

## Bluebird

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## Bluebird

by [EtherealBeing](#)

### Summary

Dialing a wrong number was no unusual occurrence. Everyone did it once in a while, and Katsuki was well aware of that fact.

However, possessing this knowledge made it no less aggravating for him to discover — a full *two minutes* into his rant about his day — that he'd been venting his frustrations to a complete stranger. As if that wasn't enough, said stranger was also inexplicably determined to hear his story to its end.

### Notes

New fandom, who dis?

*cough cough*

I'm just waiting for the day that posting in a new fandom won't be terrifying tbh.

Also, shoutout to Bunny for reading over this for me. Ur the best

**WARNING:** This first chapter discusses street harassment. It's anecdotal and doesn't go into any detail, but I figured I should let you all know.

# Into The Twilight Zone

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It's half past midnight when Katsuki finally gets home, his feet moving mechanically up concrete stairs. The walkway leading up to his apartment is barren and inconspicuous, offering no places to hide. Still, Katsuki glances back at his surroundings, as he shoves the door open. He knows there's nobody there, but after the night he's had, one couldn't blame him for wanting to be sure.

The door slams shut behind him. The entire structure vibrates.

With a groan, he collapses onto his couch. His feet make themselves at home on the coffee table at the expense of something else he must've knocked over. He hears it fall, but nothing about the sound indicated that it had broken, so he ignores it, in favor of digging his phone out of his pocket.

It was a new phone, one he'd been more or less forced to buy, after the screen of his old one had been shattered to the point of total unreadability. *Note to self: stop throwing your phone when you're pissed off. Throw something else. Throw someone else's phone.*

Katsuki squints at the list of numbers he'd managed to salvage from the device and quickly dials the one scrawled next to the name *Kirishima*. He half expects him not to answer, that he'd have to try and fit his entire rant into a voicemail without getting cut off. It's vaguely relieving when he hears the sound of the other picking up instead.

"Hel-"

"Oh my fucking god, you're not going to believe the fucking *shit* I went through tonight," Katsuki begins to rattle off immediately. Whatever arbitrary pleasantries the other had intended to express could fucking wait. "So I'm closing up tonight, right? It's like, eleven o'clock or some shit, and yeah, the store's supposed to close at fucking nine-thirty, but whatever. Just keep fuckin' browsing the raincoats, asshole, because y'know, it's not like I'm a college student with a mountain of shit due tomorrow. It's not like I exist as a human being independent from this shitty store. Yeah, when we shut the lights off, we power down all the employees too, and they all just go limp at the registers until you decide it's time to grace them with your divine fuckin' presence, dickweed.

"But hey, what's fuckin' new, right?" Katsuki rakes his fingers through his hair with an exasperated sigh. At the sound of a sharp inhalation on the other end of the line, he harshly interjects once again, stopping Kirishima before he can even start. "But that's not even what I'm calling about, holy fuck. So, listen, I'm about to leave. Like I'm tired as shit and I'm finally about to get my ass out of there, but just as I lock the doors, some chick comes up to me and grabs my hand.

"So obviously I'm like, *what the fuck?* I didn't say it too loud, though, which as it turns out was a good thing, 'cause soon as I look down at this chick's face, it's like, *holy shit she looks fucking terrified.*" He pauses briefly to take a breath, and the other end of the line is notably silent. "So like, at the time that shit just made me more confused, because it's like, in what context does any of this make any goddamn sense? What fucking situation is even happening to me, right now? Like, I don't fucking know, but I figure it's probably some serious shit, so I just kinda look at her and try to make some face that won't freak her out more, and I guess it kinda worked, maybe, because she doesn't run and starts whispering all urgently at me."

He takes another deep breath and continues. “So then, she looks me in the eye and basically tells me something like, *some guys have been following me for a while, they won’t leave me alone and I’m really scared, so will you please pretend that you know me?* I’m fucking floored at this point, but I try to subtly glance around and sure enough, there are like three dudes like twenty feet down the sidewalk and they’re watching us *intensely*. Shit hits me like a ton of bricks, and it’s fucking weird because up until she told me what was going on I probably wouldn’t have even considered that as a *possibility*.”

There’s a pause at the other end of the line. Katsuki pinches the bridge of his nose, attempting to quell an oncoming headache. Then, “Wow.”

“Yeah,” he laughs, with absolutely no humor in his tone, “fucking *wow*. I mean, you ever seen this kind of shit? Is this like a common fucking occurrence or something?”

“Well...” The other trails off, and it’s at that moment that Katsuki realizes, *wait, that doesn’t sound like—* “I work at a bookstore, and we usually close at seven. I guess that sort of thing would probably be more likely to happen later at night.”

*Kirishima doesn’t work at a fucking bookstore.*

When he thinks about it, Katsuki’s not even completely certain Kirishima can *read*.

“Who the fuck is this?” He demands, suddenly very annoyed because *oh my god, I’m going to have to repeat all this shit again to Kirishima*.

“Uhm,” he hears the boy hesitating. “I-well, my name is, uh, Izuku.”

“What the fuck.” Katsuki deadpans. “Where the fuck is hair-for-brains.”

“I’m not really... sure who you’re referring to?” And Katsuki can tell the boy on the other end of the line is trying to be polite, to be respectful, to exercise the same amount of courtesy one would usually default to when speaking to strangers.

Katsuki didn’t care very much about that sort of thing under normal circumstances, much less after having spilled his soul, more or less, to the stranger in question. He knew nothing about this *Izuku* person, other than that he worked at a bookstore, *like a fucking nerd*. In contrast, Izuku already knew quite a bit about Katsuki. Despite it being through no fault of his own, Katsuki was hopelessly pissed off by this fact.

“I... I think you must’ve dialed the wrong number?” The other offered timidly.

“Yeah, no fucking shit,” Katsuki rolled his eyes. “Bye—”

“W-wait!”

Silence.

“What?” Katsuki bit out after a moment.

“Well, uhm...” He faltered, and honestly, Katsuki was about two seconds away from just hanging up on the loser, until he said something even more incredulous. “What happened? Y’know, with the girl...?”

Katsuki glared into space, shocked into silence for a solid few seconds.

“Why the fuck should I tell you?” He finally managed to say.

“Because, uhm...” He tried. He failed. “Because, I don’t know, humor me?”

“No.” Katsuki replied immediately. “*Explain.*”

“Well, it’s just... I mean, that was a lot, y’know, and like, I listened to all of it, but...”

“Yeah.” Katsuki interrupted. “You listened to all of it, instead of stopping me and telling me I have the wrong number. Like a normal fucking person would.”

“There wasn’t a good opportunity!” He sputtered, and Katsuki could practically see this kid flailing. “You just—you started and you just kept going and I wasn’t sure what to say! So, I just, I mean. I’m sorry? I just want to know what happened.”

“Why.”

“Because now I’m invested in the story!”

“Why.”

“Because—”

“Why.”

“Are—” He cut himself off. On the second try, the other said, “Are you just saying ‘why’ now?”

“*Why.*”

“You *are*. What are you even—”

“*Why.*”

“*Why do you keep asking me why?!*” He all but shouted, and Katsuki had to stifle an impulse to laugh at just how flustered the guy was getting.

He steeled himself, and asked, “Why do you care?”

“I-I don’t know, I just *do*,” he stated reverently. “Can... can you just tell me? Please?”

Katsuki’s eyebrow twitched upward. “You’re a fucking weirdo, you know that?”

“I’ve been privy to similar sentiments.”

“The fuck?”

“People have told me—”

“I fucking know what you said, ass bagger,” he interjected. “I’m just wondering why you had to say it like such a goddamn *tool*.”

There was a beat of silence.

“I work in a bookstore,” the other, *Izuku*, answered simply.

“...Yeah, okay. That’s fair, I guess,” Katsuki obliged. A deep sigh left his body. The springs in the couch creaked beneath him as he maneuvered himself to lie down. *Might as well get comfortable.*

“So you *really* want to know?”

“Yes, please.”

“Goddamnit, fine...” he conceded, jerking the phone away from his head when Izuku promptly began to thank him profusely. Once the other seemed to have exhausted himself by *being so goddamn grateful, Jesus Christ*, Katsuki spoke again. “So where’d I leave off?”

“The girl who was being followed asked you to act like you knew her. Did you do it?” Izuku spoke with a sort of childish enthusiasm that provided Katsuki with the vague image of some faceless version of him bouncing on the edge of his seat, wherever he may be.

“What the fuck? Of course I did. What, did you think I’d tell her to fuck off?” He scowled up at the ceiling.

“Well, I mean, I don’t know you, so I wasn’t–”

“Just ‘cause I swear and yell a lot doesn’t mean I’m a *complete* asshole, y’know.”

“That’s what I was hoping,” he replied, then corrected himself, “assuming, I mean. I know that appearances can be deceiving. And, well, uhm–words, and... actions. Uhm...”

“Is shutting the fuck up a thing you’re capable of?”

“I– Yes.”

“Good,” Katsuki grunted, “*do*.”

“Okay, then.”

Katsuki paused. When it seemed like Izuku was going to keep his word, he delved back into the story.

“Anyway, yeah. I saw the assholes following her and figured this shit was no fucking joke, so I just kind of nodded and started walking with her. We were far enough away from them that they couldn’t hear what we were saying so long as we were sorta quiet about it. Basically, she said they’d been following her for like, a solid forty-five fucking minutes, shouting gross bullshit at her.”

Every once in a while, Izuku would hum along with whatever Katsuki was saying. It didn’t actually bother him, but at the same time, it didn’t strictly conform to his personal definition of *shutting the fuck up*, either.

Still, he ignored it.

“She said she dealt with this kind of shit on a daily basis–the shouting, that is, and was sort of desensitized to it, but the *following* part really freaked her out. For me it was kind of like, the fuck? Like, I’m someone who will yell basically anything at fucking anyone, and even I can’t understand why dudes would do that. It’s like, what the fuck do they think they’re gonna accomplish? They think screaming ‘hey baby, suck my dick’ is gonna make ‘em fall to their knees for ‘em? Fuckin’ Christ,” Katsuki rolled onto his side, balancing the phone on his cheek. “I mean, I’ve screamed my share of ‘suck my dick’ variations at people, but those were all non-sexual circumstances.”

Izuku giggled through the receiver, and it was a sound Katsuki immediately associated with the word *cute*, though he’d vehemently deny it if asked.

“But yeah, I walked with that chick for like twenty minutes, or some shit. Like at that point we were around two miles from my car, and I’m realizing I’m gonna have to walk all the fucking way back at some point, which is gonna be annoying as fuck, but I’m trying not to let it show on my face and junk. We were walking by a gas station at that point that was pretty fuckin’ deserted, and that’s when the dudes decided to fucking escalate shit.”

“What happened?” Izuku asked, blatantly enthralled.

“The fuck do you think I was about to tell you, ass farmer?”

“*What* farmer—”

“One of the guys actually came up to me. His buddies are chillin’ around fifteen feet back like a bunch of pussies. The dude’s not that big, but he’s a little taller than me and the gist of what he says is something like ‘we know you don’t know her, so why don’t you back off you fucking white knight.’” Izuku gasped, and Katsuki smirked. “So now I’m just fuckin’ pissed off. I mean, goddamn, ‘white knight’? I don’t even know what that shit’s supposed to *mean*. And listen, I’ve had a *long ass day*, so I basically didn’t even think and just straight up punched him in the throat, yelled something about fuckin’ killing him because, y’know, that’s just the kind of shit I say and my parents always said I should be myself and crap.”

“Oh my god,” Izuku’s laughing, something high-pitched and unrestrained. For a moment, Katsuki thinks he sees the walls of his apartment quaking in response, but he soon realizes that it was he who had been shaken. The sound of Izuku’s giggling traveling down his spine and back up, bringing shivers in its wake.

Vaguely, Katsuki wonders at what point he entered the twilight zone, and how he might go about getting out.

“Yeah, so…” He trails off briefly, his train of thought abruptly derailed. To his credit, he manages to get his bearings with remarkable speed. “I saw the other two running toward us, and I’m like, shit, because I don’t know if they’re coming to see if their friend’s okay or trying to fucking attack me, and there’s no way I could know that until it’d be too fucking late to avoid it, and the girl’s still with me. So I grabbed her by the wrist and started hauling ass back the way we came, and I’m just fucking glad she’s wearing sensible goddamn shoes, because there’s no fucking way this shit would fly if I had to run like hell *and* piggyback her all the way back.

“About three quarters of the way through, I check over my shoulder, and it looks like they’re not following us, so I slow down a bit and ask her if she wants me to drive her to like, the police station or something. She says no, and I kinda give her this very *what the fuck* look, and she tells me it’s not worth it, which really only intensifies the *what the fuck* look because, goddamn, *how* often does this shit happen to her, again?” Katsuki scoffs. “But I figured, whatever, y’know. I just offered to drive her home or something, and she agreed. So that’s it, basically. No more surprises. I just drove her home, she thanked me a bunch, I came back to my apartment, and now I’m talking to *your* sorry ass.”

Izuku hums, and a weird part of Katsuki thinks it almost sounds *fond*. Naturally, he reacts with indignance.

“If you’ve got some shit to say, fuckin’ say it, asshole.”

“What? Oh—” Katsuki snorts. “I was just thinking you seem really sweet.”

Everything falls into silence. If Izuku says anything after that sentence, Katsuki doesn’t hear it. He

doesn't hear anything at all over the deafening sound of blood rushing through his veins. There's a pulse he doesn't recognize as his own, disjointed and erratic. He feels his heart skipping beats and tripping over itself. He thinks he's going to be *sick*.

"The fuck are you talking about?" He mutters quietly. His vision is blurring, and he shuts his eyes instinctively.

"You're a really nice person," Izuku tells him. *What the fuck. What the fuck.* "You swear... *a lot*, and you act very hostile, but actions speak louder than words. When it comes down to it, you really do care about people."

"You don't fucking know me," Katsuki grits his teeth. Distantly, he wonders what it is about this situation that throws him off so much.

"That's true, but..." the other pauses. It feels like a fucking eternity. "I kinda feel like I do, sort of? I think people reveal their true selves in situations like that, and the fact you told me about it means you kind of revealed yourself to me, by... proxy, I guess. So to speak."

Katsuki's suddenly very glad he didn't tell Kirishima about this. Or any of his friends, really.

"Just because I did what any normal ass person would do doesn't mean I'm fucking *sweet*. What the shit?"

"I think plenty of people who would be considered normal wouldn't go that far. Most people wouldn't even want to get involved. I mean, haven't you seen those social experiments where they get someone to act like they're beating someone up in the middle of a crowded street? It's pretty rare for someone to actually step in."

"That's a crowded street. This was me, alone in front of a deserted fuckin' store. Not a lot of room to be a fucking bystander, don't 'ya think?"

"Okay, granted..." Izuku replies, hesitating only briefly before continuing. "Still, you seem like a sweet person. You haven't done anything that would indicate otherwise."

"Get fucked, weirdo," and Katsuki's just about to hang up, about to put an end to this ridiculous situation once and for all, but then—

"I want to talk to you more. Can I talk to you more?"

Katsuki is, quite frankly, flabbergasted. Not knowing what to say, he defaults to, "Why."

"Wh— *please* tell me you're not doing this again."

"Why."

"No, no— cut that out. Don't even—"

"Why."

"I swear to *god*—"

"*Why.*"

"*Shut up!*" He shouted, and *oh my god, did his voice just crack?*

"Holy shit, are you thirteen?" Katsuki asks, gasping through uncontrolled laughter. On the other



end of the line, Izuku sputters something incoherent.

“No, I’ll have you know I’m twenty years old, I’m in college, and—”

“You should’ve just said fucking *yes*, oh my god. At least if you were thirteen you’d have a fucking excuse, Izu-whatever.”

“*Izuku.*”

“Whatever,” Katsuki sits up then, stretching his arms over his head as glances at the clock. It’s almost two in the morning.

“I’m texting it to you so you’ll remember.”

“How do you know I’m not using a landline?”

“Uhm, what are *you*, sixty?”

“I’d be pretty fuckin’ hot for sixty-year-old.” Katsuki snorts, and to his surprise, Izuku laughs, too.

After their laughter disperses, Izuku speaks up once again.

“Uhm, so... what’s your name, then?” He asks quietly. Timidly. For a moment, Katsuki debates whether or not he should even tell him. *I’ve told him so fucking much already...*

*...I guess one more thing couldn’t really hurt.*

“Katsuki.” He states, and Izuku hums in acknowledgement.

“So... does that mean I can talk to you again... Katsuki?”

Katsuki likes the way his name sounds on Izuku’s tongue for reasons he refuses to acknowledge, much less understand.

“Yeah. Fuck, whatever,” he grumbles, injecting annoyance into his tone. Somehow, he knew it wouldn’t come out naturally. “It’s cheaper than therapy, I guess.”

Izuku laughs as they say their goodbyes, and no sooner after hanging up did Katsuki receive a text from him, containing his name along with an obscene amount of emojis.

*Looks kinda like Deku*, he thinks idly, his lip quirking upward at the thought.

It was then that Katsuki stood up, rounding the coffee table, with the full intention of simply locking himself in his bedroom and promptly collapsing onto his bed. He takes no more than three steps before something unusual catches his eye.

A puddle of water.

To be precise, a puddle of water that appeared to originate from a now-empty cup lying on the floor, *so that’s what I knocked over earlier*, which was presently soaking through a pile of papers that, upon closer inspection, turned out to be part of the assignment he had due tomorrow.

“**Fuck!**” He shouts, though he makes no move to clean it up. The damage had already been done.

He’d been planning to blame his inability to complete his homework on Izu— *Deku* . Maybe make the nerd feel all guilty and flustered over it, milk the situation for all it was worth, and eventually,

*probably*, reveal that he actually didn't give a shit about it at all.

*I guess it's the same either way.*

## Chapter End Notes

*He just said you were sweet, Kacchan. Quit being such a fucking drama queen.*

This story was originally intended to be a one shot, but then it got kind of out of control, and here we are.

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed it! I'm still fairly new to this fandom, but goddamn, this ship's got me INSPIRED. I have so much shit written that I just haven't posted yet.

Mainly because I know this ship is kind of ""controversial"" and for a while I was really scared of ""disappointing"" people who knew me through Mikayuu or something. Still kind of am, but I'm hoping that's just my anxiety talking.

Anyway, this fic will be fairly lighthearted. There'll be a bit of angst here and there, but for the most part it'll just be fun times featuring KatsuDeku banter and lots of sexual tension. I'm expecting this to be roughly five chapters, more or less. Again, this was originally meant to be a one shot.

I have another fic that I'll be posting after this. It's canon-verse, and it'll be a bit less humorous and more serious, but I'm hoping you'll all like it. It's... kind of my magnum opus. I've been working really hard to get it right.

Anyway, thank you so much for reading!! I really appreciate it. Leave a comment if you feel so inclined, because that's what motivates me to continue lol. Next chapter will be up soon.

# How to Kick Ass over the Phone

## Chapter Summary

Izuku called him once again three days later, and Katsuki knew it was him this time, because the name 'Deku' lit up his screen, right next to an image of an appendix.

## Chapter Notes

I'M BACK. Thank you guys so much for all the awesome comments last chapter! Entering a new fandom is intimidating, but you guys've made me feel really welcome, and I deeply appreciate that! Anyway, hope you enjoy this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Somewhere along the line, a pattern began to emerge. Something difficult to pin down, an odd rhythm that was unique to the two of them. Katsuki's still not sure how it happened, why he'd *let* it happen, in first place. The morning after their conversation, he'd already deeply regretted agreeing to humor Izuku.

The problem was not Izuku in particular. Sure, he was weird, but he was friendly enough, and Katsuki had no reason to suspect he was anyone other than who he said he was: a twenty year old student who works at a bookstore.

The problem was this: Katsuki already had friends. *Too many friends*. The kind of friends who come in a group package and *assimilate you* and then never allow you to leave.

And that was *fucking tiring*.

Don't get him wrong — he does enjoy hanging out with them, sometimes. They've made some good memories, and he would probably give a shit if one of them died. *Probably*. But that didn't change the fact that Katsuki was still, in essence, an introvert. Most of the time, he'd rather be alone, and his friends just didn't seem to grasp that.

So it was only natural that, once Katsuki was awake and fully cognizant, the first thing he realized was that he'd made some kind of commitment to speaking to Izuku again. He'd agreed to expend energy maintaining some semblance of a social relationship with him, despite having very little left in him to offer.

In other words, Katsuki was *fucked*.

He considered just ghosting him. Never answer any of his calls, much less return them. It was certainly tempting, but honestly, Katsuki wasn't even sure if it'd be necessary. He half expected Izuku to wuss out and never call him again.

There's this tiny, frightened, *weak* voice buried deep in Katsuki's psyche that he keeps trying to

crush beneath layers upon layers of emphatic denial. *And that would not hurt my feelings. That would not hurt my feelings. I don't care. I don't care. That would not hurt my feelings.*

As it turned out, his suspicion was proven to be incorrect when Izuku called him roughly a week later. Katsuki still hadn't decided if this was an unfortunate development or not. As it happened, the call showed up as an unknown number. Perhaps if he'd bothered to save Izuku's contact information, he wouldn't have been so quick to answer.

"What." He said.

"Katsuki!" Izuku's cheerful voice resonated through his ear.

"*Fuck.*" He muttered.

"What?"

"Deku." Katsuki stated, monotone.

There was a brief pause. Three fourths of a heartbeat. *Something like that.*

Then, again.

"*What?*"

"Do you know how to say anything other than fucking *what*, Deku?" He spat, though his words lacked any genuine venom — at least by his standards.

"What's 'Deku'?" The other boy asked, his pitch elevating slightly. "Did you really forget my name? I texted it to you literally *just* becau—"

"Your name can be read as Deku, dipshit," Katsuki interjected. "Goddamn, has no one ever told you that?"

"No." Izuku replied mildly. "No, they *very* haven't. What even *is* a Deku?"

"A useless person, basically." Katsuki smirked, though he knew Izuku couldn't see it.

"On what grounds do you deem that to be an appropriate nickname for me." He articulated flatly.

"It's not a fucking *nickname*, you piece of shit," Katsuki retaliated. "It's an *insult*. Be fucking *insulted*, goddamnit!"

"Would you prefer the term 'pet name'?" The boy offered, in a quasi-innocent tone. *You fucking son of a bitch.*

"Would you prefer to get your ass kicked?"

"I'd be interested in knowing the logistics of getting one's ass kicked over the phone," Izuku replied, sounding oddly thoughtful as he spoke. "Would that involve you somehow gaining the ability to physically shove your foot through the phone speaker via the use of portals, or perhaps wormholes? Would you want me to send you a picture of my butt so you can print it and then record yourself kicking it in a video you would subsequently send to me? If so, how exactly would you go about convincing me to do such a thing when it is clearly against my own self interest? Perhaps you could hire someone else to do it for you while you are still on the phone with me, thus kicking my ass by proxy? Is there a service for that? Maybe an app? Is there an Uber but for kicking—"

Katsuki stared blankly into space as he listened to the other boy's muttering. It was strange, really. It put him in a sort of trance. It took the blond a good minute or so to fully register what was happening.

"Oi, Deku!" He barked, bringing the muttering to an abrupt halt. "What the fucking *theoretical shit* are you talking about?"

"I..." The other hesitated for a moment. "I'm not sure, actually."

Katsuki sighed. "Well, damn Deku," he raked a hand through his hair. "I was just calling you that to fuck with you, but I guess you really *are* useless, aren't you?"

Izuku made an indignant noise, somewhere between a whine and a squawk, and Katsuki laughed at the sheer weirdness of it.

He resolutely ignored the impulse inside that urged him to latch onto the word 'cute' upon hearing it.

---

Izuku called him once again three days later, and Katsuki knew it was him this time, because the name 'Deku' lit up his screen, right next to an image of an appendix.

At the moment it occurred, Katsuki had been glaring intently at the leftover lasagna he'd made three months prior, attempting to discern whether or not it was still edible. A quick sniff of it conjured forth a brief but unsettling vision of his own body inside a casket, being carried down a cobblestone path. He wasn't really sure if it was a hallucination or a genuine glimpse of the future, but what he did know was that any food with an aroma that could cause either of those reactions was most certainly not safe to consume.

But that lasagna was just *so fucking good*.

Katsuki was just about to bite the bullet, or the almost-certainly-spoiled cheese, as it were, and taste it when he received the call. Between poisoning himself and talking to Izuku, Katsuki figured the latter would be marginally less painful.

When he answered the call, it was to the sound of heavy breathing, like something out of a corny slasher film. Katsuki grabbed a butcher knife out of the drawer and directed his gaze toward the living room window about ten feet across from him. It was way too dark out for him to actually see anything, but he continued staring and pointedly began twirling the knife in one hand as he said, "Deku?"

"*Kacchan*," he said, still sounding breathless.

"*What*." Katsuki nearly dropped the knife.

"*Hah*," the boy wheezed. "*Kacchan*." At this point, Katsuki could think of two possibilities: either Izuku just ran a *fucking marathon*, or he was—

"The *fuck*?" He spat, fingers clenching around his phone. "Are you fucking jerking off right now?"

"Wh-What?! No!" Izuku screeched. "Why would you even *ask* that?!"

“Why would I even ask that.” Katsuki repeated back to him. “Gee, I don’t fucking know,” he stabbed the knife straight into the center of the lasagna, mostly because he was irritated and he *could*, but also because he was vaguely concerned that it might actually achieve sentience if he didn’t, and Katsuki would cheerfully cut off his own dick before living in an apartment with *lasagna* for a roommate. “Maybe it’s something to do with the fact that you just called me at ten o’clock at night panting like you’re in fucking heat or something.”

“Wha—I was *running!*”

“At *night*? The hell’s wrong with you?” Katsuki grumbled, narrowing his eyes.

“I have early morning classes, okay?! This is the only time I—I just... Look, this isn’t why I called you!”

“Well, enlighten me, dicklord,” he stated dryly.

“*What* lord?”

“Dicklord.” Katsuki bent down to rest his elbows on the countertop, examining his cuticles absentmindedly. “Y’know. Lord of the dicks. One Dick to rule them all. One Dick to find them. One Dick to bring them all, and in the dark—”

“—*Kacchan.*”

Katsuki blinked once. *Slowly.*

“What.”

“Kacchan—”

“—The fuck is a fucking ‘Kacchan’?”

“You!”

Katsuki blinked yet again, and by the time he’d opened his eyes, he’d registered what Izuku was trying to say, and promptly stood up straight as he shouted back, “Oh, *fuck* no!”

“Yes!” Izuku shouted back, only he didn’t sound annoyed. Rather, he sounded downright *giddy*. “I thought of it while I was running and I just had to tell you, it’s—”

“—It’s never coming out of your fuckin’ mouth again, is what it is, or so help me *god*, Deku—”

“—If you get to call me Deku, I get to call you Kacchan.” He replied matter-of-factly, and rationally, it made sense. Katsuki had assigned a demeaning name to Izuku on a whim, and had no intention of *ever* calling him anything else. It really was only fair that Izuku got to call him something equally deprecating.

But Katsuki didn’t want fair. He wanted his way. Because, *what the fuck*, he’s talked to Deku three times on the phone now, has seen his face exactly *never*, and for Katsuki, that basically made him *Not Real*. He was like the weird NPC from a side quest he accidentally triggered at some point during the main storyline.

“If you ever call me that shit again, I’m

”—What?” Izuku cut in. *Fucker*. “You’re gonna *what*? Kick my ass over the phone?”

“I was going for something more along the lines of ‘wrap my dick around your neck and start you like a fucking lawnmower.’”

Izuku was silent for about ten seconds.

“What does that mean.” He finally asked, articulating each word very slowly.

“What you think it means, asshole,” Katsuki gritted his teeth, pulling the knife out of the lasagna and stabbing it repeatedly, just to have something to do with his hand. The blade appeared to be stained with a dark, purplish substance that grew more and more concentrated with each consecutive stab. *Yeah, I am **definitely** eating instant miso soup tonight.*

“But that’s the problem,” Izuku explained, and it was odd, because he didn’t sound offended, or even *disturbed*. It seemed he simply wanted *answers*. “I don’t know what you mean, and I don’t think I ever will unless you explain it to me.”

“Sounds like a personal problem.” He rolled his eyes.

“*Kacchan!*” Izuku moaned.

“Thought I told you not to jerk off on the phone,” Katsuki jabbed, smirking to himself.

“*K-Kacchan!*” Izuku’s voice went up an octave. *So he’s easily embarrassed, huh?*

“No, Deku,” he scolded. “Stop trying to have *phone sex* with me. I’m not in the mood.”

Izuku’s pitch went up even higher as he continued sputtering ‘Kacchan’ and various emphatic denials. Katsuki had to cover his mouth to just to keep himself from bursting out into laughter — a flustered Izuku was simply too amusing to drown out.

---

From then on, it always started the same. Usually Izuku was the one to call.

“Some guy came up to the counter today and asked me to photoshop pictures for him.”

“The fuck? Don’t you work at a bookstore?”

“That’s what I told him!” Izuku replied ardently. “I said, ‘sir, this is a bookstore,’ and you know what he said, Kacchan?! *Do you know what he said.*”

“*What?*” Katsuki groaned, trying to sound annoyed, despite being genuinely interested. “Holy shit, Deku, just fuckin’ tell me.”

“He said, ‘yeah but I see you have a computer right there, so...’” He trailed off. Katsuki narrowed his eyes, as if doing so would make it easier for him to comprehend such a level of stupidity.

“The hell does he think a computer even *is*? ”

“I don’t know!” Izuku squeaked. “Some kind of miracle box, probably!”

“The real miracle box’ll be that asshole’s coffin after I bury him alive to spare the world of his fucking idiotic existence.”

---

From time to time, Katsuki would make the call.

“Holy shit Deku—” Katsuki spoke in a hushed, urgent tone, as he paced back and forth in the men’s bathroom at work.

“Kacchan? Is that you?”

“Of course it’s fucking me,” he rolled his eyes. “Who the fuck else would it be?”

“I don’t know, but—”

“No, *listen*,” Katsuki hissed. “This chick just now, holy fuck, Deku. So, this woman just came in the store, right? She bought a bunch of shit, including bear spray. I rung her up and crap, she’s making small talk, talking about taking her kids camping, and I’m just giving her one word answers all calmly, trying to will my soul to leave my body, y’know, normal shit like that. *But then*, ” Katsuki carefully enunciated the last two words, leaning forward slightly. His hand tensed up into a sort of claw formation. *Force of habit*. “This bitch fucking smiles at me and says, ‘so, for the bear spray... should I just spray my kids from head to toe?’” He mimicked in a high-pitched, nasally voice.

Izuku paused for a second. Then, “Seriously?!”

“Fucking *seriously*.”

“Oh my— *What did you do?!* ”

“I didn’t know *what* to fuckin’ do!” He shouted, abandoning all attempts at keeping quiet as he threw his free hand up in the air. “I stood completely still for a second because I had to use, like, all my fuckin’ energy just to avoid screaming at the hag about what a fuckin’ idiot she was!”

“Oh my god. Oh my god,” Izuku mumbled, slightly muffled. Katsuki could imagine him facepalming right now. “So that’s it? You just didn’t say anything?!”

“*I* didn’t say anything, but this chick at the register next to me, Mina, overheard it and after a second she told the lady, ‘that’s not what that’s for, actually. Please don’t spray your children with bear spray,’ and explained what it’s actually fucking for, so I didn’t have to, thank fuck.”

“Wow. Wow, that’s just... that’s insane,” Deku babbled. “I-I mean, it’s probably a good thing she said something, though, right? Before she had a chance to actually do it...?”

“Yeah, yeah, the net result of this situation is positive. Fuckin’ sure, okay, great,” Katsuki spoke quickly, exasperated. “The doesn’t make it any less painful for *me*, but hey, fuck me, right? Whatever.”

“What would you have done?” Izuku asked in a tone of pure wonder. “If your coworker hadn’t stepped in, I mean.”

“Shit, I dunno, Deku,” he groaned. “I guess I’d probably just fuckin’ walk away, y’know? ‘Cause fuck, I’d rather get in trouble for *that* than get fired for flipping shit at a customer.”

“Yeah, I guess you’re right,” Izuku laughed.



“Goddamn fucking right I’m goddamn fucking right,” Katsuki smirked.

“Kacchan, language,” the other chided.

“Fuck off, Deku,” he snorted. “It’s been, what, two months? You don’t get to pick *now* to decide you have a problem with it.”

---

Regardless of who called first, the conversation usually began with one of them ranting about stupid customers, and other work-related annoyances. And for a couple of weeks, that’s where each call would end, too. Until it wasn’t.

“A guy tried to flirt with me by asking for me to recommend poets known for writing about love,” Izuku began one Saturday evening. Katsuki sat on the backrest of his couch, reaching out to touch the window. He wondered when it had gotten so cold, and why he hadn’t noticed it until then.

“How the fuck does that even work?”

“Well, it didn’t *work*,” Izuku giggled, then continued, “but to answer your real question, honestly, I’m not really sure where he was going with it.” He sighed, and something about the note of total exhaustion caught Katsuki’s attention. He wondered if he was getting enough sleep. *I’ll have to yell at him about that later*. “First, he asked for recommendations of just poetry in general, so I said ‘sure’ and took him to the poetry section.”

Katsuki pressed his cheek against the window, staring absently at the small sliver of starry sky visible just above the concrete walls that separated his apartment from others, and the outside world from them all.

“I started giving him sort of general recommendations, but then he interrupted me and said, ‘what about *love*? Do you know any poets known for writing about love?’ At this point he’s leaning in *way* more than normal.” Izuku paused, taking a deep breath and exhaling upon continuation. *He really does seem tired*. “But I thought, whatever, y’know, I’ll just ignore it, give him the recommendations and get away from him. He wasn’t being super pushy, per se, just really obvious and kind of weird, I guess.”

Katsuki hummed, and the glass vibrated along with him.

“So I did that, but then... he just kept getting more specific. He started asking for love poems specifically about guys. I could think of like one or two off the top of my head, so I told him, but then he looks at me with this weird smirk and asks, ‘what about cute guys with beautiful, green eyes?’” The way Izuku describes the whole encounter is practically deadpan. “So at this point, I can’t even pretend anymore that he’s not trying to describe me.” Those words hit Katsuki harder than he could’ve rationally expected. A single thought echoes inside his mind ceaselessly.

*Deku has green eyes.*

*Deku has green eyes.*

*Deku has (beautiful) green eyes.*

“Jesus Christ,” Katsuki mumbled.

“Yeah. I guess his goal was to just keep getting more and more specific until I couldn’t really recommend anything.” Izuku paused for a moment. “So I said no, and I tried to be firm about it, so he’d maybe get the message. Then *he* said, and he’s got this grin on his face like he’s really proud of himself, or something, ‘well, maybe I’ll have to write some.’”

“Fuck,” Katsuki groaned, cringing. “That’s so fucking lame, holy shit.”

“Yeah,” Izuku replied. “He was working up to this grand pick-up line the whole time, and it wasn’t even good.”

“Should’ve just gone with the classic,” Katsuki smirked. “‘Good thing I brought my library card, ‘cause I’m checking you out.’”

Izuku snorted. “Would you believe me if I told you I’ve actually heard that at least three times at this point?”

“Well I don’t see any reason for you to fuckin’ lie about it.”

“That’s fair,” he giggled. “I have a practiced response to it at this point, though. I always just tell them, ‘sorry sir or madam, this is a bookstore, not a library. Unfortunately, we only sell books, and I’m afraid I’m not a prostitute.’”

“Fuck, that’s gold.”

“Y’think so?” Izuku asked quietly. Katsuki heard the distant sound of the other boy clearing his throat, as if he was holding the phone far from his face. When he spoke again, it was decisively louder. “I almost got fired for it once, though.”

“Fucking worth it,” Katsuki replied, without missing a beat.

“Yeah, you’re right.” He giggled. The sound slowly dissolved into silence. Katsuki exhaled, watched the glass as it fogged up beneath his breath.

