

## Mastermind: Strategist For Hire

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Fandom:	<a href="#">僕のヒーローアカデミア   Boku no Hero Academia   My Hero Academia</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Midoriya Izuku &amp; Toga Himiko</a> , <a href="#">Midoriya Izuku &amp; Okuta Kagerou</a>   <a href="#">Giran</a> , <a href="#">Midoriya Izuku &amp; Todoroki Shouto</a> , <a href="#">Midoriya Izuku/Todoroki Shouto</a> , <a href="#">Dabi &amp; Todoroki Shouto</a> , <a href="#">Bubaigawara Jin</a>   <a href="#">Twice/Toga Himiko</a> , <a href="#">Dabi &amp; Takami Keigo</a>   <a href="#">Hawks</a> , <a href="#">Dabi/Takami Keigo</a>   <a href="#">Hawks (If you squint)</a>
Character:	<a href="#">Midoriya Izuku</a> , <a href="#">Midoriya Inko</a> , <a href="#">Yagi Toshinori</a>   <a href="#">All Might</a> , <a href="#">Bakugou Katsuki</a> , <a href="#">Takeyama Yuu</a>   <a href="#">Mount Lady</a> , <a href="#">Toga Himiko</a> , <a href="#">Okuta Kagerou</a>   <a href="#">Giran</a> , <a href="#">Midoriya Hisashi</a> , <a href="#">Sensei</a>   <a href="#">All For One</a> , <a href="#">Shigaraki Tomura</a>   <a href="#">Shimura Tenko</a> , <a href="#">Kurogiri (My Hero Academia)</a> , <a href="#">Chisaki Kai</a>   <a href="#">Overhaul</a> , <a href="#">Nedzu (My Hero Academia)</a> , <a href="#">Tsukauchi Naomasa</a> , <a href="#">Aizawa Shouta</a>   <a href="#">Eraserhead</a> , <a href="#">Todoroki Shouto</a> , <a href="#">Nishiya Shinji</a>   <a href="#">Kamui Woods</a> , <a href="#">Todoroki Enji</a>   <a href="#">Endeavor</a> , <a href="#">Iida Tenya</a> , <a href="#">Wash (My Hero Academia)</a> , <a href="#">Nemoto Shin</a> , <a href="#">Setsuno Touya</a> , <a href="#">Rappa Kendou</a> , <a href="#">Tengai Hekiji</a> , <a href="#">Sakaki Deidoro</a> , <a href="#">Hojo Yu</a> , <a href="#">Katsukame Rikiya</a> , <a href="#">Mizushima Masaki</a>   <a href="#">Manual</a> , <a href="#">Native (My Hero Academia)</a> , <a href="#">Kurono Hari</a>   <a href="#">Chronostasis</a> , <a href="#">Class 1-A (My Hero Academia)</a> , <a href="#">Monoma Neito</a> , <a href="#">Takami Keigo</a>   <a href="#">Hawks</a> , <a href="#">Yotsubashi Rikiya</a>   <a href="#">Re-Destro</a> , <a href="#">Hanabata Koukui</a>   <a href="#">Trumpet</a> , <a href="#">Chikazoku Tomoyasu</a>   <a href="#">Skeptic</a> , <a href="#">Mera Yokumiru</a> , <a href="#">Tobita Danjuurou</a>   <a href="#">Gentle Criminal</a> , <a href="#">Aiba Manami</a>   <a href="#">La Brava</a>
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## Mastermind: Strategist For Hire

by [myheadinthecoudsnotcomingdown](#)

### Summary

Izuku Midoriya never got the chance to save Bakugo from the sludge villain and impress All Might. With his dream crushed, Izuku becomes bitter and angry. It also doesn't help that he faces discrimination at every turn.

All he ever wanted was to be appreciated, so when the villains are the ones to recognize his talents rather than the heroes, well, Izuku just can't resist. He might as well help those who actually want him around.

Mistakes were made, and now society must face a villain of their own making: Mastermind.

This fic [has a discord](#).

### Notes

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

# Temptation

Izuku Midoriya tried to like heroes. He really did. That was difficult, however, when it had only been a month since the number one hero himself had crushed Izuku's dreams like a stale cracker, and then simply watched as Kacchan was attacked. Izuku wondered what would have happened if Death Arms hadn't prevented him from running in at the last minute. Maybe he would have impressed All Might, who would have taken him on, and taught him how to be a hero. Izuku scoffed at his own thoughts. Him, a quirkless loser, impress All Might? Yeah right.

As it was, All Might had gotten his act together eventually and Kacchan had been alright, if unconscious, when he was retrieved from the sludge villain's body, and Izuku had spent the last month quietly selling off his All Might merchandise and harboring a growing resentment toward hero society. Which is what led him to where he was now, sitting at a sketchy internet cafe, about to tell a random internet acquaintance, who in all probability might be a villain, how to kill a minor hero.

He had found the post on one of the more underground hero forums, the kind that often included posts about vigilantes and villains alongside the heroes. Izuku didn't necessarily want to be on it, but he was holding onto a hope that if he just continued doing the things he enjoyed before everything went to shit then he might eventually start feeling a spark of something besides anger. The post itself hadn't been that long, just one question:

Whyher0es301:

*Completely hypothetically, how would one go about killing Mt. Lady?*

A simple post like that shouldn't have changed his life. Izuku *should* have just ignored it, or maybe told the police, especially after he read through the user's old post and discovered that, even if they weren't a villain, they were definitely a villain sympathizer. He *should* have not given it a second thought and turned to more reputable forums to try and dig himself out of his growing depression.

Instead, he did none of that.

For the next week, the question repeated in Izuku's mind like a broken record, his mind latching onto anything that could cut through his apathy. How *would* one go about killing Mt. Lady? She was a new hero, prideful, and media hungry, which might explain why she was one of the hero world's rising stars, but Izuku knew she had weaknesses. He found himself at more and more of her fights over the next week, trying and failing to convince himself that he was there because he liked Mt. Lady, not because he was analysing her weaknesses. It had only taken him three days to realize that his hero analysis books contained enough information on heroes' weaknesses that he could probably kill any hero he wanted to, with a little work. The thought made him sick, but it still didn't stop him from seeking out Mt. Lady's fights and it definitely didn't stop his brain from obsessing over how to kill her.

It would be laughably easy, Izuku realized, to use her love of the media against her. Pretend to be a reporter, lure her into a densely populated area with narrow streets to prevent her from using her quirk, ask for a selfie and stab her through the heart while her eyes were focused on the camera, then blend into the crowd before anyone realized she was dead. He tried to leave it at that. He

knew how to kill her, so he really didn't need to be thinking about it anymore. After the week he'd had, he *really* should have expected that putting the issue out of his mind wouldn't work. Anyway, it was all hypothetical anyway, right? What was the harm in private messaging the poster and describing his plan, as well as a few back ups, just in case. After all, it wasn't as if the poster was *actually* a villain, just a villain sympathiser. Mt. Lady *probably* wouldn't end up dead. And Izuku could make a dummy account at an internet cafe just in case, so that no one could track his IP address, and then he'd never have to use the account again and maybe he'd actually be able to finally stop thinking about this.

A little over an hour after walking into the internet cafe, Izuku signed out of the account he'd made, *M4sterM1nd404*, and walked out the front door feeling oddly relieved.

Izuku Midoriya tried to like heroes.

It didn't work.

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Izuku's life went about surprisingly unchanged after his brief descent into *maybe* villainy. There had been several times since then when he found himself on a verge of a panic attack, wondering what he could have been thinking, sending off his notes like that. Every time he managed to calm himself down by justifying that the person he messaged probably just thought he was some creep for taking his post seriously. The poster hadn't even expected a response, he was just venting frustration, probably, so nothing was going to come of it. He wondered, in those moments, if he was a bad person for feeling sad about that fact. *He knew he was.*

It had been eight days since Izuku had messaged the poster and he had just finished banaging himself up from Kacchan's latest attempt to put him in his place. The beatings had become even worse since the sludge villain incident. From what Izuku could gather from Kacchan's rants between his explosions, he was trying to prove he wasn't some *weak ass victim* or something like that. The end result was that Izuku spent most of his life nowadays alone and in pain, but how was that any different from every day since he turned four?

Izuku was just tugging his shirt down to hide the bandages as he left the bathroom when he heard his mother gasp and drop a pan in the next room. He ran in to find her staring open mouthed at the TV, the news anchor standing on what was normally a busy street, the shot backlit by flashing police sirens.

"...As of yet, police have few leads on the identity of the attacker, only saying that he might have some sort of stealth quirk considering how quickly he was able to disappear in the aftermath of Mt. Lady's death this afternoon. A vigil for the fallen hero will be held..."

"Isn't that terrible, Izuku! She was such a new hero too. Who would do something like this..." His mother turned back into the kitchen, trying to distract herself by preparing dinner. Izuku simply stared at the TV in shock, not really seeing anything. The poster had been serious after all. He had actually done it. Which meant that he, Izuku Midoriya, a hero fanboy, was now accessory to a hero's murder. Izuku's started to hyperventilate only to be violently knocked out of his upcoming panic attack by another thought. Mt. Lady was dead. That meant that he, *a quirkless Deku*, had beaten a hero. An unfamiliar warm feeling welled up in his chest and he fought down a smile. He wondered if this made a bad person.

*He knew it did.*

# Hope for the Future

## Chapter Summary

Izuku has made his first foray into villainy, but he doesn't want to do that again. Because villainy is wrong! Isn't it?

## Chapter Notes

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

Despite his best efforts, Izuku found himself at an internet cafe logging into his Mastermind account a little under two weeks after Mt. Lady's death. The TV in the corner is playing the news and even now won't stop talking about the murder. There's even talk about putting a memorial up where she was killed. Every time he hears about it, he feels a weird mixture of pride and nausea, the same feeling he felt every time he considered logging into his account. He knew that he should just let it lie, but recent events had shown how *not great* he was at that. Once his brain had latched onto a problem, it wouldn't rest until it was dead. Literally, in the case of Mt. Lady. He clicked on the little envelope at the top of the screen, seeing a notification for four new messages. He opened the oldest one first, the only one from the original Mt. Lady poster.

New Message:

From *Whyher0es301*

*Thanks for the plan, I couldn't have done it without you. Well, I couldn't have gotten away with it at least. I know your reasons for helping are your own, mine are too, but just know that if you ever need anything, I've got your back.*

Well, Izuku thought, that's nice of him at least. He sat back and took a deep breath. No one had ever thanked him before, well, not including his mom. Goodness knows Kacchan never did. It felt...really good if Izuku was being honest with himself, even if it *was* coming from a murderer. The thought made Izuku nauseous again. Just how desperate was he for attention if a compliment from a villain was enough to send him over the moon? He really was as pathetic as Kacchan was always saying, wasn't he? Izuku shook his head in an attempt to yank himself out of a self pity spiral. If he let that get going, he might be there for hours and he really didn't want to stay logged in on his villain account longer than necessary. (He pointedly ignored the voice in the back of his head that said having a villain account wasn't supposed to be necessary at all.) It was then that he noticed the thank you note had a postscript.

*P.S. I hope you don't mind that I told a few friends about your account. None of them are cops, so don't worry about any snitches.*

Izuku hurriedly clicked back to his inbox, trying not to panic. He refreshed the page twice, willing the words on the screen to change, but when had anything ever actually paid attention to what he wanted? Three new messages. *From villains* . It wasn't like Izuku could justify it like he could last time by saying he didn't know for certain these were villains. They had been referred to him by a *murderer* specifically because he had apparently made a *murder plan* . There was no way they weren't villains. This was terrible! What had he gotten himself into?

“Hey kid, are you ok?”

Izuku jumped when the teenager who had been running the counter put a hand on his shoulder. He hadn't even realized he'd been hyperventilating until that moment. He nodded, willing the worker to just go away, but apparently he wasn't that great of an actor because the worker just stood there looking concerned. Izuku took a few deep breaths, both to calm himself down and to convince the worker he'd be fine. When he felt he'd staved off the panic attack he met the workers eyes.

“Thank you for your concern. I think I'll actually be heading home now.”

The worker nodded and walked back to the counter as Izuku signed out without reading the other messages. He considered deleting the account, but the worker was still eyeing him with concern, so Izuku didn't want to take too long. He almost sighed in relief when he walked through the doors. No doubt if the worker had seen anything incriminating on his screen, he would have called the cops rather than helping Izuku through a panic attack. He pulled at his hood self consciously as he turned toward home. *Someone thought he was useful*. The thought almost stopped him in his tracks, but he managed to trip over air instead. *Someone thought he was useful*. Sure, that someone was a villain, but still, *someone thought he was useful*! That meant he wasn't just a worthless deku!

*Bad Izuku* , he shook his head. As great as that compliment felt, it was still coming from a villain, a murderer, and murder was wrong. Izuku reminded himself that this was a world he didn't want to be caught up in and he didn't want to associate with murderers, despite the fact that they seemed to be the only ones that didn't see him as a waste of space. *Murder is wrong!* Izuku didn't want to be a villain

He just had to keep reminding himself of that.

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Izuku kept his head down as he walked to his seat at the back of the classroom, mentally willing himself to become invisible. Kacchan had been quiet for a few days, which normally meant that an explosion was coming. He was so concerned with not meeting Kachhan's eye that he didn't notice the foot sticking out in the aisle until he was already going down. As it was, he knocked his chin hard on one of the desks and just barely avoided biting his tongue as the class roared with laughter.

“Midoriya,” The teacher called out. Izuku felt his hope rise, was the teacher actually going to step in and put an end to the bullying? He had to have seen that guy trip him, right? “If you're quite finished being a disruption, I am ready to begin the lesson.”

Izuku looked up at the teacher from his place on the floor, shocked. The teacher saw what had happened and was still turning a blind eye? Izuku sat shocked for a few silent seconds before looking down at the floor and nodding. He could already feel blood beginning to drip down his neck from where his chin hit the desk, but it was obvious that he wouldn't be going to the nurse's office today if his teacher's initial reaction was anything to go by, so he just grabbed a

handkerchief from his bag and held it to stop the bleeding as he hurriedly found his seat as the teacher began to talk.

“So, everyone, I know that everyone has already decided what high school they want to go to and that most of you are headed for heroics. However, due to the highly competitive nature of that field, we’re obligated to dedicate time to a career planning workshop to make sure you know about other career paths that could be available to you. Take one of these worksheets and pass the rest back. You’ll have the whole period to work on them, so just raise your hand if you have any questions. Try to keep in mind your quirks, skills, and talents when weighing your options.”

Most of the students started to move around as soon as they received their worksheets, going to sit by their friends and the noise level gradually increased as everyone started up side conversations. Izuku turned his attention to the paper and started trying to think of careers that didn’t involve heroics. After all, if even All Might didn’t think it was possible...

“Oi, Deku!”

Izuku tensed at Kacchan’s tone, what now?

“So,” He could tell by the smirk on Kacchan’s face that whatever he was about to say wasn’t going to be pretty, but doubted he could do any worse than the suicide baiting that had become almost common since the sludge villain incident, “Teach said we were supposed to pick careers based on our quirks, skills, and talents, but you don’t have any of those, so what can you even do? A quirkless deku like you is so useless you’ll be lucky to be hired to take out the trash.” The lackeys surrounding him laughed and Kacchan looked at Deku with a self satisfied smile as if he had just told the greatest joke of all time, but *then again*, Izuku thought bitterly, *everything Kacchan does is the greatest*.

Izuku tried to ignore the jibe and just do his worksheet, but Kacchan’s words unfortunately got him thinking and he pulled out his phone to google jobs for quirkless people. The results loaded slowly, thanks to the school’s cheap internet, but they were no less shocking when they finally appeared.

*Quirkless Unemployment, an Epidemic?*

*Quirkless Discrimination, Fact, Fiction, and Glass Ceilings*

*Quirkless Unemployment: Statistics*

Izuku skimmed through the articles, frantically at first, then with more and more numbness as the hour went by. Of all quirkless people who lived to adulthood, which was only about half since suicide rates were so high, almost 80% were unemployed. Of the lucky 20% that managed to find jobs, almost all were making minimum wage and the exceptions were mostly older professionals who had been hired and promoted back when quirklessness was more common. If someone had asked Izuku that morning what would be more harmful, a throw away insult in homeroom or the beating that Kacchan gave him after school, he would have said the beating, hands down. In actuality though, he barely felt the explosions and hardly remembered patching his wounds after.

The fact that quirkless unemployment was the first result when looking up statistics on the quirkless was rather telling. But that couldn’t apply to Izuku, right? After all, Izuku was smart,

capable, and determined (he tried to avoid thinking back to the three unread messages sitting in his villain inbox), he wouldn't have a problem finding a job if he really put his mind to it. He wouldn't just be another statistic, living on the streets just because of something he was born without...right?

*Charging to kill heroes would pay the bills at least.* Izuku tried to shake the unwelcome thought from his mind as he washed up for dinner, but it stuck there like a stubborn piece of gum. After all, on the internet, no one knew he was quirkless and his skills obviously spoke for themselves. Yeah, he might have to worry about avoiding the police, but he could bypass the invisible walls that kept the quirkless *in their place*, as Kacchan would say.

*No! bad Izuku!* He tried to calm down by having a staring contest with himself in the bathroom mirror, then went out and joined his mother at the table. *Murder is wrong ... right?*

No! Izuku wouldn't become just another statistic! And he wouldn't let himself become a villain either (despite how tempting that might be). But what should he do?

"You're awfully quiet tonight, sweetie"

Izuku startled out of his thoughts. His mother was looking at him with concern and pity in her eyes (he was so sick of pity), practically begging him to tell her what was wrong (he couldn't do that, she wouldn't understand.) But what *could* he tell her?

He smiled as an idea occurred to him.

"I want to try and get a job," he blurted out.

Mom's eyes widened slightly at first, but then her face relaxed with relief. She'd probably thought it was something a whole lot worse (if only she knew).

"I think that's wonderful sweetie! What brought this on?" She smiled.

"We had a career day at school and I thought it would be helpful to get some experience to help me decide," Izuku lied easily and *wow, wasn't that concerning?*

"Just let me know if there's anything I can do to help you," his mom teared up, "I'm so proud of you Izuku!"

After a few more tears, Izuku finally finished dinner and went to his room to start on his plan. This was his chance. If he could find a job despite being quirkless, then that would mean that the statistics were wrong and there *was* hope for his future. If he could get a job, then he really had no reason to turn to villainy, right? As Izuku researched job openings and began filling out online applications, he made a deal with himself: If he got a job, he would delete his Mastermind account, and if he didn't? Well... he'd cross that bridge when he got to it.

## Chapter End Notes

Here you go. Poor Izuku, he really can't catch a break, can he?



# The Job Search

## Chapter Summary

Izuku searches for a job to prove that he doesn't have to turn to villainy. But will he find one?

