’s not our problem,” Izuku says.

“I doubt that this is one sided,” Grace says slowly. “If he’s hesitating, then you are as well.”

Izuku jumps upright and glares at her. “No I’m not!”

Grace purses her lips. “Are you sure?”

Izuku stares at her. Is he…

“Keep going,” Grace says.

He reluctantly squats again. If Kacchan came up to him, right now, and asked to bond, would he? Instead of an answer, his mind returns a null value. Great.

He supposes… he would be shocked, that Kacchan had changed his mind. And maybe kind of annoyed. He wants closure on their issues, and so… they need to talk it out. Well, Izuku’s been trying to initiate that conversation, and Kacchan has been trying as well. He’s not sure whose fault it is that those conversations turn into arguments every time. Maybe both of them, maybe neither.

So if Kacchan just told him he wanted to bond, then no, Izuku wouldn’t blindly accept it. He sets his jaw. Sparring with Grace has shown him how high level the pros really are. He needs to get stronger and he needs to learn how to handle One for All. These sparring sessions are helping, because even though it’s hard to keep his Quirk active, the sudden start and stop of the fights are stretching his Quirk in new ways. It’s good, and a lot more progress than where he’d been at even a week ago, but he still wants more. He wants to be better than what he is.

“Why?” Grace asks.

“Huh?”

“Why doesn’t your soulmate want you? You’re sixteen, aren’t you? You should both be old enough to hold a half decent conversation with each other about this.” The words are said lightly, but when Izuku looks up at her, her mouth is set in a stern line. At least she knows that this is a hard question to answer. Izuku chews over what he’s going to say for a few seconds. It’s hard, because repeating Kacchan’s words to her mean repeating them to himself. And even though he thinks that Kacchan is wrong… a part of him understands how he can see things the way that he
“He…” Izuku grits his teeth. “He thinks that I’m… reckless.”

“That doesn’t sound like the words that he would have used,” Grace says, accusation in her tone.

“He thinks I’m going to get myself killed,” Izuku says, resisting the urge to spit the words out. “He thinks that I put myself in danger for no reason – well I don’t! If I get in a fight, then there’s always a reason for it. I’m always protecting someone. It’s not my fault he doesn’t see things the same way as me.”

“Sounds to me like you need to get stronger,” Grace says lightly. “He can’t complain if you wipe the floor with everyone you come across, can he?”

Izuku huffs. “That sounds like something he would say.”

“Stand up,” Grace says, and Izuku does, panting slightly. His legs are burning. “Look. I’m not the tallest, am I?”

Izuku is taller than her, so she really isn’t. “No.”

Grace nods. “My quirk doesn’t give me extra strength or extra speed. The only thing I have going for me is my body. So I train it, and I make sure that it’s the best it can be. And when I’m fighting, I fight smart. Like so –”

She kicks out at him, and he leaps backwards. He lifts his hands to go on the defensive, but Grace is standing normally again.

“See? You jumped back. Why?”

“Your kicks really hurt,” Izuku admits.

Grace nods. “And when you’re hurt, you’re compromised. You can’t think as well as you can normally, your reaction times are delayed, your speed and strength go down. As a strategy to survive, avoiding my blows is a good idea. But what if you want to win?” She pins him with a glare. “What would someone have to do to win against me?”

Izuku winces just thinking about it. But he’s been sparring with her for two days now, so he has some thoughts. “They’d have to take a hit,” he says. “Step into your guard and take a hit, and then hit you right back. If they did it at the right moment, that would unbalance you and they might get another hit in. Avoiding you isn’t the way to win.”

Grace grins. “Yeah. Unless you’ve got a long range quirk that can take me out, getting in real close is the only way that you’re going to do any damage. But like I said before – I don’t have any augmentation. So what happens if I meet a guy, and he’s bigger, stronger and just as fast as me, and his quirk makes him have super strong skin?”

Immediately his thoughts go to Kirishima. “Evade. Don’t let him get in close, because that’s when he can hurt you.”

Grace nods again. “Yep. And that situation sounds rare, but it’s happened to me more than once. And sometimes Duality couldn’t get to me, do you know what I did?”

“What?”

Grace flicks her wrist and a knife pops out into it. “Every girl’s best friend,” she says
conspiratorially. “Knives can hurt what hands can’t. They can be lost or taken, but they’re a hell of a backup plan.”

Izuku stares at the knife. Grace flips it in her hand and offers him the handle. He gingerly takes it.

“You should start learning how to move with a blade, anyway,” Grace advises. “A lot of movement with your soulsword will come intrinsically, but some of it won’t. This is a good start. Twelve inches, 440 steel with a sawback. I think it’s the most practical type of blade you can own.” She grins at him. “Lesson one: this is how you hold a knife.”

Chapter End Notes

Who’s surprised that Katsu is giving him a knife? No one? Yeah me either.

Me? Reccing bakudeku?? It's more likely than you think
Izuku bends his head over the paper that Duality has just passed him. He’s sitting opposite the hero in his office, after Grace was called out this morning to do some press about yesterday’s fight. Duality had claimed that he was well enough to do paperwork, and Bitterblue had directed Izuku to sit with him, which Duality had agreed to.

All of which is normal enough, if you disregard the knife in Izuku’s hand.

Grace claims that the quickest way to become familiar with a knife is to hold it. All the time. Even while he’s eating. It’s meant to let the knife become an extension of your hand, which Izuku isn’t sure he believes, but Grace had simply looked at him with an eyebrow raised and Izuku had agreed. Bitterblue had then walked in halfway through Grace teaching him how to disarm someone with a knife as well as how to avoid being disarmed while wielding a knife, and had shaken her head.

“You’re not going to let him keep that, are you? It’s your personal favourite. I’ll find something more appropriate.”

“She likes knives,” Grace had said succinctly. Izuku hadn’t argued.

So now he has an eleven inch double edged blade without a sawback, evenly weighted. Grace had told him that he could keep it until she said otherwise, which means that Izuku is going to have to tell his mum why he’s suddenly holding a knife everywhere he goes. That’s already giving him a headache.

Bitterblue comes into the office and puts down another stack of papers on Duality’s desk. He eyes them up before sighing.

“Thank you,” he says, and Izuku is impressed that he sounds like he means it. Duality winks at him and Izuku has to cover his mouth. “But you should take a break sometimes too, you know. You do so much work for us… Take Deku and show him some of your knife work, that’ll make both you and Katsu happy. I don’t know what’s going on in that press conference, but whatever it is, she isn’t happy about it.”

“Katsu is never happy about press events,” Bitterblue points out. “And what are you doing in the meantime? Am I meant to leave you here alone to procrastinate?”

Duality looks pointedly at his pile of finished paperwork. Even with the new papers that Bitterblue had brought into the office, it’s taller than the unfinished pile.

“For you,” he says, and Izuku is impressed that he sounds like he means it. Duality winks at him and Izuku has to cover his mouth. “But you should take a break sometimes too, you know. You do so much work for us… Take Deku and show him some of your knife work, that’ll make both you and Katsu happy. I don’t know what’s going on in that press conference, but whatever it is, she isn’t happy about it.”

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“Fine,” Bitterblue sighs. “Come on, hero in training.”

Izuku nods to Duality as he leaves, thankful that he doesn’t have to stare at papers for another hour. He’s here to do practical work! …Though he supposes that all the paperwork is still practical. He looks at Bitterblue out of the corner of his eye. He hopes that he’ll find someone as organised as her when he becomes a hero. The longer he stays here, the more he suspects that without her, this whole office would fall apart.

Bitterblue opens the door to the gym and Izuku closes it behind her, using only one hand because the other, well, has a knife in it. Razoredge is sitting with his legs crossed in the middle of the
floor, but opens his eyes when they walk in.

“We’re going to do some knife throwing practise,” Bitterblue tells him.

“Duality manage to convince you to have a hand in this after all?” Razoredge asks, and to Izuku’s surprise, pulls out two smaller knives of his own.

“You use them too?” he asks.

“Grace gave you a knife after you were here for a day and a half,” Razoredge says wryly. “Did you think that I was going to escape that?”

“Probably not,” Izuku concludes. Razoredge nods.

They both go to stand at a thin line that Izuku hasn’t noticed in the floor before. On the wall furthest from them, there’s a corkboard that Izuku now sees is scored with knife marks.

“I’m not as good as Bitterblue,” Razoredge jokes.

Izuku eyes Bitterblue out of the side of his eye, unsure how serious he’s being. She lifts an eyebrow at him and flicks her wrist towards the wall, where a knife appears in the middle of one of the scored bull’s eyes. He hadn’t even seen the knife before it had appeared in the wall. He smiles at Bitterblue and tries not to show how freaked out he is by that.

“Go on, Razoredge,” Bitterblue says, smiling back at him.

“I can hit it about half the time,” Razoredge mutters. He stares at the wall.

“You can do it!” Izuku cheers.

Razoredge smiles for a second before he brings his hand up over his shoulder and then flicks the knife forward. It lands right next to Bitterblue’s in the bull’s eye.

“Been practising?” Bitterblue asks.


“Then do it again,” Bitterblue says, eyes gleaming like she’s caught him in a trap.

“Right,” Razoredge mutters awkwardly. Izuku watches as he pulls another knife out of the one belt that he’s wearing around his waist, takes a deep breath in, and then throws the knife. It lands next to the other two in the wall.

“Hmm,” Bitterblue says, but Izuku thinks she sounds impressed. “Nice job.”

“Thanks,” Razoredge says, staring at the wall. “…I think.”

“That’s really cool,” Izuku says. “Do you normally do this while on the job?”

“Nah,” Razoredge says. “Grace does, but I’m not nearly as good as her. Besides, I usually use my quirk see what needs to change in a situation, and then I can tell Duality what he needs to do to help me just by thinking at him.” He taps his forehead. “It’s why we work so well together.”

“Katsu is the best person I know who regularly uses knives, but she’s the best at everything she does,” Bitterblue says.

“Grace is amazing,” Razoredge says, half looking like he’s in awe.
Izuku ducks his head to hide his smile. Both of them have adoring looks on their faces, like Grace is their soulmate instead of Duality’s.

Bitterblue shakes her head. “Anyway! Po wanted me to show you how to throw a knife. You’re not really ready to take up knife throwing as a hobby yet, and you’ll probably forget all of this by the time that you are, but hey, let’s have some fun with knives!”

_Famous last words_, Izuku thinks, taking a deep breath as Bitterblue holds out her hand and shows him how to position the knife across his palm.

Grace comes back just after lunch and immediately retreats into the gym, where Izuku hears her start to punch the living shit out of her punching bag. Amnesia comes in with her, looking tired.

“What happened?” Bitterblue asks from the front desk.

Amnesia just shakes her head. “Someone got photos from the fight yesterday and posted them on Hero Goss Today.”

Izuku winces at the mention of one of the most seedy gossip magazines. Bitterblue winces as well.

“Damn it,” Bitterblue mutters. “What details?”

“That the Graceling Duo was involved, and that the villains died,” Amnesia says. “The press was an absolute circus. Shit, sometimes I wish I could just use my quirk on myself. There’s a lot of stuff I want to forget about this morning.”

“I’ll make you something to drink, if you’d like?” Izuku asks.

“Black tea, please,” Amnesia says, and Izuku scurries out of the front room. He has to pass the gym to get to the kitchen, and he can tell that Grace hasn’t let up on her punching bag. Izuku sets the water to boil and finds the tea from the cupboard. Across the hall he can see Duality’s desk. It’s empty.

A part of him wants to try and listen in on the conversation going on in the gym, even though they’re probably not speaking out loud. How do soulmates usually help each other? What do Grace and Duality say to each other when one of them is hurting? He aches to know what that type of intimacy is like.

Another part wants to go back to the front office and listen to the PR disaster unfolding there. He hasn’t been on his phone since yesterday afternoon, but when he opens his news app there’s a story on the front page about yesterday’s fight. Graceling Agency is only a small firm, and something like this could easily set back their rankings by ten or twenty. The Graceling Duo is ranked fifth in the Hero Duo rankings, so they’re high up in the public eye, but that also means that they have far to fall.

But instead he masters his curiosity and his desperate need to understand the bond that he’s a part of, and pours the boiled water into a tea cup to steep the tea.

Eventually, Amnesia comes into the kitchen. She flops down at the table and Izuku gives her the tea. It’s more lukewarm than hot at that point, but she still grabs at it eagerly. Izuku pockets his phone and sits down opposite her. He can still hear fighting coming from the gym, but it sounds like Duality and Grace are sparring instead of Grace beating up the poor punching bag.
“Thanks,” Amnesia says shortly. Compared to how she’d looked at all the other times this week, her eyes are dull, and she stares into the distance without focussing on anything.

“Figured out what you’re going to do?” Izuku asks awkwardly after a few seconds. He doesn’t want to bother her more than she already is, but he also doesn’t want to sit here in silence. Maybe talking through it to him will help her sort things out and make her feel more confident in whatever choice that she and Bitterblue must have made.

Amnesia sighs. “A bit. Grace and Duality have a lot of friends. The photos leaked in a dodgy magazine, but they’re pretty clear. Bitterblue has a lot of contacts as well, and she’s calling up some people now. I don’t know most of them, and they’ll respond better to her, anyway.”

“How come?”

Amnesia finishes her tea with a long gulp. “She’s old blood, and after the fucking mess her dad left in his wake, there isn’t an officer or hero over thirty who wouldn’t recognise her.” She shakes her head. “You’re lucky that All Might put a stop to him. He truly is the symbol of peace of this era.”

At the mention of All Might, a type of peace seems to come over Amnesia’s face. Izuku stares at her, feeling off kilter. Sure, he’s looked up to All Might for his entire life… but it’s a little weird to realise how much other adults also rely on him. The look on Amnesia’s face tells him that she thought that All Might could take care of any villain. That no matter the situation, he would always be able to resolve it.

It’s a sobering reminder of the weight that All Might bears, even now in his weakened state, and it’s intimidating as well, because Izuku himself aims to carry the weight of that expectation in the future. Looking at the expression on Amnesia’s face, Izuku is suddenly extremely aware of how little control he has over his quirk, and how far he has yet to go. Unwillingly, he remembers his hesitation before the start of the sport’s festival – how he wanted to play it safe and lay low and try and master his quirk.

Sitting in the kitchen of a pro agency, Izuku is suddenly struck dumb by the realisation that there is no playing safe. Not with the League of Villains out there. Not with All Might’s timer getting less and less every day. Not with his subpar control over One for All. Right here, right now, this period of time is likely the safest he’ll be from now on. He’s an unknown. He’s still in school. All Might is still out there, covering for him.

He needs growth, and he needs it now.

The sudden urge to fling himself out of the chair and do something almost strangles him. Amnesia is still staring at the table. And Izuku can’t stop himself from staring at her.

Amnesia shakes herself, unaware that she’s made his blood sing with the urge to be active. “Sorry. Things were messy this morning, and it kind of got to me.”

Amnesia has a freckle just under her left eye. Her hair isn’t as neat as it’s been all week, red strands loose from her bun. He can see the hints of dark roots in her hair where the part is. There are tired shadows under her eyes, and she looks lost. It doesn’t suit her.

Carefully, Izuku folds his hands together in his lap. “If it’s as bad as you’re saying, then you should be feeling the effects of it. To ignore something that causes you distress is bad for your health.” Amnesia looks up at him in surprise. “There are times to push yourself, and there are times to rest… Just remember that you can lean on your teammates here. They seem willing to share the load with you.”
Amnesia eyes him up. Izuku stares back calmly. There are glints of gold in her green eyes that he can only see when she moves her head.

“Yeah,” she finally says. “You’re right.” She drains the rest of her tea. “Thanks, kid.”

“No problem,” Izuku says. Amnesia stands up and he does as well, following her out of the kitchen. The sounds from the gym have quieted.

Amnesia puts him down at Grace’s desk and tells him to put any papers that are over a week old on Duality’s desk. Izuku takes the first few from the top of a precarious stack, and doesn’t even mind when Amnesia leaves him alone there.

After all, the light in her eyes had returned.

The afternoon goes by quickly after that. Izuku makes himself useful and runs around the agency, fetching paperwork for Bitterblue and getting Grace coffee when she grumbles over the statement that she’s writing. By the end of the day, there is less tension in the air and Bitterblue has approved a press statement to release. Izuku has been directed to ‘give Grace something to focus on’ which was just her showing him throughout her lunch break how to disarm someone with a knife, and how to avoid getting disarmed. He’d enjoyed the sparring, even though it had made him think of the fight that he’d witnessed the previous morning. After seeing Grace wield her soulsword, he can see the same types of movements when she wields her knife.

He’s holding some paperwork when Duality calls out to him from the hallway.

“Deku, can I talk to you for a second?” Duality says, looking fondly at where Grace has just disappeared out the door.

“Yes!” Izuku calls. He deposits the stack of papers on the reception desk and Amnesia hums at him in thanks, her head already bent over a stack of paper.

Duality has gone back into his office, so Izuku follows him there. In the gym, Razoredge and Bitterblue are sparring – or at least, Bitterblue is casually disarming Razoredge every time he comes near her holding a knife.

“What is it?” Izuku asks. Duality is behind his desk, organising the scant few folders that remain on the otherwise spotless surface.

Duality clears his throat. “Thank you for talking to Amnesia. She told me that you made her feel better.”

“Oh,” Izuku says. “Um. I don’t think I did all that much. Just reminded her of some things.”

Duality catches his eye, and Izuku tries not to feel small under his gaze. “I think that you did more than enough,” Duality says lowly. “You should be more confident in yourself.”

Izuku straightens up and resists the urge to bow. “Right!”

Duality’s mouth curls into a smile. “And another thing.” He taps his fingers against the desk. “I think that when most heroes take on interns, their relationship usually stays quite professional. Katsu and I have never been like that. We only have a few sidekicks, and we pick them out very carefully. They have to be people that I in particular mesh well with, due to my quirk. Katsu convinced me to try you out, and I haven’t regretted things yet. I think we have very similar
mindsets."

*What a compliment!* “Thank you!” Izuku squeaks.

Duality sighs. “Even so, you came here with an ulterior motive, didn’t you?”

“Umm,” Izuku says, blinking rapidly. “Well, I did want to intern at a Hero Duo agency, that’s why I asked Airi if she knew any Hero Duos would might accept me.”

Duality eyes him critically. “Due to your conflict with your own soulmate.”

Izuku drops his gaze to Duality’s desk and carefully thinks about nothing but how shiny the wood is.

“Katsu told me about your talk,” Duality continues. “I’m glad you had things out with her. Do you know anyone else with a soulmark besides us and Airi?”

Izuku shakes his head.

Duality frowns. “Sometimes there are things you want to ask, but going to a teacher can be too intimidating. If you need anything, I’d like you to know that you can always ask us. I think that too many younger duos muddle through their experience without asking questions they should be asking. Especially if you’re planning to go into hero work.” Duality folds his hands under his chin. “And judging from what I’ve seen so far this week, I think you’ll make an excellent hero.”

Izuku blushes under the praise. “I’m… Thank you.”

Duality nods. “You’re welcome. Now… Like I said, Katsu is still feeling off. Take Razoredge and go and get some take out from her favourite restaurant. He knows the one.”

“Right!” Izuku says, standing up and bounding out of the office. There’s a warm feeling bubbling away in his chest. Duality thinks that he’ll be a good hero! It makes him feel like maybe he’s doing something right after all. He really likes Duality, and he doesn’t seem like someone to say something that he doesn’t mean.

He sticks his head into the gym. Razoredge is still getting his ass kicked by Bitterblue. “Razoredge!” Izuku calls. “Duality wants us to go and get Grace’s favourite dinner?”

Razoredge groans while Bitterblue chuckles. “Grace just took the car, too,” Bitterblue says wickedly. “You two are going to have to walk.”

Razoredge digs his phone out from his belt. “Grace was meant to be back around half past five… We’re really going to have to be fast if we’re going to get back before then.”

“Well, we shouldn’t waste any time then,” Izuku says. “Where are we going?”

“South, to Hosu,” Razoredge mutters. “Come on.”

They’re already in casual clothes so they didn’t have to change. The streets are starting to get busier as rush hour approaches, and they have to duck around the many people on the streets. Izuku touches his phone in his pocket to make sure that it’s still there, and checks the time. Ten past five. He quickens his steps.

Razoredge is just about to step into a small looking restaurant when the first explosion goes off.

Izuku flinches and half jumps, spinning around to look for the source of the explosion. The street
is silent for a second, until the people start hurrying, most turning away from the direction the explosion came from. Izuku is fairly sure that the sound came from further south, towards the centre of Hosu. Sure enough, when he squints he can see the beginning of a smoke cloud coming from that area.

Razoredge grips his shoulder suddenly, and Izuku looks towards him. Razoredge’s eyes are flickering back and forth at a speed that makes Izuku dizzy, and then the older boy suddenly turns on him.

“Deku,” Razoredge says fiercely. “Listen to me. Go three blocks south, then two blocks east, then down the second alleyway on the south side.”

“What –” Izuku starts to say, but Razoredge shakes his head.

“There’s no time to explain. I’ll send you backup, but you need to hurry – your friend is in danger!”

Friend…? Izuku thinks, but then he realises.

He’s in Hosu. The Hero Killer has been seen in the area.

Iida is here.

Panic fills him with a warm buzz, and he nods sharply to Razoredge, who flings himself off in the opposite direction. Izuku sees him deflect a flying piece of rubble before it can hit two bystanders, probably saving their lives. He shakes his head and then starts running – three blocks south, two blocks east. He has to push past the people who are headed in the opposite direction, and just as he’s about to turn a corner, a guy who looks exactly like the Noumu guy from USJ comes barrelling down the street. Fear jolts through him, but before he can act, the Noumu lookalike jumps over the nearby building, and into the train line there. An immense bang rushes over him as the train shudders to a stop. The fear combines with his panic and Izuku curses his shaking hands as he crosses the next street, searching desperately for the alley that Razoredge had told him about.

It had looked like the creature that the villains had called ‘Noumu’ but how could there be one here? Izuku had thought that he was going to find Iida, but maybe he’s wrong about that too. The only thing he knows for sure is that if he’s at the same power level as the one at USJ, then the whole city is in trouble.

Izu spots the alley, and his head clears for a few seconds. Razoredge had said that he would send backup, but Izuku doesn’t know when that will come. He doesn’t know if anyone else is nearby, but he still fumbles out his phone and sends a location pin to the group chat. He feels extremely underequipped, since he’s wearing jeans and a simple shirt with joggers. If he was in his hero costume, he would probably feel more confident. He shakes his head as he puts his phone back into his pocket and calls up One for All, feeling the buzzing power of it under his skin. It makes him stronger and faster, and he lets that feeling wash away his fears. After all, it’s what he does with his quirk, not what he’s wearing, that matters. Whatever is in this alley, he’s going to meet it with all the strength he has.

He darts forward into the darkness.

Katsuki ignores the ramblings of one of the sidekicks in the office as he picks up his paperwork. He isn’t sure how he’d thought this internship thing was going to go, but he does know for sure
that he thought there wouldn’t be any paperwork involved. Well, there is. A lot of it.

He knows from the group chat that mostly everyone else is stuck with office duties as well, so at least he’s not outraged about that. He just burns for a chance to prove himself, to show that he’s capable of field work. Best Jeanist had taken a personal interest in him, but when he’d been called out to deal with a villain incident this morning he hadn’t taken Katsuki with him. No, he’d taken a few of his sidekicks, and Katsuki had been running around for people back in the office as they’d coordinated his attack.

Okay, it had been kind of cool to see how that worked. There are two big TVs mounted on the wall of the main office, one a 24/7 news channel devoted to this general area. The other one is normally turned off, but when Best Jeanist had been out fighting, it had displayed the villains that he was up against as well as a live feed from a camera that one of the sidekicks carried. Katsuki had helped with some battle analysis and had suggested a tactic to be used against one of the villains, which Best Jeanist had utilised successfully. So while he hadn’t been in the middle of the action, it had still been fine.

But then this afternoon had just been paperwork, paperwork, paperwork. Best Jeanist had subdued the villains, but that hadn’t been the end of it. Katsuki had thought that it was the police’s job to do all of this, but apparently a hero agency needs to cross all its stupid i’s and dot all its dumb t’s. Or the other way around. Whatever. The point being, Katsuki had been given his own little stack of papers to read through since he’d actively engaged with the battle, and it had nearly done his head in. He’d woken up around six this morning with a shock from stupid Deku, and then he’d nearly lost his shit going through the group chat. He’s going to have a conversation with invisible bitch when he sees her next.

So he isn’t in the best mood as he gives his paperwork to the sidekick who’d mostly been looking after him in the office, Mirror Image. She quickly flicks through the forms and checks his work, and Katsuki tries not to glare at her. Glaring at the wall is probably going to get better results re: not annoying her and making her give him more paperwork. Best Jeanist dismisses his lower level sidekicks at five, and it’s currently four fifty eight. Katsuki wants to go home and scarf down the spiciest food he can cook and then go the fuck to sleep.

“This looks pretty good,” Mirror Image says, sounding surprised. Katsuki wants to growl at her, because she went through the forms with him when she gave it to him, and he’s not a fucking idiot.

“Do I need to do anything else for that?” he asks instead, forcing his voice to a normal conversational volume. It doesn’t do much for the tone, though.

Mirror Image raises an eyebrow at him, looking unimpressed. “Paperwork’s a bitch, hey? Yeah, the first time you really interact with it, it gives you a headache.” She flips his papers closed and signs something on the front. “Great! It’s five, and your papers are all in order, so I guess you can leave for today.”

“Right,” Katsuki says. He doesn’t waste any time in going back to the change rooms and stripping out of his hero gear, storing it back in its case. He reluctantly pulls his binder off because his mum would go apeshit if she saw him coming home in it after he left wearing it this morning, puts a hoodie on and shoves his phone and wallet into his pocket.

Since he starts at eight and leaves at five, he’s still sleeping at home for his internship. Not all of his classmates have that luxury, even those who are interning at agencies close enough to head home every night. He stuffs his earbuds in and turns up the volume on his destress playlist.

He just misses the early train, and scowls after its retreating lights as he stares down the tracks after
it. Whatever. It’s rush hour, and there’s going to be another one in five minutes, so he leans against the station wall and waits.

It’s almost easy to miss under the babbling of the crowd around him and the music in his ears, but Katsuki tenses when Deku’s thoughts suddenly turn sharp and panicked.

Automatically setting his feet in a ready position, he almost goes to look for the threat that’s around him before shaking his head. Deku’s on the other side of the city, so whatever he’s doing is far away from Katsuki. Antsy, he shifts his weight from one foot to another, trying to get a read on Deku, but his thoughts have gone strangely blank. Katsuki wishes that he could dismiss the feeling altogether, but that sudden sharp spike of fear was unmistakable.

He gets out his phone and opens his train app, plugging in this station and the one closest to Abuta. It’s a fifty minute trip, but there’s a train leaving from another platform in four minutes.

He closes the app and stares at his phone. His home wallpaper is one of his favourite pictures of All Might, while his lock screen is one of the default wallpapers. He clicks his phone off and on and off again, tapping his foot against rapidly.

A message comes in to the class group chat from Deku, and Katsuki clicks on the notification.

**Class 1-A Chat (#general)**

5:19pm

*Midoriya Izuku has shared their location*

Katsuki stares at the message, then opens the map that’s linked. His stomach drops out when he sees that Izuku isn’t in Abuta like he’d said he was – the pin location shows him to be in **Hosu**.

The thread of thought at the back of his mind turns terrified again.

**Alien Queen**: yo Midoriya you okay?

**rock hard ;)**: hey dude, was that a mistake??

**Alien Queen**: Midoriya blease answer

Katsuki drags a hand down his face. What has Deku gotten himself into this time?

**weed birthday**: Not a fucking mistake. Who’s the closest to Hosu?

**Alien Queen**: I’m out of the city :/

**rock hard ;)**: I’m not close

**rock hard ;)**: dude do you know what’s up??

**Alien Queen**: Iida was interning in hosu, wasnt he? Thats close

**Alien Queen**: oh shit hosu

**Alien Queen**: you don’t think

**Alien Queen**: …
Alien Queen: the hero killer?

Katsuki is going to kill Deku with his own two hands. He hasn’t decided if he’s going to choke or explode him to death. He can pick later, when he knows that Deku’s going to be alive enough to know that he’s being killed.

weed birthday: Something’s up.

fluffy bunnies are VALID: dudes stop blowing up my notifs lol

fluffy bunnies are VALID: wait shit wtf????

fluffy bunnies are VALID: I’m actually kinda close. I’ll go check on him

Katsuki resists the urge to type out please. That might just freak them all out even more than they already are, and if invisible bitch is already on her way it might distract her.

His train pulls in. Katsuki looks up at it, and then darts across the platform to board the train that’ll take him to Hosu.

Chapter End Notes

Me? Giving you a cliffhanger? It's more likely than you think.

This chapter was Annoying to write, but!! It's here!! Finally!! I've actually gone back and edited all of the prior chapters of this fic, fixing tense issues (there were so many I'm so sorry), some soulmate stuff (it now all makes sense!), and making Katsuki trans (bc why the hell not). I would encourage you to go back and read it again, if you're so inclined. If you're reading this fic for the first time, congratulations! You've got the 2.0 version.

You know what's better than BNHA or FMA? BNHA and FMA! Click here to read an AU where Roy teaches at UA and Ed and Al are in class 1-A!
Izuku sprints into the alley, and is just in time to see Iida trapped beneath a man who is bringing a knife down towards him.

“Iida!” Izuku screams, throwing himself forward, his quirk pumping him full of speed and power. He kicks the knife away from Iida and body slams the man, so they both go rolling across the alley. Izuku doesn’t let himself get caught up in a tangle with the villain, jumping back to Iida’s side as quickly as he can.

Iida hasn’t moved – as he looks his friend over, Izuku realises that it’s probably because Iida can’t move.

“Midoriya?” Iida asks, sounding vaguely shocked. Izuku steps in front of him and faces down the villain.

He’s got a red scarf wrapped around his head, a sword in one hand and a knife in the other. Immediately Izuku’s eyes go to his legs. No one from Graceling Agency dual wielded knives, but he’d been fighting against them for long enough to know that the first hint of a knife attack would come from the stance.

He hadn’t expected to be putting his knife skills into practise so quickly. The villain stands up slowly, evaluating Izuku quickly.

The Noumu… the Hero Killer… working together?

The thought is alarming, but Izuku shakes his head slightly. There’s no room for meandering thoughts right now – he needs to focus on what’s in front of him and ignore the terror pounding through his blood.

“Found you,” Izuku says, staring down the Hero Killer while talking to Iida. “Sorry it took so long, Iida. I had directions, but I couldn’t run any faster.”

“Midoriya! Why…” Iida starts to say, but Izuku has to duck under a thrown knife.

“Can you move even a little?” Izuku presses. “You’re faster than me, and could find some pros.” And it would get Iida away from the danger.

“I can’t move…” Iida groans. “He cut me… that’s likely his quirk.”

“I saw that on TV,” Izuku says grimly. So he needs to avoid getting cut… Well, time to make Grace proud of him and show how much he’s learnt from her lessons. He felt his brain click into the mode he used when fighting against Grace and she was coming at him with a knife. Hopefully his two days of training would pay off now.

A shadow in the alley catches his eye, and Izuku swears to himself. Another hero is down, but there’s not a lot of blood, so he probably isn’t dead yet. Just paralysed, just like Iida. With two victims, there’s no way he can escape with one of them. That means he’s just going to have to delay for as long as possible, until Razoredge sends backup.

“Midoriya… don’t interfere. This has nothing to do with you!”
Izuku boggles at that, resisting the urge to round on Iida. He can’t take his eyes off the villain. “What?”

The villain lets out a chuckle. “A friend shows up to protect you… I’m assuming another little hero in training, even though he’s wearing casual clothes. However, it’s my duty to kill these two… I like your attitude, but if we’re forced to fight, then naturally… The weaker of us will be culled. So what now?”

Izuku lifts his lip in a silent snarl, even as the ferocity coming off the Hero Killer in waves nearly does his head in. The fear running around his stomach rears up into full blown terror. Izuku doesn’t want to meet Stain’s eyes, but he can’t make himself look away.

There’s no doubt about it… This guy is nothing like the villains at USJ. Those are the eyes of a killer!