“Why’d you spend so much time helping that asshole, anyway?” He asked. Katsuki told himself it was to fill to silence. “If ‘ya ask me, asking employees at a bookstore for personal recommendations is fuckin’ weird. Even if it wasn’t, I’d still have the good sense to expect a half-assed answer.”

“Yeah, most of my coworkers could probably name like five poets off the top of their head.” Izuku finished with a sheepish sort of chuckle. “I guess I was just kinda... I dunno, hopeful? I-I mean, It was kind of nice to have an excuse to talk about it, even if it was sort of superficial.”

“You like poetry, huh. Why am I not surprised,” he mumbled, more to himself than to Izuku. Katsuki felt his eyelids growing heavy.

“Because I work in a bookstore,” he replied matter-of-factly. Katsuki grunted in acknowledgement, but didn’t push any further. After a moment of hesitation, Izuku proceeded to ask, “Do you like poetry, Kacchan?”

“Hmm?” He hummed absently. It took him the moment to actually process the question being asked, but once he did, “The *fuck*?” Katsuki jolted out of his trance. “Why the fuck would *I* like that stupid, flowery-ass shit?” Izuku was silent. Katsuki held his breath. For a few seconds, the words simply hung in the air.

“I thought you might say something like that.” He stated, after a moment, in a monotone voice. It

was the sort of carefully unemotive inflection one would adopt when trying very hard to mask how bothered they were. It instantly set Katsuki on edge.

“...Wait—” he began, intending to backpedal, despite his confusion, but Izuku cut in as soon as he started.

“You know, Kacchan, you remind me a lot of this one poem in particular.” The shakiness in his voice was almost imperceptible, a sort of ever-present vibration.

Katsuki waited for him to elaborate, but he didn’t.

“Well, what—”

“I should go to bed,” Izuku said at the same time, and because he was louder, his words took precedence. “It’s getting late, and I have classes at eight.” He yawned. “G’night, Kacchan,” he said, in the same cheerful voice he always said it in. It was so abrupt, it took Katsuki a moment to realize what was even happening.

“Ni—” he started to say, but the line went dead before he could finish.

Katsuki peeled his phone away from his ear and stared at the screen. It was fogged up from the heat of his body, as it usually was by the time their conversations naturally concluded. The only difference was that this wasn’t a natural conclusion.

He continued to stare at the device as though it were some mind-bogglingly bizarre relic. As though he could expect it to explain what had just transpired. As though it were Izuku, himself.

“...Night, Deku.”

---

The curtains in Katsuki’s bedroom were a vibrant yellow that appeared green under the moonlight.

As the night carried on, the shifting of the clouds created new shades in gradual transitions that made it difficult to distinguish where one green ended and another began, though the change was undeniable.

Every fifteen minutes or so, Katsuki would glance at the curtains, and his sleep-deprived brain would render abstract images of matching irises, and subsequently wonder if Izuku’s would look the same. He always snapped out of it before that thought could progress too much, but no matter how much he slapped himself, his mind always brought him back.

Katsuki didn’t sleep much that night.

---

At five in the morning, Katsuki texted Izuku for the first time. The message read, “*are you okay.*”

Miraculously, he passed out almost as soon as he sent it.

---

At ten in the morning, Katsuki woke up to a response from three hours prior.

*“Of course, why wouldn’t I be? :)”*

Katsuki stared at the message on his screen — broke the sentence down into words, the words down into letters. He continued to do this for quite some time, as though there were some sort of clue, something hidden within the pixels for him to find. His fingers remained stationary, stuck to the device yet unable to move across it, and perhaps it was funny, in a dark sort of way.

Despite all his time spent analyzing it, Katsuki still couldn't come up with an appropriate response.

## Chapter End Notes

BakuDeku banter is so fucking fun to write.

Bit of drama at the end there. Honestly I kind of wanted to save it for next chapter, because I was really stupidly proud of all the dumb jokes in this chapter and figured "but if shit hits the fan, who's going to remember Kacchan making Deku's picture in his phone an appendix, or the scent of spoiled cheese being so potent that it causes an out of body experience?

Me. That's who. I will remember. I will remember, and I will laugh. I will laugh at my own shitty jokes until the void swallows me whole.

Anyway, guess I should probably list my social media shit, so uh

Tumblr: Weirdfairytales

Twitter: Weirdfairytales

Thanks for reading! ~~ur comments give me life and low key validate my existence lol~~

# How to Use Ass-Kicking as Foreplay

## Chapter Summary

*“Kacchan, you stop BDSM-ing at me **right this instant.**”*

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

In the two weeks that followed, Izuku didn't call Katsuki, and Katsuki didn't call Izuku.

There were a couple of instances at work that tempted him. A woman was caught attempting to shoplift several sports bras by wearing them all simultaneously. Apparently, she didn't think they'd notice the way her chest miraculously tripled in size between the time she entered the store and the time she tried to leave. His fingers twitched with the urge to call Izuku, to vent all his emotions, frustration and amusement alike. He managed to resist it.

But Katsuki caved eventually. He knew he would, at some point. He'd just been hoping Izuku would cave first.

“Hello? Kacchan?” He answered, as if he hadn't read the caller ID. As if he didn't *know*.

“*Tell me,*” Katsuki demanded, lamenting how out of breath he sounded, despite having remained sedentary in his bed for the past hour or so.

“...Wh-what?” Izuku laughed nervously.

“Fucking poets,” he bit out, then quickly amended, “poetry, I mean—” Katsuki raked a hand through his hair and released a sigh that manifested itself as a groan. “Whichever. *What* ever. Just tell me about it, *Fuck.*”

“*Oh,*” Izuku's pitch leaped an octave. “N-no, that's okay, Kacchan. I know you're not really into it, you don't have to—”

“I don't *have* to do *anything*, Deku,” he cut in. “I'm asking because I fucking *want* to,” he declared, “so tell me about fucking poetry, ass-brigade.”

“*Ass-briga—?*”

“*Brigade of ass.*” Katsuki clipped. His neighbor next door kicked the wall. Katsuki kicked it back. “Just tell me about *fucking* poetry, goddamnit!”

“Okay, okay!” he *finally* surrendered. After a moment of hesitation, Izuku asked, “uhm, so... where should I start?”

“What the fuck? I don't *know.*” Katsuki retorted. “Shit, just—Who's your favorite poet, Deku? Start there.”

“Oh, that's hard to say...” he said contemplatively. “There are so many to choose from. I-I mean, there's classics like Matsuo Basho, William Shakespeare, Robert Frost, T.S. Eliot, Maya

Angelou... Ah, but I really like Yoshiro Ishihara, Richard Siken, Catie Rosemurgy, and Mutsuo Takahashi, too, and, ah—ah—” Izuku’s speech devolved into a rapid muttering beneath his breath that Katsuki could not understand and did not attempt to. But he waited patiently, taking a deep breath and releasing it silently. Finally, Izuku’s voice came back into focus. “I guess if I had to choose, maybe E. E. Cummings?”

“Why?” Katsuki pressed.

“Well, the way he formatted his work is part of it. Oh, but, it’s more the way he arranges the words themselves than anything else!” He exclaimed cheerfully. “It’s all very idiosyncratic, but he has this way of communicating emotion that’s simultaneously direct and abstract, y’know? A lot of that does have to do with format, though! The space between words change the pace you experience the poem at. Like, large spaces can make you feel sort of distant or removed from the subject, but they also make every word more powerful! No spaces kind of simulate either claustrophobia or intimacy. It’s all about the context, really! But the content itself is so—”

Katsuki pulled the blankets over himself as he laid down on his side. His phone was balanced against his cheek as he listened to Izuku rambling on excitedly. Katsuki didn’t know much about poetry, and honestly, his desire to learn more was essentially non-existent. Still, Izuku managed to pull him in, to make him listen, not to his words, but to the way that he says them. It was a passionate, endless stream of consciousness, and though Izuku’s way of speaking was quite disorganized and prone to going off on tangents, there was something oddly endearing about it that he couldn’t quite place. It made Katsuki feel all strange and warm and paradoxical inside — because even though the feeling is comforting, his lack of understanding of it put him on edge, forced him into some bizarre superposition of varying levels of individual ease.

But Izuku went on, gushing like a girl with a celebrity crush about poets who may’ve been dead for a century or more, and for a while, it seemed there would be no end to it. All Katsuki could do was make small noises of acknowledgement every now and then. When the line went quiet, and Izuku’s voice trailed off and left echoes of sheepishness behind, that was when Katsuki knew to grunt, or hum, or otherwise confirm that yes, he was still listening. Yes, he was still there.

Katsuki wasn’t sure how much time had passed when Izuku’s voice began to dull, expressing less and less emotion when he spoke, as though he was trying to preserve his energy in order to continue as long as possible. Katsuki wasn’t complaining, wasn’t even really aware of how much time had passed until he caught a glimpse of the moon, and Izuku’s words became breathy and distant. Until they eventually stopped completely, and the sound of Izuku’s slow, even breathing lulled Katsuki into a dreamless slumber.

---

From that day on, it became a semi-regular occurrence for Izuku to call Katsuki and read him his latest literary *masterpiece*.

“I wrote something just now,” Izuku told him, sometime a few weeks later. At the time, Katsuki had been studying for a differential equations test. “It’s called, ‘To The Girl Who Lives Above Me,’ and it’s...” he trailed off briefly, laughing sheepishly as he finished, “actually not quite complete yet.”

“So why’re you tellin’ me about it, then?” Katsuki asked, tapping his pen against his open notebook, uncaring about the green ink leaking onto the paper. The page was littered with numbers

and symbols he was more than happy to take a break from.

“Well, I was actually hoping you could help me with it.” Izuku explained, and there was something off about his tone that heightened Katsuki’s curiosity. “It’s... a little embarrassing, though.”

“*Hah?*” Katsuki scoffed. “The fuck? You’ve read me your shit tons of times, Deku.”

“Well, yeah, I know, but...” He hesitated briefly, and Katsuki could hear the heavy breath he took before speaking again. “It’s just the subject matter, I guess.”

“Well shit, Deku,” Katsuki smirked, one of his eyebrows quirking up. “Now I’m fuckin’ curious. C’mon, read it.”

“Well,” Izuku cleared his throat. “Alright, then.”

With that, Izuku began reading.

*“To the girl who lives above me*

*Who’s so busy every night*

*I’m glad you don’t feel lonesome*

*And I don’t mean to be uptight.*

*But could you maybe keep the noise down?*

*I’m trying to sleep down here*

*And I’m certain words like ‘faster,’ ‘harder’*

*Need not be screamed into my ear.*

*And I hate to have to say something*

*But it causes me anxiety*

*So with that in mind, I must insist...”*

Katsuki snorted several times throughout the other’s reading. When Izuku eventually trailed off, he waited for him to continue. When he did not, Katsuki took it as his cue to speak up. “That it?”

“A-ah— yes.” Izuku replied sheepishly. “What do you think?”

“This chick above you sounds like a real shit balloon,” Katsuki answered. At some point, he’d begun absent-mindedly sketching up in the margins. “Y’know, a grade A ass canister. A real piece of *fuck*.”

Izuku snorted in a clear attempt to stifle his laughter. “Something funny, *come jar?*”

“*Oh my go — what jar?*” Izuku replied, not even *trying* to mask his amusement anymore.

“*Come jar.*” Katsuki reiterated, huffing. The doodles at the edge of his page slowly began to take the shape of eyes. He wondered when that happened, exactly. It certainly hadn’t been a conscious decision. “Like a big ass jar that you just fuckin’ jerk off over every goddamn day for like two years until it’s so full of come that you have to *buy another jar*. That’s what *you* are, Deku.”

“Wh— How do you even *think* of something like that?” Izuku wheezed. “That’s so... I don’t even *know* what that is.”

“It’s fucking creative is what it is.” Katsuki scoffed, dropping the pen over the doodles on the page before leaning back onto the couch. He scowled at his own hand as he held it up in front of himself. The side was stained with green ink. “It’s fucking innovative. I’m a goddamn *inventor*, Deku.”

“Yeah, okay,” Izuku snorted. “Sure thing, Kacchan. You’re an inventor, and I, for one, look forward to seeing Kacchan’s Revolutionary Come Jar in stores come summertime. I’m sure it will be incredible. You’re truly an entrepreneur—”

“—*Yeah, yeah, yeah.*” Katsuki cut in. “I’m amazing and my shit’s gonna change the world. *I know*. Y’know, if you want it so bad, why don’t ‘ya just fuckin’ pre-order it, huh?” He gripped the phone a bit harder, his eyes narrowing. “Just send three easy payments of nineteen-ninety-five straight to *my ass*, bitch; I hope you *drown* in your come jar.”

Something about the way those words came out felt strange to Katsuki. There was an odd sort of tension in his face, as though something was actually pulling— and oh. *Oh*. Katsuki’s fingers brushed over his own lips, ever-so-lightly. He’d been smiling the whole time, hadn’t he?

In his distraction, he almost didn’t hear the sound of Izuku speaking again, when the sound of oddly musical giggling pittered out.

“So, the poem...” He began, and after a second, Katsuki grunted to let him know he was listening, and waiting for him to *fuckin’ get on with it*. “I’m not really sure how to end it,” he explained sheepishly. “I kinda figured you might have some interesting ideas for the last line, since it’s... well, since it’s...”

“Since it’s about a chick who lives above you who likes getting relentlessly fucked every night but couldn’t shut her goddamn trap if her life depended on it?” For a moment, Katsuki heard nothing but short, aborted noises on the other line. He could almost imagine Izuku opening and closing his mouth repeatedly, like a fish out of water. After a couple of seconds of no substantial response, Katsuki continued. “And you, a twenty-year-old *college student*, for fuckssake, can’t even call it like it is without tripping five times over every goddamn syllable, like some kinda virginal maiden?”

“It’s not—” Izuku huffed indignantly. “It’s not because it’s *sex*, Kacchan. I can talk about sex just fine, just not with—” He cut himself off abruptly, as though his throat had slammed on the breaks, and Izuku’s voice skidded into silence. After a second, “Look, can you just help me with this?”

“Yeah, yeah, *fine*.” Katsuki groaned, sinking further into the couch cushions. He’d long since forgotten about his homework. Izuku had a way of making him do that. “Read the last part for me again. I’ll try and think of some shit.”

“*Thank you*,” He sighed, and Katsuki would never get over it — that sort of naked sincerity in Izuku’s voice. Part of him wanted to slap the guy for wearing his heart of his sleeve like that, but



honestly, he wasn't sure what he'd do if Izuku ever stopped. He tried not to think too deeply about it — about the logical conclusion to that train of thought.

Izuku read the final, incomplete stanza once again.

*“And I hate to have to say something*

*But it causes me anxiety*

*So with that in mind, I must insist...”*

He cleared his throat awkwardly. “The third line can be changed to fit with whatever the fourth is. I guess the main thing is that it has to rhyme with ‘anxiety.’”

“Hmm,” Katsuki acknowledged, squeezing his eyes shut as he thought. “What rhymes with anxiety?”

Ahm...” Izuku paused for moment. “Society, uhh... sobriety, variety... propriety...” He trailed off, then sighed. “There aren't a lot of pure rhymes, I guess,” he mumbled quietly, and— *Oh*.

A proverbial light bulb lit up inside Katsuki's mind.

“Would ‘quietly’ work?” He asked.

“Quietly?” Izuku parroted. “Ah... Quietly, anxiety. Quietly, anxiety— I mean, it works well enough. Did you have something in mind?”

“Yeah,” He smirked. He hadn't even said it out loud yet, and he already felt proud of himself. “How ‘bout this: ‘go fuck yourself, but quietly.’”

“O-oh that's—” Katsuki heard the sound of quiet muttering on Izuku's end before he spoke up once again. “I mean, it works, but it's a little—” Katsuki already knew where this was going.

“You wanted my input, Deku.” He interjected, with little intonation. “You asked me, specifically, to think of something. You fucking expected this.”

“I— *Well*, I mean...” He said, then sighed in resignation. “Yeah, you're right. It's... actually a really good line, the more I think about it. Thanks, Kacchan!”

“It's whatever,” he shrugged. “Is that true, though? Like, every fuckin' night?” He asked.

“Well, not every night,” Izuku replied. “But... I mean, it's at least four times a week. I've heard some *things*, Kacchan. Things I can't ever unhear.” He deadpanned.

“Yeah?” Katsuki snorted. And because he had some bizarre, insatiable desire to one-up Izuku at most things, he continued. “I once heard someone scream, ‘fuck me, daddy’ from the apartment below me.” Izuku *choked*. “You know how fucking *unsettling* it is hear something like that coming from *underneath* you? It fuckin' scared the shit 'outta me. I thought I was hearing the anguished cries of spirits trapped in *Hell*.”

“Oh my god...” Izuku squeaked. *Yes, fucking squeaked*. Honestly, Katsuki couldn't blame him.

“Had a bunch ‘a friends over at the time, too — *that* sure as fuck didn’t help,” Katsuki cringed as he recalled the memory. “For, like, six fuckin’ months I had to deal with those assholes screaming ‘fuck me, daddy’ at random times. I tried to make ‘em *stop* but they just fuckin’ turned around and started calling *me* daddy. They still fucking do it sometimes, *to this day*. Fuckers are lucky to be *alive*.”

Izuku made some bizarre, inhuman noise, and Katsuki had never heard an ostrich before, but if he had, he’d imagine it would’ve sounded something like that. The flustered noise gave him an idea, and an evil grin stretched across his face.

“Why aren’t ‘ya sayin’ anything, Deku? Do you have a daddy kink?” He jabbed, barely resisting the urge to burst out laughing.

“W-*What?! N-No—!*” Izuku sputtered. In Katsuki’s mind’s eye, he was on the floor *flailing*. “Why would I—”

“—Well I *guess* you can call me daddy, then.” Katsuk loudly interrupted, sighing dramatically, as though he was reluctantly agreeing to some extremely inconvenient compromise. “I mean, everyone else does, anyway.”

“Kacchan, I don’t have a *daddy kink!*” He practically shrieked. “What the hell!”

“Oh, so it’s more of a master-and-slave sort of thing?” Katsuki replied, without missing a beat. *This is too fucking good.*

“M-mas— *What?*”

“Y’can call me master if that’s what you’re into.” He elaborated plainly, picking up his abandoned pen and twirling it absently. “‘Sir’ is fine too, if that’s more your speed.”

“*Kacchan, you stop BDSM-ing at me right this instant.*” Izuku firmly stated.

“Okay.” He said immediately.

Izuku paused for a moment. Then, “...Really?”

“Yeah,” Katsuki replied. He tossed the pen into the air, watched it spin, and then caught it again with his free hand. “On one condition.”

“...What’s that?” The other asked nervously.

“Say that again. Y’know, the thing about BDSM-ing at you. I want to record it and set it as my ringtone.” Katsuki deadpanned.

“Wh—” Izuku cut himself off before he could even start. After a moment, he sighed. “You’re *actually* the worst.”

Katsuki couldn’t help the grin that practically ignited his face. “*Thanks.*”

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It happened one night as he was getting ready for bed.

“What do you look like?” Izuku asked, seemingly innocent, and for a moment, Katsuki was speechless.

“...*Hah?*” He finally responded.

“What do you look like, Kacchan?” The other repeated. Katsuki glared at his reflection in the bathroom mirror. He didn’t want to know why his face was red, but he sure as fuck wished it would *stop*.

“Your worst nightmare,” Katsuki replied. He decided to get away from the mirror altogether, exiting the bathroom with his toothbrush in hand.

“The one where my teeth fly out of my mouth?”

“What the *fuck?*”

“That’s my worst nightmare; I have it about once a week.” Izuku stated drily. “Apparently it’s actually really common.”

“You serious? The *fuck*...” The other hummed in response, and Katsuki sighed, mumbling, “Every human on Earth is fucking weird as fuck except for me.”

“Sure, Kacchan.” Izuku snorted, pausing briefly before continuing. “You didn’t answer my question, though. I wanna know what you look like.”

“Why.” Katsuki ran his toothbrush under the kitchen sink.

“Because I’m curious.”

“Why.” He repeated, squeezing out some toothpaste onto the bristles.

“*Don’t start.*” He sighed, exasperated. Katsuki smirked before beginning to brush his teeth. “I just want to know.”

Katsuki rolled his eyes, speaking even as he brushed his teeth. “Ish thih yer wahh uh tyina ass me hor ahh pishher?”

“Uhm... no...?” Izuku said very slowly. “I’m not one-hundred-percent sure what you just said but... no? I think?” The line was quiet for a second. “What are you doing, anyway?”

Katsuki removed the toothbrush in order to carefully articulate, “Sucking cock, obviously,” before immediately going back to brushing his teeth. He nearly choked at the sound of Izuku sputtering through the receiver, and the resulting noise was hilariously appropriate, given the context.

“Wha—What—”

“Sharry, cah ear you o’er duh ound uh ish *masshive dick*.” He nearly shouted.

“I can *hear* you brushing your teeth, Kacchan!” He yelled back, and Katsuki paused for a moment, spitting into the sink.

“Then why the fuck’d you ask?” He grumbled.

“Stop changing the subject,” Izuku said. “I asked you what you look like.”

“What, you want me to fucking describe it for you?”

“Basically.” He answered casually.

Katsuki sighed, running a hand through his hair before making his way back to the bathroom. He glanced at his reflection as he set his toothbrush on the counter.

“What do you *think* I look like?” He deflected, beginning to walk back to his bedroom.

“Mmn...” He hummed, remaining silent for a few seconds. “Like an anthropomorphized explosion, maybe?”

Katsuki stopped in his tracks, side-eyeing his phone with a glare. “The hell?”

“You look the way it feels to watch Fight Club for the first time and think it’s the best thing ever.” He deadpanned.

“The fuck’s that supposed to mean?” Izuku didn’t respond, only snorted a suppressed laugh that prompted Katsuki to retaliate. “Well *you* look like something that stumbled out of a fucking Wes Anderson movie only to get immediately shoved into a fucking locker.”

Izuku made a noise of indignation. “Yeah, well, I bet you can live off of energy derived from taking gym selfies alone.”

*“I bet you fucking photosynthesize.”*

And there was a brief moment of silence on the other end of the line before Izuku burst into a fit of laughter in which Katsuki refused to join, though he couldn’t help but grin as he collapsed onto his bed. He didn’t try to get Izuku to calm down. He just waited patiently, listening to the sound of the other’s unhinged amusement as began to shed his clothes messily. Eventually, Izuku’s laughter pittered out.

“Sorry, it’s just... It’s funny because you’re almost not wrong — I mean you *are*, but...”

“Hah—?” He said, as he worked his shirt over his head.

“—What color is your hair, Kacchan?” Izuku interjected.

“*Hah?*” Katsuki replied, feeling *like a goddamn broken record*, at this point.

“I’m gonna make this easier. Just answer my questions.” He said. After a moment of silence, he added, “please,” as an afterthought.

Katsuki blinked, staring into space for a moment. Then, “Fuck, fine...” He groaned, throwing both his pants and shirt in the general direction of his hamper before reaching up to touch his hair absently. “It’s kind of a lighter blonde, I guess.”

Izuku hummed. “Eyes?”

“I have them.”

*“Kacchan.”*

“Red.” He grunted, somewhat exasperated by the one-sided nature of the conversation. “What about *you*? What color are *your* eyes and hair?” Katsuki asked, pretending he didn’t already know the answer to one of those questions.

“Green,” He answered simply. Adding a second later, “Both. That’s that the answer to, uh... to

both.”

*The photosynthesizing thing makes a lot more sense now*, Katsuki mused.

“How tall are you?” Izuku asked.

“Mmn...” he squinted. “Six feet? Something like that. You?”

“Ahh, uhm...” The other stumbled. “That’s... not important.”

“So I take it you’re fuckin’ short, Deku.” Katsuki teased, eating up the indignant noises the boy made. In a low, quiet voice, he muttered, “That’s cute...”

Had it not been for the way Izuku’s breath audibly caught in his throat, he wouldn’t have realized he’d said it at all. *Fuck, shit, where did that come from?*

Katsuki cleared his throat. “Next question.”

“I, uhm... I’m not sure what else to ask,” Izuku said sheepishly. “I guess it’s kind of hard to figure out what someone looks like unless you know what to ask about. Do you have any distinguishing characteristics?”

“The hell do you mean by that?”

“I mean, like, for example, I have freckles. So, that’s... something,” he finished awkwardly.

*Izuku has freckles. Fuck, that’s cute.*

Katsuki resolutely *did not* say this out loud, and instead replied with, “I don’t have freckles,” as he shifted around on the mattress, eventually finding a comfortable position on his side. Katsuki didn’t bother with getting under the covers, content to remain on top of them in his boxers alone. His body temperature had always been high, anyway.

“I wouldn’t call that a *distinguishing* characteristic, Kacchan.”

“Well, I dunno what to fuckin’ tell you, Deku.” He sighed, raking his fingers through his hair. “People tell me I always look like I’m pissed off.”

“So, you have... Uhm, resting bitch-face?”

“Oh, no.” Katsuki corrected. “I’m actually just pissed off most of the time.”

Izuku groaned.

“...Kacchan, this isn’t getting us anywhere. Why don’t *you* ask *me* a question?”

Katsuki hummed, pausing as he fidgeted with the hem of his boxers. Then, with absolutely no intonation in his voice, he proceeded to ask, “How big is your dick?”

“K-Kacchan!” Izuku sputtered. Katsuki smirked. In his mind, he visualized childish freckles receding behind a bright red complexion. *Glorious.*

“What?” He responded, quasi-innocent. “You wanted me to ask a question about what you look like. *So?*”

“Kacchan, I’m not gonna to answer that.” Izuku sighed, clearly exasperated.

“Why? You *small*?” Katsuki jabbed, snorting.

“Wha— *No*, I’ll have you know I’m perfectly—“ he cut himself off, but it wasn’t hard for Katsuki to deduce where that statement had been going. He grinned evilly as he stared up at the ceiling.

“*Why do you care so much?*”

“Why are *you* bein’ so defensive about it?”

“I’m not being *defensive*, I’m exercising *discretion!*” Izuku retaliated. “There’s a difference!”

“That so?” Katsuki teased, drumming his fingers over the surface of the covers.

“*Yes*, and if you really think it’s nothing to be discrete about, *why don’t you go first?*”

For a moment it was silent, as though Izuku’s mind had only just caught up with what his mouth was saying. Katsuki could practically *hear* him regretting it.

“Did you seriously just ask me how big my dick is, Deku?” He raised his eyebrows slowly. “Am I in the wrong universe? That’s fuckin’ *wild*.”

“*You asked me first!*” He replied indignantly.

”Nice save, Deku.” He snorted before continuing. “I’ve never measured it. Just never really felt like doing it. I mean, maybe in middle school or something, but usually, if I’m that fuckin’ hard, I’m not gonna be thinkin’, ‘oh hey, I should go get tape measure’ or some shit, y’know?”

“A-ah...” Izuku awkwardly responded. “Well, why would you assume that I’d know if *you* don’t even know?”

“Just had a hunch you would.”

“...What’s that supposed to mean?”

“You just seem like you’d know.” He answered, stretching his arms over his head before elaborating. “You seem like the type of guy who’d get distracted while jerking off and drop everything just to measure your cock.”

“...Okay, how are you able to just *say* these things out loud?” Izuku asked slowly. “I mean, do you *hear* yourself?”

“Well, what I hear right now is you being a little bitch about it, but that’s beside the point.” He laughed at the irritated noises Izuku made. Eventually it pittered out into silence, and Katsuki took the opportunity to continue. “Anyway, I don’t actually know. All I’ve got are testimonials. Maybe check Yelp, or something.”

“Yelp...?” Izuku paused, then proceeded to mutter, “Seriously?” And Katsuki couldn’t help but snort.

“Yeah. There are fucking *Yelp reviews* for my dick. Seriously.” He rolled his eyes, in spite of the grin stretched across his face. Then, softly, as an afterthought, he added, “God Deku, you’re so *easy*, y’know that?”

The words came out lower than he’d expected. More rough than he’d planned. It solidified the tension in the atmosphere, and the way Izuku’s breath seemed to hitch in response made Katsuki’s pulse to speed up. Slowly, Katsuki turned over onto his back again, his eyes locking on the blank,

white ceiling as his fingers drummed over the musculature of his abdomen.

“A-am not...” Izuku eventually mumbled. And Katsuki kind of wanted to argue, but he decided to let this one slide. A few seconds of silence went by.

“Hey, how bout this.” Katsuki began again, on a whim “You got a nice ass?”

“K-Kacchan, what the *hell?*” He squeaked.

“What?” Katsuki played innocent. “It’s a subjective question. Surely you can answer that.”

“Y-Yeah, well, can’t you ask me something that isn’t so...” He trails off, muttering something inaudible.

“So *what*, Deku?” Katsuki teased, and with that, it was as though a switch had flipped inside his head. His vision grew hazy as his brain shifted gears unconsciously.

“So, I mean— *sexual*.” Izuku finally managed to get out.

“Mm?” Katsuki hums. “Who said this was sexual? You fuckin’ perv,” Katsuki clutched the phone a bit tighter. “You know, I’m still planning to kick your ass if I ever see you in real life. Gotta know what I’ll be dealing with beforehand, y’know?”

“You’re... ridiculous.” Izuku said, in some bizarre tone that read as exasperation, yet carried some strange, stifling air to it — like there was something Izuku was trying very hard to repress. And something about that quality made it impossible for Katsuki to feel annoyed by it. “You’re a *ridiculous* person, Kacchan...”

“I’m tryin’ to help you out here, y’know,” Katsuki replied. His voice lowered as he continued, “I might be inclined to go easier on you. I ain’t the type to wanna destroy nice things...” He trailed off briefly, his fingernails digging into his lower stomach absently. “Guess it depends how you define ‘destroy,’ though.” A slow-spreading smirk took its place on Katsuki’s face at the sound of Izuku’s flustered stuttering.

“K-Kacchan, this—this is—” He cut himself off, swallowing audibly. “Starting t-to sound like, uhm... Like you’re, a-ah... It’s like—”

“Like what, *Deku?* ” Katsuki pressed, the name coming out low and raspy by his own design.

“Like—Like you w-want to...” Izuku mumbled something high-pitched and inaudible. Muffled, as if he had his face pressed into a pillow, or a mattress.

*That’s a nice image*, Katsuki decided, his fingers tracing his waistband idly.

“I-I mean, I thought you wanted to, ah...” Izuku paused, gulping again before continuing. “Uhm, kick my ass, or—”

“Oh, I’m gonna kick your ass, Deku.” Katsuki cut in, his tone something deep and all-consuming. “Gonna kick your ass *so hard*.”

And the sound of choking was not something Katsuki necessarily associated with sex, excluding, like, particularly *vigorous* blowjobs, of course, but *this*. The sound Izuku made, as though he was choking on his own saliva, sent waves of heat to his dick — made it necessary for him to grip the blankets with his free hand to prevent himself from crossing a boundary he couldn’t go back from.

“Kacchan—” Izuku wheezed. Katsuki bit his lip, closed his eyes, and released a breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding.

“I’ll kick your tight little ass all night long, Deku.” He practically growled.

“**Holy** — *a-ahh...*” Izuku said, somewhere between a moan and a whimper. “K-Kacchan, I—”

“Yeah, you’d like that, wouldn’t you?” Katsuki rasped. “*De-ku...*”

On the other end of the line, he heard the other’s breath hitch. A second later, he realized that he, too, was holding his breath, again. And it made sense, really. Needless to say, Katsuki hadn’t been considering all the possible ramifications of his words. When all was said and done, he’d simply hoped to fall back on plausible deniability. Play it off as a joke. A tease. Pretend he’d *just* been messing with him. Even the *tight ass* comment, blatant as it was, *could* be taken back, if handled it carefully enough.

Now, without really even meaning to, he’d handed the reins over to Izuku via a simple yes-or-no question. He could say *no* and give them both an out, make it possible to go back from this — or he could say *yes*. He could say yes, and make going back impossible. He could say yes, and make this interaction mean something.

But Izuku didn’t say yes or no.

Instead, after a pause that seemed to last an eternity, he simply muttered, “I... I think that I—” A sharp intake of air, like an awkward parody of a laugh. “I think I might be, uhm... a bit of a masochist, maybe...”

And for a while, Katsuki said nothing, too busy attempting to process the answer. He’d been thinking of the question as a binary, and he had to backpedal a bit, rewrite some of his internal code in order to make sense of it.

In retrospect, Katsuki could see that he’d been far too slow in doing so.

Izuku hung up the moment he opened his mouth to respond, and the words dissolved on his tongue.

## Chapter End Notes

BakuDeku foreplay is basically just suggestive antagonism tbh. That's my headcanon at least lol, but anyway.

*Can you believe my mom made 600 ao3 accounts just to leave kudos on this fic?*

Seriously though, the response has been so positive, it's honestly more than I could've hoped for, and I am extremely grateful for all your kind comments (to which I am currently in the process of responding, pls bear with me askldjf), and just the fact that you're all spending time reading this story at all. Thank you for reading, and I'll see you all in about a week with chapter four!



# The Space in Between

## Chapter Notes

This chapter's almost 7k words and... I'm warning you now, this is mostly just Katsuki being shit at The Emotion Thing lol. And by that I mean it's not as humorous as the previous chapters. I hope you enjoy it anyway though! It's a pretty important chapter. Sorry if there are any mistakes or typos... I need a nap lol

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

In the aftermath of what essentially amounted to impromptu-almost-phone-sex with Izuku, Katsuki was left in a state of bewilderment. Suddenly, he was forced to confront the reality that he was *sexually attracted* to Izuku, which was a highly incongruous concept, in his mind, when juxtaposed with the fact that he'd *never actually seen the guy before*.

Katsuki was no expert on sexuality, and he wouldn't dispute that it was perhaps *possible* to be attracted to someone you've never actually seen. When he really thought about it, it didn't actually sound like a completely unheard of experience — it's just that it wasn't *his* experience. It wasn't something *he* was used to, and the fact that it had abruptly become part of his reality had placed him in a position where he was more or less forced to consider something that simply hadn't been on his radar until that moment.

One thing Katsuki did understand about himself was that he rarely saw people in terms of immediate sexual attraction. Rather, he would see an attractive person, and perhaps if the context was appropriate he would think to himself, 'Oh hey, that person's kinda hot. Maybe if they're not a complete shit of a human being I'll wanna fuck 'em,' somewhere in the back of his mind.

It was always *some* combination of personality and appearance, though more often than not, appearance was the gatekeeper. At least, that's what he had thought.

Izuku had a nice voice. It was shaky and prone to muttering, but it was nice all the same. It was a pleasant voice with which Izuku regularly made strange little noises that caused Katsuki to feel all warm inside various different parts of his body, which would change depending on the context.

And yeah, he thought it was cute.

And yeah, he did mean 'cute' in the sense that, if it was possible for a person's voice to manifest itself in a physical form that Katsuki could fuck, he'd have his pants off before you could say, 'Kacchan, please calm down.'

'Kacchan, please, we're in public.'

'Kacchan, **please**.'

'Kacchan, please, **I need** it.'

'Kacchan, please **fuck** me.'

And god **fucking** damn it, not **now**, Katsuki thought, gritting his teeth and digging his nails into his

palms.

Ever since *The Incident*, it'd been the same thing almost every morning. Katsuki would jolt awake in a cold sweat with his dick hard, the events of some random wet dream playing back in his head, with Izuku in a starring role. It was a bizarre experience — dreaming about someone you'd never actually seen. Katsuki could never recall the details when morning came. In his memory, Izuku's facial features were blurry at *best*, and yet somehow, Katsuki was certain that at the time of the dream itself, Izuku's appearance had been clearly defined.

Odd details aside, it was massively inconvenient. Upon waking up, it became general procedure for Katsuki to spend a good minute or so just glaring at his own dick in a mixture of fury and disappointment, as if to say, *'I trusted you. I fucking trusted you, and you do this.'*

Once he was done with this little charade of dissociating from his genitals so he could comfortably place blame on something other than himself, he would then proceed to begrudgingly take himself in hand and focus on getting off as fast as humanly possible, because *goddamn*, Katsuki Bakugou had *things* to do — things that did *not* involve touching his cock, which he would very much like to actually *get* to.