## Chapter Notes

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

Most of the applications Izuku filled out were submitted online, but he found a few that wanted him to drop them off in person, so that's what he dedicated his Saturday to doing. He was feeling pretty confident in himself. He'd filled out almost two dozen applications and the economy wasn't bad due to All Might's presence, so there was no way that he wouldn't be getting a job. He hadn't even been all that tempted to log into his villain account since he decided to find other employment. He smiled as he walked in the door of the McDonald's he was applying for and was promptly knocked down.

"What are you doing here you useless Deku?"

Izuku looked up to see one of Bakugo's followers, the one who could stretch out his fingers. What was his name? Bakugo always just called him fingers. He caught sight of the crinkled application in Izuku's hand and laughed.

"Oh you're applying here too? Why would they hire a quirkless idiot like you when they could have someone *normal* like me who actually has a quirk?"

*Maybe because I have better grades and a better work ethic, not to mention a better record. I happen to know for a fact you've got a few marks on yours from getting into fights with kids from other schools.* Izuku didn't say that out loud. Instead...

"Well, there's no harm in trying..."

Fingers just smirked. "We'll see. May the best man win." He brushed past Izuku, letting his knee hit Izuku's head on his way out. Izuku scowled as he watched him leave, then took a deep breath and got up, brushing himself off. He unwrinkled his application as much as possible by rubbing it flat on the edge of one of the tables before heading toward the office to turn it in.

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Izuku hung up the phone in despair, wishing he had one of those phones he had seen in pre-quirk era movies just so he could violently slam it down in the receiver. It had been two weeks since he'd started looking for a job and so far, he'd only had one interview. Almost everywhere else had either never called him back, or simply let him know that they didn't feel he was 'the right fit for our company.' The one interview he'd gotten was with one of the only companies that didn't ask about his quirk on the application. The interview had been going really well and the people in charge had seemed to like him, at least until they finally asked what his quirk was. The interview hadn't lasted long after that. He didn't even know why it still hurt so much that he didn't get the job, it wasn't like he hadn't been expecting it. He sighed and crossed them off the list with red pen. There were still a few companies he hadn't heard back from, maybe it was time to hit the pavement and follow

up. Show initiative.

*Or maybe it's time to give up. At least the villains let your skills speak for themselves.*

Izuku calmed his breathing and let his panic fuel his determination. If there was anything he was good at, it was not giving up. He scanned his list, skimming past all the lines crossed off in red until his eyes picked up one company. *McDonalds*. He'd had to drop off the application in person, so it made sense to follow up in person. He hurriedly grabbed his keys and put on his shoes, looking in the mirror on the way out the door to make sure he looked presentable.

"I'm heading out Mom!" He yelled back into the house.

"Ok honey!" She yelled back, "Be home for dinner! Be safe! Don't go chasing too many hero fights!"

He chuckled and locked the door behind him.

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Izuku stood shock still, mind turning as it tried to make sense of what he was seeing. Fingers stood behind the register in full uniform, the bright yellow m on his hat standing out mockingly against the black. He didn't have a trainer shadowing him, so it wasn't even his first day. He caught sight of Izuku standing by the door and *smirked* before turning back to the customer at the register. Izuku didn't bother going back to the office to ask about his application. If they'd hired Fingers who applied the same day, it was obvious they'd already made their decision. He walked out the door in a trance. *Stupid discrimination. Why? Why did it have to be this way? Why wouldn't they even give him a chance?*

He arrived at the internet cafe before he even realized where he was going. He hesitated for a moment. Yeah, discrimination sucked, but was he really ready to walk head on into villainy? He wouldn't be able to justify it this time by saying he didn't know how the person would use the info he gave them. Was he really ready for this? He remembered the smirk that Fingers shot him when he dropped by McDonalds. He remembered Bakugo burning him and calling him useless while the teachers watched and did nothing. He remembered being told to kill himself.

Izuku pulled up his hood so security cameras wouldn't catch his face before walking into the cafe with his head held high and paying for an hour. He signed into his villain account and went straight to his inbox. He hadn't received any new messages in the weeks since he'd signed into that account, but the three from before were still unread. He read over them quickly, a minor hero, a sidekick, and, oddly enough, a bank robbery for Izuku to plan. This would be interesting.

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**Pro-Hero Stretch Found Dead Near Favorite Cafe.**

**Sidekick at Edgeshot Agency Killed in Villain Fight, Suspect Still at Large**

**Tokyo Gold Bank Down 10 Billion Yen After Bank Robbery**

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Izuku tried to bury his guilt as he read the headlines. Afterall, the world had put him through hell his whole life...

It was about time he returned the favor.

Here we go! Izuku has finally made his decision and can anyone blame him? Now how will he deal with his new career path, hmm? Thanks for all the comments and kudos, guys, you're amazing!

# Embracing the Role

## Chapter Summary

Izuku has embraced his role as a villain, but who is following him?

## Chapter Notes

A time skip! We see how Izuku is fitting into the world of villains and how he's going to move forward.

It had been six months since Izuku's fateful encounter with All Might. It seemed like a lot longer to Izuku: a lot had changed since he was a bright eyed kid holding onto a dream of becoming a hero. He'd learned a lot about computers and hacking to help with his villain work and was planning on going to a high school that emphasized programming. He still did most of his villain work in internet cafes, but moved around frequently to prevent being tracked. He had also tried picking up as much as he could about money laundering to prevent anyone from tracking his funds. His prices went up with each plan he sent out and he had yet to reach a point where his clients refused to pay.

He had also been cleaning Dagobah beach. It had started as a way to deal with his guilt over becoming a villain. Maybe if he did something good for the community, it would cancel out the harm he'd caused. Izuku was gradually coming to terms with his new life, letting his bitterness at society combine with his pride at a job done well to drown out his regret. He didn't get panic attacks anymore when he opened the news and saw that one of his plans had been carried out. He still got nervous and somewhat nauseous, but even that was getting replaced with satisfaction. It didn't hurt that every message in his inbox fed his ego as villains were constantly thanking him or demanding his services. For the first time in his life, he had people who didn't think he was useless! It was like a drug and Izuku couldn't get enough of it. So far, he'd sold the murder plans for ten heroes and that wasn't even counting the numerous robberies, non-hero assassinations and other crimes that he'd planned.

But people were starting to catch on. Conspiracy theorists online were starting to connect the recent uptick in hero deaths and even the police were starting to suspect there might be one person behind it. Villains were starting to come to him with higher profile targets, but were also starting to demand face to face meetings rather than just through a screen.

Which was why he'd never stopped cleaning the beach. He knew that one act of good wouldn't make up for the bad he'd done and he was getting to the point that he didn't want it to. But it was excellent muscle training, and he needed to be strong if he expected to survive in the world of villains.

Izuku caught movement out of the corner of his eye as he hefted a microwave and began to carry it toward the dumpster. He had started to suspect this morning, but now he was sure. He was being followed, which meant that someone had managed to figure out that he was Mastermind. The only question was who? Izuku continued his task without letting on that he knew he was being watched,

opting instead to keep an eye out and get a description of his stalker. Hopefully it was a villain. Izuku didn't quite know what he'd do if the heroes caught onto his identity this early in the game, so yeah, hopefully villain. Izuku had to resist chuckling to himself. What had his life become.

By the time he left the beach at sundown, he'd discovered that his stalker was a middle aged man with grey hair, a goatee, and apparently a love of cheap suits and cigarettes. He was pretty good at staying out of sight, but Izuku had years of experience hiding from bullies and, more recently, stalking heroes himself. He breathed a sigh of relief, this guy was almost definitely not a hero, but if he had managed to find Izuku, he must have significant connections in the underground. Izuku made a note to check his notebooks when he got home.

Izuku had become much more paranoid since he'd thrown himself into villainy. Call it a combination of a guilty conscious and an anxiety disorder or whatever, but the end result was that Izuku was neurotically careful when it came to not getting caught. He had an irrational fear that, somehow, a cop would try posing as one of his clients online, get him to send a murder plan for a hero, then somehow use the IP adress to track him and take him to jail. Yeah, maybe Izuku had been watching too many crime dramas, but it *could* happen.

Anyway, he'd started to learn as much as he could about the villain underground so that he could reasonably vet his clients. It helped that he'd started asking about his clients quirks and skill sets so that he could incorporate them into his plans, but a majority of his information came from the dark net and hacking into some of the less secure police databases. Just like he had notebooks of information on heroes, now he had them on villains and it came in handy in unexpected ways.

One client a few weeks ago had commissioned him to help their group rob a casino. It was a difficult job with a big payout, so Izuku had only demanded part of his fee upfront. After the job was done, he'd messaged the client about the rest of his money and gotten the response of *Thanks, but you should be lucky with what you've got and you're not getting any more from us*. Idiots really. He'd vetted them beforehand and checked their quirks against the police registry, so he knew who they were, where they lived and, most importantly, their weaknesses.

In the midst of his fuming, it hadn't taken him long to find a few villains with a grudge against their little group. Turns out Izuku wasn't the only one these guys had tried to screw over. It was a little harder to find out how to contact their enemies, but once he did they seemed more than happy to pay Izuku for the chance to take them down. Needless to say, no one had tried to cheat Mastermind out of his fee since.

It came in handy now as he looked through descriptions of various known villains in an attempt to figure out who was following him. The guy didn't have an obvious quirk from what he could see, but who would have a reason to come after him? A previous client? No dice. Izuku continued rifling through the pages until...bingo. *Giran* . A broker, Izuku leaned back in his chair, of course.

The name nagged at him though, like he should be more familiar with this guy than just a passing entry in his journal. His eyes skimmed over the notes, lingering on the known connections list when a note he'd made in the margin caught in eye, more specifically, a username. *Oh, right*. *Giran* was the broker who'd reached out to him online a few times early on, offering to arrange meetings with big name players in the villain world and provide any necessary gear.

Izuku had soundly refused. He had been so new to the game when *Giran* had reached out and hadn't yet grown comfortable with calling himself as a villain. He had also been scared. One of the main reasons he liked working online was that his skills could speak for themselves. He had a sneaking suspicion that Mastermind's credibility would tank the moment word got out that he was just a quirkless teenager.

*Things are different now , Izuku mused, yeah, I'm still a quirkless teenager, but at least I've gotten used to the fact that I'm a villain now. I've got a reputation. A big reputation, if the copycat Mastermind's popping up to sell inferior plans was anything to go by. A reputation I need to uphold. So far, Izuku had been able to take care of the copycats fairly quickly, using the same methods he used for cheating clients, but one could never be too careful. Maybe it's finally time to start showing a physical presence.*

And with that, Izuku pulled out a notebook and began to make plans.

# First Meetings

## Chapter Summary

Izuku finally sits down and has a chat with Giran

It had been a week since Giran started following him and Izuku was beginning to get frustrated. The guy was supposedly one of the best brokers in the underground and was obviously good enough to find him, so one week should be more than enough time for him to confirm his suspicions. Izuku knew that he didn't really look the part of a villain, because what criminal mastermind lets himself be bullied everyday, but *come on*.

It was with these thoughts that Izuku decided to deviate from his normal daily routine, a routine that Giran *should* be familiar with at this point if he was paying any attention. Hopefully his annoying stalker would come out of the woodwork if given a good enough opportunity. If not, Izuku might just walk right up to the guy and punch him in the face. *Actually*, he winced as he thought back to his inability to fight against his bullies, *probably not*.

Izuku wound his way through the city, heading in the opposite direction from Dagobah beach. It was a part of the city that he was only familiar with through maps, meaning that there wouldn't be anyone there who would recognize him, and it was a medium-better part of town, meaning that, with any luck, there wouldn't be anyone there who would recognize Giran either. A nice, neutral territory for a first meeting.

The cafe Izuku walked into had good reviews, but he honestly didn't care about how good their coffee was. What Izuku cared about was that it was busy this time of day, which meant there was enough ambient noise that he and Giran would be able to talk without being overheard, and there was the added bonus that one one would be suspicious over two strangers sharing a table. Izuku walked up to the counter and gave his order. Now all that was left was for his stalker to take the bait.

It didn't take long at all for Giran to enter the cafe, at least considering how long he'd stubbornly insisted on following Izuku. If he'd taken any longer, Izuku was considering messaging the guy to just come inside. The boy watched the broker wait in line out of the corner of his eye, chuckling when he noticed that Giran had even put out his ever present cigarette. He was halfway through his coffee when Giran slid into the seat across from him.

"I was wondering if you were ever going to actually talk to me."

A look of shock briefly crossed the broker's face before he let out a surprised laugh.

"You knew I was following you."

"I make a living being more observant than most people. Of course I knew." Izuku took another sip of his coffee, "What I don't know is why you insisted on observing for a full week before coming to talk to me. You must have had pretty good intel on who I was, watching my daily routine wasn't going to change that."

Giran chuckled and shook his head, "Well it took me a week to be sure I had the right guy, and

even now you're sitting here confirming it and I'm still not sure."

Izuku hummed, "Yeah, I guess my whole weak and innocent act does tend to throw people off. If it almost fooled you, then just imagine what the heroes will be thinking when they have their pride on the line."

Giran smiled, "Now there's the ruthless Mastermind we know and love. You've been doing pretty well for yourself online from what I've heard, but you know that you're not going to be able to hide in the shadows forever, right?"

Izuku sighed and put down his cup, "Yeah, the copycats are already starting to get on my nerves." He reached into his bag and pulled out a folder, sliding it across the table, "That's why I need your help. You are the best at what you do, right?"

Giran raised his eyebrows as he took the folder and began looking through it. There was a design for a villain costume and a list of weapons that Izuku thought he'd need, including a lot of knives. The broker looked over the designs silently for a few minutes, then nodded.

"This should be doable, but I should warn you that this'll cost you a pretty penny, the weapons especially."

"You know what my rates are Giran. I can afford it. Plus I'll even let you introduce me to a few of the contacts you've been hounding me about."

Giran smiled, "You sure know how to tell a man what he wants to hear. I'll start calling around. But you'll be packing some serious heat." Giran pulled out the weapons list and placed it in front of Izuku, "Are you sure you know how to use all these?"

Izuku shook his head, "Not yet. That's actually the last thing I need your help with."

Giran cocked his eyebrow, still smiling, and gestured for him to continue.

"I want to meet Himiko Toga."

That wiped the smile off the broker's face, "The serial killer?!" He asked in shock. Izuku nodded.

"You've followed me so I trust you know about my...quirk situation..." Giran nodded hesitantly, "Well, since I don't have a quirk to fall back on, I'm going to have to rely primarily on weapons. Knives are the best option for both close combat and ranged, once you factor in throwing knives, and there's no one better than Toga when it comes to knives. I want her to teach me how to fight."

Giran was solemn now, "I hate to ask it, but what if she kills you?"

Izuku just smiled, wondering if it made him just a little bit crazy that he was asking to be trained by a serial killer, "I think I can hold my own. Besides, you won't let her kill me, I'll be making you too much money."

Izuku started to get up to leave, but Giran grabbed his arm.

"Before you leave, I have a gift for you." He grabbed a laptop bag from the floor and put it on the table, "This is top of the line, virtually untraceable. Internet cafes are great and all, but I think you'll agree this is the easier option." Izuku booted up the computer and looked it over. It was nice and really would make his work much easier. He quickly checked to make sure there wasn't any tracking apps or spyware installed before closing it. Meanwhile, Giran had pulled out a simple smartphone, "This is also untraceable. I already have the number and put my contact info in as



well. I'll text you an address when your gear is ready and you can pick it up. I'll also text you when I manage to get ahold of Toga. She's slippery, but shouldn't be too hard to find. I'll be honest, I really hope you know what you're doing."

Izuku just tucked the phone in his pocket and slung the laptop bag over his shoulder as he stood and grabbed his cup, "If I didn't, I wouldn't have chosen to call myself Mastermind."

Giran watched the boy leave. *This kid is crazy*, his smile turned greedy, *look out heroes...*

*Mastermind is here to stay.*

# Learning

## Chapter Summary

### Izuku meets Himiko Toga

Izuku checked the address Giran had texted him to make sure he was in the right place before going in, letting the door swing on its hinges behind him. The travel agency he was in was obviously a front, the bored young woman at the front desk fixing him with an unimpressed stare that very obviously said, *you're lost, idiot, get out of here before you hurt yourself*. Izuku just ignored it, walking up to the desk with the sweetest smile on his face.

"Hi! I have an appointment with Giran. He said he had a package for me?"

The girl continued staring at him for a minute before she gave up and sighed, "If you're sure, squirt. What's the name?"

Izuku's smile got wider, "Mastermind."

He almost laughed as she did a double take, suddenly much more awake.

"Just a moment sir," her voice shook slightly, "I'll just let him know you've arrived."

Izuku nodded and found a seat in the lobby as the receptionist made a call. He was just pretending to look through a magazine when the door swung open again and a blond girl in a loose school uniform came skipping in and leaned over the receptionist's desk.

"Hiya baby! You're cute! Giran said he wanted to see me, do you know why? Was it to meet you? I like your shirt by the way, it's such a pretty shade of red. Red's my favorite color! I love seeing everyone in it! You just came prepared."

Izuku smirked at the cornered look on the receptionist's face as Toga encroached further and further into her personal space. She was saved by Giran coming out from the back.

"Mastermind! Pleasure to see you again. Nice to see that the phone I gave you is working well!"

"It's working wonderfully, thanks," Izuku replied, "The laptop as well. If the other gear I've ordered is even half that quality, I don't think I'll ever order from anyone else."

"That's what I like to hear," Giran clapped him on the back and turned toward the receptionist and Toga, who was looking at Izuku hungrily, "Toga, I'll be with you in just a few minutes. Can you find something to entertain yourself out here in the meantime?" The receptionist looked faint as Toga smiled widely at her, her fangs on full display.

"Your poor receptionist..." Izuku said when the two arrived at Giran's office.

"Yeah," Giran replied, "But remind me whose fault it is that Toga is here to begin with."

"Point taken," Izuku chuckled, "So, you have my villain outfit?"

Instead of replying, Giran just took a large box and put it on the desk. Izuku looked over the contents, inspecting the armored pants, shirt and jacket before moving onto the gas mask. Overall, it was simple and more than a little plain compared to the flashy hero costumes plastered all over the news, and it was exactly what Izuku wanted.

“It all looks good. And the weapons?”

“In the gym where you’ll be training with Toga. Speaking of, I don’t really like the idea of having to find a new receptionist. I just barely hired this one. The gym is the last door on the left, I’ll go get Toga and meet you there.”

Izuku nodded and made his way down the hall. He tried a few of the other doors, but they were all locked. Good, Giran’s not just a trusting idiot. The gym wasn’t huge, but there was enough room to move around comfortably. There were a variety of different sized boxes stacked against the walls so that they could train with obstacles when they were ready and there was a large display of weapons on the wall beside the door. Izuku guessed that this room was normally used for demonstrations of the most common weapons Giran sold.

He noticed an innocent looking cardboard box sitting on the ground under the weapons display and was halfway to wondering what was inside before he saw the name *Mastermind* written in small black letters in one corner. He smiled and opened it. All the weapons he’d ordered were there, as well as a few extra “training” versions, which were basically the same, except dull instead of sharp.