His goal now is to protect the two people in this alley. Razoredge is out there, and will hopefully find back up. He’d sent out a mass text to the group chat. Now all he needs to do is stall for time – or drive off the Hero Killer himself.

It’s like a more deadly version of his spars with Grace, when she would tell him that he had to last three minutes against her. Except now his time limit probably needs to be longer than that, and he can’t afford to lose.

“No! I told you to run! This is none of your business!” Iida shouts.

Izuku feels a wave of anger, which is unlike him but he feels like it’s appropriate for the situation. Leave? Leave so that Iida and the other hero can be killed? For what? Iida’s pride? His stupid stubborn idiocy?

“What’s a hero meant to say when you spout crap like that?” Izuku seethes quietly. “I’ve got a lot to say to you, but that will have to come later… because it’s like what All Might said. Giving help that’s not asked for is what makes a true hero!”

“Heh,” Stain says, leaning forward. Izuku still has his eyes fixed on his legs, even as he takes a few steps forward. He needs room to manoeuvre, so that he doesn’t trip over Iida.

A flex of the knee, and Izuku is prepared for the sudden dash forward, sword outstretched and gleaming in the low light. He calls up One for All, green lightning lighting the alley as he carefully runs to meet Stain, aiming to get under his guard.

One for All: Full Cowl!

Stain jerks aside to avoid his punch, but rounds on him as Izuku ducks past.

Stain pulls out a knife to accompany the sword, and shifts to stand in a position that Izuku isn’t familiar with.

“Don’t let him cut you –!”

Stain lunges again, and Izuku ducks under the sword and knife combo, almost skimming the ground in an attempt to avoid getting touched at all by the blades. Stain is fast – maybe a hair faster than Grace, and his skill with a blade is equal to hers. Izuku can’t last in a knife fight (or any fight) against Grace, but he’s not looking to fight back here. He’s using time and baiting Stain further down the alley, away from Iida and the hero. And Stain is falling for it – perfect.
Stain slashes in a wide arc, and Izuku bounces off the alley wall to go over it, before bouncing off the other alley wall to gain momentum and take Stain from his blind spot, smashing a fist into his face. It’s a move that he’s seen Kacchan pull off numerous times using his explosions to change directions. He’d always admired the manoeuvrability of the action, and putting it into practise makes his blood sing with victory. Look at me now, Kacchan!

Stain falls to the floor, and Izuku skids to a stop, grinning. Stain doesn’t waste any time in standing up and jumping forward again, and Izuku has to dodge a series of sword and knife combo moves that feel like they’re millimetres away from nicking his skin. Wishing for the superior protection of his hero suit, he’s extra careful in measuring the distance between them.

Stain leads with a knife move that Izuku suddenly recognises. He grabs his own knife from where it’s been sheathed in the small of his back and wraps Stain’s knife with his own in a move that would have made Grace proud. The knife goes flying across the alley and Stain takes a step back in surprise as Izuku falls into his own stance.

“Hoho… a hero that uses a knife? Interesting.”

Stain’s stance changes again to something that Izuku doesn’t recognise, and now it’s a dance of steel as Stain starts throwing small knives at him. Izuku curses to himself as he jumps around them while also avoiding the long reach of the sword. He sheathes his knife again for more manoeuvrability of both hands, and then sees stars as Stain trips him and he slams face first into the alley wall. Izuku blindly throws himself back, fearing the knives, and is unprepared for Stain to go for the wall instead, and licks it.

And he’s unable to move.

Panicking, Izuku struggles for a few long moments before the drip of blood down his face from his nose registers. Of course… it wouldn’t matter that Stain cut him if it’s the blood that he’s after.

“It’s always stimulating to go against another knife user, but in the end you lacked the information that you needed. A skilled fighter, but in the end it wasn’t enough. Even though so many fools out there are nothing but talk… you are not one of them. You are worth keeping alive.”

And Stain walks past him.

Izuku tries to move, tries to do anything, but he can’t. “NO!” Izuku screams.

Sudden heat flares as fire splits the alley, separating Stain from the heroes. Izuku’s hope grows with the flames.

“Midoriya,” Todoroki says blithely. “Please be more specific in your directions in the future. I was almost too late.”

Relief almost crushes him. Stain mutters unhappily about the fire. Izuku’s hope grows with the flames.

“Sending out a meaningless message isn’t your style,” Todoroki says. “I realised it meant ‘I’m in trouble, help!’” Todoroki sends out a wave of ice that pushes Izuku around the Hero Killer and behind Todoroki, where Iida had been. Now Iida is further away, almost at the mouth of the alley.

“It’s just like the reports said,” Todoroki says grimly. “But you’re not killing these guys today!”
“Todoroki, don’t let him draw blood! He paralyses people by ingesting it!”

“Explains the blades,” Todoroki says lowly. “So I need to keep my distance —”

He’s cut off by a thrown knife that skims across his cheek. Izuku hisses, but he can’t move to help, so he can only watch on as Todoroki and Stain exchange blows. Todoroki uses his ice skillfully to keep distance between them, but is distracted by a flying sword (fair, to be honest). Stain stabs him in the thigh as he licks the blood from his cheek, and then Todoroki is just as frozen as the rest of them.

Shit… Izuku flicks his eyes back to look at Iida, but he’s not there.

“A commendable effort,” Stain says lowly. “Now, where was my first victim…”

He turns, but there’s nothing there. Izuku can’t keep the grin off his face.

“See, that’s the problem with you vigilantes,” Todoroki manages to say. “You always work alone – so you expect us to as well!”

And with that, Stain goes flying across the alley, victim of an invisible foot to the face.

“Score!” cheers a voice that Izuku recognises. “One point to me, yah!”

“What…?” Stain mumbles. He stands upwards and then doubles over again, likely because of a fist to the gut. Stain lashes out, knives flying, and Izuku tenses, but no blood goes flying. A knife gets knocked out of Stain’s hand, but another thrusts forward. Izuku redoubles his efforts to move, and his finder twitches.

Hagakure goes toe to toe with Stain for a few more seconds as Izuku manages to move his whole hand. He can feel warmth suddenly flow from his hand up his arm, and then he can move again.

Curling his lip, Izuku channels his quirk and flies forward. “Hagakure, I can move!” he shouts, and Stain darts out of the way as he aims a kick at him. Hagakure’s invisibility is a help in situations like this, but Izuku has to be careful not to catch her in his attacks.

“You go high!” Hagakure calls, and Izuku bounces off the walls of the alley, always looking for a blind spot he can take advantage of. Stain must be running out of knives, because he’s not throwing them anymore, but waiting for Hagakure’s attacks and then retaliating by slashing widely in the hopes of hitting what he can’t see. He comes down from above and Stain has to fight a battle on two fronts, against two opponents that can match him.

“His quirk must have a time limit!” Izuku calls. “Todoroki, keep trying to move!”

Stain flies at him in a combo attack that has Izuku stumbling back to avoid his attacks. Stain trips over, probably due to Hagakure kicking his legs out from underneath him.

Izuku leads with a punch, but Stain dodges and he slams into the wall fist first. He yanked out of the way as a sword comes down where he was a second ago.

“Thanks,” he says.

“He’s fast!” Hagakure says. “And he’s almost got me a few times.”

“We just need to last a little longer!” Izuku hisses.

Hagakure strings together hits on Stain, and Izuku darts in to distract Stain from above and give
Stain swings his sword and Izuku can’t get out of the way in time. He feels the blade skate across his face, and beside him, Hagakure calls out in pain as well. Izuku grabs her arm to drag her away, but Stain has already brought his sword to his lips.

Izuku curses, straining to move, but he can’t. Hagakure is tense under his hand, but immobile as well.

“Finally,” Stain mumbles. “This has been far more trouble than it was worth. Stupid kids…”

“You!”

Izuku flicks his eyes to the mouth of the alley, and feels the urge to both collapse and jump for joy. Standing there are several pros, standing at the ready. In front of them all is Endeavor, and standing beside him is Razoredge. Iida stands up under his own power, and Izuku looks him in the eye, and – something has changed in him. For the better.

“Deku!” Razoredge calls, real fear in his voice.

“Damn it,” Stain says, and jumps up to the roof of the building they’re next to. Several of the pros leave, but Razoredge darts forward. He rests a hand on Izuku’s shoulder.

“I brought help as soon as I could,” Razoredge says. He looks at the cut on Izuku’s cheek. “I’m sorry you had to fight – shit, I didn’t know what you’d face, only that you could save your friend…”

“It’s okay,” Izuku says, managing to smile. “It all turned out okay. You did good.”

Razoredge folds into himself, but then startles suddenly, jumping away.

“Um, sorry,” Hagakure mutters. “I don’t mean to interrupt.”

Razoredge stares at the spot where Hagakure is. “Someone who’s completely invisible,” he mutters. “Now I’ve seen everything.”

Izuku closes his eyes and refuses the urge to cry, and the urge to laugh.

The hospital is in disarray when they arrive, people who have been injured from the Noumu everywhere. Of the four 1-A students that faced the Hero Killer, Todoroki is the most injured. He’d been rushed off as soon as they arrived – apparently when Stain had stabbed his thigh, he’d nicked one of the major arteries there. It was lucky that Todoroki had been forced to be still and hadn’t moved around after that, otherwise he could have bled out. Iida is the next worst off. Before Izuku had arrived, Stain had pinned his arm to the ground with a sword, resulting in a stab wound that went through the entirety of Iida’s arm. It looks painful, and Iida is taken away soon after Todoroki – Izuku catches something about nerve damage that has him on the edge of his seat. Izuku has a concussion from when Stain smashed his face against the wall of the alley, and a few scrapes that could have been prevented if he’d been wearing his hero costume, as well as the final blow that Stain had delivered, a shallow cut across his face. It cuts through tip of his nose and then across his left cheek.

Hagakure is the most uninjured of them all. Stain had nicked her shoulder, but it’s apparently even
lighter than the slice across Izuku’s face. Just enough to draw blood. So she’d been put on duty watching Izuku while they waited in the waiting room. Razoredge is over by the entrance way, on the phone with Bitterblue. As soon as they’d arrived he’d called the agency, and he’d told Izuku that Grace had immediately left to come to the hospital. Izuku isn’t sure what he’s going to say to her.

The nurse calls them forward, and Izuku is directed towards one of the weary doctors, who beckons him into an examination room. The doctor shines a light into his eyes and asks him a few questions, but now that the adrenaline has worn off, Izuku has to admit that he’s feeling a bit dizzy and nauseous, and that he has a headache. Or at least his nose is aching enough for his whole head. The doctor tells him that it isn’t broken but it will hurt a whole lot for a while, especially since the deep cut at the tip won’t help the bruise heal. The injuries to his face make him look a lot more hurt than he really is. The doctor tells him that he has a mild concussion, but that it’s not serious enough for him to stay overnight at the hospital.

The door bursts open, and Izuku startles. Grace is standing there in casual clothes, with her hair very mussed. She probably rode the motorbike to the hospital – by the looks of it, without a helmet.

“Deku!” she says sharply. “Are you okay?”

“He has a concussion, but apart from that nothing serious,” the doctor says. She’s obviously very tired, but Izuku knows that there are still people waiting outside. Grace comes over and looks Izuku in the eye. She takes a deep breath in.

“I’m glad that you’re safe. I’m expecting a full debriefing when we get back to the office.”

She looks like she’s going to say something else, but then the door slams open again. Izuku is a lot less happy to see this person. As his angry red eyes fix on Izuku, Izuku raises a hand vaguely. That does nothing to dissuade him at all.


The doctor sighs and leaves the room. Izuku hopes that means they’ve got permission to use the room for a while. He doesn’t think that Kacchan would appreciate everyone outside hearing him yell.

Kacchan stalks over to him and Izuku tries not to quail under his stare. Kacchan’s eyes trace his red and bruised nose and then trail across his cheek. If it’s possible, the anger radiating off him becomes even fiercer.

“What the fuck did you do? First the stupid message in the group chat, then silence, except it wasn’t silent for me, because all I could feel was your fear –”

He grabs the front of Izuku’s shirt and leans into his space. Izuku reels back, put off balance by Kacchan’s nearness and the burning intensity of his eyes.

“Kacchan…” Izuku says quietly.

“Hey. Hands off my intern.”

Kacchan goes very still. Kacchan rounds on Grace, who is standing with her hands on her hips and an anger to match Kacchan’s in her eyes.
Izuku wants to back away from their intensity. Kacchan is taller than her, and uses every inch of his height to loom over Grace. Grace has her chin tilted up and her hands on her hips, and refuses to back away when Kacchan takes a few threatening steps towards her. There’s real rage in Kacchan’s stare, but Grace’s flat refusal to back down is giving him a run for his money. The two of them are locked in a battle of wills, and Izuku doesn’t know who will come out on top. Kacchan looks ready to unleash his fury on someone who isn’t Izuku. Grace looks ready to put Kacchan down in one hit if he makes a move.

“Kacchan,” Izuku says, trying to keep his voice from trembling. “You don’t have an issue with Grace. If you’ve got something to say, say it to my face.”

“So you’re him,” Grace says lowly. Her eyes turn sharp and evaluating. Izuku doesn’t think that she’s liking what she’s finding.

Kacchan lifts his lip in a snarl. Izuku grabs his arm before he can lunge at her. Kacchan turns his poisonous look on him, and Izuku tries not to flinch away from him.

“I can’t believe you would run into another fight with a villain,” Kacchan spits.

“It wasn’t like I wanted to fight!” Izuku says. “Iida was in danger – the Hero Killer –”

“WHAT?!” Kacchan roars. “YOU FOUGHT THE HERO KILLER?!”

“Err,” Izuku says awkwardly. Grace raises both her eyebrows.

“I HOPE YOU’RE HAPPY WITH HOW YOU LIVED YOUR LIFE BECAUSE I’M ABOUT TO KILL YOU!”

“Kacchan!” Izuku says, staring at him in shock.

Grace slaps the back of Kacchan’s head, and Kacchan snarls at her. “Your soulmate has a concussion and probably doesn’t appreciate your screaming,” she says blithely. “If you’re having trouble controlling yourself I will remove you from the room.”

Kacchan’s face goes dark. “Look lady. I don’t know who you are, but you’ve got no business here.”

“Kacchan!” Izuku hisses. “She’s the hero that I’m interning under!”

“Oh,” Kacchan says. He actually looks at Grace for the first time – Izuku thinks that he was too mad to see her before. The tension in the room is awful. Slowly, Kacchan turns to face him again. Izuku doesn’t know how to describe the look on his face. Kacchan’s hand reaches up to brush the skin under the cut on his cheek. Izuku shudders under the touch.

“You scared me half to death,” Kacchan says, voice choked.

“I… I’m sorry…” He doesn’t know what to say.

Kacchan just shakes his head. “You’re unbelievable. I – I’m going home.”

Kacchan shoulders past Grace, and slams the door after him. Izuku looks down at the floor.

“Well!” Grace says. “He sure is something, alright.” She turns to look at him. “Are you okay?”

“Huh? Yeah. I mean, my head hurts.”

Grace looks at him. “That’s not what I mean.”
Izuku shrugs a shoulder. “That’s… well, not really normal. I mean he actually seemed to care? Like he said that he was worried, which is actually not normal for him, like he normally just straight up ignores me which isn’t great at all but that makes this even more strange like he actually came to the hospital? Which brings up the question, how did he even know how to get here, I mean Todoroki and Iida aren’t exactly in any shape to answer questions and Hagakure wasn’t on her phone and Kacchan was across the city so –”

“Deku!” Grace says. Izuku forcibly shuts his mouth. She sighs. “Look, you don’t have to stay here, so let’s just go back to the agency, okay?”

“I wanted to wait until I heard from Todoroki and Iida though.”

Grace shakes her head. “You’re not family, so you won’t be allowed to see them until tomorrow at the earliest. We should head back and try to get some sleep.”

Izuku feels like sleep is the last thing on his mind at the moment.

“What about Hagakure?”

“I asked Amnesia to bring the car around. She should be here by now. We can drop her off at the train station, or her agency if she wants.”

“…right.” It’s weird to think of just dropping Hagakure off somewhere, like she didn’t help him kick ass just an hour or so ago. The thought of Stain still out there somewhere makes his stomach churn, but he doesn’t think that he’s going to be out hunting tonight anymore. Not with all the heroes out there combing the streets for him.

“Let’s go and ask her, okay?” Grace puts a hand on his shoulder. Izuku takes a deep breath and nods.

As it turns out, Hagakure is staying at the agency that she’s working at this week. Bitterblue drops her off and Izuku tries not to fall asleep in the car on the way back to Graceling. Kacchan’s expressions and anger and the feeling of his fingers on his face are still going through his head.

His nose hurts.

At the agency, Duality meets them at the door. He looks Izuku up and down and shakes his head.

“You get into just as much trouble as Katsu does, don’t you? The two of you make quite the pair.”

“I don’t know what you’re trying to say about me,” Grace pouts. She looks Izuku up and down. “Do you think you could tell us what happened? You’re going to have to tell the police tomorrow, probably. They have their hands full tonight, but expect the four of you to be interrogated about what happened. Especially since none of you even have a provisional hero license yet.” She rubs a hand over her face. “Razoredge told you to go, but the nature of his quirk doesn’t allow him to know what other people will do when he sends them out to do things, so I don’t know how much of a defence that will be.”

“But won’t it count as self defence?” Izuku asks, aghast. “He was about to kill Iida!”

Duality nudges Grace’s side. “Hey. We can talk about this stuff tomorrow with the police. Deku, can you walk us through what happened?”

Izuku nods sharply and does. Razoredge adds his own bit in about what he’d seen with his quirk, which was his ability to allow Izuku to save his friend’s life. Izuku says how he’d sent out a text,
and how Todoroki and Hagakure had responded to it.

“Did any of you respond to your friends?”

“I just told them that we were all safe,” Izuku says. “Nothing else.”

Duality nods. “Good. Don’t send them any more details, okay?”

“I’ll tell Hagakure too,” Izuku mutters, getting out his phone and texting Hagakure the heads up. She responds in under a second with a thumbs up and a smiley face emoji.

Izuku finishes his story with them arriving at the hospital. Grace sends a significant look towards Duality, who frowns slightly. Izuku wonders if she had just told him about Kacchan, and Duality nods at him. Izuku ducks his head and tries not to feel too embarrassed.

“Razoredge, Amnesia, can you go and check in with Bitterblue and see if she needs anything?” Duality asks.

The sidekicks leave without complaint, and the Hero Duo turn to him.

“Midoriya,” Duality says, using his name for the first time. “I want you to know that we’re both very proud of what you did today.”

“And I’m very happy that my training paid off so soon,” Grace says quietly. “Even if I didn’t want you to have to use them in a real fight so soon.”

“The fact that both you and Razoredge were involved means that we have due cause to request the Hero Killer files,” Duality tells him. “And we’re going to aim to take an active role in this case.”

Izuku straightens. “Really?”

“Yes,” Grace tells him. “Tomorrow I want you to go through all the moves that Stain used with me. I didn’t like this guy before, and I’m even less inclined towards him now. I doubt that we will find him this week, but hopefully we will soon, before he hurts anyone else.”

Izuku can’t help but tear up. “I’m sure that you two will succeed in bringing him in!”

Duality looks pleased, while Grace looks uncomfortable with his tears. She leans forward to ruffle his hair.

“You’re a good kid,” she says awkwardly. Duality smiles at her. Izuku feels like he can fit into the space between them. He likes these people, he thinks. This is a good place to be.

Chapter End Notes

The Stain arc isn’t over yet! He's still out there... and Izuku's week of interning hasn't finished :)

Also I found this fic which is honestly one of the best canon bnha fics I've read?? Featuring Izuku with a quirk and sass, and a lot of super well done OCs.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Unlucky number 13

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Just like Duality had predicted, Izuku is called to the hospital the next day to be questioned alongside Hagakure, Iida, and Todoroki. Grace drives him, because apparently he’s not allowed to be let out of her sight anymore until this week is over. She insists that he continue to wear the knife she gave him. Razoredge comes as well, and looks more and more apprehensive the closer they get to the hospital.

Izuku asks the person at the front desk for directions up to Iida and Todoroki’s room, and hears Hagakure before he even turns into their corridor.

“… said ‘yeah gotta go’ and sprinted off. They didn’t like it when I arrived dirty and bloodstained last night though!”

Izuku opens the door just as Todoroki replies.

“Thank you for coming as well,” he says. “It’s good that you got the two of them out of danger while they couldn’t fight.”

Iida ducks his head, but then blinks and looks up at Izuku. “Midoriya! I’m glad that you’re okay.”

Izuku looks him and Todoroki over. Todoroki looks pale, and there’s a heavy bandage around Iida’s arm, but apart from that they look fine.

“You’re both up!” Izuku says which is totally redundant because obviously they’re both up. “And Hagakure and Todoroki… thank you so much for coming. If you hadn’t been there, then I don’t want to think about what could have happened.”

Todoroki shrugs. “It’s no big deal.”

“Wow Todoroki… you’re such a Chad.”

“I want you to know that I take offence at that.”

Izuku doesn’t know what a Chad is, or what Hagakure is implying, or why Todoroki knows what she’s talking about, so he just clears his throat and ignores the exchange. He opens his mouth, only to find out that he doesn’t know what to say. The others look at him.

What do you say after you’ve just gone through what they went through? The four of them faced down one of the most current well known villains, and they hadn’t even been really damaged by him. He looks around at them – Iida with the bandage around his arm, Todoroki who is favouring his leg even while sitting, Hagakure who is dressed in a nice top and skirt. He has a few band aids across his face that Bitterblue and Amnesia awkwardly placed this morning, alongside a black eye and a bruised face.

Overall, they got away extremely lightly. Izuku wishes that he could say that it’s due to their skill,
but even he has to admit that they’re all here because of pure luck.

“After what happened last night… I think that we’re all lucky to be alive and as unharmed as we are,” he says. Iida and Todoroki’s faces turn pensive. He can only assume that Hagakure’s does as well, even though he can’t see her face.

“Well, I’m glad that you know that,” Grace says cheerfully.

“Oh!” Izuku says. “Right. Grace, Razoredge, these are my classmates, Iida and Todoroki. Guys, this is the hero Grace, who I’m interning with this week, and Razoredge is an intern who also goes to UA.”

“I’m also his bodyguard until I say otherwise,” Grace says lightly, smiling daggers at his friends. Razoredge waves at them.

“We’re not keeping you from your work?” Iida asks, frowning.

Grace waves her hand. “My partner is out of the count for now, and this is work, after all. Since this morning, I’ve been cleared to work on this case, so listening to your version of events will be very helpful.”

“I see,” Iida says. “Well, I hope that our perspectives will be useful to you.”

“I’m sure they will be,” Grace says. “We’re going to wait outside for the police, okay?” She jostles Razoredge with her elbow, who smiles wanly at her.

Izuku nods, and they leave, closing the door behind her. Izuku goes and sits down next to Todoroki, since Hagakure is using the only chair in the room.

“I have to admit, last night was one of the scariest things that I’ve ever done,” Hagakure says cheerfully. “But I’m glad to see that my footwork can keep up with a villain like that. While it was happening I was pretty terrified out of my mind, but now… It’s weird. I feel, like, more confident? Like I think that if something like that happens again, I’d be able to face it with a clearer head.”

“I know what you’re talking about,” Todoroki says. “But I think that it was almost the opposite for me. I went in with the intention to save you, but in the end I needed help too.”

There’s a grim silence for a few seconds.

“Not to mention, he’s still out there,” Izuku says.

That does nothing to lighten the mood.

Izuku hears Grace say something outside, and then the doors open. Through the doors come Grace, Razoredge, a hero that Izuku doesn’t recognise, a man with a dog head, and an extremely short older man with scraggly white hair who is wearing a hero costume. Izuku only just resists the urge to hang his head. Two heroes walk into a room, and he doesn’t recognise either? He’s supposed to be a hero fan… but he can’t even identify heroes… he’s a fake…

“Manual!” Iida says. The younger hero nods at Iida, while the one with a dog head steps forward.

“My name is Tsuragamae Kenji, I am Hosu’s Chief of Police. You paw things should sit down, after what you’ve gone through.”

“Chi-chief of Police?” Izuku stutters.
“So you’re the UA underdogs who pet a stop to the Hero Killer,” Tsuragamae says.

Pet? Izuku thinks, bewildered.

“I won’t hound you for answers, since I’m sure you’ve all had eruff,” he continues. “But I still need you all to tell me what happened last night. It’s the leashed you can do, with the Hero Killer still on the loose.”

Izuku exchanges a look with the others, then decides to start, since he pulled them all into this. “I was with Razoredge, another intern at my agency. Then the Noumu burst out of nowhere, and Razoredge must have used his quirk – he told me where to go and that I would save one of my friends if I went immediately.”

The chief turns his attention to Razoredge. “You didn’t authorise him to use his quirk?”

“I’m not a pro,” Razoredge says, although Izuku can tell that he’s nervous. He’s playing with the edge of one of his belts. “And I didn’t know what Deku would find, just that it would result in him saving lives.”

“Your quirk is not certain,” the Chief points out.

“It’s been certain enough for several of your convictions,” Grace says, voice on the edge of being dangerously hard.

He inclines his head in acknowledgement.

“The outcome of me not sending Deku there was clear,” Razoredge says tightly.

Tsuragamae is silent for a few seconds. “I have no issue with howl you conducted yourself,” he finally says. “You did not know what you were sending the pup into. He might just have been needed to get his friend through a ruff patch.” He turns to the four first years. “However… I cannot say the same about you four. You chased this villain down – especially you, Iida.”

Iida hangs his head.

“At the dawn of this era, the police ran to prioritise leadership and maintain the status quo, so they decided not to use quirks as weapons. The profession of the hero was what leaped to fill that void. Authorising the use of such mutt – of these powers that could so very easily kill, was a heavily criticised decision at first, but it would fetch public support. All because your predecessors acted morally and obeyed the laws that were put forward.”

Izuku gulps. This is not looking good.

“Those who bite without permission from police – even if they face someone like the Hero Killer – would represent a stunning breach of the law. You four and your mentors must be impartially and strictly dealt with.”

“Wait a second,” Todoroki butts in. “If Iida hadn’t acted, Native would have been killed. If Midoriya hadn’t shown up, then both of them would be dead. Nobody knew that the Hero Killer was around! Even Razoredge’s quirk couldn’t predict that! Should we have let people die in the name of the law?! Everything turned out just fine! Isn’t it a hero’s job to save people?”

Izuku lunges towards him and grabs his arm as Todoroki stands up on wobbly legs and stares down the police chief.

“Clearly you still have tricks to learn,” Tsuragamae woofs, seemingly unworried by Todoroki’s
words. “Some education you’re receiving from UA and Endeavor.”

“You mangy…!” Todoroki growls.

“Stop it!” Iida says.

“Will you children quit being so loud?” the older hero says grumpily. He’s been staring at Izuku the whole time he’s been here, which Izuku is trying not to feel unnerved about. “Just listen to what he has to say and stop your yapping.”

“Gran Torino, please heel yourself,” Tsuragamae says. “You are here as a favour for a mutual friend.”

Gran Torino! Izuku thinks, shocked. The mutual friend must be All Might, but why is he here?

Tsuragamae turns back to them. “All of that… is what I must say to you, as the police. However, as the Hero Killer has yet to be sniffed out, dealing with this issue publically would only make the job of those who are tracking him harder. The trail they must put their nose to is already cold – I do not want to muddy it further with other scents. The number of eye witnesses means that this incident can be contained… if all of you don’t bark about it. I would hate to pursue charges when it comes to such a pack of promising young people.”

Izuku’s breath catches. He’d known that there could possibly be repercussions from their actions, and he’d figured that if any of them were going to be in trouble, it would be Iida. From what Izuku knows, Iida had chased after the Hero Killer himself, without prompting. But if none of them would get punished, then that’s the best outcome that Izuku can think of.

“Either way, our negligence is to blame,” Manual says. “We have to take responsibility.”

Grace steps to stand beside Izuku and puts a hand on his shoulder reassuringly.

“I’m very sorry!” Iida says, bowing towards Manual, who clips him on the head.

“That’s right! You caused big trouble for me, so don’t do it again!”

Izuku bows as well, and Todoroki bends beside him as well. Hagakure’s shirt dips down. They all thank the police chief, together.

“Good,” Tsuragamae says. “Now! I expect to see none of you for the rest of the week.”

Izuku chimes in with the others when they say “Yes!”

And even though in the moment he means it, Izuku doesn’t know yet that he won’t be able to keep that promise.

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After they’ve been quizzed for over an hour by the police, all of the cops leave. Tsuragamae says that he knows where to find them if he has any follow up questions. Since they’re the only ones to fight the Hero Killer and come away alive, the police have many questions about his fighting style and his quirk. Grace helps Izuku show them some of the wilder moves that he’d pulled off, though everyone in the room had been very surprised to see Izuku pull his knife out.

It’s not even midday yet, but he’s still tired. He hadn’t gotten much sleep last night. Apparently after light concussions the person with the concussion needs to be woken up every hour to check
that they’re still able to answer questions and that their concussion isn’t worsening. Bitterblue and Amnesia had taken that role, which had been… weird. He just wants to go sleep, and going over everything that had happened has kind of stressed him out. He wants to go back to the agency and stare at boring paperwork that Duality gives to him. That’s peaceful and normal and boring.

As if he could be that lucky. When he bids the others goodbye, Hagakure already making them a private chat, there’s a surprise waiting outside the hospitable room. Gran Torino stares at him grumpily. Izuku tries not to quail under his gaze. He isn’t sure what he’d been expecting from All Might’s mentor, but this is not it.

“Hmm,” Gran Torino says. Grace steps up beside Izuku and stares down at him, unimpressed.

“If you have any business, please state it,” she says coolly.

“With the squirt,” he says, squinting at Izuku. Izuku gulps.

“I know him,” Izuku says. “Well, I know about him, umm, I mean that we know the same person, well obviously more than us know him –”

“Deku,” Grace cuts him off. Izuku clamps his mouth shut. “If you have anything to say, please say it or hold your peace,” Grace suggests in a way that makes it not sound like a suggestion.

Gran Torino ignores her, which makes him far braver than Izuku could ever hope to be. “Why’d you ignore my invite?”

“I– I had already asked and been accepted by Graceling Agency,” Izuku says, trying not to stammer. Something about this man makes him feel off balance. “It would have been rude to then tell them I wasn’t coming for the week.”

“Hmph,” Gran Torino says. “Well, know that I expect you to contact me after this week is up. There are things that we need to discuss, understood?”

Izuku nods quickly. Gran Torino huffs at him, and then heads down the hallway. Izuku lets out a breath.

“Quite the character,” Grace murmurs.

“You can say that again,” Razoredge says.

“Lets just go back to the agency,” Izuku suggests. The other two heroes nod in agreement.

They leave the hospital, and Grace drives them back to the agency. Razoredge is flipping through a thin file, and hands the first few pages to him. Izuku takes them.

It’s a copy of the Hero Killer’s file. Razoredge has given him the papers without any pictures, but the descriptions of the crime scenes are more than enough. Izuku tracks the pattern across the pages. The Hero Killer has struck at least five times in every city that he’s been to before moving on. Izuku wonders if that pattern will hold after what happened last night. Stain might decide that things would be easier if he moves on to the next city.

They get back to the agency before Izuku is finished reading the few pages. His phone is buzzing in his pocket, which are probably messages from Hagakure since he hasn’t muted the chat that she put him in yet. He wants to read the rest of the file, he wants to shove the papers back at Razoredge, he wants to leave Hosu and the mess that it’s become over the last day. He wants Kacchan to message him and say that he’s forgiven, or at least that he isn’t mad anymore. He wants to head home and cuddle with his mum under a blanket on the couch and let her run her
Duality is standing in the doorway of the agency. Grace has barely parked the car before she leaps out of the driver’s seat and scolds him for being out in the open when she isn’t around while he’s still weak. He does look pale, but he’s standing under his own power, so Izuku supposes that he’s doing better.

Duality catches his eye, and Izuku isn’t sure if something shows on his face or if Duality catches a whiff of his thoughts, because the hero frowns at him slightly.

“Just come in, all of you,” he says, standing back and pulling Grace with him. Izuku follows them inside, where Duality ushers them into the kitchen. It’s a bit of a squeeze with all five of them there, but Bitterblue hands Izuku a cup of tea and he settles onto the counter with Razoredge, so it’s fine.