So he got it over with. Closed his eyes to block out the light that bled in through the window; jerking off in the morning always felt like a fundamentally *incorrect* action, no matter how horny he was.

For the first time in his life, Katsuki found himself actually *hoping* that his particularly heavily course load for the semester would completely monopolize his attention, if only to keep his mind off the thought of dicking some faceless nerd.

On a street corner a few blocks from the main building of the university, there was a secondhand bookstore that Katsuki rarely entered more than once per semester. They generally kept stock of most of the textbooks required by certain courses, so long as they weren't too obscure — and sure, some of them were a little beat up, or in slightly outdated editions, but they served their purpose well enough. It was always a good place to try, if paying an arm and a leg for textbooks wasn't your idea of a fun time.

And *yes*.

Katsuki did, indeed, think to himself as he was approaching it, *Shit, what if fucking Deku works here?* He *did*. That was a thought that he had. Its presence weighed heavily on his mind, but it was never *real*. It wasn't a *real* concern. It was just one of those thoughts that inevitably passed through one's head, not because it was extremely likely, but because it was *weird* and could actually *happen*, maybe. He was entering a situation in which this was a possible outcome which would make logical sense, but it didn't change the fact that there were probably a hundred different bookstores in the city, any of which Izuku could've worked at. The odds of running into him were slim, to say the least.

It was a boring cliché — a plot device native to cheesy rom-coms. It just didn't *happen* in real life.

Which was precisely why Katsuki's first thought upon entering the store, rounding a corner and immediately walking directly into a shorter man who squeaked out an apology in a voice Katsuki would recognize *anywhere* was, *'god fucking damn it, I'm living in a goddamn simulation, aren't I?'*

And his disdain for whatever alien entity was running said simulation was almost enough to overshadow his shock.

Almost.

It took him a second to convince himself to open his eyes, and he could've sworn his heart stopped somewhere in the space in between. For all his lingering suspicions that Izuku might've worked there, the world still stood still when they proved to be true.

And he wanted to freeze up, but this was reality. The world would carry on around him whether he was ready for it or not. There wasn't any time for internal monologue.

When Katsuki finally raised his gaze to the man before him, the sight felt like a swift punch to the gut, and he almost wanted to close his eyes again.

Izuku had full cheeks dotted with freckles and lips adorned with the telltale bite marks of an anxious mind. His hair curled around his face in locks of dark green, framing his features in such a way that it looked as perfect as it did blatantly accidental. And he was cute, truly — but Katsuki couldn't help but feel as though it were some sort of error. As though Izuku's cuteness was just a mistake he'd kept making, every day since he was born.

Wide, bright, green eyes seemed to dominate his face, both in terms of size as well as intensity. And *yes*, they were quite pretty; if Katsuki were to describe Izuku's eyes in that precise moment in three words, those words would be big, beautiful, and *bewildered*.

Katsuki snapped back into reality, where Izuku was watching him with a disconcerted expression. "Sir, did you... need help finding something?" He asked.

He opened his mouth to speak— and closed it almost immediately, in favor of simply shaking his head. The odd look on Izuku's face persisted even as he politely told him, "Well, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask!"

As Izuku swiftly passed by him, Katsuki caught a whiff of his scent in the disturbed air. Some bizarre juxtaposition of something earthy and something sweet that he couldn't quite place.

When it finally occurred to him, a *full minute later*, that standing still in the middle of a store attempting to discern the particular smell of a person who just passed you by was an exceedingly creepy thing to do, he shook his head and turned, making quick strides back the same way he had come. He caught only a brief glimpse of Izuku standing on a step ladder, sorting books on the top shelf, before he reached the exit.

The bell chimed as he pushed forth into the cool air again, and Katsuki willed himself not to look over his shoulder. He wanted to know if Izuku was watching him, but he didn't want to know how he'd feel once he knew. So he kept his eyes forward as he shoved his hands into his jacket pockets, watching his breath curling as it met the cold air.

The traffic around him fell into silence as he walked back to his apartment, replaced instead by the sound of harsh, white noise.

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The two weeks following *The Almost-Phone-Sex Incident* were silent on both ends. Of course, that didn't mean Katsuki wasn't thinking about him. Hell, ever since *The Bookstore Incident*, he'd hardly *stopped*.

Now, Katsuki was not the most social media savvy person in the world.

He had accounts on most of the popular websites, but was seldom active on any of them — which was for the best, really. The last time he'd scrolled through his Facebook feed, he wound up

getting himself sucked into a very long and heated political *shitfest*, during which he called his aunt an *ass-disaster* and made several allusions to hunting down a few of the vocally idiotic members of said aunt's book club with a jar of peanut butter and a blowtorch — a threat he was content to leave up to their imaginations. Evidently, limiting his time on social media was just in his best interest.

Of course, that did not mean he didn't know how to track people down and stalk profiles.

Prior to running into Izuku, there'd been a sort of implicit agreement between them about doing such things. It was never verbally stated, and really, for all Katsuki knew, Izuku could've done it months ago — but it just felt *taboo*.

Now, having already seen Izuku's face, it felt as though the taboo had abruptly disappeared, and anything was fair game. Just like that, Katsuki suddenly felt an almost frantic urge to seek Izuku out online, the likes of which he, frankly, just hadn't ever felt before.

With the discovery of his Facebook came an overload of new and mostly useless knowledge. Izuku's likes, dislikes, favorite bands, favorite books, his relationship status set to *single*, his 'interested in' set to *men*. And sure, many of these things he actually already knew, but there was something oddly satisfying about looking at the profile of someone you knew quite well and finding exactly what you'd expect.

And then there were the pictures.

*Fucking christ, the pictures.*

Pictures of Izuku as a kid with massive eyes, scraped knees and toothless smiles. Izuku at his high school graduation. Candid photos of Izuku on stage beneath a spotlight, making grand gestures as he spoke into a microphone. Izuku dressed as a ghost on Halloween.

The pictures of Izuku at the beach culminated in what was perhaps the guiltiest jerk-off session Katsuki had ever had — and he'd gotten off on some pretty *fucked up shit* over the years.

Of course, while all the pictures were certainly nice, and would prove to be... *useful* for him, there was something oddly hollow about going through them. He hated to admit it, but in the end, nothing could replace the feeling of actually speaking to Izuku.

And so, after two weeks of silence, Katsuki was, once again, the first to cave.

Part of him wanted to be irritated by that, *I mean, shit, talk about one-sided*, but deep down, he knew it was only logical. After all, both occasions, way back then as well as now, had been primarily the result of his own actions.

In any case, while deciding to call Izuku, was, indeed, the first step toward regaining normalcy between them, it certainly wasn't the last.

Under typical circumstances, Katsuki wouldn't need a reason. Over the course of the past few months, the justification for each call had worn thinner and thinner, until it was practically nonexistent. Until greetings like 'what's up' could be met with a simple, 'not much, just felt like calling,' and neither one of them would bat an eye. But this was different, and Katsuki didn't want to risk going into it unprepared. With their last call still hanging heavily in the air still, he had to be very careful not to let the conversation veer off toward the question of what exactly had happened between them.

The answer to that question was something they couldn't go back from.

After much thought, he ultimately decided to try and reconcile with Izuku the same way he had before, albeit with different intentions: by talking about poetry.

It was a good plan, he thought, because it allowed him to both clear the awkward air between them *and* get an answer to a question he'd been wondering about for weeks, all in one sitting.

On Saturday evening, he made the call.

"...Kacchan?" Izuku answered, seeming uncertain.

"Deku." He replied, wiping his sweaty palms off on his knees before leaning back against his couch. *Best to get right to it.* "I wanted to ask about something. Are you busy right now?"

"Ahh— no! No, I'm—" Katsuki could hear the sound of papers shuffling and books closing in the background. "I'm not, uhm. I'm not busy." He told him, and Katsuki smirked slightly as the noises slowly faded into silence. Izuku couldn't lie to save his life. "What'd you want to ask?"

Katsuki took a deep breath, steeling himself. "Remember way back when you first told me you liked poetry?"

And for a second, Izuku was quiet. Then, "Yes, uhm..." he trailed off. Katsuki could practically *hear* the cogs turning in the other's mind. Could hear him attempting to predict the path of conversation. "What about it?"

"I've been waiting for a good time to ask this, but at this point I don't think there's ever gonna be one so, just..." He hesitated briefly, squeezing his eyes shut and taking a slow, deep breath.

"Why'd you get so upset back then?"

Izuku audibly opened his mouth, some aborted noise coming out just before Katsuki cut him off, "And *don't say you weren't fuckin' upset.* I know you were. And like, *yeah,* I was kind of a fuckass about it, I know, but..." He sighed, trying to rid the tension from his muscles. "Look, could you just tell me?"

For several seconds, Izuku said nothing. Only the barely-there sound of his breathing came through the speaker.

After a while, Katsuki opened his mouth again, intending to say something like, '*or not, I guess,*' but the moment he inhaled to speak, Izuku shattered the silence.

"I was bullied over it." He stated plainly.

Katsuki froze with his mouth open as the words settled in. It wasn't especially *shocking*, but there was something disconcerting about the way he said it. It wasn't monotone — even a monotone voice still communicated *something* about the emotions of the speaker, though it varied greatly depending on the context. But the way Izuku spoke was not so much void of emotion as it was simply lacking a dominant one, some definitive emotion which tipped the scales to reveal what exactly it was that he was feeling. As a result, Katsuki found himself unable to come up with a single safe response to the statement.

So he just waited, and after a moment, Izuku continued.

"I didn't have very many friends growing up," He elaborated softly. "I was really quiet, most of the time. Other kids used to get annoyed because I had this habit of mumbling, 'cause I was always... sort of in my own little world. I... actually still do that," he laughed, in a clear attempt to mask his

anxiety. “It wasn’t so bad at first. I mean, I was always a little weird, but I didn’t stand out very much, so the others mostly just left me alone, but...” Izuku trailed off, taking a deep breath before going on. “I mean, to this day, I’m not really sure what it was about the poetry thing that... I guess, *bugged* them so much?”

Katsuki shifted the pillows on the couch around and moved to lie down on his side, balancing the phone on his cheek as he continued to listen in silence.

“I-I mean, I guess to preface this I should say that I’ve been interested in poetry since I was quite young. My mom used to read it to me instead of bedtime stories,” he explained. “I think the thing that fascinated me the most was just the notion that ideas could be more or less powerful depending on the words you used to say them. I mean, I’m still fascinated by it to this day — the fact that there are infinitely many different ways to say the exact same thing, and the way you choose to say it determines what kind of emotions the idea evokes.

“I experimented with that a lot as a child. I started keeping journals for it at a young age, and early on I remember I’d just have like, ten consecutive pages of the same poem worded differently,” he released a soft laugh, barely there. It dissolved into silence a second later, and Izuku paused before going on. “I think maybe that had something to do with it. The repetitiveness, I mean. For the first few years I did it, no one bothered me about it because nobody actually *knew*. It wasn’t until I was seven that they found out.” He sighed, and his exhaustion permeated the distance between them. “I was caught writing in class, so my teacher took the notebook and read something from it to the entire class.”

*That* roused a response from Katsuki.

“What the fuck?” He said, and he felt his mind toeing the line between irritation and *righteous anger*.

“Yeah,” Izuku replied. “I mean, it wasn’t something super personal. I think it was just some random thing about my dog, actually...” He trailed off, recalling. “But it *was* the beginning. It certainly didn’t help that after reading the poem out loud, she then proceeded to tell me to, ‘*stop wasting my time on such pointless things.*’”

“Fucking *christ*,” Katsuki muttered, sitting up. “Is this bitch still teaching?”

“Probably not. I mean, she was pretty old and it *was* thirteen years ago.” Izuku laughed softly. Humorlessly. “But believe me, you have no idea how many times I’ve contemplated trying to figure out where she lives just so I can go over there and, like, demand she pay for damages, or something. I mean, my mom *did* have to put me in therapy when I was in middle school. That was *not* cheap. At the very least, I’d want to just... ask her if she *knew*. Like, ‘hey, so, remember that time when you managed to ruin several years of my life within the span of thirty seconds in the name of maintaining ‘order’ in the classroom?’ Something like that. I know it’s kind of petty, but...” He paused for a moment. “I mean, I *know* it’s petty, but also, I... don’t really *care*. Honestly, that woman can go to hell, because not only did she *start* it, she saw it get *worse* and just didn’t do anything about it.

“I remember coming home from school one day and realizing my journal wasn’t in my backpack. I thought I’d just lost it, but I found out the next morning that some kids actually took it.” Izuku paused to take a deep breath. “The next morning, it was like everyone knew. I’m still not sure how it happened so quickly, but the teasing started immediately. There were...” He swallowed audibly, and when he continued, his voice was noticeably shakier. “The poem the teacher read wasn’t so bad, but... t-there was some pretty personal stuff in there. Stuff about, like— uhm, well, my dad, and things...”

Katsuki was not used to being in situations where he may need to comfort someone, much less ones where he actually *wanted* to. It felt as though his mind was scattered around the room, broken up into jagged pieces, because the impulse was there, but he had no idea what to do with it. He didn't dare speak, for fear of saying the wrong thing.

"Kids can be really, ah... cruel. Though, honestly, I think a lot of the just... didn't really understand how, well— *wrong* it was." After a second, he clarified, "Well, actually, I *know* that was the case. Over the years a couple of them have actually come forward and apologized to me sincerely, and I've forgiven them. None of the things they did can be undone, but... I've forgiven them."

Katsuki almost wanted to shout, '*No, don't ever fucking forgive them. How could you just **do** that?*' But he refrained. Deep down, he begrudgingly knew that it was probably better for Izuku this way. Healthier. But somehow, he just couldn't quite reconcile that concept with the image of young, wide-eyed Izuku, with his toothless smiles and freckled cheeks. He didn't want to think about that boy *crying*.

"It wasn't actually, uhm— *physical* until around middle school." Izuku stated. "Honestly, at a certain point it was like I didn't even know what it was about anymore," he said, huffing a small, humorless laugh. "It was almost like the poetry thing was just an entryway; an excuse to harass me about other things. I was small and effeminate and still struggling with my sexuality, and it was like everything was fair game." Izuku released a long, drawn-out sigh. *He sounds so fucking tired*. "Things got better when I entered high school. I started working out and became more confident, but some things you just... never really get over."

Katsuki hummed, something he only hoped sounded like an affirmation of some kind. He was still trying to figure out where he fit into this conversation, if at all. He wanted to stay silent because it felt safer, but at the same time, he worried about that silence being misinterpreted.

*Why are feelings so goddamn hard? Fucking fuck!*

"It wasn't always bad, though." Izuku spoke up again, his voice steadier this time. "Shiori was there for me during the hard times, and— ah! Shiori was my dog's name," he clarified. "I didn't always want to tell my mom about the bullying because I was scared of making her worried, but I would tell Shiori everything. I remember reading somewhere that dogs can actually read facial expressions and emotions. Maybe that's why she was always so eager to stay with me on the bad days."

"Dogs are also just... I dunno, better than people," Katsuki responded, finally breaking his silence, albeit uncomfortably. "Most of the time, I mean. Sometimes they're loud."

Izuku giggled. "Yeah, Shiori was really sweet, though. Big, fluffy, white dog. People used to mistake her for a sheep," Izuku went on, and Katsuki couldn't help but notice how much calmer he sounded as he told him about her. "Did you have dogs growing up, Kacchan?"

"Nah," he answered, feeling slightly less awkward. "Didn't really have any pets. I had a snake when I was a kid, though."

"Ooh," Izuku said adorably. *Fuck*. "What was his name? Or, uhh.. Her. It? Uhm—" He decided to cut Izuku off, so as to keep him from spending even more time struggling with *snake pronouns*.

"*His* name was King Explosion Murder." He stated flatly. Izuku was quiet for a moment, as his words seemed to die in his throat.

Then, "*Seriously?*"

“Yeah.” Katsuki replied, standing up and wandering back to his bedroom. “‘The King’ for short.”

“Okay, but...” Izuku paused before releasing a very long, drawn-out, “*Why?*”

“Hey, *fuck you*. It’s a good-ass name, dick weasel.” He retaliated, moving to sit on the edge of his bed, and then promptly collapsing. “Also, I was seven and when I first saw him at the pet store I thought he was a dragon,” He mumbled under his breath. Izuku laughed, and Katsuki bit his lip against the impulse to respond. There were two things that weighed heavily on his tongue — the first one being an expression of pure indignation, and the second being some blatant commentary about how cute his laugh was. That was a game of Russian roulette Katsuki was more than happy not to take part in.

“Well, what kind was he?”

“Ball Python,” Katsuki answered, shifting the pillows beneath his head slightly. “Went through fuckin’ hell just to convince my parents to let me get ‘em. He was pretty chill, though.”

“Ah, wow! that’s so cool!” The other exclaimed, his tone full of childlike excitement. *Fuckfuckfuck*. “I’ve always thought snakes were neat. I think I’d be kinda scared to actually touch one, though.”

“Yeah, I knew a lot of people like that.” Katsuki retorted, cracking a smile as he stared up at the ceiling. “When I was a kid, I used to like answering the door with him just chillin’ around my neck. Freaked a lot of people out.”

“I would imagine so,” Izuku giggled.

“Yeah, my mom made me stop eventually,” he went on. “I still did it whenever a friend came over, though. Especially if they’d never been there before. It was kind of a test. Like, if they ain’t cool with the King, they ain’t cool with me.” Katsuki huffed a short laugh.

“Makes sense,” the other replied. Katsuki could *hear* his smile. “It sounds like you liked him a lot.”

“Yeah, I guess.” Katsuki muttered, eyes darting to the side and back again. “Liked him enough to get him live mice on his birthday.”

Izuku made a vaguely grossed out noise. “So they *do* eat mice, then?”

“Yep.” He affirmed. As the memory came back to him, a grin stretched across his face. “But damn, you shoulda seen it. I had to fuckin’ fight my mom over that shit, she was *not* havin’ it. I was like, ‘Hey, *fuck you*, mom. It’s his fuckin’ birthday. The birthday snake gets to eat live mice!’”

“Oh—” Izuku started cracking up, snorting with the force of it. “I’m— I’m sorry, I’m just. I’m trying to imagine you saying that, but like... in a high-pitched voice and *tiny*, and it’s, it’s just— oh my *god*.”

“Yeah, yeah. Laugh it up, ‘ya damn *bagel fucker*. ” Katsuki rolled his eyes. “But yeah, the King was the coolest fuckin’ snake on Earth. *Objectively*. Anyone who says otherwise can fucking fight me in real life.”

“Yeah, he sounds like really nice *danger noodle*.” Izuku spoke in between bouts of laughter. “What a sweet *nope rope*.”

“Oh my *god*, Deku” Katsuki groaned. “Shut the fuck—”



“—A long puppy.”

“*Deku.*”

“Freestyle stick.”

“Deku, I swear to *god*, if you don’t shut the fuck up *right now*—”

“—Friend spaghetti!” He shouted, bursting into a fit of unabashed giggling again. Katsuki’s left eye twitched as a *conscious choice*.

“*God*, you’re such a fucking nerd.” He sighed, playing up his exasperation. He would *hate* to admit it, some of those were actually pretty funny. *Heh. Friend spaghetti.* “I mean what’re you, some kinda snake otaku?” He snorted. “Guess it’s still better than how people usually responded.”

“Oh?” Izuku’s laughing pittered out gradually. “People responded negatively?”

“Yeah. I mean, there’s a lot of shit about snakes people just don’t fuckin’ get, I guess.” He explained. “Like the aggression thing. I mean, if you never fuckin’ handle the snake and only ever open the tank to feed ‘em, they’re gonna think you’re bringing food every time you open it. It’s your own damn fault if they bite you, at that point.”

“I’ve never really thought about it like that, but it makes sense.” Izuku replied thoughtfully. Then Katsuki heard a sudden intake of breath, like something had just occurred to the other. “Wait, but — don’t snakes live like, a really long time, Kacchan?”

Katsuki tensed ever-so-slightly, hesitating. He hadn’t been expecting to go into *this*, and it took him some time to collect his thoughts. “...Yeah, but...” He trailed off.

After a few seconds, Izuku broke the silence. “Kacchan?” He said, the barest hint of concern in his tone.

“Yeah, they do,” Katsuki sighed in exasperation, squeezing his eyes shut and pinching the bridge of his nose. “It’s too bad my parents fucking got rid of him when I was eleven.”

“They—” he cut himself off, and tried again. “They *what*? But... But *why*?”

*Fuck, okay*, Katsuki thought to himself, in a sort of numb acceptance. *Guess I’m telling this story, now.*

“It was all my shitty little cousin’s fault.” He began, gritting his teeth. Katsuki took a moment to inhale deeply before going on, spilling it all in one breath. “My aunt fuckin’ brought him over while I was still at school. Little shit got into my room, reached into the goddamn tank, tried to fuckin’ *grab* him by the tip of his tail, and guess what? The King bit him.”

“*What*?” Izuku gasped. “That’s— well, I mean, why wasn’t anyone *watching* him? They just let him wander into your room *unsupervised*?”

“That’s what I fuckin’ said!” Katsuki shouted. “Like, look— it *barely* even bled, but he still cried like a bitch over it, and goddamn, my aunt got *so fucking pissed*, and I’m just over here like, well, *shit*, maybe you should watch your fucking child, lady, *huh*?”

“Wait, she was mad? Like, at *you*? At the *King*?” Izuku sounded absolutely astounded, which, as far as Katsuki was concerned, was really the only reasonable reaction that didn’t involve incoherent *screeching*. After all, it *was* an *astounding* level of stupidity. “Why would she be mad at *anyone*

other than *herself* and *her kid*?”

“I don’t fucking know. People just don’t fucking like snakes,” he countered. “Like, they freak ‘em out because they can’t project their *bullshit feelings* onto them. And they just see that they’re not affectionate the way dogs and cats are and assume it means they all just fucking hate humanity, or something.”

“God,” Izuku sighed deeply. He made a small noise, then — that *oh-hey-I-just-thought-of-something* noise. “Wait, so... *are* they affectionate? I mean, in their own way?”

“I mean, yeah, kind of.” Katsuki’s palm slid down his face and onto the blankets. As he racked his brain for a proper explanation, attempting to recall how he’d described it in the past, it suddenly hit him when he came up with nothing. Katsuki honestly wasn’t sure he if he ever *had* told anyone about it. “Like, the King wanted to be *around* me and shit, I guess. When I opened his tank he’d come right out and had no issues with me holding him.”

“So, then...” He seemed to hesitate for a moment, like he wasn’t quite sure if he should ask. “Do you think The King had, like... feelings?”

And evidently, that question tapped into his memories, because in that moment, Katsuki could suddenly recall dozens of times as a child when others — his family, his teachers, his friends, his *friends’* family — had asked him the same question, yet he had been unable to adequately answer it. Perhaps he was just too young. Perhaps their minds were never open to begin with.

A good fifteen seconds or so went by before he released a deep sigh, exhausted by his own thoughts.

“I don’t fucking know,” He started, glaring up at the ceiling. “I mean... having a snake isn’t really *about* feelings, it’s... It’s like, about *trust*.”

The sound of Izuku’s steady breathing on the line was calming, if a bit odd. It felt... It was almost as if he’d been expecting him to interrupt him.

Was that how it usually went?

“The King was wary of other people, but he was totally comfortable around me. He knew he was safe when I was holding him, so take that as you will, I guess.” He explained quietly. The slightest hint of a smile graced his lips as another memory came back to him. “I used to chill in my room at night, doing homework or playing video games with him around my neck. It was... nice.” He said the word very slowly, as if it was foreign to his tongue.

“Kind of relaxing, I guess. I trusted him not to strangle me and he trusted me to keep him safe and not do shit that would make him uncomfortable.” Katsuki went on. “And I kinda liked that, y’know... It was alright. Just hangin’ out with the King.”

“I mean, I had friends and shit, but I didn’t wanna be around them *all the time*.” Katsuki suddenly felt an odd, looming sense of foreboding over his head. Some deep impulse shocked his mind and urged him to hang up the phone and never bring any of this up again. He wasn’t quite sure why. “Like— the King kept me company and the relationship was simple, y’know. It was *easy*. It didn’t drain my energy, it was just, like, a thing. I dunno. He was *there*.”

An alarm resounded somewhere in the depths of his soul: *Katsuki Bakugou, you are now entering the danger zone. Please vacate the area.*

Against his better judgement, he ignored it.

“But my parents just... didn’t really get that.” He stated through gritted teeth, sitting up to lean over his knees. “They assumed he was just some kinda novelty to me. Just some mindless thing that couldn’t really *love* anything, so I guess that made it okay to just— just fucking *get rid* of him.” Suddenly, his throat felt constricted.

*Katsuki Bakugou, you must evacuate immediately.*

“A-And yeah, I mean, I know he probably didn’t *love* me, but like...” He swallowed a lump in his throat, his eyes opening up wide, gaze locked firmly on the ceiling. “It... it just *sucks*, y’know? Like... I dunno, I guess maybe think I would’ve done better. Maybe gotten into less trouble later on if they’d just— Like, *shit*. I don’t fucking *know*—”

*Katsuki Bakugou, this evacuation is mandatory.*

“I wasn’t like, *articulate* enough to explain shit to them back then. It was... I mean, it was fucking upsetting, y’know? Like, of course it was. Fucking *obviously*.” He released a shaky exhale, gripping his phone tighter against his face. “A-And I think...”

*Katsuki Bakugou.*

“I think the worst part wasn’t that they didn’t understand. Like, that would’ve been fine. They don’t have to. I don’t give a fuck.”

*This is your final warning.*

“The worst part was that they didn’t even... seem to want to *try*.” He heard his voice break but felt utterly powerless to stop it. “They didn’t want to try and understand this thing that was fucking important to me,” he swallowed. Katsuki could hear ringing in his ears. “Because I was just some *stupid fucking kid*.”

Katsuki’s hand shook as he pushed back his hair. He knew he couldn’t say anything more — his throat felt too tight. And Katsuki wasn’t one to cry often, but he still knew that feeling when he had it. That feeling of teetering on the edge, just one syllable away from breaking. The world froze around him, and Katsuki was locked in stasis.

All he could do was wait for Izuku to reply. Until then, he was frozen in place — suspended in the space in between.

When Izuku spoke, the first word he said was ‘*Kacchan*.’

Incidentally, it was also the last, for as soon as he heard it, the sound of his own blood rushing in his ears drowned out everything — every sound and every thought. Everything except one command from his brain to his fingers, screaming for him to hang up as quickly as possible.

So he did.

He hung up on Izuku.

He crawled under the covers.

And he wondered if Izuku would try to call him back

And he wondered why that thought was suddenly fucking *terrifying*.

Katsuki turned off his phone before he could find out, and shut out the light. He hadn’t showered,

or brushed his teeth, or done anything, really, but he was just so damn exhausted, he couldn't be bothered.

He just pulled the covers up over his head.

He couldn't bare to look at those damn curtains right now.

---

At five in the morning, Katsuki awoke with a jolt, coated in sweat and spiraling in a potent state of confusion.

He grabbed his phone out of habit, and turned it on. It was only at the sight of three missed calls, two texts, and one voicemail that the events of the previous night began to come back to him.

And he knew he shouldn't do it — shouldn't listen to Izuku's voicemail. At least not *now*. But his thumb was on the screen tapping, his head on the pillow, eyes staring up at the ceiling. Soon enough, the speaker was against his ear, and the Izuku of four hours ago was speaking softly into it.

"Kacchan, remember... way back when I told you that there was a poem you reminded me of?" He paused, hesitating. Like he wasn't quite sure if whatever he had in mind was a good idea or not. Izuku swallowed audibly. "I'd... I'd like to read it for you, if you'll listen."

*"Please listen."* He whispered.

Izuku cleared his throat, "O-okay, so—" After a moment, he stated, "This is a poem by Charles Bukowski. It's... It's called *Bluebird*."

And with that, he began.

*"There's a bluebird in my heart that  
wants to get out  
but I'm too tough for him,  
I say, stay in there, I'm not going  
to let anybody see  
you."*

(Whenever Izuku paused, Katsuki held his breath.)

*"there's a bluebird in my heart that  
wants to get out  
but I pour whiskey on him and inhale  
cigarette smoke"*

*and the whores and the bartenders  
and the grocery clerks  
never know that  
he's  
in there.”*

(His body tensed, frozen in place, waiting for him to go on.)

*“there's a bluebird in my heart that  
wants to get out  
but I'm too tough for him,  
I say,  
stay down, do you want to mess  
me up?  
you want to screw up the  
works?  
you want to blow my book sales in  
Europe?”*

(Had it always been like this? With him. With Izuku. How did it get to this point?)

*“there's a bluebird in my heart that  
wants to get out  
but I'm too clever, I only let him out  
at night sometimes  
when everybody's asleep.  
I say, I know that you're there,  
so don't be  
sad.*

*then I put him back,  
but he's singing a little  
in there, I haven't quite let him  
die  
and we sleep together like  
that  
with our  
secret pact  
and it's nice enough to  
make a man  
weep, but I don't  
weep, do  
you?"*

Katsuki was silent.

He held his breath until he heard the line go dead.

His first inhale afterward was slow, stuttering — almost as though he'd forgotten how.

Shaky hands tapped at his phone, pulling up the unread text messages. He chewed his lip as they showed up on his screen, glowing bright in front of his face.

**Deku 2:34 AM**

*Please get some rest, Kacchan.*

**Deku 2:35 AM**

*You're amazing, but even you need to rest.*

Katsuki felt his eye twitch, something warm and wet slowly rolling down his cheek.

And he wanted to reply to him. Wanted to tell him off, tell him to worry about himself, not him. Say, *'I'm doing just fine without it, go fuck yourself, Deku'* and then stay up through the early hours of the morning out of *spite*.

But he didn't.

Instead, he locked his phone, and placed it on his night stand. He rolled over onto his side, and pulled the covers up further. He squeezed his eyes shut, and allowed himself to remain there. Suspended in the space in between.

## Chapter End Notes

BAKUSNAKE IS BEST BOY and wow, that sounds like an innuendo lmao

I think a couple of you already guessed what the poem was lol, so kudos to you all! I guess it's not like, an extremely obscure thing, though.

I always feel kinda insecure about posting things that aren't just like. fluffy shitposty humor, because I feel like that's the main reason why people actually read my writing. Like I almost feel like I need to apologize lol... but idk, chapter five will be more of an even mixture of serious things and humor, I think.

I had a lot of doubts writing the shit about the King because like. I dunno, I kept questioning whether Kacchan would get upset about it or not. But I figured... I mean, if you had a pet that you really loved for four years of your childhood and then your parents took it away for some bullshit reason without considering how it would affect you and then you bottled up your feelings about it for like a decade, allowing them to age like a *fine wine*, then... Idk, ya might be a *little fuckin upset*. lmao

~~also, it's based on a true story. I knew a guy in elementary school who had a ball python named Sam, and his mom gave it away or some shit after it bit someone. so~~  
yEAH

Anyway, thank you guys so much for commenting and leaving kudos and just.

Generally being fucking amazing?? (I'm in the process of responding to ur comments aslkdjflk pls continue to bear with me)

Comments are the source of my power, tbh.

Anyway, next chapter will prrrrrrobably be the last one, unless I decide to write like. An epilogue or something lol. There is a possibility that there'll be more, if chapter five gets too long and I have to split it or some shit, but yeah. Thank you all again!

# Treading Water

## Chapter Notes

Sorry this took so long! A lot's been going on, but HEY

Also, SURPRISE, there's going to be one more chapter lol, and then perhaps an epilogue, **if people want one**.

Sorry if there are typos. I kind of had to rush to finish this.

Anyway, without further ado, here's 8.6k words of Katsuki playing *The Floor is Healthy Emotional Expression*. I apologize in advance.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Katsuki awoke the next morning in a haze — that sort of achy, disoriented fog that overcame one's mind in the wake of an emotional episode. It felt like everything around him was moving in slow motion, muted and distant, as though the world were underwater. His thoughts were dull and monotonous, as if his emotions had been anesthetized. The feeling persisted for several days afterward.

He hadn't spoken to Izuku since that night, though not for lack of trying on the other's part. Every night, at around eleven o'clock, Katsuki would receive a call from him, and every night, at around eleven o'clock, Katsuki would stare at the name as it lit up his phone screen, listen to his ringtone repeating itself until it abruptly halted in the middle of the third loop, and the screen blacked out. Katsuki never had any intention of answering, and yet he always seemed to find himself free when the call came. He didn't want to think about why that was.

There was a small coffee shop connected to the bookstore where Izuku worked, and Katsuki seemed to find himself working on homework there more and more often. And yeah, he knew that it was *more than a little creepy*, but no matter how hard he tried, he just couldn't seem to make himself stay away. Every once in a while, he'd look up and see the green-haired man moving swiftly around, pushing trolleys full of books, or organizing shelves, or helping out customers with a smile on his face that made Katsuki wonder how exactly he'd reached this point of pathological *patheticness*, before reminding himself that he was better off not thinking about it. So he'd squeeze his eyes shut, take a deep breath, and try to lose himself in his schoolwork again.

On one particular day, while Katsuki was sipping some, frankly, *shitty* coffee and trying to convince himself to give a fuck about convolution integrals, he recognized a familiar face out of the corner of his eye that was not Izuku's. He blinked, and suddenly there were two, and it all happened so quickly that it took him a moment to realize what was going on.

"Bakugou? Is that you?" A voice, *Kirishima's*, called to him as it grew nearer. Katsuki glanced up and recognized Kaminari trailing behind him, and for a moment he was frozen in place, as though his very existence was buffering as his mind attempted to work through the cognitive dissonance that had violently hit him at the sight of those two in a *bookstore*, of all places.

He opened his mouth to respond at the precise moment that Izuku strolled by around twenty feet away, and the words suffocated in his throat.

Glancing back at his two *so-called-friends*, he noticed the odd stares they were giving him, and for a few seconds, he merely stared back, his jaw tight as he internally debated where to go from there.



After a moment, he simply stood up and jerked his head toward the side door, prompting the two to follow him.

Katsuki released a deep sigh as he stepped out into the open air. “What the *fuck* do you want?”

“Uhm, nothing?” Kaminari replied, narrowing his eyes. “We were literally just gonna say hi, but now you’re acting all *sketch*.”

“Yeah, man, what’s the deal?” Kirishima chimed in, a hint of concern in his eyes. “Something wrong?”

“*No*.” He blurted instinctively. “I mean, yes—” Katsuki gritted his teeth. “I mean, no, I mean—*fuck*—”

“—Okay, so that’s a *yes*.” Kirishima cut in.

“*Fuck you*.” He bit back, shoving his hands into his pockets. A couple of seconds of silence went by before Kaminari decided to fill it.

“So...” He squinted. “Are you gonna to tell us what’s up anytime soon, or...?”

Katsuki sneered, retaliating, “Are you gonna jump back up your mom’s vagina anytime soon, or...?”

“And that’s a *no*!” Kirishima supplied, smiling cheerfully, prompting Katsuki to glower at him viciously.

“Did you break your phone again?” Kaminari asked, cocking his head to the side.

“The fuck?” His gaze jerked toward the other blonde, taken aback. “*No*—”

“—Did the barista puke in your coffee?”

For a moment, Katsuki just stared at him, squinting as he struggled to comprehend how one could possibly ask such stupid questions with such a serious tone. He shook his head in an attempt to clear it, though it was more for show than anything else.

“Okay, what *the fuck* is wrong with you?”

“That’s our line, Bakugou.” Kirishima retorted, smirking. “We just wanna get to the bottom of this, y’know?”

“Well, stop asking such fucking asinine questions.”

“Well, are you gonna tell us what’s wrong?” Kaminari asked.

“*Get fucked*.”