“Is this really him? Is this Mastermind? He’s so tiny!” It was a wonder this girl was such an effective killer, considering she probably wouldn’t know stealth if it bit her in the butt. Izuku really hoped that this wasn’t one of those “smart people make stupid decisions” moments because he wasn’t really ready to die today. Maybe he should have put his affairs in order before showing up?

Something must have shown on his face because Giran laughed, “I would say she won’t bite, but honestly I don’t know. Yeah Toga, this kid is Mastermind. Don’t let his size fool you though, he’s probably one of the smartest villains I’ve ever met. Mastermind, I’m sure you already know this is Toga Himiko, considering you’re the one that wanted this meeting.”

“Oooh!” Himiko squealed, “Mastermind knows who I am?! And he’s so cute! You need a cute nickname to match! Like Stainy! Mastermindy? Master-chan? Mind-chan? Mind-chan! That’s perfect! Giran said you asked for me Mind-chan! Why does a cutie like you want to meet an adorable killer like me?”

Izuku swallowed his doubts and smiled. It was getting easier to understand her the more he listened, her excitement wasn’t too different from his own ramblings after all. And Giran probably wouldn’t let her kill him. Probably.

“Well, um, you probably know that not many people have met me, um, yet. So, um, I need to learn how to defend myself, and, um, you’re really good at knife combat so, um, yeah.” He cringed and saw Giran mirroring the expression. *Smooth*. Toga, however, didn’t really care.

“Wow! So you want me to teach you how to fight Mind-chan? That’s so cool! I don’t really know what I’m doing half the time, I just like to see people in red, so I don’t know if I’ll be a good teacher, but it’ll be lotsa fun to try!”

Despite his common sense screaming at him to get as far away from this girl as possible, her enthusiasm was contagious. “Perfect Toga-sensei! If you’ll try to be a good teacher, I’ll do my best to be a good student.”

It was Toga's turn to cringe, "Toga-sensei? That's not cute at all! Just call me Himiko, Mind-chan!" and then she ran at him with a knife.

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Izuku didn't think he had ever been more sore in his life.

He was currently stretched out on the couch icing his bruises with bags of frozen peas. Thankfully, the training knives he and Toga had been using only left bruises instead of slashes. Toga wasn't too happy about that: she insisted that red was a much prettier color than purple.

Izuku heard the door open, but didn't bother moving. He wasn't even sure he could at this point, but maybe he was just being dramatic.

"Oh! Izuku sweetie, are you ok? What happened?"

"Hi Mom," Izuku tried to smile, but it came out as more of a pained grimace, "I just spent the afternoon with a few friends. One of them is pretty good at martial arts and she was trying to teach me. She's just, uhh, *really* enthusiastic."

His mom didn't seem any less worried, but seemed to decide to take his word for it, "Did you learn a lot? What's she like?"

Izuku lit up, "Yeah, I did! We basically spent the whole time going over some basics and getting them into my body. She said I'm a really fast learner. Um... what else? Like I said, she's really enthusiastic and not just about fighting. Himiko just does everything with about twice as much energy as anyone else, so she's actually a lot of fun to be around. It was a little intimidating at first, but I'm getting used to her, so it's not too bad."

Mom was smiling too now, "I'm so happy you're making friends, Izuku! She sounds really nice! Maybe you should bring her around for dinner sometime," *yeah, no, that would not be happening*, "You've been so happy these past few months. I was so worried about you after Katsuki was attacked by that awful villain, you were just so quiet for months after, and then that whole thing with trying to find a job. I don't know what changed, but you seem to be thriving now!"

Izuku thought about it for a minute. It definitely hadn't been a *smooth* transition from wannabe hero to up and coming villain but, was he happier now? He thought of his fight with Toga and how she didn't ever ask about his quirk, just pouted that she wasn't allowed to make him bleed. He thought of Giran and how he treated him like an equal. He thought about his overflowing inbox, full of people who respected him and wanted to be associated with him and he felt a smile smile tug at the corners of his mouth as he looked up at his mom.

"Yeah, I guess I am. I've found people who like me and I'm doing something I enjoy. For the first time in a while, I think I'm really happy."

# Face to Face

## Chapter Summary

Izuku starts to show his face in the underworld, and we see how the cops are reacting to Mastermind.

Mastermind looked back at Izuku from the full length mirror in Giran's office. He didn't want to get dressed in his villain outfit at home and potentially risk getting caught by his mom or the neighbors. If everything went well tonight, he would be finding his own base soon enough, but until then, Giran's office would have to do.

His villain outfit was practical, but still managed to look intimidating. Or at least it *would*, if Izuku wasn't so short. The black armored pants were fitted, but flexible, and were paired with a black armored shirt made from the same material, but what tied the outfit together was the jacket. It was a dark green and had a hood he had pulled up, his hair just peeking out from underneath it. There were dozens of pockets that had smoke bombs, grenades, flash bangs, and, of course, his knives. He also had knives strapped to each of his legs and a few hidden in his dark red boots for emergencies. After a few months training with Toga, he was deadly with a knife, if not quite as good as his teacher. The last thing he put on was his mask. It was a solid black and covered his entire face below the nose. It didn't look like a standard gas mask, looking instead like a simple ski mask, but Giran assured him it would filter out any harmful gas attacks. Looking in the mirror, the effect was stunning. The knives alone would have been intimidating, but the hood partially shaded Izuku's face so that the only distinguishing feature were his bright green eyes, lit with a deadly sort of fire. He loved it.

Giran had arranged a face to face meetup now that Toga said he *probably* wouldn't die immediately as soon as he was attacked. The meeting was with a small gang that had territory in eastern Tokyo and were wanting to rob a casino. Izuku himself was still considered small time, even if he was becoming more well known, so Giran said this would be a good chance for Mastermind to start showing his face, even if it was behind a mask.

"Looking pretty snazzy." Giran was leaning against the doorframe, smoking his ever present cigarette. "I'd say knock 'em dead, but that'd be bad for business."

Izuku rolled his eyes, again marveling at how they stood out against his outfit, "Let's go. The sooner we get this over with, the sooner I can pretend I'm not nervous."

Giran chuckled, but grabbed his keys, "You're such a smart kid, I keep forgetting how new to the game you are. Normally it takes years for small fry like you to get to this point in their careers."

"Yeah well, normally small fry don't make a living killing heroes."

The drive to the warehouse was short, but maybe that was because there's not really any traffic at two o'clock in the morning. As they walked in, Giran and Mastermind were met with a dozen armed guards surrounding a man almost as big as Fatgum who was obviously the head honcho. Izuku immediately started analyzing, matching the people and quirks he saw to the research he'd done beforehand.

The head honcho was sneering at him “Giran, I said I wanted to meet with Mastermind, not some kid who’s still wearing diapers! What kind of a joke are you trying to pull here?”

Giran just smirked, Izuku was fairly certain it was his default expression, but there was a possibility that he was genuinely amused by the situation. “Yeah, I know he doesn’t look like much, but I guarantee you he’s the real deal. Apparently, you don’t have to be tall to be smart.”

Izuku’s nervousness was slowly morphing into anger and determination. If there was anything he was used to from his life before villainy, it was jerks who thought it was their right to look down on him. The head honcho had gone on a rant about Giran not taking him seriously and how he was powerful and blah, blah blah. Izuku just sat down on the chair provided for him and spoke quietly, the determination in his voice and eyes passing for confidence in his words.

“Takumi Fujito. Age: 42. Quirk: Spines, you convert the fat in your body into spines that can be detached, however they have a tendency to bleed when you do that, so you avoid detaching them if at all possible. Family: you have a wife that you married ten years ago and four kids, all under the age of 15. Your youngest just turned six last wednesday, congratulations, by the way. Weaknesses: your family, the dependence of your quirk on your previous fat stores and the risk of blood loss if forced to use it in the wrong way. You also have a severe allergy to shellfish. Did I get anything wrong?”

The room had gone completely silent and Izuku smiled innocently beneath his mask and looked directly at the head honcho, who gulped. “So,” Izuku said pleasantly, “Shall we begin?”

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Detective Tsukauchi rubbed his eyes in frustration before taking another gulp of his coffee. The Mastermind case was rapidly turning from a minor headache to a massive migraine. The guy had been on the scene for less than ten months and he was already becoming one of the most dangerous villains the detective had ever been tasked with finding.

He looked at the file again, filled with whatever neatly written plans they had managed to confiscate from villains and a handful of blurry photographs pulled from security cameras at internet cafes. All the evidence pointed to one thing: Mastermind was a ghost. The police hadn’t even known about his existence until months after his first murder, and it was the media who first caught onto the fact that all the recent hero deaths were connected. The heroes and police hadn’t even thought to check. Why would they? Each murder was committed by different people with different quirks and there wasn’t any signiture connecting the deaths.

It wasn’t until Nedzu noticed that the villains committing the crimes weren’t smart enough to pull off the kinds of heists they were doing that they began looking for a strategist rather than a serial killer. A strategist for hire. Looking at it now, it seemed obvious and simple. The murders were only possible because there was some genius pulling the strings from behind, making sure that the villains knew every possible weakness and how to exploit it. Nedzu was anxious to catch Mastermind mostly because he wanted an intellectual equal to play chess with, but Tsukauchi wanted to catch him because the more his influence grew the more dangerous he became.

The only comforting fact about the entire case was that Mastermind never agreed to in person meet-ups, which limited his influence considerably. If the police and heroes could catch him before he got up the courage to show his face, then they might be able to nip this in the bud, but Mastermind was starting to change his MO and that made Tsukauchi nervous. For a long time, Mastermind had used internet cafes to communicate with the villains who hired him, which had been the only solid lead the police could get on the guy, as thin as it was. He had been caught on camera multiple times, but always kept his hood up and seemed to know where the cameras were placed, so they still had no idea what he really looked like. Tsukauchi and Sansa had gone to

interview employees at the various cafes but because they didn't know about Mastermind until several months after he became active it had been too long for most to remember a random guy in a hoodie. The only thing they had to show for the interviews was one clerk who remembered a young man with green hair, but even he admitted it could have been black and the harsh fluorescent lights were just messing with his eyes. In short they still had nothing, but were tracking any suspicious activity at dozens of internet cafes in the city.

And then he stopped using them.

The crimes continued, accelerated even, but there was no physical sign of Mastermind anywhere. Tsukauchi and the rest of the police could only guess that he had either bought some sort of untraceable tech, or he had figured out how to build it himself. Either way, their most solid lead had gone cold and they were back to where they started. Well, almost. At least they knew the guy existed now.

A slight movement in the corner of his eye made Tsukauchi reflexively drop the file and reach for his gun.

"Hey now, I didn't think I was being that quiet."

Tsukauchi curbed his panic for long enough to recognize the long white scarf, tangled hair and tired eyes of the hero in front of him. He sighed in relief.

"Eraser! Sorry I didn't hear you coming, I just..." He looked at the papers spread all over the floor, "got lost in thought, I guess."

Eraser grunted in response, "I guess I should apologize for sneaking up on you. Stealth is just kind of a reflex for underground heroes, it takes too much work to turn it off."

"No," Tsukauchi shook his head, "It's not a problem. So, why are you here Eraser? Normally you go straight to sleep after patrols."

Eraser's expression, minute as the change was, turned grim, "I heard something concerning from one of my informants and needed to let you know as soon as possible." He glanced down at the file that was still lying in disarray at their feet, "I have something else to add to your file."

Tsukauchi perked up half in excitement and half in dread. While he hoped Eraser was bringing good news, his grim attitude made that much less likely. "Please tell me that you have some sort of lead on how to find him." Even as he said it, he knew it was a useless hope. If Eraser was bringing something like that, he'd be smiling, as unhinged as the hero's smile was.

As expected, Eraser shook his head and frowned, "Much worse. According to my contact, over the past week, Mastermind has met with the leaders of several minor gangs. *In person.* "

Eraser waited a moment for his news to sink in, watching as all the overworked cogs in Tsukauchi's brain finished turning to the correct positions, and when they did...

"Fuck."

# Entrance Exam

## Chapter Summary

People have been asking if Mastermind ever commits crimes with his own two hands.  
Here's your answer.

## Chapter Notes

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

“Are you sure you’re ready for this Mind-chan?”

Izuku just rolled his eyes, ignoring the lump of guilt, excitement and doubt that had been steadily growing in his gut all day.

“Himiko, you do realize I *have* killed people before, right?”

“I know *that*, silly, it’s just...” she looked at him softly, “It’s just you’ve never taken a life with your own hands. It’s different than just making murder plans and letting other people act them out. The blood will be on *your* hands, no one else’s. There’s no coming back from this.”

Izuku took a deep breath and started playing with his favorite knife, “Yeah, I guess you’re right. But,” Izuku’s eyes took on a determined glint, “I think I *need* to do this. I mean, in the eyes of the law, I’m already a killer, so it’s not like it’ll save me a prison sentence even if I never do it myself and...well, I think I need to prove to myself that I *can*, you know? My whole life, I’ve been told that I can’t do anything everyone else can do, I can’t be a hero, I can’t be a useful member of society. I can’t be human. Hell, my own dad *left* because I was so useless. If I let everyone else do my dirty work forever, then isn’t that proving everyone else right? Yeah I’m smart, but when it comes down to the wire, I really am the useless deku that everyone’s always told me I am.” He looked over at Himiko, crouched beside him on the rooftop while they waited for their prey to pass through the alley below, “I want to... I *need to do this*. I *know* that I’m capable of it, I just need to actually, you know, do it. Does that make any sense?”

“Not really to me, but I’ve never been one for big ideals.” She got a contemplative look on her face, “I mostly just kill people to see them bleed, which other people think is a dumb reason too, so I think that if it makes sense to you, can it really be wrong? I mean, any more wrong than murder is anyway?”

Izuku laughed, “That really shouldn’t have been as comforting as it is. Thanks Himiko, you’re a great friend.”

She smiled, her fangs glinting in the dim light of a nearby street lamp before her eyes brightened in excitement. She grabbed Izuku’s shoulder and shook him roughly.

“Mind-chan! Mind-chan!” She whispered, somehow still managing to convey mania as if she were yelling at the top of her lungs, “She’s here!”

Izuku focused on the woman entering the alley below them. Hero Name: Glimmer. Sidekick at Uwabami Agency. Quirk: Sparkles. She can refract light to produce a glittery effect around her



body that she uses to blind and disorient her opponents. Weaknesses: she is susceptible to the blinding effect of her own sparkles. She uses dark glasses as part of her hero costume to minimize this effect, but right now? she's coming off a day shift in the dark of night in civilian clothes and dark glasses would just get in the way. Izuku smiled and put on his own dark goggles to shield his eyes before grabbing a pair of throwing knives.

Glimmer cried out as one stabbed her in the shoulder and the other lodged itself in her thigh, preventing her from running away. She instinctively surrounded herself with sparkles, but had to shield her eyes with her hand. She reached for her pocket where she kept an extra pair of sunglasses only to receive a swift kick to the hand as soon as she managed to grab them. She could tell by the sound of them hitting the floor that they were most likely cracked and useless. She dimmed her quirk enough that she could still see somewhat. She could just barely make out two figures behind the bright sparkles. One was hanging back, but the other was stalking toward her with knives in each hand. A knife-hand quirk, perhaps. Glimmer shook her head. Not important right now, she needed to focus on staying alive.

She launched a punch at her attacker, only for him to dodge at the last second. How? Even dimmed, she knew her sparkles made it difficult to see her movements. It seemed it was her opponent's turn to attack as he ran close to her with a knife and gave her a deep cut on the side of her neck. Her eyes widened in pain and realization as she saw the dark goggles on his face. She stumbled backwards, trying to get out of range before he came at her again, thanking every deity she could think of that her hurt leg didn't give out from the movement.

Glimmer was starting to hyperventilate. She didn't have her glasses and her opponent's gear limited the effectiveness of her quirk anyway. She was also injured and bleeding heavily while she hadn't even managed to land a hit on him. They fought for another few minutes, but for every hit she managed to get in, he gave her another few cuts or stabs. She hadn't been this scared since the first time she'd run into a major villain during her first internship. Her mentor had been there to save her then, but no one was going to come to save her now. She stilled and prepared to stand her ground as a last desperate strategy occurred to her. There was a risk she might go blind, but hopefully it would incapacitate her attacker long enough for her to run away.

She slammed her hands over her screwed shut eyes and sparkled brighter than she ever had in her life. She had never poured this much energy into her quirk because even with standard dark glasses, this much light could cause permanent damage. She was just about to cut her quirk and run for her life when she felt a knife slide between her ribs. If her eyes hadn't been closed she would have been concerned about how dark her vision was going as her legs finally gave out beneath her and she succumbed to quirk exhaustion and blood loss.

Izuku waited for the last of the sparkles to fizzle out before taking off his glasses. He'd had to close his eyes during that last attack, but the glasses Giran had provided him with had done a wonderful job at protecting him. He watched the last bit of life drain from Glimmer's eyes as Himiko came to stand beside him.

"So," she drawled, "That looked like fun. How do you feel?"

Izuku knew that the him of 10 months ago would have probably thrown up at the realization of what he had just done, but all he felt was a sick sense of pride, just like he'd felt that first time that a villain had honestly *thanked* him for coming up with a plan to kill Mt. Lady.

"I feel good." He smiled at Himiko as he retrieved whatever knives were still stuck in the hero, cleaning them off and putting them away. "I think I told you when we were planning this that today was the UA entrance exam," Himiko nodded, "Well, I've just been thinking about how

proud my bully was when I saw him walking home this afternoon and honestly, I think I've got him beat." This was like his own personal entrance exam, his own proof that he was a real villain. Izuku liked the poetic irony. It was just as ironic as a hero fanboy growing up to kill heroes because of the words of the number one hero in Japan.

Sirens were starting to grow closer, most likely drawn by the bright light of Glimmer's final stand, but it wasn't important. Izuku and Himiko had plenty of time to get out of there before anyone else showed up.

"Come on Himiko," he said, "let's go celebrate."

## Chapter End Notes

With how popular my fics are becoming, I figured I might want to share [my tumblr](#). Be aware that I only have one, so it's definitely multi-fandom. It has a lot of miraculous ladybug, dragon prince, good omens, and of course my hero academia.

# Caught

## Chapter Summary

Tsukauchi and the heroes organize a raid to catch Mastermind.

Tsukauchi checked his gun one last time and radioed the heroes who were coming on the raid, “Everyone in position?”

“Ready.” Eraserhead responded. He was waiting in the rafters of the warehouse, hidden in the shadows. The current theory was that Mastermind had some sort of analysis quirk, but there was always the possibility he could have something more offensive, so they couldn’t be too careful.

“Ready.” Kamui Woods had insisted on being part of the raid. He and Mt. Lady may have stepped on each other’s toes, but they had been friends. In his mind, Mastermind might not have wielded the knife that killed her, but he was still responsible for her death.

“Ready.” Nedzu stood beside Tsukaguchi. It wasn’t often that he physically came on missions, but he was the only one that could match Mastermind in intellect, just in case it wasn’t something Eraserhead could erase.