“How was the interrogation?” Amnesia asks wryly. Grace shakes her head.

“Par for the course, with added guilt tripping for the kids about not breaking the law.” Grace side eyes him. “I would say that you’re exempt from that, but I’ve got a feeling that if you had known what was going on, you would have still charged in.”

Izuku takes a sip of his tea and decides that saying nothing was his best course of action. Grace and Duality sigh in tandem.

“Though I did think of something to add,” Grace says. “Tell Mr Shouty that he shouldn’t go around saying that you fought the Hero Killer.”

“Yeah, okay,” Izuku says, because it’s a good idea even though he doesn’t want to message Kacchan. He digs his phone out of his pocket and stares at the text box for a few seconds before typing anything.

Me: Hey Kacchan, just wanted you to know that the police are handling the Hero Killer case but want things to be quiet, so don’t tell anyone that I fought the HK okay?

“Mr Shouty?” Amnesia asks, eyebrow raised.

“Hmm,” Grace says. “Deku’s soulmate tracked him down last night in the hospital. Wasn’t thrilled about the state he found him in.”

“I thought you said you weren’t bonded?” Bitterblue asks.

Izuku tries not to squirm under their attention. “Yeah, we aren’t.”

“Did you tell him where you were, then?” Duality questions. Izuku shakes his head.

“I thought you did,” Grace says. “Huh. You two must be pretty attuned to each other if Shouty can track you down without you two actually being bonded.”

Izuku blinks. She’s right – there’s no other way that Kacchan would have been able to find him. It must have been through the soulbond.

Between his shoulder blades, his mark starts to itch. Izuku rolls his shoulders and then shrugs.

“If he can find me, then he hasn’t told me.” He looks at the floor so he won’t have to meet any of their eyes. “What do we do now, for the case?”
There’s a loaded silence for a few seconds. Bitterblue breaks it. “I’ve been calling other police agencies that were involved with the case for any info that wasn’t in their file. So far it’s all been more of the same – the Hero Killer came in, killed some heroes, and left without a trace. You’re the first group to face him and make it out alive.”

“His advantage lies in one on one battles,” Izuku muses. “Against a whole group, he had to use his quirk on us individually, and in the time he was dealing with the others, we could recover from the paralysis. He probably doesn’t want to fight any battles where outside influence will be a factor.”

The others nod. “That’s what it says in the file,” Amnesia says. “Only problem is, the Hero Killer isn’t really picky about who he goes after, and not all heroes listen to warnings to not patrol alone.”

Grace shakes her head. “From now on, I don’t want any of us going anywhere alone, got it?” They all agree. Izuku thinks it’s an excellent idea. He doesn’t want to face off against Stain again anytime soon. Or ever again, really.

“We’ll start on the files that the police sent over,” Duality says. “Bitterblue, you organised them, right?”

“Yeah,” she says. “There isn’t a lot, but it’s enough to start on.” She digs out a few scanty files and passes them around. Grace unceremoniously gives hers to Izuku.

“I think I’ll go train for a bit,” she says. Amnesia rolls her eyes while Duality just sighs.

“Well, the rest of us should get started then,” he says, and all of them split off to their respective rooms to start reading.

As Friday evening rolls around, the entire agency starts tying things up for the week. They haven’t made any progress on the Hero Killer case. Stain has apparently gone to ground after their fight on Wednesday, which Izuku can hardly blame him for. Grace and Bitterblue have spent the entire afternoon arguing over whether or not he will strike again in Hosu, or if he’ll move on to another city. Amnesia has finally ended the debate after saying that either outcome is a possibility, but only time will tell who’s right and that the both of them are wasting time arguing over something pointless when they could have been doing something productive. That had led to some grumbling, but then the police station had called and Grace and Amnesia had left to go and look at some new evidence that had been found. That leaves only Izuku, Duality, Razoredge and Bitterblue in the agency, and Bitterblue has locked her office and ordered no one to disturb her.

So Izuku has been hanging out with Razoredge for most of the afternoon. He’d asked some questions about UA, gotten some good stories about some of the teachers, and finally asked what his name is (Sentaku Mirai). They’d been laughing at Razoredge’s rendition of Present Mic screaming when a spider had dropped onto his desk in Razoredge’s second year when the back door had opened and Duality had wandered out.

“You’re not meant to be up yet,” Razoredge warns him.

“What Katsu doesn’t know won’t hurt her,” Duality says, shooting them both a look that promises death if either of them tell her. Izuku doesn’t take that as much of a threat, because if Grace finds out that he’s out of his room when she wasn’t in the agency, she would kill him before he had any chance to enact any threat he’d uttered. “Besides, I just want something to eat.” Duality ducks into
the kitchen, but comes out a second later, looking annoyed. “There’s no cookies left… who ate the cookies…”

“I think it was Bitterblue and Amnesia this afternoon,” Izuku supplies.

Duality shakes his head. “Well, there’s only one thing for it. We’ll have to go and get some.”

“No way,” Razoredge says. “I don’t want Grace to kill me.”

“She doesn’t have to know,” Duality says. “Come on, you two.”

“We can get some for you?” Izuku asks, but he’s sure that this is just a way to escape the agency, and sure enough Duality shakes his head, such an intense expression of sadness on his face that it has to be faked.

“Unfortunately only I know what cookies I want… the two of you can come along and be my bodyguards.”

Razoredge sighs and stands up. Izuku follows them towards the front of the building.

“She’s not going to be happy about this,” Razoredge says, but he sounds resigned.

Duality ducks out of the doorway and puts a hand each on Izuku and Razoredge’s backs. “Yes, well, Katsu can’t complain if all we’re doing is walking around. She’s a mother hen but she’ll be too embarrassed to let you two know that, which she will if she comes and drags me back inside. So! A walk. Finally. I’ve been cooped up for so long.”

“It’s been two days,” Razoredge points out dryly.

“Two and a half days,” Duality corrects. “More than enough time for me to become rested. Look, I’m fine, walking around normally and everything.”

“Right,” Razoredge says. “Just know that when Grace comes and kicks your ass, I’m not going to say a word to defend you.”

“She won’t kick my ass,” Duality scoffs. “Now come on, I want to go and buy some of that good stuff.”

It’s nearing the end of the work day, but since summer is approaching there’s still light in the sky. It is nice to be out for a walk, Izuku has to agree. The familiar sounds of cars in the distance, a bird swooping overhead, people passing them on the sidewalk, a terrified scream coming from that alley – wait…

Even as he’s having the thought, Duality has already moved towards the sound. Razoredge curses beside him, but follows just as quickly. Izuku bounds after him, lamenting their supposedly quiet and now not peaceful outing.

It’s a few blocks down. Since Izuku can’t use his quirk in public without getting in trouble, he has to run the normal way, and Duality is far faster than both him and Razoredge. It’s probably because he’s so tall.

By the time Izuku rounds into the small alley, Duality has already run off whoever was worrying the woman who is huddled close to him. Razoredge sighs and shakes his head, but goes over and offers to call the police. The woman refuses, even after both of them ask her a few times, so Duality reluctantly relents.
They all watch her go, glad that they helped.

“Well, Katsu is on her way over here and is pissed as all hell, so I suggest that we buy our goodies before then,” Duality announces. Izuku and Razoredge wince in unison.

“I’m sure it won’t be so bad,” Izuku tries to say.

Razoredge checks the time on his phone. “It’s nearly five… Deku you can probably leave for the week. Let me spare you Grace’s wrath.”

“My stuff is still back at the agency.”

“Rest in peace,” Razoredge replies, mock sincerely. Izuku gulps.

Duality slaps Razoredge’s back. “Oh, don’t overreact.”

That’s just about when Stain drops down at the other end of the alley, knives already flung towards them all. Izuku is the only one facing in that direction, but he isn’t fast enough to dodge. Duality flows around the knives like he can see them, and Izuku realises that he must have – through Izuku’s perception that they were going to hit him.

They’re not paralysed yet, because Stain is still down the other end of the alley and hasn’t moved to pick up his blood stained knives. Izuku grabs his arm where he was cut and resists the urge to voice his pain, biting his lip instead.

“Are you the fool who dares to use the name ‘hero’?” Stain asks coldly, clearly addressing Duality.


“So you would tell them to go now, unlike last time where you make children fight for you,” Stain sneers. “You cannot even stick to your flimsy ideals. You deserve to fall under my blade.”

“Now,” Duality snarls, standing firm and summoning his soulsword in a gleam of light. He uses it to block the next two slashes of Stain’s sword, the two of them testing each other’s strength for a second before Stain leaps back.

“Not so fast,” he says, voice rasping. Razoredge grabs Izuku’s shoulder as he tenses. “I still have business with the older one. From what I can tell, he sent this child in to fight me, did he not? That’s unbecoming of a hero as well… Only the child will be allowed to leave this alley alive. He alone has the potential to be a true hero.”

“I’m not a child,” Izuku hisses.

“Don’t be stupid!” Razoredge hisses back. “Stay behind me. Don’t draw attention.”

“If he doesn’t want to hurt me then I should engage,” Izuku argues.

“Both of you will leave,” Duality says dangerously, still staring down Stain. They leap forward at almost the same moment, and the clash of steel against soul rings out. Izuku grits his teeth against the uncomfortable pressure it makes him feel, even as all the blood drains out of Razoredge’s face. It feels like his bones are shaking and like he’s about to fall apart, but even as the pressure in the alley continues to rise, Izuku forces himself to dart forward. Razoredge makes a choked sound but doesn’t move in time to stop him from going.

Izuku ducks under Duality’s arm, noting how both men have slowed due to the heaviness that
Duality’s blade is exerting. He pulls up his quirk and uses it to throw a punch, but Stain dodges it at the last second. As the swords disconnect, the air returns to normal and Izuku’s ears pop.

Stain throws a knife and Izuku tracks its progress, but Duality once again dodges it in an effortless leap that means he can bounce off the nearby wall into a flying attack. Razoredge flings a CD of all things towards Stain, and as Duality comes in from above and Stain’s attention is focused there, he treads on the CD and his foot slides out from under him. Duality brings down a solid strike on Stain with his soulsword, the sword slicing clean through Stain’s arm. It doesn’t leave a mark behind, but Stain’s sudden snarl speaks for itself.

Izuku takes a step back as Duality and Stain engage in one of the fastest blurs of swordplay that he’s seen, and then Razoredge darts past him to pitch a softball at Stain, which hits him just as he jerks back to avoid a hit from Duality. The extra impact from the ball sends him crashing to the ground, but he rolls backwards and leaps up again to step back under Duality’s assault. He jumps over Duality and brings his sword down on Razoredge, who has just stepped in range.

Izuku kicks the sword out of Stain’s grip by using One for All. The sword spirals up into the air, where it glints in the light above the alley for a second before falling.

Izuku is still looking up at it, so he reacts too late to stop Stain from thrusting a knife into his shoulder and then yanking it out to lick. The paralysis seizes him immediately, and he resists the urge to scream. Blood starts dripping down his shirt, but the pain is easy enough to ignore when he channels it into his frustration.

Stain lifts his knife and Izuku can only stare at it as he clearly intends a fatal strike. He can’t move…!

Razoredge jumps in front of him and takes the knife intended for him. The knife skates across the bracers on Razoredge’s arms, but still catches some skin. Stain flicks his tongue out to lick Razoredge’s blood and then both of them are stuck.

Duality rears up behind Stain and Stain is forced to whirl and block his sword before Duality can strike him down. Duality and Stain engage in another round of swordplay, sword sparking against each other.

“Shit… I can’t use my quirk,” Razoredge grunts. “If I can’t do anything, then I’m useless.”

“Me too,” Izuku mutters. Though even as he says it, he wonders if it’s true. He’s frozen, but One for All is extremely strong…

The strange pressure that the two swords create upon meeting fluctuates as Duality and Stain fight, gritted teeth and a snarl on both their faces. Izuku feels the pressure building in his ears and uncomfortably he deals with it, unable to swallow to break it.

Achingly, the seconds tick past. Izuku knows that Stain’s quirk has a time limit, but time isn’t passing fast enough. Izuku struggles against the quirk, fighting to move any part of his body, but it’s stubbornly refusing to move. Panic builds in his throat and a single bead of sweat drips down his nose. Izuku watches it so he doesn’t have to watch the fight in front of him.

Stain and Duality break apart to regard each other for a few seconds. Stain has picked up his sword again, and it hangs easily by his side, ready to move in a second. The two men look at each other warily.

“You’re good,” Stain says grudgingly. “But what will you do when I do this –”

Stain flickers around Duality and Izuku catches a scream in his throat as he barrels towards
Razoredge and him. For a split second Izuku catches Stain’s eye. It’s gleaming with madness.

Movement from the entrance of the alley, behind Stain – Grace leaps around the corner towards them, soulsword in hand, flying faster than Izuku can track with his eyes. Stain begins to bring his sword down on Razoredge, a glint of light catching it almost in slow motion.

*Izuku can’t move.*

Duality jumps between Stain and Razoredge, and Stain’s sword comes down, through Duality’s chest right where his heart is, and out his back. Stain yanks it out in a brutal move that leaves blood spurting from both exit wounds.

Izuku can only stare in horror as Duality goes limp and his soulsword drops out of his hand to clatter to the ground. Can only stare as Grace falls bonelessly, her momentum sending her sprawling.

A crack of light splits Grace and Duality’s soulswords in tandem, and their blades shatter into pieces.

Chapter End Notes

So… yeah. That just happened.

If you look up Razoredge’s name, please don’t @ me when you discover I literally named him Future Choice. Horikoshi does that for every single character so I’m allowed to as well.

If you want to get a glimpse into my thought process and why I wanted to write this chapter and the next chapter, [read this meta](#). That link also goes to my tumblr, oathkeeperoxas.

*fluff?? You want bakudeku fluff??*
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

So glad you all liked the last chapter!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You tear around the corner, steps fast and uneven and your breath harsh in your throat. Po is here, somewhere, near, you can feel him but he isn’t talking back, his mind closed to you. You push at the barrier between you, but it doesn’t move. There’s only been a few times that he’s blocked you out completely, and it’s always been when he’s about to do something colossally, immensely stupid. While panic is simmering in your blood, it doesn’t affect your thoughts or your heart rate. You don’t let it.

You hear a crash, and you turn towards it, feet skittering on the rough ground as you spin. You pass another few alleys, wasting precious time, precious seconds before you can get to them, before you can find them. Furious with yourself, angry at your uselessness, you quicken your steps, past what you thought you were capable of.

So you’re just in time to round a corner and find Midoriya on the floor, Sentaku standing in front of him, and Po shielding them both. The villain is standing between you and them with a sword held high, but you can still see Po’s face. For the smallest, briefest second, Po meets your eyes, and his gaze softens.

The sword plunges in.

*Live!*

You are screaming, but oddly, you can’t hear yourself. Deaf to you and the rest of the world, the sword comes out, glistening, gleaming, *red*.

and

you

**shatter**

Silence rings out.

The pieces of soulsword don’t reach the ground, disappearing into thin air in one final, mocking dismissal. Grace thuds to the ground. A second later, Duality slowly topples over to imitate her. He falls bonelessly, flopping to the ground.

Izuku feels all the blood rush out of his face. His brain stutters, an old movie that’s run out of film to play and can only spin the tape and sound out the *click click click* of the end of the film against the cartridge.

*This can’t be happening.*
Blood starts to pool around Duality. It’s too red. Izuku has never seen this much blood before, but an animalistic part of him rebels against it. It’s wrong. It’s bad. That much blood means that something has gone horribly wrong. It shouldn’t be happening, not here, not ever.

Stain lowers the sword to his side, and a drop of blood falls from the tip. It’s almost worse to see that behind him, Grace is bloodless, pale, uninjured. She should be moving. She should be moving.

“Hm. One dealt with,” Stain says. He looks over his shoulder to where Grace is sprawled. “And a bonus. It doesn’t matter. If one was rotten, the other was as well.”

“You know nothing,” Izuku seethes, anger starting to pulse through him, throbbing as hotly as his pulse in the wound in his shoulder. “Nothing about them!”

“I know enough,” Stain says dismissively. “Same as I know enough about this one as well. No last words to say?”

He lifts the sword again, but this time he’s aiming it at Razoredge.

Izuku sees red. He’s crouched on the floor, but his right arm is bent, and he can move it just the tiniest, tiniest amount, but that’s all he needs.

He yanks on One for All, channels it not like he’s learnt over the last week but how he’d been using it before. One hundred percent pours into his arm, and he jerks it just enough to fling himself forward, crashing right into Stain.

The villain is clearly not expecting it, because he does nothing to stop Izuku and doesn’t strike out at him.

“Don’t you dare touch him!” Izuku snarls. “Don’t you fucking dare.”

“Deku,” Razoredge says, choked and still frozen. Izuku has landed facing him, so he can see the tears that are streaking down his face.

Stain stands up and nudges Izuku with his boot. Izuku glares at him, livid, channelling the sudden anger that’s raging under his skin.

“You’re precocious,” Stain grumbles, staring that the ruin of Izuku’s right arm. He looks over to at Razoredge, who had thrown himself in front of Izuku. Crying, he suddenly looks very young.

“But fine. If you’re so attached to this one that you would do that to yourself for him, I suppose I can let him live.” Stain peers down at him. “I liked what I found in you the other day, but the hate in your eyes almost makes me want to reconsider.”

“You said that you want to weed out the heroes that you don’t agree with,” Izuku says, voice low and dark. “Did you consider what you would do if you created them?”

Stain looks at him dispassionately. “I would do to them what I do to all the others, of course. Only those who are worthy should take on the name of ‘hero.’”

“Who made you the arbiter of that?” Izuku hisses.

“Someone has to be,” Stain says. “The so called heroes aren’t doing their job properly, so someone has to step in to do it for them. It’s a thankless task, but that’s not why I do it.” He stares at Izuku for another few seconds before nodding. “I’ll leave you alive, for now. But just know that I have my eye on you… hero Deku.”
And he walks away.

Izuku bites back the urge to scream. He’s still motionless, still useless. The pool of blood around Duality is still growing larger. And… merging… with the puddle of blood… that’s coming from… him…

Right. The shoulder wound. It almost hurts less than his arm, but apparently a stab wound actually means that he’s bleeding. Bleeding blood. That can’t be good. The alley is very dark all of a sudden.


Izuku can’t find it within himself to look at much of anything, actually.

He wonders for a brief second, if the heroes that will come here will find three bodies instead of two. Then blackness covers his vision.

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**Kacchan:** Deku what the fuck is going on

**Kacchan:** Deku answer me you shit

**Kacchan:** You better not be in trouble

**Kacchan:** WHY are you hurt?? What did you do to your arm???

**Kacchan:** Did you not get the message that I was going to kill you if you got hurt again???

**Kacchan:** Where the fuck are you???

**Kacchan:** Deku answer me

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The first thing that fades through to him is a regular beeping sound. It’s almost comforting at first, but quickly becomes annoying. He tries to ignore it, but when it’s the only stimulus that he’s getting, that’s kind of hard.

He groggily pries his eyes open, staring blankly at the ceiling for a few seconds. There’s a sudden silence, which cues him into the fact that there had been low murmuring going on as well as that annoying beeping. Murmuring. Which means voices, which means –

“Izuku!” his mother cries, and she grabs his hand tightly. Izuku tries to shake his head, but moving hurts, even though he’s feeling kind of floaty and he’s half sure that he’s hyped up on pain killers right now.

“Mum…? What…” He tries to say more, but his mother hushes him.

“It’s okay honey, you’re at the hospital, you’re safe.” She squeezes his hand. “You’re going to be fine.”

“…Right,” he murmurs, and looks over to the other side of his bed, and is shocked awake when he discovers Aizawa sitting there. “A-Aizawa-sensei!”
Aizawa waves him off. “The hospital called the school, who called me, who called your mother.”

Izuku blinks a few times. There’s natural light coming through the window, which means that it must be the next day because the last thing he remembers… the last thing he…

“Razoredge! Duality…”

Their faces grow sober.

“Izuku… well…”

“Razoredge is fine,” Aizawa says. “He’s up and about and he’s been by several times.”

Izuku stares at him until he continues. His mother is still clenching his hand.

“Duality was brought here, but he couldn’t be revived. His partner is here as well, but she hasn’t woken up.”

Izuku tries to clench his fists, but all he succeeds in doing is squeezing his mother’s hand and making a stab of pain shoot up his other arm. He looks down, only to find his entire right arm in a cast. Right. He’d launched a 100% punch at Stain, and he’d shattered his arm again. Again.

“Recovery Girl came around here specifically to heal you,” Aizawa says, tone overtly casual. When Izuku looks over however, his eyes pin him to the hospital bed, sharp and accusing. “So you should be able to move around soon.”

He swallows. “…Okay.”

Aizawa and Inko exchange a look over his head.

“I’ll be heading off now, Ms Midoriya,” he says. “I’ll tell the nurses that he’s woken up when I go past the station.”

“Thank you,” she says formally. Aizawa nods and leaves.

His mum doesn’t let go of his hand. “Oh Izuku… you scared me. They had to give you a lot of blood before they even healed your arm, and they wouldn’t tell me much and I’m very glad Aizawa-san was here.”

His heart plummets. That’s the last thing he wants. “I’m… so sorry, mum. I don’t want to worry you.”

She smooths down his permanently messy hair. “I know that. And I know that you’ve always wanted to be a hero, and… I always knew that it was a dangerous profession. When your quirk appeared I was so happy for you…! But I also started to worry a lot, you know? And this type of thing shouldn’t be happening to you in high school. You should be safe!”

“It was an accident,” Izuku tries to say. “It wasn’t meant to happen, the Hero Killer wasn’t meant to be there –”

“I know that,” she says quietly. “But it still did happen. And it could happen again. Izuku, sweetie… are you sure that this is what you want?”

Izuku tries not to flail. “Yes! Yes, I’m sure, I’ve always been sure. Mum, after what I’ve seen, even this week, I’m certain that this is what I want to do.”
She grips his hand tightly and sighs. “I know that you’ve always wanted it and that you’re stubborn. You know that whatever you do, I’ll support you, right? But it would make me worry a lot less if you were more careful with yourself.”

“I – I’ll try to be better,” Izuku promises awkwardly, even as he’s not exactly sure what he’s promising. To get a better handle on his quirk so he can save people more efficiently?

“You don’t have to try to be better, because I know that you’re already doing your best,” she says. “But I would like for you to try to be safer, okay? At the very least, until you’re out of high school. I don’t know if my heart can take scares like this regularly.”

He makes himself sit up so he can lean over to hug her. His mum’s arms come up around him, so even though he can only use one arm, it still feels like a proper hug. She’s warm and he relaxes into her hold.

“I don’t want to worry you,” he says sincerely. “That’s the last thing I want. I’ll try to avoid going to hospital in the future, I promise.”

She sniffs a little bit. “Okay. I want you to be safe and happy. As long as you’re safe and happy, then I’m happy too, got it?”

“Yeah,” he says, leaning into her some more. He buries his nose into her neck and the smell instantly makes him feel better. Instead of the clinically bland smell of the hospital, it is safe and mum.

Izuku is just starting to drowse off again when the door opens and a nurse pops her head in. His mum backs off long enough to let the nurse go through a series of tests, but Recovery Girl’s healing must have done its job, because apart from the light headedness that he reports, if he doesn’t move his arm nothing really feels wrong. The nurse shines a light in his eyes and measures his blood pressure and heart rate and asks him to count down from one hundred, and writes everything down on a clipboard that she then sticks at the end of the bed.

Izuku is almost ready to go back to sleep, but the nurse promises that lunch will be here soon if he’s still awake, and the emptiness in his stomach prompts him to keep his eyes pried open. He asks what Aizawa and she had talked about, and Inko admits that she had just talked for hours on end and he had generally just made acknowledging sounds to show he was still listening. Izuku resists the urge to bury his head in his hand. From the sounds of it, Aizawa knows like, his entire life story now, maybe minus the baby photos.

There’s a knock on the door, but it isn’t lunch. Instead Razoredge pokes his head inside, brightening considerably when he sees that Izuku is up.

“Deku! You’re awake!”

“Yeah,” he says.

“Good morning, Ms Midoriya,” Razoredge says politely, before coming over to sit in the other chair in the room. Closer up, Izuku can see the heavy shadows under his eyes, and suspects that he didn’t sleep last night.

“How are you feeling?” Razoredge asks.

“Pretty good,” Izuku admits awkwardly.

“Me too,” Razoredge says lowly. They stare at each other for a second before dropping their gazes. Izuku doesn’t want to say it out loud, but it kind of feels... wrong that he came out of their
second fight with Stain so uninjured. Sure, he’d shattered his arm and he’d sustained a few knife wounds, but Duality…

He’s sure that Razoredge feels the same way.

“I’m glad to see you up,” Razoredge says, voice cheerful but strained in a way that lets Izuku know that he’s forcing himself to sound like that. “It’s good to see.”

“What about Grace?” Izuku asks gingerly.

Razoredge shakes his head. “She’s still sleeping. They’re not sure… if she will wake up.”

Unwillingly, Izuku remembers Grace rounding the corner of the alley, only to see Duality killed. Graceless, she had fallen even as Duality had.

“She’s still alive,” Izuku says stubbornly. “I’ve looked into things like this, and… if she’s still alive, then there’s a good chance that she’ll wake up. We just need to wait.”

“If you say so,” Razoredge says lowly. He yawns.

“Did you get any sleep after I shooed you out last night?” Inko asks warningly. Izuku looks back at her. From her tired expression, he’s not sure she has a leg to stand on saying that, but Razoredge only shrugs.

“I went back to sit with Grace, but she didn’t wake up. Her mum’s there now though, and she told me to go home and rest.”

“But you didn’t,” she said warningly.

“I’m more hungry than tired,” Razoredge admits. “The food in the cafeteria isn’t great.”

“I’ll go and get you some,” Inko says firmly. “I’m feeling a bit peckish myself,” she adds as she stands up, even though Izuku is sure that she only said that to make Razoredge accept the food.

Before Razoredge can protest, she’s swept from the room. He sighs. “Well, that’s one way to get food,” he says.

“Mum instincts activate,” Izuku tries to joke. It falls flat.

“We talked a bit last night,” Razoredge tells him. “Your mums pretty good, you know?”

“Yeah,” Izuku says, looking away and blinking back tears. “Yeah, I know.” He takes a deep breath. “Is Grace really just sleeping?”

Razoredge nods. “Yes. Just lying there. It’s weird, like… she’s normally so active. Vibrant. But not now.”

“What about you?” Izuku asks lowly.

Razoredge shrugs one shoulder. “Amnesia and Bitterblue are managing the agency,” he starts. “But it’s not like we’re exactly managing anything except the press who all want a scoop. They’re outside,” he says, nodding towards the window. “It’s all over the news. So far Bitterblue’s managed to keep your name out of the news but she couldn’t do the same for me. They found my home address, and my dads’ have been dealing with all that, so that’s just great.” He sighs. “Now that Graceling Agency is basically defunct, everyone’s future is up in the air. Amnesia can’t run the agency by herself, I’m still in school…” He snorts. “The worst thing is, I just keep thinking
about what Duality said, ages ago.”

He’s staring at his folded hands in his lap. Izuku waits for a minute before speaking.

“What did he say?”

Razoredge keeps looking at his hands. “I wanted to drop out of school to work for them full time, but Duality told me that I had to stay in school… in case something happened to the agency, I would need all the qualifications I could get. It’s a hard world out there for heroes.” He lets out a short laugh, but it doesn’t sound happy at all. “Guess he could see the future more clearly than I could.”

“You couldn’t predict what would happen,” Izuku says firmly. “You can’t use your quirk at all times.”

Razoredge doesn’t answer.

They make him stay overnight, but promise to release him by Sunday afternoon. It means that he can head back to school on Monday, which he’s glad about, even though he had to talk his mum into it. He doesn’t want anyone to question why he skips a day of school, even though he’s sure that Aizawa wouldn’t hold it against him. Todoroki, Iida and Hagakure have already messaged him several times over the last few days. The death of the number 29 ranked hero and the tragedy of the loss of the number 3 Hero Duo has dominated the news cycle since someone leaked the details to the press early Saturday morning. So far the only good thing about that is that Izuku’s name hasn’t been linked to the agency. He doesn’t exactly feel up to dodging members of the press.

Badass Bitches (#secretgeneral)

10:43am

Iida: Midoriya we just want to know if you were involved, and if you were, if you are uninjured

Todoroki: we just want to know if you’re okay

Baddest Bitch of them All: Midoriyaaaaa answer us

He scrolls up through the chat, which is them worrying about him. Iida had suggested trying to find him in hospital, but they don’t know which hospital to even try, and most have hero blackouts where no questions are answered unless you’re a family member.

Izuku doesn’t know what to say to them – that he’s in hospital? That he fought Stain again? They obviously suspect that. He doesn’t really want to talk about it, but he also doesn’t want them to worry.

Midoriya: I’m fine. Yes I was involved with the second fight. Stain got away again. Already talked to the police, and they want to keep my involvement secret still, mostly just to stop the press from trying anything. I got hurt but Recovery Girl came and I’m going to be released this afternoon. I’ll see you all at school tomorrow.

He sends it and then puts his phone face down on the bedside table. It’s already on silent, so this
will mean that he won’t see their responses until he wants to. Which he doesn’t right now.

Of course, then he looks up to see Kacchan standing in the door. Izuku tenses, which pulls at his shoulder, which hurts. He doesn’t flinch, but Kacchan does.

“…Mum said that you came by on Friday night,” Izuku says awkwardly.

Kacchan doesn’t move from the door, staring at him silently. Inko had gone to finalise the paperwork, so Izuku doesn’t know how much longer she’ll be gone. For now, it’s just the two of them.

Kacchan lets out a sigh and comes into the room, closing the door behind him. He sits down on Izuku’s left side, where his mum has been sitting all weekend, and slouches down into the seat.

“Did you get my texts?”

Izuku winces. “Yeah,” he says after a few seconds. “Sorry for not replying. I figured that you knew I was okay.”

Kacchan grunts. “Would have been nice to have some response,” he grumbles. “How much longer are you staying here?”

Izuku guesses that that’s Kacchan’s way of asking how hurt he is.

“Mum is finalising some of the paperwork now,” he tells him. “I’ll be home this afternoon, and back at school tomorrow.”

“Huh,” Kacchan says. He looks down at the bandages on Izuku’s right arm. “So you got someone with a healing quirk to take care of that.”

“Recovery Girl,” Izuku says. He doesn’t ask how Kacchan knew how hurt he was. He’s already dreading the lecture that he’s going to receive upon seeing her again at UA. She’d warned him that she wasn’t going to heal him any more after he used One for All at one hundred percent, but he’s glad that she did decide to again, even as he’s sure that this is the last time. This had been a different circumstance, but… still.

“You’re lucky she’s around.”

“I am,” Izuku agrees. Kacchan is looking over his legs and out the window. Izuku aches to make him look at him instead. “I’m sorry I put you through that.”

That earns him a sharp look and Kacchan lifting his lip in a sneer. “Don’t be stupid. You can’t control that.” Kacchan pauses. “What you can control is how often you get involved in these situations.”

“It wasn’t like I planned to fight the Hero Killer!”

“Twice. In one week.”

Izuku ducks his head. “It wasn’t planned.”

“Obviously not the circumstances,” Kacchan says quietly. “But you still chose to fight.”

“Of course? Should I just left and let the Hero Killer kill someone?”

If you hadn’t stepped in, Duality could have fought. He did kill someone, and it’s your fault.
Kacchan chews over that for a few seconds before sighing.

“You say you want to be a hero, but I don’t know if I believe you,” Kacchan finally says.

Izuku can only goggle at him.

“Auntie Inko told me what happened,” Kacchan says lowly. “How you could have fled the second fight, but you chose not to. At what point does selflessness become an obsession? When does it count as going too far when you sacrifice your health for others?” Kacchan stares down at the thick bandages on Izuku’s arm. As he talks, Kacchan’s voice grows ever cooler. “You need to have reasons to not do this to yourself, besides ‘I won’t be able to help others if I’m hurt’. You need to think about taking care of yourself as well. Your desire to help others doesn’t mask the ugliness of your self-destruction.”

“You don’t know what I think,” Izuku says stubbornly.

“You’re in my head,” Kacchan hisses. “And I hear some things clearer than others, even if I don’t want to.” He holds his gaze fiercely. “You see nothing wrong with destroying yourself for the sake of others.” Kacchan clenches his fists in his lap. “Deku. You will never be able to save everyone.”