“You know I’m just gonna keep guessing until you tell us, Bakugou.” Kaminari stared blankly back at him — this sort of deadpan resolve. “If I’ve got to stand here in the middle of the sidewalk playing ‘what’s crawled up Bakugou’s ass today,’ until the sun goes down, I will.”

“Holy fucking *shit*,” he groaned. “Will you just—”

“—Did an ostrich kick you in the balls?”

“What—”

“—Did someone steal your identity and move to Belize?” He asked, and *fucking christ, this shit just keeps fucking coming*. “Did you get sprayed with a super-soaker full of cat piss? Did someone replace all your neckties with eels? Did you get your dick caught in a food processor? It’s actually a lot easier to do than you’d think.”

“What *the hell*—”

“Did someone force you to fellate a banana at gunpoint?”

“*The fuck is wrong wi—*”

“Did you get kidnapped and develop stockholm syndrome for your captor?”

“Okay, *listen*, dipshit—”

“Did you accidentally write a best-selling erotic novel?”

“How the *fuck*—”

“Did you, *god forbid*,” He took a step forward, placing his hand on Katsuki’s shoulder as he gazed at him with a reverent look in his eyes. “*Did you leave the stove on?*”

Katsuki slapped his hand away. “I swear to *fucking god*, you *fucking* piece of *fucking* shit,” he bared his teeth. “If you don’t shut the fuck up *right now*, *I will shove your head so far up your ass, you will turn inside out.*”

“Dude,” Kirishima said plainly. “You know he’s just gonna keep going until you spill. C’mon.”

Katsuki glared at the two for several seconds, hoping to deter them, though in the end, he knew Kirishima was right.

He sighed, exasperated, as weighed the pros and cons of telling them. It wouldn’t be the first time they’d heard the name ‘Deku.’ Katsuki had mentioned him plenty of times before, from small remarks made in passing to retellings of entire conversations. Should he choose to clue them in on the particular circumstance, Katsuki knew that an inability to understand would not be an issue.

He was, however, quite substantially concerned that they would understand a bit too *well*.

But after a while of contemplating, Katsuki eventually just gave in, groaning in resignation.

“*Fucking Deku’s* in there.” He finally stated, staring down at his feet. “All the fuckin’ bookstores he could’ve worked in, and it had to be *this one*.”

The two gaped at him, mouths hanging wide open in a way that made Katsuki wonder if they’d spent a past life living as a couple of brain-dead fish.

“*Deku?*” Kaminari blinked a few times pointedly. “Like, *Deku Deku?*”

“*The Deku?*”

“*Do you know any other Dekus?!*” Katsuki snapped, because *shit*, he was *already* regretting this.

“That’s *crazy*, man!” Kirishima exclaimed.

“Yeah. No fucking shit. Now, *get lost*.” He bared his teeth, trying to convey that this was non-negotiable as he turned back toward the door. Kaminari stepped out in front of him before he could reach the handle.

“Wait, wait, wait, so—” He paused, his brow furrowing. “Does he know you’re there? Have you talked to him?”

“What the fuck? Of *course* not.”

For a moment, both Kirishima and Kaminari seemed dumbstruck, eyes wide and shoulders tense as they stared back at him. Katsuki glanced between the two, feeling a sudden spike of anxiety under their gaze.

“*What—*”

Like a trigger of some sort, the first word from Katsuki’s mouth prompted the other two to immediately interrupt.

“What do you mean ‘of course not’?!” Kaminari balked.

“Why haven’t you said anything?!” Kirishima nearly shouted. “You’ve just been *watching* him this whole time?”

“*No!*” Katsuki lied on impulse, but the knowing looks on his friends’ faces told him his efforts were fruitless. He gritted his teeth. “Okay, *maybe—*”

“—Dude, that’s *so fucking creepy*.” Kaminari sighed, giving him a look of profound disappointment.

“Hey!” Katsuki barked. “I don’t need to be hearing that from the guy who tried to give Jirou his fucking *dick* in a *box* for Christmas.”

“Wha— it was *funny!*” The blonde retaliated indignantly.

“It was *sexual harassment*, you fucking dick grenade.”

“*Kyouka* thought it was funny!” He crossed his arms, glaring

“No, she thought your *dick* was funny.” Katsuki corrected. “Big difference.”

“Big difference, small dickference, am I right?” Kirishima added with a grin. Katsuki snorted.

“Wow, okay!” Kaminari practically shouted, throwing his arms up in the air. “So, could someone maybe fill me in on how the *hell* this conversation went from ‘time to stage an intervention for Bakugou acting like a damn stalker’ to ‘the Let’s All Make Fun of Kaminari’s Dick Super-Happy-Fun-Time Variety Hour’?!”

“Wha— I’m not fucking *stalking* him, for fuckssake!” Katsuki argued. “I’m just doing homework!”

“Okay, but why *here*?” Kaminari asked, shoving his hands in his pockets pointedly.

“The coffee’s good!”

“Dude, you *hate* coffee.” Kirishima deadpanned.

“What the fuck? No, I don’t.” He scowled. “I drink coffee every goddamn morning, dipshit.”

“Uh,” One of Kirishima’s eyes twitched. “I wouldn’t call that *coffee*, bro.”

“Yeah man, that shit’s just *gross*.” The blonde agreed.

“Sometimes I lay awake at night wondering if you have taste buds.” Kirishima looked up at the sky, as if searching for god.

“I’m pretty sure the stuff you’re doing to your coffee is illegal in one of the Baltic states.” Kaminari added. “I believe it’s considered a hate crime.”

“I mean, no offense, man but... What did *roasted bean juice* ever do to *you*?”

“Holy shit, will you *shut the fuck up*? ” Katsuki all but yelled. “I don’t give a *rat’s ass* about what you think of my coffee, and I don’t give a *rat’s ass* about what you think of me being here, okay?! It doesn’t fucking *matter*! It’s not like I’m ever gonna talk to him again, anyway!”

Katsuki abruptly closed his mouth, the angered scowl dropping from his face, as the weight of his own thoughtless words came crashing down on him. He reached up to pinch the bridge of his nose, because *goddamnit, this is gonna be a whole ‘nother thing, now, isn’t it?*

“Dude...” Kirishima began carefully. “What... What do you *mean* you’re not talking to him again?”

“Haven’t you been doing this whole phone-call-buddies thing for like, what, *six* months, now?”

“Seven, actually.” Katsuki replied, in a mock-cheerful tone. His jaw felt tight.

“*Seven months*, and you’re just stopping,” Kirishima snapped his fingers, “like *that*?” He gave him a concerned look, his brow furrowed. “Are you seriously *okay* with that?”

Katsuki didn’t answer.

“Dude.”

Katsuki looked away.

“Dude,” Kirishima repeated. “Whatever crap you’ve got unsettled between you two, you’ve gotta *fix it*.”

“Oh yeah?” Katsuki sneered, turning back to him swiftly. “*Why*? The fuck do *you* know?”

“I mean,” Kaminari chimed in. “All I know is that this ‘Deku’ guy’s the only person I’ve ever heard you talk about in a way that made you sound gay in both senses of the word.”

Kirishima snorted, “Nice,” exchanging a not-so-subtle fistbump with the other blonde. The grin dropped from his face once he looked back at Katsuki. “But seriously though, like... what’s the deal? Is he ignoring you or something?”

“No,” Katsuki scoffed. “It’s more like *I’m* ignoring *him*.”

Both Kirishima and Kaminari went quiet for a few second. Just as Katsuki was beginning to think that he’d had enough of their eerie, ominous silences, the redhead finally spoke up.

“So... What you’re saying is...” He lowered his chin slightly, narrowing his eyes. “You’ve got to

find a way to make *yourself* stop ignoring him...?”

“Wow, what kind of mindfuck is that?” Kaminari asked, with the tonality and grin of a small child at an amusement park.

Katsuki’s eye twitched. He was exactly one smartass comment away from *fucking decking* Kaminari. Vaguely, he wondered how and *why* he’d wound up with a group of friends against whom he consistently wished to enact violence. He clenched his fist and took a step back toward the door.

“Wait, wait, wait!” Kirishima said hastily, shuffling in front of him in such a way that Katsuki was instantly reminded of a crab, for some reason. “So, like, has he called you?”

Katsuki glared, but eventually bit out a simple, “Yeah.”

“And you haven’t answered?”

“No.”

Kirishima blinked. “Wait, so, is that ‘no, I haven’t answered’ or ‘no, I have—’”

“—No, I haven’t fucking answered him!” Katsuki cut in.

“Okay, uhm.” He hesitated for a moment before *very slowly* asking, “*How come?*”

“Because I don’t fucking *want* to, dumbass, what do you think?”

Kirishima suddenly looked very, *very* tired.

“Well, maybe you should, like... I don’t know...” He shrugged. “Do it anyway? *Maybe?*”

“Well, maybe you should, like... I don’t know...” Katsuki shrugged twice as dramatically. “Grab some lube and slowly ease your ass down on fucking Tokyo Tower? *Maybe?*”

“See, this is why it’s hard to have a serious discussion with you, Bakugou,” Kirishima pointed at him, though his expression was impassive. “You just repeat back all the questions and statements that make you uncomfortable, but with some weird twist that’s meant to mock them but ultimately just derails the conversation and tempts people into changing the subject.”

Katsuki stared blankly at the red-haired man, his left eye twitching. Something about the way he said those words seemed to imply that he’d thought deeply about this before, and honestly, Katsuki had no fucking clue how to feel about that. He defaulted to quietly fermenting in his own rage.

The silence persisted until, finally, Kaminari broke it again.

“Do you think anyone’s ever tried to do that?” They both glanced over at the other blonde. He was staring at the horizon in thought. “Y’know, with the tower.”

“See?” Kirishima said. “It’s like trying to ride a carousel to the moon.”

Katsuki rubbed his temples, sighing heavily. He pursed his lips as he tried to get a handle on his anger. After all, they *were* still right outside that bookstore, and, needless to say, Katsuki was not particularly thrilled by the notion of inadvertently revealing himself to Izuku by thoughtlessly screaming at his *dumbass friends*.

“Okay, y’know what?” He finally began. “You want me to be direct? I’ll be fucking direct.”

Katsuki gritted his teeth. “I haven’t fucking *spoken* to fucking *Deku* because the last time I did, I blabbed some fucking embarrassing-ass shit so bad I had to fucking hang up on him.” He threw his hands up in the air, as if to say ‘fuck it.’ He continued, whisper-yelling, “I can’t answer his fucking *calls* because I just fucking *know* that we’re gonna end up talking about it again if I do, and frankly, I’d rather *cut off my own dick* and *shove it up my ass* than be under Deku’s *fucking* analytical lens having *that conversation*.”

Kirishima blinked several times slowly, in silence. Off in the distance, Katsuki heard someone’s car alarm go off. “So…” the redhead glanced to the side. “So, what you’re basically saying is… you’d rather *never speak to him again* than spend a few minutes talking about your *feelings*?”

Katsuki opened his mouth to retaliate, taking a sharp inhale, but the words never came to him.

“Dude, you need to talk to him.” Kirishima said, filling his silence. “How long has it been?”

He glared at him for a moment, not quite sure if he wanted to say it.

“S’been a little over a week,” he eventually answered.

“Okay,” Kirishima nodded. “That’s not too bad, I guess. You can still fix this.”

Katsuki grinded his teeth, but didn’t say anything.

“Has he texted you?” Kaminari piped up. “Left a voicemail? Anything like that?”

He turned to glare at him.

“Is that a yes?” Kaminari’s eyes drifted over to Kirishima. “It looks like a yes.”

“Yeah, it’s a yes.” Kirishima confirmed, smirking. “So what’s he been saying?”

Katsuki lowered his head, letting his bangs fall over his eyes as he stared at his feet. After a moment, he quietly responded, “I don’t know.”

Kaminari blinked. “You don’t—”

“I haven’t fucking *listened* to them.” Katsuki snapped, looking back up at him suddenly. “He leaves a voicemail every fucking day, okay? I haven’t fucking listened to them.”

“Why not?” Kaminari tilted his head to the side.

Katsuki opened his mouth, then bit his lip harshly.

What was he supposed to say?

*‘Because I’m worried he’ll tell me something that’ll shake my self-image again’?*

*‘Because he’s too goddamn perceptive, and I don’t think I could handle seeing myself through his eyes, again’?*

*‘Because I’ve gotten too comfortable with him. Because he’s gotten too close. Because I’m scared he’ll tell the truth’?*

Should he answer honestly? He couldn’t answer honestly. Should he lie to them? How should he lie? What should he say?

What should he *do*?

Katsuki shoved his hands deeper into his pockets, staring at his feet. Slowly, he shuffled back over to the door. Just as he grabbed the handle, he felt a hand on his shoulder, and tensed.

“Bro, listen.” Kirishima said, carefully soft, like he was treading a minefield. “I get that this kind of thing isn’t, well...” He trailed off, and paused. Katsuki felt a meter of tension rising beneath his skin. He ground his teeth against the ever-growing urge to knock that hand off his shoulder. “I get this isn’t the kind of thing you *like* dealing with, but... You’re not the only one being affected, here.” He sighed, letting his hand fall off his shoulder. Katsuki started to turn the doorknob.

The last thing he heard before heading back inside alone was:

“Just ask yourself if what you’re doing right now is really fair — not just to yourself, but to Deku, too.”

---

Every night, at around eleven o’clock, Izuku called him.

And it was so routine at this point, sixteen days in a row. Katsuki came to expect it, had begun to actively rearrange his schedule for the sake of it, even. On the foggy days, those days when he felt like his existence was pointless — that he was only moving forward, but never truly moving *toward* something — those were the days when he appreciated it the most. It was something he could latch onto.

He still never answered, despite Kirishima and Kaminari’s words, but it was comforting, in some weird way. Watching his phone vibrating across the coffee table, or on the nightstand. He would count two and a half loops of his ringtone before it stopped completely, and in his mind, that was when the day was over.

He’d gotten so used to waiting on it that he’d find himself glancing at his phone when he knew the time was near. The call usually came a few minutes later... until one day, it didn’t.

And for the next three days, it felt as though that first day had never really ended — it just dragged on.

It was particularly cruel, Katsuki thought. Of all days, it just *had* to be a Monday, didn’t it?

At first, Katsuki had thought, *hoped*, that it was just a mistake. Maybe Izuku just fell asleep early, or got wrapped up in something else. But the next night, it was the same thing again. And the night after that. And the night after that.

It was half-past eleven on Thursday night when Katsuki’s self-control finally snapped beneath the weight of anxiety. He decided to listen to Izuku’s daily voicemails — all sixteen of them, from oldest to newest.

In the dim light of his bedroom, he crawled beneath the sheets in silence and wrapped himself up tightly, as preparing to physically hold himself together in the event that Izuku’s words shattered him into a million pieces.

He scrolled down to the first message, and hit ‘play.’

**20 days ago**

“Hey, I hope you’re doing alright, Kacchan. Please call me back when you get a chance, alright?”

The sound of Izuku’s voice after twenty days of silence made his chest feel tight, and Katsuki nearly slapped himself across the face for it. He’d gone longer without talking to the other man before. Why was it different, now?

(Katsuki didn’t want to think about the answer to that question.)

### **19 days ago**

“Hey, it’s me again, uhm—” He halted abruptly, then released a small, nervous laugh. “I guess you’re probably pretty busy. I understand. Please call me back soon, though.”

### **18 days ago**

“Hey, Kacchan... I know you probably don’t want to talk about it.” He said, in a soft, almost forlorn tone. “A-And that’s okay!” He hastily added. “We don’t have to — I understand! We can talk about anything you’d like, so just... call me, okay?”

Something in the tone of Izuku’s voice loomed over Katsuki, casting a large shadow on his mind that made him wary of what was to come.

### **17 days ago**

“Ahah... I’m, uhm. I’m sorry to keep calling you like this, Kacchan, I know it’s... uhm,” he paused, then cleared his throat. “W-Well, anyway, some guy at the bookstore today got really angry and called me a sea cucumber, of all things,” He released a small, sheepish laugh. “Uhm, it — it kind of reminded me of you, but less... ah, vulgar, I guess? Anyway, call me back, please...”

Katsuki bit his lip. The fact that Izuku had thought of him like that at work did something strange to his stomach that he had no desire to analyze. Probably couldn’t, even if he wanted to. That lingering anxiety still tugged at his mind, yanking him in all different directions. He hit ‘play’ on the next voicemail.

### **16 days ago**

“Okay, about our last conversation, uhm... a-and this is the last thing I’ll say about it, I swear! Promise!” He exclaimed. Katsuki visualized him blushing red and waving his hands in the air defensively. Despite himself, it brought a slight smile to his face.

“We can pretend it never happened if you want, I just wanted to tell you this, so...” he paused. Katsuki heard him take a deep breath before speaking again. “Writing poetry can be really cathartic,” He said, in an exhale. “It’s— it’s a good way to get your feelings out of your head without having to actually, uhm... tell someone about it? I mean, I know it’s not your thing exactly, but...” He made some strange, shaky sound in the back of his throat.

“I-I dunno, it’s worth a try?” Izuku said, his voice sounding strangled. “That’s what I do when I’m



stressed out or depressed, anyway...” He mumbled, almost too quiet to be heard. Izuku cleared his throat. “I’d like it if you... I mean, at least give it a shot... Please?” He continued, reverent in his pleading.

Afterward, he was quiet for several seconds — or as quiet as Izuku could be, under typical circumstances. If Katsuki strained his ears, he could recognize the sound of him muttering in the distance, like he was holding the phone away from his face.

Finally, in an uncertain tone, he concluded with, “Anyway, uhm, call me back?” And hung up shortly after.

Katsuki wasn’t really sure what to make of that one. The suggestion took him off guard, and frankly, it wasn’t really something he had much interest in doing.

Katsuki had written poems for school assignments before, and he was a good student, so they usually wound up sounding alright, enough to earn him a good grade, in any case, but the process was never really enjoyable for him. The sort of poetry he’d written was formulaic — riddled with arbitrary rules about syllables and rhyme schemes which forcibly imposed a level of structure that made it damn near impossible for him to convey what he actually *wanted* to convey.

And sure, he was aware that not all poetry was like that. Listening to Izuku gush about poetry for hours on end had beat that fact into his skull, but oddly enough, that didn’t make him any more interested in writing it. Katsuki’s first impression of writing poetry had shown it to be stifling, *frustrating*. Katsuki was used to expressing his thoughts either directly or not at all. Every poem he’d written thus far had just seemed like a roundabout way to say nothing at all, and yet, even knowing that it didn’t have to work that way, he still felt that initial impression weighing heavily upon his mind.

Katsuki rubbed the bridge of his nose with a groan, and played the next message.

### 15 days ago

“I know this must be getting weird, like...” He faltered. “I-I don’t know, I keep calling you like this. I’m probably coming off really, uhm... well, *obsessive*.” He released a short huff of what he, knowing Izuku, assumed was *intended* to be laughter. To the untrained ear, however, it just sounded like a soft, sudden release of breath. Maybe vaguely distressed, if you squinted.

“Just— I just hope you’re doing okay, Kacchan. That’s... that’s all.” Izuku swallowed audibly, his voice wavering as he continued, “Uhm, even just a text, or something... maybe...”

Katsuki’s breath caught in his throat when he heard the telltale click of the line going dead. He gripped the sheet harshly as he pulled the phone away from his face and stared at it for a few seconds.

He replayed the message, pulling the covers tighter around himself. He couldn’t quite pin it down, but... that shadow over Izuku’s tone, over Katsuki when he heard it — it made him feel so *cold*.

His palms felt clammy as he hit ‘play’ on the next voicemail.

### 14 days ago

“You know, I actually like your voicemail a lot.” Izuku began, with some strange, unfamiliar inflection that Katsuki couldn’t find the words to define. That, in itself, caused his heart rate to accelerate. “It’s so much like you, I always used to laugh a little whenever I heard it.”

Izuku went quiet for several seconds. During that time, Katsuki heard absolutely nothing on the other end. No intakes of breath, and none of the usual Deku-noises that Katsuki had learned to recognize. Something about that was deeply unsettling. When Izuku continued, he didn’t break the silence — he *shattered* it.

“Nowadays it’s kind of... I don’t know, it makes my heart feel all... heavy.” Katsuki counted three seconds of silence before he went on. “I wanna hear your voice, Kacchan. Here, in the present...”

When the line went dead, violent shivers racked Katsuki’s frame. His phone nearly slipped from his hand.

### **13 days ago**

Izuku took a deep, shuddering breath. “It’s... it honestly feels so selfish of me but...” His voice faltered for a moment.

Then, “I miss you, Kacchan—”

Acting on impulse, Katsuki immediately paused the message. He wasn’t sure why he needed to, just that he *did*. After taking a few deep breaths, Katsuki closed his eyes and leaned back onto the pillows, skipping back a few seconds before ‘play’ again.

“I miss you, Kacchan. I miss talking to you, and hearing you, and all your vulgar jokes and weird insults, it’s...” His voice sounded stuffy, like his nose was stopped up. Katsuki wondered if he was sick. “I-I’m sorry. I can’t help it, it’s just—” Izuku halted suddenly, taking a deep breath and releasing it slowly. “I just miss you, Kacchan.”

The line went silent for several seconds. Long enough that Katsuki had to actually glance at the screen just to be sure the message hadn’t ended. When Izuku finally spoke again, it was in a quiet tone.

“I... I should go to sleep. I hope you’re sleeping well, wherever you are, Kacchan.”

### **12 days ago**

“Kacchan. I hope you’re doing well,” Izuku started, with an even tone. “I keep wondering what you think of, or what you’re feeling when you listen to these messages.” He sighed.

“I would hope it’s a good feeling, b-but...” his voice seemed to almost... *break* at the end, there. Izuku trailed off for just a second before he seemed to catch himself. “A-ah! I’m sorry.” He said awkwardly. “I’m just— I’m just gonna— uhm, bye.” The line went dead, abrupt and jarring. Katsuki’s brow furrowed as he moved onto the next message.

### **11 days ago**

When Izuku began speaking this time, his tone was apologetic from the start. “Kacchan, I’ve been thinking lately and I’m... I mean, I’m realizing that I stepped over a line.” Katsuki tensed, confused. He pressed the phone even closer to his ear.

“I... I shouldn’t have read you that poem, especially at a time like that. It was...” He paused before stating in a decidedly diplomatic tone, “That was insensitive of me, and I’m very, very sorry.”

Katsuki’s heart was beating like crazy. *Wait.*

“I understand if you’re, well... m-mad at me,” his voice cracked. *Mad at you? Why would I be mad at—* “and... I’m just really sorry, Kacchan. I’m so, *so* sorry.”

Katsuki’s body was frozen in place for a few seconds as the realization finally hit him, and from that point forward, it felt as though the world had sped up around him, leaving him floundering in the dust. When he looked at the screen, the time stamp was stained into his brain.

Eleven days ago.

Eleven days at least that Izuku had — *that Deku had been thinking— shit.*

*Oh, shit. Oh, no.*

There were still *seven messages left.*

## **10 days ago**

“*Please*, Kacchan.” Izuku said, high pitched and desperate. “Please, please, *please* pick up the phone, I’m— *I’m so sorry.*” He made a noise that Katsuki didn’t want to believe was a sob.

“I-I’ll stop talking about poetry, if it’ll make things better.”

*What?*

When he spoke, Izuku’s voice was a sound Katsuki feared might shatter. “I just... I just need things to be better.”

“No.” Katsuki whispered into the quiet room. “No, Deku, that’s not— that isn’t—”

## **9 days ago**

“I’m—” Izuku gave a short, humorless laugh. “I’m sorry.”

“*Stop apologizing.*” Katsuki hissed through gritted teeth, sitting up in his bed suddenly. His free hand gripped the sheets like a vice.

“I feel so bad about this because it’s, well... it should be about *you*, not me. I mean, it *is* about you. It’s you, and what you need. What it takes for you to feel better, but...”

“*Deku.*” Katsuki said sharply. As though he wasn’t over a week late. As though Izuku could respond. As though he was still *here.*

“Lately I just can’t think straight, and I... I think it’s because I haven’t been able to talk to you.”

Katsuki wanted to scream ‘*me too*’ until his throat was raw and useless.

“It’s... it’s so selfish, isn’t it?” Izuku said, seemingly to himself. “So terribly, horribly selfish...”

“It’s not *fucking* selfish, Deku— *It’s not*—”

The line went dead, strangled like the words from Katsuki’s throat.

## 8 days ago

“Please, Kacchan. I’m just— I’m so *sorry*,” he choked on the last word.

“*Stop saying that, stop saying that, stop*—”

“I keep making this about me and I— I *hate* myself for doing that—”

“—Don’t say that, don’t say that, don’t you *ever fucking say that*—!”

“—When you’re the one who’s probably suffering,” he sniffled at the end.

“I’m *fine*, Deku, holy shit—” His knuckles were as white as the sheets they held. He heard them beginning to rip, but the noise he heard didn’t register as any sort of action. He was too busy *losing it* to think of anything else. “It’s not your fucking fault that I just, I was— god *damn* it—!”

“It’s just— I don’t know how to stop!” Izuku nearly shouted. Katsuki heard a groan of frustration, though whether it came from him or Izuku was anyone’s guess. “It’s so frustrating, I’ve been— I’ve been pulling out hair, and it’s *pathetic* but... Just...” *Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck.* “Just...” He swallowed audibly, “Tell me how to stop, Kacchan.”

Katsuki couldn’t get over it, that feeling pervading the other man’s tone. Izuku sounded so hopeless as he asked, “*How do I stop needing you?*”

Katsuki bit his lip. He could taste his own blood.

## 7 days ago

Izuku’s tone was a bit more even at the beginning, this time.

“There’s this guy who’s been coming down to the bookstore lately... He drinks coffee and works on homework in the coffee shop attached to the store.”

*Katsuki stopped breathing.*

“He looks— he looks a lot like how you said you looked.” Gradually, his voice began to sound more and more strained, the longer he went on. “A-and I know it *isn’t* you—”

“—It *is* me,” Katsuki hissed. “*That’s fucking me, Deku*—!”

“—I know that...” He took a deep, stuttering breath. “But... I’ve started to avoid him. He just... It makes it harder for me, I guess. Knowing you’re not going to answer.”

“Deku, holy *shit*.” Katsuki released the sheets, wiping his sweaty hand over them before standing

up. He began pacing around the room, gripping at the roots of his hair.

The last time he'd felt this powerless, he'd been—

Well.

"It's like you're always in my head, Kacchan," He stated, in this unbelievably fragile tone that sounded so incongruous with Izuku's voice. Who Izuku *was*.

"It's like I'm some schoolgirl with a crush." He released a noise, somewhere between a sob and a laugh, then paused. "I-I mean, I guess that's... I guess that's at least half-true."

It took a few seconds for Katsuki's brain to catch up, for him to comprehend the meaning behind those words. His pacing slowed to a stop, and he leaned his shoulder heavily against the wall, his mind reeling.

"*Deku...*" He breathed.

Izuku paused, sniffing. "God, I must seem like such a *m-mess* to you..."

Katsuki didn't even realize the message had ended until several seconds afterward. His eyes remained wide, and he kept waiting for Izuku to say more, to say *something*, but—

## 6 days ago

"I'm sorry, that was... that was inappropriate of me to say." Izuku started, his tone sheepish, but otherwise even. "That was... it was unfair."

"What's fucking *unfair* is that I can't even say it back, now, *asshole!*" Katsuki groaned, yanking at the roots of his hair.

"I'm sorry, Kacchan." Izuku huffed a short laugh. "God, I just keep making mistakes, don't I? I just always... I can never say the right thing, when it comes to you..."

Katsuki released a violent yell of aggravation as his shoulder slid down the wall, until he was crouched beside it.

## 5 days ago

The message began with several seconds of silence, such to the point that when Izuku did speak, Katsuki almost jumped in surprise.

"So, I, uhm... I understand if you'd rather not talk to me again."

Katsuki's mouth hung open for a few seconds, as all the air was suffocated from his lungs. Breathlessly, he whispered, "What..." He blinked, eyes growing wide. "What are you talking about, Deku?" And the words sounded so strained with no breath to fuel them. Somehow, despite knowing Izuku couldn't hear him, speaking still felt more urgent than breathing.

"If you don't want to be, uhm..." He hesitated. "W-well, f-friends, uhm... with me..."

"I'll be *friends* with you, I'll be *more than friends* with you, I'll be a *goddamn fucking cactus*, I

*don't give a shit, just—*” Katsuki cut himself off with yet another violent scream. His upstairs neighbor stomped the floor. Katsuki responded by yelling, *“Fuck you!”* even louder at the ceiling.

“I completely understand and I just— I just wanted to say that I’m sorry for how I’ve behaved.”

“What are you talking about? *I’m* the asshole here, that’s *my* fucking job, *don’t just fucking—* ”

“A-and I’ve... I mean, I’ve been thinking about it a lot. I’m just— I’m sorry, Kacchan—Katsuki, ah, uhm...”

Wait, did he hear that right?

*Katsuki?*

***Katsuki?!***

“What the *fuck? Who?!?*”

With shaky hands, Katsuki tapped the last message.

#### **4 days ago**

After a couple of seconds of silence, he heard Izuku swallow, then clear his throat.

Then, with a voice so level Katsuki figured it must’ve been practiced, Izuku put the last nail in the coffin.

“I’m sorry, Katsuki. I’ll leave you alone now.”

The phone clicked as he hung up, and the finality of it made Katsuki want to vomit. He stood up, throwing his phone at his bed as he began pacing back and forth again, digging both hands into his hair.

“Fucking *Katsuki*,” he muttered angrily. “Who the fuck is fucking *Katsuki*, what the fuck—”

He was shaking with rage as he glanced over at his phone, lying at the center of his bed. He was just so fucking angry — not at Izuku, but at himself. He wanted to hit his head against the wall to punish himself for being such a colossal *idiot*, because *goddamnit, I should’ve seen this coming!*

*Of course* Izuku was going to massively overthink this whole thing. *Of course* he was going to blame himself. Izuku was fucking *anxiety* in corporeal form, *goddamnit, how could I be so fucking stupid?!*

Katsuki stopped pacing and focused on his breathing, trying to keep himself from hyperventilating.

He had to talk to him.

He had to call him back.

Katsuki grabbed his phone up off the mattress, hovered his thumb over the call button, and he was so close, *so fucking close* — but he held back.

Because as much as he wanted to call Izuku right then and there, wanted to immediately clear the air, reassure the other man that everything was *fine*, that he did nothing wrong, Katsuki had the

good sense to recognize that this was not something he could just conjure up on the fly. He couldn't afford to make things worse by failing to translate his feelings. He had to— he had to—

*Okay, fuck, I have to write this shit down*, he thought. And with that, he scrambled over to his backpack and grabbed the first notebook and pen he saw. Sitting cross-legged in the middle of his bed, Katsuki put the pen to the page and began writing messily in a continuous stream of consciousness.

And seconds turned into minutes.

And minutes turned into hours.

And by the time he had something he was somewhat satisfied with, he'd torn out several pages and was left with one covered in scratch marks, with words crossed out all over and places where the tip of the pen tore through the paper due to the pressure.

He grabbed his phone with the intention of calling, and it was only then that he realized that it was almost four in the morning. His hand lowered slowly, his body going limp as he collapsed onto his back and stared up at the ceiling.

Katsuki would tell himself it was because of the time.

He'd tell himself that Izuku was almost certainly asleep, and there was no way he could fit all of what he had to say into a voicemail, anyway, so there was no point in calling, right?

He'd tell himself that, as his phone slipped from his hand onto the mattress, and he curled up on top of the covers and fall asleep with the lights on. He'd continue to tell himself that, even when he awoke the next morning.

But deep down, he knew that if he really thought about it, he would almost certainly find some degree of *fear* mixed in with that excuse — he just wasn't sure how much. Didn't really want to find out. Didn't even want to acknowledge it consciously.

Still, that fragment of awareness remained at the back of his mind, lightly tapping on the wall of glass that divided it from the rest of his brain. Quietly trying to get his attention.

Before he met Izuku, Katsuki honestly wasn't sure it was there at all.

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Katsuki always found himself at the bookstore without truly meaning to. It was as though the moment he left the massive lecture hall, his body went into autopilot, and his feet simply moved forward until he was standing in front of it. The day after he heard the voicemails was no different, that is, at least up until he got there.

Under normal circumstances, Katsuki would be capable of more or less ignoring Izuku's presence in favor of focusing on homework. Initially, this was not the case, of course — the first few days, Katsuki could barely focus at all — but gradually, after a couple more days, he'd reached a point where he'd grown accustomed to it. Izuku's existence in the general vicinity remained at the back of his mind, but for the most part, he really only stopped to glance at him when he passed through his field of vision.

Or when he caught sight of Izuku bending over a trolley full of books, but that's neither here nor there.

On that particular day, however, Katsuki felt as though he was back at that first day all over again. He couldn't focus on any of his homework, too preoccupied by the the sound of Izuku's polite and cheerful voice, and his soft footsteps that Katsuki loathed to say he could actually recognize. He became hyper aware of the routes the man took as he moved about the store, and how he seemed to snake around the shelves and the store's perimeter in odd, inefficient ways that didn't to seem serve any purpose, apart from avoiding having Katsuki in his line of sight.

Although that bothered him, to say the least, nothing bothered him quite like having to listen to Izuku deal with flirtatious customers. It had happened three times in the time he'd been coming there.

The first time, Katsuki sat there boiling with rage and the barely repressed urge to just stand up, flip the table, and storm right over there to intervene. His fists clenched so tightly, he managed to break a *mechanical* pencil, but it was a worthwhile sacrifice in his mind. Katsuki would be hard pressed to think of a way he'd *like* to reveal himself to Izuku, but he could think of plenty of ways he would *not* like to, and screaming at a customer on his behalf was definitely on that list.

The next two times, the experience still put Katsuki in a sour mood, but he was able to keep a handle on it by simply reminding himself, *it's fine, it's fine, it's fucking fine. Deku can handle this. Deku is more than capable of handling this shit.*

It didn't exactly make him feel *better*, but it allowed him to get ahold of himself enough to keep quiet.

In the present, Katsuki felt his eye twitch and his teeth clench as he quickly came to realize that he was currently watching the fourth, and he sipped his gross coffee for the sole purpose of giving his mouth something to do other than *scream*.

It actually didn't start out extremely overt, at least not to the point where Izuku seemed to recognize it. The guy was leaning over the counter a bit, his dipshit face just slightly closer than what would be considered a polite distance. Izuku didn't make any move to step back, which in itself irritated Katsuki to no end.

"I came to the book club meeting last month, but I don't believe I saw you there," He commented with a grin as Izuku was scanning his books.

"Oh, yeah," He offered a nervous laugh, eyes darting away from the man. "Well, we have a lot of events and things, so..." He trailed off, like he was expecting the idiot to gather where he was going with it, but he just leaned in a little further and continued to grin at him expectantly. Izuku smiled back politely. "While I'd like to be able to go to all of them, I can't, well... go to all of them." He concluded awkwardly.

"Oh yeah?" The man smirked, and finally, *finally*, Izuku took a slight step back. "Didn't realize you all were so busy. Got anything interesting coming up?"

"Well," Izuku's eyes darted around, and he wringed his wrists. "I mean, there's a book signing tomorrow, the poetry slam on Saturday. The book club meets again on Monday, and there's a couple more signings that week. We've also have a few release parties planned this month, and—"

"—Poetry slam, huh?" The guy interrupted, weirdly delayed. Katsuki saw the faintest flash of irritation in Izuku's eyes. "Slam poetry is pretty cool."

Izuku's gaze snapped back onto the man, and he smiled sweetly.



“Yeah, I think so, too.” He replied, handing the man his receipt. “It’s at eight o’clock Saturday night.”

“Will you be there?” He asked, and for a moment Izuku looked like a deer caught in headlights. His mouth opened slightly as his wide eyes glanced away again. There was a brief moment where Katsuki made eye contact with him, and he damn near choked on his shitty coffee before Izuku immediately looked away.

“Uhm, well... yes.” Izuku eventually mumbled. “Not performing, but yes.”