Eraserhead’s informants had caught wind of the deal a few days ago and plainclothes officers on the scene had confirmed that Mastermind had entered the warehouse 20 minutes ago. Tsukauchi took a deep breath to calm his nerves. It’d be over soon.

“Move in!”

---

Izuku was unimpressed. This group of drug dealers was hardly worth the trouble of meeting with, but Giran had vouched for them, so he’d given them the benefit of the doubt. But seriously? All they wanted to do was make sure a rival group stopped encroaching on their territory? Kill their men! Send a message! Hiring a professional strategist was just redundant. He sighed. These guys were idiots.

All of a sudden, the warehouse exploded in movement as dozens of cops came pouring in and restraining the drug dealers. Izuku cried out as he was wrapped in...branches? He swore. Heroes. A loud voice came from a megaphone outside.

“Mastermind, this is Detective Tsukauchi from the Japanese Police Force. You are under arrest for accessory to multiple murders and other crimes. Do not resist.”

Izuku chuckled desperately as his mind raced for a way out of this situation. The heroes had gotten the drop on him, but...he knew better than anyone that every hero has a weakness. He slumped and bowed his head, hiding his smile as he felt Kamui Wood’s lacquered chain prison loosen slightly. He silently thanked his bullies for teaching him how to pretend he’d given up, all while reaching in his pocket. His knives wouldn’t do much good against this current opponent, Kamui would be able to grow his branches much faster than Izuku would be able to cut through them, but he had a lot more tricks up his sleeve. He grinned as his hand finally grasped what he was looking for, good thing his costume was flameproof.

Kamui Woods screamed as his branches were charred and he reflexively let go. Izuku hit the floor in a roll, but still didn't let up his grip on the miniature flame thrower, instead targeting Kamui's main body. He made a break for the back of the warehouse and laughed as he felt triumph radiating from the police thinking they'd managed to corner him. He took a grenade from one of his pockets and pulled the pin before throwing it at the wall. Just because there wasn't a door back here didn't mean he couldn't make one.

"Shit! He took out Kamui and blew out the back wall! Head him off! Quickly, before he gets away!"

Izuku vaulted over the rubble into the back alley behind the warehouse and looked around to decide which direction to run. If he went left, he'd run right into the arms of the police. He turned right, but felt his body wrapped up for the second time that night.

"Fuck!" He swore under his breath. Of course *this* was how he got caught. What would his mom think? He supposed he should have expected something like this after how quickly he'd risen through the villain ranks. How did the phrase go? The faster they rise, the quicker they fall? Something like that?

Izuku desperately looked around and saw Eraserhead staring at him, hair floating around him like some kind of devil's halo. If he hadn't been so scared he would have laughed that they sent *Eraserhead* after a quirkless kid. As it was, he couldn't suppress a deranged giggle and the hero looked at him with suspicion.

"What's so funny? You can't use your quirk and you can't get away. Just give yourself up."

This just made Izuku laugh harder, because now he knew how to escape. Eraserhead wasn't used to people fighting back after their quirks were taken away, and unlike with Kamui's branches, Eraser's scarf was easy to cut through. Eraserhead reared back at the manic look in the villain's eyes as he looked up and didn't see how he grasped a knife in each hand. He made quick work of the capture weapon and threw one of his knives at Eraserhead. The hero managed to dodge only to be blinded by a bright flash as soon as he turned back to look at his opponent. By the time he could open his eyes again, Mastermind was nowhere to be seen.

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Izuku watched from the roof as Eraserhead looked around for him before heading into the warehouse. The heroes and cops would start canvassing the area soon, they'd probably already set up a perimeter. He crept to the other edge of the roof so he could see where the police were gathered. Most were still clearing the warehouse or loading the drug dealers into police cruisers, but some were having to hold back the crowd that was starting to form as people from a nearby shopping district rushed to see what all the commotion was about.

Izuku smiled as an idea occurred to him and he slipped off his mask and took off his jacket, folding it to look like a bag. He quickly gathered all his knives and weapons and placed them inside his jacket. It might have looked weird in the middle of the day, but under the cover of darkness and chaos, he just looked like a kid who'd been out a little too late with friends. He shimmied down the fire escape and took out his phone, setting it to record right as he came into view not too far from the police line.

"Hey, kid! You're not supposed to be back here!" An officer rushed to him and grabbed him roughly by the arm.

"S-sorry, o-officer, b-but I heard there were heroes and my friends dared me and..." Izuku lifted his phone helplessly as the officer rolled his eyes.

“Don’t be stupid kid, there’s a dangerous villain out tonight, the police line is there to protect you. You and your friends can get autographs at Hero Con.” And with that Izuku was escorted outside the police line with firm instructions to never do something like that again. Izuku stayed with the crowd for a few minutes, watching Nedzu talk to Tsukauchi, who looked more tired with every officer or hero who came to talk to him.

An ambulance had been called for Kamui Woods and the media had started showing up by the time Izuku left. No one paid a second glance to a plain looking boy making his way away from the chaos and he made it home without incident. He crawled through his window and drew a shuddering breath as the stress finally hit him. Tears leaked from his eyes and he wiped them away in frustration. It seemed that being a feared villain didn’t make him any less of a crybaby.

That had been too close. If he hadn’t had his flamethrower, or if they’d sent different heroes... Izuku cut off that train of thought before it could paralyze him. He still needed to lock away his villain gear and shower away the dust and soot that was sticking to him from the fire and the explosion.

Most importantly, he needed to find a way to make sure this never happened again.

# Hostages

## Chapter Summary

Izuku does everything in his power to make sure the police think twice before trying to catch him again.

“What is this damn world coming to?” Mistuki exclaimed, “Just last night that fucker Mastermind gave the heroes the slip. Put a hero in the hospital too, from what I heard.”

“It’s just terrible! I wish that they’d just catch him already, it’s nerve wracking every time I turn the news on now. I’m so worried for Katsuki when he starts UA!” Inko fretted.

“Yeah right, like some weak fucker like Mastermind could beat me!” Katsuki said, “They should have sent stronger heroes to the raid. The reason that hero got hurt was because he was weak!”

“Shut up, brat! Don’t go speaking ill of the injured like that!”

Izuku played with his food and tried not to react. Dinner with the Bakugos was always difficult, having to act natural with Katsuki so his ‘friend’ wouldn’t have any reason to kill him, but it was even harder when *he* was the topic of conversation. Izuku wanted more than anything to smirk and take credit for his crimes, or even kill Katsuki right here and prove that he wasn’t weak, but he was smart enough to realize how stupid that would be. He’d just escaped a hero raid with his identity intact, he wasn’t about to go giving himself away now. It still didn’t make it any easier to navigate this conversation.

“Well, I’m just grateful that it didn’t end up any worse...” Masaru said quietly.

Inko looked at him like he’d grown a second head, “He got away and a hero was injured, how could it have gone any worse?”

Masaru set down his fork and looked at Inko, “According to a friend of mine with the police, a huge crowd gathered shortly after the raid began and they were worried Mastermind would take hostages. We’re lucky he just disappeared.”

Izuku’s head snapped up as the cogs in his brain started turning. *Hostages*, he thought, *now there’s an idea.*

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“Did you enjoy dinner with Katsuki’s family? You’re kinda tired tonight.”

Izuku nodded, “Yeah, it was great, as always. It’s just...I’m kinda tired. I think I’m just gonna go to bed early.”

Inko looked at him with concern, “Don’t you want to watch the news?”

Izuku just shook his head. It’d all be about the failed raid, anyway, “Goodnight Mom.”

Inko looked like she wanted to protest, but pity won out, “Ok, Izuku, Goodnight.”

He shut his door and immediately went to his desk and opened the untraceable laptop he'd gotten from Giran. *Hostages*. It was such a simple idea, but it would be extremely effective. Because the first rule of hero work was to prioritize the rescue, any time a hostage was in danger, the heroes would have to do whatever was necessary to keep the hostage safe, rather than catch the villain. But who to take? Izuku sighed, kidnapping civilians and holding them somewhere just wasn't practical. As shitty as his life was outside his villainy, it still existed. He didn't just have an underground bunker somewhere to keep hostages fed and alive for an indeterminate amount of time. If only he could just threaten to kill more heroes if they caught him or something, but then he'd be caught and wouldn't be able to kill them.

He paused. Mastermind had never *had* to be physically present to kill anyone as long as he had interested buyers, it was one of the reasons it'd taken the police so long to acknowledge his existence. Izuku smiled slowly. What he had in mind would take a lot of preparation, and he wouldn't be able to do it alone, but he was sure it would make an impact. He opened up his Mastermind account and drafted a message to a hacker named La Brava that Giran had recommended. The heroes wouldn't know what hit them.

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If there was anything good that had come from the failed Mastermind raid, it was that the guy hadn't shown his face for two weeks. Tsukauchi didn't know if he should be happy the guy wasn't committing crimes, or frustrated that they couldn't find him, but the fact remained that Mastermind had gone to ground immediately after the raid and hadn't been heard from since. Nedzu had warned that he might be planning something, but Tsukauchi didn't know what it could be. He decided he'd just count his blessings that the media had finally stopped camping in front of the station trying to get statements. It was bad enough that the vultures had finally gotten ahold of the fact that Kamui Woods wasn't just injured, but had been viciously burned alive. He'd been lucky to survive, but there'd be a lengthy recovery process before he'd be able to return to hero work.

Tsukauchi's thoughts were interrupted by his phone ringing.

"Hello?"

"Detective, are you watching the news?" Nedzu's voice sounded worried and alarm bells started ringing in Tsukauchi's head. He'd heard the principal sound gleeful, sad, even frustrated, but he'd never heard him sound *worried* before, "Turn to channel 5."

Tsukauchi grabbed the remote to the small t.v. by his desk and turned it on to find two terrified looking news anchors looking into the camera.

"...left on the desk of the main producer of our station this morning with instructions to air it or our entire production team would be killed. We do not know yet what is on this tape, so we urge viewers to stop watching as there is the possibility that it could contain sensitive information or images that could be triggering to some viewers."

The screen cut to a dark green background. A black circle with a capital M inside it was superimposed on the green and Tsukauchi found it hard to breathe. He'd seen that symbol before on some of Mastermind's latest plans, it was a sort of signature he'd added in the past few months, probably to discourage copycats. This was bad.

The image faded to reveal Mastermind in a dark room, his toxic green eyes looking directly into the camera. His voice was somewhat distorted, but it still sounded young and male.

"Hello! For those of you who don't know me, my name is Mastermind! I'm the strategist behind the recent uptick in hero deaths. You're welcome!" He said cheerfully, "So, some of you may have

heard already, but the heroes almost managed to catch me last week,” he slow clapped, “Congratulations, *heroes*, and I’d say better luck next time, but,” he turned deadly serious, “there won’t be a next time. You see, this video is just a courtesy to let you know that this is now a hostage situation. If I am caught or killed, the murder plans for all top 50 heroes will be automatically released to interested buyers.”

Tsukauchi couldn’t look away. Taking the top 50 heroes hostage? Mastermind couldn’t be serious!

“Now, I know what you’re thinking, *‘But Mastermind? Heroes can defend themselves! You can’t take them hostage!’*” His eyes took on a wicked glint, “But, you see, that’s where you’re wrong. I’ve proved over a dozen times that heroes aren’t as invincible as you all want to believe. Just ask Mt. Lady. Stretch? Or maybe Glimmer?”

“Detective? Detective?” Tsukauchi raised his phone to his ear again from where it had fallen on his desk, “I’m here.”

“Please tell me this is a bluff.” Nedzu pleaded, “Tell me that he doesn’t actually plan on doing this.”

Tsukauchi swallowed, “My quirk hasn’t registered any lies...” Nedzu swore, another first for the principal.

“Now,” Mastermind continued, “in case you think that this is a bluff, I’m going to give you proof. I’ll wait until this video airs, then I’ll release the murder plans for Pro Hero Wash. He’s in the top 10, a pretty competent hero by all accounts. So go ahead, try to protect him. I’m frankly excited to see you try.” Mastermind was smiling now, if his eyes were any indication, “And just remember, once he’s dead, that if you catch me or kill me, you’ll have a *lot* more dead heroes on your hands. You might be able to save some of the top 50, but there’s no way you’ll be able to save them all.” Mastermind waved to the camera, “Good luck!”

The screen cut back to the news anchors, who began to discuss the footage, but Tsukauchi could hardly hear them. Mastermind had just gone from a dangerous up and coming to an S ranked villain instantly. And they couldn’t do a thing about it.

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“I’m sorry, Wash, it’ll just be for a few days until we can determine Mastermind’s threat level.”

“It’s ok, detective,” Wash held up his hands placatingly, “I understand the need for extra security. Mastermind had Japan on edge even before he announced his plan to take pro heroes hostage. I just hope everything works out and we can catch him soon.”

Tsukauchi sighed and shook his head, “You and me both.”

They were currently in a safe house, which meant that Wash had to take a few days off hero duty, but it wasn’t the end of the world. At least this would prove to Japan that the police and heroes were able to protect the top 50 and render Mastermind’s “hostage situation” harmless. It would all be worth it in the end.

“Start the stream!” A voice called out and Wash and Tsukauchi immediately went on high alert. There wasn’t supposed to be anyone but them here right now. The other officers weren’t scheduled to arrive for another 20 minutes. Tsukauchi took out his gun and looked at Wash, who nodded his head and took a place behind the detective. They flinched as an explosion sounded and the door to the safe house flew open. Four thugs ran in with gas masks, the one at the back holding a phone out in front of him. Tsukauchi fired as Wash shot a stream of water at the villains. All of a sudden,



Wash spasmed and fell to the floor.

“Wash!” Tsukauchi cried out.

“Hah, water’s an awesome conductor, isn’t it, *hero*?” the lead thug said. Tsukauchi aimed for him, only to realize that one of their quirks created a bulletproof shield and all his bullets were falling ineffectually on the floor. He grabbed a lamp, the nearest thing he could use as a weapon, and stood in front of the unconscious hero, preparing to make a last stand. One of the thugs rushed him and Tsukauchi knocked him aside easily, but the next grabbed his lamp and forced him to grapple. All of a sudden, his opponent let go of him and stood back, but rather than catch his breath, Tsukauchi stiffened as he felt electricity run through him and he fell paralyzed against the couch.

“Make sure you get this on camera! Mastermind wants the world to know what he’s capable of. It’s the least I can do to rid the world of this *scum* that arrested my brother.”

The thug with the camera nodded and Tsukauchi watched helplessly as the lead villain took out a gun of his own and shot Wash twice in chest. He paused a moment, then put another bullet in the hero’s head.

“You can never be too sure,” He laughed, “Roaches like that are tough to kill. Come on boys, lets go.”

Backup arrived as Tsukauchi was finally able to start moving again. He watched as paramedics rushed to Wash first, only to shake their heads and come to help him instead.

“Are you ok, sir, can you move?”

Tsukauchi nodded and flinched. The paramedics continued asking him questions and he answered numbly. Nedzu arrived as they were leading him to the ambulance with a shock blanket around his shoulders.

He must have looked pretty bad because the principal immediately looked at him with concern, “Are you ok, detective?”

Tsukauchi shrugged, “My entire body hurts like hell, but the paramedics say I’ll be ok.”

Nedzu got a strange look in his eye, “No, I mean emotionally.”

Tsukauchi rubbed his eyes in frustration and was surprised when his hand came away wet. When had he started crying?

“The leader had an electric type quirk. When Wash got hit with it, I thought he was just unconscious, but it just paralyzed whoever got hit with it. I was awake the whole time. I had to...oh god, I had to just watch while they killed him and I couldn’t do anything about it.” He looked at Nedzu helplessly, “What are we gonna do?”

Nedzu just looked to where the media were already starting to gather, despite the fact that Wash’s death had been live streamed, “I don’t know,” he whispered, “I really don’t know.”

# The Daily Life of Mastermind

## Chapter Summary

Izuku starts high school. A couple villains get too big for their britches.

## Chapter Notes

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

“Be careful today? I don’t want you getting hurt on the way to school...” Inko fretted.

Izuku rolled his eyes, “Mom, I’ll be fine. Aldera High School is literally a 10 minute walk, I don’t even have to take the train.”

Inko brushed imaginary dust off the shoulders of his blue uniform, “I know, it’s just that there’s so much more crime nowadays with Mastermind on the loose and...I just worry about you, you know that.”

Izuku sighed internally. Yeah, he knew that Mom worried. He also knew she’d worry less if he’d been born with a quirk. He hid his frustration behind a smile, “I gotta go Mom. I don’t want to be late for the first day of high school!”

She waved at him with the famous Midoriya tears in her eyes as he shouldered his backpack and walked down the road toward his new school. It had been pretty easy to get into. He’d applied a few other places, including a few that had a track that specialized in analysis and hero support. All of those had taken one look at the red *Quirkless* written on his ID and promptly let him know that he “wasn’t the right fit” for their schools.

In the end, it was better this way. Going to a prestigious school would bring attention, something that Izuku couldn’t afford right now. The police hadn’t tried to arrest him since he’d started his hostage situation, but he was almost certain that Nedzu was working hard to try and uncover his identity. It’s what Izuku would do. If they could find out who he was, then they might be able to find the computer program he’d hired La Brava to write that would release his murder plans if his arrest or death was ever trending on the internet, or they’d go after Giran, who also had instructions to release the plans if anything happened to him.

But Izuku knew from experience that no one expected anything from a quirkless kid, especially one who didn’t even stand up to his own bullies. If Izuku Midoriya was ever a suspect for Mastermind, his lack of quirk would instantly clear him of any suspicion. If the police looked past that, then the fact that none of his bullies had died mysteriously in the last year would be brought in as evidence that he obviously “wasn’t capable” of being the villain. What the police wouldn’t know is that Izuku Midoriya, quirkless deku, was a mask. And if they managed to look past all that? Well, then they were smarter than Izuku gave them credit for and maybe, just maybe, they deserved to arrest him.

“Hey Deku, haven’t you thrown yourself off a bridge yet?” The bully, Makoto Ito, was big, stupid, and obviously trying to fill the void that Katsuki had left by going to UA if the crowd of sycophants surrounding him were any indication. Izuku resisted the urge to glare at him.

“H-hi, I-ito! H-how are y-you today?” It was amazing how quickly people saw weakness when Izuku stuttered. He smirked internally as Ito puffed his chest out and sneered at him.

“Don’t try to be friends, *Deku* . You’re worthless and don’t you forget it!” With that, Ito shoved him to the ground and turned on his heel to enter the school, followed by his entourage. Izuku stood and brushed himself off. He’d gotten worse from Toga on their first day of training.

He smiled as he thought of his friend. He’d have to remember all the dumb things his bullies said and tell her later. She’d get a kick out of it and they’d giggle about all the ways they kill the idiots. It was a good friendship.

By the time Izuku got to class, he was back to wearing the mask of a weak, quirkless deku, but underneath, he felt stronger than any of them.