Izuku sets his jaw. “But I can’t just ignore someone in danger! I won’t be able to live with myself if I do!”

“And we won’t be able to live at all if you decide to kill us both to save one person.” Kacchan stares at him, an intensity in his gaze that means that Izuku can’t drop it. “Would you rather save one person and die, or live and save even more in the future?”

“Every life matters,” Izuku says stubbornly.

“Every life does!” Kacchan almost yells. “Including yours!” He takes a slow breath in through his nose, sucking it in loudly. “It’s… hard to accept that we won’t be able to be there for some people. Obviously. As heroes in training we want to save everyone. I think that we should want to save everyone. If there’s a time for idealism, then it’s when we’re in high school. But there has to be a line.”

“I have a line,” Izuku protests weakly.

Kacchan just stares at him. Izuku looks down, away from him, but that means he has to stare at his bandages, and the new scars that he knows is under them.

*Izuku rushing into the fight, Razoredge protecting him, Duality protecting Razoredge –*

It could have all been prevented if he had just stepped back with Razoredge and let Duality fight until Grace got there.

“I just… don’t know what to say to you,” Kacchan finally admits.

“What does that mean?” Izuku asks, alarmed.

“I don’t know what will get through to you. I don’t know how to make you see that this isn’t okay.”

Izuku shakes his head. “I – I can listen. Just say what you’re thinking, what – what you want me to know.”
Kacchan stares out the window for a few minutes. Izuku tries not to fidget or stress too much. He breathes in. He breathes out. He tries not to be too aware of Kacchan, sitting a scant meter away from him.

“What I want you to know, is that I don’t think I trust you,” Kacchan finally says.

“What?” Izuku asks, stunned. Of all the things that he’d expected Kacchan to say, that was not one of them.

Kacchan won’t look at him. “I’m trying to do this whole…” He waves his hand between them. “Thing. But I don’t think that you are. If anything is going to work between us, then you need to look outside yourself, which you’re just… not doing right now. There’s two of us. Start acting like it.”

“I am,” Izuku says, almost scandalised. “I’ve started conversations between us! Been trying to get closer!”

“But you’re not listening to me,” Kacchan hisses. “Even now! You’re still stuck, in this fantasy you have, where you can make everything okay! It’s unrealistic and it’s going to get us both killed, you idiot!”

Izuku looks at the wall and refuses the urge to cry, since that will just derail this conversation. It’s not a fantasy. He has the ability to be like All Might, to save so many lives. He just needs to get a handle on his quirk, just needs to learn more and be better.

Right?

Hurting his arm to fight Kacchan, which really had been unnecessary. Rushing in at USJ to help All Might, who hadn’t needed help, not really. Fighting Todoroki and not caring how much he hurt himself, even when it was just a tournament match with no real consequences. Recovery Girl telling him that she won’t enable the destruction of himself anymore, that she won’t heal him. Jumping to help Duality, a pro hero, just because he was there.

“I have been thinking,” Izuku says, very carefully so that he doesn’t start crying. “You’re… not the first one to say that to me.”

“That’s because it’s really obvious,” Kacchan says, but it’s subdued.

Izuku lifts his chin and stares at the wall and takes a breath. “What can I do to show you that I am listening? What can I do to make you trust me?”

Katsuki thinks about that for another few minutes.

“You’re flexible and adaptable and clever when you want to be,” he grudgingly admits. “So show me that you’ve listened. It’s dangerous out there, and I’m not going to ask you to ignore someone in danger, because that’s not who you are and you’re not going to listen to that. So instead I’m going to ask something else. When you’re out there, standing between someone and danger, don’t hesitate. Don’t give them any quarter. Be merciless when you take them down.” He leans forward, into Izuku’s personal space. Izuku’s mouth goes dry as Kacchan’s ruby red eyes bore into him. “What I’m asking you to do, is to simple.

“Be vicious.”
The hospital discharges him on Sunday night. Izuku is just glad that it means he doesn’t miss any school. Though he’s not looking forward to dodging questions about how his internship went, or the new scars on his arm. The doctor had taken it off just before Kacchan had left, and the other boy had seen his skin. Kacchan had pinned him with one final look before he’d walked out, and Izuku had heard those two words echo between them again.

*Be vicious.*

It feels like a promise. Something that he needs to do, to prove to Kacchan that he isn’t needlessly putting himself in danger, that he cares about them both, that he acknowledges both their needs. He shakes his head, as if that will dislodge his errant thoughts.

His mum is a big protective mess, so Izuku lets her handle all the hospital staff and sign all his papers, because it lets her feel like she has some control over the situation. It also lets Izuku avoid letting the nurses get a good look at him and deciding that he needs to stay here for longer, which is an utmost priority.

After the last papers have been signed, and the receptionist is about to motion for them to go, Izuku leans forward, “Excuse me, but can you also tell me the room number for Taeru Katsu?”

“Izuku, honey…”

“I want to go and see her,” Izuku says stubbornly. “I need to.”

His mother sighs but nods. The receptionist frowns.

“We don’t normally give out room numbers for heroes, but since I know you aren’t part of the press then I will. Don’t stay too long, alright? Visiting hours are almost over.”

Izuku thanks her and then they hurry for the elevator that will take them to the fifth floor. They find the room easily enough – dinner isn’t being served yet, and most visitors have already left.

“Do you want me to come in?” his mum asks.

“If you want,” Izuku says.

“I want to know what you want,” she says, wringing her hands.

Izuku hesitates for a second. “Can you stay out here? I’ll only be a minute.”

“Of course,” she says. “I’ll be here if you need me.”

Izuku nods and then carefully opens the door. One bed is empty and the other has the curtain half drawn around it. He closes the door and steps forward to see around the curtain, only to be confronted with two women, one of which he recognises.

Airi looks up at him, surprised, and sitting opposite her is an elderly woman with flaming red hair.

“Airi,” Airi says. “I didn’t expect you to be up and about.”

“I already got discharged,” he says, trying not to feel awkward. “I just wanted to see Grace before I left.”

Airi nods. “Fire, this is Deku, the young intern that was with Po when he fell.”

The old woman looks up at him, and he almost flinches away when he meets her eyes. They’re sharp and intelligent and as bright as her vibrant hair.
“I’m glad to see you uninjured,” Fire says softly, a strange accent lilting her words. “Airi has good news for us.”

Izuku looks back at Airi, who nods.

“My quirk allows me to see souls, not just soulmates,” she says. “Hospitals call me in when they need to tell if someone is brain dead or not. If their soul still exists, then there is always hope of a recovery. And Katsu’s soul is still very much in existence, even if it is… splintered.”

A heavy weight settles in his chest. “Is she… okay?”

“No,” Fire says firmly. “She has lost her soulmate and her soul has been ripped apart. I doubt she will ever be okay ever again. But she is strong. She will endure.”

“She’ll survive,” Izuku says hollowly. “That’s what she said her quirk was, right? Survival. Even though she doesn’t have her quirk anymore.”

Airi and Fire exchange a look.

“It’s true that when one half of a soulpair dies, the other loses their quirk,” Airi says, subdued. “When Katsu wakes up, the whole world will know that she’s quirkless.”

*It’s not that bad*, he wants to say, but he knows that that’s a lie. He’d hated the fact that he could never figure out what his quirk is. Going from being a hero, having a soulmate, having a quirk, to losing it all…

He stares down at Grace’s motionless form. She hadn’t asked for this. Duality had been the one in the alley. He had been the one to sacrifice himself, had been the one who had made that decision, to put Razoredge’s life above his own, and possibly Grace’s as well. And even if Airi is right and she will wake up, her life is shattered. Her soulmate is gone, her quirk is gone, her career is gone, and she has to cope with her soul being split apart.

She had no choice in that.

Suddenly uncomfortable, Izuku bows to the two women, speaking formally. “Thank you for letting me know Grace’s condition. It means a lot to me. I hope that she wakes up soon.”

He doesn’t wait for their replies, despite how rude that is. He hears them start to talk between each other even as he shoulders open the door.

“Izuku? What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” Izuku forces himself to say. “Airi-sensei is in there, and she says that Grace’s soul is still there, so she’s going to wake up.”

“That’s good,” Inko says, but she still looks concerned. “Honey, are you okay?”

He leans up against her and she wraps both arms around him. Izuku swallows, and doesn’t say anything because he doesn’t know what to say. That Kacchan is right? That he’s been selfish? That he’s confused?

“Can we go home?” he finally asks.

“Of course,” Inko murmurs. She kisses the top of his head. “We can go home and I’ll make you katsudon for dinner. Does that sound good?”
“Yeah,” Izuku says, more out of habit than him actually looking forward to the food. “Yeah, okay.”

He has a lot to think about.

Chapter End Notes

Fic rec this chapter is my own fic, which is an AU of Limerance (lmao) which is just my scrapped ideas for this fic, basically. So if you want to see how things could have panned out, where basically everything is different (except for the soulsword mechanics) click here.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Apologies for the late chapter, but I’m a baby who can’t type in the cold and it’s been FREEZING for the last month. This chapter is extra long to make up for it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

**Hero Killer Strikes Down Hero Duo!**

_The Hero Killer has made another appearance on Friday night, almost three weeks after the last attack that retired the pro hero Ingenium from active service. The widely beloved silver hero Duality was killed at approximately five thirty in the evening in the Hosu district after a confrontation with the Hero Killer. His partner, the persistent hero Grace, is in hospital. It is uncertain if she will recover, but it is certain that even if she does, she will be unfit to return to hero work…_

Izuku flicks past the article to the next, but it’s more of the same. He sighs and opens his emails, even though he checked them a minute ago. He’s trying to look engrossed in his phone, but since he actually isn’t, that means that he can’t help but overhear the conversations that his peers are having around him.

Everyone seems more than eager to talk about their internships, and their brightness and enthusiasm is a sharp contrast to how Izuku feels about his week. Uraraka is intent on her fighting movements, Kaminari and Mineta are swapping stories and Kirishima and Ashido are talking to each other over Kacchan’s head, matching each other in their excitement. Kacchan isn’t contributing much to their conversation, but is clearly listening.

Izuku leans against Todoroki’s desk, while Hagakure sits on top of it, popping bubble gum loudly. Iida is slowly talking about how the rest of his week panned out. All three of them are watching Izuku, who is just here because he knows that these people won’t expect him to be as upbeat as he normally is.

“Tokoyami, you have to tell us all about your internship!” Ashido cries. “Interning with the number four hero is so cool! And Hawks is so hot oh my god I don’t know how I could have dealt with being around him for the whole week.”

“He was a competent mentor,” Tokoyami says. Dark Shadow darts around his head in a way that Izuku thinks might convey that it is happy. “He took me on several night time patrols, which I was hoping to do during my week. I am satisfied with how my time was used.”

Everyone stares at him, until it becomes clear that he isn’t going to say any more. Ashido sighs. “I’ll have to get more details off you later! Hawks is so cool… his hero costume is amazing, and I love his wings, and his soulsword, how he just –” She mimes swiping a sword through the air, grinning the whole time.

“Oh yeah, that reminds me, did you see the news about the Hero Killer?” Kaminari asks loudly. Izuku sighs to himself. It’s big news. Of course his classmates would want to discuss it.

“It’s everywhere, of course I saw,” Ashido replies. “It’s so scary! I can’t believe that there’s a
villain out there like the Hero Killer… when do you think he’s going to get caught?”

“I don’t know.” Kaminari says. “But the Hero Duo he killed mustn’t be that strong if he took them down.”

Izuku grits his teeth.

“Kaminari!” Iida suddenly says. “You shouldn’t be disrespectful! The Hero Killer has taken down many heroes.”

“Right,” Kaminari says, waving his hands wildly, trying to backpedal. “Course. I just meant that the Hero Killer is super strong, you know?” He clears his throat, suddenly aware that half the class is paying attention to the conversation. “So, Mr Class Rep, what did you get up to this week?”

Iida slowly pushes his glasses up the bridge of his nose. “Nothing at all!” he says, brandishing his hands wildly, so over the top that Izuku has to resist the urge to put his head down on the desk.

“Wow,” Hagakure mutters. “That was not suspicious in any way, shape, or form.”

Kaminari stares at Iida with his mouth open, obviously not knowing how to respond to that. Izuku awkwardly smiles at him.

The whole class lets out a relieved breath when Aizawa bursts through the door, even though several class members have to vault through the air to get back into their seats before Aizawa can call them out for not being ready for class.

The rest of the day is fairly normal. Aizawa hands out the rankings of their midterm exams, which they took in the week between the sports festival and their practical week. Izuku is pretty happy with being ranked fourth, even though he’ll probably try to study harder in the future. In small letters at the bottom of the results page, it also states that he passed Airi-sensei’s midterm as well.

When the bell rings for lunch, Izuku is about to duck out of the classroom when Aizawa calls him back in. Their homeroom teacher had been napping in the corner all morning (how he did that when Present Mic was yelling about English, Izuku will never know), but one of his eyes is open a crack as he calls Izuku over.

“Sensei? Is something wrong?” Izuku asks worriedly. He’s not going to bring up all the embarrassing childhood memories that his mother stress talked about last week, is he?

Aizawa lets out a slow sigh. “No, Midoriya. There isn’t anything wrong. I just want you to know that the school is aware of everything that happened over the past week. As per our guidelines, that means that you’re going to have to attend a minimum of four counselling sessions, more if the counsellor says so. Here’s the room number.” Aizawa hands him a card. “UA only has your best interests at heart, and the main goal of this institution is raising well-adjusted and competent heroes. I arranged for your first visit to be this afternoon. I know that you have lessons with Hatake on Tuesdays, so I didn’t want that to clash.”

Izuku stares at the card in his hand before stuffing it into his pocket. “Thank you, sensei.” He bows and then quickly scurries out of the room as fast as he can. When Uraraka asks him what Aizawa wanted, he quickly says that he just wanted to talk for a second.

The note burns in his pocket for the rest of the day.
Izuku knocks on Airi’s door on Tuesday afternoon, waiting a second to hear her call for him to enter before going in. The office is the same as always – the window is open, there’s water on the table between the chairs, and Ichimaru is under Airi’s desk in the corner. Her tail starts wagging as she sees him, and she gets up to pad over. Izuku scratches behind her black and white ears.

“I’m just finishing this up,” Airi says. She flips a page and scrawls something down. Izuku gets out the two books that he’d been given before the internship week and puts them on the table, as well as half a dozen typed pages stapled together with the answers for the questions about the books.

Airi sighs and gathers up her papers, before standing and coming to sit opposite Izuku, in the giant plush chair.

“You’ve finished these already?” she asks, surprised.

Izuku shrugs a shoulder. “I did it the weekend before last.”

“Ah,” Airi says. Ichimaru abandons Izuku to go and put her head in Airi’s lap instead. Izuku tries not to feel too betrayed.

In the pause, he takes the time to actually look at her. There are shadows under Airi’s eyes, and she looks like she’s patting her dog’s head more fiercely than normal. Izuku had only known Duality for a week, but he had said that Airi was a close friend. The constant reminders of his death are likely hitting her just as hard, if not harder, than him.

“All healed up?” she asks. “No more bandages, I see.”

Izuku flexes his arm, and wonders if he’s imagining the feeling of bones creaking. “For now. Recovery Girl had some… strong words for me yesterday when I went to see her.”

Airi lets out a huff. “I would suspect so. She didn’t seem very happy about you hurting yourself again.”

“Especially since it didn’t help in the end,” Izuku says.

“Hey,” Airi frowns. “You were in a circumstance where you were way out of your league. No one expects you to have taken on Stain single handed. I’m extremely happy that even though you faced him twice, you’re still alive.” She narrows her eyes at him. “Did Aizawa talk to you about the mandatory therapy yet?”

Izuku nods. Airi sighs. “Well, at least he isn’t completely useless. If you feel like you want to talk to anyone else, I’m willing to listen, okay? And I’m sure Bakugou-kun would understand if you wanted to go over things with him as well.”

“He didn’t like all the fighting I got into last week,” Izuku says.

“Well, you’re both enrolled to become heroes, so he had better get used to it sooner rather than later,” Airi says sharply. She sighs. “Was your week even slightly successful? Barring what happened Friday night, did you get anything out of it?”

Izuku takes a breath in and thinks about the rest of the week.

“It was… fun,” he admits. “I really liked it. I liked everyone there, and they were all really accommodating and taught me a lot. If only…” he trails off.

Airi nods slowly. “Did Grace show you her knife skills? I asked her to.”
“Oh yeah,” Izuku says. The knife that Grace had given him is strapped to the middle of his back. He hasn’t had the heart to leave it behind. After all, she’d told him to carry it everywhere with him.

“Good,” Airi says. “I want you to keep practising what she showed you. It’s a very good base for when you pull your soulsword later, okay? Getting in early practise is good. Muscle memory is important for the basics.”

“Is this a part of your lesson plans as well?” Izuku asks wryly.

Airi nods. “You need to be able to use your soulsword, after all. And there’s no reason to wait until you can summon it, especially since it usually takes a while, even after a pair is bonded.” She picks up the sheaf of papers that Izuku had put down next to the two books. “Now, do you have any questions about these?”

Katsuki resists the urge to slam the door to Miss Dagger Eyes’ room. Just because she’s a teacher, it gives her no right to intrude on his relationship with Deku. ‘He might be having trouble dealing with things’ ‘He might need your support’ ‘You should talk to him’ shut up! Katsuki can deal with Deku by himself. No shit he’s still thinking about literally seeing someone get killed in front of him. Katsuki doesn’t need some lady to tell him that.

Only problem is, Deku has been avoiding him all week. He’s still hanging out with his loser friends, but he’s been coming almost late to class, and leaving as soon as the bell goes so Katsuki can’t corner him. He sits with his nerd friends at lunch but dodges any questions that they ask about last week. Ugh.

Katsuki isn’t sure when he started to be able to know where Deku is. He’s spent so long ignoring their bond that when something changes, the newness isn’t that noticeable. It’s grating, but he’s been using the bond to keep tabs on him. At least the thing’s useful for something, and Katsuki is hellbent on making sure that Deku doesn’t get into any more trouble for the rest of the term, at least. If Deku getting in trouble again doesn’t do his head in, then he’s certain that it’ll crush Auntie Inko. So. No more trouble for the next two months.

“Hey, Bakugou!”

Katsuki turns on his heel to see Kirishima coming down the hall. The red head lifts a hand in a jaunty wave. The bell had rung several minutes ago, so Kirishima must be on his way to afternoon debate practise. Kirishima had asked him to join, but since they meet on Thursday afternoons and Katsuki was already booked for then, he’d had to decline. Although dagger eyes doesn’t usually keep him for long after the bell, anyway.

“Shitty hair,” Katsuki grunts, because he wants to leave but Kirishima won’t let him go without at least saying hello.

“Dude, you should be glad you got to skip the last part of our lesson. Present Mic went hard on calling everyone out and made us say so many things in English… my English is so bad, bro.” He rolls his shoulders, then looks at the door behind Katsuki. “Wait a second, isn’t this Airi-sensei’s room? Hey, doesn’t she work… with… soulmates…?” Kirishima starts to grin. “Dude!”

“You know dagger eyes?” Katsuki makes himself ask, because he doesn’t want to stand there silently like an idiot.
“Yeah!” Kirishima says, because of course he does. “I know all the staff! I was so excited to come to UA that I ran around introducing myself to all the Pros and asking what everyone taught and stuff. I didn’t recognise Airi-sensei though, so I was kinda awkward asking her if she was a pro, but she was super cool with me! Let me pat her dog and everything while she talked, but hey! You can’t distract me. So does this mean you’ve got a soulmark?”

Katsuki sighs. “It’s none of your business.”

Kirishima’s happy smile of glaring annoyingness tones down to something that Katsuki can actually look at. “Hey bro, that’s understandable. You don’t have to tell me anything you don’t want to.”

Katsuki resists the urge to roll his eyes. “Whatever. If you already know, then there isn’t much I can do about it.”

Kirishima brightens again. “Awesome! Hey, that is so cool. Geez, I wish I had a soulmate!”

Katsuki thinks about the mood that Izuku has been in all week and has to physically hold himself back from shaking some sense into Kirishima. Kirishima must see some trace of his thoughts on his face, because he throws an arm around Katsuki companionably.

“Hey, I’m sure you’ll find them eventually. All youth blossoms eventually!”

“…Right,” Katsuki says, wanting this conversation to end as soon as possible. “Don’t you need to get to practise?”

Kirishima jumps. “Yes! I do. We can talk more later, okay? There’s no way I’m letting you off the hook for not telling me this sooner! I want all the details.”

Katsuki just lifts a hand in response as Kirishima races down the hall. Katsuki stands still for another few seconds before starting his walk towards the train station. When he gets outside it’s just starting to rain, which makes him scowl. Isn’t it supposed to be summer?

He sprints through the rain since he’s not bothered enough to get his umbrella out from his bag, and manages to get on the early train which he normally misses on Thursday. He shakes his head to get the water out of his hair and glowers when he still feels some dripping down his neck. The train is a bit more packed than normal, but he still manages to find a seat.

When he gets off at his station, he sees Deku getting off a carriage down. Katsuki swears to himself silently for not checking in on where he was, but follows the nerd as they leave the station. Deku pauses before stepping out into the rain, which has gotten heavier.

Katsuki pulls his umbrella out of his bag. “Oi, Deku! Follow me,” he orders, opening up the umbrella and stepping into the rain. He hears Deku spluttering for a second behind him, but the younger boy still ducks under Katsuki’s umbrella. Deku awkwardly tries to avoid touching him, but that only makes him end up half in the rain still, so Katsuki just grunts and grabs his sleeve to yank him closer. Deku flushes so hard that Katsuki can see it even out of the corner of his eye, but he resolutely ignores that and the prickling he can feel over his skin. Even when they avoid skin contact, if things have gone this far… he takes a deep breath in.

They make it to Deku’s building with the only drama being Deku not being able to find his keys for a minute. Katsuki is just about resigned to retracing their path with him to see if they can find them when he pulls them out of his pocket.

“Guess they were in here all along,” Deku says, opening the front door. Katsuki grabs his shirt to stop him from walking too far inside.
“I know that you’re avoiding me,” he says. “I’m not stupid.”

Deku bristles. “Of course you’re not stupid, you’re –”

Katsuki glares at him.

“…right,” Deku mutters.

“I know I am,” Katsuki says. “Look, just… you don’t have to. And if you want to…” he braces himself. “…talk about it, or whatever. You can talk to me. If you want.”

Deku looks at his feet. “Thanks, Kacchan.”

“Whatever,” Katsuki says, the name making his heart flip for some stupid reason. It’s only what Deku has called him for their whole lives. It’s nothing new. He needs to get a grip.

Katsuki pushes Deku through his doorway. Maybe later, Deku will tell him what he’s been thinking about.

Izuku pulls on the neck of his hero costume. Their regular Friday afternoon class is normally headed by All Might, the same as their Wednesday afternoon class. The Pro Hero hadn’t been here on Wednesday, and Izuku hasn’t seen him all week – hasn’t seen him since before the internships, actually. He’s been tracking All Might's location through social media, of course – there was an extremely large bust happening in the north that got wrapped up on Wednesday night, that had All Might as a leading figure in the arrests that were made. Sometimes Izuku gets a little whiplash when he realises that he’s come to expect that All Might be available for him pretty much whenever he wants to see him.

All Might is still a Pro Hero, and Izuku suspects that these arrests probably had very little input from him at all – that the extent of the publicity is inverse to the amount of time All Might needed to spend in his muscle form. It makes sense, but it still feels weird to not have him around. Izuku thinks that this is the longest period of time they haven’t talked since meeting.

And it happened after last week.

Izuku sighs to himself, thoughts circling around… again… to what had happened. At this point he doesn’t know if he’s more sad or guilty or just plain angry. He couldn’t do anything about what happened to Duality. But he’s determined to not let something like that happen. Never again.

He sneaks a look at Kacchan, who is standing with Kaminari and Sero. He’s still not sure how to feel about the other boy walking him home yesterday, but… it feels like the beginning of something.

All Might walks through the doors, and Izuku looks him over. He looks the same as ever, which means he’s probably ill and hiding it spectacularly. Working at UA is a good cover, but sometimes Izuku wonders if he should actually be teaching any classes.

“I am here! And the reason for that is… your basic hero training!”

Izuku resists the urge to put his head in his hands. Beside him, Todoroki starts patting his pockets.

“Did you forget something?” Izuku asks him.
“I just want to be ready to take notes. After all, All Might is a pillar of this society.” The deadpan delivery means that Izuku isn’t sure if he’s joking or not.

Izuku wonders if living with the number two hero desensitises Todoroki to these types of things or not.

“As an immediate follow up to your internships, today’s activity is a playful one. A rescue training race!”

All Might lifts his hand, and it’s just about then that Izuku realises that he’s wearing his Golden Age costume.

*Maybe he did get involved in fighting, if he’s wearing that suit did his other one get destroyed?* a part of him thinks, while the other part freaks out about seeing the Golden Age costume in real life.

“This is field Gamma!” All Might cries out, distracting Izuku from his fixation on his costume. “It’s a dense spread of factories that wind together to create an intricate network of mazelike alleys! You’ll be split into four teams of five, with each team going once at a time! I’ll send up a distress signal from somewhere inside, and you will all start at the border. It’s a race to see who can reach me and rescue me first!” All Might peers at Kacchan and points at him. “And naturally, keep the destruction of property to a minimum!”

Kacchan mutters something and scowls into the distance. Izuku tries not to smile.

All Might sorts them into groups. Izuku is in the first group, running with Oijirou, Iida, Ashido and Sero. They’re all given a particular point to start at around the edge of the field, and Izuku heads to his with his mind whirling. This is the first time that his classmates are going to really see him in action. He’s only just gotten the basics of One for All under control, and he can actually utilise them in a fight without destroying himself now. Izuku bites back a grin as he takes his position, and waits for the signal. He knows what he’s going to do.

“START!”

Izuku takes a breath and calls up his quirk. His skin crackles with energy and he lets the giddy feeling fill him, power rushing through him. He remembers how he moved on that night with Stain, how he flipped through the air and how he moved with ease.

He jumped up, the bounce putting him high up in the air. A part of him is concentrating fiercely on keeping One for All under control and not letting it output too much, but mostly he lifts his face to the wind and lets out a yell of glee, moving like Kacchan when he flies through the air.

He focuses on his footing, which is very unstable in the maze. He flies past Sero, who looks at home swinging around in the air, and then bounces off a few more buildings before slipping and faceplanting on the ground embarrassingly.

By the time he recovers from that and makes it to the designated meeting spot, all the others are already there. He collapses on the ground, cradling his throbbing face and tries not to feel too put out by failing in front of the entire class. Oh well. It’s been a learning experience. Note to self: When in a place with unstable footing, plan landing before leaping.

“...keep up the good work as you prepare for you final exams!” All Might says loudly, breaking through the fog of his thoughts.

“Right. Finals are soon,” Izuku says to himself as he drags himself to his feet. The next team will
probably be going soon, and he wants to watch them.

“Incredible. I barely recognised you!” All Might whispers to him as he passes by. He gives Izuku a thumbs up. “Come and see me after class.”

All Might walks off without saying anything else, and thoughts about what he would want to talk about lurk at the edges of his mind as he watches the other speed tests.

In the locker rooms after class, like normal he changes quickly with his back facing the wall. Mineta tries to share his discovery of a hole in the wall with the rest of the boys, only to get scolded by Iida and stabbed in the eye by one of Jirou’s earphone jacks.

Izuku hurries out of the locker room as fast as he can, heading towards the break room where All Might has called him in for talks before. Sure enough, he’s there in his true form, hands folded together pensively.

“Take a seat,” All Might says seriously. Izuku resists the urge to scuttle as he does so, the oppressive air in the room starting to get to him.

All Might looks at him seriously. “You’ve been through a lot lately, and I’m sorry that I wasn’t there to help.”

Izuku looks down and scuffs his shoe against the ground a bit. “It’s not your fault that you weren’t there.”

“Similarly, it is not your fault that you were there,” All Might says gravely. He regards Izuku silently for a few seconds while Izuku tries not to fidget. “I hope you understand that.”

Izuku takes a breath in. “It’s like… I’m more upset that I couldn’t do anything to stop it.” And angry that he couldn’t stop it. “And I’m worried about Grace.”

“I have it on good authority that she will wake up,” All Might says. “When she does, I am certain that she will tell you that she did not expect for you to have turned the tide of battle all by yourself.”

“I know,” Izuku says, even if he wonders if he does know.

All Might nods. “That’s good. I also wanted to reassure you – I heard that the Hero Killer licked your blood. I was wondering if you remembered what I said to you when I granted you my power.”

“Now eat this,” Izuku says, because the shock that he felt at that statement had engraved the phrase into his mind.

“No, not that. The Hero Killer ingested your DNA. So –”

“Wait! Don’t tell me, the Hero Killer has One for All now?!”

“No. I just thought you might be worried about that because I didn’t explain it fully. One for All only transfers if the holder wants it to. So it cannot be taken against your will… it can only be transferred if you want it to be transferred. Only you have the power to give One for All to another.”

Izuku looks down at his hands, his new scars red and shiny.

All Might nods. “The power is in your hands… and speaking of that, I would like to once more
recommend that you speak to my mentor Gran Torino. I am certain that he has things that he can teach you.”

Izuku nods, and All Might’s phone chimes. He takes it out and frowns at it.

“Hmm… I wanted to talk further, but business calls. I will see you around, young Midoriya.”

Izuku looks at the door, even after All Might walks out and closes it. He’s got a lot to think about, but right now there is an action that he can take.

He gets out his phone and calls the number he has programmed under ‘Gran Torino.’

Katsuki slouches down in his chair and resists the urge to yawn. Monday mornings always seem to make him sleepy, no matter how early he goes to bed on Sunday night. Not to mention his dumb mum got him up extra early this morning for literally no reason. He sighs and adjusts his binder slightly so it doesn’t show above his collar.

“Bakugou-kun!” a bright voice says. Katsuki resists the urge to jump and rounds on the voice. It’s round face, and what she wants to do with him he has no idea. Deku is clearly not in his seat, so maybe she feels the need to pester him instead.

“What,” he says flatly, obviously not inviting conversation.

“I’ve been thinking,” she says, far too cheerfully. “About starting up some sort of sparring practise!”

She jabs a few punches into the air as if that will prove her point, or make Katsuki understand her at all.

“What,” he repeats. She’s far too loud for this time on a Monday.

“Well I went and interned with Gunhead, which was really cool, but it’s been a week and I already feel like I’m falling behind.” she says, pouting a little bit and creasing the space between her eyes. Katsuki has to try to not find it cute. “So I want to get some practise in! I’ve thought about joining a gym or something like that, but everything is so expensive, even with student discounts…” She sighs. “So I was thinking, what if everyone from the class got together to do something? That way, we all get extra hand to hand practise, and it’s free!”

Katsuki stares at her. She doesn’t say anything else, so he’s forced to respond. “And what has this got to do with me?”

“Well, even without your quirk you’re really strong,” she points out. Katsuki resists the urge to snort at her stating the obvious. “And you’re good at grappling and close combat stuff. I’ve seen it in the simulations and pracs that we’ve been doing. I figured that if I could get you on board with things, then half the class would be totally ready to come as well!”

Katsuki huffs and props his head up on a fist, looking at her out of the corner of his eye. “Why didn’t you ask Deku first?”

She bites her lip. “Well, I was going to, of course. But I don’t know, he’s been a bit… weird, the last week. I didn’t want to bother him unless everything was kinda set up and stuff first, yanno? Since I haven’t really planned anything yet. It’s just an idea. Um. I just wanted to know if you were interested?”
She looks at him hopefully. Katsuki stares back and considers her words for a moment. Hand to hand combat was an area he excelled in because for a long time his explosions weren’t strong enough to reach from far away. Keeping his skills sharp now that he can make larger explosions probably isn’t a bad idea.

“Whatever,” he finally says. “If you’re going to do something like that, it probably wouldn’t be a total waste of my time.” Proving that he was better than his classmates by winning in a fight against them… now that sounds like the best idea round face has ever come up with.