“Well, I guess I’ll see you there, then,” He glanced pointedly down at his nametag. “*Izuku.*”

And *holy fucking shit*, Katsuki wanted to vomit. The guy vacated the store at a leisurely pace, giving Izuku one last obvious once-over before he exited.

All he could think about in that moment was that, though he had little interest in attending a poetry slam, he was going to *have* to go to one. He’d made the decision as he watched the guy’s gaze lingering on Izuku’s ass on his way out.

Katsuki slammed his hands down on the table as he stood up, attracting the attention of several other customers and perhaps Izuku, though with his back turned to him, he wouldn’t know and, quite frankly, did not want to. He grabbed his half-finished coffee and marched over to the trash can, being sure to make petty eye contact with the barista’s mismatched blue and grey ones as he pointedly poured the rest into the trash before dropping the cup along with it. The barista rolled his eyes, but said nothing.

After that, he grabbed his books and headed out the door.

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The first thing Katsuki did upon getting home was google ‘poetry slam’ along with the name of the bookstore. This lead him to a facebook event page, which stated that it was a free, open mic show, and that all performers would receive a complimentary beverage from the adjoining coffee shop, which, frankly, made Katsuki feel bad for them. It gave details about its duration, and showed around fifty people who had said they were going — none of which were on Katsuki’s friends list, thank *god*.

Katsuki had a vague idea of what slam poetry was, based on small things Izuku had mentioned in passing, but it wasn’t enough to know what to expect. He figured it was of little consequence, however, since he knew he’d probably be watching *Izuku* more often than any of the performers, in any case.

He glanced over at the note he’d written the night before, resting on the coffee table. After reading over it that morning, he’d realized that there were several parts which, though they had perhaps seemed logical to his sleep-deprived mind, made very little sense to his cognizant self, which subsequently made him very glad he hadn’t decided to call Izuku.

There was another reason he was glad he hadn’t decided to call Izuku.

Though he hadn’t acted on them, the words of Kirishima and Kaminari continued to bounce around inside his mind, masquerading as his own ideas until suddenly they *were*.

Because he’d always known, on some level, that him hanging around Izuku’s *fucking workplace* unannounced was exceeding creepy. He’d just blocked it out. Shoved it as far from his mind as he possibly could without forgetting it entirely, because it just wasn’t something he wanted to think

about. It wasn't an idea he wanted to accept, because accepting it would mean he'd either have to continue on with a feeling of guilty *filth* lingering over his skin and monopolizing his thoughts, or just give it up entirely.

And he couldn't give it up. Katsuki understood this quite well. He couldn't stop going, because in the absence of Izuku's regular phone calls, this was all he had left. The only way to satisfy that bizarre urge for closeness that Katsuki just could never seem to shake.

He huffed a bitter laugh to himself. *And Deku thinks **he's** selfish.*

Still, what this essentially meant for Katsuki was that if he was going to clear the air with Izuku, he was going to clear it completely. Which meant telling him what had *happened*, how he *felt*, and *who he was*.

Katsuki grabbed the piece of notebook paper and a pen, reaching for a stiff binder to write on before pressing the tip to the paper. He noticed his right hand shaking and scoffed, grabbing his wrist with the left to force it to stop. He had to do this.

Katsuki begun by crossing out parts that were unclear and writing notes off in the margins, until eventually it got so messy that he had to grab another piece of paper.

Katsuki wasn't sure where the time went. When he finally checked the time and realized that two hours had passed, his first thought was that some phantom *asshole* must've come in and shifted the time setting forward on his phone without him realizing it. His second thought was that he wasn't even *done* yet.

When he finally did finish, Katsuki grabbed a beer and collapsed back onto the sofa with a long, drawn-out groan.

The clock read eleven-thirty, and it hit Katsuki then that, by this time tomorrow night, he would be face-to-face with Izuku, offering him his damn *soul* on a silver platter to do with as he pleased. The idea was daunting, to say the least, but Katsuki was nothing if not determined.

Katsuki cracked open the can and tipped it back, practically inhaling the stuff in one go. He leaned forward to place the can on a coaster before sitting back against the couch.

Glancing around the room, he found himself laughing slightly. He'd come home to a clean apartment and an uncluttered living room, and within the span of a couple of hours, he'd managed to single handedly ruin that without so much as moving an inch. He'd started out with a full notebook, but as time went on and he continued to tear and rip pages out, crumpling and discarding them in careless directions, the notebook's page count had dwindled until it was, quite literally, nothing more than a shell of its former self.

With a sigh, he reached for his final, completed note, glancing over it one last time. He continued to hold onto it even after he was done. Continued to cling to it, as if it were a lifeline. His last remaining hope for success, which held him afloat and kept him from drowning, as he tread water in a sea of past failures.

## Chapter End Notes

Katsuki has it bad, but what's new? lol

I actually don't like this chapter very much, mostly because *what the fuck they didn't even interact*. Also, I fucking hate drama in stories that arises due to misunderstandings, or characters just not fucking communicating, but hopefully this isn't too bad in that regard, since they're not gonna dance around the issue for 30 chapters, or some shit. Katsuki knows he was a goddamn idiot and he's gonna fix it IMMEDIATELY. But yeah, in any case, it's sort of a transitional chapter that kinda had to happen, I think. I hope it like.... made fucking sense.... Jesus.

The main reason why this took so long was because, apart from being really busy with finals and shit, I had a really hard time figuring out how to end this story. I had an ending planned from the beginning, but stories kind of have a mind of their own, I guess, and this one wound up going in a semi-unexpected direction, which made the logistics of that ending a lot more complicated. So I fucking agonized over it until I came up with a better ending, started writing, realized this shit was gonna be like 18k words or something, decided to split it, and here we fuckin' are.

On the bright side, chapter six should actually be out in a couple of days, since it's already around halfway written. Also, it's at least 50% smut, so like. That's a thing, lol.

I'm probably gonna be spending like the next two hours responding to all the amazing comments you all left on chapter four, because you guys are fucking incredible and you have no idea how much I appreciate it (even if I can't always find the words to articulate that appreciation). Seriously, like, I can't recall ever writing anything intended to evoke sadness before that chapter, and the fact that you all thought it was effective means a lot to me, so thank you very much!

# Closer

## Chapter Notes

This is 13k words and 6k of it is just gratuitous smut.  
Enjoy

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The next day, Katsuki set about creating a game plan of sorts, laying out his objectives and strategizing. There were a few things he would need to accomplish if he wanted the night to go smoothly. At least, as smoothly as one could reasonably hope something of this nature to go.

First, he had to keep Izuku's *douchebag customer* more or less in check. How exactly he would go about achieving this would vary depending on the situation.

Second, he had to find a way to get Izuku's attention and get him alone. Katsuki acknowledged that this would be a bit of a difficult task, taking into consideration that how Izuku would react to him was still an unknown.

Third, Katsuki would need to pay careful attention to Izuku's reactions and adjust the direction of his speech accordingly. This was *crucial*.

Because Katsuki had apologized to people before, but he'd never needed to do it to such an extent as he did with Izuku. He never needed to go into such depth. As such, he had no real way of knowing if he was on the right track beforehand — he would have to learn and change things as he went, which was a daunting task, to say the least, when he considered what was at stake.

He'd taken a page out of Izuku's book in preparation for this step, recalling what he'd said during their last conversation:

*"There are infinitely many different ways to say the exact same thing, and the way you choose to say it determines what kind of emotions the idea evokes."*

Keeping that in mind, Katsuki opted to create several 'branch points' in his message, each one having the potential to go in two or three different directions, which he would carefully select according to Izuku's reactions. It was far more meticulous than what Katsuki was used to, but he figured that if he was going to apologize to Izuku, it made sense to at least try think about it as Izuku would. He even made a goddamn *flowchart* to keep track of it all.

Katsuki showed up early — seven-thirty sharp, his hands stuffed into the pockets of a sweatshirt with a hood just large enough to swallow up the top half of his face. They were still setting things up when he entered the store, though that was to be expected. He took a seat near the back and took note of a few other people already scattered throughout the audience, none of which looked to be *Mister I-Call-Cashiers-By-Their-First-Name*. Katsuki sighed and slouched back in his chair, watching the barista with the red and white hair standing atop a step ladder while he fiddled with the lighting, as a woman with short, brown hair adjusted the mic stand. Honestly, he wasn't sure why they needed a microphone in the first place, given the size of the store, but Katsuki didn't dwell on it.

As people began to file in more steadily, Katsuki shifted his attention to the door until, finally, his eyes locked on his target.

Well, perhaps *target* wasn't the right word — Katsuki didn't intend to *do* anything to him. His only real intention was to keep him in check, one way or another, because while he knew that Izuku was more than capable of protecting himself, Katsuki also knew quite well how muddled one's ability to reject others' advances could become when they happened while they were on the job. Depending on the company rules, it could take a customer actually *putting their hands on an employee* to make a firm rejection permissible, and frankly, Katsuki didn't want Izuku to be in a situation where he'd have to *hope* it would escalate to that point.

He watched as the man went to sit near the center a few rows ahead of him, and in turn, moved up a bit as discreetly as possible. He tried not to glare too blatantly as he watched the man's head turning from side to side, quite obviously searching for Izuku. When said man emerged from the back with a cup of coffee that said '*I am finished helping out here,*' Katsuki had to grind his teeth to keep from yelling when the guy *called to him from across the room*.

"Izuku!" He shouted, waving, and the man in question froze. "Hey, Izuku!" The guy's shouting had attracted the attention of those around them, who glanced between the two with mildly irritated expressions. "I saved you a seat!" There were plenty of seats. "C'mere!" Izuku very clearly did not want to.

The man hesitated a few seconds more before the weight of the entire room's attention made him give, and with a sigh and a polite, but strained, smile, he nodded and began to move toward the man. He muttered '*excuse me*' quietly as he scooted past others in the row, and finally sat down beside the guy. The *douche* didn't even apologize.

"I'm Satoru, by the way." He said, leaning in creepily close. Izuku leaned away in turn. "I don't think I got a chance to tell you yesterday."

"Ahah," Izuku laughed awkwardly. "Right. Well, uhm, It's uh—" He hesitated. "Nice to see you again." He stated, lips twitching upward, like he wanted to pacify him with his smile.

"The *pleasure* is all mine." *Resident fuckhead Satoru* replied, with a smirk and some weird, deep inflection that Katsuki figured matched the guy's idea of *seductive*. He clenched his fists.

One response. All it took was *one* verbal response from Izuku for the guy to deem it appropriate to break out the *gross flirting*. Katsuki wanted to laugh and scream simultaneously. It was as ridiculous as it was offensive, and Katsuki already knew he was gonna have to give the guy his undivided attention for the next two hours.

As the lights began to dim, the spotlight came into focus, and the barista stepped onto the low stage with an impassive look on his face. The chatter within the now-crowded room slowly died down.

"Welcome," He called out. "I'm your emcee tonight," He stated, in a tone which seemed to imply that this was not a choice he'd made of his own free will. Katsuki huffed a short laugh under his breath.

"As many of you know, we have some special guests tonight. The winners of the national championship, Hitoshi Shinsou and Momo Yaoyorozu, are here. Of course, this is still an open mic, so anyone who wants to perform is welcome to do so." He explained, then clarified, "Once we get through the list of people who signed up beforehand, of course." He gestured toward the piece of paper in his hand. "Anyway, first up, we have our very own Ochako Uraraka."

Everyone applauded as the girl with short, brown hair walked onstage to take the emcee's place. Nervously, she spoke into the microphone. "Uhm, I've never actually done this before, so, just... bear with me, please."

And Katsuki's mind phased out somewhere between her deep inhale and the first word she spoke. Izuku was leaning heavily forward, elbows resting on his knees as he practically hung on her every word. His eyes drifted to *fucking Satoru*, and caught his gaze lingering on Izuku's back and ass. Katsuki's mind instantly flooded with surreal and oddly *cinematic* fantasies about projectile vomiting onto him.

As the night went on, Katsuki found brief reprieves wherein Satoru was *not* being a fucking creep. During those times, he was mildly surprised to find himself genuinely enjoying some of the performances — and they truly *were* performances. The emphatic expression used with each word held just as much meaning as the words themselves, if not more. If Katsuki had gone into the event completely ignorant, he wouldn't have described it as poetry — though he could certainly see that aspect, too — so much as he would have described it as a very artistic rant.

Katsuki smirked to himself. *Ranting as an art form? Now that's some shit I could get behind.*

Still, although his mind wasn't quite as monopolized by *motherfucking Satoru* as he'd anticipated, he was far from forgetting him entirely. Couldn't do it if he tried — not when the fucker was still trying to pull weird, over-familiar moves on Izuku right in front of him. On two separate occasions, Katsuki had been forcibly yanked out of his focus on the performances as the asshole attempted to put his arm around Izuku. Naturally, Izuku had responded by physically removing the guy's hand, but again, this happen not once, but *twice*.

During the brief interludes between poems, in which the audience applauded and the emcee announced the next performer, Satoru seemed to be have something to say more often than not. Generally they would be weird, off-color compliments that toed the line of sexuality just enough to be uncomfortable, but not so much that one would be able to call them out as such.

Katsuki recalled him, at one point, stating that he thought Izuku would, '*Look good while wet.*' This prompted Izuku to develop a bizarre expression that probably would've been hilarious in any other context. At another point, he had explicitly called Izuku's *shoes* '*sexy.*'

It went on like that for *a while*.

When the list of people who'd signed up beforehand had finally been exhausted, the emcee was in the process of choosing someone among a sea of raised hands, as many others decided to step up to the plate. As such, there'd been a brief intermission of sorts. And Katsuki had hoped to maybe pull Izuku off somewhere during that time, as eager as he was nervous about getting his message off his chest. But before he could even think to reach out toward him, *Satoru Fuckface McGee* was turning toward Izuku, resting a hand on the back of his chair. He was not yet attempting to wrap it around him again, but Katsuki wouldn't be surprised if that was the next thing on the asshole's agenda.

Speaking of the asshole's agenda, Katsuki was shocked by how rapidly it seemed to become muddled. He'd initially thought the guy was just flirting, in his own *aggressively awkward* way, but the more he persisted as Izuku continued to remain unreceptive to his advances, the more Katsuki began to wonder if he was actively *trying* to make him uncomfortable.

"So, Izuku..." He began, drumming his fingers on the back of his chair. Izuku leaned away from that hand as he turned his head toward him. "You see, I lost my number." Izuku blinked. "I was wondering if I could borrow yours?"

Izuku blinked again. For several seconds, he was quiet. Katsuki had to bite down on his tongue to keep from losing his shit over the absurdly terrible pick-up line.

Finally, Izuku asked, “Wait, so... you want to... borrow my phone?” He squinted. *Shit* oru chuckled lowly.

“No, no...” He replied, grinning. “I’m saying you should give me your number. So I can call you. Among other things.”

Katsuki barely repressed the urge to snort and shout at the guy, *oh, like unsolicited dick pics?* And honestly, the only reason he didn’t was because he was far too busy working through the sudden stab of acute *fury* he felt toward the guy. He imagined Izuku, talking on the phone with him. Calling him at eleven o’clock sharp every night. Speaking to him in the same sweet voice he used to speak to Katsuki, and calling him some bullshit name like *Sato-chan*. He gripped the plastic edge of his seat tightly and clenched his jaw, his rage emanating off his body in waves, but never quite making it past his tongue.

Izuku hesitated, his mouth opening, then closing. All the while, *Shit-chan* just kept staring at him with that same cocky grin, and some odd glint in his eyes that Katsuki couldn’t quite place.

Eventually, Izuku spoke again, and the words that tumbled from the man’s mouth seemed to make everything around them fade out of existence, confining the universe to a three-foot radius.

“I-I’m sorry, I have a boyfriend,” he stuttered. Katsuki’s jaw dropped, because *what the fuck, no you don’t—*

“Oh yeah?” *Shit-chan* replied, grinning wider, and something about that response was extremely unsettling. Suddenly, Katsuki understood.

*Oh. Of course.*

*Deku’s lying, because that’s the only answer that’ll make a creep like that leave him alone. Anything else would just register as ‘convince me’ in the fucker’s head.*

But understanding that didn’t make him any more prepared for the exchange that followed.

“Yeah.” Izuku replied, a slight glare finally making it onto his face. “And I don’t think he’d appreciate me giving my number out like that.”

“Oh, really?” He said, like a challenge of some sort. “And what’s he gonna do about it if you do?”

“I mean, frankly, he would probably try to kill you.”

“Wow, *scary*. So you like bad boys, I take it?” He smirked. “I can be *bad*.” Izuku gave him a mildly disgusted look before turning to face forward. Katsuki saw his neck lower as his head dropped slightly.

*Then.*

“Well, if you can’t be *Kacchan*, I’m afraid I’ll have to decline.”

He said it so quietly, his voice shaky and almost vulnerable, and yet it still blared inside Katsuki’s head like a siren.

His jaw dropped, and for a few moments he just gaped at the man’s back. But before too long, he

felt a grin breaking out onto his face as a sense of euphoria flooded throughout his body. The feeling was so potent that it seemed to manifest physically inside him, seemed to have a mind of its own. It was bursting to come out through some kind of vocalization, and Katsuki knew he wouldn't be able to contain it much longer.

As the next poem came to a close, he spared a glance at Izuku and Satoru to confirm that, *yeah, it looks like Shit-chan is backing off, now*, and made his way hastily to the bathroom.

As soon as the door shut behind him, he yanked his hood further down his face, stretching it over his mouth, and he *screamed* into it. He hadn't checked to see if anyone else was in the bathroom, but fortunately, when he emerged from the fabric, he found that he was, indeed, alone.

The energy was bursting throughout him, practically making him vibrate, and in an effort to get ahold of himself, Katsuki made his way to the sink and splashed cold water on his face.

*I still have to apologize to him. I still have to explain shit*, he reminded himself.

Still, he couldn't resist the urge to smile when he looked in the mirror.

*But this is good.*

*This is really fucking good.*

With a sigh, Katsuki smoothed his hood down over his head again and took a deep breath before heading out. What he found upon re-entering the main area was as irritating as it *should've* been predictable.

The room was flooded with people, after all.

Of course some asshole was going to take his fucking seat.

Katsuki clenched his fists at his sides, but managed to reign in his anger.

*It'll be fine*, he thought. *Deku's more than capable of telling that fucker to take a goddamn hike again, if needed.*

Katsuki leaned against one of the bookshelves pushed off to the side. It was as close as he could get to Izuku without standing out, so he reluctantly accepted it.

His eyes darted between the performers and Izuku every now and then. As another poem concluded, Katsuki found his gaze lingering upon realizing that *Shit-chan* was talking to Izuku again, his expression oddly sober.

Almost... solemn.

It was strange, to say the least, and Katsuki clenched his jaw in frustration over not being able to hear what was being said. His eyes seldom left the two for the duration of the next two performances.

Whenever the audience clapped, their conversation would resume, and Katsuki was beginning to worry about how... *receptive* Izuku seemed to be. It was a complete turn-around from what he'd seen just thirty minutes prior, but it didn't take much longer for him to understand. Not after the first tear slipped down the asshole's face, and he ducked his face into his hands.

*Oh.* Katsuki thought.



*Oh, fuck.*

Izuku reached out toward him, not quite touching. His fingers twitched like he wasn't sure if he should or not. Eventually, his hands dropped to his lap, and he wrung his wrists as he stared down at them, speaking calmly to the sobbing man.

And there was nothing more *ominous* than the look of sudden joy on *Shit-chan's* face as he lowered his hands, smiling wide. If one hadn't been watching, they wouldn't have known he'd been crying at all.

From that moment on, everything happened in slow motion, and yet, somehow, it still felt far too fast for Katsuki.

The crowd erupted into a loud, but distant, applause as the performer finished their poem.

Satoru stood up.

Izuku stood up.

They shuffled down the row, until they had cleared it.

Satoru offered Izuku his hand, and Izuku hesitated.

Katsuki took a stuttering breath.

*Fuck.*

*Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, shit, no—!*

He was moving before he even realized it. Moving closer to Izuku. He needed to get to him, but the man was on the opposite side of the audience.

Distantly, Katsuki heard the emcee up on stage, forming words that sounded like, '*we have time for one more,*' and no sooner after, the room was filled with raised hands and shouting.

Then Izuku took his hand.

And that was where Katsuki's restraint collapsed.

*"Deku!"* He shouted.

The man didn't hear him.

*"Deku!"* He yelled louder, desperately trying to communicate over the deafening outcries of strangers.

Satoru began to lead Izuku toward the door.

*"Shit."* Katsuki hissed, panicking. He waved his arms around. *"Deku! Hey!"* He ran back and forth along the aisle, searching for some path across, but finding none. *"Deku!"*

*"Alright— you."* The emcee said. The speakers carried his words over the crowd, but still only barely managed to penetrate the fog over Katsuki's mind. He glanced over and did a double take as he realized that the man was pointing at *him*. Katsuki paled at the realization that everyone else had their eyes on him, too.

Everyone except the one person who actually *mattered*.

Izuku was getting closer to the door.

The room was still quite loud.

Katsuki wasn't breathing.

In a split-second decision, he gritted his teeth and ran up onto the stage, grabbing the microphone in both hands. Izuku was at the door.

Katsuki opened his mouth, and spoke before he could take a single breath.

**“Hey.”**

He said into the microphone, his tone firm. It resonated throughout the room, until, *finally*, it reached him.

And Katsuki watched, with bated breath, as Izuku stopped in his tracks and slowly turned around, looking up at him with eyes shocked wide.

And Katsuki was fairly certain his heart had stopped beating, because, *of course*, Izuku had looked at him before — but this was the first time he’d looked at him and actually *seen him*.

He swallowed down his anxiety and pulled his phone out of his pocket, swearing under his breath. The barista-slash-emcee was staring at him with an amused expression, crossing his arms like he was issuing some sort of challenge. Like he knew something he couldn’t possibly have known.

*And, is this revenge for when I looked him in the eye and poured his shitty coffee in the trash?*

He glanced over at the person in question, glaring.

*Okay, yeah, this is definitely fucking revenge, but...* His eyes drifted back to Izuku, who was still looking at him with wonder, his feet inching further from the door and closer toward the stage.

*There’s only one person here whose opinion I give a fuck about.*

He unlocked his phone, already open on the document containing his speech. He made a few mental notes about small changes he ought to make as he went, in order to adapt to the context, but that was about all he could manage in that instant.

All there was left was for him to say what he had to say, and hope for the best.

Katsuki found that, when Izuku looked up at him with those big, green eyes full of shock and awe, there was some unique property to the sensation it created. It was equal parts exhilarating and nerve-wracking, but it gave him the resolve he needed to go on.

He glanced over the document one more time.

Then he closed his eyes, took a deep, shaky breath, and began speaking.

“I don’t have a title for this,” he said, opening his eyes, his gaze darting over to the audience as he stuffed his hands back into his pockets. “So for now I’ll just call it...” He pursed his lips, and sighed. “‘Sorry.’”

From beneath the spotlight, the crowd was lost in darkness, and yet, when Katsuki directed his gaze back to Izuku, he found that he still shined as brightly as ever.

And he almost laughed, because *Jesus*, he thought. *I'm in deep, aren't I?*

His gaze lingered on Izuku's face, on the hopeful expression mixed in with the shock, and no small amount of fear. His eyes seemed to sparkle, as though they were light sources in themselves.

*Yeah.*

*I'm in so, so fucking deep.*

He opened his mouth, closed it, squeezed his eyes shut, and tried again.

"I've been trying to figure out what you are to me." He began quietly, his head hanging slightly, allowing his hood to obscure his eyes as he looked at his feet. "What it is I actually feel for you."

He paused for a second.

"And it's fucking *hard*, you know? But you wouldn't *think* it would be." His hands gripped the fabric lining his pockets, fists pressing further down. "Maybe it's not supposed to be."

He looked up at Izuku again.

"Trying to figure out what you mean to me is like trying to define a word you don't know using other words you *also* don't know. It feels fucking *pointless* because you've got no idea where to start." He scoffed, eyes flitting up toward the lights, shining bright above him. He squinted up at them, then lowered his head. Katsuki's eyebrow quirked as his gaze drifted off to the side, unsure where to settle.

"I'm gonna try, though." He said. "I'm gonna—"

Katsuki bit his lip, glancing at his phone screen, lit up in his pocket, making sure he was on track. He sighed.

"I knew a guy with an addiction, once." He closed his eyes. "'Kinda guy who's rearranged his life for the sake of his vice. It was sad, I guess. But I was a kid, then. I never quite connected the dots. Only knew the things he told me about. Only knew that I knew him better when he was high than when he was sober."

He opened his eyes, gaze snapping onto Izuku again.

"You feel the way a drug addiction does when it goes on long enough." Katsuki stated. "When it stops being mind blowing and becomes a relief. When it becomes necessary—" He paused on an inhale, his mouth open. He looked down again before continuing, "—Because it keeps you normal, even though it's the least normal thing about you."

One of his hands emerged from his pockets, reaching beneath his hood to rub his neck.

"You're like a drug addiction when it becomes its own *metric*, when you..." He pulled his hand out and made some ambiguous, all-encompassing gesture. "...Start to see time in terms of how long it takes to get from one dose to the next — and you *need* it, but you can never say that out loud, because you wouldn't be able to justify it if someone asked."

He chuckled under his breath, something dry, with overtones of bitterness.

"And it's shit like this that really makes me feel fuckin' *crazy*, y'know?" He threw his hand up, gesturing vaguely toward his head. "Because I *need* you, but I can't explain *why*, can't—" He

dropped his hand, clenching his fist at chest height, “—put you in a damn *box* and expect you to stay.” His arm fell limp at his side.

“Can’t even be mad at you for it because it’s not your fault.” He scowled at the floor. “You just keep *growing*. Can’t help but destroy shit, I guess.”

Katsuki scoffed. “But tell *that* to all the goddamn shredded cardboard on the floor.” His head hung from his neck, lips pursing. “I don’t *blame* you for breaking out, but that doesn’t—” He hesitated. “That doesn’t mean I don’t *feel it*, when you do.”

After a moment of silence, Katsuki looked up again, grabbing onto the microphone.

“I feel a lot of things for you, like a whole *mess* of contradictory fucking things.” He suddenly began to rattle off again. “I wanna *hang up on* you. I wanna *cuss you out*. I wanna *find* you and *kick your ass*, because *fuck you*.” He glared straight ahead. “But at the same time, I wanna *talk* to you. I wanna *listen* to you. I wanna *find* you and *tear all your clothes off*, and *fuck* you.” He huffed a short, humorless laugh. “When I think about you I wanna *touch* you. When I don’t think about you, I still kinda wanna exist in the general vicinity of you.”

“Because *shit*, I guess I kind of have a thing for you. Like a *really big thing*, and if you couldn’t already tell that, *there it is*.” He threw both hands up in the air, in a sort of dramatic resignation.

“And it’s the kind of *thing* where it’s a fucking *problem*, okay? During the seconds before I ran into you that first time, I was trying to figure out how it was possible for me to want you fuck your *voice*, and then you showed up and, whaddayaknow? I realized I wanted to fuck *the rest of you*, too.”

The crowd laughed lightly. The sound came from all around Katsuki, and yet it still sounded oddly distant to his ears.

“Then I called you me that night and you told me about your past and I realized I also kind of wanted to give you a hug. Then I told you about mine and and I started thinking about how nice it would be for you to just hold my hand and just kind of— kinda *exist* with me, or some shit, I—”

Katsuki raised his hands to his face, palms rubbing into his eyes. His hood was slowly inching down his head, though at the time, he hadn’t even noticed it.

His hands fell from his face, hanging limply in front of him. When he looked at Izuku again, he had advanced several feet closer to the stage. Katsuki opened his mouth, then closed it and gave a tight almost-smile, glancing down at the ground before looking up at him again.

“Funny how we always seem to do these things out of order.”

For a few seconds, he remained silent, studying Izuku’s face. His cheeks were red, and his hands were pressed over his mouth. There was a sparkle in his eyes, as though he were on the verge of crying. Katsuki sighed.

“If you haven’t guessed by the goddamn *title*, this is just a really fuckin’ long-winded way for me to apologize. Okay? For everything.” He rolled his eyes lightly. “Yeah. Fuckin’ *everything*.”

His gaze darted back to Izuku. “Anything you can think of that you think I should be sorry about, chances are I fuckin’ *am*.” He stated, with a straight face. “And if you can think of anything I haven’t yet, I’ll gladly be sorry about that shit, too, because *hey*, you would know.” He grabbed the mic in one hand as he lifted the other into the air, his palm out, as if in surrender. “You’re the goddamn expert, here — I mean, you know what I’m feeling when *I* don’t even know. Like *shit*,

you just—”

Katsuki froze, suddenly regretting his choice to rely primarily on his memory.

Without really meaning to, he'd found himself heading down a particular path in his message, the conclusion of which necessarily involved him saying far more than he was really comfortable saying on stage.

His hood slipped down his neck. He stuffed his hands back into his pockets.

It was already too late to turn back.

“You...” He bit his lip, eyes locking on his feet. “You make me see things. You make me see—” He hesitated, then continued, softer, “—how... fucking... *scary* it is.” He clenched his jaw.

“You’re like this weird lens that I can look through, and suddenly I can see all the things I didn’t know. Things I didn’t *want* to know.” He pulled one hand out of his pockets, reaching up to grip the microphone again.

“You *show* me what my weaknesses are. You do your damndest to make me acknowledge them.” He laughed under his breath. “And I’m just standing here thinking, get the fuck out of here with that shit, y’know?” He looked up at Izuku, smiling. “I’m twenty years old. I’m *way* too young to be the best version of myself.”

The smile dropped from his face as he rolled his eyes. He pulled his other hand out of his pocket and began to wave it around.

“But then here you are, just waving all this shit out in the open. Like ‘hey, look at this. Look at all these things you care about.’” He scoffed. “Like, listen. I don’t know where you got all these goddamn *bluebirds*, but I’m gonna need you to get them the fuck out of my *goddamn house* before they shit all over my *goddamn carpet*, okay? Whatever you think you see, it ain’t fuckin’ there, and I don’t have to listen to this. I don’t have to listen to *you*.” He dropped his head then, muttering, “That’s what I’ve been telling myself, anyway.”

“But...” He wiped his hand down his face. “Fuck, I don’t know how to explain it but it’s— it’s like...”

Katsuki took a deep breath, steeling himself before looking back up at Izuku. He knew he should’ve expected it, but it still took him by surprise — how close he’d gotten. four feet from the stage, at most.

Katsuki exhaled, “Like there’s this space in between—” He rolled his eyes, in an attempt to soften his sincerity. Make it feel like a joke, if only to himself. “Between the words I say and the words you give back.”

His heart was in his throat, beating madly within the quiet room. Some part of him was paranoid, irrationally worried that everyone else could hear it, too.

“Like the world just... just *stops*, and for a moment,” He bit his lip, raking a shaky hand through his hair. “For a moment, we aren’t quite... *real*.”

“And then when you speak again, *fuck, this is so stupid*—” He gripped the microphone with both hands, knuckles turning white as he leaned toward it, like he was just hanging on. Just hanging onto it, for stability, or maybe his life. Katsuki wasn’t sure anymore. “It’s like I feel all your weight, your *existence*, just— just crashing down on me. All over again.”

“You’ve never been real in any other way, so I guess it’s like I see you, when you speak.” He explained, licking his lips. They suddenly felt so dry. “I know you’re there. That I didn’t make you up.”

He took a deep breath, trying to manually slow his pulse, and murmured, “But I’m sick of the uncertainty, this— constant fucking *freefall*.”

“I want to see you when you’re silent.” He whispered, swallowing the lump in his throat. “Wanna reach across that space, so I can touch you — pull you *closer*.”

“And it seems so goddamn selfish, you know? After all these weeks.” He huffed as humorless laugh. “I’ve been right beside you this whole time, but that only makes it harder to resist — like there’s this weird fucking *magnetism*.”

He bit his lip, his brow furrowing.

“The closer you are, the closer I need you.”

“God fucking *damn* it, Deku.” He muttered, voice nearly cracking as he turned his full body toward Izuku. Saw the man a foot away from the stage. His cheeks were wet. “It’s *disgusting* and *wrong* and I *know* I don’t deserve it.”

“But fuck, I can’t *stand* it, anymore.” His eyes followed a fresh tear as it slipped from his (*beautiful*) green eyes and rolled down his full cheeks. His feet were inching further toward the stage. Katsuki gripped the microphone, even as he felt his own feet mirroring Izuku’s actions.

“I need you—”

He let go of the microphone.

“—*So* much—”

He ran off the stage, jumping down as Izuku met him halfway. Wrapped his arms around him like he was prepared to stay there forever.

“Fucking *closer*.” Katsuki spoke into his ear, and held him tight.

And maybe the audience applauded.

Maybe they remained silent in shock.

Katsuki honestly didn’t know. But he figured it didn’t really matter, because—

“—Kacchan,” Izuku sobbed against his shoulder, fingers clawing his back like he was scared he’d slip away again. “*Kacchan*.”

—It was never about them, anyway.

“Goddamn, Deku,” He almost gasped. “Fuck, I’m sorry. Fuck, I—”

“*It’s okay*.” Izuku responded, sharp enough to shock him slightly, but when the shorter man pulled away, he was relieved to find him smiling up at him, even through his tears. “C’mon, let’s just— let’s go outside, okay?”

Katsuki nodded, taking Izuku’s hand as he led them out into the night.

Once they'd cleared the threshold, Izuku abruptly turned toward him and yanked him down by his head into a kiss so sudden that Katsuki almost forgot what to *do*, but to his credit, it only took him a second to catch up. He wrapped his arms around Izuku's back and pulled him in closer, kissing him deep, all-consuming, until they were both so breathless that they were left with only two options: break away, or come to terms with dying like this.

Frankly, Katsuki wouldn't have minded the latter, but ultimately, they went with the former.

"We'll— we'll talk about everything later, okay?" Izuku panted, lips swollen and red. "*Kacchan*," he whined, for no particular reason. Like he just wanted to say it for the sake of saying it. Like calling Katsuki's name was an end in itself.

"Okay," Kacchan replied, just as breathless, "Okay, *fuck*." His fingernails dug into Izuku's lower back. He felt one of his hands interlacing with his hair. "*Fuck*, Deku. I wanna fuckin'—" He paused for air, "—take you home. *Shit*—" He hissed as Izuku's grip tightened, yanking on his hair with a whimper. "Can I— Can I fucking take you home, Deku?"

"*Yes*." Izuku replied immediately. He used his grip on his hair to pull him down a bit, and kissed up his neck to his jaw. "*God*, yes... but—but wait," he paused, pulling back to look up at him. "Don't you want your drink?"

"My *what*?"

"Your drink," Izuku nodded toward the store. "Your free drink, y'know— for performing."

Katsuki glanced at the window, and sure enough, he spotted that same red-and-white-haired barista holding a tray full of drinks, as he handed them out to the performers. Katsuki didn't bother to hide his disgusted expression, wrinkling his nose at the thought.

"The *fuck*?" Katsuki turned back to Izuku. As he met his eyes, his look of disgust was replaced by a grin that Izuku mirrored, when he responded with, "*Of course* not."

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Izuku's back hit the door the moment it slammed shut behind him, and just like that, they were on each other. Katsuki's hands on either side of his face, nails biting into his cheeks, juxtaposed with the oddly gentle way his thumbs rubbed circles on his cheekbones. Katsuki held him there, just like that, as he dived right in, drawing some involuntary, high-pitched noise from Izuku's throat when their lips meshed together.

Katsuki felt wired. Each hair stood on end as their lips moved together, and his heartbeat thumped erratically inside his chest, skipping beats with each sound he pulled from the shorter man. He wanted to make it *worse*. Wanted to make Izuku just as desperate as he felt, gazing at him from under the stage lights, his green eyes standing out, even in the darkness. So he dug his fingernails in a little harder, made Izuku's space his own. Pulled his lower lip forward roughly between his teeth and relished his gasp. Shoved his knee between Izuku's legs and smirked when he heard him *moan*.