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Izuku walked around the apartment and checked the security system one more time. From the outside, it just looked like any apartment in the red light district, but the walls were heavily fortified and the security system could probably put UA to shame. And it was all his.

Izuku sighed, he could finally stop smuggling his villain outfit out of the house and changing in Giran’s office!

“Nice digs, kid.” Giran leaned up against the doorway in the kitchen.

“Thanks for finding this place for me, Giran. I feel like I’ve finally made it, you know?”

Giran chuckled, “Sorry to have to tell you this, but you ‘made it’ a while ago. I can count on one hand the number of villains that have the balls to threaten a top 50 hero on national television, not to mention all of them at once. If you’re not careful they’ll start calling you the number 1 villain in Japan or some other bullshit.”

“Well, it was always my dream to be like All Might.”

“Why don’t you just live here full time, kid? You don’t have to keep living with your mother and doing the whole song and dance routine at school like you’re not one of the most powerful villains in Japan right now.”

Izuku pulled a soda out the fridge, “Disappearing would call too much attention to me right now. Missing posters, the police looking for me in two identities. There would be too many chances for them connect the two, and it would just be too much work when it’s easier to just avoid the whole problem. Plus, I’m not ready to leave Mom yet. Despite how much she worries, I still love her and she’s been the only one who ever cared about me until the last year. I don’t want to put her through that, and I’d miss her too much.”

Giran shrugged, “Suit yourself. You ready for your meeting tonight?”

Izuku nodded, “Just need to get dressed and I’ll be on my way. I’ve been going to these meetings for *months*, Giran, you don’t need to worry about me.”

Giran held up his hands in surrender, “All right, all right, I get it, you’ve got your big boy britches on and everything. I’ll just be on my way, don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.”

Izuku crossed his arms, “Giran, would you have threatened all 50 top heroes?”

Giran chuckled, “Good point, kid. Have fun.” He waved and walked out the front door. Izuku went

to the closet and pulled out his villain costume. Time to get back to work.

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Izuku walked into the Blue Dogs base with his head held high. The gang leader was already waiting for him.

“Mastermind, pleasure to finally meet you. My name is Tanaka. Please, take a seat.”

Izuku sat in the chair offered, “So, what can I do for you?”

Tanaka ran his hand through his hair and smiled condescendingly and Izuku tensed slightly. Something seemed off, but Izuku didn’t know if there was something legitimately wrong, or if he was just among villains.

“We want to rob the Okane Bank. We’re looking for a big haul.”

Izuku nodded, “Should be doable. What are your quirks?”

One of the thugs snarled, “What do you need to know our quirks for?”

Izuku rolled his eyes, “Because it’s normally advisable to use your quirks when robbing a bank. If you’d like a completely quirkless plan, I can do that, but most people don’t go for that option, oddly enough.”

Once he decided the thug had been sufficiently cowed, he turned back to Tanaka, who was still giving him that same smile that set Izuku’s teeth on edge, “That’s just Takahashi for ya, he’s got a gas manipulation quirk, allows him to control any gas, including the air in people’s lungs. He,” Tanaka jerked his thumb toward another thug standing in the corner of the room, “can see in the dark and she,” he pointed toward a woman leaning against the wall playing with a knife, “can throw any knife with 100% accuracy. I have a strength enhancement quirk and can lift three times my own body weight. The heavier I am, the more I can lift.”

Izuku nodded. This matched up pretty well with the information he’d been able to gather before arriving. At least they weren’t trying to lie to him, so why did it feel so off?

“All right, all that’s left is the matter of my fee.”

Tanaka’s smile turned wicked and he pulled out a gun and leveled it at Izuku’s head, “How’s this for a fee, *pipsqueak*, you give us the plan and we’ll let you walk out of here alive.”

Izuku looked around the room to find the the other two men had their guns trained on him and the woman with the knife throwing quirk had two knives in each hand. He sighed, this explains why he’d been feeling off the whole meeting. He really should start listening to his gut more often.

As he scanned the room, Izuku weighed his options. He could just fight his way out: he’d escaped pro-heroes before. But then again, the pro-heroes weren’t trying to kill him. He eyed the woman with the knives. With her quirk, he’d be walking out of here with at least one stab wound. Not the end of the world, but something he’d prefer to avoid if possible. Stabs were harder to hide than bruises and burns, afterall, and he’d rather not make his mom more worried.

On the other hand, he could just give them the plans, but he didn’t want word getting out that you could just threaten Mastermind rather than paying. It was bad for business. Izuku thought for another moment before deciding.

“It sounds like you have yourself a deal.”

Tanaka put away his gun and smiled, "I knew you'd come around, pipsqueak. Now how about you give us those plans."

As Izuku wrote, he smiled wickedly beneath his mask. Yes, he'd let them have their plans, but a fat lot of good money would do them with what they had coming.

Fun Fact: everyone has enemies willing to pay to bring them down.

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"Detective Tsukauchi? There's been an interesting development on the Okane Bank case."

Tsukauchi gestured for the officer to continue.

"They're dead sir."

The detective did a double take, "I'm sorry, what did you say?"

"The perpetrators of the robbery are all dead." The officer said, "One was found strangled in his home alongside his family. Another seemingly died in a bar fight, although I doubt it's a coincidence. Another was found in a back alley, stabbed through the throat. The leader's body was left in front of the channel 9 news station. He appeared to have been starved and tortured to death. All the murders were done by different people at different times. The only thing linking them was that they were all members of the Blue Dogs gang that robbed Okane Bank last week."

Tsukauchi looked at the officer, "And you think Mastermind is behind it."

The officer shrugged, "It was pretty obvious he was behind the robbery. But why would he eliminate paying customers? Seems like a pretty bad business choice to me. I brought in a guy that had known dealings with the gang. Do you want to talk to him."

Tsukauchi nodded absently and grabbed the files on Mastermind and the Okane Bank robbery. He walked into the interrogation room, set the files on the table, and sat down opposite the twitchy young man waiting for him.

"All right, let's just get straight to the point. What can you tell me about the elimination of the Blue Dogs gang?"

The man rubbed his fingers together and looked around the room like he was expecting threats to pop out of the walls at any moment, "It was their own fault."

*True*

Tsukauchi tilted his head, "What do mean by that?"

"T-they screwed over the wrong person."

"You mean Mastermind?" Tsukauchi asked.

The man nodded, "Tanaka wasn't ever the type to play fair. If he could screw you over to get a dollar, he'd do every time. Word is he tried that on Mastermind. Held a gun to his head to get the plans for free," he rushed out, "He should've just paid. You don't mess with Mastermind."

*True*

"You think he killed them to send a message?"

To his surprise, the man shook his head, “Mastermind didn’t kill ‘em”

*True*

“Tanaka had enemies, they all did. But it wasn’t a coincidence that all their enemies suddenly knew their every weakness right after they pulled that shit.”

*True*

Tsukauchi stood, “Thank you. You’ve been a big help.”

As soon as the door to the interrogation room closed, he sighed and rubbed his eyes. It took a major idiot to try to screw over someone who had managed to kill a hero while he was in police protection. He put the files back on his desk and stood. Maybe he should call Toshinori and go to dinner. Get away from this case for an hour or two. He nodded and grabbed his coat before calling his friend. At least Mastermind didn’t know about Yagi Toshinori. Tsukauchi shuddered at what would happen if Mastermind figured out how weak All Might really was right now, but his friend had always been super careful with his identity, so they had nothing to worry about.

Right?

## Chapter End Notes

Yeah, kinda a filler chapter, but what it sets up will be important in the future. Ok, so this probably won't be incorporated into any fic in the future, but it's been on my mind for a while. Say Yaoyorozu and Sato are paired together for a mission and Sato runs out of sugar. Yaoyorozu can easily create more sugar with her quirk (it's non-living), but would that count as cannibalism?

# The League of Villains

## Chapter Summary

Izuku meets with a new client.

Izuku scribbled in his notebook as he watched the news. A few new heroes had debuted, but that wasn't what caught his attention. What *had* caught his attention was a group of reporters trying to interrogate a few UA staff members about All Might. It had been a short clip, probably only about 20 seconds, but it was clear that the camera man had been *inside the gates*. The reporters didn't call any attention to it, but Izuku knew that UA didn't give out press passes, so *how did they get in?*

He was just considering hacking into the traffic cameras around there to satisfy his curiosity when his phone rang. *Giran*.

"Mom, I'll be in my room!"

"Ok, sweetie! Don't stay up all night!"

Izuku answered the call right as he closed his door, "So Giran, what have you got for me? Anything interesting?"

On the other end of the line, Giran chuckled, "I'll let you be the judge of that. Have you ever heard of the League of Villains?"

Izuku frowned slightly, "No, but they sound pretentious." He went to sit on the bed, "They must not be a very big group if I haven't heard of them yet. How long have they been around?"

"Not very long." Giran said. "From what I understand, there are only two or three real members, but they're backed by the boogeyman of the underground, so I wouldn't underestimate them. They're planning something big and going through a massive recruitment."

"I'm fine on my own, thanks." Izuku drawled, "Why would I tie myself down to an organization?"

A chuckle came from the other end of the line, "Calm down, kid, you'd just be a consultant." He paused. "So, will you meet with them?"

"I don't know..." Izuku responded, "Have they even done anything yet, or am I supposed to just rely on some boogeyman's reputation?"

Giran paused for a long moment and Izuku could almost see him taking a long drag of his cigarette like he always did when he was thinking, "Well, Shigaraki told me they broke into UA earlier today? I don't know, the news didn't cover a break in."

A slow grin spread across Izuku's face, "Because the media took advantage of them destroying the gate and most likely provided the perfect distraction for whatever the League wanted to do. The media didn't report it as a break in because they'd be the ones blamed for it, so it'll go pretty much under the radar. Brilliant!"

“So I can tell Shigaraki to expect you tonight?”

Izuku couldn't wipe the smile off his face, “If they want me to plan something as bold as breaking into UA? Definitely.”

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Izuku was surprised when he arrived at the address that Giran had texted him, only to find it was a bar. He shrugged. *Guess I get to check 'been to a bar' off my bucket list.* He was even more pleasantly surprised when he went inside to find it clean and tastefully decorated, a nice change from the derelict warehouses and docks he was used to meeting clients in. A bartender made of mist polished a glass behind the counter and Izuku's eyes narrowed in on the metal braces he wore around his neck. *Interesting, he must have a physical body that needs to be protected.* A scraggly-looking young man, probably only a few years older than Izuku was sitting on one of the bar stools, playing with a handheld game console, although Izuku wondered how he saw the screen with a severed hand clutching his face. At least he wouldn't have to deal with these villains discounting his planning skills on account of his age if one of their people was a teenager too.

Izuku sauntered up to the counter, “Which of you is Shigaraki?”

There was no answer for a long moment before the teenager paused his game and set it down on the counter, “Had to reach a save point. I'm Shigaraki, Giran said you'd be interested in joining our party.”

Izuku tilted his head, “That remains to be seen. I'm more of a solo player, to tell you the truth, but I understand teaming up to defeat big bosses.”

The hand on Shigaraki's face moved slightly and Izuku guessed the man was smiling, “Kurogiri, I like this one! And yes, Mastermind, we're gonna be taking down the biggest boss of them all! All Might!”

Izuku's eyes widened, “That's a pretty lofty quest for a relatively unknown party such as yourselves.”

The look in Shigaraki's eyes was deranged, “But we can do it. Sensei! Tell him about the Nomu!”

Izuku turned back to the mist bartender, expecting an explanation, but was met with only silence. Instead, a staticy voice came from the tiny tv set resting in the corner, “As you wish, Shigaraki. And may I simply say that it is a pleasure to see you here, Mastermind. I've heard many things about you.”

Izuku eyed the tv suspiciously, “All good, I hope. You must be the 'boogeyman of the underground' that Giran told me about if you won't even show your face at this meeting.”

A chuckle cut through the static, “I suppose some have called me that, but you can call me All for One.”

Izuku nodded, the name sounded familiar, but he'd have to look it up later, “So, what's this Nomu that Shigaraki mentioned.”

“The Nomu is a genetically engineered monster with multiple quirks, including strength, regeneration, and shock absorption. I created it to be on par with All Might's strength.”

Izuku hummed and sat down, “Interesting, but the problem with monsters is that they are hard to control.”



“The nomu are practically braindead,” Shigaraki said gleefully, “And super obedient. This one will only obey orders from me and will do exactly what I tell it to!”

“And you believe it has the power to defeat All Might?”

Shigaraki smiled, “Of course! Sensei made it!”

Izuku frowned. Hero worship, even if it was for a villain, was dangerous. He made a mental note to not trust anything Shigaraki said when it came down to All for One’s abilities.

“Even in the event that it cannot kill All Might,” Kurogiri spoke up for the first time, “It will most definitely weaken him.”

“I suppose that’s true...” Izuku said, “So what’s the plan? Just throw the nomu at All Might when he’s on patrol, or does this have something to do with the break in at UA?”

“Your intelligence stats are off the charts,” Shigaraki said, “We broke in to get a class schedule. In a few days, All Might will be teaching a class in a building away from the rest of campus. That’s where we’ll kill him! Kurogiri will warp us right into the building when they least expect it. The muscle we’ve recruited will take care of the hero brats and other pros, and Nomu will take care of All Might!”

Izuku nodded. His mind was buzzing. He’d never been obsessed with getting revenge on All Might for crushing his dreams, society had done more to do that than the number one pro, but he’d be lying if he said the idea of revenge didn’t appeal to him. But there were too many unknowns in this plan for him to be entirely comfortable with it. What happened if the Nomu failed? How could they make sure All Might was weak when he fought it? What happened if All Might used all his time in the morning and never showed up to class? He began to sort out his thoughts, letting his brain come up with plans for every eventuality. After a few minutes of this, Izuku finally realized the others were staring at him, most likely waiting for his answer.

“All right, sounds like a plan. However, I’d like to make a few changes, if that’s alright with you.”

Shigaraki looked to Kurogiri, who nodded. Shigaraki gestured for Izuku to continue.

“First, All Might has weaknesses that we can take full advantage of, one of which is that he has a time limit for how long he can be active each day. This is good for us, but could also potentially bite us in the ass if he does too much work in the morning and doesn’t show up to class.”

“Hmm,” All for One said, “What do you suggest?”

“Well,” Izuku pulled out his notebook, “Both of us have significant pull in the underground. Between the two of us, I’m sure we can manipulate the city so that All Might has to interfere in about two hours worth of crimes, but no more than that. Last I heard, All Might’s limit was around three hours, so if we keep him occupied for two of them, he’ll be as weak as we can get him while still ensuring he shows up to class. From there, we’ll need to split up the hero students and get them away from the entrance. It’s important that none of them escape to get help from other heroes. We’ll also need some way to jam communications so no one can call for help.”

“That’s already taken care of,” Kurogiri said calmly, “One of the villains we recruited has an electric type quirk perfect for jamming signals.”

Izuku wrote down what they had so far, “Do you know the students quirks? It’ll be better if we know what to look for.”

Shigaraki shook his head, “They’re just brats, they can’t do much damage.”

Izuku wasn’t so sure. If all the students were as strong as Katsuki, they could do a lot of damage indeed. He looked at Shigaraki coldly, “People would probably say the same about you and me. Age isn’t a measure of competence.” He bit his pencil, “Unfortunately, the staff is probably already on guard after today’s break in, and hacking into the records now would tip our hand. It’s not ideal, but we’ll just have to split them up as soon as we arrive.”

The four spent the next few hours debating different plans and making sure that everything would go smoothly. By the time that Izuku went back home, he was almost too excited to sleep. He looked at his bare walls and the still visible outlines of where posters had been and smiled brightly. Watch out, All Might, Mastermind is coming.

# USJ

## Chapter Summary

The USJ attack.

## Chapter Notes

[TV Tropes Page](#)

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

Bakugo tried to keep to himself on the bus ride, but that stupid shitty hair extra just wouldn't leave him alone. He and his equally loud and upbeat friends surrounded Bakugo, who was seriously two seconds from exploding. Not that Bakugo himself wasn't loud, he knew he was, but he was an angry type of loud not...whatever these extras were. They weren't anything like the extras that had followed him around in middle school, those ones only spoke if it was to agree with him or praise his quirk, where these guys talked about everything under the sun and *just wouldn't shut up!* They even had the balls to laugh at him and call his personality a *garbage heap* ! Seriously?

All Might and Aizawa-sensei sat in the front of the bus, ignoring the class's antics. Aizawa looked almost as annoyed as Bakugo was, probably because All Might wouldn't shut up either. Or maybe that's just what Aizawa always looked like? It was hard to tell.

He followed the teachers into the facility and rolled his eyes when the stupid space hero started thier spiel. Sounds like they *really* wanted the acronym of this place to be the same as Universal Studios Japan. And yeah, he knew quirks could kill, that's why he wanted his name to be *King Explosion Murder*. Ugh, just let him blow some stuff up already.

All of a sudden, a purple dot appeared in the center courtyard and Thirteen's voice trailed off as the students started muttering.

"Is this part of the training?"

"No!" Aizawa said as people started pouring out of the strange purple mist, "Those are villains."

The students fell silent as they watched the crowd grow larger. A guy with a hand on his face seemed to be the leader, but he wasn't the one the students' eyes were drawn to. The students took in a collective breath as they saw a short figure in a green hooded jacket, bright eyes visible as they scanned the students.

"I-I thought Mastermind never participated in his crimes..." Yoyorozu said faintly, "What's different this time?"

Aizawa was already running down to meet the villains, trying to keep Mastermind and the hand villain in his sights. Unfortunately, this meant that he didn't notice when the mist villain left his field of vision.

“Hello students,” The mist villain stood in front of the door, “We would normally take the time to introduce ourselves, but Mastermind assures us time is of the essence.”

Bakugo ran forward and saw shitty hair doing the same, but before they could reach the guy, the ground beneath their feet had disappeared and they were somewhere else entirely, surrounded by villains on every side. Bakugo grinned. Finally a good excuse to go all out.

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Izuku grinned as all the students were spread throughout the facility. Perfect. All Might would need to track them down before he would be able to help any of them escape, but he'd have to get past the Nomu first. He stalked toward them, flexing his muscles and looking intimidating as his smile turned into a grimace.

“You fiends, what have you done with them?!”

“Hahaha! Don't worry *All Might*,” Shigaraki cackled, “we're not here for them, we're here for you! Nomu, get him!”

The Nomu surged forward and All Might leveled a punch at his gut. Izuku took a sick sort of satisfaction in the look of shock that he saw on All Might's face before Nomu returned his punch and he went flying across the courtyard.

“Ahhh!” Both pros looked toward the front entrance as a cry rang out from the entrance and Thirteen crumpled under the force of their own quirk. There wasn't time for them to dwell on it, however, because the Nomu charged and the horde of villains swarmed Eraserhead. Izuku stood back and watched as both pros fought. It really was quite impressive.