She brightens. “Oh, really? Thanks, Bakugou-kun, I really mean it! Okay, now we’ve got to come up with a time, and a place of course, if there’s going to be a lot of us then we should find a big place, but we can’t be disturbed so it needs to be private…” She drags her chair over and pulls out a notepad and starts making notes in her notepad, on Katsuki’s desk. Katsuki stares at her for a second before grudgingly telling her the times that he’s free. If she’s going to do this thing, then it might as well be at a time that he can go as well.

On Thursday, Izuku wakes to dozens of messages on his phone. Most are from Hagakure’s secret chat that she created after she, Todoroki, Iida and Izuku faced down Stain. Izuku opens the app with a heavy heart.

Sure enough, when he scrolls up Todoroki has linked an article with the news that Stain has struck again, this time in a different location than Hosu. It makes sense. Izuku knows that there’s been an immense increase in hero activity in Hosu ever since Stain had killed two pros there. Now the hunt would start again.

He gets dressed and heads to school, but he’s still thinking about Stain. The number 84 hero ‘Blitz’ had been the victim this time, but Izuku is sure that there’s no way that Stain is done yet. The two people in front of him on the train are talking about Stain, so he moves to the next carriage. He’s so wrapped up in his phone that he jumps nearly half a metre when Kacchan sits down next to him.

The other boy raises an eyebrow. Izuku resists the urge to duck his head.

“Umm. Do you need anything, Kacchan?”

“Nope,” Kacchan says, folding one leg up over the other and then leaning on that knee.

“R-right,” Izuku says. He looks back at his phone. “Did you see…?”

“Yeah,” Kacchan says. He furrows his brow. “If I see that sick fuck, nothing’s going to stop me from taking him down.”

“And I thought you had issues with me facing down villains,” Izuku half mumbles.

“Yeah, you, who runs into things recklessly,” Kacchan says.

Izuku stares at him.

Kacchan stares back. “And I would bring backup. Or something.”

Izuku looks back at his phone. “Someone needs to bring him down. How many more heroes are going to die before that happens?” He’s asking himself more than Kacchan, but the other boy still
“Eventually, he’ll choose to fight someone who will be better than him,” Kacchan says. “It’ll happen.”

Izuku doesn’t think that’s much of a reassurance.

“Well, I don’t know what else to say,” Kacchan grumbles. “Shouldn’t’ve even come down here…” he says under his breath.

“Stop that,” Izuku hisses.

“Stop thinking,” Kacchan replies, shaking his head.

But something Kacchan had said had caught his attention. “Wait. You – followed me here?”

“Not really,” Kacchan mutters.

“What does that mean?!” Izuku says, putting as much emphasis into his words as he can while also keeping his voice down.

“I just know where your dumb ass is, okay?” Kacchan says. “Can’t control it, or whatever.”

“What?”

“Do I really have to repeat myself?”

“No, I just…”

“What?”

Izuku looks at him. “So what you’re telling me is that you’ve basically got a tracking chip on me?”

“Well when you put it like that it sounds crazy,” Kacchan sighs. “I just felt you moving carriages, which you never do. So I figured that something had upset you, so I followed you.” He waves his hand in a circle. “Whatever. I can leave if you want.”

“You don’t have to,” Izuku says.

“Right.”

The train pulls up to the station near UA then, so neither of them have to sit next to each other for too long. But even so, Kacchan walks next to him the whole way into class. When they sit down, Kacchan turns back to him and scowls at Uraraka’s desk as if it’s owner has offended him. “Has round face talked to you about her thing yet?”

“No?” Izuku asks, confused.

“Get her to talk to you about her thing,” Kacchan says, and then turns back around to greet Kirishima, who has just wandered over.

Izuku resists the urge to hold his head in his hands. Just one more day, and then the weekend – which he’s looking forward to, since he has two days planned with Gran Torino.
The class that All Might normally teaches on Friday afternoons is more low energy than normal, since All Might isn’t there to teach it. Instead Aizawa ushers them all into pairs and tells them to strategize as to how they would fight each other, and how they would team up with that person to fight someone else.

Uraraka is lucky enough to be paired with Tsuyu, and Izuku nearly starts laughing when he sees that Kacchan is paired up with Iida.

“Midoriya and Todoroki as the last pair. Now all of you be quiet while you work so I can nap.”

Izuku walks over to Todoroki, who is contemplating Aizawa’s transformation from teacher to ugly caterpillar. It’s a nice day outside, and Izuku likes being in his hero costume, but it’s a bit of a letdown to not be in a class led by All Might. He resists the urge to open his phone to see if there’s been a blow up in the news about All Might getting into a fight with anyone, and instead grins at Todoroki.

“Right!” Izuku says. “You don’t happen to have anything to write with, do you?”

Todoroki shakes his head. Izuku looks around to see that it’s a problem that a lot of his classmates seem to be having.

“As class representative, I will make the journey back to the classroom and gather writing implements!” Iida calls out, before using his quirk to zoom back towards the main building.

“Nyoom,” Todoroki says, with a completely straight face. Izuku stares at him.

“Well, we can find somewhere to sit while Iida does that?”

Todoroki nods. Izuku points out a part of the oval that’s shaded by a tree, to which Todoroki agrees. The summer sun is blazing overhead, but Todoroki isn’t even breaking a sweat. Izuku supposes that when you can regulate your temperature, no place would ever really be hotter or colder than you wanted.

Iida delivers pens and papers to the different groups, and Izuku sits down cross-legged on the grass. Todoroki sits in a more traditional kneeling position.

“Right. Well, we’ve already fought each other, so I guess we can start there,” Izuku mutters, resisting the urge to chew on the end of his pen. He doesn’t know who owns this pen, but it’s definitely not his.

“Well, you could try actually fighting me,” Todoroki points out.

“I was fighting you,” Izuku protests.

“You were trying to get me to use my fire side but go off I guess,” Todoroki says.

“Well, I could do both of those at the same time,” Izuku argues.

“But I still won.”

“Well, trying to win and actually winning aren’t the same thing.”

“Point,” Todoroki says. “But I’d still say that you weren’t trying to win.”

Izuku looks at him for a few seconds before writing down ‘try to win.’
“Okay. Well, I’ve gotten better grip on my quirk since the Sports Festival, so I could probably shatter your ice without breaking anything now,” Izuku says speculatively. “But I still think I’d be on the defensive at first, since you mostly focus on long range attacks. You should make sure that you’re good at fighting at close range as well, just in case you get into a situation where you can’t use your quirk, like if you’re in a really flammable building or something, but you still need to fight. Situations like that have brought down heroes in the past before, so it’s really important to recognise your weaknesses and make sure that you know how to cover them or deal with them, even if you can’t immediately fix the weakness. Hey, that’s probably the point of this training session, don’t you think? That way we can get others to look at how we use our quirks from another perspective, since we’re likely used to our quirks and how we use them and as such we would have a set way of thinking about them—”

“Midoriya.”

“– so this would be a good excersize to get us to rethink our quirks. Aizawa-sensei is really sneaky like that, isn’t he? He’s always out here with his logical ruses and getting us to think outside the box, but I would expect something like that from him since he’s an underground hero, so he would want us to be able to think on our feet, which is definitely an admirable quality for a hero to have—”

“Midoriya!”

Izuku pauses with his mouth open. “Oh, I was mumbling again, wasn’t I. Sorry, Todoroki.”

Todoroki nods once. “Don’t worry about it. And you’re right about you probably being able to destroy my ice better now. You should have seen everyone’s expressions last week when you started hopping through the maze like that.”

Izuku resists the urge to grin. “Yeah, I figured that would surprise everyone.”

“I think Bakugou was about to pop a migraine from how hard he was staring at you,” Todoroki continues. “But you were using his moves, so I guess I can get where he’s coming from. He seems to be the possessive type.”

And that stalls Izuku’s brain for a good few seconds, before he forces himself to get back on topic. He looks at Aizawa, who is lying exactly where he had passed out on the ground twenty minutes ago.

“I don’t know about you, but I’d like to know just how much I’ve improved,” Izuku says slyly. “You wanna make up some ice so I can smash it?”

Todoroki looks at Aizawa consideringly. “As long as we don’t pelt him with ice, I think it should be fine,” he says, and holds out his hand to create a massive block of ice several metres long and high.

Izuku grins at him, and starts One for All humming through his blood, looking at the ice to calculate where the best place to hit it would be.

On Saturday morning, Izuku unplugs his phone charger from the wall, checks his overnight bag one more time, and heads out after eating breakfast. Even though it’s early, it’s still summer, so the sun is already up despite the hour. Izuku hurries to the train station and spends his entire train ride wondering what this weekend is going to be like.
It’s not school sanctioned, so he doesn’t have his hero gear or anything like that. The address that Gran Torino had given him is already input into his phone, but when Izuku gets there he’s not entirely sure how to feel.

The place is… rundown. To put it lightly.

Even so, he heads up to the third floor and finds the apartment number that he had been given. Before he can knock, the door opens and Izuku comes face to face with All Might’s homeroom teacher.

He lets himself feel giddy for a second, because well. All Might’s homeroom teacher. How much cooler can you get?

“Kid,” Gran Torino sniffs. “At least you’re on time.”

Izuku straightens his shoulders on reflex. There’s something about the elderly hero that makes him want to stand up straight.

“I’m ready to learn,” Izuku says, hoping to please, but Gran Torino just huffs and turns to walk back into the apartment.

“I would hope so! You’ve got a long road ahead of you. You’re going to need all the training you can get.”

Izuku gulps and steps into the apartment, closing the door after him. The place doesn’t look any cleaner from inside the apartment.

Gran Torino spins on his heel and stares him down. Izuku sets his own stance and meets his gaze firmly.

“Well, let’s see what you can do,” Gran Torino says. “See if you can lay a hand on me.”

Izuku bounces a little on his toes, focusing on the hero in front of him.

“Let’s say… three minutes.” Gran Torino picks up a timer out of no where and sets the time. Then he puts it down, and blurs towards Izuku.

He’s fast which is not what Izuku had been expecting at all, but he jerks out of the way in time to not get a foot to the face. Gran Torino doesn’t let up, smashing anything that gets in his way, including stuff around the apartment. Izuku needs time to think so he ducks under the couch and comes up swinging, but still, he misses.

The timer goes off, and Izuku huffs to himself. He’s not normally one to be frustrated over losing, but right then he almost feels like Kacchan.

“Hmm,” Gran Torino says, staring at his destroyed furniture as if he didn’t just wreck it himself. “Interesting. You can think on your feet and dodge a hit, which is more than I can say for most heroes. Glad I don’t have to teach you that. Toshinori was hard enough.”

He turns on Izuku. “So? What is it?”

Izuku stares at him. “Um… what is what?”

Gran Torino huffs. “Your other quirk. Toshinori told me about it. What is it?”

Izuku fights down a wave of frustration. “I don’t know. I’m still trying to figure it out.”
Gran Torino looks at him, face giving away nothing. Izuku resists the urge to twitch.

“Well, I would have thought that a smart boy like you would have figured it out by now. Come on, let's go.”

Gran Torino marches out the door, leaving Izuku to scramble after him. The hero leaves the building, and Izuku looks around, trying to figure out where they are going.

It's several blocks before Gran Torino stops in the middle of a bridge. The courseway that runs underneath it is dry, but almost out of sight Izuku can see a young girl by herself. She's obviously trying to do something with the riverbed, but nothing is happening.

“She comes down here every weekend to try and draw some water up from this stream,” Gran Torino says. “I’ve seen her do it, but it usually takes her hours.”

They watch the girl for a minute.

“Well?” he says. “Don’t you want her to succeed? The water helps the animals around here, as well as the plants.”

“Yes, I do,” Izuku says carefully, wondering what on earth he's supposed to be doing here.

Gran Torino snorts. “Then act like it. Tell her you want her to do better. Even if she doesn’t hear you.”

Izuku stares at him. Then, slowly, he turns to look at the girl.

“Hey… Um, I know you can do it. You know you can do it. You can do it!”

And as he stares at the girl, wishing for her to do better… she does.

The bubble of water at her feet is unexpected, even for her, and she falls over in her surprise. Gran Torino grabs his sleeve to make sure Izuku doesn’t leap over to help her. Izuku looks at him, and he nods.

“That’s what I thought.”

Izuku looks back at the girl, who is brushing herself off and directing the water she had pulled up. That she hadn’t been able to pull up before.

“W… What?” Izuku says, half stunned.

“I picked up on it while watching Sports Festival footage,” Gran Torino grumbles. “All of your teammates did well… Extremely well. From what I can tell, it’s vision based, but it also might be more than that.”

“I have a quirk… that enhances quirks,” Izuku mumbles to himself. After all his hours and hours of testing and trying to find out what he can do, and what his quirk could be, Gran Torino just comes in and tells him. He doesn’t know how to feel, and it’s something he’s beginning to get used to.

“That handles that,” Gran Torino says. “Now let’s go, kid. I want to see what else you can do.”

Izuku looks back at Gran Torino, and thinks about All Might’s cautiousness towards this man, and thinks about how quickly he dissected what Izuku’s quirk is. Some of All Might’s actions begin to make a bit more sense.
“Yes,” Izuku says firmly. “Let’s test this out.”

That night, Izuku lies on the half of the couch that remains and reads the book that Gran Torino had given him before the hero had started doing things in his kitchen, muttering to himself under his breath.

After he’s finished in the kitchen (microwaving takoyaki?) Gran Torino comes to sit opposite Izuku. Izuku looks up from his book. It’s interesting, but he’s more interested in asking Gran Torino some questions.

“So what was it like teaching All Might?” Izuku asks, because he wants some insight into that, and if that’s informed how All Might has taught him.

“Hmm. He learned through doing,” Gran Torino says. “Unlike you. I can tell you something, and you can understand it. Although today I still had to make you use your quirk before you realised what it was, so perhaps you both have more in similar than I thought.”

Gran Torino had pushed him to use his quirk – all day today, on one person after another. Izuku isn’t sure if he can get up from this couch. He’s exhausted, which is weird because he didn’t do anything physically demanding today – but he supposes that a quirk is just another physical part of him. It’s just not a muscle that he’s used to using.

Izuku looks up at the ceiling. It’s a mess, just like the rest of this apartment. There are water stains all over it, and the paint is peeling in every corner.

“Do you think that I can be a pillar like All Might?” Izuku asks.

Gran Torino pauses and looks at him, but doesn’t say anything.

“I just mean, All Might’s still doing hero work. I’m not sure how much longer he’ll be able to do that for, but I want it to be a long time, obviously. But I’m just thinking… is my role going to be the same as his?”

Gran Torino is silent for another minute. “Every hero finds their role,” he finally says. “You will, too. Whether or not you want your role to mirror his, is up to you.”

“…right.”

Gran Torino snorts. “Keep reading that.”

“Okay.” He lifts the book again, but his thoughts are still on All Might.

“Half n half.”

Todoroki turns in response to his call, and Katsuki resists the urge to scowl. Annoying bastard. Katsuki can never tell what he’s feeling. Todoroki always has the same dumb expression on his face.

“We’ve been partnered together for today,” Katsuki says. “Follow me.”
“Sure, we can talk about things,” Todoroki says, but Katsuki ignores him in favour of heading deeper into the grounds. How come he gets being paired up with all his annoying classmates? …to be fair, he thinks all of them are annoying.

“So I’ve been thinking,” Todoroki says. “And I think that both of us are similar.” He’s following him, at least.

“Bullshit,” Katsuki growls.

“We both started out this year as powerful individuals who had trouble connecting to people,” Todoroki muses, ignoring Katsuki’s interruption.

“I don’t have trouble connecting with people.”

“Both of us are friends with Midoriya.”

“He isn’t my friend.”

“We both made it to the last round of the Sports Tournament –”

“Where you refused to fight me at full power!”

“– and even though I lost, I still think we’re the two most powerful students in our class. I wonder why Aizawa-sensei put us together for this task.”

“Probably to torture me,” Katsuki says bitterly.

“Wow, I don’t think I’m terrible company.”

“Well I think so.”

“Well that’s your opinion.” Todoroki says. He huffs a laugh to himself for some reason, which Katsuki ignores.

“What’s your point?”

“Hm?”

“You think we’re similar. Why bring it up?”

Todoroki taps his chin with a finger. “I was just trying to say that we should be friends.”

Katsuki rounds on him. Todoroki stands there and doesn’t move back when Katsuki steps into his personal space, which leaves them face to face, which leaves him fuming even more, because Todoroki is taller than him. *Shit*, he wants to be taller than people. He wants to *loom*. He wants to rant at the universe. *Let! Me! Loom!*

“You want. To be friends.”

“That is what I just said, yes.”

Katsuki stares at him. “Why?”

“I literally just said why,” Todoroki says, exasperated.

Katsuki struggles with that for a few seconds. “So? We’ve got some shared experiences. If you
can even count them as shared. That’s not a basis for making friends.”

“Then what is?”

Katsuki stares at him.

“Wow,” Todoroki mutters.

“What?” Katsuki demands, once again wishing he were taller so he could scowl at Todoroki from above.

“You’re worse at making friends than I am,” Todoroki says bluntly. “I didn’t even think that was possible. Not sure if this is a sign that I should continue to try, or if I should give up for now and practise making friends with other people who might be a little more receptive than you.”

Katsuki squares his shoulders. “I can be receptive as fuck. I can be a better friend than whoever the hell else you’re thinking about.” His scowl deepens. “Didn’t you just say you were friends with Deku, anyway?”

Todoroki scratches his head. “I did, didn’t I? I like Midoriya. I really do.”

Katsuki nearly explodes him, but restrains himself long enough to hear Todoroki’s next sentence.

“But he was really aggressive with his friend making, you know? I didn’t get a lot of say in the friend making, so I would like to make a friend all by myself. Ha, make a friend all by myself. Funny.”

Katsuki doesn’t laugh.

“Geez, maybe that statement’s right in this context,” Todoroki mutters. “Look. Let’s just treat today’s prac as a starting point. Let’s try to get through today without killing each other.”


Todoroki bumps his side with his elbow, which makes Katsuki twitch. “Hey, it’ll be fun!”

Katsuki shakes his head. He just wants to get this over and done with.

“Deku!” Uraraka hisses quietly.

Izuku turns in his chair to find her by his desk, wringing her hands awkwardly.

“You ready to talk to Iida and Yaoyorozu?”

Uraraka nods. “Right. You didn’t forget.”

“Of course not,” Izuku says, shoving his things in his bag. “I think your idea for after school sparring is cool. But I looked over the school rules and we need the support of our class representatives and a teacher if we’re going to start a new club.”

“I still can’t believe that there’s no club like this already,” Uraraka says. “Like, this is UA.”

“Maybe everyone thought that we get enough fighting practise during school hours?” Izuku suggests.
“Maybe,” Uraraka says. “But we don’t do *that* much.”

“Just one hour a day,” Izuku says. “But sometimes we don’t do combat in our afternoon classes.”

“Yeah, exactly!” Uraraka exclaims. “We need as much practise as we can get.”

“Iida!” Izuku calls out. Iida power walks over to the two of them.

“Midoriya! Uraraka! Are you ready to present your proposal?”

Izuku smiles. Iida knows about their plan to form a new club, but he’s adamant that the two of them follow school rules and formally present it to him.

“Yes, we’re ready!” Uraraka says.

“I will fetch Yaoyorozu!” Iida exclaims, and zooms across the room to get their other class rep.

Uraraka pulls out her papers and plans, and Izuku looks over them with interest. He’s been helping her refine ideas, but most of this has been Uraraka’s ideas, and honestly he thinks they’re very good. The papers show a plan for the club, some rules, and the minute to minute running of a normal meeting.

Yaoyorozu and Iida sit down seriously and listen to Uraraka’s passionate proposal of an after school sparring club, with no quirks involved. All they really need to do is find a teacher who will be willing to oversee the club meetings.

“From what I can tell, this will need a teacher present at every meeting,” Yaoyorozu says. “And maybe more than one teacher, if you want multiple spars happening at the same time.”

“We spar everyone at the same time with one teacher almost every week,” Izuku points out.

“I think that might just be because Aizawa-sensei likes to sleep,” Yaoyorozu says, frowning slightly. Uraraka giggles at the comment, and the two girls stare at each other for a second. Izuku looks at the papers on the desk with intense interest, suddenly feeling a little awkward.

“Anyway,” Yaoyorozu says suddenly. “I think the idea is good.”

“A lot of heroes rely solely on their quirks,” Izuku says. “But can sometimes ignore skills that any person can learn, and thus are ignorant of skills that their opponent can use and how to block against attacks that aren’t quirk based.”

“So you think that focusing more on hand to hand skills would hopefully prepare a hero to face such circumstances?” Iida asks.

“Yes,” Uraraka says. “It would widen our skills immensely. And we all know from first hand experiences that we need as much practise as possible.”

Yaoyorozu hums lightly. “I have my own sparring sessions outside of school, but having them at school would make them more affordable and inclusive to any person of the student body who wishes to participate. I think that this is a good idea, and that you’ve laid things out very well.”

Uraraka blushes a deep red, which Izuku raises an eyebrow at. She doesn’t normally get flushed that easily.

“I agree,” Iida says, looking at Uraraka with concern. “Uraraka, are you feeling alright?”
“Y-yes!” she squeaks. “Just fine. Now, um, the only thing we need to take care of is finding a teacher who is willing to supervise.”

All four of them are silent as they consider the choices.

“Present Mic-sensei likes narrating what we’re doing… and he seems like he’d be down to watch us fight each other?” Uraraka suggests.

“All Might can’t do it,” Izuku says.

“Midnight-sensei heads the debate club, and she says that she doesn’t want to be responsible for any more clubs,” Yaoyorozu says.

“We could ask Snipe, or Cementoss?” Iida suggests.

“Or you could ask me.”

The four students jump at the sudden voice. Izuku looks up to see Airi pull up a chair and sit down on it backwards. Her eyes still have shadows under them, and she looks tired, but chipper as well.

“Um,” Uraraka says. She exchanges a look with Izuku, who shrugs one shoulder. They both know who Airi is, but he doesn’t know if Yaoyorozu or Iida will.

“Hatake-sensei,” Yaoyorozu says respectfully. “Did you hear what we needed?”

“Most of it,” Airi says, flipping through Uraraka’s papers. “I don’t fight hand to hand, but close to it. I know more than enough to give you kids some pointers and make sure you don’t hurt yourselves while doing it.” She finds the official form that Uraraka has already printed out, and signs her name at the top. “Lucky for you guys, I’m free on Wednesdays. When do you want to start meetings?”

Izuku blinks a few times. Well, that’s that problem taken care of.

“I want to start as soon as possible!” Uraraka says. “But we would need to get the word out about the club first, so maybe not next week.”

“That would give me time to organise some of the logistics as well,” Airi says. “Works for me. So Uraraka, are you going to be the president of this club?”

Uraraka squeaks. “Well… I just had the idea.”

“And organised everything!” Izuku says. “You definitely deserve to be the president.”

“We can vote during our first meeting, if you’d like,” Airi says slyly, in a way that makes Izuku suspect that she’ll heavily encourage everyone to vote for Uraraka.

“That sounds good,” Uraraka says, smiling. “Wow! I can’t believe this is actually happening.”

“It’s all because of you,” Izuku says, bumping her with his shoulder. She grins at him.

“You’re lucky I was coming by,” Airi says. “Midoriya, can I talk with you? Uraraka, you have my email. We can hash out some details soon, got it?”

Uraraka nods, and Izuku stands, unsure what Airi wants to talk about. Their meeting on Tuesday was pretty normal… Maybe she forgot something?
“See you guys later!” Izuku says, heading after Airi, who leaves the classroom and starts heading towards the school’s entrance.

“Do you need to do anything this afternoon?” Airi asks tensely.

“Just… go home and do homework,” Izuku says lamely. Airi nods.

“Good.”

They walk out of the doors, and Izuku is surprised to see Razoredge there, intently looking at his phone.

“Razoredge!” Izuku calls out. “What are you doing here?”

Razoredge looks up, a corner of his mouth curled into a smile. “I’m not in my hero outfit right now, Midoriya. You can just call me by my name.”

“Right,” Izuku says. After weeks of thinking about him as Razoredge, that’s probably going to get some getting used to. “Mirai-senpai, what are you doing here?”

Mirai looks at Airi. Airi looks at Izuku.

“Midoriya,” she says. “I just got word from the hospital that Katsu has woken up. I was wondering if you would like to come with Mirai and I and go and see her.”

Izuku startles. “She’s… awake?”

They nod.

“Then of course I want to see her,” Izuku says, staring them down. “Let’s go!”

Chapter End Notes

I'm such a sucker for daemon AUs, so here's one for BNHA

Some filler this chapter... I'll get onto the final exam arc soon, I promise

Also I just changed my URL on tumblr, so new blog is oathkeeperoxas
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Quirk Boost: Within a set radius, Izuku can give up to a 10% boost to anyone's quirk. The only prerequisite is that the person who is getting boosted is within the radius, and Izuku wants to boost their quirk. Note: this boost only unlocks the *potential* of what a quirk can do if the wielder trained their quirk more.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When they arrive at the hospital, it looks exactly the same as the last time Izuku was here a few weeks ago. The nurses move with the same calm efficiency, and the fluorescent white lights buzz quietly above their heads. He still dislikes them.

Izuku follows Airi, his head down. He doesn’t exactly have many great memories of this place, but he’s hoping that meeting with Grace will create some. She has to be fine… right?

Airi stops outside the same room that Izuku had come to last time to see Grace, and the three of them pause. Izuku can hear the low murmur of voices from inside the room. He bites his tongue and waits for Airi to make a move.

“I don’t know what state she’s in,” Airi says quietly. “Dr Raithwait was not very forthcoming on the phone, which makes me suspect that she isn’t in very good shape. Just keep in mind that she’s been through something very traumatic, okay? She might not act like how you remember her.”

She looks at them both sombrely, her gaze lingering on Izuku, before she turns and knocks on the door lightly. An elderly woman with violent red hair opens it. She’s the same woman who had been here last time, as well.

“Fire,” Airi says. “Can we come in?”

Fire looks over them. “The doctor is checking her over,” she says, her accent strange to Izuku’s ears. “But you should check her soul. The boys can come in if they’re quiet.”

Izuku and Mirai nod quickly, so Fire opens the door and they head inside. Airi immediately goes to stand with the two doctors who are standing next to the bed. Izuku and Mirai hang back near the door.

One of the doctors steps to the side to let Airi stand next to the bed, and Izuku gets his first look at her.

Grace’s skin is ghostly white, and her face is expressionless and slack. Airi murmurs something and Grace blinks slowly, deep bruises under her eyes, and turns towards her slowly like a flower turns towards the light. Airi takes her hand, and Izuku has to bite back a sound of dismay when he sees the back of her hand. Before, her snowflake soulmark had been clean black lines painted smoothly onto her skin, but now the back of her hand looks like she’s put it through a fire. The skin is bubbled and blistered, and he can’t make out any trace of the soulmark anymore.

“Katsu, how are you feeling?” Airi asks her.
“…hm,” Grace says. She looks at Airi’s face intently, but there’s a distinct lack of focus in her eyes that makes Izuku intensely uncomfortable.

There is no trace of the hero Grace in front of him anymore.

Katsu hums as the doctors ask her to follow a light with her eyes – if they ask her to do something, then she does it. The longer he watches, the more he’s reminded of a broken doll being directed, but without any thought behind the motions. It’s like she’s doing things by route instead of actually thinking as she performs the actions.

“Airi,” Katsu says suddenly, and Airi leans down so she can be at eye level with her.

“Yes, Katsu?” Airi asks gently. “What is it?”

Katsu narrows her eyes, staring at Airi. Her eyes wander past her towards Izuku and Mirai. She furrows her forehead quizzically at the two of them, before standing up suddenly. She marches over towards Izuku, and he can only stand his ground as she grabs his hands and stares at him.

“Do you still have your knife?” Katsu asks, eyes suddenly aflame and focused on him.

“Y-yes,” Izuku says, looking over her shoulder at Airi. Airi’s mouth is tight but she nods at him.

“Good, good,” she mumbles. “You need to keep practising. It’s important. Very important.”

“I will,” Izuku promises. Katsu then looks at Mirai, who is tense as he waits for what she’s going to do next.

“Razoredge…” she says. “Where… where’s Po?”

Mirai’s face collapses. Airi comes over to put a hand on Katsu’s shoulder.

“Katsu,” Airi says calmly. “I need you to look at me.”

Slowly, Katsu turns to face her.

“Po is dead,” Airi says, looking her straight in the eyes. “You are alone now.”

Katsu and Airi stare at each other for several agonising seconds. Izuku clenches his fists.

“Alone,” Katsu echoes, and her voice is indescribably mournful. It’s a confirmation, and an agreement. Izuku fights back tears and looks at the ground so he won’t have to look at her.

Airi reaches out, and takes her arm to guide her back to her bed. Izuku takes a step closer to Mirai, and Mirai leans up against him. Izuku leans back, appreciating the support.

The doctors keep asking Katsu questions, but she doesn’t reply to any of them, choosing to stare at the wall instead.

Izuku’s phone buzzes in his pocket, but he doesn’t check it.

“You should reply to that,” Mirai mutters.

Izuku digs his phone out of his pocket.

**Kacchan:** I don’t know why you’re feeling like that but if you don’t reply to this I’m going to find you.
Izuku puts his phone away and shoves his hands into his pockets, trying to calm down. Kacchan doesn’t need to feel bad. Just one of them is enough.

“Her soul is there, but it’s… cloudy,” Airi tells the doctors. “I’ve seen it before in some people who have very severe head injuries. She’s not thinking right at the moment, but she should get better with time.”

Both doctors scribble something down on their clipboards.

“Have you seen severed bonds before?” the younger doctor asks.

“Only one,” Airi replies. “She woke up completely fine, and then committed suicide as soon as she was released from hospital. I suggest that a very close eye be kept on Katsu.”

“I will be here,” Fire says from her position by the side of the bed.

The doctors make another note. Izuku tries to banish the idea of Katsu killing herself from his head.

The doctors ask Airi a few more questions, and then she ushers Izuku and Mirai out of the room.

“She doesn’t need lots of people around at the moment,” Airi says, eyes distant as she thinks. “Let’s go get something to drink, shall we?”

Airi insists on paying for their drinks. Izuku orders the first thing on the menu and then moves his straw around his tea listlessly, not interested in drinking but not wanting to discard the cup out of hand. Mirai isn’t even making that effort, staring at his cup in silence.

Airi sighs as she sips her bubble tea. “I know that it doesn’t seem like it, but Grace is in there… I think she just needs some time.”

“Good,” Mirai says firmly. Izuku nods to signal his agreement.

“I can get the train,” Izuku says. Mirai says that he can come along to Izuku’s station before going home, which Izuku tries to turn down, but Mirai won’t take no for an answer.

Mirai’s presence on the train keeps his darker thoughts at bay, because the older boy asks about some of the lighter parts of school. Izuku tells him about Aizawa sleeping in class and Uraraka’s idea for a sparring club.

“Is it open to all years?” Mirai asks. “It sounds like fun.”

“Well,” Izuku says, because they had discussed including second and third years, but Izuku hadn’t really been sure if any would be interested. “If there were older kids, we were planning on having them focus on demonstrations and take on a more mentor role to the first years. Since you would have more combat experience than us.”

Mirai nods. “It sounds like a good idea. I can’t believe there isn’t already something like this at UA.”
“That’s what we thought as well.” The train comes to a stop, and Izuku hops up. “This is my stop. Thanks for coming along with me.”

“No problem,” Mirai tells him. “I’ll see you around school sometime, yeah?”

“See you!” Izuku calls as he leaves the carriage.

The train station is deserted at this hour, so Izuku tucks his hands into his pockets and heads down the street. Halfway home, he’s surprised but also not really surprised to see Kacchan crossing the street to Izuku’s side.

“Hey,” Kacchan says. Izuku can’t resist the urge to touch him, so he steps over and leans his forehead against his shoulder. Kacchan sighs, and Izuku can feel his breath ruffle his hair.

“I don’t want either of us to end up like her,” Izuku mutters into Kacchan’s shoulder.

Kacchan carefully wraps an arm around his waist. “Then we won’t,” he says simply.

Izuku wishes that it were that simple.