"Want you so fuckin' bad, Deku," he rasped, looking down at Izuku's red face. Trapping him in his gaze.

"K-Kacchan, I— *Ah!*" Izuku yelped when he began to rub his knee up against him. Katsuki's grin grew wider when he leaned in closer, let Izuku feel his hot breath against his ear, as his hands trailed down his sides and settled on his hips.



“What?” He asked, teasing. *Deku’s easily embarrassed*, he internally recalled. “Got somethin’ to say, *De-ku?*”

Izuku choked out something that sounded vaguely like his name as Katsuki gave a harsh nip to his earlobe, and *god*, Katsuki was struggling to reconcile the rational need to slow down with his own needs — the ones that told him to pin Izuku down, to sink his teeth into his skin, and *fucking ruin him*, because *what the fuck*, he’s waited *so long* for this. *Way too fucking long*.

He pulled his hips further into his thigh, encouraging Izuku to grind against him until he didn’t need the encouragement anymore. Katsuki’s hands found their way under his dorky button-up, and the skin beneath was hot to his touch.

“A- *Ahh*, Kacchan, I want—” He choked on his words. Katsuki’s lips found their way onto his neck, sucking harshly beneath his jaw, explicitly looking to leave marks. “I need to, ff- *ahhh!* God, *Please.*”

And, well— *that* sure was interesting.

“‘Please’?” Katsuki repeated back, smirking. “Please *what*, Deku?” he pressed, just as his fingers made contact with Izuku’s nipples.

“What do you want, Deku?” He asked again, speaking directly into his ear. “C’mon, be *specific.*”

“*Kacchan*,” He groaned, and there was a hint of annoyance in it that had Katsuki smirking against his neck, his hands retreating from beneath his shirt and pressing his hips against the wall, holding him still. Izuku whined in frustration.

“You don’t wanna tell me?” He ran his tongue up Izuku’s neck slowly, felt the man shudder beneath him. Katsuki then pulled away, in favor of looking into his eyes. Those big, green eyes of his — in retrospect, he honestly felt stupid to have thought he could ever conjure forth an image even *remotely* comparable.

His eyelids fell to half-mast as he met Izuku’s equally hazy gaze. One hand left his hip to tilt his chin up, wanting to hold the eye contact. Wanting to keep him there. There was a soft, stuttering breath against his lips as Izuku’s gaze greeted him with just as much intensity. For a moment, Katsuki just held his breath, and a memory flickered to life in his mind.

“Well, since it’s nothing to be *discrete* about, I guess I could go first.” He suggested, a slow-spreading smirk making its way onto his features. It took a moment, but Katsuki was rewarded by the sight of Izuku’s face heating up when he recognized the callback.

*‘Yes, and if you really think it’s nothing to be discrete about, **why don’t you go first?**’*

“How ‘bout it, Deku?” He grinned mischievously. “You wanna know what *I* want?”

Izuku’s breath hitched, his mouth opening and closing a few times. Eventually, his response came in the form of a simple nod.

Katsuki held his gaze for a moment longer before replying with a simple, “Kay.”

Then, in one swift motion, Katsuki hooked an arm beneath his right leg and hiked it up until his knee was almost touching the wall behind him, and Izuku gasped and moaned as Katsuki started grinding against him, hot and hard through his jeans. Katsuki rolled his hips up into the swell of Izuku’s ass, felt his cock pulse at the sensation.

“*Fuck*,” He groaned, gritting his teeth in an attempt to get ahold of himself. He took a deep breath. “I wanna suck your cock,” Izuku’s hips jerked up against him, and *shit*,” And then, I wanna fuck you ‘til you forget how to say anything but that *stupid goddamn nickname*.”

Suddenly, Izuku’s hands were grabbing his cheeks, pulling him down into a fast and urgent kiss. During the fleeting moments where their lips weren’t connected, Izuku would gasp, “*Kacchan, Kacchan*,” as if chanting some kind of incantation. As if he could somehow make this more *real*.

“How’s that sound?” Katsuki murmured against his lips, something deep and breathy.

“*Yes*.” He responded reverently, nails digging almost painfully into the sides of Katsuki’s face. “*God*, yes.” He glanced down, noting the way Izuku’s leg shook, and his back began to slide down the wall.

“Bedroom’s fifteen feet away. You gonna be able to walk?” He asked, raising an eyebrow and grinning as he leaned in. Katsuki placed his forearm against the wall beside Izuku’s head. “You need me to *carry* you, Deku?” He teased.

“I can *walk*, Kacchan.” He rolled his eyes as Katsuki released his other leg onto the floor.

“Yeah?” He leaned in even closer, so their lips were just a hair’s breadth apart. Then, in a low voice, he whispered, “Can you *run*?”

“*H-Huh?*” Izuku blinked repeatedly as he looked up at him. Katsuki’s response was a toothy, almost *predatory* grin as he dropped his arm from the wall, giving the other man space, and he watched as the man’s eyes widened in comprehension. Izuku hastily started power-walking toward the bedroom, but when he looked over his shoulder and saw Katsuki right at his heels, he jumped and picked up the pace, glancing back and forth between the blonde and the path ahead. “Kacchan?!”

“—On the *bed*, or on the *floor*, Deku. ‘S your choice.” He called out ominously, that same grin still plastered over his face as he reached his hands out and matched Izuku’s speed, forcing the other man into an awkward sideways-run that had him narrowly avoiding tripping over his own feet with each stride he made.

“*Kacchan!*” Izuku laughed, passing the threshold into the bedroom. He skidded to a stop at the foot of the bed and turned around. “Hate to be the one to tell you this, but your apartment’s a bit too small for us to be playing cat and mou— *Ahh!*” He shouted in shock when Katsuki suddenly shoved him onto the bed. He watched him bounce comically on the mattress as he blindly kicked the door shut behind him.

“Thanks for your input.” Katsuki rolled his eyes, reaching for the hem of his hoodie and shirt, peeling them both off and carelessly dropping them onto the floor. He stalked over to the bed, shoving his hands into his pants pockets. Izuku sat up at the precise moment that Katsuki sunk his right knee into the mattress. Katsuki responded by quickly crawling up over him and promptly shoving him back down. He stayed there, straddling his abdomen, and went to work on unbuttoning his shirt as quickly as he could manage. Once the last button was undone, Katsuki spread the fabric open to reveal Izuku’s toned chest. “We’ll be sure to take that into consideration in the future,” he smirked.

With that, Katsuki shuffled back, positioning himself between Izuku’s legs before reaching for his fly. He glanced up at his face, searching for any signs of discomfort. Finding none, he proceeded to undo the button on his dark dress pants. Once the zipper was down, Izuku lifted his hips slightly, and Katsuki took that as further confirmation that, *yes, Izuku Midoriya would, indeed, like Katsuki*

*Bakugou to take his pants off.*

He admired the way Izuku pointed his toes when he slid the pant legs off of him, and barely resisted the urge to release a bark of anxious laughter, because, *shit, I've really got it bad for this nerd, huh?*

He swallowed the impulse and focused on spreading Izuku's legs instead.

Katsuki's breath hitched as he finally looked down. Izuku was wearing light blue boxer briefs that bulged in such a way that he might as well be wearing nothing at all. And Katsuki would definitely like to get to that point, of course — but that didn't mean he couldn't enjoy the view as it was.

With his palms flush against his inner thighs, Katsuki pushed his legs wide open and scooted forward. "*Fuck, Deku...*" He rasped, biting his lip. Katsuki pressed his hands forward a bit, making Izuku's hips angle up off the mattress, and when he looked at Izuku's face, at the hazy look in his eyes and his wet, kiss-swollen lips still parted for him, like he was ready to take *anything* Katsuki could dish out — ready, and willing, and *fuck, shit*— Izuku's knees pressed into the mattress, *fuckfuckfuckfuck*—

"Kacchan," He moaned. "*God...*"

"M'gonna touch you, Deku." Katsuki said, as a statement of fact rather than a question. Frankly, Katsuki just didn't have it in him to ask for permission in that moment. He started rubbing Izuku's inner thighs, getting closer and closer to his dick each time.

"Please," Izuku almost sobbed. "*Kacchan,*" his legs seemed to strain even wider.

"*Fuckin' shit,*" Katsuki said under his breath. Unable to resist any longer, he palmed his cock with a shaky sigh, his other hand stationed against his inner thigh, still, as though Izuku needed any more encouragement to keep his legs open. The other man made a noise as though he'd just narrowly avoided choking on his own saliva, before pressing himself up toward Katsuki's hand with a moan. Katsuki was suddenly acutely aware of his rapid pulse.

"*Ahhh, Kacchan—*"

"*Deku,*" he groaned, rubbing Izuku slow and hard through his underwear. "I wanna— shit. I wanna suck you," he rasped, almost to himself. A second later, his eyes drifted up to settle on Izuku's red, pleased face. "You want that? Y'want me to suck your cock, *Deku?*"

"*Yes,*" Izuku nodded quickly. "God, *please,* Kacchan. Please, please, *plea—*" Even as he continued, Katsuki was already shifting, shuffling his knees back so he could lean down and grab Izuku's waistband with *purpose*. He couldn't quite explain it, but in that moment, it was as though he had been possessed. As though his brain had been taken over by the singular urge to make Izuku feel *good*, and he was just along for the ride.

His hands were surprisingly steady as they lowered Izuku's boxer briefs, allowing his cock to spring out, and for several seconds, Katsuki just kind of *stared* at it. Then a small, high-pitched sound prompted him to tear his gaze away in favor of looking at Izuku's face. The other man had both hands plastered over his mouth, their color contrasting against his bright red cheeks. His eyes were wide, and when they made contact with Katsuki's, he jolted slightly and quickly averted his gaze.

And as Katsuki watched his eyes flitting around the room in quick, stilted movements, it soon

became apparent to him that Izuku was thinking *far* too much.

So with that in mind, Katsuki immediately reached over to wrap his fingers around his dick, leaned in those last few inches, and flattened his tongue against the base, leaving a wet trail behind as he dragged it slowly to the tip. Izuku's hands fell from his face.

"Haahh, Kacch— *ahhh*," He moaned, fingers gripping the sheets beneath him.

Katsuki wrapped his lips around the tip of his cock tightly, his tongue swirling around. It'd been a while since he'd done this, but if Izuku could tell he was a bit rusty, he certainly didn't show it. Katsuki hummed around him, and Izuku shivered.

He wrapped his hand firmly around the base when he began to bob his head, pressing the other into Izuku's hip to keep him anchored to the mattress. Izuku whined when he did that, and Katsuki would've smirked, if such a thing were possible with a mouth full of dick.

He kept a slow pace, partly to tease Izuku but also to allow himself time to adjust. Deepthroating was never exactly his forte, but was hoping to maybe *pretend* it was, if only for that night. Once he was a little past the halfway point, he fully removed his hand, placing it on the opposite hip, holding Izuku down as he slowly worked his cock deeper. He felt the aborted muscle movements in Izuku's hips as he tried to resist the urge to thrust. Katsuki responded by pressing down harder and looking up at him with a heated, knowing gaze.

"*Kacchan*," Izuku keened, his eyes still wide and his face still red. His spread legs shook on either side of his head. Katsuki took him deeper, sucking his cheeks in around him and picking up the pace slightly, until the room was filled with filthy, wet noises and the sound of Katsuki's name on Izuku's tongue.

"Kacchan, s-so good, ah-aahh—" His voice broke when Katsuki took him to the base, fighting against the impulse to gag with all the resolve inside him. "*Kacchan*—"

For a while, Katsuki just continued that way, bobbing his head on Izuku's dick, humming around him every so often, and at some point, he'd closed his eyes. When he looked up at Izuku next, his eyes had fallen to half-mast, and it was safe to say that the blush on his face had little to nothing to do with embarrassment, anymore.

Katsuki came off with a wet *pop*, one of his hands moving to stroking Izuku's wet cock while the over became a surface for him to rest his cheek against. He smirked and licked his lips, slow and pointed. Some high-pitched noise came from Izuku's throat, and his fingers clenched repeatedly in the sheets.

"So Deku," he began, his voice hoarse, but otherwise casual. "Ever taken somethin' in the ass, before?" He asked, the same way one might ask about the weather. Izuku's eyes widened and he tensed slightly, but the tension melted away as Katsuki continued to stroke him.

"*E-Excuse me?*"

"S'important," Katsuki replied conversationally. Every now and then, his eyes would drift back to the dick he was stroking. "Y'know, since I'm gonna be *fucking* you?"

"Oh," Izuku muttered, understanding, albeit still sheepish. "W-Well, yes."

Katsuki hummed, swiping his thumb over the head and barely resisting the urge to grin at the sharp intake of air Izuku took. "So d'you finger yourself often?" He followed up.

“*What?*” Izuku squirmed beneath him nervously. “K-Kacchan, that’s—”

“—Also important.” Katsuki interjected, staring up at him blankly. He was fairly certain that from an outside perspective, it must’ve looked rather funny — for him to look so deadpan while casually stroking Izuku’s cock approximately two inches from his face. But Izuku was probably thinking far too many thoughts already to fit that observation into his head. “There’s a big fuckin’ difference between, ‘yeah, I got drunk and lost my virginity on prom night’ or ‘yeah I shoved a remote control up my ass when I was fourteen’ and ‘yeah, my hobbies include shoving my fingers up my ass when I jerk off.’”

Izuku blinked at him a few times, processing. “I don’t think masturbating counts as a *hobby*, Kacchan.”

“Maybe if you’re a *filthy casual*, it doesn’t.”

Izuku was silent for even longer this time. He cocked his head. “Kacchan, are you actually suggesting that *masturbation* has varying difficulty levels?” His brow furrowed. “Are you some kind of masturbation elitist?”

“Quit avoiding the damn question,” Katsuki retorted, rolling his eyes.

“*But—*”

Katsuki narrowed his eyes and gave the base of Izuku’s cock a squeeze, just tight enough to drift into the realm of discomfort. The man winced, instinctively lifting his hands, his fingers twitching toward Katsuki’s wrist, but not trying to grab it. At least, not yet. The blonde raised an eyebrow, maintaining his grip.

“Alright, *alright*,” He conceded, and Katsuki went back to slowly pumping him as though nothing had happened. Izuku took a deep breath. “Yes, I guess I do... *that*, pretty regularly.”

Katsuki hummed, more than a little pleased by the mental image that conjured forth. Izuku. Naked on his bed. Knees propped up and spread wide. Face pressed down into his pillow, muffling his pants and moans as he worked two wet fingers in and out at some breakneck pace. Having to balance his weight on his upper chest so he could play with his dick while he was at it. His strong, toned thighs shaking violently.

And damn, Katsuki wanted to tease him. Wanted to press him further, make him tell him more. Ask what position he used and how many fingers he could fit. Exactly how often he did it and what he liked to think about when he did. But at that point, Katsuki was so fucking turned on that even the sight of a flustered, embarrassed Izuku didn’t seem worth the delay.

Instead, he simply replied, “Good to know,” with a vaguely teasing lilt, before reaching across the other man’s body and grabbing the lube, knocking over a few things in the process which he couldn’t be bothered to give a fuck about. As he moved back to his original position with the bottle in hand, he looked directly into Izuku’s eyes.

“This won’t be anything new to you, then.”

Setting the bottle aside, Katsuki made quick work of fully removing Izuku’s boxers, the other lifting his hips to aid in the process, and once it was done, he stopped for a moment to admire the sight before him. Izuku, in all his naked glory, all flushed and freckled skin and toned muscles.

Katsuki was suddenly *very* aware of the fact that he still had his fucking jeans on, and also that they’d become tight to the point of actual discomfort. For now, he would ignore it, if only for the

sake of keeping himself from doing something fucking *stupid*, liking coming untouched over the sight of Izuku Midoriya naked.

His eyes trailed up his body and settled on his face. Izuku was looking off somewhere to the side — a clear sign of embarrassment. *Yeah, fuck that*, Katsuki thought to himself, taking hold of Izuku's chin and making him face forward as he dove down to kiss him, something fast and passionate that went on for several seconds until Katsuki finally broke away and began speaking against his lips.

"Don't be fuckin' embarrassed. You're hot shit." He grinned.

"Thanks..." Izuku narrowed his eyes, "...I think?"

Katsuki scoffed, giving him one last peck on the lips before sitting up again. He grabbed the lube and flipped the cap up. "Y'ready?" he asked.

"Yeah, but..." He bit his lip, eyes darting over Katsuki's frame. "Kacchan... why aren't you naked?"

"A-plus pick up line, Deku."

Izuku rolled his eyes. "Yeah, yeah. Look, I'd just—" He rubbed a hand against his head as he glanced off to the side nervously. "I'd feel better if I wasn't the only one naked right now."

"Oh, I understand," Katsuki clarified, nodding. "I'm just saying, y'know, for future reference — if you ever wanna initiate sex with me but aren't sure how, that'd be a great way to start."

"Duly noted," Izuku muttered, sitting up on his elbows. "*Pants*, Kacchan—" He said, his hands reaching out at the same moment Katsuki's own made contact with the top of his jeans.

"Oh, did you want to—?"

"A-ah," Izuku's fingers twitched back. "I-I mean, if that's alright?"

"Well, that depends," Katsuki smirked. "Can I trust you not to get my dick caught in a fucking zipper?"

"Kacchan... you're such a dork," the other sighed, fingers swiftly unbuttoning his jeans before going for the zipper.

"Never thought I'd hear a guy say *that* while he was getting my dick out." Katsuki muttered, and it seemed to dissipate in the room around them.

Izuku licked his lips, seemingly unconsciously, as he carefully lowered the zipper before reaching for the top of his jeans. Shaky hands grasped the waistband and pulled, and Katsuki leaned back on his hands to help get them over his hips.

He sighed in relief when his dick was finally free, and Izuku's hands retreated. When Katsuki finally looked down, he found him slightly hunched over, his face a deep shade of red.

"I-I..." Izuku swallowed, and Katsuki followed the movement of his throat with his eyes. The silence weighed heavily on the room. "I can't believe you're not even wearing *underwear*, Kacchan..." Izuku finally stated.

Katsuki scoffed lightly. "I'm a busy man, Deku." He said, pulling his jeans the rest of the way off.

“Too busy to put on underwear?” He squinted. “God, you really *are* a dork, Kacch— *ah!*” As soon as Katsuki worked his pants off his feet, he lunged forward, hooking his hands beneath Izuku’s hips and essentially folding him in half again. Katsuki’s forehead came to rest against his with a grin, and he noted the anxious way Izuku bit into his lips.

“You doin’ alright there, Deku?” He asked.

“Hm?” Izuku seemed distant for a moment, as if he’d been lost in thought. He jolted out of it. “Yeah, yeah! I’m—I’m totally fine, Kacchan. I’m—”

“Y’know,” Katsuki interrupted, lips moving against Izuku’s. “We don’t *have* to go all the way if you’re not up for it right now.”

“What? No, no, no, *no*.” He replied hastily. “I’m not— *this* isn’t reluctance,” he gestured toward his own face. Katsuki’s brow quirked up in amusement. “I’m just nervous because it’s been a while. I *want* this, Kacchan.”

There was a sort of pleased rumble from deep within Katsuki’s chest, almost like a purr. His eyes became half-lidded as he gazed into Izuku’s, feeling around for the lube and popping the cap open.

“Yeah?” He murmured lowly. Izuku’s breath stuttered.

“Yeah,” he whispered back. Katsuki kept his eyes locked on the man even as he coated his fingers.

“You want it?” He rasped, lowering his fingers.

“*Kacchan*,” he whimpered, as Katsuki started tracing his forefinger around his rim. Izuku was still folded in two, and Katsuki felt a thrill of excitement shoot through him when he felt the man attempting to push his hips up even more.

“You want me to fuck you?”

“Yes, Kacchan, God, yes— *aahh*—” He broke off into a moan as Katsuki finally eased his finger inside him.

Once it was in to the knuckle, Katsuki paused to allow him time to adjust, but no more than three seconds passed before Izuku began to squirm and wiggle, like he was trying to fuck himself on his fingers, despite having little to no leverage to do so from his current position. “Come on,” he whined.

In response, Katsuki slowly withdrew his finger— and then shoved it back in. Izuku cried out incoherently as he immediately set a fast pace.

“Was tryin’ to be *gentle*, y’know,” he said lowly, sitting up to better see what he was doing. “Was tryin’ to be *polite*.”

Izuku’s eyes had been squeezed shut, but he opened them to a squint and looked up at him. “Polite?” He said, in this sort of fake-innocent tone. “*You?*”

Katsuki clicked his tongue. He wanted to look offended, but he couldn’t help the way his lips quirked up. Instead, he simply retaliated by curling his finger inside Izuku until his back arched up off the mattress, and the only sounds his *smart-ass mouth* could make were broken cries.

“Careful, Deku.” He teased. “I’ve got a lot of power right now.”

Izuku grinned, then stuck his tongue out at him, and Katsuki responded by staring straight into his eyes as he pressed in another finger, drawing a deliciously strangled noise from deep within the other man's throat.

This sort of back-and-forth continued on as he added a third, and by the end of it, both of them were so flustered and *high* off the atmosphere that every touch sent shivers up Katsuki's spine, and when he finally withdrew his fingers and began lubing himself up, he hissed at the contact.

"Deku." He groaned, rubbing the head of his cock against Izuku's entrance. "*Shit, Deku—*"

"—Do it," He gasped. Katsuki looked up and found him, his hair wild and fanned out on the pillow as his hands fisted the sides of it. His face red. His eyes dark. Izuku licked his lips and said, "*Fuck me, Kacchan.*"

Katsuki's brain short circuited, his thoughts only coming back online at the realization that Izuku was now pressing down against him, trying to work his cock inside on his own.

Slowly, Katsuki began to press forward, fingers gripping Izuku's hips as he did.

"*Fuck, fuck, fuck—*" he hissed, watching himself disappearing inside, gradually, until eventually he felt his hips pressing against Izuku's ass, and released a shaky sigh.

"Kacchan," Izuku breathed, prompting him to look up at him. He took in his flushed cheeks and hazy eyes, and it hit him that this was actually happening. Izuku was actually there. He was *real*.

Katsuki leaned down, pressing his forearms into the mattress on either side of his head, and gently resting his forehead against Izuku's.

"Tell me when you're ready," he said softly.

Izuku hummed in agreement. "C'mere," he whispered, wrapping his arms around his back and pulling him further down, until their chests were pressed together and Katsuki had to tuck his head over his shoulder. Izuku wrapped his legs around his waist, making him groan as he was pulled even deeper.

For a little while, they just stayed like that. Izuku laced his left hand through Katsuki's hair as his left traced patterns along his spine.

After a minute, Izuku retracted his hands, and Katsuki sat up to look down at him.

"Ready?" He asked.

"Mhm," he smiled.

With that, Katsuki slowly began to pull out, until just the tip was left inside, before pressing back in at the same speed.

"Fucking *hell*, Deku," He breathed, rubbing his hands over the backs of his thighs before settling under his knees. He kept that same pace for a bit, fucking Izuku nice and slow, but as the man's noises became louder, more clearly pleased, he couldn't help but speed up.

"Kacchan!" He cried out, knuckles turning white as he grasped the sheets. "Yes, yes—"

"—How could you do that, Deku?" Katsuki asked suddenly, smirking as the man opened his eyes to look at him in confusion. "What, you're just gonna drop a bomb like, '*fuck me, Kacchan*' and



expect me to just go on like it's *nothing*?"

"You—ahh," Izuku moaned, biting his lip to cut it off. "You say stuff like that all the time, though!"

"What, the word '*fuck*'?" He lifted an eyebrow.

"No, I mean—" Izuku whimpered. "I-I mean *vulgar* things. You say vulgar things all the time and it doesn't— doesn't affect *me*."

Katsuki lifted *both* eyebrows.

"Oh?" He said, "Doesn't *affect* you, huh? Well shit, that sounds like a *challenge*, Deku." He gave a particularly hard thrust for emphasis.

"A-Aahh!" He cried out, legs shaking in Katsuki's hands. "Wait, *what*—"

Suddenly, Katsuki leaned down, his lips pressed to his ear.

"Fuck, Deku. So tight," He groaned, directly into his ear. The words drew a moan from Izuku, and he hissed as he felt the man clench around him. "Yeah, mmn— can't believe I was thinkin' 'bout kickin' this ass. This feels *so* much better. Yeah, you want it, baby? You want my cock? I'll fuck your tight ass all night long, Deku."

"*Holy— ahh, Kacchan—*" he cried out, and Katsuki moaned when he felt him squeezing tight around him.

"Mmn, yeah... *Shit*, you take it so good, baby. Gonna make you fuckin' *scream*." He rasped, nipping the shell of his ear. "Gonna make you scream my name. C'mon, do it. Say my name. Tell me who's fucking you, *Deku*."

"Th-that's not fair, Kaccha— *ahh!*"

"Hmm? '*Not fair*'?" Katsuki repeated back nonchalantly. "I have no idea what you're talking about, Deku."

"That's a lie. You're a liar, Kacchan. Haah—" he retorted. "You're lucky you're not wearing pants right now, you *fucking liar*—"

"Oh-ho!" Katsuki grinned. "He *swears*, huh? Fuckin' *wild*—" Izuku wrapped his arms around his neck then, nails digging into his skin as he brought his lips to his ear.

"Mm, yeah, *fuck me, Kacchan*. C'mon—" Katsuki's breath stuttered. *Oh god, oh fuck*. "Yeah, nice and *deep*, just like that. Fuck me harder. God, your cock feels so good, so *thick*—"

"—Yeah, I'm gonna need you to cut that shit out unless you want me to come, like, literally *right* this fucking second."

Izuku snorted. "You started it."

"*You* challenged me!"

"Kacchan, you think *everything's* a challenge."

"*So do you!*"

Izuku paused for a moment, humming as he pulled Katsuki closer. Then, in one fluid movement, he hooked his ankles behind his back and rolled them both over, so he was sitting atop him. Katsuki was so stunned that, for a moment, all he could do was stare up at him, dumbstruck.

“You *might* have a point.” Izuku grinned, though it fell from his face as he slowly began to lift and lower his hips, his palms pressed against his chest. “Ahh, Kacchan, mmn—”

Katsuki rolled his eyes, more for show than anything, but he damn near choked on his own saliva when Izuku suddenly slammed his hips down, moaning loudly.

The man bit his lip, eyes half lidded as he looked down at him with a cheeky smile, and Katsuki almost asked, ‘*who are you and what the fuck have you done with Deku?*’

“Careful, Kacchan,” he teased. “I’ve got a lot of power right now.”

Katsuki snorted. “Oh, yeah?”

“Mhmm,” Izuku replied, lifting his hips slowly again, his eyes falling shut in pleasure.

Katsuki then swiftly reached up and grabbed his hips, slamming him back down before the man knew what was happening. Izuku released a choked up sob, and Katsuki dug the balls of his feet into the mattress as he grinded up into him.

“*Keep tellin’ yourself that, Deku,*” he smirked.

Eventually, they fell into a rhythm — Izuku pressing down onto Katsuki, as Katsuki thrust up into him, holding onto his hips to help ease the strain on his legs. After a while, it still, inevitably, grew tiresome for him. Eventually, Katsuki took the initiative to flip them both again, in order to better facilitate their mutual desire to have Katsuki *pounding into him*.

It was getting hotter. Katsuki felt sweat on his back and on his palms, where he gripped Izuku’s hips. He tried to subtly wipe them off when he leaned down to kiss him, lacing the fingers of one hand through his hair as the other slowly travelled down his chest to wrap around his cock.

“God, you’re so fucking *perfect*, Deku.” When Katsuki spoke, he found himself saying things like that more and more often. When Izuku spoke, he primarily just said his name at a steadily increasing volume, growing a little closer to a sob each time. Sometimes he’d devolve into rapid muttering about how good it felt, where it felt the best, and occasionally, how *happy* he was.

“K-Kacchan, Kacchan, *Kacchan*, yes—” he’d cry out, clawing at his back. “Feels so good, you feel *so* good. God, *f-fuck*, I can feel you, you’re so good, I’m so happy—” Katsuki would often take those moments to seal his lips over Izuku’s pulse point and suck, leaving marks along his neck, just to have something to do with his mouth other than vocalizing the tight squeeze he felt inside his chest whenever Izuku babbled about how *good* and *happy* he made him.

As they both neared the edge, Katsuki started stroking Izuku’s cock in time with his thrusts, whispering, “C’mon, come for me, Deku. Wanna see you, come on—”

He bit down on his neck and Izuku cried out, coming against his stomach with a broken shout of his name. Katsuki fucked him fast and hard through the aftershocks, the sound of his skin against Izuku’s filling the room until finally, he followed, coming with a groan, and grinding his hips further into him as he basked in the heat for as long as he could get away with.

He barely managed to find the strength to get them both cleaned up before they crawled beneath the covers, and his limbs tangled with Izuku’s in an attempt to get as close as possible *without*

trying for round two. Izuku didn't protest; he pulled him closer, too.

In the seconds before Katsuki slipped into unconsciousness, he spared a glance up at the window, and the curtains, which appeared green under the moonlight, still. He huffed a breath through his nose, the faintest shadow of a laugh as he recalled Izuku's eyes and thought, *yeah*.

*Those curtains ain't got shit.*

---

Katsuki awoke the next morning surrounded by the scent of sweetness and earth that he'd come to associate with Izuku.

It was still only around eight o'clock, so he did his best to untangle their limbs as gently as possible, so as to avoid waking the other man, before slipping on a fresh pair of boxers and heading out toward the kitchen.

He put on a pot of coffee and began rummaging through his fridge, setting various ingredients out on the counter as he went about making breakfast, being sure to prepare twice the amount he normally would. Izuku emerged mere moments after he'd finished, and Katsuki heard his bedroom door clicking shut, followed by a yawn, right as he was pouring himself a cup of coffee. He turned around to lean back against the countertop, took a small sip, and damn near *choked* the moment Izuku stepped into his line of sight.

He tried to play it off, make it look like he was just clearing his throat, but the knowing look Izuku gave him proved his efforts to be fruitless. In all honesty, he wasn't that embarrassed. Given the sight before him, Katsuki figured anyone would've had the same reaction.

Izuku's messy hair was even more frazzled than usual, and his neck was covered in bruises and bitemarks. Both these things would've been enough on their own, but what *really* got to Katsuki was the fact that he appeared to be wearing his discarded hoodie from the night before, and nothing else. *Appeared*, because though he might've been wearing underwear, Katsuki wouldn't know. The thing was already pretty large on him, but on Izuku, the hem fell somewhere just past mid-thigh.

"G'morning, Kacchan," He said sweetly, yawning again. Katsuki set his mug down on the counter.

"So, is that your way of saying you want me to fuck you over the counter?" He replied nonchalantly.

Izuku laughed. "I mean, I wouldn't be *opposed*." His eyes flitted over to the fried fish, still in the pan on the stove. "I'm pretty hungry, though."

Katsuki hummed, nodding. "Get some food," he said, as he grabbed his own plate and coffee.

"Thanks," he smiled. Katsuki grunted in acknowledgement and headed toward the living room. As he was setting his dishes down on the coffee table, he heard Izuku call out to him, "Where are the mugs?"

"Cabinet on the far right," he called back, carefully sitting on the couch before sipping his coffee. When Izuku joined him, he'd already started eating.

"This is *good*," he said, his mouth still partially full.

"I know," Katsuki responded, not even looking at him, because frankly, it was *way* too early in the day for him to be a slave to his dick.

Izuku put his coffee down as he moved to sit beside him, placing his plate in his lap and digging in. Katsuki grabbed his own plate and did the same, and for a minute, they just continued like that, eating together in a comfortable silence. Eventually, Izuku gave the food a rest and reached for his coffee.

He took a sip, paused for a second, and then promptly spit it back into the mug. Katsuki gave him a mildly disgusted look that Izuku either ignored or just didn't notice at all.

"Kacchan, what *is* this?!" He squeaked, his eyes visibly beginning to water.

"It's coffee, dumbass." Katsuki took a sip of his own, as if to emphasize.

"*Coff*—" Izuku sputtered, eyes going wide. "What— Why is it *spicy*?!"

"I like it that way," he shrugged, eyes drifting toward the window nonchalantly.

"*What do you put in it?*"

Katsuki turned back toward him sharply, fixing the man with a glare.

"The fuck?" He scoffed, "I'm not tellin' you my secret ingredient!"

"Secret ingre—" Izuku blinked a few times, clearly taken aback. "What? *Why would I wanna steal it?!*"

Katsuki said nothing — just maintained eye contact with him as he slurped his own drink pointedly and gulped it down, popping his lips with a satisfied, "*Ahh*." Izuku narrowed his eyes at him.

"Unbelievable."

"Oh, fuck you," he rolled his eyes. "I never said you *had* to drink it."

"*Unbelievable*." Izuku reiterated. In response, Katsuki just flipped him off, turning his attention back toward his meal. They went back to eating quietly, and for a few minutes more, that was all it was.

Katsuki broke the silence. "So," he began, setting his empty plate down on the table. "About, y'know... everything." Izuku hummed, glancing up as he chewed. "I mean, I said a lot of this shit last night, but... y'know. Sorry. For making you worry like that." Katsuki looked down at the floor, crossing his arms stiffly. "I mean... frankly, I was just fuckin' embarrassed, and..." He hunched forward, as if trying to make himself smaller. "Well, I... actually didn't *hear* any of your voicemails until a few days after you stopped calling."

Izuku set his utensils down. "Wait, *what?*" His brow furrowed as he reached up to wipe his mouth with his napkin. "*Why?*"

"Well, after the fuckin' *bomb* you dropped in the first one, I was— I mean, I don't know. I guess I was kind of scared that shit would happen again." He answered, with a groan. "Like, it just— I don't know, it fuckin' freaked me out, so I avoided it. I mean, I know that's not really an *excuse*, but it's... It's the truth, and it's all I've got." I fucked up, and..." He sighed, turning to look at him again. "I'm sorry."

"It's... I understand." Izuku nodded, glancing off to the side and rubbing his neck sheepishly. "I mean, honestly, I was... kind of embarrassed about leaving those..." He muttered, with a nervous laugh. "I was upset at the time and... Well, I didn't really think. In retrospect I figure it probably

came off as, uhm..." He trailed off, biting his lip. "Very creepy and obsessive?"

Katsuki scoffed. "Well, if you wanna talk about *creepy* and *obsessive*, I think my shit takes the cake, there, too." He quirked an eyebrow, knocking back the last of his coffee, as if it was alcohol, and setting the mug down heavily. He fixed Izuku with a firm, deadpan look. "I was at your goddamn *workplace*, Deku. *Regularly*."

Izuku hesitated for a moment.

Then, "Okay, yeah, that's... definitely worse." He nodded, mirroring Katsuki's blank expression. For a few seconds, neither of them spoke, and all that could be heard was the sound of nearby traffic, permeating the paper-thin walls of Katsuki's apartment. Finally Izuku spoke up again, "Uhm, so... Why didn't you say anything?"

Katsuki huffed a small, bitter laugh under his breath. "Shit, Deku, I don't *know*," He raked a hand through his hair. "I mean, after the first time, it just felt fucking weird, and I guess at a certain point it just... didn't really seem like an option anymore." He sighed, exasperated. "Like, it just seemed like any way I did it at that point would just lead to us having *this conversation*, y'know. You asking me *why*." He slumped back into the couch, his eyes falling shut for a moment. "And... I don't really have an *answer* for that."

"That was an answer, though?"

"*That was an answer, though*," Katsuki repeated in a high-pitched voice, mocking. Izuku snorted and rolled his eyes. "If it makes it any better, I wasn't actually watching you the whole time. Most of the time I was just doing homework."

"I guess that's... *marginally* better," Izuku squinted. "But just so we're clear, if you ever do that again, I *will* kick your ass, Kacchan." He stated, staring at him unblinkingly, "I mean it. You talk about kicking my ass a lot, but I'm serious. Like, I will make you *cry*."

"*Yeah, yeah, I get it*," Katsuki groaned. "Don't even fuckin' worry about it, Deku, 'cause I can tell you right now that I am *never* setting foot in that goddamn store *ever again*."