He heard panicked screaming and glanced over to the shipwreck zone in time to see a girl jumping ashore with two purple-haired boys in her arms, one of which was the source of the screams. *How heroic*. Many of the villains were sitting dazed in the water, apparently in some sort of a trance, most likely the other purple-haired boy's quirk. It couldn't be the girl's, considering she was moving like a frog. He'd have to be careful of that boy.

Kurogiri had rejoined the fight in the main plaza as All Might suplexed Nomu, opening a portal and allowing Nomu to grab All Might from below. All Might grimaced as Nomu's claws dug into the old wound at his side and he started pulling All Might through the portal, but was interrupted when a massive wave of ice froze him in place, allowing the hero to escape.

Izuku whipped around to look at the source, finding a boy with red and white hair glaring at him. He pulled out a pair of combat knives and ran toward the student, only to be blocked by Eraserhead, who had finally finished dispatching the crowd of villains he'd faced. Izuku dodged the capture weapon and slashed at the pro, who jumped back just in time. Eraserhead had his quirk focused on Mastermind, but it didn't slow him down at all. The two were evenly matched when it came to combat: Eraser had more experience, but Mastermind had knives and wasn't afraid to kill.

“Die!” Izuku flinched as Bakugo yelled, but his old bully and another red haired student headed straight for Kurogiri instead. Izuku turned back to Eraserhead, Kurogiri could fight for himself. Bakugo let loose an explosion as the two neared the mist villain, but instead of hitting him like they'd obviously planned, their attacks went straight through him.

“That was close. You students are too problematic.” And with that he warped all three students away again. Even if the students had managed to defeat all the villains in the areas they were warped to, it would still take them time to get back to the plaza.

A tearing sound echoed as the Nomu tore himself from the ice and regenerated his lost limbs.

“Did you think shock absorption was Nomu’s only quirk?” Shigaraki’s grating voice taunted as his smile turned deranged underneath his hand mask. “He was designed to withstand you at 100% of your power, *All Might*. ”

All Might clutched his side and stood tall, spitting out a mouthful of blood, “Shock absorption, huh? Not nullification.” All Might rushed toward Nomu and let loose a flurry of blows that the Nomu returned with vigor, “That means there’s a limit to what you can take! You’ve already told me how to beat him. If he’s designed to withstand 100% of my power, I’ll just have to go beyond that!”

Izuku smirked, but Eraser tried to take advantage of his distraction and attack despite the high winds from the fight.

“Not so fast, Eraserhead.” Shigaraki ran up behind the pro and grabbed his elbow right before he had to blink. Eraserhead’s elbow began to disintegrate and he cried out in pain. Izuku ran forward and Eraser reared his head back as a blade narrowly missed his eyes, leaving a long jagged cut on his right cheekbone. Shigaraki threw him toward the floor and Izuku kicked him in the head, knocking him unconscious.

“Plus! ULTRA!” All Might cried. The Nomu went flying through the ceiling of the USJ and All Might turned to face Shigaraki. Most of the students had already escaped the zones and were gathered around the edge of the plaza, cheering for their heroes victory.

Izuku used the dust cover to slowly sneak around as All Might began monologuing, “You’ve been bested, villains. Surrender!”

Izuku smiled as he noticed the steam mixed in with dust. All Might was nearing his limit, if he wasn’t past it already. Izuku adjusted his grip on the knife in his hand as he snuck up behind the hero.

All Might remained focused on convincing Shigaraki of his bluff, “What’s wrong? Not attacking me? Didn’t you want to clear this level? Come and get me if you dare!”

Shigaraki smiled, “Oh, I fully plan on clearing it, but you don’t face the big boss alone.”

Izuku took that as his cue. He grinned as he stabbed All Might right in his old injury. A puff of steam erupted and All Might coughed up blood as the smoke cleared to reveal the skeletal form of Toshinori Yagi.

“All Might!” Some students cried out and others just wordlessly screamed.

“What’s wrong, All Might?” Shigaraki said gleefully, “I thought we’d been bested?”

Izuku pulled out his knife, only to stab the hero again and twist the knife. All Might was choking on his own blood now and Izuku pulled the hero's head back by the hair, “So much for the symbol of peace,” Izuku whispered in his ear, “I guess even people with strong quirks like you can’t be heroes.” All Might struggled weakly for a moment before slowly going limp as he lost too much blood. Izuku put away his knife and tossed the hero’s lifeless form to the ground before checking his pulse. He smirked as he stood and stepped over the body.

“Congratulations, Shigaraki! You did it!”

The students cried and screamed, unable to move as Shigaraki laughed. Suddenly a voice raised

over the rest of the students, “You bastards! Who do you think you are?”

Shigaraki was about to reply when Izuku held up a hand to make him stop. He turned to the tall purple haired student, who was staring at him defiantly, “What? Not gonna say anything?”

Izuku scanned the faces of the other students, seeing traces of hope among the terror and grief. He thought back to the dazed villains from the shipwreck zone and turned back to the student, who obviously wanted him to respond. He simply smiled at the student and turned to Shigaraki, “Come on Shigaraki, let’s gather your forces and go home. We’ve done what we came here to do.”

Kurogiri spread out his mists to retrieve the villains as Shigaraki got the last word, “Remember the League of Villains, *heroes*, you’ll be facing us again soon enough.”

He and Izuku disappeared through the warp gate, leaving the students alone.

The doors to the USJ opened slowly and Nedzu walked in with several other teachers.

“Is everything alright? We heard an explosion...oh my!” The teachers took in the tear-marked faces of the students, Thirteen lying near the door with a lacerated back, Eraserhead by the fountain bleeding heavily from a head wound, and, finally, All Might’s skeletal form lying in a pool of his own blood.

They were too late.

## Chapter End Notes

Feel free to scream at me!

# Aftermath

## Chapter Summary

The aftermath of All Might's death.

## Chapter Notes

So that last chapter, huh? That sure was a ride. From the very inception of this fic, I knew I wanted to kill All Might at the USJ. It's something you hardly ever see and it has been fun thinking about the effects that All Might's premature death will have on society.

I'm glad you're still enjoying this fic. I hope you can still feel your hearts after this next chapter!

Thousands showed up for the funeral of the Symbol of Peace. Tsukauchi stood stoically next to Sir Nighteye as Gran Torino stood at the podium to give the eulogy.

"I've known All Might since before he was the symbol of peace. Back then, he was just a kid with a dream. We thought he was crazy, thinking that he could decrease crime just by being visible, by being a symbol, but I guess he was just crazy enough to pull it off. All Might dedicated his life to protecting people, and now he's dedicated his death too. The villains were after *him*, make no mistake, but All Might did his darndest to make sure that none of those kids were hurt and he succeeded. This is his legacy: that wherever All Might was, people were safe. He made the world safer just by being there and by being himself. He'll be missed, that's for sure, and the world won't be the same without him, but if I know anything about All Might, I know that he wouldn't want us to lose hope. He'd want us to keep going, keep fighting, and keep protecting those in need. Thank you, All Might, and Goodbye."

Gran Torino went to stand back by Tsukauchi, wiping his eyes surreptitiously. The three walked over to the casket along with several other heroes, taking up their places as Pallbearers. They had managed to keep the existence of All Might's skeletal form out of the media, so the casket was much larger than it probably needed to be. Tsukauchi had caught a glimpse before they'd closed it. Toshinori had looked so small, dwarfed by his own casket, by his own legacy.

He thought people were supposed to look peaceful in death, but all Tsukauchi could think of was the agony and despair that his friend had felt in his final moments as Mastermind slid a dagger between his ribs. Mastermind, who Tsukauchi was supposed to have caught. If he had just been a little faster on that first raid, or realized that the villain existed sooner, or managed to track him down before he started showing his face, then maybe, just *maybe*, his friend would still be beside him, laughing until he coughed up blood, rather than lying in a box that really was too big for him.

They lowered him into the ground and Tsukauchi couldn't take it anymore. He tried not to run, but walked quickly away from the graveside, not stopping until he reached the relative privacy of the bathroom. He burst into tears and didn't even try to hold them back as he thought of his friend, not

All Might, not the symbol of peace, but his *friend* murdered in cold blood because he couldn't do his job as a fucking cop and catch the guy!

He buried his head in his hands and collapsed onto the dirty cement floor, not even caring that he'll have to dry clean his suit after this. He'd been sobbing for a few minutes when he felt arms around him and looked up. He could barely see Gran Torino through his tears, but the old pro was kneeling beside him, whispering to him to breathe and that everything was going to be alright.

"It's not your fault, Tsukauchi. There wasn't anything you could have done to prevent it."

"I-I could have!" Tsukauchi sobbed, "I could have caught him! I could have ignored the stupid hostage situation and put the bastard in tartarus so he couldn't fucking hurt anyone else! I could have.."

"Stop that!" Gran Torino hit him on the head with his cane, "If you'd ignored the hostage situation, there'd be a lot more people dead and there was still a chance Toshinori would be dead. Mastermind knew his weaknesses. He knew about his injury. *He knew about his time limit.* No matter what anyone did, Mastermind was always going to kill Toshinori eventually. And the guilt for that rests solely on the bastard that held the knife, not on me or you or *anyone else*. Do you hear me?"

"But..."

"No! Gran Torino's right." The two looked up to see that Sir Nighteye had joined them, "If we were to assign blame on your criteria, I would be just as guilty as you. I was the one who told him to go to UA and find a successor. If I hadn't have pushed him like that, he would never have been there and those villains would never have come! But if we lose ourselves in blame, we will be paralyzed with doubt and fear and *than we will never be able to catch the man who killed our friend.* And I won't let that happen."

The other two looked at him in shock, surprised by the ferocity of his declaration. Sir Nighteye had tears streaming silently down his face now and his hands were clenched at his sides. Suddenly, Gran Torino reached forward and pulled Nighteye down onto the floor, wrapping his arms around him.

"It'll be alright... even if he's not here...it has to be alright..."

The three didn't know how long they stayed there, sobbing on the floor and holding onto each other for dear life, but by the time they left, the crowds had already dispersed, the news crews were gone, and the gravediggers were already filling the hole with dirt. They each went their separate ways and Gran Torino waved to the others as they left before turning to face the grave one last time.

"We'll catch the guy that did this Toshinori." He whispered. "We have to."

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"So, I need to be completely honest with you." Nedzu sat solemnly at the head of the table. The staff of UA had gathered together for a meeting on how to move forward after All Might's death. Thirteen was wrapped in bandages and Aizawa still had a thick piece of gauze taped under his eye, both physical reminders of what had happened. At least the media wasn't blaming them for All Might's death. If anything, they were being praised for how well they protected the students against a hoard of unbeatable villains.

"The league of villains only came to UA because All Might was here." Nedzu continued, "He was



the ultimate goal and his presence put the students in danger, and for that I am truly sorry.”

“Why did you think it was a good idea for him to teach here anyway? He didn’t even have teaching credentials and…” Aizawa huffed angrily, “Those villains put our students through hell. They had to learn too early that not every villain can be beat. They had to watch the symbol of peace die. That’s not something we can erase from their minds, it’s something that will stay with them forever. And it only happened because All Might was here.”

“At the time, I believed the students could learn something from him. He was also unwilling to step down as the symbol of peace, so a teaching job gave him an excuse to step out of the spotlight for a time and respect his time limit. But the main reason I invited him to teach at UA was because of his quirk.”

Nedzu looked around the table at the confused faces of his staff and took a deep breath before continuing, “All Might’s quirk was unique in many senses of the word. It was called One for All and had an aspect that allowed it to be physically transferred to another person.” Nedzu ignored the shocked looks and whispers, “He came to UA to find a suitable successor for his quirk. I thought I could point him to some of our students that have been doing well and he could groom them to become the next symbol of peace.”

“So…” Midnight spoke up, “Are you telling us that one of our students has All Might’s quirk now?”

Nezu looked up at her, “No. That’s just the thing. He had spent the year so far looking at several students, but had not yet made a decision at the time of his death. I normally wouldn’t have dreamed of telling you this secret, but it doesn’t matter anymore. All Might was not able to pass it on and his quirk died when he did.”

“So why *are* you telling us,” Aizawa asked, “If he didn’t pass it on, it’s a moot point and we don’t need to know.”

Nedzu sighed, “I wish it were that simple. You see, One for All has a… a brother quirk, of sorts, called All for One. The villain with this quirk can steal the quirks of others, which he has used to give himself a supernaturally long lifespan. We believe he died in a confrontation with All Might several years ago, but his body was never recovered and there is a possibility, however slight, that he survived. Until now, the only people strong enough to keep All for One in check have been the holders of One for All.”

There was a pause as everyone digested Nedzu’s words and their implications. When it finally sunk in, the teachers stared at the principal in horror.

“Now that One for All is gone,” Nedzu whispered, “I do not know if there is anyone alive strong enough to defeat All for One.”

“Will he come after the students?” Mic asked quickly.

“I don’t know.” Nedzu replied. “With All Might gone, he shouldn’t have any reason to, but there is always the possibility that he does not know that All Might never passed on his quirk and he will look for the successor among our student body.”

“How will we protect the students?” Snipe asked.

Nedzu stared off into the distance, “I don’t know,” he said softly, “I don’t know.”

# Shouto

## Chapter Summary

Izuku attends the sports festival.

## Chapter Notes

Finally, Shouto is going to make an appearance!

“Hello everyone and welcome to the sports festival! Can I get a Plus Ultra?!”

Present Mic’s booming voice could be heard even from the sidewalk outside the stadium and Izuku shook his head. *Heroes.*

Honestly, Izuku didn’t know why they were still holding the festival this year after All Might had been killed on school grounds, but the principal had held a press conference a few days after the funeral announcing that it would continue as planned. Something about how with the symbol of peace gone, it fell to the rising generation to bring hope to the world, or something like that. Well, at least Izuku could get some good intel on the quirks he’d be facing in a few years. He wished he’d had that info before the USJ attack but, oh well, better late than never.

He walked past dozens of pro heroes as he went through the heightened security, but no one gave a kid in a T-shirt and jeans a second glance. He smiled and found his seat. Mastermind was here in their midst and the heroes would never know.

His mom had been so excited when he told her a friend of his had won tickets and invited him to go. They’d never had the money to afford it before, but Izuku hadn’t had a shortage of cash since he’d become a villain. Too bad his mom didn’t know about his secret funds, hence the cover story. He wished he could have brought Himiko, but a suspected serial killer couldn’t exactly sneak past security.

“All right! Let’s welcome in the students who faced a villain attack and survived! The same students that All Might gave his life for! Class 1-A!”

The stadium erupted into cheers and Izuku watched as the familiar students stride into the stadium. They looked vaguely uncomfortable...they probably didn’t like the reminder of watching the number one hero die, it must have been traumatic. Izuku squashed the feelings of guilt that tried to choke him. They were *heroes*. They had been given everything in life just because of their quirks, while Izuku’s life had been nothing *but* trauma. They deserved a little trauma after what they had put him through.

Watching All Might die in front of them was just payback.

He was excited to see what the purple haired student’s quirk actually was. He figured it was verbal response triggered, considering his defiant behavior at the USJ, but the question remained of

whether it put someone to sleep like Midnight's quirk, or was somehow more involved. He was also excited for the half-and-half boy's quirk, since he was one of the few who managed to fight back during the attack, and against the Nomu too! Izuku smiled darkly as he watched Katsuki climb the steps to give the opening speech. There was always the possibility that Katsuki would be injured in one of his matches, but Izuku knew he shouldn't get his hopes up.

"I just want to say, All Might was an amazing hero. We owe it to him to give it our all and that's why I'm gonna win this thing."

Izuku rolled his eyes as the other students booed. Of course Katsuki would manage to compliment All Might and insult his competitors all in one breath. His old bully would never change, would he?

The first round was interesting, but not surprising. It was a surprise to learn that the half-and-half boy was Todoroki Shouto, the son of Endeavor. He managed to freeze most of the competition and narrowly beat out Katsuki as winner of the round.

Izuku leaned forward as he watched Todoroki glare blankly at the crowd as Katsuki lost it. His coloring was very distinct and he only ever created ice from his right side, so could he do it from his left? Izuku pulled out a notebook and began to write down his thoughts. It wouldn't surprise him at all if Todoroki had some kind of hybrid quirk, unfair, but not unheard of. Maybe he could create ice from the right side of his body, the white haired side, and fire from his left? If that was the case then why hadn't he shown off his fire side yet? It would have made much more sense to melt through the robots or use the fire to propel himself like Katsuki did, but Todoroki only used his ice. Interesting.

The next round gave Izuku a good chance to evaluate the purple-haired boy's quirk. He was named Shinso, at least according to the scoreboard. Izuku watched as he took advantage of the other teams as they targeted Todoroki. He would approach them as if he wanted to team up, but then the other team would simply hand over their points without a fight. So some sort of brainwashing, not just putting them in a daze. Izuku wondered how complicated the commands could be. It was a useful quirk, shame it had to go to a hero.

In the end, Todoroki, Katsuki, and Shinso all moved on, as well as another team comprised mostly of class 1-A members, plus a support student. And still Todoroki didn't use his fire. Izuku knew he had it now. He'd seen it ignite briefly once when Katsuki had gotten too close, but Todoroki had looked angry and extinguished it almost immediately. His mastery of his ice was amazing, but Izuku couldn't help but wonder how powerful he could be if he stopped ignoring his left side.

He put his notebook away, stretched, and headed for the student areas. He never had been very good at ignoring his curiosity, had he?

Sneaking past the guards was almost too easy, even if they were pro heroes, and Izuku walked confidently as he searched for Todoroki. If he was caught, he could just say he was looking for 'Kacchan' and that they were old friends. Sneaking backstage to see him and wish him luck was something the old Izuku would have done, no question.

"You're a disgrace, Shouto." Izuku ducked behind a wall as he heard Endeavor's voice, "There wouldn't even be a question of your position if you would just use the fire I gave you."

"I will never use your fire," Todoroki's voice was tight with anger, "I *will* make it to the top, but I will do it without your quirk."

"Seriously, Shoto. I indulged you when you were younger, but it's time you give up this childish tantrum!"

Even from his place around the corner, Izuku could see his breath as the temperature dropped.

“It’s time for you to go, Father. The tournament will be starting soon.”

Izuku flattened himself against the wall as Endeavor stalked past him, radiating heat. The hero didn’t even glance his way, just disappeared down the hall. Izuku waited a moment before turning the corner, it might not be the best timing, but he didn’t want to lose his chance to talk to Todoroki.

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Shouto’s eyes widened slightly as a short boy with green hair, obviously a civilian, came into view. This area was supposed to be off limits for spectators. Endeavor had gotten past security by virtue of being the new number one hero, but this was just a normal kid, so how did he get back here. Was he a threat? Shouto relaxed slightly when the kid gave him a brilliant smile. Anyone who could smile like that couldn’t be dangerous.

“Hello, Todoroki?” The boy asked nervously. Shouto nodded and the boy smiled, “You’re doing really well so far. Your skills are amazing! I especially loved how you beat out Katsuki in the last two rounds.”

Shouto raised one eyebrow, “Katsuki?”