After visiting Katsu, Izuku drifts through the next week and a half, only just keeping his head above water as the term starts to wind up and final exams get closer and closer. He makes efforts to see Mirai around school, and Mirai introduces him to a few of his third year friends, which is nice. Stain has killed another two heroes, and that has driven him further into his head. Kacchan has been walking home with him every day, and that time alone with him usually lifts his spirits. His mum has been doing her best to cheer him up, so over the weekend they go camping just outside the city. That had done a lot to clear his head, but even so, he’s been so out of it that he doesn’t know where or how the idea started. It’s only when he hears Uraraka and Tsuyu excitedly discussing a class ‘dinner’ that he perks up and turns around in his seat to listen to them.

“I’m just happy that UA is covering all the costs!” Uraraka cheers. “I’ve looked up the place that we’re going, and it looks super fancy and nice. I couldn’t read half the menu though, but it’s a set meal so choosing what we eat shouldn’t be an issue.”

“They cater to all types of people and quirks, kero,” Tsuyu ribbits. “It does look quite interesting.”

“Wait, what?” Izuku asks, thrown. The two girls stare at him.


“What restaurant?”

The three of them stare at each other for a silent few seconds. Uraraka looks more and more concerned as she realises that Izuku is serious.

“You know, the thing that Aizawa-sensei told us about last Friday? UA is sponsoring us all to go and eat somewhere fancy for some good press for the school and this class after the bad press of the USJ attack”

“Right,” Izuku says, hesitantly. “I knew that.”

“You obviously didn’t know that,” Tsuyu points out.
“It’s tomorrow night,” Uraraka tells him. “We have to wear something fancy! I brought a nice
dress from home but I’m not sure if it’s nice enough, you know?”

“You could always ask Yaoyorozu if you could borrow one of hers,” Tsuyu suggests.

Uraraka goes bright red. “Haha, ah, right, right. That’s funny. Hilarious.”

Izuku is left to puzzle **that** reaction out throughout the rest of the day as that’s when class starts.
That afternoon, on the way home with Kacchan, he asks the other boy about the dinner.

Kacchan looks at him disbelievingly out of the corner of his eye. “Aizawa gave us that note on
Monday, remember?”

Izuku *does* remember the note, but he didn’t read it. But he did give it to his mum, so at least it
shouldn’t be a surprise for her.

Kacchan raises his eyebrows. “Wow, you really are out of it lately, aren’t you?”

Izuku shoves his hands into his pockets and doesn’t reply. Then he has a dawning realisation.

“Wait… what am I going to wear?”

“Something nice?” Kacchan says, sounding as if he’s stating the obvious because Izuku is an
idiot.

Like *what?* The most expensive item of clothing he owns is a limited edition All Might shirt that
cost him more than he’d ever admit.

“What are *you* going to wear?”

“Parents bought me some fancy shit a while ago, so I could go to mum’s dumb parties and look
the part. You really don’t have anything?”

Izuku scratches his head. “Hmm… I’m sure I can find something.”

Kacchan rolls his eyes. “Just let me look through your stuff, it’ll be quicker.”

“Umm… okay.”

When they reach Izuku’s apartment building, Kacchan follows him inside instead of leaving to
head to his own home like normal. Kind of weird, but kind of nice too.

“You mum not home?” Kacchan asks as they walk through the kitchen.

“She won’t get home until about six,” Izuku says. He nervously runs a hand through his hair,
unsure what to do next, but Kacchan walks right past him towards Izuku’s room. Izuku jolts and
trots after him.

“Wow,” Kacchan says when he opens the door. “This place really hasn’t changed since I was
here last.”

Izuku looks at the All Might posters that are covering the walls. There’s a few older ones, but
most are more recent.

“My collection has been updated since we were kids,” Izuku says, scandalised. Kacchan laughs at
him.
“Right, sure, whatever you say.” He crosses over to Izuku’s wardrobe and starts digging through it. Izuku slinks over to his bed and sits on it, unsure of how to reconcile the ideas of Kacchan and in his room together. Weird.

It doesn’t take Kacchan very long to pull out the two good shirts that Izuku has, and find the ties on the back of the door, all of which he inherited from his father.

“No black pants?”

Izuku shakes his head. Kacchan sighs.

“Look, I’ll just lend you some of mine. We’re about the same height.”

“Thanks,” Izuku says awkwardly.

“Whatever,” Kacchan says. “We should get them now.”

Mitsuki greets Izuku warmly when he comes in, and then Kacchan and her do their weird thing where they don’t actually greet each other or say that they love each other, but mean it anyway.

“Stay here,” Kacchan grumbles, and disappears back to his room.

“How have you been sweetheart?” Mitsuki asks, already wandering around the kitchen to make some tea.

“Yeah, you know. Studying for finals, which is less than two weeks away now. There’s a lot of self-taught content because of how UA focuses on teaching us hero stuff, so I want to know that I have it all down.”

Mitsuki nods. “Katsuki has been complaining about studying, so I take it that he’s doing all that he can as well. You two should study together, it would help you both.”

“Um. Maybe,” Izuku says, because he doesn’t know if they’re both okay enough around each other yet to do something like that.

Kacchan comes back out of his room with a pair of pants, which he throws at Izuku. “Wear those and your green top,” he says, making a beeline towards the fridge and grabbing something to eat.

“Is this about your dinner tomorrow?” Mitsuki asks. “I’ve been to the place where you’re going, it’s quite lovely. I’ve actually got a meeting there tomorrow as well. Is everyone going there together or meeting after school?”

Kacchan scoffs. “After school, obviously. We all have to get changed and stuff.”

“Well, I can drive you both, then.” She looks at Izuku. “Unless you have any other plans?”

Izuku shakes his head, and she nods.

“All settled then. Katsuki, have you picked what you’re going to wear yet?”

“Nope,” Kacchan says.

“Wow, judging me for not having anything but you haven’t picked anything either,” Izuku says.

“Hey, at least I knew that the whole thing was even happening,” Kacchan says. “And I’ve got options to choose from, and I want to look good. This is going to be publicised, and I don’t want these pics coming back to bite me in the ass in five years or whatever.”
“I’m sure that whatever you wear, you’ll be fine,” Mitsuki says. “And if it’s not fine for some reason, you can just write your younger self off as having no fashion sense. Though I might be embarrassed by that… you’d think that after living with someone who designs fashion for a living you’d have some taste for it.”

“Pah. You think you’ve got taste? More like you’re mainstream.”

“I create the mainstream.”

Izuku takes their rising voices as his cue to leave.

“I’ll just, uh, head home then,” he says.

“You don’t have to go,” Mitsuki says.

“No, I don’t mean to infringe on your hospitality. Plus Kacchan already gave me his pants, so.”

Mitsuki chuckles. “Very well. I’ll see you around soon, then.”

Izuku nods, and waves bye to Kacchan, who is already digging into his food. His soulmate lifts a hand to wave back, and Izuku counts that as a win.

The next day after school, Izuku puts on the shirt that Kacchan had picked out for him, and is glad that his borrowed pants fit. They don’t have to meet until six, so he spends the afternoon puzzling over some English work.

His phone buzzes, distracting him from writing out the translations.

Kacchan: I’m outside your house, come down.

Izuku looks at the time, and jumps out of his chair to sprint through the apartment.

“Bye mum see you later!”

“Say thank you to Mitsuki for driving you!”

“Yeah I will!”

Sure enough, Kacchan is leaning against a car on the street. He’s wearing a red top with a cut similar to Izuku’s, and a black vest with roses embroidered over it. It widens his waist, slims his hips, and makes him look really good. Izuku can’t help but notice that their colour schemes look nice together.

“Deku,” Kacchan grunts.

“Oh, hi Kacchan,” Izuku says. “Um, thank you for taking me.”

“Whatsoever,” Kacchan says, getting in the front seat of the car. Izuku opens the door of the backseat and climbs in.

“Ah, driving you two out to dinner,” Mitsuki says wistfully. “It’s something I’ve always wanted to do. You know, I still remember the first date I had with your father.”

Izuku looks up at the roof of the car and resists the urge to whimper. There’s no way this is going to end well, and he’s trapped in the car with them for the next half hour or so.
“We’re not going on a date,” Kacchan says stonily. “We’re going to be with everyone else from school. At a school event. Which is in no way date like.”

“I didn’t even say anything about you two being on a date, but if that’s what your mind goes to… oh, he protests a bit much, but, sure, sure. You’re both all dressed up and looking so lovely though, I should get a photo before you leave.”

“No.”

Izuku quietly tries not to die of mortification.

“Well, then make sure someone else takes your photo. I don’t have many of you all dressed up, let alone both of you together. What photos am I going to show your children to embarrass you?”

“MUM!” Kacchan shrieks. Izuku reels back, sure that his eardrums have been blown out. “WHAT HAVE I TOLD YOU ABOUT SAYING STUPID SHIT LIKE THAT?”

Mitsuki tuts. “Okay, I’ll be quiet. But I still want a photo!”

“I don’t like having my photo taken,” Kacchan says, clipped tone conveying easily that his anger is still present.

“And that’s why I don’t have many photos, I know. But humour me tonight, please?”

“Tch.”

“Good. I’ll be expecting a nice one. Make sure you get it Izuku, I don’t think Katsuki will bring me one even if he does take it.”

“Right,” Izuku squeaks, not wanting to participate in this conversation.

“You don’t have to play into her schemes,” Kacchan says wrathfully.

“I hardly think that wanting a photo is a scheme.”

“That’s what someone who was executing a scheme would say,” Kacchan mutters.

“I’m not scheming, darling. If I were scheming, you wouldn’t have any idea about it.”

That doesn’t stress him out at all.

Thankfully, the restaurant isn’t too far away from where Izuku lives, so he’s only in the car with Kacchan and Mitsuki for another twenty minutes, during which they continue to snipe at each other, with Mitsuki occasionally calling on Izuku to back up something that she says, which he has to reluctantly agree with because she argues extremely well. When they finally pull up in the car park near the restaurant, Izuku lets out a silent breath of relief.

“I’ll see you boys later,” Mitsuki tells them. “I don’t know which of us will be done first, so Katsuki, I’ll text you when I’m ready to go, and both of you should come back here, got it?”

“Yeah.”

“Yes. Thank you, Bakugou-san.”

“Aw, being all polite. Cute. Now scram!”

Kacchan grabs his arm and Izuku follows him as they walk.
"We’re meeting with shitty hair and stuff before we go in," Kacchan grumbles.

"Okay," Izuku says, texting with his free hand.

Me: im here! :D

Uraraka: Already inside ;) just ask for the ua table

"Hey, Bakugou, Midoriya!"

Izuku looks up to see Ashido waving at them. Kaminari and Sero are standing with her.

"Did you two come together? That’s so cute," Ashido gushes. She turns to Izuku. "We wanted to all go in as a group so that the cameras outside couldn’t get any photos and make something seem like it’s happening when it’s not happening, you know? I thought that was kinda boring, but Bakugou insisted on ‘maintaining our reputations’ or something."

"It’s a good idea," Izuku says. "UA has invited reporters to be around, and Aizawa-sensei went over all those ways of dealing with questions in class today, so hopefully no one will say anything crazy. So to report on anything they’ve got to have something juicy to talk about."

"Like Todoroki dating someone!" Kaminari says. "Since his dad is the number two, that would totally be news, right?" He takes on a more pompous tone, imitating a reporter. "Now, look at this lucky kid that gets to marry into the fame of the Todoroki family!"

"I wonder if Todoroki is around somewhere," Izuku says, looking about. The entrance of the restaurant does in fact have several reporters with microphones and cameras, ready to capture the entrance of the upcoming young heroes. He takes a breath and steadies himself. As a group, hopefully they’ll be easier to face.

"Kirishima’s train is running late, and I think him and Todoroki comes from the same area?" Sero says. "So they’ll probably come together."

"Wasn’t he meant to be the first one here?" Kacchan says, his normal scowl present on his face.

"Yeah, but he should be here any second," Ashido says, looking at her phone. "The station is right around the corner."

Izuku looks over his shoulder in time to see Kirishima come into view, talking with Todoroki and walking beside Satou and Aoyama.

"We’re almost late, so I hope that’s everyone," Sero says, checking the time on his phone.

The group waves them over, and Izuku does a headcount. Altogether, there’s nine of them, which should mean that they can go in pairs at least to talk to the reporters.

"Right, let’s go," Kacchan says, hands tucked into his pockets coolly. Kaminari falls into step beside him, with Izuku and Sero behind them.

"This place looks super cool, I can’t wait to taste their food," Sero says cheerfully.

"Just gotta get through them first," Izuku replies.

"Gotta work for our free meal, huh," Sero chuckles.

They cross the street, and as soon as they get close the reporters are on them. Izuku finds himself
efficiently shuffled to a space away from the other reporters alongside Satou.

“Good evening boys,” the reporter says, a man in his thirties wearing business casual clothes. “Could I grab a few works with you before you head inside?”

Izuku is fairly sure that it’s not a question that he can say no to, but he nods, and Satou does as well.

“Excellent,” the man says. “I’m Kaoshi, and you are?”

“Midoriya Izuku,” Izuku says.

“Satou Rikidou,” Satou says.

The man scribbles down something that Izuku can only assume is their names. “Great. Now, you are both from Class 1-A, aren’t you?”

“Yes we are,” Izuku answers.

“I see. Midoriya, I recognise you from the sports festival. So, both of you were involved in the infamous USJ attack, weren’t you?”

“Class 1-A was the class present,” Satou says guardedly.

“Of course, just confirming,” Kaoshi says. “How do you both feel about being involved in the attack?”

Izuku and Satou exchange a glance. This is a question that Aizawa had schooled everyone on.

“I personally didn’t see a lot of fighting,” Satou says. “It was quite unexpected to be fighting real villains, though.”

Izuku nods along to Satou’s words. “Yes, I agree. Fighting real villains was a lot different to what we’d done before in class.”

Kaoshi nods. “And how are you both liking UA?”

Izuku brightens at the question. “Oh, it’s really amazing! It’s always been my dream to go to UA, and so when I took the entrance exam I was pretty nervous. But everything turned out alright, and here I am!”

“I’ve always known that UA was the school I wanted to go to,” Satou says. “But even though I trained really hard, I was still surprised to see that I had been accepted. It was really exciting.”

“And how are your teachers? All of them being Pro Heroes must also be very exciting.”

“Snipe has always been one of my favourite heroes, so learning under him has been so cool,” Satou replies. “And of course, being in a class with All Might is crazy, you know? Really drives home that UA is the best. All Might can be pretty funny, too.”

“Really?” Kaoshi asks. “How so?”

Izuku and Satou look at each other and resist the urge to laugh.

“He makes his entrances very interesting,” Izuku says in mock seriousness. “Can we go? We’re kinda late.”
“Yes,” Kaoshi says reluctantly. “Thank you for spending time with me.”

“You’re welcome,” Izuku says formally. He and Satou head towards the door, passing by the woman interviewing Kaminari and Ashido, who looks half stunned. Izuku hopes they’re not saying anything too wild.

Todoroki, Aoyama, Kacchan, Sero, and Kirishima are already inside, and Izuku goes to stand beside Todoroki.

“Are we going to head in?”

“We were going to wait for the others,” Todoroki says.

“I think Ashido and Kaminari are going to keep their reporter waiting for a while,” Izuku mutters.

“Let’s go in then,” Todoroki says, turning to walk towards the woman at the front counter. “We’re here for the UA dinner,” he says politely.

“Come with me,” she says, and Izuku follows his classmates to the second floor, where there’s a private room with ‘UA’ marked on it.

Present Mic is standing beside the door, and he waves at them as they walk over. “Heya guys, head right on in.”

Inside, Izuku does a quick headcount and confirms that they were the last group to arrive, which means that Kaminari and Ashido are the only ones who aren’t here yet. Aizawa is sitting next to Yaoyorozu, and they’re talking to each other, probably about something class related. Izuku spots an open seat next to Uraraka and makes a beeline for it.

“Deku!” she says. “You’re finally here. I think Aizawa-sensei was starting to get worried.”

“We were just talking to the reporters at the front of the restaurant,” Izuku says.

“Oh yeah, about that,” Uraraka mutters. “Aizawa-sensei said that later he’s going to have one of them come in and take a photo of all of us and maybe ‘mingle’ for a bit, so I guess that means we’ll be questioned further.”

“Did they corner you as you came in?”

“Sure did,” Tsuyu says, leaning forward so she can talk to him from where she’s sitting on the other side of Uraraka. “Asked us about USJ and having All Might as a teacher.”

“Same,” Izuku says.

Tsuyu puts a finger on her chin. “It makes sense that they would want to know about All Might. After all, he is the number one hero.”

Izuku nods. It’s kind of weird to be asked about All Might. After spending so much time with him over the last year, Izuku doesn’t see just the public front he puts up anymore. Instead, he knows the real All Might.

“My reporter was pushy about asking me what I thought of All Might,” Todoroki says dryly from Izuku’s other side. “I think she wanted a hot scoop about how I loved him as compared to my father.”

“That would be something that they would want to write on,” Uraraka says thoughtfully. “Sorry
Todoroki shrugs one shoulder. “I’ve been in the public eye for my whole life, so I’m used to answering questions from the press.”

It makes sense, and Izuku is reminded again that Todoroki is prime hero material. He’s even starting ahead of everyone else when it comes to talking to the press!

Kaminari and Ashido saunter through the door, and Present Mic comes in after them, going to sit in the empty space next to Aizawa. Kaminari and Ashido take the two empty seats between Sero and Tokoyami.

Aizawa clears his throat, and all noise dies reflexively from his students. “Now that we’re all here,” he says, staring at Kaminari and Ashido. “I want to congratulate all of you on making it through those reporters, and thank you all for coming. It’s good to see everyone here. There will be a group photo later, but until then enjoy dinner.”

He leans back in his seat. There’s a jug of water on the table, so Izuku pours himself a glass. Uraraka has juice, and she catches him staring at it.

“There were waiters in here earlier who got us drinks,” she says.

“Right,” Izuku says.

Sure enough, a few waiters come around and most of the students ask for a drink other than water. Soon after that, the first course comes out. It’s a glass bowl balanced on a plate, and has a small appetiser balanced on artfully arranged seaweed.

“This is going to be more than like, three different sets, isn’t it,” Uraraka says, sounding like she’s half in shock.

“Well, this place does lean towards more traditional Japanese,” Izuku points out.

The second course has seasonal sushi, and the third is sliced sashimi, which is delicious. Uraraka tells them that she hasn’t had sashimi since she moved out of her parent’s house, and Tsuyu gives hers to her, since apparently she eats it often. After that is a tofu and vegetable dish, followed by a light soup and then a hot pot. A palate cleanser and some miso soup finish off the dinner, leaving Izuku feeling full and sleepy. Talking with Tsuyu, Uraraka, and Todoroki has been really good as well – Tsuyu had told them some stories about her younger brother and younger sister, and Todoroki tells them a story about his older sister in return. With the excellent food and company, Izuku feels much more upbeat than he has been in the last few weeks.

Todoroki replies to something Tsuyu says, making Uraraka laugh so hard she snorts out the last of her juice. Izuku laughs alongside her, and feels like a weight has been moved off his chest.

There’s a knock at the door, and Aizawa opens it to reveal the reporter who had interviewed Izuku outside. There’s an expensive looking camera around his neck, and he talks to Aizawa for a minute before their teacher calls for all of them to gather in front of the large, blank back wall.

Kaoshi arranges them due to height order and what he thinks looks good. Izuku ends up between Tokoyami and Kaminari, kneeling on the floor as the first row of the photo.

Kaoshi takes a few pictures, clicking his camera and muttering to himself. After a few minutes, he nods, satisfied.

“That should be good enough. Thank you for letting me have these.”
“As long as I get a full resolution copy,” Aizawa warns.

“Of course, of course,” Kaoshi says, waving him off. “Now, perhaps a photo of you and Present Mic to go in our gossip column…?”

Aizawa growls at him, which Izuku thinks is honestly fair. The reporter squeaks and scurries out the door. Everyone gets up and starts to mill around the room, but the photo taking has reminded Izuku of his promise to Mitsuki.

“Can you take my photo?” he asks Uraraka, giving her his phone.

“Sure,” Uraraka says.

“Wait a second,” Izuku says, and then darts over to Kacchan’s side. The other boy appears to be storming off in the other direction as fast as he can, already knowing what Izuku wants.

“Kacchan,” Izuku says. “Come on, it’s just a photo, and it’ll make your mum happy, and my mum happy. It’ll just take a second.”


Izuku happily tugs him back over to Uraraka, who raises an eyebrow at the both of them.

“Try not to be scowling too much,” Uraraka says, amused, as she lifts Izuku’s phone.

Kacchan tenses, so Izuku lays his head on his shoulder and wraps his arms around one of Kacchan’s arms. “Smile!” he says, smiling widely.

In the photo that Uraraka takes, Kacchan has a small smile too.

That Friday, the class buzzes with excitement as they gather in ground beta for their afternoon hero class with All Might. Izuku hasn’t seen anything about him in the news today, so he thinks that the hero will probably appear to teach them, not having used up all his time yet.

Sure enough, All Might lands in front of the class, dropping from the sky and scaring half of them to death. Izuku jumps – even though he’s seen this move be used multiple times, he’s always been watching it happen on a video.

“Hello! Just know, that I am here!” All Might exclaims. “For your hero training! Are you all ready for today’s lesson?”

“Yes!” Mostly everyone replies eagerly.

“Good!” All Might says. “Now… today’s class is all about capturing! When confronting a villain, your main goal is always to capture! Today we will be examining some skills needed to do that, as well as polishing everyone’s speed skills. Two students will participate at a time, with one being the ‘hero’ who needs to find the escaping ‘villain.’ All of you will run twice, one time being the hero, and one time being the villain! To win, the hero must capture the villain, or the villain must escape the hero’s clutches, and exit ground beta to return to where we are standing now!”

“That skews heavily in favour of the villain,” Yaoyorozu points out. “Especially if that someone has a speed quirk, like Iida.”
“Indeed! Leave it to the class representative to point out something like that. Since you so nicely pointed it out, could you please note if the hero or villain wins each match?”

Yaoyorozu nods.

“Excellent! Now to answer your question, when facing real villains, they will have a variety of quirks that you need to account for. It is likely that in your career, you will encounter someone who is faster than you. It is something that you need to account for, if you are alone against a villain! Now, without further ado, the first match up is…”

All Might pauses for dramatic effect, then ruins it by pulling out a clipboard to consult.

“Ashido as the hero, and Aoyama as the villain!”

“Nice! I get to go first,” Ashido cheers.

“Oh, time to test my sparkling!” Aoyama says.

Izuku blinks from how different and yet how loud both of them are.

The two of them head to different parts of the training ground, and then All Might sounds the buzzer to start the match.

“Ashido knows that Aoyama will be heading here, so that’s an easy way to try and find him,” Uraraka says, but is cut off by a bright sparkling light that shines across the whole training ground.

“That works too,” Uraraka agrees.

Aoyama ends up escaping the area, because Ashido couldn’t get in reach of him when he used his laser to blast himself up into the air.

Kaminari and Ojirou are next, which ends in Ojirou escaping the area after making Kaminari use up his quirk so that he was too stupid to follow him to the exit. Kirishima runs from Koda, but ends up being captured when Koda finds him using birds as sentries and then tripping Kirishima over with a raccoon. Jirou captures Satou after finding him using her earphone jacks, and then Shouji escapes the area by avoiding Iida. Even though Iida is fast, Shouji made sure to always know where he was and then avoid him at all costs.

“This is just like hide and seek!” Uraraka says happily to Iida, who is looking dejected after losing. “I can tell you weren’t very good at it as a kid, though – you looked past a lot of hiding places!”

“It’s true, I did not play hide and seek very often as a child,” Iida replies. “Perhaps I should have – it would have honed my skills for now.”

Uraraka laughs at him. “Right, that’s definitely why you should have played hide and seek.”

All Might calls up the next pair, Tokoyami and Mineta. Mineta wins after he sticks Tokoyami to the ground and escapes the area. Hagakure successfully escapes from Ojirou, even after she yells encouragement to him a few times. Izuku supposes that being invisible would really help in this situation. Sero then captures Aoyama, and Kacchan escapes the area, with Kirishima trying to catch him but not succeeding.

“Okay!” All Might cries. “Next will be young Midoriya acting as the hero, and Todoroki acting as
the villain.”

Todoroki nods to Izuku, while Izuku tries not to start sweating. Todoroki’s ice gives him fast movement and a strong defence, while his fire can ward off close range attacks. A combination that will mean that it’s going to be hard to get him to stop at all. Izuku checks his capture tape in his pocket and then makes his way to the starting point that All Might has shown him.

The buzzer goes off, and Izuku immediately jumps up into the air, feeling the power of his quirk rush through him. He needs to cover a lot of ground, since Todoroki only needs to head straight to the entrance, but Izuku needs to find Todoroki.

He angles towards the entrance, since that’s the only area that he knows for sure that Todoroki is going to have to go. He gets there with no sign of the other boy, so he begins to make wide arcs around the area, looking down streets and hoping to spot him.

So he’s surprised when Todoroki jumps down from the top of a nearby building, using his ice to turn his fall into a controlled slide. Izuku flings himself towards the ice and smashes it with full cowl. He’s very thankful that he and Todoroki have practised with him smashing the ice, because it means that he can see the weak point and hit it at just the right point to get the whole thing to shatter.

Todoroki loses his footing for a second and it’s enough time for Izuku to leap in front of him and try to jump at him to pin him down. Todoroki dodges out of the way at the last second, and uses his fire to get Izuku to reel back to avoid getting burnt. Izuku jumps back through the fire and knocks Todoroki off his feet and onto the ground. Now he just needs to get the capture tape around him, but Todoroki blasts him away with a spike of ice that sends Izuku flying. He crashes into a wall, and by the time he’s standing again, Todoroki has passed through the exit gate.

He sighs to himself as he also heads towards the gate. That’s what, the sixth loss for the hero side? And the villains have only lost three times. Izuku is starting to see a pattern starting to emerge, and he doesn’t particularly like it.

“Aw, too bad Deku,” Uraraka says consolingly.

“I also lost as well,” Iida says. “But consider – a loss for us is a win for our classmates!”

“You almost had me at the end,” Todoroki says, as All Might organises the next two to go out, Yaoyorozu and Tsuyu. “You just needed to be a little faster with the tape.”

“Yeah,” Izuku agrees.

Yaoyorozu escapes by making a scooter to speed out with, and then All Might calls out, “Uraraka and Bakugou, you two are next!”

“Ahh,” Uraraka says. “I’ll beat him this time! This is a rematch for the sports festival, and I’m ready!”

She jogs over to All Might.

“Uraraka, you will be playing the villain, Bakugou, the hero. Here is where you must go for the start of the round.”

“Let’s do our best!” Uraraka cheers.

“Yeah, sure,” Kacchan says, but Izuku swears that he can see him smiling a tiny bit.
They enter ground beta, and Izuku hops impatiently as he waits for the sound that signals the start of the round.

Kacchan immediately blasts off, going high into the air while Uraraka starts running towards the exit. She’s looking up, so she can clearly hear the explosions, which will give her the advantage. From what Izuku’s seen, usually whoever finds the other first has the advantage in their fight.

Kacchan searches while Uraraka runs, and one time he passes overhead and she hides under a balcony until he’s gone. Izuku resists the urge to bounce nervously as she gets closer and closer to the exit, but just as she’s a few metres away, Kacchan spots her.

“HEY!” he shouts, flying towards her. Uraraka keeps running, but dodges to the side at the last second. Kacchan doesn’t let that slow him down as he turns and aims an explosion at her. Uraraka ducks underneath it and charges towards him, which Kacchan laughs at. Uraraka keeps coming, and Kacchan lets off an explosion that fills the area with dust. Izuku strains to see, and eventually both of them come into view, tussling on the ground.

On this side of the gate.

“Uraraka wins!” All Might cries.

“What?” Kacchan demands.

“She exited through the gate without you capturing her,” All Might points out. “Well done, young hero.”

Uraraka beams widely, while Kacchan stabs the ground with his toe.

The rounds go by fast after that. Ashido chases Tsuyu and loses, and then Satou chases Sero and loses, and then Mineta chases Jirou and loses.

“I think I’m beginning to predict how these bouts will play out,” Uraraka says half jokingly, but Izuku can tell that she’s actually concerned about the ratio of hero to villain wins.

Iida then escapes from Shouji, and Todoroki catches Kaminari, which is one more win for the heroes. Hagakure captures Koda, and then Tokoyami escapes from Yaoyorozu, which leaves only Izuku and Uraraka as the ones who haven’t had a second run.

“Uraraka as the hero, and Young Midoriya as the villain!” All Might calls out. “Please head to your designated spots on the map!”

“Right,” Izuku and Uraraka say at the same time, and they smile at each other as they head through the gate and split off towards their starting points.

Uraraka isn’t as fast as him, so Izuku decides to sprint towards the exit as fast as he can. The buzzer sounds, and Izuku leaps forward, still giddy at the speeds he can fly. Sometimes, he still can’t believe it. He has All Might’s quirk. Wild.

He reaches the gate before Uraraka, and when she comes in a few minutes later panting, she high fives him.

“I really need to work on my cardio,” she groans. “You don’t know how hard it is! You just power up your quirk, and zoom, off you go! Some of us actually gotta run.”

Izuku smiles at her, as All Might calls them all up to review everyone’s performance.
“Yaoyorozu, can you please tell us the number of hero victories?” All Might asks her, uncharacteristically quiet.

“Five hero wins and fifteen villain wins,” Yaoyorozu says promptly. All Might nods gravely.

“And so, you can now all see one of the difficulties of being a hero – in the real world, a villain can escape at any time. They might have a planned escape, or it might be impromptu. But if they escape, the hero has lost! I expect all of you to review your performance today and think about how you might succeed in the future.”

“Yes All Might!” the class says in unison.

“Now go and get changed,” All Might tells them, and the students turn to head back to the main building where the changing rooms are. Izuku startles when All Might’s hand falls on his shoulder.

“Young Midoriya,” he says, quietly enough that only Izuku will hear him. “Can you come and find me after school? I need to tell you some things… about the history of One for All, and it’s counterpart, All for One.”

Izuku spends the whole weekend thinking about what All Might tells him.

A quirk that steals other quirks, and lets them be bestowed upon others… That would be hard enough to swallow, without the added facts that All Might fought this person and was injured severely, and that All Might thinks that he is the mastermind behind the League of Villains.

On Monday morning, he finally gets his mind focused back on school when Aizawa reminds them all that there’s only one week left until final exams. Izuku might have spent the whole weekend doing nothing but looking at conspiracy theory sites to try and find evidence of what All Might had told him instead of studying, so he feels like he’s lagging behind his peers a bit. He really needs to focus so he does well on the upcoming tests.

“Of course, it would be completely irrational for you all to take a month off,” Aizawa says.

“Don’t tell me –” Kaminari says.

“So you’ll be doing a summer training camp in the woods,” Aizawa says.

The class bursts into speculation about what a camp would look like. Izuku grins, glad that the class is going to do something cool together after the exams.

“However,” Aizawa interrupts. “Anyone who doesn’t pass the upcoming final exams… is in for summer school hell, right here.”

“Do your best guys!” Kirishima shouts.

Izuku nods, and resolves to.

At lunch time, he sits with Uraraka and Iida like normal, with Hagakure and Tsuyu joining them. They all puzzle over what the written final could contain, and what the practical final could be. Monoma and Kendo walk past and Kendo tells them that the practical final will likely be robots – that puts Izuku at ease about the practical final. He can handle robots.
“I so need to study!” Hagakure says. “Like, today. This afternoon.”

“Same!” Izuku says.

“Study group!” Hagakure says. “Today in the library!”

“That’s a cool idea!” Izuku says. He looks at Iida and Uraraka. “Are you guys free?”

Iida pushes his glasses up. “I’m visiting my brother this afternoon.”

“Ah, right,” Izuku says. The girls nod.

“I’m free though,” Uraraka says.

“I am as well,” Tsuyu adds.

“Great!” Hagakure chirps. “How about we all go to the library together after school ends?”

Plan formulated, Izuku texts his mum to let her know that he’ll be late home because he’s studying at the UA library.

**Mum: Sounds fun honey let me know when you’re coming home and I’ll cook dinner! xoxoxo**

It’s easy enough to leave class together after school ends and head to the library. Hagakure finds them a table to study at, and Izuku waves to Mirai, who is sitting with a few of his friends at a nearby table with their books out. The third year textbooks look very large and intimidating.

“All right,” Hagakure says. Something cracks, and Izuku wonders if she just cracked her knuckles. “What’s everyone having the most problems with? Between us all, we can probably manage to cover everything.”