"Oh, I don't mean that," his brow furrowed. "I have no problem with you being there if you *tell* me first, just don't show up *unannounced*."

"Well, in any case, it ain't happening," Katsuki laughed humorlessly. "Not after last night, anyway."

"What are you talking about?"

"Don't play dumb, Deku." He scoffed. "You saw me waxing poetic about you up there. I fucking said that shit *on stage*, in front of a room full of people."

"So..." Izuku blinked. "You're embarrassed? That's it?"

"In a word, *yeah*," Katsuki replied, then lowered his voice slightly. "In two words, *fuck off*."

"Because you wrote a cheesy poem about me? That's what's embarrassing?" Izuku raised his eyebrows, grinning.

"Shut up," he warned, narrowing his eyes. At this, Izuku began giggling. Katsuki gave him an odd look that only became more potent when the giggling progressed into a full-on fit of laughter.

"What?" He demanded, but Izuku didn't respond. He simply kept on laughing, and, from the looks

of it, wouldn't be stopping anytime soon.

Katsuki's eye twitched as he scooted toward him, grabbing him by the shoulders and shaking him. "Fucking *what?*" He shouted, his face uncomfortably hot. "What's so goddamn funny?!"

"Oh my—" Izuku gasped, then sighed as he finally began to calm down. His face was red, his eyes shiny with unshed tears. He continued to grin once he'd finally collected himself enough to look up at Katsuki, though he still let slip a small hiccup of a laugh every so often.

"The fuck's wrong with you?" Katsuki growled, though it lacked any genuine venom. His eyes darted down to Izuku's lips, following the movement when the man bit the lower one. Izuku was grinning still, in spite of it, and leaning further toward him.

"Oh, Kacchan—" he murmured, resting his chin on his shoulder as his arms wrapped around his back. Katsuki felt his breath, warm against his neck. Then, with a tone so soft, so disgustingly *fond*, Katsuki almost couldn't believe it was *for* him... Izuku went on to say, "I've been writing poetry about you since *day one*."

Katsuki's mind went blank for a moment, but he felt it come online as his lips quirked up, seemingly of their own accord. And he thought about saying something, but nothing adequate came to mind.

So instead, he took a deep breath, and wrapped his arms around Izuku. He released the air in a sigh as he tucked his face into his neck.

He felt Izuku's heart beating fast against his own chest, and still, he pulled him closer.

## Chapter End Notes

The real question is: Is Todoroki's coffee actually bad, or is Katsuki just a really shitty judge because he literally brews his coffee with fucking ground habanero? Yeah, there you go. That's his secret ingredient. What a goddamn degenerate.

If you follow me on twitter, You may've seen me bitching about writing Katsuki's poem lol. It was easily the most difficult thing in this entire story, because it there were so many things it needed to convey simultaneously. It needed to be both amateur *and* poignant, while also giving an impression of being largely accidental in its poeticism, because strictly speaking, Katsuki actually wasn't consciously *trying* to write poetry. Additionally, it had to be in character for *fucking KATSUKI BAKUGOU*, which meant that, even though Katsuki did pour his heart into it, most of his vulnerable feelings could not be expressed outright throughout for the majority of the poem.

The "accidental poeticism" thing wasn't too difficult, because I see Katsuki as someone who has trouble putting names to his own feelings, so using analogies and metaphors would actually come more naturally, because the only way he'd really know how to explain his feelings would be to compare them to something he already understood, albeit in disorganized, floundering ways that are occasionally hard to follow.

SO YEAH IT WAS A FUCKING LOT. I'm still not sure if I got it *totally* right, but I'm satisfied enough to post it. Anyway, if anyone wants to read the full thing on its own, [here's the link](#). Though tbh I think with slam poetry (if it can even be called that)

it's probably more. I guess. Powerful?? In the context of the story, lol...

Also hahahaha gratuitous smut, pls don't look me in the eye I'll fuckin combust.

ANYWAY. Just. Wow, okay, I wanna say thank you guys so fucking much for sticking with me on this ride. You've all been so amazing and supportive, and I honestly can't thank you enough. Just. Thank you so fucking much, holy shit. I know I don't always reply to comments, but I read all of them and..... Okay this is kinda embarrassing, but I actually screenshot and print them out and keep them in a binder for me to look at when I feel shitty. I'm fucking serious. I'm a goddamn mess.

If you liked this story, I can tell you right now that I've got a shit ton of other bakudeku stories coming soon, so like. Be on the lookout for that!

My next story is going to be a very intense character study for Bakugou. It's mostly written already, and honestly... probably more proud of it than I am of pretty much *anything else* I've written, so I really, really hope you'll enjoy it.

So yeah, I'll also mention that, while this story is TECHNICALLY finished.... **YES, THERE WILL BE AN EPILOGUE AND YES, IT WILL BE SILLY AND FLUFFY AND GROSS.** So yeah. Look forward to that in like. A week lol.

OKAY, thank you guys so much and I am going to shut the fuck up now <3

Tumblr: Weirdfairytales

Twitter: Weirdfairytales

# Epilogue: Constant

## Chapter Summary

Fragments of a life in terms of poetry.

## Chapter Notes

"One week" is Anna Speak for "11 whole ass fucking months"  
Sorry about that. but, uh. At least it's here, I guess? akldsif

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Living with Izuku was not always easy. After two years spent on his own, Katsuki had anticipated that adjusting his daily routine to accommodate another person would be a stumbling process; he just hadn't predicted the specifics.

When they moved into their new apartment, Izuku brought his own coffee maker, on the grounds that Katsuki's was, as he put it, *permanently tainted*. Katsuki spent a fair amount of time feeling irrationally offended by this, though he only ever voiced his disdain for the lack of counter space because of it. Of course, Izuku, perceptive as always, saw through him almost immediately. A couple of days after they moved in, Katsuki could clearly recall every detail of Izuku's facial expression and intonation when he'd asked, "Why do you need me to validate your coffee, Kacchan?"

And all at once, Katsuki's bizarre fixation on the matter melted away, like icicles in the springtime.

Once that was settled, the majority of their grievances were minor and mundane. Izuku, not cleaning his hair out of the shower drain. Izuku, leaving his dirty clothes on the floor.

Katsuki, frequently breaking plates and glasses. Katsuki, stealing all the covers while they slept.

Both of them, never bothering to unload the dishwasher, instead opting to simply live out of it until it was empty, and the tower of dishes stacked up in the sink threatened to come crashing down.

Most of the micro-nuisances they lived with on a day to day basis were primarily universal. They were generic issues that other couples had. And while Katsuki knew quite well that they both had their share of idiosyncrasies, when he thought about it, there was really only one particular oddity that actually took some getting used to on Katsuki's part.

Everyday, without fail, Izuku Midoriya *will* write a poem of some sort.

Katsuki had known this about him for a while — *long* before they'd moved in together. He just hadn't expected the sort of scheduling gymnastics Izuku would occasionally perform in order to accomplish it. Given the choice between eating and finishing a poem before midnight, Izuku would happily go hungry.



It wasn't uncommon for Izuku to read his daily poems for him, particularly when he thought they were especially good or funny. It happened a little under half the time. What was rare was when he decided to read him poems he'd written sometime in the past. Those days were few and far between, though when they did occur, they tended to be memorable.

The first time it happened, it was several months after they'd officially begun dating, and a couple more before they moved in together.

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***I. "Him"***  
*Valentine's Day*

Katsuki opened his front door on a shifty-eyed, fidgety Izuku. He quirked an eyebrow.

"What's up with you?" He asked.

Izuku jumped. "Ah! Kacchan," he said.

"The fuck are you acting all startled for?" He scoffed. "It's my fucking apartment; who'd you think was gonna open the door? The goddamn *Lorax*?"

Izuku rolled his eyes, pushing past him as he entered. "Happy Valentine's day to you, too." He plopped down on the couch, dropping his backpack next to him with a sigh. Katsuki shut the door, shoving his hands into his pockets as he meandered in his direction.

"Is that why you're acting all jumpy?" He asked, before amending, "More than usual, I mean."

Izuku narrowed his eyes at him slightly in annoyance, though his expression fell neutral a second later. "Well... I guess, sort of."

Izuku's gaze dropped to the floor, and Katsuki took that as his cue to collapse on the couch beside him, wrap his arm around his shoulders, and murmur, "I'm sure whatever kinky shit you're wanting to try out isn't as weird as you think it is."

The other looked up suddenly, sputtering, "That's— that's not what I was—!"

"Is it something to do with piss?" He interjected, barely resisting the urge to laugh. "That's the vibe I'm getting. I mean, I'm not *particularly* into it but I could probably get on board with pissing on you if it's really *that* important to—" Izuku abruptly slapped his palm over Katsuki's mouth.

"No." He clipped. "You will not *gross* this Valentine's Day."

Katsuki glared, removing the hand from his face. "'Gross' isn't a verb."

"I didn't think so either until I met you," Izuku deadpanned.

He scoffed. "Okay, so I guessed wrong. *Whatever*. It's not my fault you're a fucking walking ball of kinks."

"Actually, a significant portion of that *is* your—"

"—So are planning on telling me what's actually bugging you, or are we just gonna keep going with the whole 'hey let's argue over some stupid shit as a form of foreplay' thing 'til I've got you

pressed up against the mirror?”

Izuku’s cheeks dusted with pink, and Katsuki grinned. It was rare for either of them to actually say as much, but they were both quite aware that their arguments having a tendency to culminate in sex was no coincidence. After a moment, Izuku sighed, closing his eyes for a few seconds. Then, he hunched over, unzipped his backpack, and pulled out a journal — just one among the hundreds Katsuki knew he had.

“I’ve been thinking about what I wanted to do for Valentine’s Day,” he started, fidgeting with the fraying pages of the notebook in his lap. “I couldn’t really think of anything, well... special.”

“You know I don’t give a fuck about any of that, Deku.” Katsuki stated, with a sigh. “Like, yeah, I appreciate it and junk, but you don’t need to legitimize our relationship with fucking flowers and heart-shaped candy boxes. Shit’s just a corporate scheme, anyway. I’m completely fucking dandy with just watching Netflix and maybe fucking in the shower or something later.”

“Oh, I know,” Izuku waved his hands in some weird, meaningless gesture vaguely resembling a surrender. “And we can do that, of course. I just wanted to, well— I wanted to give you something, so...” He tapped his journal. “Remember how I told you I’d been writing poems about you since the beginning?”

Katsuki had an inkling of where he was going with this, but regardless, he simply replied with, “Yeah, I remember.”

“Well... I thought I’d maybe, uhm, read you one?” He scratched his cheek awkwardly. “It’s... nothing special, and it’s not very long, and—”

“Deku.” Katsuki interjected, sensing the oncoming tangent of self-deprecating rhetoric. Izuku looked at him, his eyes shifty and anxious. “What’re you so damn nervous about? You read me your poetry every other day.”

“Well, I know, but— that’s, I mean...” he sighed, slumping slightly. “That’s when I’ve *just* written it, and it’s— different, somehow. I don’t know.”

Katsuki remained silent as he watched him. He lowered his chin, subtly signalling for him to continue.

“Kacchan, I’ve been writing poetry every day for *years*. It’s... automatic. It’s like breathing.” He chewed his lip and glanced away. “Most of the time, unless something big and dramatic has just happened, I’m kind of just pulling it from the aether. There are times when I won’t even know what it’s about until I look at it later. The implications of certain lines...” he trailed off briefly. Eventually, his gaze fell back on Katsuki. “I guess you could say I get, err... retroactively embarrassed by it.”

Katsuki pursed his lips, considering. He’d be lying if he said that he completely understood Izuku’s feelings, but he figured he didn’t have to. They were real; he could tell by the apprehensive look in his eyes. They were real, and Katsuki knew Izuku well enough to trust that his feelings made sense, even if they didn’t make sense to *him*.

Katsuki took a different tactic in his reply.

“Remember that one time when I got up on a fucking stage and did some shitshow slam poem about you in front of a room full of strangers and you?”

Izuku cracked a smile. “Obviously—”

“—And then I took you home and fucked you until you screamed my name,” Katsuki grinned.

“—Okay, I did not *scream*. I am not a *screamer*, Kacchan. ” Izuku retaliated, sitting up straight to make himself appear taller. Katsuki, of course, took that move for what it was — a subtle act of war, and responded by sitting up at his full height as well. Izuku’s resulting glare did not go unnoticed.

“Yeah. You’re right, you’re not.” Katsuki said, rolling his eyes as he went on to say, “You’re a fucking mumbler, is what you are.”

Izuku groaned. “Not this again—”

“‘Not this again,’ my ass.” Katsuki returned his glare. “You know how fucking weird and surreal it is to have a guy muttering commentary about your dick when he’s supposed to be going down on you? S’like getting blown by a damn ESPN commentator.”

“Says the guy whose dirty talk is comprised of a jarring, feverish alternation between praise and degradation.” Izuku scoffed. “If you wanna talk about surreal, try getting called both a slut *and* an angel within the same sentence. In that moment, I experienced a feeling I’ve never felt before. I think it was my sense of self *flickering*.”

“Shut the fuck up.” Katsuki reached over and pinched his nose. “You *love* it.” Izuku batted his hand away and stuck his tongue out at him, but quickly retracted it when Katsuki attempted to pinch that as well.

After a moment, he hesitantly asked, “So do you wanna hear the poem, or...?”

“What the fuck?” Katsuki’s brow pinched. “Of course I do.”

Izuku sighed, “Alright,” and opened his journal to a dog-eared page. “This is from about two months after your first call.”

Izuku cleared his throat.

“Everyday, when he speaks,” he paused, biting his lip nervously. “I try to paint a picture of him in the colors of his voice.”

Izuku glanced up at him briefly, and the look on his face must’ve been comforting, as he quickly seemed to lose himself in the rhythm of his recitation.

“The syllables that drip from his tongue in hues of red and yellow  
bloom so beautifully behind my eyes, but  
it’s always the moment when I  
feel I’m getting closer  
that it happens.

The sensory overload of my name on his lips,  
splattering across the image, and  
that vulgar silence that wipes my canvas blank,  
makes my hands shake, makes my  
heart ache, clench, twist,  
because it’s  
almost sickening, really.”

Izuku stopped for a moment, taking a shaky breath. Then:

“I never get tired of starting over.”

The words hung in the air for a few seconds before they finally seemed to settle in, soaking through his skin and saturating the silence that filled the room, until Izuku broke it once more.

“So...” He laughed quietly. Anxiously. “What’d you think...?”

Katsuki found himself strangely caught off guard by the question. He blinked once in some odd, almost *stuttering* motion, as if his facial muscles had malfunctioned in some way. Evidently, that wasn’t the only part of him that was malfunctioning, because as soon as Katsuki opened his mouth, he heard himself thoughtlessly blurt out, “Fucking— move in with me,” and Izuku’s already wide eyes were suddenly so much wider.

Katsuki felt his face heat up as his boyfriend continued to stare at him slack-jawed, and after what seemed like an eternity, said boyfriend finally spoke up.

“Do... Do you mean that?” He asked, nearly breathless.

“I never say shit I don’t mean.” Katsuki shot back immediately.

“I think the number of times you’ve threatened to kill Todoroki say otherwise, but sure, whatever you say.” Izuku fired back, just as quickly.

Katsuki narrowed his eyes. “I’m hearing a lot of smartass *bullshit* but not a lot of fucking *answers*.”

“So— so you’re really asking me, right? You mean it?” Izuku shifted to face him, his knees pulling up under him. Katsuki mirrored his position.

“Yeah, *dumbass*, we *just* fucking established that.”

Izuku blinked owlishly at him for a few more seconds, before his expression broke into a wide grin, and he promptly tackled Katsuki in a kiss, his back hitting the couch. After a moment, Izuku pulled away, tucking his face against his neck.

“Yes.” Izuku said, his lips moving against his skin. “Of course I’ll move in with you, Kacchan.”

And he sounded so goddamn happy and just giddy about the matter that Katsuki couldn’t help but smile as he wrapped his arms around his back, pulling him tight against his chest.

Two full anime series and a round of sex in the shower later, Katsuki was lying in bed on his back with Izuku’s cheek pressed against his chest. He was dozing, about to drift off, when Izuku broke the silence.

“I’ve been thinking—” Katsuki jolted. “Ah, sorry.” Izuku said sheepishly.

“Whatever,” Katsuki groaned sleepily. “What is it?”

“I’ve just been thinking, Kacchan...”

“And?” He pressed, muttering under his breath. “You’re always fuckin’ thinking...”

“Kacchan,” Izuku chided lightly, propping himself up so he could look at him properly. “No, I

mean...” He trailed off for a second, his eyes drifting away before returning to Katsuki’s. “One of my professors last year said she really liked my writing, and... well, she said she could put me in contact with some people who could help me get published, if I wanted.”

Katsuki was a bit more awake, now.

“You thinkin’ about doin’ it?”

Izuku nodded slightly. “I still have most of my old journals,” he went on. “I was thinking of maybe trying to sort through them. If I can find enough decent poems, I might be able to make a compilation, or something like that.”

“Decent, huh?” Katsuki scoffed, raising an eyebrow. “Seems like the real problem’s gonna be choosin’ between all the fuckin’ great ones.”

Izuku made a face, something that looked like it was trying to be a glare, but wound up resembling a wobbly, flustered smile, instead.

“Well, maybe you could help me with that.” Izuku said, ducking his head and pressing his cheek to his chest again. “If you think it’s a good idea, that is.”

“Of course it’s a good idea,” he said, fingers absentmindedly threading through Izuku’s messy hair. “You write some good shit, Deku. It’d be a damn shame if no one else ever got to see it.”

Izuku hummed, the sound vibrating against his chest like a cat’s purr.

“Thank you, Kacchan.” He said, and drifted off soon after.

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## ***II. “Somewhere”***

*A few months later*

Izuku had been down.

Katsuki knew this, could see it plainly in the way his shoulders slumped when he walked — the way he struggled to pull himself out of bed, as though it physically pained him to do so. He knew this, and yet he found himself at a loss as to what he ought to do about it.

He tried to help, in his own way. He started picking up some of the slack, cooking even more often and cleaning up around the apartment without complaint. He gave Izuku kisses on the forehead and hugs from behind, and held him close while they slept. He wanted to do more, wanted to ask Izuku what was wrong and what he needed to feel better, but although the symptoms of his depression had certainly been worse than usual in the past few weeks, Izuku had yet to actually say anything about it.

He wanted to think that it’d be fine to just ask, but although that certainly did seem to fall in line with Izuku’s character, the fact that he had yet to openly acknowledge his feelings did not, and that made the whole situation feel a lot more uncertain to him. He knew he had the broach the subject, he just didn’t know how.

And things went on like that for quite a while, the persistent feeling of apprehension beneath

Katsuki's skin growing more and more frantic as time went on.

Everything came to a head on a Sunday night in June.

Katsuki had been lying in bed, playing some rhythm game on his phone when Izuku came in.

The man took a deep breath, a brief pause, and then, in a deceptively even tone, proceeded to ask, "Do I annoy you, Kacchan?"

And Katsuki's response was thoughtlessly immediate, the words coming out sharp as he tried to focus on the game.

"Of course you fucking do."

For a few seconds, it was silent, apart from the noises coming from the game. The sound of a snuffle broke his focus, and when Katsuki chanced a glance up, only to find Izuku crying, he fumbled, his phone falling onto his face, and then the mattress.

"What the fuck—" He blurted, hastily sitting up on his elbows. "H-Hey, cut it out—"

"I'm sorry," Izuku sobbed, his back slowly sliding down the wall, until he was hunched over in the corner, his palms covering his temples and the bottom half of his face hidden by his knees. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry," He repeated, and Katsuki felt his chest become tight, his insides twisting. He only remained frozen for a half-second more before he shoved himself off the mattress, traversing the space between them urgently.

"Deku—" he squatted down in front of him, his hands encircling his wrists, pulling them away from his face. "Deku, are you — shit, c'mere," He almost hissed, snaking his hands beneath his arms to wrap around his back in a hug awkwardly impeded by Izuku's legs.

Izuku hiccuped, "It's— I—"

"—Shhh," Katsuki said, trying his best to sound soothing as he pulled him in tighter. "It's okay. It's okay..." Izuku's legs shifted onto their sides and behind him, allowing Katsuki to hold him closer while Izuku buried his face in his chest and *cried*.

"Deku..." One of his hands moved up to his hair, petting it softly. "*Everyone* annoys me. You *know* that, but it's— it's only okay when it's *you*." He murmured, his throat tight. "You're the one person whose shit I *want* to put up with."

"Y-You mean it?" Izuku asked, his voice muffled, quivering.

"Yes." Katsuki stated firmly.

"B-But you're so—" he choked on another sob. "You're— you're amazing, Kacchan... You're *beautiful* and—and *smart*, and you're good at everything you try, and I'm just..." Izuku's fingers clutched the back of his shirt, his face sliding a few inches down. "I'm plain, and boring and I'm—I'm not really good at anythi—"

"That's fucking bullshit, and you know it," his fingers clenched in Izuku's hair reflexively, though he relaxed them at the small noise of discomfort the man made. Katsuki took a deep breath.

"That's bullshit, Deku. You're fucking hot as hell, and do you *really* think I'd date a guy I thought was boring?"

"But—"

“—And ‘not good at anything’? The fuck’s up with *that*?” He went on. “You’re good at all kinds of shit, Deku. You’re like a damn poetry *prodigy*, for fuck’s sake.”

“Kacchan, I don’t—”

“No, shut the fuck up.” He interrupted, more clipped than he intended. “Look, Deku, you—Izuku.” Katsuki paused with a sigh, chewing his lip. After a few seconds, he hunched forward, resting his cheek at the top of Izuku’s head, his voice slightly muffled by his hair when he quietly said, “You... You know I *love* you, right?”

Izuku remained quiet, sniffing into his shirt. This irked Katsuki slightly, and he groaned.

“*Right*?” He repeated. “Izuku, you *asshole*, you know I *fucking love* you, right?”

“Y-Yeah, but...” Izuku replied, breathy and quiet. “Why...?”

“The hell do you mean, *why*?” He scoffed, scowling into the mop of green curls. “I *just* told you. What’re you trying to say, *huh*? That I have bad taste? You wanna fuckin’ *go*?”

Izuku snorted a laugh against his chest, in spite of himself. Katsuki felt some of the tension in his own shoulders release at the sound of it. The corner of his lip quirked up.

“You oughta know I take that shit as a personal offense, Deku.” He went on, pulling Izuku into a death grip. “I’m fucking great. *Of course* my boyfriend’s fucking great, too.”

Izuku giggled. “Kacchan... I can’t breathe...”

Katsuki moved the hand on Izuku’s back under his chin. “C’mere,” he said, pulling him up by his head and looking into his red-rimmed eyes. After a second, he went in for a kiss, only to be blocked by Izuku’s arm.

“A-ah, Kacchan, wait,” He rubbed his nose against his sleeve. “I’m— there’s *snot* and—”

Katsuki rolled his eyes, “Shut up.” And kissed him, anyway.

It was slow and gentle. Katsuki’s hands cupped his cheeks while Izuku’s clutched the front of his shirt. Katsuki wasn’t sure if it was possible to transfer abstract, inarticulable feelings through a kiss, but he sure as hell intended to try. They went on this way for a little while, until eventually Katsuki pulled away, looking into the puffy eyes of his boyfriend.

“Why didn’t you tell me you were feeling like this?”

“I—” Izuku tried, then closed his mouth. His eyes squeezed shut for a moment. “Mostly I just... didn’t want you to be worried, but...”

“But?” Katsuki prompted.

“I, well— I guess, part of me was afraid that— that I’d be right. That you’d just... confirm all my fears, so I just...” He trailed off.

“I *was* worried.” Katsuki stated. Izuku looked up at him, opening his mouth like he was about to apologize, and you better believe Katsuki shut that shit down as fast as possible. “Because you didn’t say anything.” He clarified. “I could tell some shit was up, but usually when you’re upset about something, you talk about it. When you were clearly upset but not talking about it, I didn’t know *what* to do.”

“A-ah, I’m—”

“—Don’t fucking apologize, I get it.” He groaned. “But just— look, if this ever happens again, just... what should I *do*.”

“You don’t need to do any—”

“—Holy shit, shut up. I *want* to *help* you, asshole,” He interjected, exasperated. He took a few deep breaths and considered his words, and after a moment he continued, more calmly, “Look, can I just — just *tell* me, is it alright for me to ask you what’s wrong when I can tell that something’s up but you’re not telling me?”

Izuku blinked a few times, then nodded. “Yes, that’s... that’s completely, ah, fine.” His brow pinched in thought, and after a few seconds he added, “I guess, just... know that there might be times I don’t want to talk about it.”

“That’s fine.” Katsuki replied. There was a moment of silence.

Then, “What about you, though?” He asked. “Is it okay for me to ask you what’s wrong if something’s clearly wrong, but you’re not telling me?”

“Fuck no.” He responded, not missing a beat. He narrowed his eyes in a scowl, “But I know you’re just gonna fuckin’ do it anyway, so it’s a moot point, I guess.” Izuku smiled, wild and brilliant, despite his red, puffy eyes and tear stained cheeks. Katsuki tried to roll his eyes, though he still couldn’t help the small smile that crept its way onto his face in response.

“C’mon, nerd.” He spoke fondly. “Time for bed.”

Some thirty minutes later, Katsuki emerged from the shower, a towel slung low around his waist, and he entered the bedroom to find Izuku beneath the covers with one of his journals in hand.

“Ah, Kacchan— can I, uhm...” his eyes went wide when Katsuki abruptly removed the towel, using it to dry his hair, smirking at Izuku’s response. This, in turn, made Izuku narrow his eyes in playful defiance. “I was going to ask if you wanted to hear a poem I wrote a while ago, but I’ll wait until you’re *decent*.”

“You fucking bitch shitter, I’m *always* decent. *Better* than decent.”

“Just put some underwear on, Kacchan.” Izuku sighed, rolling his eyes. Katsuki grumbled bitterly under his breath, but did as he said, regardless. When he crawled beneath the covers, Izuku sat up, his legs crossed.

“Ready?”

Katsuki nodded. “Is it about me?”

“Mhm,” he replied. “I wrote this a few weeks before we met.” Izuku paused, then clarified, “By which I mean in the, uh, real world. I mean— you know, the physical realm?”

Katsuki snorted. “Read the poem, nerd.”

Izuku chewed his lip, and nodded.



“In the aftermath of our collision,  
I feel your presence linger.  
The notes of your voice sweep the air,  
Sink and settle, saturated.  
And the space that I occupy  
Becomes the space that you own  
And when I occupy that space  
You, in turn, occupy me.

Until  
The stray shreds of you  
Get stuck between my teeth, and  
I can feel you hiding beneath my fingernails.  
I breathe you in and breathe you out, but  
I know your dust still coats my lungs.

I’ve been coughing you up for months, now.

The frequency of your voice and  
Your specific brand of inflection  
Sate my needs for a bit  
But

The bits beneath my nails can’t make me laugh  
The pieces caught in my teeth never challenge me  
And I know, deep down, that there’s nothing I can do  
And the dust inside my lungs will not become you.

But I’ll keep trying, and that won’t stop me  
I’ll keep trying and  
I’ll keep trying  
I’ll keep  
I’ll—

—find the rest of you somewhere  
In the space between the sky and the horizon  
I’ll collect all the pieces until you’re here, beside me.  
Like I always knew you would be.

For while I know that all these fragments  
Do not constitute a whole,  
When I feel them in my hands  
I know you’re real.”

For several seconds, the room was silent. Katsuki’s eyes scanned up and down Izuku’s frame, as though he could expect to gain some new insight by studying the same body he’d long since memorized through both sight and touch. Izuku’s gaze was trained down at the notebook, his shoulders tensed almost imperceptibly as he awaited his response.

“Damn.” Katsuki eventually said, something quiet and slightly strangled. Izuku looked up.

“...Good damn or bad damn?” He asked.

Katsuki rolled his eyes. “*Good* damn, you fucking piss grenade—”

“*Piss grenade?*” Izuku snorted. “That’s a new one. What even *is* that?”

“Like a golden shower, but explosive and lethal.”

“Sounds like a nightmare.”

“Don’t kinkshame me.”

“What—”

“—I’m serious, though,” Katsuki cut in. “Like, that was fucking good, Deku.”

Izuku looked down, a slow, hesitant smile pulling his lips ever-so slightly. “You’re just saying that,” he mumbled.

“Just saying tha—” He scoffed. “Can you shut your fucking insecurity hole for, like, five seconds?”

Izuku paused, gazing up at the ceiling in thought.

Then, “No.” He replied reverently. “No, I don’t think I actually can.”

Katsuki sighed, collapsing onto the bed, his back bouncing off the mattress slightly. “Just fucking — take the damn compliment, Deku, holy shit.”

“Okay, okay,” Izuku smiled, waving his hands. “It’s nice to hear, even if you don’t mean it—”

“Christ, Deku.” He groaned, though he was smiling as well. “What’s it gonna take for you to get it through your thick skull? You just read me a poem about you, like, metaphorically finding remnants of me inside you. Do I need to make that literal? Do you need it dripping down your thighs?”

“You say that like it’s a threat.” He shot back.

“I mean, if that’s what it’s gonna take to get you outta that damn head of yours, I’m more than happy to oblige.” Katsuki smirked, quirking an eyebrow. “Is that what it’s gonna take?”

“Hmm,” he hummed, making a show of pondering the question.

Katsuki clicked his tongue, eyes going dark as he looked the other up and down, and beckoned. “Get your ass over here, nerd.”

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### ***III. “And Children Are Not Built to Break”***

*Katsuki’s 22nd birthday.*

Izuku was up to something.

That was the conclusion Katsuki had arrived at, although it really wasn’t much of *conclusion* at all, the way he saw it; he still had no idea what exactly it was that he was up to.

For the past few weeks, Katsuki had noticed strange, mysterious packages showing up on their doorstep, all addressed to Izuku. At first, he didn't think much of it, content to let Izuku go on receiving his weird boxes without comment. When eventually his curiosity did get the better of him, and he had to ask, it was Izuku's reply that sparked his suspicions.

"A-ah, right, uhm—" Izuku had stuttered, his eyes seeming to look in every direction but Katsuki's. "I-It's nothing, Kacchan, don't—don't worry about it."

At the time, Katsuki merely rolled his eyes and dropped it, not really in the mood to press the man about it, though his words only created more questions. What was Izuku doing that was so personal that he couldn't even tell Katsuki about it?

He considered the possibility of him cheating, for about two seconds, but he quickly dismissed the thought as ludicrous. He trusted Izuku, and even if he didn't, cheating wouldn't explain all the packages. *I mean, what would he be receiving? Fucking sculptures of a guy's dick?*

No, it had to be something else. *Some fucking nerd thing, probably*, Katsuki vaguely thought.

And while he didn't think that whatever Izuku was doing was malicious, not knowing was—understandably—bothering him.

He got home at around six o'clock that day, immediately spotting Izuku as soon as he entered. The man was standing in front of the closed door to their bedroom, and as Katsuki shut the door behind him, he looked up.

"Kacchan!" He called out, beaming.

"Hey," he greeted back, narrowing his eyes and giving him a once-over. "What're you up to?"

Izuku scoffed. "What do you mean 'up to'?" He rolled his eyes. "I'm not *up to* anything, Kacchan."

"Don't give me that bullshit, Deku," he replied, setting his bag down and taking off his shoes. "You're standing in front of our room," he stated, beginning to walk toward him. "Like, *just* standing, which is a really fucking weird way to just *passively exist*, considering there's a couch about five feet away from you."

He averted his eyes, smiling sheepishly. "Okay, yeah... When you put it like that, I guess you could say I'm, err... 'up to something.'"

Katsuki came to stand in front of him, crossing his arms. "Which is...?"

Izuku bit his lip. "Kacchan, it's your *birthday*. I just..." He trailed off for a moment. "I wanted to get something *special* for you."

The blonde tilted his head to the side, opting not to say anything. Izuku seemed to understand his body language, however, and responded by turning toward the door, twisting the knob, and slowly opening it. After that, he stepped out of the way, prompting Katsuki to enter first.

He started into the room swiftly, but was no more than two feet inside before catching sight of something that gave him pause. Katsuki stopped in his tracks, remaining still as his eyes went wide.

*Is that...?*

Slowly, he began moving toward it again.

*This is... no way.*

*No fucking way.*

It was a tank. A pretty good-sized one, at that, with a heat lamp and a strip light above the mesh cover. Inside were fake leaves and branches, a small pool of water, and when Katsuki approached the enclosure, his eyes caught on the hollowed out log in the corner. As he bent down to peer inside it, he saw—

*Fuck.*

One of his palms sealed itself over his mouth as he remained there, almost completely still, his eyes twitching as he tried to will himself to maintain his composure. It was a strange rush of emotion, one that somehow left him feeling overwhelmed as well as entirely blank. Like his brain had short circuited, leaving him to wander in the dark.

Meanwhile, Izuku evidently must have mistaken his demeanor for a negative response, as only a few seconds went by before he was breaking the silence with his sputtering.

“W-We don’t have to keep him if you don’t want to!” He hastily assured him. “I know it’s a, uhm, a pretty *big* responsibility, and it’s, well— I mean, it’s probably not a great idea to just, I guess, *spring* this on you, but... uh, uhm—”

“How long’s he been here?” Katsuki quietly cut in, still hunched over, gazing at the creature curled up within the log.

It took Izuku a moment to gather his bearings before he replied. “Four days. I was, ah, keeping him in the hall closet, since— well, since you never use it, and—”

Wordlessly, Katsuki crossed the last remaining inches between himself and the tank, unclipping the top and reaching in. He lowered his hand in front of the snake’s hiding place, letting him know he was there, before reaching in and picking him up from the middle of the snake’s body. After pulling him out, Katsuki lowered his other hand to support the rest of the snake’s weight, adjusting the spacing of his hands before pulling him out of the tank entirely.

The snake acted relatively docile in his hands, moving slowly, tongue flicking out as he tried to get a sense of his surroundings.

The python’s coloration slightly was reminiscent of a leopard’s, with deep, dark brown weaving between and around large spots of scales which varied between a bright orange and a fiery red. In the light, they took on an almost golden sheen. It was a coloration befitting of a creature meant to blend in with the inferno, something proud and majestic, like a phoenix, or perhaps—

Katsuki swallowed.

*A dragon.*

He opened his eyes wider in an attempt to keep the water in them from overflowing.

He cleared his throat, regulating his voice very carefully as he asked. “How old is he?”

“Ah! About three years.” Izuku replied, then added, “I adopted him from a shelter.”

Katsuki hummed, watching in wonder as the snake coiled around one of his arms. With his back still turned to Izuku, he went on to ask, “Does he have a name?”

“I’m... actually not sure.” He answered. “Apparently his previous owner hadn’t written one in. I figured you’d probably want to name him, anyway.”

He nodded, chewing his lip. He held his forearm out in front of himself at chest level, and the upper portion of the snake’s body rose toward his head curiously. Katsuki stared right back at him, his lip starting to quiver. Under his breath, he murmured a shaky, “Hello...”

“Maybe, uhm... King Explosion Murder?” Izuku offered hesitantly.

“Nah.” Katsuki shook his head. “Not King Explosion Murder.”

“Ah, right—” He laughed sheepishly. “Of course, he’s not the same snake. His name should be unique—”

“—*Lord* Explosion Murder.” Katsuki declared, finally turning to look at the other man.

Izuku paused, blinking at him a few times. “That’s... *basically* the same thing, but okay?”

“You’re really gonna say that shit?” Katsuki snorted, placing the snake around his neck. He gestured up toward him. “Here? In front of the Lord?”

“Oh my god.” Izuku intoned, pinching the bridge of his nose for a moment in a show of annoyance. As his hand fell limp from his face, he sighed. “Okay, so... You like him, then...?”

Katsuki tensed, his momentary distraction abruptly vanishing as he glanced to the side, catching sight of the snake’s head hovering near his ear, seemingly examining him.