The boy’s expression soured slightly, interesting. “Katsuki Bakugo. We’ve known each other since we were kids.” He smiled again. “Sorry, I forgot to introduce myself! I’m Izuku Midoriya.”

Shouto nodded, “Why are you back here?”

Midoriya rubbed the back of his neck, “I actually have a question for you. You’re obviously pretty powerful with just your ice, but you have a fire quirk as well, right? Why don’t you use it?”

Shouto scowled, and turned away, “My father put you up to this, didn’t he?”

Midoriya grabbed his arm, he was stronger than he looked, “No! I was just curious and I wanted to know because I thought it was interesting, not that I’m going to try to force you to use your fire I was just wondering and…” He trailed off and stood there awkwardly. Shouto didn’t know if it was just one thing, but for some reason, he felt like he could trust Midoriya. Maybe it was his face when he talked about Bakugo, but for some reason Shouto thought that if anyone could understand what he was going through, it was this boy he’d barely met.

He sighed and leaned against the wall, “Have you ever heard of quirk marriages?”

Midoriya’s eyes widened in realization, “No!”

Shouto nodded sadly, “My father always wanted to be number one. I guess he is now, but he wanted it to be because of his power, not because All Might got himself killed. He had enough money and power as the number two hero to buy off my mother’s family and force her into a marriage. He got her pregnant multiple times trying to create a child with a quirk strong enough to beat All Might. He raised me to be his ‘masterpiece’, not his son.” Midoriya was listening with wide eyes and Shouto took a deep breath. It felt liberating to finally talk about this. “In every memory I have of my mother, she’s always crying. She called my left side unbearable, right before she poured boiling water on my face. I never blamed her though, it was all my father’s fault for forcing her to that point.”

Midoriya was staring at him strangely, “You must hate your father, then.”

Shouto thought for a moment. Midoriya had said it like a statement, rather than a question, but he

wanted to answer it anyway. Did he hate his father? He thought about the rage he buried under a layer of ice, about the fear he felt when he thought about using his fire. Is that what hate felt like?

“Yes.” He said firmly. “I think I really do hate him.”

Midoriya nodded, “I think that’s good then. I understand why you don’t want to use your fire, but just so you know, it’s your quirk, not his and you can always use it to do things your father would hate. Good luck Todoroki! Crush Katsuki for me!”

And with that, Midoriya waved and left Todoroki to make his way back to his classmates.

“Where’d you go you half-and-half bastard?!” Bakugo yelled, “I looked everywhere for you and couldn’t find you!

Shouto felt consumed by the hatred he had just realized he felt and it left him numb as he thought about Midoriya’s words, “I ran into an old friend of yours.”

“Friend?” Ashido laughed, “Bakugo had friends before UA?”

“Shut up Pinky!” Bakugo yelled, “Who was it?”

“Izuku Midoriya. He’s interesting.”

Bakugo sneered, “Deku? He’s worthless and he’s *not* my friend. I’d never sink low enough to be that idiot’s friend!”

Shouto nodded absently, “I liked him.”

He then tuned out any response Bakugo had and the laughter of their other classmates. He had a lot to think about.

# The Hero Killer: Stain

## Chapter Summary

Izuku meets the hero killer.

“Mastermind.” Izuku looked around and saw a pair of red eyes staring at him from the darkness.

“Well, I should hope I’m recognizable by now,” he said cockily, “I am pretty high profile.”

“You’re the one who killed All Might.”

Izuku smiled behind his mask and threw his arms out to his sides, “With pride. What can I do for you?”

“You can die!” All of a sudden three knives shot at him from the darkness. He managed to dodge the first two, but the third grazed his cheekbone before clattering to the ground. His brain kicked into overdrive as he turned to look at his attacker.

His eyes widened when he saw Stain, the hero killer. He knew that Stain had been known to kill villains, but that was back in his vigilante days, now he mostly targeted heroes. Well, except for him, apparently.

Izuku quickly picked up the knife that had dropped and wiped off the blood as best he could. He didn’t know how the hero killer’s quirk worked exactly, just that it involved blood and paralysis, but the odds were that there was some sort of blood ingestion requirement for activation like most blood related quirks. He pulled his mask up a little higher to cover the cut on his cheek.

“So, are you gonna tell me what I did to get on your hit list?” Izuku asked. Stain was known to be long-winded, so hopefully he’d monologue for long enough for Izuku to figure out a way to either kill Stain or run away.

“You killed All Might!” All of a sudden, Stain was right next to him, grazing his arm and licking the blade before Izuku could stop him. Izuku fell to the floor as his body gave out on him and he tried to calm his breathing. Stain’s quirk had a time limit, Izuku knew that much. He swallowed and hoped his intel was correct about how much Stain liked monologuing.

“You kill heroes too, we’re not so different, you and I!”

“All Might was the one true hero among the scum. He was the only one worthy of the title hero. The heroes I killed were selfish beings pretending to do what was good for society when in reality they are only furthering their own ends. They needed to be weeded out for the good of society. The heroes I killed sent a message to the ones that remain that they need to improve or else fall victim to my blade.”

“And you believe that All Might’s death sends the wrong message?” Izuku tried to move his fingers to no avail.

“It sends the opposite message. Killing All Might was an act of senseless violence and for that, you must die. By killing All Might, you have not made hero society better, you have deprived it of its

crown jewel. There is nothing left worth keeping, all that's left is trash! Don't you understand what you have done?"

Izuku's panic was starting to bubble up underneath his calm facade. This was it. This was how he died. He kept trying to move his fingers, but it felt like he wasn't even trying. He closed his eyes, preparing for the end and then...his finger twitched. Izuku resisted the urge to laugh hysterically. It felt like he was moving through taffy, *but he could move*.

"It's scum like you who make it necessary for me to stain my hands with the blood of the unworthy. You are what is wrong with society."

Izuku looked up at Stain, but didn't move. It seemed he couldn't feel when his quirk wore off. Izuku could use that to his advantage. Stain moved around as he spoke and at one point he looked up at the sky.

"I have judged you and found you unworthy of life..." Izuku quietly stood and quickly made his way behind a nearby dumpster. He held his breath as Stain looked back to where he should be.

"Shit! He must be type O." He looked in either direction before gathering up his knives, "No matter, he can't have gotten far. My blade will still taste his blood tonight." And with that, Stain hurried out of the alley in search of his prey.

Izuku waited for several long minutes before breathing a sigh of relief and coming out of his hiding place. He quickly took off his jacket and mask, hiding his knives inside like he had when he had escaped the hero raid. It was far too dangerous for Mastermind to be on the streets tonight.

Izuku made his way back to base, he thought through the fight. Stain would find him again soon enough, and when he did, only one of them would make it out alive.

---

"No."

"Come on, Stain, be reasonable! We both want to destroy the things we hate."

"No," Stain pulled out another knife, "You want to destroy the things you hate, I want to change society for the better. You have no vision, as evidenced by you killing the only true hero in this godforsaken society."

"Please Stain," Kurogiri said, "We can change society together."

Stain shook his head, "I will let you live because I think you truly are trying to change society, but if I ever run into Mastermind again, he will taste my blade. Killing All Might will lead to all the wrong changes and it is unforgivable." He sheathed his blades, "Take me back to Hosu, Warp Gate, I still have business there."

---

Shouto Todoroki watched Ida brush off Uraraka as she tried to talk to him. He'd originally thought it was strange that Ida was going to intern in Hosu because that's where his brother was attacked, but then he'd seen Ida's eyes.

His eyes were full of the same hatred that Shouto felt swirling inside of him. Ever since Midoriya had made him aware of it, he just hadn't been able to ignore the feeling. He felt it constantly to where sometimes it was all he could think about. After years of feeling numb, the anger felt...nice? Shouto knew that he should probably talk to someone about this, a therapist or something, but Endeavor was the number one hero now. Who would ever believe that he had spent years abusing

his wife and children, just because of some one-sided rivalry with All Might?

Shouto couldn't talk to anyone. He couldn't fight Endeavor and win. So if Iida had something he could do to get rid of this festering anger inside him, who was Shouto to get in the way? He silently wished Iida luck as he watched him leave. Hopefully he'd find what he was looking for.

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Shigaraki scratched at his neck as he overlooked Hosu at sunset, "That stupid hero killer. Who does he think he is? I'll show him the change we're capable of!"

"Are you sure you wouldn't prefer to consult with Mastermind before we enact our plan?" Kurogiri asked, "He *has* helped us in the past."

"You don't need a strategist if all you're doing is causing chaos, Kurogiri." Shigaraki replied. "Warp in the Nomu!"

As Kurogiri complied, Shigaraki smiled and looked out at the still peaceful city, "I'll show them all! By this time tomorrow, everyone will have forgotten about Stain's pathetic changes!"

---

Izuku cracked his neck as he left the meeting. Hosu was quite the journey from his home base, so he tried to make any prospective clients come to him if they wanted a face to face meeting, but this gang had the potential to be a big client and Izuku decided to invest a little effort into making sure they had a good relationship. And this way, he'd be able to take care of his little Stain problem.

Now all Izuku needed to do was wander a bit and see if he could find the hero killer. All of a sudden, he was blown off slightly off course by an explosion and he panicked. What was Katsuki doing here? He was supposed to be interning with Best Jeanist in another city!

Izuku looked around quickly and sighed when he saw a group of heroes fighting a Nomu. Ah, it was just the league. He idly wondered what Shigaraki was trying to accomplish by letting them loose in Hosu, of all places, and then decided it didn't matter. What the League chose to do with their resources was their own decision, Mastermind only needed to worry about it if they paid him.

In fact, the League's interference only made things easier, Izuku thought as he headed away from the action. Stain would be somewhere quiet, apart from the chaos, most likely in an alley.

None of the heroes noticed Mastermind as he quietly began his search for the hero killer.



## Mastermind vs. Stain

### Chapter Summary

The fight with Stain.

Iida shielded his head as a katana came out of nowhere, blocking his kick, removing off his helmet, and knocking him to the ground.

“This is no place for a child.”

Iida stood and let Stain see the rage in his eyes, “Blood red scarf, knives all over your body. You’re Stain, the hero killer! I’ve been looking for you, but I didn’t think I’d find you so soon.”

Stain leveled his katana at Iida’s face, “Your eyes are searing with vengeance. Be careful what you say next, for even someone your age could be my target.”

Iida clenched his fists as rage and hatred clenched his heart, “Are you saying I’m not even a threat to you?” He met Stain’s eyes. “My brother is a hero who *you* attacked! He was the best older brother anyone could ask for. I have come to stop you because *he can’t anymore*. I’m going to make sure you remember my name for as long as you live. I am Ingenium and I *will* defeat you!”

“Then so be it,” Stain said, “die.”

Iida leveled a kick at the hero killer, who dodged and returned with a kick of his own, knocking Iida to the ground. Before he could even think to move again Stain’s katana was buried in his arm.

“So you’re Ingenium’s brother. You don’t deserve to call yourselves heroes. You’re fakes, the both of you.”

Iida grit his teeth, “My brother was someone people looked up to! Now he’ll never work as a pro hero again. *You had no right to take that away from him!* I won’t forgive you. *I’ll kill you !*”

“Shouldn’t you be worried about saving that guy?” Stain pointed and Iida followed his finger to see pro hero Native slumped against the wall of the alley. Iida’s stomach sunk. He hadn’t even realized Native was there!

“So busy with your grudge, you forgot all about him, right? You planned on using your quirk only for your own selfish desire for revenge. You’re about as far from being a hero as I can imagine.” Stain slid his katana from Iida’s shoulder and licked it, “And that’s why you’ll die tonight.”

Iida couldn’t move, he couldn’t think. What would his parents think? What would Tensei think? They’d be so disappointed and he wouldn’t even be able to apologize. Hot tears fell on the concrete, how could he have been so stupid?

“Goodbye, child. May your death bring about a better world.”

Iida closed his eyes and waited for the sharp bite of the katana, but it didn’t come.

“Hello again, *hero killer*. Fancy seeing you here.”

“Mastermind.” Stain pointed his Katana at the newcomer. Iida tried to look, but could just barely see a dark red boots standing behind Stain, “So nice of you to come. My blade hungers for the blood of the bastard that killed All Might.”

“Did you know that the girl who taught me how to fight loves you?” Mastermind asked idly, “When I told her I was killing you tonight, she was so excited. Told me to bring her a vial of your blood.” Mastermind fixed Stain with a green eyed stare, “I don’t intend to break my promise.”

Iida didn’t think that was how love worked at all, but he figured that whoever taught Mastermind to fight must be as crazy as he was, so it was best not to question it. He tried to move his fingers but couldn’t. Was this how Tensei had felt when he woke up and couldn’t move his legs?

Mastermind launched himself at Stain, a long knife in each hand. Stain sliced down with his katana, intending to lodge it in his opponent’s shoulder, but Mastermind twisted out of the way at the last second, slashing Stain across the ribs.

Stain hissed as the blade snuck between the metal plating on his suit and left a long gash, “You have excellent aim, Mastermind.” He smiled. “Unfortunately I have been at this much longer than you have.” He ran forward again with his katana. This time, when Mastermind dodged, he kned him in the stomach then used a knife he had hidden in his other hand to slash at Mastermind’s arm. He brought the blade to his mouth, only to look at the clean metal with confusion.

“A word of advice,” Mastermind laughed, “when planning to fight a blood quirk user, invest in excellent armor.”

Before Iida could blink, Mastermind was pushing Stain back and he had to bite back a groan as Stain stepped on him before launching forward again. The two had seemingly forgotten about him in their haste to kill each other and Iida didn’t think it would be wise to remind them he was still there, frozen on the ground.

This time Mastermind blocked the katana with his knives and twisted, disarming Stain and sending the sword skittering further down the alley. Stain didn’t even look toward his fallen blade, instead pulling a pair of hunting knives from his belt and running forward again.

Iida flinched as another knife came sailing toward him and flew over his head. *He flinched!* Iida tried to stamp down on his growing hope as he thought about moving his fingers and they obeyed him. *He could move again!* He looked to where Stain and Mastermind were fighting further down the alley and for one brief moment he considered taking advantage of Stain’s distraction and working with Mastermind to bring him down. He shook his head and slowly stood up. No. It had been a stupid decision to come after Stain in the first place and if the hero killer had taken him down so quickly, what would he do if both Stain and Mastermind decided to kill him. Both had taken down heroes far more experienced than he was, he wouldn’t stand a chance. He couldn’t, *he woudn’t*, do that to his family. Not again.

Iida sneaked from the alley as quietly as he could before revving up his engines. He had to find Manual.

---

“Is that all you got?” Izuku taunted as he stabbed Stain again, “I can see why I’ve killed so many more heroes than you.”

“You’re the worst kind of person on this earth,” Stain growled, “you let other people do your dirty work and then you take all the credit. You take joy in senseless death and violence with no regard for your effect on society!”

“Oh I understand my effect on society, all right.” Izuku said as he blocked another throwing knife, “I understand that they fear me, that they think I’m powerful. That the kid they all thought was weak is stronger than all the rest of them!”

“So it’s revenge you’re after, is it?” Stain panted as he pulled another knife from its sheaf, “You’re just as bad as that kid I’ll kill later.”

“Revenge? No, I’m afraid it’s simpler than that.” Izuku replied. “Society is what made me who I am. They tossed me aside and ignored my pain. They agreed that I was only good for being abused and hated, so guess what? It’s my turn to be powerful.”

Stain rushed at him with both knives, trying to draw blood from the exposed skin at his face, but Izuku simply bent over and stabbed both his knives into Stain’s gut before backing away.

“I’ll kill you for what you did to All Might!” Stain choked out.

Izuku straightened. The hero killer had lost a lot of blood. He was getting slower and more disoriented the longer the fight wore on. The Hero killer was much better at quick battles that allowed him to draw blood early on. He could feel the conviction in Stain’s aura, but he barely paid it any mind, he’d felt more murderous intent from Katsuki on a *good* day. Izuku slowly sauntered forward and when Stain raised his knife to stab him, he simply knocked his blade out of the way.

“Thanks for the fight, Stain.” He said. “It’s been a nice challenge.”

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“Manual!”

Manual looked up from the fire he was putting out when he heard his intern’s voice, “Iida! Where have you been?” He took in the blood staining the white armor, the missing helmet, the tear streaks, and the way his intern was limping, “What happened to you?”

“The-the hero killer.” Iida choked out and Manual felt sick. “I-I know where he is. He’s fighting Mastermind in an alley a few blocks away. I-I couldn’t fight him, he was going to kill me. Native’s still there. H-he’s paralyzed with Stain’s quirk.”

“Come on Iida,” Manual said, “Let’s get you to an ambulance.”

“No!” Iida cried, “You have to catch the hero killer. You have to save Native!”

“Did you say the Hero Killer?” Manual and Iida flinched as Endeavor came up behind them. Iida nodded, “I know where he is.”

“Lead the way, boy.” Endeavor said, and Iida started running, with Endeavor and Manual close behind. Shouto Todoroki watched them leave from his place among the sidekicks. Iida looked like he was lucky to have survived. He shook his head and focused on sending ice toward some of the fires. Maybe he should have told someone his suspicions about Iida after all.

*But, he thought, at least the hate in his eyes is gone.*

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“Right down here!” Iida called, then stopped short when he saw the blood. Some of it was his, he knew, but there was a lot more of it than had been on the ground when he left.

Endeavor went to Stain, who was lying on the ground, his red scarf blending into its surroundings.

“Surrender, Villain! You cannot escape!” When Stain didn’t move, he bent down, keeping one hand on fire just in case. He checked the villain’s pulse and swore, extinguishing the light in his hand.

Meanwhile, Manual had gone to help Native. Iida went over to help him, but Manual just shook his head, “I’m sorry, Iida. It looks like he bled out sometime during the fight.”

Iida stared at the fallen hero in horror as Manual put his arm around him and led him out of the alley.

“Come on,” he said softly, “let’s get you to the hospital.”

# Preparations

## Chapter Summary

Preparations for the training camp.

## Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I drew a version of what [Mastermind's villain outfit](#) looks like!

Shigaraki scowled as he looked at the new recruits. Yeah, Sensei said it was a good idea to use the hero killer's ideals to grow their numbers but he just didn't see *why*? Maybe if Stain's ideals brought in more six foot tall behemoths like Muscular, sure, but a school girl and an emo? This was the league of villains, not disney channel!

"Go away," He glared at them from behind the hand on his face, "I can already tell you're the kind of people I hate the most."

"Don't be hasty, Tomura Shigaraki," Kurogiri said, "I'm sure these two will add greatly to our cause."

"Hi! I'm Himiko Toga!" The schoolgirl said excitedly, "I *loved* Mr. Stainy! He looked so beat up when he died, it was so cute!" she did a little dance in place, "And you've worked with Mind-chan, right? He's cute too! I remember when he could barely hold a knife and asked me to teach him! It was adorable!"

"*You* taught Mastermind to fight?" The emo asked incredulously.

Giran laughed, "Yeah, I was surprised too, but this cute little lady is the main suspect in a string of exsanguination murders. Mastermind sure does have an eye for quality!"