“Math,” Uraraka groans. “It kills me.”

“And that is valid!” Hagakure says.

“What is it in particular?” Tsuyu asks. Izuku remembers her being quite good at math, and that she ranked sixth in the midterms.

Uraraka pulls out her books and flicks to a page to show Tsuyu.

“What about you, Midoriya?” Hagakure asks.

“I don’t think I need to focus on anything… just more like, general studying for everything.”

“Then we should do classical literature, because I just don’t get it,” Hagakure says. “Symbolism and metaphors, onomatopoeia… what even is onomatopoeia?”

“When you have a word that describes a sound that sounds like that sound,” Izuku explains. “Like… woof. Describes a bark, but also sounds like a bark.”

“Hmm,” Hagakure says. She writes down something, and Izuku gets his own books out. “Why is all this stuff even necessary like I’m not going to be shouting metaphors at villains as I take them down!”

“UA has to examine us on some subjects to meet government standards,” Izuku says.
“Dodgy government,” Hagakure mutters. “Like, are you sure I can’t just get by on my hotness?”
Izuku stares at where her head is, but he can’t tell for sure since she’s invisible.

“Um, pretty sure no hero does that,” he says instead of commenting on the fact that she’s invisible.

“Not true,” Hagakure says. “Have you seen Hawks? He’s hot as hell. No way could he have gotten to where he is now in such a short time without his looks doing something for him.”

“Hawks has an extremely good villain takedown rate,” Izuku counters.

“Yeah… but he ranked in the top ten when he was still a teen!” Hagakure argues. “And that’s because his fanbase had crazy growth, mostly of young women. They all think he’s smoking hot. As do I.”

“You realise that he has a soulmate, right?” Izuku asks. “The reason he has such a good take down rate is because he’s got a soulblade, and he isn’t afraid of using it.”

“Yes, but no one knows who his soulmate is!” Hagakure says. “That means that everyone can dream about dating him.”

“Not me,” Tsuyu ribbits.

“What? How come?”

“I’m not interested in men.”

“That doesn’t excuse the fact that you should be able to recognise that he is objectively the hottest hero out there.”

Tsuyu puts a finger on her chin. “I just don’t see it.”

“Unrelatable content,” Hagakure mutters.

Uraraka chuckles. “I think Hawks is pretty cute.”

“Cute?” Hagakure says, sounding scandalised.

“Well he has a soulmate that he’s already bonded to, so I don’t really think about it anymore than that,” Uraraka says.

Hagakure sighs in a way that makes Izuku think that she is currently pouting immensely. “You can’t let that stop you!”

“Well, I kinda have a soulmate to find too, so yaknow, gotta keep an eye out for the people who are actually available,” Uraraka shrugs.

“Oooh tell me more,” Hagakure says.

“Not much to tell,” Uraraka shrugs. “I don’t know who they are, so… yeah.”


“We should keep studying,” Tsuyu suggests.

“Yeah,” Hagakure agrees. She flicks the page of her book, and then asks Izuku if he knows what alliteration is.
After a few hours of studying, Uraraka wants to leave so she doesn’t get home too late, since she lives by herself. Izuku volunteers to walk her to the station, since he needs to get home as well.

There’s no one around at this time of day, and the sun is just beginning to sink below the horizon. Izuku loves the lengthy summer days and how long the sun lingers in the afternoon sky, but it does kind of mess with his perception of time and how late it actually is.

Uraraka sighs.
“What’s up?” Izuku asks.

“Well, I’m just wondering if it was the right thing to tell Hagakure and Tsuyu about my soulmate. I mean, I trust them and everything, but still. It’s a pretty big step.”

“If you really do trust them, then I think it’ll be fine,” Izuku reassures her.

“You’ve known for a while now, and you haven’t told anyone. Not that I think that you would!” she says. “I just… want to find my soulmate, you know? You told me that you knew yours, and I was just really jealous, even though you also said that you and your soulmate don’t really talk much.”

“We’ve been talking a lot more recently,” Izuku says after a beat.

“Really? That’s great!”

“Yeah,” Izuku murmurs. “It is.” He bites back the urge to sigh.

“You should introduce me one day,” she says teasingly. “I’m sure he’s got heaps of embarrassing stories about you.”

A curl of shame twists in his belly. He stares at the ground as the train station approaches. He wants to tell her, because she’s his friend, and really the only thing holding him back is habit and embarrassment. But she’s his friend, and he knows that he can trust her.

“Well, I don’t really have to introduce you,” Izuku mutters.

“Huh?” Uraraka says.

Izuku shrugs a shoulder. “I… it’s Kacchan. He’s my soulmate.”

Uraraka stops walking, and it takes a step for Izuku to stop as well. He turns and looks back at her. She’s staring at him.

“Are you serious?” she asks him, eyebrows drawn together.

“Well… yes?”

“Wow,” she mutters under her breath. “I really should have guessed that, huh.”

She starts walking again, and Izuku falls into step with her.

“Well then why doesn’t he want you to be a hero?” she asks. “That doesn’t make sense?”

“My quirk took ages to appear,” Izuku says. “I’ve really only had it for less than a year.”

“No way,” Uraraka says. “Wow, yeah, I can see how that would drive a wedge between you,
what with his whole ‘be number one hero no matter what’ thing he’s got going on. Wow. Hmm. This is a lot to process.”

Izuku laughs. “You’re telling me.”

“I guess that’s true,” Uraraka says. “You’ve gotta tell me more!”

“Okay,” Izuku says, smiling.

The rest of the week flies by. Izuku spends most of his time studying, and before he knows it, it’s Monday morning, and he’s standing outside the classroom with the rest of 1-A, nervously going over his notes. Uraraka is looking at her math formulas, while down the hall Kacchan is leaning against the wall answering questions that Kirishima keeps firing off at him.

Aizawa opens the door. “Come in, everyone. It’s time for your first test.”

That first test is only the start of their three days of exams. With each exam that he finishes, Izuku feels stress slide off him, until Aizawa calls time for the last exam and he puts his pen down, satisfied.

Now there’s only the practical final exam.

The day of the practical, Izuku changes into his hero outfit along with the rest of his classmates. Kaminari is chatting excitedly about the robots, which Izuku is starting to doubt more every time it’s mentioned. Surely, things won’t be that straightforward… Right?

Everyone gathers near the front gate of UA, and Izuku blinks as he counts the teachers. There sure are a lot of them here…

“Let’s begin your practical exam,” Aizawa says. “It is, of course, possible to fail this exam. If you want to attend the training camp, then don’t mess this up. Knowing you guys, you probably asked around… and you think that you might have a vague idea of how this’ll go.”

“It’s a robot rumble, like the entrance exam!” Ashido cheers.

“Not quite!” Izuku blinks as Nezu pops out of Aizawa’s capture scarf. “Various circumstances have demanded a revision to the exam format!”

“A revision?” Yaoyorozu mutters from where she’s standing.

“From now on, we’ll focus on battles against flesh and blood opponents. It is critical that our teaching simulates practical experience as closely as possible!” Nezu jumps down from Aizawa’s shoulder and looks up at them with a glint in his eye. “As such, you students will be pairing up… and fighting one of the teachers you see here!”

The class mutters among themselves. Izuku resists the urge to start muttering. So they’ll be fighting the teachers in pairs. Interesting.

“You pairings and assigned teacher have already been decided. Many factors were considered, so without further ado… Todoroki, you are with Yaoyorozu, against me,” Aizawa says.

Izuku shoots the two of them a consoling look. There’s no way he can imagine fighting Aizawa for real.
“Next… Midoriya is with Bakugou.”

“Kacchan?” Izuku says, shocked, looking at him.

“Deku,” Kacchan growls, looking as surprised as Izuku feels.

“Your opponent… will be… me!”

All Might steps forward in full hero form, and Izuku stops feeling sorry for Todoroki and Yaoyorozu.

“You’ll have to work together to your full potential to win… so come at me, you two!”

Chapter End Notes

Social media outside POV canon compliant pro hero bakudeku? oh you mean my favourite thing ever huh. I usually try to rec fics that aren't WIPs but I read this this morning and it's.... so amazing and good...

Next chapter: breather chapters are over! It's full throttle from here on out, babey!
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Just a quick note, this chapter follows the anime version of the final exam, so Izuku and Katsuki are the last of the class who are completing their exam - all teams are not taking the test at the same time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The bus ride to their final exam location is quiet, but Katsuki doesn’t feel like filling the empty space with any noise.

Deku sits near the front, and Katsuki sits opposite him, legs and arms crossed and chin tucked up against his chest. Deku’s thoughts are tumbling over each other too quick to follow in the back of his head, so Katsuki ignores them in favour of pondering why they were even paired up in the first place.

Obviously, it’s because they’re soulmates. Duh. But they’re not bonded, so they’re not actually a duo or anything like that – so then why? Aizawa said that a lot of factors were taken into account when planning these match ups, and the only thing that Katsuki can think of is that the school wants them to overcome their differences and work together and all that bullshit in order to pass. It feels like he’s being set up which really rubs him the wrong way. Fuck. His relationship with Deku is no one else’s business. Why does he feel like everyone is constantly sticking their nose where it doesn’t belong?

He’s trying not to be in a foul mood, but it’s difficult when there’s nothing else to think about and he’s always hated people prying into his personal life. He lets out a silent breath. He just needs to calm the fuck down and think of a plan that they can use to beat All Might. A tall order, but Katsuki’s never backed away from a challenge before. Besides, he thinks he already has something in mind. Now he just needs to get Deku to play along, but that shouldn’t be too difficult. After all, he seems intent on throwing himself into danger at every conceivable opportunity.

The bus pulls up, and Katsuki marches out and into the blisteringly hot sun. Deku trails behind him like a lost puppy. They’re going to start the test without talking about strategy, but they should be able to come up with something on the fly. Katsuki is good at improvising like that, and he’s seen Deku in a fight – the nerd comes up with some of his best moves while in the thick of things.

All Might comes to a stop in front of the gates and turns to them. “Now, this is where we will fight. You two should know the rules by now… after all, it’s the final final exam! Hahaha!”

Katsuki doesn’t say anything. Beside him, Deku swallows. His thoughts are full of static and he’s flashing through ideas faster than Katsuki can follow. It’s starting to annoy him, because it almost feels like Deku is panicking which will not be conductive to passing this exam.

All Might lets out an awkward chuckle when neither of them say anything. “Hmm. Right to business, then! You have a half hour time limit to escape or to capture me. You two will start in the centre, so chop chop! The timer will start when you get there.”
All Might jumps up and away, and Katsuki snorts and starts walking. Deku takes a few quick steps to catch up to him.

“So, what’s the plan?” Deku asks nervously. “We have to run, right?”

The thought doesn’t even have a chance of sticking in his head. “No way! Obviously beating him down’s the best option.” The fact that they even have to discuss this is annoying – obviously they fight. Shit. He doesn’t need to be feeling angry at the moment, and especially not angry towards Deku. He lets out a breath and rolls his head to the side to stretch out his neck, and then starts warming up his wrists while they walk.

“I really think we’re better off avoiding a battle, no matter what,” Deku says. Katsuki shakes his head as thoughts of All Might’s battles and triumphs flash through Deku’s head.

“Running isn’t an option.” Katsuki says. “We fight. Drag it out until time is nearly up and then crush him in a surprise attack.”

“Umm,” Izuku says. Something about what he just said has thrown him, which is distracting. Katsuki shakes his head to try and dislodge the thoughts, but Deku is really focused on him at the moment, which makes it difficult.

“This is All Might we’re talking about… you know, the number one pro hero? We’re just high school students –”

Katsuki rounds on him, taking a few steps towards him. “Deku. We are fighting.”

“Even if we work together, there’s no chance that we’ll win!”

“So you want to give up without trying?” Katsuki snarls. “What happened to the Deku who would run into a fight for any reason?”

The pale face of the woman Deku interned with flashes through his head for a split second. Deku sets his shoulders and stares at Katsuki with his lips pursed together tightly.

“I’m just talking common sense! You’re crazy if you think we can win!”

“Fine, then I’ll fight without you!” Katsuki yells back. “Run if you want!”

Katsuki opens his mouth to say more, but a giant explosion interrupts him, the shockwave pushing Deku off his feet and sending him flying, while Katsuki only just manages to stay on the ground. Bits of concrete and building fly overhead, and All Might appears as a shadowy figure in the dust cloud.

“Who cares about keeping this town intact?” All Might says, a different lilt to his voice than normal. The dust clears a little to show him standing tall and proud on top of a pile of destroyed rubble.

The sheer aura of intimidation that he gives off stuns Katsuki for a good second.

“What?!” Deku thinks.

“What the hell?” Katsuki echoes.

“If you’re only thinking about this as a test, you’re going to have a bad time. I’m a villain, heroes. So give me your best shot.”
Katsuki refuses to back down even as All Might jumps towards them, the frightening aura only increasing as he gets closer. There’s no way he’s giving up without a fight.

“We can’t beat him head on – let’s run!” Deku shouts.

“I said, we’re fighting!” Katsuki yells back. He raises his gauntlets and prepares to let off an attack against All Might when he gets into range. STUN GRENADE!

It does nothing to stun All Might, but he hadn’t expected a small explosion like that to hurt the number one hero. All Might covers his eyes from the brightness for a second, and Katsuki uses the time to leap forward, into his space.

“All Might!” Katsuki yells. “From the start –”

All Might recovers from Katsuki’s attack, and reaches up to grab Katsuki’s face just as he comes into range. Katsuki doesn’t flinch at all, bringing his gauntlet up for a zero distance attack.

“– I was expecting this,” Katsuki snarls, or at least tries to say. The words are muffled by All Might’s hand, and shit his hand is huge. He chomps down on All Might’s palm as he lets off a dozen explosions, all of them as large and as powerful as he can make in such a short time period.

All Might knocks his gauntlet to the side and then throws him, landing Katsuki hard on his back. The breath is knocked out of him, and he spends precious seconds just trying to fucking breathe. The brace around his neck had protected his spine, but he’s suddenly really regretting the inbuilt binder that’s in his hero costume because he’s certain that it’s not exactly making things easier on his ribs.

Katsuki snarls to himself and jumps up, using explosions to propel himself forward. He’s pinned Deku’s location into the forefront of his mind, so he aims towards that and meets him in mid-air. Deku obviously isn’t expecting him, but Katsuki grabs his collar and spins him around to launch him back at All Might with a powerful explosion behind the motion, lending speed and strength to his throw, and Deku fucking shrieks like a little girl.

“Punch, you idiot!” Katsuki roars as he flies through the air for a follow up.

Miraculously, Deku does get off a punch, but Katsuki isn’t exactly surprised to see that it doesn’t affect All Might at all. All Might punches back and sends Deku flying through the air, doing wildly spinning summersaults. Katsuki lets off a warning explosion towards All Might and then swears and leaps to grab Deku again, nearly getting a foot in his face for his trouble.

Deku’s face lands in the side of his neck, and they mesh for a second.

There’s no chance we can beat All Might!

“There won’t be if you don’t do anything!” Katsuki yells at him. They bounce off the side of a building and Katsuki controls their descent to the ground with an explosion so they don’t splat as flat as a pancake.

Deku steps back as Katsuki steps forward, looking for where All Might had gone off to. “Kacchan, listen to me –”

“Only if you’ve got something to say!”

“I do, and it’s to say that we should run –“

“That doesn’t count!”
“Hohoho, never take your eyes off your opponent!”

The cry comes from above them. Katsuki looks up just in time to see All Might descend from the sky like an avenging angel, a guard rail held in his hands.

“A present for the boy who would run!” All Might shouts, pinning Deku to the ground. Katsuki snarls with the shock of the impact on his back, and tries to turn so he’s ready for what All Might’ll pull next, but then the pro hero nails him in the gut with the most powerful punch Katsuki has ever felt.

There are punches, and then there are punches. When a normal punch lands, Katsuki can spit a swear back at their face and stand up again, easy as anything. When a normal punch lands, Katsuki can roll with it and shrug it off and be ready for the next opportunity he has to fight back, to launch an explosion right in someone’s dumb, stupid face.

This is not a normal punch. Katsuki’s immediate reaction to being punched by All Might is to puke his guts up, even as he’s flying through the air. He hits the ground hard, and rolls more times than he can count before he comes to a stop. He wheezes air in through his mouth and spits to get most of the leftover vomit out before rolling over onto his back. *Fuck*. All Might is seriously strong.

“Young Bakugou… what did I tell you at the beginning of this exam?” All Might asks as he gets closer, striding confidently. “You’ll have to work together if you want a chance of defeating me. I know that the both of you are capable of it, if you look beyond yourselves –”

“Shut it,” Katsuki growls as he pushes himself to his feet. No shit they’ll have to work together to defeat All Might. “Shouldn’t you be giving this speech to Deku?”

“You are the driving force in your relationship… If you decide on something, I have little doubt that the both of you will be able to carry it through.”

Katsuki lifts a lip to snarl at him, but sees a blur of movement just behind All Might. “Well then he needs to get with the program!”

“*Detroit Smash!*”

Deku lands a clean hit on All Might that distracts him, and then darts around to grab Katsuki around the middle and carry him away from All Might as fast as he can go. They dart around a corner and out of the pro’s sight quickly.

“Lemme go,” Katsuki snarls, struggling in Deku’s grip. Deku ignores him.

“Whether we run, or fight, I can’t think of a single plan,” he admits. “So… Kacchan, whatever you’re thinking, I think that’s what we’ll have to go with.”

Deku stops running and Katsuki jerks himself out of his hold. The movement jars his chest and suddenly he feels like he can’t breathe. “What, so you’re finally going to listen to me?” he wheezes.

“I *always* listen to you,” Deku protests.

“Oh yeah, except for what, ten minutes ago,” Katsuki says, sounding breathier than he’d like.

“You weren’t paying any attention to me!”

“Yeah, because your idea was shit. There’s no way that we can run away with All Might being as
fast as he is."

“There’s no way that we can fight All Might, he’s way too powerful!”

Katsuki stares at him. He can’t take deep breaths, so he takes slow shallow ones that make him feel like he’s drowning. “Yeah, I know. But I’m not going to lie down and fail because I didn’t try.”

Deku goggles at him. “Then… what?” He bites his tongue and Katsuki watches his throat bob as he swallows. Deku’s head is going a mile a minute, and it’s starting to give him a headache. He puts a hand to his side and winces. Yeah, that rib is definitely fractured. Or worse.

“There’s got to be a way to win –”

“Are you alright?” Deku asks, and Katsuki snarls wordlessly at him. “Kacchan, I’m serious!”

“I’m fucking fine!”

“Then why are you breathing like that?!”

“I think my rib’s fucked,” Katsuki says.

Deku makes a stressed noise. “What? You can’t fight like that –”

“I’ll fight however I damn well please!”


“It’s none of your business,” Katsuki tries to snarl, but it comes out as more of a whistle.

Deku puts his hands on his hips. “Either – either take it off or I’m telling All Might we have to stop!”

“What!?”

“You heard me,” Deku says, hands coming up half defensively half looking like he wants to grab Katsuki before he falls over. “You really can’t fight like that Kacchan. So, pick an option.”

Katsuki growls at him, but Deku just stares back, unforgiving. Katsuki grinds his teeth together, but deep down, he knows Deku is right, and there’s no way he’s forfeiting this match or letting Deku fight alone. He slowly turns around.

“There’s a clip down the back of my shirt,” he says reluctantly. “Undo it.”

He hears Deku take a step forward and his hand brushes Katsuki’s back lightly. Deku pauses and then there’s the quiet rustle of fabric and Deku’s hands are back, but he’s not wearing his gloves anymore. Katsuki tucks his head against his chest as Deku pulls the back of his shirt out and reaches in to unclip that part of his costume. As soon as he does, Katsuki can breathe again, and he starts panting, sucking in air. This costume is extremely well designed to function both as a binder and as not, but this is the first time Katsuki has used this particular function.

“How does that work?” Deku mutters as more of a question to himself, but Katsuki answers it anyway to stave off the awkward silence and to try and ignore the feeling of Deku’s hands on him.

“The fabric’s made of a special material that can constrict or loosen depending on whether or not that switch is on,” he grits out. “So it’s adaptable and shit.”
“Huh, that’s cool,” Deku mumbles. “Is that okay?” he asks, like a fucking moron, but Katsuki doesn’t answer him, instead rounding on him.

“Look, I’m fine now. Got it?”

Deku looks him up and down for a long few seconds.

“You’re not peachy fine either,” Katsuki warns him. “I can feel your injuries too.” He’s fairly sure his ankle is twisted and his back is going to be black and blue soon.

“Fine,” Deku says. “But what are we going to do about All Might?”

“He has to have a weakness. We just need to get out there and fight until we see it.”

Deku teeters on the verge of saying something, but Katsuki doesn’t have time to wait for him to make up his mind. They’ve already wasted enough time here.

“Let’s go,” he says shortly.

Deku shakes his head wildly. “Kacchan!” he says, desperately. “Please! Just… let’s work together. Really work together, for once in our lives. What’s the one thing that All Might doesn’t have? Us. Together.” He takes a step closer and looks into Katsuki’s eyes searchingly. “You know what I mean.”

He offers out his hand. Katsuki stares at it. Katsuki is still wearing gloves, but he knows what Deku is trying to say.

“You better listen to me if we’re gonna do this,” Katsuki growls as he grabs Deku’s hand. Deku slides his hand up to touch Katsuki’s bare arm. The skin contact makes him shiver.

Deku beams up at him, all bright teeth and shining eyes and Katsuki can’t help but feel his heart skitter at the sight of it. That just makes Deku smile wider, because they’re touching and he can feel it too.

*I’ve got an idea,* Katsuki tells him, and can’t help but start to grin too.

Izuku leans low against the side of the building, eyes sharp as he watches for movement. He doesn’t have Kacchan’s advantage of being able to know where Izuku is at all times, so he’s going to have to rely on his eyes and the plan that they’d hastily hatched between them.

They’d moved as close to the exit as they’d dared, but sure enough All Might is walking up the main road, the destruction that he’d caused earlier meaning that there’s nowhere to hide from him to try and escape. They’re going to have to face him in order to pass this exam.

He counts under his breath, waiting for the agreed time before acting.

295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300!

Kacchan blasts out of hiding from the other side of All Might, but Izuku doesn’t watch what they’re doing, already pumping his legs and speeding towards where he needs to be in half a second. He makes sure to concentrate on Kacchan, boosting his quirk as much as he can with his original quirk, as Kacchan blasts All Might with a large explosion, and Izuku darts through the
smoke to come up behind his hero.

Kacchan’s gauntlet is heavy on his arm, but with Kacchan’s instructions still running through his head from where he’d dumped them all, it’s easy to lift his arm exactly as he needs to and pull the pin on the explosion.

“DEKU!” Kacchan screams. All Might turns to look over his shoulder, but that’s all Izuku sees before the explosion goes off, blasting All Might with a point blank range attack. Kacchan had angled himself so that he was protected by All Might’s body, but Izuku is still blown back by the recoil of the explosion.

“SORRY ALL MIGHT!” he screeches as he flies through the air. Kacchan had shown him the right way to avoid recoil damage from a full power explosion when they’d thought up the plan, and Izuku is extremely grateful for it as the distance he flies shows just how bad handling the gauntlets incorrectly would have been.

It also serves to put him closer to the exit gate, which is the next step of their plan. Kacchan’s explosions echo behind him, and Izuku glances behind from where he’s sprinting to see him quickly catching up. Kacchan’s movements aren’t nearly as fluid as they normally are, and Izuku runs faster. They have to get out of here as fast as they can.

Kacchan comes up alongside him, and Izuku feels his heart in his throat as he sees the gate.

“Nearly there!” he looks back over his shoulder again to see if there’s any sign of All Might, only to see the hero bounding towards them.

Kacchan responds to Izuku’s thought, and lands and turns even as All Might comes up to them, while letting off a full force explosion from his gauntlet. But it’s not point blank range, and a second later All Might leaps out of the cloud of smoke, eyes fierce and focused on them. Kacchan had let himself be blown back by the explosion, so Izuku is the closest to All Might now, and his hero bears down on him with frightening intensity.

Izuku steels himself and lets his quirk flow through him. There’s no way his measly five percent is going to hurt All Might, and he can’t let himself get taken out by a one hundred percent punch, so he’s going to have to make where he lands his hit count. There’s one weak spot that he definitely knows about, so he mentally apologises even as he ducks under All Might’s attack and launches himself into a punch aimed at All Might’s side.

Be vicious.

It lands, and he hears All Might let out a harsh cough. Izuku tries to scramble away, but All Might catches him by his foot and yanks him back so he’s hanging upside down from his grip.

“Ah! Not pulling any punches, young hero,” All Might says. “But I still have you.”

“You don’t have me!” Kacchan yells as he comes flying back in. He’s not wearing his gauntlet anymore, which makes sense because it would be out of fuel for a while. Izuku sees the resolve in his eyes and futilely tries to kick out of All Might’s grip, because he does not want to be caught up in the blast that Kacchan is about to let off.

All Might’s smile falters for a split second before Izuku is enveloped in a red hot inferno. He shrieks out of instinct, but a second later he realises that the explosion hasn’t actually touched him – he’s just feeling the super-heated air rush past him. He hears a smack, and All Might’s grip on his leg loosens for a second, in which Izuku yanks his knife out of his belt and sinks it into his arm. All Might releases his foot out of pure instinct, and Izuku yanks his knife back out as he
jumps as far away as he can.

A second later Kacchan goes flying past him, and smashes against the first wall that in his path. Izuku leaps over to him even as he looks back and sees All Might lowering his leg from where he’d kicked Kacchan away.

All Might brings his arm up to investigate his stab wound, and then tuts loud enough for Izuku to hear it. “That letter opener won’t stop me!”

“Kacchan!” Izuku says, putting a hand against his shoulder. Kacchan groans. “Kacchan, are you okay?”

The question seems to snap him awake. “Yes, of fucking course I am!”

Izuku quickly wipes the blood off his knife and sheathes it so he has both hands free. Kacchan leans against him when he staggers up, so he’s probably less okay then he’s letting on, but then All Might is rushing at them again and he has no time to think. Izuku uses full cowl to dodge the attack, while Kacchan lets out a massive explosion and uses the smoke to hide his actions so he can get away in time. Izuku tries to sprint around All Might and back towards the gate, but All Might comes out of the smoke and far too quickly, and is right next to him again. Izuku stares down the incoming punch, but he can’t see a way to dodge it, so he grimly gets ready to take the hit.

Kacchan shoulders him out of the way and All Might punches him instead. Izuku hears something snap and Kacchan yells out in pain.

“Let me take a hit for you if I can – I’m going to feel it either way, but this way at least one of us will still be functional.”

The remembered words echo through his head as Izuku grits his teeth and All Might puts his foot under Kacchan and kicks him towards Izuku. Izuku catches him, and Kacchan grabs at his shirt to stand up by himself.

“What’s next, heroes?” All Might asks, striding forward confidently. He hardly looks like he’s got a scratch on him. “Is that all you’ve got?”

“Hardly,” Kacchan snarls. He limps forward and raises his hands. “My gauntlets let me use my full power without risks, but there’s no way we could beat you without taking a few risks.”

Izuku stares at Kacchan and urges him to do well, and Kacchan lets out one of the biggest explosions that Izuku has ever seen. He recognises it from the sports festival. Izuku jumps forward and picks Kacchan up – after that blast, he needs time before he can use his quirk again, even with Izuku boosting him.

“Put me down and head for the exit!” Kacchan yells.

“You just broke something!” Izuku yells back. “You’re coming with me!”

He makes it another hundred metres towards the exit before All Might lands in front of them again. The exit is so close that if he can just walk around All Might he could leave, but All Might stands in the way, a towering wall. Kacchan fights to get out of Izuku’s grip, but he leans up against him even standing on his own two feet, so Izuku knows that he’s almost spent.


“Huh?” Izuku asks, but Kacchan has already grabbed the back of his shirt and has punted him a
hundred metres into the air with an explosive throw, far above All Might’s head. Izuku watches for the split second that he’s weightless as Kacchan darts forward to exchange another series of blows with All Might.

Izuku leans forward and calls up One for All to be ready when he lands, but even as he’s coming down to the ground All Might leaps up to pluck him out of the air. Izuku uses his momentum to launch a powered kick at All Might’s head, but the hero grabs his foot before it can connect. They land on the ground, and Kacchan immediately lets loose a large explosion, but that doesn’t faze All Might, who uses his grip on Izuku to throw him at Kacchan. Izuku yells a warning but it’s too late for them to do anything but go sprawling together, tumbling head over heels until they slide to a stop. Kacchan is wheezing again, and Izuku suspects that he’d cushioned his fall, but it means that Izuku can get up almost immediately and face down All Might.

“Go, Deku!” Kacchan screams, and Izuku jumps out of the way of All Might, pushing past him to start running towards the exit again.

There’s a heavy thunk sound, and Izuku looks back to see All Might standing over Kacchan, who is laid out flat on the ground in front of him. Izuku stops for a second, but then Kacchan grabs All Might’s legs and starts up a series of explosions, cursing him out the whole time.

Izuku snarls at himself, but he can’t stop himself from turning and using the space he had gained as space to gain speed as he hurtles back towards them both.

“Out of the way, All Might!” he yells, and lands a solid punch, powered up to the highest extent he can safely manage, right on his cheek. All Might reels back for a second, and Izuku grabs Kacchan again and sprints back towards the exit, not looking back this time, his entire being focused on the gate. Kacchan doesn’t move or say anything at all, and his dead weight weighs him down, but there’s no way Izuku is leaving him behind.

He runs through the gate and above him, hears a cute chime.

“Bakugou and Midoriya have passed the final exam!”

Recovery Girl kisses him on the cheek, and Izuku suddenly feels a lot better, but nowhere near good. All Might really didn’t hold back. It’s a sobering reminder of how far he really has to go before he’ll be anywhere near All Might’s level.

Recovery scolds out All Might while walking over to Kacchan, and Izuku watches as his soulmate’s injuries heal before his eyes. It puts him at ease, which just makes him feel even more tired. The exertion and Recovery Girl’s quirk and the stress of the exam are all combining into a relentless force that pushes him closer and closer to sleep.

“He’ll be unconscious for a while,” Recovery Girl says. “Two of his ribs are broken, and that’s going to take a little longer to heal. Not to mention his overall state of being! Can’t you pull your punches at all?”

“Right,” Izuku mumbles, even though he’s not sure she’s talking to him.

He can’t take his eyes off Kacchan, and even though every part of him is begging to stay exactly where he is, another part of him needs to be closer to Kacchan.

“You two were the last exam, so there will be several other people at the infirmary at school. It might just be quieter to leave you both here to rest.”
“All Might,” Izuku mumbles, Recovery Girl’s words going over his head.

“Yes, my boy?” All Might asks quietly.

“Can you put me over with Kacchan?”

All Might and Recovery Girl exchange a look over his head, but Izuku doesn’t see it. His eyes are still fixed on Kacchan.

Recovery Girl sighs and nods. All Might carefully goes over to Kacchan and moves him slightly, then picks Izuku up and moves him to Kacchan’s bed. It’s squishy, but Izuku doesn’t think either of them are going to move for at least a few hours.

He manages to throw an arm over Kacchan and press his nose against his shoulder before immediately falling asleep.

Above them, the two adults can’t help but smile.

Somewhere not that far away, in a dark bar with no regular patrons besides the villains that call it home, a door creaks open.

Shigaraki looks up to see two new possible recruits for the League of Villains. One is a grumpy looking young man with dark patches of skin scattered around his body, and the other is a younger girl with a twisting soulmark splashed across her face.

“Wow. In person… you’re super gross,” the man says.

“Wow! You’re Mr Stainy’s friend, right?” the girl asks. “Are you my soulmate? Do you know anyone with this soulmark, huh? Oh, you have to let me join up! I wanna join up!”

Slowly, Shigaraki smirks.

Chapter End Notes

Outside POV bakudeku?
Not that night, but the next, after Aizawa has told them who has passed and who has failed the final exam, and explained that everyone is going to summer camp, Izuku jerks awake at three thirty in the morning because Kacchan is having a nightmare. Shakily, he grabs his phone and calls the other boy, hoping that it will wake him up – he isn’t sure exactly what the dream had been about, but it had been suffocating, and full of dread and resignation and fear, and he wants Kacchan to wake up from that as soon as he can.