*Just like—*

Katsuki felt a familiar tightness in the back of his throat, and he knew, in that moment, that there was nothing he could do to stop it from rising. As a last resort, Katsuki hastily staggered toward Izuku and wrapped his arms around him, placing his head over his shoulder and pulling him in tight just before the first tears could spill over.

“Okay, woah—” Izuku said, a bit panicked. “Okay, that’s a snake, that’s a very close snake. Kacchan, the—”

“Shut up.” Katsuki blurted, his voice cracked and raw as he pulled Izuku even tighter against his chest. “I love him and I love *you*, shut the *fuck* up, Deku, I’m—”

Izuku’s arms finally wrapped around him, hands meeting on his shoulder blades as he hugged him back, albeit a bit stiffly. Katsuki ducked his face into the shorter man’s shoulder, sniffing and choking up sobs that he tried to hide, but couldn’t.

“I love you too, Kacchan.” Izuku spoke softly in his ear, his hands rubbing up and down his back.

For a long time, they just stayed that way, standing in the middle of the room embracing each other, as Katsuki’s felt the full force of several years worth of unresolved emotions rushing back into the forefront of his mind.

Eventually, the snake became a bit restless, however, and slowly, but deliberately, began slithering over Izuku’s shoulder, moving toward his neck.

“Uh-uhm, Kacchan—” Izuku stuttered, his voice jumping a few octaves. “Kacchan— h-hang on, the snake— he’s— I don’t know if I can—”

“S’fine,” Katsuki interjected, speaking with a sort of finality. “Just let it happen, Deku.”

“I— I don’t, I mean—” Izuku paused, a strange noise leaving his throat as the snake looped around his neck as well as Katsuki’s, effectively tying them together. Katsuki heard him swallow. “O-Okay, I guess this is, uh, fine.”

It took a few minutes, but slowly, surely, Izuku began to relax under the snake’s hold, melting further into his chest in the process.

And it occurred to him then that, prior to that moment, Katsuki couldn’t remember ever having felt so complete.

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When the dust finally settled a few hours later, Katsuki found Izuku sitting on the couch, staring into one of his notebooks intently.

“Stuck?”

Izuku jolted in surprise. “*Kacchan.*”

Katsuki snorted, ruffling Izuku’s hair before moving to sit right beside him.

“Are you stuck?” he repeated, glancing pointedly at the page.

“O-Oh. No, I’m actually just, uhm...” He trailed off into silence.

After moment, Katsuki nudged him in the side. “Just *what*, nerd? I ain’t a fuckin’ mind reader.”

Izuku scoffed lightly, something tinged with warmth and fondness. “Well, you see... I had, err, I had this poem I wanted to read you today, but...” He paused, biting his lip. “I guess it seems like a bit much? You know, just—after everything...”

“Well, now you fuckin’ *have* to read it.”

“Kacchan.” Izuku complained, swatting him lightly on his arm.

“Jesus, Deku. You’ve read me some pretty intense stuff before. What’s so different about this one?”

For a few seconds, the other was quiet.

Then, he inhaled deeply and said: “I wrote this the day after you first told me about The King.”

Katsuki’s breath caught in his throat, leaving him momentarily dumbstruck. He then cleared his throat. “Damn, Deku,” he chuckled under his breath. “Haven’t I fuckin’ cried enough today?”

“You’re right,” Izuku abruptly closed the notebook. “It’s too much, and I mean, honestly, it’s not even a very good—”

“Woah, woah, *woah.*” Katsuki let his hand fall heavily on Izuku’s shoulder. “I didn’t say I didn’t *want* to hear it.”

“Yeah, but—”

“Read the damn poem, Deku.”

“No, I’m serious, Kacchan, it’s—”

“I can handle it.”

“Are you sure?” Izuku tried one last time. “Like, are you *sure sure*?”

“Do it.” Katsuki said, staring evenly into his boyfriend’s eyes. “Just fuck me up, Deku.”

Izuku gazed at him a few seconds more before cracking a slight smile. With a smile, he wordlessly opened the notebook, flipping through pages until he found it.

“Alright. Here it goes.”

Izuku cleared his throat, and began.

“When I’m small, I see the afterimages  
Of disgusted sneers wrapped in paper-thin flesh  
When it’s dark, I hear the voices  
Of brittle children on the wind, whispering urgently,  
‘The boy with the journals is contagious.’

They say it’s planned obsolescence, and it’s  
Meant to be this way.  
When you break them they’ll  
Send you something better.

‘But the boy with the journals is defective,’ they say.  
‘Something in the skin he’s wrapped in.  
It’s a tactile contaminant  
So it’s best to stay clear  
Perhaps if we ignore him, he’ll just disappear.’”

Izuku paused for a moment, taking a deep breath as he turned the page.

“When his mind starts to wander, he sees the cracks  
In the glass, of a home made vacant too soon.  
When it’s quiet, he hears the sound  
Of words ricocheting off a fragile body,  
‘The love that you feel is outrageous.’

They say it’s planned obsolescence, and it’s  
Meant to be this way.  
When you break them, it’s okay.  
They’ll send you something better.

‘But the boy and his love are defective,’ they say.  
‘Maybe something with the bolts in his head.’  
So they took him apart,  
Every screw, every tether—”

Izuku stopped for a second before finishing the stanza, his voice quiet, shaky, reverent.

“Had the nerve to be shocked, he couldn’t hold himself together.”

He stared down at the page, face carefully blank, and for a moment, Katsuki thought it was over, but—

“Come together, against the weather.  
These are the bonds that they cannot sever.  
For we weren’t built from glass,  
We fight back,  
Feel the earth beneath us quake,  
For our souls were never yours to take,  
And children are not built to break.”

Shortly after finishing, Izuku began speaking once again.

“It’s—It’s definitely not my best work, I don’t think—” He rambled, nervously fidgeting with the hem of his T-shirt. “It’s... I mean, it’s weird and inconsistent, but I wrote it the morning after we talked, and it all just kind of came out of nowhere, and I don’t know, I kind of felt like, you know, like—it’s like, despite all of that, I couldn’t *not* read it to you, I guess? It always felt like it was going to happen, and today just seemed like—”

Katsuki barely even registered Izuku’s frantic muttering, too busy dealing with the emotional fallout the poem dug up, and feeling almost angry at himself over it, because *goddamnit, I thought I was done with this shit.*

Wordlessly, Katsuki wrapped both arms around Izuku from the side, and proceeded to lean on him until he collapsed beneath his weight onto the couch, bringing Katsuki along with him.

“K-Kacchan?”

“It’s a good poem,” Katsuki mumbled against the back of his neck. “I like it, and I’m glad you read it to me.”

For several seconds, Izuku was quiet. Finally, in a tone far more relaxed, he replied, “Of course.”

And it was around that moment when the exhaustion truly began to weigh down on Katsuki. He felt himself drifting within seconds, only vaguely aware of the sound of Izuku setting the journal on the coffee table before scooting further back against him, his warm hands taking hold of Katsuki’s and holding them to his chest.

“Happy birthday, Kacchan.” He said, and everything else dissolved.

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**IV. “Too Many Snakes”**  
*A few months later*



The middle of August found Katsuki naked on the living room couch, dozing on a Sunday afternoon with the Lord balled up and resting on his chest. He'd been in the middle of some mindless mobile game when the front door swung open. Izuku walked in, gave him a single, blank look, and then immediately took his journal out, along with a pen. As he moved to sit across from Katsuki, he promptly began writing before his butt even made contact with the chair.

Around five minutes passed in near-silence, as the room was filled with the soft sounds of pen on paper. Izuku then neatly set the pen aside, and cleared his throat, jolting Katsuki out of his daze.

“So unsuspecting I had been  
As I encroached upon my doom.  
Entering my home, only to find  
too many *snakes* in the living room.

Kacchan, you know I love you,  
from your heart, and to your crotch-thing.  
But with that said, I do request,  
Put your dick away, the Lord is watching.”

Katsuki blinked a few times, processing. In contrast to the way Izuku usually recited his poetry, his voice was now completely monotone, and it took him a second to catch up.

But soon enough, Katsuki offered his reply in the form of a scoff, followed by, “Fuck off. It’s my living room, too, asshole. I’ll be naked if I damn well want to be.”

“Seriously?” Izuku rolled his eyes. “Would it really *kill* you to put on some boxers?”

“Well, considering the fact that it’s like a thousand fucking degrees out there, I’d say yes. Yes, it fucking would, Deku.” Katsuki sat up with a groan, repositioning the snake to rest around his neck and turning to face his boyfriend. “And *crotch-thing*? The hell’s a fucking crotch-thing, Deku?”

Izuku blushed. “Hey, I wrote that in, like, three minutes!”

“Oh, fuck off. You’re *you*. Y’tellin’ me you couldn’t think of anything better to rhyme with ‘watching’?” He shook his head disapprovingly. “That’s just disappointing. I expected better from you, Deku.”

Izuku snorted. “At least I know how to put on *pants*.”

“Fuck off, Deku.” Katsuki groaned, flipping him off. “It’s fucking hot as balls.”

“Uhh, are your balls *room temperature*?” Izuku retorted, narrowing his eyes. “Because if that’s the case, you should probably get it checked out.”

“Fuckin’ smartass,” Katsuki scowled. “What’s the big deal, huh?” He grabbed his flaccid dick, waving it around. “It’s nothing you haven’t already seen a million fuckin’ times, anyway.”

“Yeah, but I need to *edit*.” He replied, pinching the bridge of his nose in exasperation. “I’m trying to get this draft back to the publisher before the end of this week. I have to *focus*.”

Katsuki registered the implication of those words first, his scowl dropping in favor of a mischievous grin. Izuku caught on a few seconds later, his face flushing bright red before the blonde had even said anything.

“Oh, so it’s distracting you, huh?” He leaned back into the couch cushion as his legs spread apart. “Me being naked is a distraction.”

“Kacchan, no.” Izuku’s palms pressed into his face, eyes peeking through the spaces between his fingers. Katsuki smirked, and started running one of his hands down his chest, making a steady journey south. “Kacchan, the Lord is watching.” Izuku hissed.

“The Lord literally could not give less of a fuck.” He rolled his eyes briefly before his grin returned, and he stared at Izuku as he trailed his fingers down the rest of the way. Katsuki hummed deep in his throat as he began stroking his dick, maintaining eye contact with the other man, who seemed to tense up. His teeth dug into his lip as he continued watching him, his eyelids falling to half mast. Then, suddenly, Izuku stood up and made a beeline toward their room, disappearing into it.

For a moment, Katsuki was left wondering if he actually had gone too far, and that Izuku was legitimately angry, now. But that thought left his head the second he felt a soft garment hit it.

“Put them on.” Izuku commanded, leaving no room for argument.

Katsuki groaned at an excessive volume, but did it, anyway.

“Thank you.” Izuku clipped. He then walked into their adjoining kitchen, and when he returned, he had a soda in hand. With a sigh, Izuku collapsed onto the couch beside him, cracking the can open and taking a sip. “I can’t believe you’d try to pull that right in front of him.”

“You say that like he’s our kid or something.” Katsuki rolled his eyes. “He’s a snake, Deku.”

“I can’t believe you’d try to pull that in front of our snake-child.” Izuku amended.

Katsuki scoffed. “Whatever, nerd.”

“No, I’m serious,” Izuku turned toward him. “I could call child protective services. Take it to court and get full custody of the Lord. Make you pay child support and everything.”

“Child support? For the *Lord*?” He snorted. “What do I look like, a goddamn *church*?”

Izuku blinked a few times, then abruptly broke out into laughter. “Oh my god,” He managed to say, in between fits. Katsuki couldn’t help but grin as well.

Once Izuku calmed down, he proceeded to pull his laptop out of his bag with a sigh, opening up the document. He spent a few seconds staring vacantly at it before turning toward Katsuki again. His eyes flitted down to the Lord, still around his neck, and back up again.

In a fond, warm voice, Izuku asked, “What do you think he’s thinking about?”

“‘*Goddamn, this tree is warm.*’” Katsuki shot back. “Somethin’ like that. Anyway, aren’t you supposed to be editing? I put on fuckin’ pants for this, Deku.”

Izuku groaned, “Yeah, yeah.”

Katsuki blinked. “What’s up?” He asked, tone shifting to one of slight concern. “Somethin’ givin’ you a hard time?”

“Well, I mean, it’s just—” He bit his lip, then sighed. “I still haven’t figured out a title.”

“Do you *need* to have one?”

“I guess not, but it seems like a bad idea not to.”

“Huh.” Katsuki nodded. “Well, what kinda names do people usually use for shit like this?”

“That’s the thing.” Izuku said. “There... isn’t really a pattern. People name poetry compilations all kinds of things.”

Katsuki hummed, raking his hand through his hair as he pondered Izuku’s predicament. “Well, what if you just named it after one of your poems in the book. One you’re really proud of, or some shit.” He suggested. “A lot of bands do that with albums.”

“Yeah, I kinda was thinking about that, but...” Izuku trailed off, his brow furrowing as he sat there, chewing his nails and seeming quite engrossed in thought.

“Don’t stress about it, Deku.” He said, idly flicking the side of Izuku’s face. “Here’s an idea: why don’t you just name it the most ridiculous thing you can think of.”

Izuku side-eyed him. “Like what?” He asked, slowly and carefully.

“I said the most ridiculous thing *you* can think of,” Katsuki rolled his eyes, then smirked. “But if you’re takin’ requests...”

“What’d you have in mind?”

“How about, ‘fuck me in the ass and call me princess.’”

Izuku promptly reached over and sharply yanked his hair.

“—Ow!” Katsuki flinched. “Okay, how about, ‘fuck me in the ass and call me a fucking cock goblin’?”

“Kacchan,” Izuku warned, eyes narrowed, face red as he turned toward him, leaning in threateningly.

Katsuki responded by leaning in further.

“What about, ‘fuck me in the ass and ca—’”

“Kacchan, I am not titling my book anything that begins with the words ‘fuck me in the ass.’”

“Are you sure?” Katsuki pressed, fingers gently lifting his chin. “You need some inspiration? Maybe something more practical, hands-on.”

“Kacchan, the Lord is slithering down my shirt.”

“Call it divine intervention.”

Izuku’s eyes widened slightly, something sparking behind those green irises, though at the time, Katsuki couldn’t even begin to guess what.

Suddenly, Katsuki’s phone vibrated on the coffee table, and with a bitter groan, he disengaged and reached out for it. Upon seeing the name *Eijirou Kirishima* illuminating the screen, Katsuki briefly considered ignoring it, glancing back at Izuku only to find him in a state of intense focus, typing away at his laptop. With a sigh, he accepted the call, greeting his friend with a nice, warm, “You better be *dying* right now, Shitty Hair,” and earning a laugh in response.

“Nah, I’m not, but Kaminari might be.” In the distance, Katsuki heard a voice groaning, as though in physical pain.

“The fuck’s wrong with him?”

“He can’t do math.” Kirishima supplied.

Immediately sensing where this was going, Katsuki quickly responded with a firm, “No.”

“What?” Kaminari cried in the distance. “Let me talk to him—” he said, and Katsuki heard the phone shifting hands through the receiver before a clearer voice began speaking. “Bakugou, please, calculus is *hard*.”

He clicked his tongue. “Calculus is *not* hard.”

The line filled with noises of distressed confusion.

“What are you—?!” Kaminari sputtered, “Well, help me then!”

“No,” he repeated. “For fuckssake, I’m not your *dad*.”

And in that moment, it was as though time had stopped. The other end fell silent, as though giving Katsuki a chance to think about what he’d done, about the utterly inane, rookie mistake he’d just made. Then:

“*Please, daddy.*”

“No!” Katsuki shouted, eyes going wild, *frantic*. “*Fuck* off, I’m *fucking* hanging up—!”

“—I know where you live, daddy.” Kaminari instantly replied, in a calm, *creepy* tone.

“And *I* know how to call the fucking cops, you piece of shit—”

“*How do you integrate natural log of x.*”

“*I will integrate my fucking foot into your asshole—*”

“—Yeah, that sounds real kinky, *daddy*, but the back of the book says it’s wrong. I thought it was just one over  $x$ , but—”

Katsuki hesitated. “*What? What the fuck?*” He glared into the distance before rolling his eyes. “That’s the *derivative*, dipshit, not the *integral*.”

There was a brief pause before Kirishima and Kaminari seemed to respond in unison, “Ohh...”

“Wait, so, how do you do it, then?” Kirishima added.

“Just— fucking integrate by parts,” he said, gritting his teeth. “And if you don’t know what that is, look it up, holy fuck, this isn’t fucking *hard*—”

“Sure, mister engineering major *daddy*, sir,” Kaminari interjected. “Fucking *calculus* is totes easy, okay, cool, thanks a lot, *da—*” Katsuki ended the call, releasing an exasperated sigh, before a small sound in the otherwise silent room drew his attention. He whipped his head around, gaze settling on Izuku, his eyes still trained on his laptop screen, though he was grinning, now, barely suppressed snickers slipping out intermittently.

Katsuki strode up to him, planting his foot on the couch beside him in an effort to appear vaguely imposing. “Hah? What’s so fuckin’ funny?”

“Nothing.” Izuku replied, his voice slightly strangled.

He stared at him for a moment longer before clicking his tongue, turning to walk away. “Yeah, that’s what I thought.”

He was several paces away when he heard it.

“Sure thing, *daddy*.”

Katsuki nearly tripped over his own feet.

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## V. “*Scratch Marks*”

*Day before their second anniversary*

It’d been three months since Katsuki’s internship had begun. Things were occasionally monotonous; his boss seldom emerged from his office, and they rarely interacted with one another outside of discussing Katsuki’s objectives and approving his reports. Katsuki wasn’t certain what he had expected a career centered around making large buildings go *boom* to entail, but the paperwork certainly was not part of his vision.

*Still better than working in fucking retail*, Katsuki thought, cycling through various social media apps while he waited for his write-up to finish printing.

The day before demolition was a quiet one, at least from where Katsuki was sitting. It was a rare circumstance — a twenty-story, dilapidated structure downtown. He wasn’t sure what they planned to put in its place, and he wasn’t sure why no one would *just fucking tell him*, but he set aside his annoyance for the sake of the project. It wasn’t every day he got to help plan the controlled implosion of a metropolitan hotel building, even if they refused to let him touch the explosives.

The printer by his desk had an extremely irritating quirk that caused it to stop for several seconds between each individual page, and reports with over thirty pages made for plenty of downtime. It was during this downtime that Katsuki received a text from Izuku containing a series of images which, upon closer inspection, were revealed to be taken straight from one of his journals.

After opening up the first image, it didn’t take long for Katsuki to realize that this was not a standard poem.

“Hot hands and hooded eyes.  
Swollen lips and shaky sighs.  
Fingers burning across my skin  
Teeth pierce my neck and break me in.  
This is when I feel you best,  
When I should be sleeping, but you won’t let me rest.  
You keep me up to take me down

You burn me up then watch me drown.  
Rough and heated, just like we do,  
The way I like it feels just like you.”

Katsuki’s eyes widened minutely. His tongue darted out unconsciously, wetting his lips as he flicked to the next picture.

“So look at me with that face you make  
When you win our bets and it’s time to take.  
Stare me down like you do some days  
When I set the stakes but you’re ready to raise.”

He was just about to flick to the next picture when he noticed another section beneath the stanza, and while it had been crossed out, it *was* still in the frame, meaning Izuku *probably* meant for him to—

~~And I’ll get on my knees for you,  
Look up at you,  
Moan around you,  
I’ll bend down, spread out for you,  
Beg for you,  
Scream into you.~~

“Fuck.” Katsuki muttered, sliding down in his chair, fingers clutching the cushion just to keep himself from slipping right off. *Deku, what the fuck are you trying to do to me?*

He flicked to the next picture.

“Because this is where I am right now  
At my wits end, guess I’ll take a bow.  
Come up behind me, step into the spotlight  
Arms wrap around my waist when you pull me in tight.  
The pen falls from my hand as you carry me away  
Guess my fingers will have to do, if only for today.

When you’re caught beneath my nails, when I trigger the explosion  
I scratch the words into your skin, and we’re poetry in motion.”

He stared at the words for just a second more before slapping his hand down heavily on the desk, prying himself upright, and swiftly moving toward the bathroom, his thumb already pressing the ‘call’ button.

Katsuki locked the door behind him.

Izuku answered after a single ring.

“Kacchan,” he said, his voice breathy and somewhat distant, like his hands were busy and he was

on speaker—

*Fuck.*

“Shit, Deku,” Katsuki hissed, back pressing up against the door. “Y’know, you’re gonna get me in trouble with this shit someday.”

Izuku laughed, something soft and throaty.

“Sorry,” he replied, distinctly unapologetic. “In my defense, *you* called *me*—”

“—Because you just sent me a poem about us fucking, Deku.” He interjected.

For a moment, the line went silent. “Is this a bad time, Kacchan?” He eventually asked.

Katsuki paused, considering his options. Eventually, he bit his lip and thought, *fuck it*, and reached up to loosen the tie he despised having to wear.

“How many fingers are ‘ya up to?” He purred, smirking to himself in the low light of the empty men’s room.

Izuku keened. “Just one, but, ah— wait,” Katsuki heard a sharp intake of breath, followed by a shaky moan. “Okay, two.”

“Christ, Deku,” he groaned, fingers clenching around the phone. “That poem of yours was pretty fuckin’ dirty, huh? Did ‘ya get all hot and bothered, Deku? Have to touch yourself while you were writing it?”

“Fffu— Kacchan,” he moaned, so high and *desperate*. Katsuki reached for his belt.

“Can’t believe you’re makin’ me do this shit at work.” He laughed lowly, unzipping his pants once the belt was undone. “‘S a dangerous game, Deku.”

“I’m sorry,” Izuku said again, “I just... want you. A lot.”

“Yeah?” Katsuki slid his hand into his pants, palming his cock through his boxer briefs.

“Yeah,” Izuku breathed.

“Want me enough to deal with the consequences?”

Izuku’s breath hitched. “Conse—”

“Yeah,” he cut in, slowly sliding his waistband down, hissing slightly when the cool air hit the sensitive skin of his dick. Katsuki slowly wrapped his hand around the base, sighing deeply as he began stroking himself. “Was thinkin’ maybe I should punish you. Y’know, for puttin’ me in this situation. Whaddaya think, Deku?”

“Hah— oh god—”

“Just walk in, take you by the shoulders and push you down on your knees,” He thumbed over the tip of his cock, biting back a groan as he stared down at the tile floor, imagining Izuku kneeling before him. “Make you suck my cock right there in the living room, nice and slow.” He paused for a second, spitting into his hand to ease the friction. “I’d let you choke on it, but I know you like that a little *too* much, don’t you, Deku?”

“Fuck.” Izuku hissed, and he felt his cock twitch in his hand. Hearing him swear always had that sort of effect on Katsuki, and Izuku knew it just as well as he did. *Goddamn nerd.*

“Language,” he said, and Izuku just laughed.

“That’s rich coming from you,” he replied. “Fuck. Shit. Goddamn. Fuck.”

Katsuki’s grip tightened painfully at the base, and he winced.

“Am I gonna have to spank you, too?” He almost growled.

Izuku went silent for a split second before breaking out into a loud, shuddering groan. “God, please, Kacchan—”

“Oh, you like that, huh?” Katsuki grinned speeding up his strokes a bit, his cock already leaking. “Want me to bend you over my knee, Deku?”

“Fuck yes,” he moaned, and Katsuki swore he could hear slick, wet, squelching sounds through the receiver, *fuck fuck fuck*. “Fffu— three fingers, Kacchan. Aah, I’m— I’m so close.”

“Shit, me too, babe. God,” Katsuki groaned, eyes fluttering shut. “I wanna fuck you so bad, Deku. So hard. Better make sure that ass is ready when I get home.”

“I’m — *ahh* — always ready for you, Kacchan.”

“*Fu—uck*,” Katsuki felt the heat twisting in his gut, flaring up at the mere implication of that statement. “*Shit*. You gonna come, Deku?”

“Yeah, yeah, fuck—” He whined. “Fuck me, Kacchan. I need to—” Suddenly, Izuku’s breaths became even more harsh, and— “Haa— ahhh, K-Kacchan!” He cried out, and Katsuki knew. He knew, and it was all he could do just to rotate himself toward the nearest sink when the waves of pleasure started crashing down on him.

“Deku, Deku, shit—” He groaned through gritted teeth, pumping his cock frantically as it pulsed and throbbed in his hand, shooting into the sink. He listened to the sweet sound of Izuku’s voice and stroked himself through the aftershocks, until he was toeing the edge of overstimulation and had to let go.

He could hear Izuku panting through the receiver as he came down, and honestly, Katsuki’s breathing was practically in sync. After a moment, his eyes fluttered and focused again.

“Shit,” he muttered.

“What?” Izuku asked.

Katsuki clicked his tongue. “Fuckin’ came on the mirror.” He quickly tucked himself back in his pants before grabbing a paper towel, wiping up the mess with a look of mild disgust.

“You were looking in the mirror?” Izuku asked, a teasing lilt in his voice.

Katsuki rolled his eyes, despite his boyfriend not being there to see it. “Shut the fuck up,” he mumbled.

Izuku giggled.

“I always knew you were a bit of a narcissist, but—”



“Oh my god, Deku, I’m not fuckin’ jerkin’ off to my reflection.” He groaned, forcefully throwing the dirtied paper towels into the trash. “Told you to shut the fuck up.”

“You’re not the boss of me,” Izuku shot back.

“Oh, you are *so* getting fucking wrecked when I get home.”

Izuku laughed again, breathily. “Looking forward to it,” he said, with a tone simple and warm and *so fucking Deku*, it did weird things to Katsuki’s chest.

“You say that now, but you’re gonna be bitching at me all of tomorrow morning.”

Izuku hesitated for a moment. Then, seemingly unable to refute the statement, he simply said, “Yeah, Well...” and trailed off.

He snorted. “Not even gonna deny it, huh?”

“Ehh,” he said. Katsuki imagined him shrugging. “Doesn’t really change anything, does it?”

“Yeah,” he replied, straightening out his tie in the now-clean mirror. “Guess not.”

After a moment of comfortable silence, Izuku took a deep breath. “Well, guess I should let you go, then.” He sighed. “Love you, Kacchan.”

Katsuki smiled to himself, ever-so-slightly.

“Yeah,” he said. “You too, nerd.”

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## **VI. “*The Forest Fire Called ‘Us’*”**

*The following morning — second anniversary*

Katsuki was awoken by the sound of Izuku groaning in pain, and in that moment, before he was even fully cognizant, he already knew why.

“Kacchan,” he moaned, his voice hoarse from screaming. “I’m sore.”

“Take some Ibuprofen.” He grunted.

“Don’t wanna get up.”

Katsuki remained silent.

“Kacchan...”

“Fuck, *fine*.” Katsuki said, grumbling as he sat up abruptly, leaning down to put on his slippers. He stood up, soft soles shuffling across the floor sluggishly, and a moment later he returned with a glass of water and pain medicine, which Izuku took from him without comment.

“What?” Katsuki blinked, raising an eyebrow at him. “No ‘thank you’?”

“Well, it *is* your fault,” he provided.

Katsuki rolled his eyes. “If you don’t wanna be sore, stop fucking *crying* for me to fuck you harder.”

“No.”

“Then stop fuckin’ complaining!”

“No.” Izuku repeated, grinning over his cup.

Katsuki released an exasperated groan, collapsing back onto the bed and covering his eyes with his forearm. “You’re lucky I love you, asshole.”

“Mmn,” Izuku hummed, chasing the pills with water before leaning down to leave a wet kiss on Katsuki’s cheek. “Happy anniversary, Kacchan.”

“Yeah, yeah,” he replied, wiping water off his cheek pointedly, but cracking a small smile nonetheless. “What time is it, anyway?”

“Uhm,” Izuku paused, turning grabbing his phone off the nightstand. “It’s about half past nine... What time are they—?”

“Two o’clock, if they’re on schedule. But they won’t be, so two-thirty-ish. Did you get everything from the store yesterday?”

“Yeah, as far as I know.”

“Kay, Guess I’ll get started then,” He said, sitting up again and stretching his arms over his head with a low groan. “You come help me once that shit starts to kick in.”

Izuku nodded, replied, “Sounds good,” and flopped back onto the mattress while Katsuki made his way into the kitchen and began setting out the ingredients.

Some forty-five minutes later, Izuku emerged from the bedroom in bunny slippers and a large hoodie.

“What can I do to help?” He asked, partway through a yawn.

Katsuki gestured toward the stove. “The rice should be done. You can start on the onigiri.”

“Alright,” he nodded, grabbing the tuna and moving to wash his hands. Izuku filled a bowl with water and wetted his palms in it before dusting them with salt. From there, he began methodically filling and shaping the rice balls, setting them aside in a container on the countertop.

For a while, they just continued on that way, preparing the food in silence. Izuku wasn’t the best chef in the world, but Katsuki would concede that he wasn’t the worst, either. He learned new things with relative ease, and his attention to detail tended to serve him well. Overall, there were worse people Katsuki could be sharing a kitchen with.

Once the katsudon was done, Katsuki handed it off to Izuku to pack away in a heat-sealed container while he started preparing the cookies. It was around that time that the mail came, and the sound of something somewhat heavy being shoved through the mail slot caught both their attention.

Izuku made brief eye contact with Katsuki before moving swiftly toward the door. Katsuki was planning to just continue cooking, but the sound of Izuku loudly gasping gave him pause.

“Who died?” He called out. For a moment, Izuku didn’t respond, and the silence was instead filled with the sound of a package hastily being torn open. It was Izuku’s sudden, high-pitched *screech* that finally convinced Katsuki to put down his whisk and see what was up.

As he made his way toward Izuku, Izuku made his way toward him, and they narrowly avoided crashing right into each other when they met in the middle of the hall.

“Fuck—!” Katsuki exclaimed reflexively, backing up a step.

“Kacchan, look!” Izuku shouted, bouncing up and down, holding a medium-sized *something* in his hands. “Look!”

“Hold still I can’t fuckin’ see what you’re—”

Izuku shoved the object into his face, so close Katsuki had to lean back just to see it, but as soon as he registered what it was, he understood. A soft smile spread over his face. It paled in comparison to Izuku’s wide, sunshine grin, but at that moment he knew he was almost as happy as Izuku was.

The first proof of Izuku’s book, a compilation of poems titled, *One Last Call for Divine Intervention*.

“I didn’t think it’d get here for at *least* a few more days!” He exclaimed.

“That’s fucking awesome, Deku.” Katsuki said. “What do you think? Does it look right to you?”

“I haven’t looked inside it yet but the cover looks *beautiful*, oh my *god*.” As if on cue, Izuku promptly cracked the book open and started flipping through it, mouth hanging open as he gawked at each glossy page in awe and wonder. Katsuki barely resisted the urge to reach over and pinch his cheeks.

“Alright, you keep lookin’ at that. I’ll pack the katsudon for you.”

It took a moment for Izuku to register his voice, though when he did, his head snapped up sharply. “O-Oh, I still can do that—”

“It’s your first book, Deku.” Katsuki glanced at him sharply. “Go fuckin’ look at it, ya’ damn nerd.”

“Okay!” Izuku agreed, and immediately dashed into the living room, mumbling frantically as he looked through the book.

Katsuki smiled to himself, and went to work again.

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Once everything was packed and ready, the two of them headed out. Izuku sat in the passenger seat as Katsuki drove, still entranced by the book in his hands, only stashing it away in his bag when Katsuki pulled up alongside the hill.

It wasn’t much of a hike, at least by Katsuki’s standards. It still took around twenty minutes for them to get to the top, partly due to them having to lug their bags, blanket, and picnic basket along with them. After the ground leveled out beneath their feet, they walked an additional few minutes before arriving at their final destination: a grassy, shaded area on a cliff that Katsuki had once happened upon, with a perfect view of downtown.

They laid down their blankets and began setting out the dishes, and as they sat down beside one

another, Katsuki glanced at his phone.

Just under fifteen minutes left.

They dug into their lunches together, Izuku still flipping through his book, but occasionally stopping to show off certain pages on which the design elements were particularly striking. Katsuki nodded along with him, making little commentary beyond the basics. *That's cool*, and *looks great*, and *damn*. Izuku blushed and beamed and vibrated in place like a firework ready for takeoff, gripping the picnic blanket as if to keep himself grounded.

Sometimes minutes would fly by without either of them saying a word, because Katsuki knew he didn't need to, knew Izuku understood just as well. It was nice sometimes, he thought—just being able to coexist alongside someone. A gentle breeze blew through Izuku's hair, and he tried to keep it out of his eyes one-handedly. Sometimes, he would glance up at Katsuki and offer this sort of small, soft, contented smile, and Katsuki would look away, maybe mutter something under his breath about him needing a haircut, before slipping back into that comfortable silence once more.

As time passed by, Katsuki found his eyes darting toward the sky more and more, until each proceeding glance merged into a single, intent gaze, and he couldn't help but count the seconds as he waited. It was at this time that the sound of Izuku's voice grabbed his attention again, made him jolt ever-so-slightly, and he looked over to find him holding his book open on what appeared to be the last page.

“I like the way the fire in your eyes comes to me  
When you look at me  
Stare at me, so intensely.  
I stand still for you,  
Ready for you  
To burn me down.

Let the flames sweep across my skin,  
Spread through my bones, like branches,  
'Til the forest gets unwritten.  
'Til I'm someplace that you could live in.

Because it's the light that draws me in  
But it's the heat that makes me stay.  
Whether my hands do hover above it  
Or my body is encased within it  
I'm always thinking  
That I could stand to be closer.

Because I like the me I am when I'm with you.  
Like the way we mix together, taint each other  
Until everything's just, interwoven,  
And we're just the right shade of wrong.

I like the me I am when I'm with you.  
Like the way you pull me up when I start to sink  
Like I pull you down when you start to rise,  
So that we're grounded, side by side,

Hand in hand and eye to eye,  
Until my roots become your veins,  
Until your smoke becomes my oxygen.  
And I'm the me who's made out of you.  
And you're the you who's made out of me."

Seconds later, the sound of dozens of explosions firing off in rapid succession drew their attention toward the skyline. The demolition had begun, and the building came crashing down on the horizon, collapsing into its own footprint and leaving only rubble and smoke in its wake. In that moment of precise chaos, the domain of the old abruptly became the realm of the new, and anything was possible.

Katsuki laced his fingers through Izuku's, held his hand tight as they watched the world change, and together, remained constant.

## Chapter End Notes

So, this was quite possibly the hardest thing I've ever had to write.

No matter how much I tried, I could never quite feel satisfied with all the poems. I mean, Katsuki's poem was hard because I had to make it both convincing and poetic. Not bad, but not amazing either. This was much harder for me personally because, unlike Katsuki, Izuku's supposed to be GOOD at writing poetry, and while I don't think I'm terrible at it, it has been a few years since I've actually sat down seriously to write some. So anyway, that was the main reason this wound up taking so goddamn long (well, that and school lol). But. Hey, I posted it in time for kacchan's birthday lol, which is nice.

Also, I wanna thank clod for reading over this! ur the fuckin best dude ily I know I've had like... zero presence online lately, and for that I apologize. I actually HAVE been very actively involved in the bkdk fandom, just on a separate account with a separate name that I can't really say anything else about lol. But I am continuing my other fics, By Design and Icebreaker! And now that I don't have this hanging over my head I anticipate it being much easier.

[Btw, here's a link to a document containing all the poems from this chapter in full!](#)

So yeah. Thank you for reading this, if you made it this far. I know it's been a long time, and probably most people won't actually read this, but it means a lot to me that y'all stuck with me until the end. Comment if you enjoyed it (because i'm serious, like, writing this fuckin depleted my life energy lmao), and until next time, my dudes!

EDIT: I've also got a new ongoing fic called [Fire Lily](#). It's a story about the formation of an unlikely friendship between demon!Katsuki and angel!Deku. I'm very excited about it; it's my most rigorously planned out story to date, and I would love it if you checked it out!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!