The phone rings for a good thirty seconds before Kacchan answers.

“What,” he says, and Izuku swallows.

“Are you… alright?” he asks lamely.

“Peachy fine until someone called me in the middle of the night for no reason,” Kacchan says, but Izuku can hear the undertone of something in his voice that tells him that Kacchan isn’t as okay as he says he is.

“I can tell that something’s wrong,” Izuku says quietly. “Just, tell me the truth. Are you okay?”

Kacchan is silent for a long few seconds. Izuku sits down on his bed heavily and twitches his curtains aside so he can see down the moonlight streaked street. There aren’t any clouds in the sky, and even though it really is the middle of the night, it’s hot enough that he’s sweating.

“I’m fine,” Kacchan finally says, but he sounds exhausted.

“I’ll come over,” Izuku blurts.

“Like hell you will,” Kacchan says, a bit of bite finally coming into his tone. “You can’t knock on my door at four am.”

“I’ll tap on your window.”

“I won’t let you in.”

“I’ll keep tapping and being annoying until you open the window to explode me.”

“That sounds more accurate,” Kacchan growls. Izuku fiddles with his window for a few seconds, trying to open it.

“I’m coming over,” Izuku says, and then hangs up before Kacchan can argue with him anymore. He pulls on his shoes, but just as he’s about to jump out the window, his mum opens the door. She’s wearing her fluffy All Might slippers that Izuku had gotten her for her birthday a few years ago, despite the heat.

“Izuku? What’s happening?”

“Um,” Izuku says, because his legs are out the window so he feels like it’s kind of obvious what’s happening.
“Don’t you tell me you’re sneaking out at this time of night,” she says warningly.

“Um,” Izuku says, more stressed. “Kacchan had a nightmare so I’m going over to talk to him.”

“Oh, sweetheart,” she says, coming over to his bed. “Can’t it wait until morning?”

Izuku thinks of the cold horror of Kacchan’s dream and shakes his head.

“Well then let me walk you over,” she says, wringing her hands nervously.

“I don’t want to wake up his parents,” Izuku says. “Look, I’ll just text you as soon as I get there, okay? I’ll say that I’m in his room, and that I didn’t get robbed walking a few hundred metres down the street. It’ll be fine. And then I don’t have to worry about you, coming back here by yourself.”

His mum is still wringing her hands. “Oh, okay dear, but make sure you text me right away. If you don’t text me in five minutes I’ll call the police.”

“Okay!” Izuku says, kind of alarmed by that time frame. Hopefully Kacchan actually lets him in. “I’ll just, go then.”

He takes a moment to summon his full cowl in order to jump down to the street without being hurt, and then lets his quirk die down. It’s only a quick jog to Kacchan’s house, and Izuku vaults their fence and then squints at the side of the house until he’s sure which window is Kacchan’s. He jumps up, green sparks flying around him, and grabs the bottom ledge of the window.

The window jerks open before Izuku can even look through it, and he meets Kacchan’s eyes with a sheepish smile.

“What took you so long? Did you crawl down the street?” Kacchan asks, voice low and scratchy. If it were anyone else, Izuku would say that he’d been crying. He steps back, and Izuku jumps over the sill to stand inside the room. It’s just as messy as he remembers.

“I had to convince my mum to let me out of the house without her coming along,” Izuku tells him. He pulls out his phone.

Me: I’m here!! You can go back to sleep xoxoxo

Mum: Okay good tell me when you’re going to leave!

Izuku resigns himself to the fact that she’s going to stay up until he goes back home, and shoves his phone in his pocket. He looks at Kacchan. The other boy has a hoodie on, even though it’s sweltering, and Izuku tries not to flush as he realises that he just ran down the street in nothing but a shirt and his boxers. At least he remembered his shoes.

“So, uh, how are you feeling?”

“The same way as I did when you rang me,” Kacchan says flatly. “How did you know I was –” He cuts himself off. “I thought you couldn’t feel me at all,” he mumbles.

“I can’t!” Izuku says. Kacchan raises his eyebrows and stares at him.

“Right. So you just rang me in the middle of the night and insisted that you knew I’d not been sleeping well, for no reason at all.” His voice is bitingly sarcastic, which makes him sound a lot more normal.
When he puts it that way, Izuku supposes that it does look kind of suspicious.

“I can’t… when I’m awake,” Izuku mutters. “I can just tell when you’re dreaming sometimes.”

Kacchan goes tense and taut, and he stares down Izuku like he’s a predator, red eyes glinting in the low light that comes through his window from the streetlights. “How long have you been able to do that?” he asks, voice low and dangerous.

“Err… a while,” Izuku admits.

“Great,” Kacchan mutters. He turns away so Izuku can’t see his face, which only makes Izuku feel more awkward. He didn’t even know what was really going on here when he had Kacchan’s expressions to go off.

Izuku rubs the back of his neck. “It’s not a big deal, Kacchan. I only get your thoughts while you’re dreaming, while you have to deal with mine like… all the time.”

“I wasn’t saying it was great for you,” Kacchan says, shaking his head.

They stare at each other for a few silent seconds. Kacchan jams both his hands into the pocket of the hoodie. Izuku realises that this was maybe not the best idea he’s ever had.

“What was it about?” he asks, prodding for the last time. If Kacchan brushes him off again, then he’ll leave it be.

Kacchan turns abruptly and sits on the floor next to his bed. “Some lady just misgendered me on the train home after school. It doesn’t happen a lot since I pass pretty well nowadays, but still fucks me up when it does happen.”

“Ah,” Izuku says. He carefully sits down next to Kacchan. “Are you feeling okay now?”

“Not fuckin’ really,” Kacchan mutters. He scratches the inside of his thigh, and Izuku only takes note of it because when Kacchan sees him looking, he snatches his hand away.

Izuku leans his head against Kacchan’s shoulder. “Some random lady on the train doesn’t know anything. You know who you are.”

Kacchan doesn’t say anything, and Izuku looks up at him, wondering if he’s said something wrong.

“You didn’t say anything wrong, nerd,” Kacchan mutters, but he won’t look at him. Izuku worms an arm between him and his bed so he can pull him closer.

“Back off, Deku,” Kacchan warns, but there’s no bite in his words so Izuku just leans against him. Kacchan is stiff until he lets out a big sigh and pushes his nose into Izuku’s hair.

“Are you gonna go back to sleep?” Izuku asks, his voice slightly muffled because he’s talking into Kacchan’s shoulder.

“Nah,” Kacchan says lowly.

Izuku pulls back a little so he can look at him, and Kacchan’s face is so close –

Kacchan flushes deep enough that Izuku can see it even in the low light of the room. Izuku’s mouth is dry and he’s suddenly very aware that he can feel his heartbeat. Kacchan’s throat bobs as he swallows.
“R-right,” Izuku stammers. “Then we should uh. Play a game or something.”

“Right,” Kacchan says, voice low and eyes fixed on him. Izuku doesn’t know what to make of his gaze, so he drops his eyes and tries not to feel like he’s lost a round of the game that they’re always, always playing.

Kacchan shows him where his game system is, and Izuku picks out one of the only multiplayer games that Kacchan has, a PvP fighting game. Kacchan obviously knows what he’s doing, because he picks a hero to play as right away, and kicks Izuku’s ass four matches in a row while Izuku works out the controls.

Izuku beats him on the fifth match, and then the ninth, and then they start winning one game each, far more evenly matched. When the sun starts to shine through Kacchan’s window, Kacchan sighs, and says, almost too quietly to hear, “Thanks.”

He’s sitting on his bed and Izuku is on the floor, so he leans his head against one of Kacchan’s legs. “It’s no problem.”

Ochako breathes in the cool air of the shopping centre, glad to get out of the sun. It’s stinking hot outside, and she can’t exactly afford enough air conditioning to make her apartment liveable, so she’d probably be at a mall anyway, but being here with half the class is super nice. It’s a bonding activity, but outside of the constraints of school. Here, she doesn’t feel the need to make herself quieter or smaller. No, she can laugh and yell just as much as she wants to, and the only thing the other people at the mall will see is a bunch of teenagers, out having a good time on a Saturday morning.

Everything is so big – she comes from a smaller town in the country, so seeing a place this large that’s just devoted to stores is kind of blowing her mind. It’s the first time she’s been here, but it looks like some of her classmates are more familiar with the surroundings.

“Oh! Aren’t those UA first years?” someone in the crowd yells. “Good going at the sports festival!”

“Huh?” Ochako says. “People still remember that?” Her parents still bring it up every time they talk on the phone, swapping between tears and loud declarations of how good of a hero she’s going to be one day. But she hadn’t thought that other people would as well – especially since the second and third year tournament days often overshadow the first years. To be recognised from one event, two months later is… well, it’s a reminder that she’s picked a career where she’s always going to be in the public eye.

“I gotta find a giant duffel bag,” Jirou says, and Yaoyorozu agrees to go with her. Ochako tries not to look too obviously at the pair as the meander away. They’re so close… she thinks they might even start dating soon. She should probably get used to that idea now, and not think about what else could happen.

The rest of the class announces what they need to find, and everyone agrees on a time and then splits up. Ochako finds herself alone with Deku, which she isn’t sad about or anything, but she had been looking forward to today as a class event.

“Wow, they all went off in a hurry,” Deku laughs. “Do you need anything, Uraraka? I’m going to see if I can find some wrist weights.”
“It’s going to be a camp, so I was going to look for some heavy duty bug spray,” Ochako tells him. “I wonder where they would sell that…”

“We can look together,” Deku says, smiling. He looks over her shoulder, and his face twitches, but a second later he’s back to normal. Ochako frowns at him.

“What’s up?” she asks, going to look over her shoulder at whatever he had seen.

“Nothing!” he says, bouncing forward to sling an arm over her shoulders. Slightly startled by the contact, but not against it per say, Ochako walks alongside him as they wind through the crowds of people.

“Hey, Uraraka? Can you wait here a second? I think I saw someone back there who I used to know,” Deku says, then laughs awkwardly, strangely. It doesn’t sound like his normal laugh. He points at an empty bench seat.


“Cool! Right, I’ll be back in a tick,” Deku says, and disappears back into the crowd.

Ochako sits on the bench, because Deku said that he’d be back in a second, and she doesn’t want to lose him with all these people around. She kicks out her feet and watches the people passing by. There sure is a lot of them.

She can see up to the higher level from here, and she watches those people who are further away, and spots Jirou and Yaoyorozu talking together as they enter a shop.

“It’s because you like her, don’t you?”

Ochako feels herself blush furiously and she cracks her knuckles and stretches her wrists to try and distract herself from her thoughts. Dumb Aoyama… why did he have to distract her in the middle of the final exam like that? Was her crush on Yaoyorozu really that obvious? Just because she’s smart and pretty and has great fashion taste and also can wield a variety of weapons… okay that’s not making anything better. She sighs.

She looks over to where Deku disappeared, and taps her feet on the ground in an uneven pattern. He’s fine. Just because he saw someone he knew… after that weird look he’d gotten before… and then he’d deposited her here…

She stands up suddenly, nearly knocking into a woman who is walking past. “Sorry!” she calls out as she begins to thread her way through the crowd, eyes sharp as she tries to spot Deku’s green hair. That’s his only real defining characteristic – he’s pretty plain otherwise, honestly. She keeps her steps measured as she looks, her heartbeat loud enough to hear over the noise of the crowd. She’s probably just freaking out over nothing. Probably, everything is okay.

She walks past where the class had met up, and stands on her tip toes to try and gain some height to look over the top of the crowd. It doesn’t really work since she’s so short, so she jumps up on a nearby bench to try and get a view instead. She can’t see anything from up there though, so she jumps down and keeps looking, her steps quicker now as she tries to cover more ground.

Her throat is tight and she’s sweating, but not because of the heat. Her heart flutters as she tries to keep her cool, but she can’t see him anywhere, and if there’s something wrong then she’s standing here like an idiot doing nothing while who knows what happens, and Deku is her friend and she wants to be there for him –

Finally, she spots him, a little bit away from the main crowded area, facing a man wearing a
hoodie. Deku is just out of range to be grabbed, and he’s tense, as if wanting to jump forward and jump back at the same time. She can read it in the line of his feet and the way his hands are clenched that he might also be angry which is not an emotion that she normally associates with him. But Gunhead had taught her how to recognise anger – an angry person is likely to be an aggressive person, and Deku looks angry right now.

“Deku?” she calls out as she gets close enough for him to hear her. “Is that… your friend…?”

The almost seething expression on Deku’s face seems to say otherwise.

“Oh, it’s the person you were with before,” the hooded man says. “Interesting, very interesting… well, I’ll just be taking my leave now. You know what will happen if you follow me.” He turns on his heel, but Deku takes a bold step forward and calls out after him.

“Wait! All for One… what’s he after?”

“All for One, huh,” the hooded man says. Ochako swallows, tense. Something in the way that both of them say it tells her that the words are important for some reason, but she doesn’t get it. “I wonder how you know that name, Midoriya Izuku. Yes, this has been a very informative chat indeed…”

The hooded man leaves, and Ochako rushes to Deku’s side. “Who was that? What did you just say? What’s going on?”

“It was Shigaraki,” Deku says lowly.

“What?” Ochako exclaims. He – he shouldn’t be here!

“Can you call the police for me?” Deku asks. “I’m not sure I’d be able to get everything across to them.”

Ochako fumbles out her phone as she pushes him towards a chair. “Hello, police? A villain! He’s, yeah, right now, at Kiyashi Ward —”

As she gives the details of what happened to the police, she can’t keep her eyes off Deku. The anger in his eyes has died, and now he just looks tired. She doesn’t like that much better than the anger.

As she looks into the crowd to try and see where Shigaraki disappeared to, something tells her that whatever just happened, is going to effect the coming days in an immense manner.

Summer vacation doesn’t feel too peaceful anymore. Just hot, like panic under her collar.

The morning of the training camp, Izuku checks his bag one last time. Aizawa had told them to pack light, since the only things they were going to need would be training gear and any extra training equipment they could reasonably carry with them. So really all that’s in the bag is a week’s worth of clothes, since he doesn’t know if there’s going to be any way of washing them at camp. He checks that his knife is in the sheathe at the small of his back and then puts his bag by the door, ready to go.

He lets his mother cook him breakfast, and reassures her again that it’s a secret training camp, no one knows where they’re going or what they’re going to do, Aizawa and a few other heroes will be there, yes he will be perfectly safe, no he’s not going to end up in the hospital again, he
promises. He promises that nothing is going to go wrong.

Kacchan texts him that he’s outside, so Izuku kisses her on the cheek and then runs out to meet him. Kacchan is scowling like normal, but he doesn’t even say anything mean about Izuku not being ready to meet him, so Izuku takes that to mean that he’s glad to see him, despite the fact that he hasn’t talked to him since the Shigaraki incident over the weekend. They get the early train to UA, and then Aizawa ushers them all onto a bus, where Izuku gets to sit next to Iida, which is alright except for how he keeps yelling at everyone to be quiet, but in the process is probably being one of the loudest people.

After a while everyone settles down a bit, and Izuku convinces Iida to play a few rounds of a card game with him. He’d brought the cards because they’re small and waterproof and there’s a lot of games they can play with them, so if they get any downtime then they can take advantage of it.

One hour into the trip, they stop for a toilet break, and Izuku gets out of the bus, stretching his legs and arms and tilting his face so he can catch the sun’s rays. It’s a nice day, even though it’s quite hot, but he goes from relaxed to alert when Aizawa says, “Of course we stopped here for a reason.”

Izuku looks out over the forest below them a blinks a few times. So it’s that type of training camp. He feels Kacchan’s eyes on him and gives him a discreet thumbs up to show him that he’s ready for anything. Kacchan huffs, but nods back.

The doors of the nearby car open, and two women step out, striking a pose. A young boy also gets out of the car.

“Rock on with these sparkling gazes!”

“Strikingly cute and catlike!”

“We’re the wild, wild pussycats!”

Izuku can almost see the special effects around them.

“Wow!” he says, enthused.

“Who are they?” Uraraka asks him.

“They’re a hero quartet!” he says excitedly. “That is, they’re four heroes who are all soulmates with each other! They’re a veteran team who specialise in mountain rescue operations! They’ve been in business for about twelve years now –”

“But we’re eighteen at heart!” yells the blonde woman, who Izuku recognises as Pixie-Bob – quirk: earth flow.

“– mountain over there,” the other pro hero says. Izuku recognises her as Mandalay – quirk: telepath. Izuku has never seen them personally before – they tend to stick to areas where they’re most powerful, which tends towards mountainous regions away from the city. He jumps up and down on the spot a few times, unable to contain his excitement. He’s looked up to the Pussycats for years for being the only hero quartet to operate in Japan. He’s always envied their cooperativeness and their skill, if not their cat theme.

“It’s half past nine now, so I’m thinking twelve… twelve thirty…” Mandalay says mischievously. A few of his classmates try to sprint back to the bus, but Izuku stays still, already prepared for this outcome. A hike to the camp, huh? At least they won’t have to carry their bags.
“Kittens who don’t make it there by twelve thirty won’t get any lunch!” Pixie-Bob yells.

“Sorry kids,” Izuku hears Aizawa say as he’s swept off the side of the cliff and down into the valley below with the rest of his class. “Training’s already begun.”

Izuku is flung out of the main earth flow and free falls for a terrifying few seconds before he hears a loud bang and Kacchan catches him by the back of his shirt. Izuku grabs onto him and Kacchan flies them down to land kind-of-but-not-actually gently on the ground.

While the rest of their classmates dust themselves off and pick themselves up, Izuku peers into the forest and takes his bearing as to what direction their destination is.

“You’ve got three hours to reach the facility on foot, and make it through the Beast’s Forest!” a shout from above informs them.

“The Beast’s Forest?” Izuku asks to the empty air. That doesn’t sound good.

As if the words have summoned it, a giant thing with weird teeth and gangly long limbs emerges from the dark woods.

“Huh,” Izuku says. Kaminari and Sero scream at it, and he’s pretty sure that Mineta pisses himself.

“It’s not a big deal,” Kacchan says from beside him. Izuku looks over to him. His eyes are glinting in the low light, and he’s grinning at the giant beast. He looks at Izuku from the corner of his eye, and Izuku wonders if the rescuing from death via falling and the talking to him now means that Kacchan has forgiven him for getting into another dangerous situation with a villain over the weekend. “C’mon. Let’s get it.”

Izuku snorts, but he grins as well. “Right. Let’s.”

When they all finally stagger out of the trees, bruised and tired and bloody, the sun has almost set and the trees cast long shadows across the clearing, fingers stretching out in pointed accusation.

Izuku pants and resists the urge to just fall flat on his face. He’s never used One for All for such a long period of time before, and he can feel his muscles cramping and the buzzing of phantom energy over his skin. If this is the warm up for the rest of the week… he’s not sure if he should run for the hills or not.

“‘It’ll only take three hours’… yeah right,” Sero moans.

“Sorry, that’s how quick we would have made it,” Mandalay quips. She’s looking just as good as she did earlier in the morning – she obviously hasn’t been on a day long hike through treacherous woods. Izuku tries not to resent her for it.

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“We actually thought it would take you guys longer!” Pixie-Bob says excitedly. “Not bad. Especially you five.” She points at Izuku, Kacchan, Iida, Hagakure and Todoroki. “I guess your past experiences allowed you to act without hesitation?” She grins, sharp and wide and feral. “Oh, three years from now… I’m gonna have fun! You guys will totally be mine!”

She pounces, and Izuku holds her off for a few seconds, before asking a question that’s been on his mind. The young boy who was with the heroes earlier is still at their tails, staring sullenly at the UA students.
“Hey, I’ve been wondering – that boy. Who is he?”

“Oh, he’s my nephew.” Mandalay says. “Kouta, come over and say hello. You’ll be spending a week with these guys after all.”

The kid walks forward in a slouch that kind of reminds Izuku of Kacchan. Izuku steps forward to greet him.

“Hi! I’m Midoriya Izuku, from UA High School’s hero course. Nice to meet ya,” Izuku says, holding out a hand for the boy to shake.

The kid ignores his outstretched hand and goes straight for Izuku’s balls.

A second later he’s laid out flat on the ground, completely taken out by the surprise attack and groaning in pain.

“Midoriya!” Iida yells.

“Wow, Bakugou man, I didn’t know you’d be that sympathetic over someone else getting taken out,” Kirishima says, just loud enough for Izuku to hear.

“Hey!” Mandalay shouts. “Why’d you punch Midoriya in the junk?”

“I can’t abide jerks who wanna be heroes,” Kouta says.

Izuku looks up to see Kacchan with a hand over his face, half leaning on Kaminari, and Kouta walking away.

Well. This week is getting off to an interesting start.

After dinner, Pixie-Bob invites everyone to go and take a bath in the nearby hot springs. Izuku’s muscles scream that yes, that would be a very good idea indeed, but there’s no way he’s going to walk around with his back exposed, no matter how much he likes his classmates. They don’t need to know about his soulmark.

He’s pretty sure that Uraraka and Kacchan are probably thinking the same thing, so he takes a quick shower in the not-hot spring bathrooms to wash off all the grime, and goes looking for one of them. During the trek through the forest, there was hardly any time to shout warnings to each other, let alone talk, so being able to sit down with one of them would be nice.

He’s in luck, because he spots Uraraka talking with Pixie-Bob, so he heads over. He still can’t get over the fact that the Pussycats are going to be the ones helping them train this week… they’ve always been his favourite soulmate heroes, and seeing them in action would be totally awesome.

“…treating you?”

“UA is so cool!” Uraraka says as he gets into earshot. “I’m so happy to have gotten in, and after finishing my first term there I’m even more excited to see what’s going to happen next.”

“Ha! Well, it’s good that you’re excited. Kittens should be full of energy.” Pixie-Bob looks up and spots him, and her eyes narrow. “Oh, another one who isn’t taking a dip? The springs are quite excellent, you know.”
“Err, maybe later,” Izuku mumbles.

Pixie-Bob looks at him knowingly. “That’s what the other boy said as well.”

Feeling a little too put on the spot, Izuku shrugs a shoulder. There’s a sudden series of shouts from the spring area, and Pixie-Bob looks over with concern. Izuku sees Mandalay disappearing into the area, followed by Aizawa, but Pixie-Bob still scratches her head.

“I’d better go and see what that was about,” she says cheerfully. “You two don’t get up to anything too energetic! We’ve got lots of things planned for you tomorrow.”

She winks at them, and runs off.

“As if I could do anything energetic after everything we did today,” Uraraka mumbles. “Also I ate a lot of food at dinner so now I just kinda really want to go to sleep, ha.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean,” Izuku says, squeezing his hand into a fist. “I’m seriously tired out. If this is what the rest of camp is going to be like, then I’m pretty sure Aizawa-sensei has like. Actually planned to murder all of us this week.”

Uraraka raises one eyebrow. “You mean he hasn’t been out to get us since day one of school?”

Izuku thinks that over and decides that she’s probably not too far off the mark.

Mandalay, Pixie-Bob and Aizawa come out of the door leading to the hot springs, with Mandalay carrying Kouta, and Mineta trailing despondently at Aizawa’s heels, with Iida following close behind.

“Huh?” Uraraka says. They look at each other.

“I’ll go see what happened to Kouta,” Izuku says.

“I’ll trail Aizawa,” Uraraka volunteers.

“You’re braver than I am,” Izuku says seriously. Uraraka grins at him. They bump fists and then split up, Izuku hurrying as Mandalay disappears into the main building.

Iida’s voice coming from one of the rooms is more than loud enough to guide him. Izuku gingerly opens that door.

“Is everything okay?” he asks, seeing Kouta laid out on the couch.

“Mineta attempted to spy on the girl’s baths,” Iida says, pushing his glasses up his nose. It looks more ridiculous than normal since he’s only wearing a bath towel around his waist.

“It didn’t end how he’d planned,” Mandalay continues, disapproval clear in her voice. “Kouta must have just passed out from the shock of falling off such a high wall. Thank you for catching him, Iida.”

Iida puffs out his chest. “It was my pleasure as a future hero to catch him,” he says proudly. Izuku grins at his pose, but his smile fades as he looks back down at Kouta. While he’s resting, his face is lax and at peace. It’s very different to the expression that Izuku had seen him wearing earlier. And his punching Izuku, combined with his words – *I can’t abide jerks who wanna be heroes.* It’s not usual for a child to have that type of opinion.

“Kouta seems pretty… opposed to heroes,” Izuku says awkwardly.
“Hm?” Mandalay asks. Iida looks at him sharply.

“Well, it’s just that all my life I’ve been surrounded by people who wanted to be heroes – so I did too. Isn’t it unusual for a kid his age to be like this?”

“It’s fairly obvious, isn’t it?” Manadalay says, resignation in her voice. “He would probably look up to heroes if he’d been raised normally, or at least not by me.”

“Normally?” Iida questions, his eyebrows lowered in concern.

“Mandalay’s sister and her husband were Kouta’s parents,” Pixie-Bob says as she comes through another door, holding a few cups of water. “They were a Hero Duo who died in the line of duty.”

And that hits home, a little closer than he wants it to – Izuku looks down at Kouta so he won’t have to look at either Pixie-Bob or Mandalay. The knife at the small of his back feels heavier.

“They died two years ago, protecting civilians from a villain. An honourable death, but to a boy who had only just started learning about the world, he couldn’t understand that – because his parents were his entire world. To him, it was like they’d left him all alone. But society kept praising them for their actions, and even though some lamented the fact that taking one of the pair out meant that the other died as well, that wasn’t what Kouta heard. He only heard that what they did was noble and great.” She stares down at Kouta unhappily, and Izuku feels his heart turn over.

“I don’t think he likes us very much either, but he doesn’t have any other close relatives, and he needs a stable family to take care of him,” Mandalay says. “Though I worry about what will happen to him if something happens to us…” she mutters, just loud enough for Izuku to hear.

“Mandalay,” Pixie-Bob cuts in. She sighs heavily. “Kouta has a hard time connecting with heroes, and he can’t understand them. But that’s not your problem, kids. Kouta is our kitten, and we’ll take care of him.”

Izuku and Iida nod to her. Mandalay is still staring at Kouta’s peaceful, sleeping expression. Izuku looks down at the boy who has had heroes ruin his life, and can’t think of anything to say.

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Izuku follows Iida out of the main building, thoughts heavy. Kouta is so young, but to be disillusioned so severely…

Iida starts to walk back to their rooms, but Izuku waves him over and Iida stops, looking puzzled.

“What is it, Midoriya? Do you have something else you want to do before bed? We should get as much sleep as possible.”

“Yeah, but we’ve got to find Uraraka,” Izuku tells him. “We split up – I followed you and she followed Aizawa-sensei.”

Iida takes a deep breath in. “Eavesdropping? That is serious anti-social behaviour!”

Izuku resists the urge to laugh. “I didn’t eavesdrop on you, did I?”

Iida frowns. “Well… I suppose not.” He slices one hand through the air speedily and Izuku jumps back in an effort to not get karate chopped into the next day with a concussion. “We should find her and guide her back to the rooms! It is my job as the class president to make sure all my
classmates are safe and secure!”

“Right,” Izuku says. “They went this way.” He points towards where the other group had disappeared, towards the back of the main building.

They circle the building, and Izuku is surprised by how large it is. On the other side is an official looking area, with a paved road that leads away into the woods. It makes sense that there would have to be one – after all how else would everything be transported out here to the middle of the woods?

Izuku pokes his head around the corner, and Iida pokes his head around the corner just above Izuku. They probably look ridiculous.

Aizawa is standing with Mineta, who is looking down at the ground. Izuku can’t hear what they’re saying.

“Oh! You two are here!” Uraraka says from behind them.

Izuku and Iida jump at the sudden sound. Uraraka sounds like she’s trying not to laugh uproariously at them.

“Uraraka! You should not have snuck up on us like that!” Iida shout-whispers.

“Did you hear anything?” Izuku asks.

Uraraka shakes her head. “Nah, and it’s just the two of them, and Aizawa-sensei is really chewing him out, so I figured I wouldn’t intrude. We should head back to the rooms, so you can tell me what else went on. I don’t think Aizawa-sensei would like it overly much if he found us here.”

Izuku looks around the corner again. Aizawa does look pissed, and that’s something he really doesn’t want to deal with.

“Let’s go,” Izuku says, and the three of them speed off, back towards the common area.

Iida fills Uraraka in on the way, and by the time they get to the chairs and tables, she’s tapping her finger on her chin. “Well, that’s super gross. We should put in another complaint about Mineta, honestly.”

“You’ve out in complaints before?” Izuku asks awkwardly. He knows that Mineta is bad, but maybe he’d been underestimating things a bit.

Uraraka’s mouth twists. “Yeah, we have.” She doesn’t say anything else, and Izuku doesn’t ask, not wanting to pry into things if she doesn’t want to talk about them.

“When Aizawa-sensei is done talking to him, I will talk to him,” Iida announces. “It is my responsibility to make sure that all my classmates are looked after and feel safe in this class.”

Uraraka hums, uncommitted.

“Let’s just go back inside,” Izuku says. “Some of the others will probably be back by now.”

Iida and Uraraka walk in front of him, so neither notice when Izuku pauses for a second, his eyes drawn to the shadows where the tree line starts. It’s probably his imagination, but Izuku thinks that Kacchan’s eyes glint ruby red in the darkness. Izuku raises his hand, but Kacchan doesn’t return the motion, looking away instead. Izuku sighs, and follows his friends.
Kirishima and Kaminari are messing around in the boy’s room, and Izuku sets up his sleeping area while listening to them rib at each other. Most of the other boys come back in, but there’s still no sign of Mineta or Aizawa, or even Kacchan.

A sharp knock at the door of their room makes most of the boys quiet, and the room falls completely silent when Aizawa opens the door. Izuku can’t help but think that he’s got them trained up quite well.

“I want you all out in the common area in five minutes,” Aizawa says gruffly. “I need to speak with you all.”

He closes the door, and Izuku looks to Todoroki, who shrugs one shoulder and stands up. Izuku follows him and everyone else out the door.

In the common area, Pixie-Bob is standing next to Aizawa with her arms crossed, and they’re discussing something in low voices. The girls are already out here, so Izuku goes to stand beside Uraraka, and Todoroki comes to stand beside him.

Aizawa clears his throat, and it’s enough to silence the whispered speculation. “I brought you all out here to remind you something that you should all keep in mind, going forward.” He sweeps his eyes over the class. “There are some qualities that I expect all of you to model, as they are integral to the hero community’s reputation, and embody what it means to be a hero. One of those qualities is respect.” Izuku tries not to quiver under Aizawa’s harsh glare, and is glad that he’s on the receiving end of it as a group. He’s not sure he could have dealt with it if he were alone.

“While you attend UA, you are also ambassadors for the school. We expect that you handle yourself with dignity and deference, as we trust in your actions to represent UA properly.” He takes a breath. “To that end, one of your classmates has soundly shown to me that he does not have the qualities that UA desires, and I have judged him to have no potential as a hero because of his actions. Mineta is the first of this class that I have expelled, but be warned that he is unlikely to be the last. I expect all of you to be mindful of your actions, always. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sensei!”

Aizawa huffs. “Then go back to your rooms and go to sleep. It’s an early start tomorrow, and you don’t want me to have to drag you out of bed.”

After that speech, Izuku is certain that everyone is going to go to sleep as fast as they can. Uraraka links her arm into his as they walk back.

“Wow,” she mutters. “I guess Aizawa-sensei really does have the power to expel people, huh.”

“Yeah,” Izuku says. “We should be on our toes.”

“I’m going to bed,” Uraraka tells him. “Immediately. Right now.”

“An excellent decision,” Iida says from where he’s walking on her other side. But it’s less exuberant than normal, and Iida looks troubled.

Uraraka elbows him. “Hey. There’s nothing you could have done about that. Mineta dug his own grave.”

“Indeed,” Iida says, but Izuku isn’t sure if his heart is in it.

The remainder of class 1-A huddle together as they walk back inside. Izuku can’t help but think that this is just the first of the challenges that will strip away his classmates.
Chapter End Notes

There's a lot of upcoming stuff that I'm really hyped about, but to do it full justice, I really want to have the next chunk of this fic written before posting any of it. So I'll see you in December!!

No fic recs this week - I haven't been reading much fic tbh. Maybe I can turn the tables and ask you guys for recs instead...?

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