Shigaraki glared at the emo, "At least she has the manners to introduce herself. What about you? What's your name?"

The emo returned the glare, "Right now, I'm going by Dabi."

"That's no good. I meant your *real* name."

"You'll know it when you need to know it." Dabi said coldly, "In any case, my new purpose is to carry out the hero killer's will."

"That wasn't what I asked you, patchwork." Shigaraki scratched his neck, "Why is everyone so hung up on Stain, anyway? He's all I ever hear about! Every damn day! It's really *pissing me off*!"

He lunged toward the two, who made to fight back, but Kuogiri warped their hands so their attacks went nowhere, "Calm yourself, Tomura Shigaraki. If you want to succeed, we must increase our numbers. Our chance is at hand," He leaned close, "we must use the hero killer's ideology to

further our own ends.”

Shigaraki stalked away, “I’m leaving.” He slammed the door behind him.

Toga smiled, “I really thought he was gonna kill us for a sec!”

“I believe he knows what he has to do,” Kurogiri said calmly, “Shall we get back to you about recruitment at a later date?”

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Shouto stood awkwardly by the fountain in the mall courtyard. Yaoyorozu had invited him to go with the rest of the class and he hadn’t been able to think of a good excuse in time. The rest of the class had split off into groups of two and three, leaving him alone. Yaomomo had invited him to come with her and Jiro to look at swimsuits, but he already had one, so he opted to stay behind. Maybe if he left quickly, no one would question it?

“Hey! Aren’t you one of those students from UA?”

Shouto saw a teenager in a ratty black hoodie, but he couldn’t see his face.

“You were the second place winner at the sports festival, right?” Shouto grimaced as the stranger put an arm around his shoulder, “You’re pretty powerful.”

“Please get away from me.”

“What can I say, I’m just a huge fan,” The man didn’t move his arm. “I can’t believe I’m running into you again. It makes me think it might not be a coincidence.” Shouto’s eyes widened slightly as the man put a hand around his throat, keeping his middle finger lifted, “It feels like destiny, but I guess from your perspective, we haven’t met since the attack on UA.”

The man smiled at him, allowing Shouto to see his face. Tomura Shigaraki, the head of the league of villains with a five point disintegration quirk. Shouto swallowed, suddenly the hand around his throat felt much more threatening.

“Why don’t we sit down and chat for a while, Shouto Todoroki?”

Shigaraki led Shouto over to a nearby bench and they sat down with Shigaraki’s hand still at Shouto’s throat.

“I could just freeze you right here, you know.” Shouto said.

Shigaraki laughed, “If you tried, I’d just put my finger down and the first thing to go would be your throat.”

“Here with all these people? A hero would come catch you.”

Shigaraki shrugged, “Sure, but how many of these smiling sheep could I take out before that happened? I’m fast, I could probably take out twenty, thirty, maybe even more before a pro finally showed up. These idiots, they assume that everyone has their same morals, but any one of them could use their quirk and start a massacre right now. They think laws and rules will protect them, they’re convinced nothing bad could ever happen to them.”

“What’s your point?”

Shigaraki shrugged, “That’s just it. I don’t know. I hate pretty much everything, but right now the Hero Killer pisses me off the most. Have you ever hated something so much you just wanted to kill

it?”

*My father*, Shouto thought, but bit his tongue before he could say that, “Wasn’t the hero killer one of your men?”

“Not technically,” Shigaraki replied, “but that’s what the media made it seem like. And now everyone’s obsessed with him. Everything I’ve done, releasing Nomus on Hosu City, the attack on UA, even killing All Might! It’s all been overshadowed by that stupid hero killer and his stupid ideology. In the end, all he did was try to get rid of what he hated, same as me, so why is everyone so obsessed with him?”

“I don’t know...” Shouto said slowly, “Maybe it’s because he convinces everyone to hate what he does. His ideology makes sense, not all heroes deserve the title, and I think maybe everyone knows that deep down, they’re just too afraid to say it. Or maybe they don’t want to believe it. So they just let heroes keep taking power and abusing...abusing the system. Stain was a manic, but he didn’t destroy things just because it sounded fun. He was trying to make a change, show how corrupt the hero system really is.” Shouto’s voice had dropped to a whisper, “That’s why I agree with him.”

Shigaraki looked at him strangely, “You have some strange opinions for a hero student.”

Shouto just stared at the ground helplessly. He hadn’t really meant to say all that, but maybe it was because Shigaraki was already a villain that Shouto thought maybe the guy would understand. Shigaraki wouldn’t judge him for hating heroes because he hated them too. Shouto wondered what had happened to make Shigaraki hate All Might so much. Could it have been something similar to why Shouto hated Endeavor?

“So you think people like the hero killer so much because he proved the corruption of hero society?” Shouto nodded carefully and Shigaraki smiled, “It all makes sense now! Why All Might pissed me off so much, why the hero killer made me so angry! It was right in front of me! All Might was the reason why these people smile and think they’re safe, because heroes will always protect them. They trust them when really, heroes don’t save everyone, and they don’t deserve our trust.”

Shigaraki released Shouto’s throat and looked at him, “I don’t need to change my ways after all. I just need to prove how fragile society’s sense of safety really is! Thank you, Todoroki, you’ve been a big help.” He stood. “Don’t try to follow me, *hero*. If you try, I’ll get angry.”

Shouto watched him leave until he disappeared in the crowd.

“I’m not a hero.” He muttered.

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Toga hugged Izuku the moment he walked into the bar and gave him a kiss on the cheek, “Mind-chan! Mind-chan! How are you? It’s been so long!”

Izuku laughed and pried her hands away, “Himiko, you just saw me a few weeks ago!”

“It *feels* like an eternity.” She pouted.

“Welcome Mastermind,” Kurogiri said, “Can I get you a drink?”

“Sure, I’ll take cranberry juice, if you have any.” Kurogiri nodded and a laugh came from the corner.

“You have no qualms about murdering heroes and yet you’re worried about the legal drinking

age?” Dabi scoffed, “Some villain.”

Izuku raised an eyebrow, “It’s not so much that I’m concerned about the legal drinking age as it is that I make a living with my brain and I prefer not to have anything slowing it down.” He turned back to the bar, “You’re Dabi, right? Cremation quirk?”

“Yeah,” Dabi said and took a seat next to Izuku at the bar, “How’d you know?”

“I make it my business to know everyone in the underground, especially if I’m going to be working with them.” Izuku said simply, “I’ve had my eye on you for a while now.”

Dabi looked vaguely concerned, but it was hard to tell many facial expressions with his scars. Kurogiri set a glass of cranberry juice down on the bar and Izuku pulled down his mask, letting it pool around his neck.

“Whoa, Mastermind,” Dabi said, “Aren’t you concerned about people seeing your face?”

Izuku smiled, “I’m concerned about *heroes* seeing my face. As odd as it sounds, my identity is not completely unknown in the underground. Giran and Himiko know who I am, for example, and quite a few people have seen my face.”

Dabi raised an eyebrow, “And you’re not concerned about anyone snitching to the cops?”

Izuku shook his head, “I was at first, but normally by the time people know my face, they’re already familiar with my reputation.” He took a sip of his juice, “I’ve got a bit of a temper. If anyone screws me over, I screw them over twice as hard. There was a gang a few months back, the Blue Dogs, have you heard of them?”

Dabi nodded, “They’re dead now, aren’t they.”

Izuku nodded gleefully, “They tried to threaten me into working with them rather than paying me. I gave them their plans, but then tracked down all the enemies the gang had and made sure they knew the weaknesses of every single member. They didn’t last a week.”

Dabi shivered, “Remind me not to piss you off.”

Izuku smiled, “If I have to remind you, it’s already too late.”

Shigaraki walked into the room, “Thanks for coming Mastermind. It’s always more fun when you’re my player two.”

“Not a problem, Shigaraki. You pay well and your jobs are always interesting. So what do you have in mind?”

Shigaraki sat at the bar, “We’re going to show how fragile society really is by attacking a UA training camp, kidnapping one of the students and turning them to villainy.”

“Hmm,” Izuku thought for a moment, “That might be difficult...do you have a plan in place?”

Shigaraki shook his head, “We have a spy, but not one I’m willing to pull out yet. He’ll be leaking the location to us as soon as they arrive.”

Izuku nodded, “Alright then, who do you have in mind?”

Shigaraki smiled and pulled a photo from his pocket, “Katsuki Bakugo.”



Izuku frowned and took the photo. It was of Katsuki chained up on the podium at the sports festival. He'd taken offense that Todoroki hadn't used his fire in their fight so his win 'didn't mean anything'. Izuku got where he was coming from, but at the same time, Todoroki didn't use his fire against anyone, so Katsuki really shouldn't have taken it personally.

"Yeah, no, that's a terrible idea."

Dabi laughed as Shigaraki stared at Izuku in shock, "But he already acts villainous."

"I know!" Izuku laughed. "The problem is that he's too stubborn. You'll never be able to get Katsuki to be a villain because *he doesn't see himself as one*. He sees himself as a hero and no amount of threatening or bribery is going to convince him otherwise." He let the group digest that information before continuing, "If you're really serious about recruiting a hero student, I'd suggest going after Shouto Todoroki instead."

Out of the corner of his eye, Izuku saw Dabi tense slightly and smiled.

"The number one hero's son?" Shigaraki said in confusion, "What makes you think we'll be able to turn *him*?"

"Take it from someone who used to want to be a hero," Izuku smiled as the group reacted to that, "people don't turn to villainy without a reason and Todoroki has one of the best reasons I've ever seen. He was abused by a hero for years and no one ever saved him. Who would ever believe the number one hero was guilty of child abuse?" Izuku lifted his glass to take a drink. "And besides, we have his brother to help us convince him."

The others looked confused as Dabi stared at him in shock, "How did you know?"

"A strong fire quirk, bright teal eyes, a hatred of all heroes, but *especially* Endeavor?" Izuku shrugged, "It wasn't that hard to put together. I told you I'd had my eye on you for a while." He looked Dabi in the eyes, "So what do you say *Touya Todoroki*, are you ready to see your brother?"

# Training Camp

## Chapter Summary

Villains attack the UA training camp.

The UA traitor rolled his eyes at his classmates antics as the bus rolled to a stop. He quickly sent a text sharing his location with Shigaraki. This would show those class A assholes.

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Why did Shouto have to be paired with *Bakugo* of all people for the test of courage. It wasn't that he hated him, it's just that Bakugo was just so *loud*. They were almost to the halfway point when they saw smoke in the distance.

"Hey Icy-Hot, I thought you never used your fire..."

"I don't." Shouto said. "I didn't light that."

"Well then who did? Because we're the only ones here with fire quirks and it sure as hell wasn't me."

Shouto looked around as he prepared to use his ice, "Be quiet."

"Don't tell me what to do, Icy-hot!"

"Be quiet! There might be villains!"

Bakugo scowled, "If this is some trick by those class B losers..."

Shouto rolled his eyes, at least he wasn't yelling anymore. The boys both crinkled their noses as a smell like rotten eggs started wafting through the forest along with a pink mist.

"What the..?" Shouto put his hand over his nose as he began to feel lightheaded, "This smoke is poisonous, we have to get out of here."

"No shit, Sherlock!" Bakugo growled, keeping his own mouth and nose plugged.

They ran away from the smoke, coming across a class b student who had passed out on the trail. Shouto hesitated a moment before putting the boy on his back. Heroes never saved him, but maybe he could save this classmate. They continued on, slower than before due to the extra weight.

Because he was no longer covering his face, Shouto got lightheaded much quicker than he had before and it was only the practice he had working through the pain of his father's training that kept him going. That was probably why it took him longer than it should have to see the black figure kneeling on the path in front of them.

"Who's that?" Bakugo asked, then he noticed the severed hand, "Which group was in front of us again?"

"Tokoyami, I think..." Shouto replied softly, trying not to think that the hand might be one of theirs

“And Shouji.”

“...so pretty...” The figure whispered, “No! Have to work...but it’s so delicious...beautiful flesh...” The man turned around, revealing a wide mouth held open with hooks. Despite the fact that the man’s eyes were covered, Shouto could feel he was looking straight at them, “...I have a job to do...”

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Aizawa watched in horror as his capture weapon went *through* the villain.

As the flame villain melted into goo, he smirked, “I wonder if you can save your students?”

“Mr. Aizawa! Help!” Eraser looked to see Ida running out of the woods as fast as he could, panic on his face.

“Show me your Blood!” a giant villain barrelled after him, muscle fibers bulging. Aizawa’s eyes widened as he recognized Muscular and he activated his quirk.

“What the...? What did you do?” Muscular screamed as he deflated, but Aizawa quickly wrapped him in his capture weapon and knelt the villain in the face, knocking him out before blinking. He took in the sight of Muscular’s blood-coated fists before turning back to Iida, “Are you alright?”

Iida nodded, “The rest of our classmates should be along shortly, I told them to hide because I was the only one able to outrun the villain.”

Aizawa nodded, “Good work. Head inside, Vlad King is already waiting for you with the other students. I’ll be back!”

He didn’t look to see if Iida obeyed as he ran into the woods. If he had heard the flame villain correctly, his students were the targets. He had to save them, or at least get to Mandalay and give them permission to fight back. His heart gripped in panic, it was like the USJ all over again, only this time the villains wouldn’t let the students live because they’d already got what they wanted. The students *were* what they wanted, which was infinitely worse.

The only students he passed as he ran were Ojiro, Mineta, and Kouda, who promised to go straight to camp. It wasn’t long before he reached the clearing where the test of courage was supposed to begin. A lizard looking villain with a sword made out of other swords was bearing down on Mandalay and Aizawa managed to pull her out of the way with his capture weapon just in time to prevent her from being cut into ribbons.

“Mandalay, are you alright?”

“Eraser! Have you seen Kouta?”

Aizawa felt his stomach sink, “No, I haven’t, but I need you to send a message to all the students. Tell them to use their quirks and training, that I’m authorizing them to engage in combat with the villains.”

Mandalay looked shocked, “Are you sure?”

Aizawa nodded, “I’ll take the heat. Our students are the targets and they need to be able to defend themselves.”

“Ahh,” A large woman in sunglasses said as she ran at them, “Who squealed?”

“Wait!” The lizard villain cried, “That’s Eraserhead, he’s an underground hero and if Stain were still alive, he would likely judge him a true hero!”

Aizawa wasn’t quite sure how he felt about that, but the important part was that the villains were too busy arguing to attack.

“So what?”

“So we must be sure we’re abiding by Stain’s princip...” the lizard villain was cut off by a kick to the head from Mandalay at the same time the other villain was knocked out by Tiger.

“Thank you for the help, Eraserhead,” Tiger said as Mandalay sent the message to the students, “Things were getting kind of rough there.”

“Where are Pixie Bob and Ragdoll?”

Tiger looked behind him and Aizawa paled as he saw Pixie Bob lying on the ground, “Ragdoll hasn’t checked in.”

Aizawa took a deep breath, he couldn’t worry about that right now, “Get her back to camp, I need to go look for the rest of the students.”

Tiger nodded as Aizawa ran further into the woods.

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Shouto put up another ice wall to stop the blades, careful to avoid the class B boy he’d laid on the ground, “Don’t just rush into this fight Bakugo!”

“Whatever Icy-Hot! We’ve been given permission to fight so that’s what I’m gonna do!”

Shouto swore as Moonish dodged his ice wall again and took off into the trees, “This guy’s quirk is too good at navigating this terrain.”

“This freak looks like a scrawny little sidekick to me!” He shifted into a battle stance, “Come at me you bastard!”

“You can’t use your explosions Bakugo! You could start a forest fire and kill our classmates!”

“Whatever, Icy-hot, I’m not an idiot.”

Todoroki doubted that. Right now, Bakugo was acting just like Endeavor. Take down the villain, show his own strength, don’t care who gets hurt in the process. He looked behind him, where the wall of poison gas was now clearly visible. Between Moonfish and the gas, they didn’t have anywhere to run.

Bakugo ran at Moonfish with an explosion, breaking some of the blade teeth and causing the villain to cry out in pain. Bakugo smirked.

“Watch out!” Shouto cried as Moonfish’s blade teeth flashed, but Bakugo couldn’t move out of the way in time. He grit his teeth in pain as he was stabbed through the shoulder.

“You fucker!” He yelled, “I’ll kill you!”

Shouto knew he should send an ice wall to protect his classmate, but he could already feel hypothermia setting in. That combined with the gas was making it almost impossible to think straight.

“...flesh...blood...sweet...” Moonfish stabbed Bakugo again, but this time he got close enough for the student to grab his face.

“Die.” Bakugo screamed and let off a full force explosion in Moonfish’s face. Shouto idly wondered if it was bigger than the one he used during his fight with Ururaka at the sports festival. When the smoke cleared, several trees were smoking and the villain was heavily singed and unconscious.

“Weak ass villain.” Bakugo spit a dollop of blood on the ground before looking at Shouto, who just barely had time to wonder about the look of alarm on his face before he felt himself collapse like a telescope. By the time the nauseating sensation had ended, he was surrounded by blue glass walls and neither Bakugo nor the forest were anywhere to be seen.

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Ururaka and Tsu shifted into battle stances as they stared down the villain in front of them.

“What kind of person slashes someone out of nowhere?” Tsu said, “Who do you think you are?”

The girl pointed at them with a bloody knife, “I’m Toga! You two are super cute, Ururaka and Asui.”

“She must know who we are from the sports festival,” Ururaka said.

“But we don’t know *anything* about her, so we’re at a disadvantage,” Tsu replied.

“There’s not enough blood,” Toga pouted, “Normally, I’d suck it straight out of the cut to get it flowing, but there’s no time. Don’t worry, girls, my fun new toy will start pumping as soon as I stick it in you. I’ll get my fill in no time!” She looked at them from beneath her lashes, “Who’s first?”

Tsu threw Ururaka in the air with her tongue the moment Toga started running, “You have to get back to camp! We have permission to defend ourselves, not counterattack! Ahh!” Tsu cried out as Toga slashed her tongue.

“Tsu!” Ururaka yelled.

Toga stopped for a moment, “Tsu? That’s so cute! I think I’ll call you that too!”

Tsu backed away in fear, “Only my friends call me that!”

Toga laughed as she pinned Tsu against a tree with a needle, “I guess that means we’re friends then! You’re so cute when you bleed!”

“Get away from her!” Ururaka yelled. Toga turned and came at her with the knife, but Ururaka used her Gunhead martial arts and pinned her to the ground.

“That was amazing, Ochacho!”

“Ochacho? You’re cute too!” Toga stabbed her in the leg and let her machine pull the blood out.

“Ururaka!” Aizawa called out her name as he ran into the clearing and activated his quirk.

“Aizawa-sensei!” Tsu cried in relief, “You have to help her!”

Toga jumped away from Ururaka and ran off into the forest, “I don’t feel like being killed tonight,” she giggled, “Toodles!”

“Ururaka,” Aizawa knelt beside her on the ground, “You’re hurt.”

She shook her head, “It’s not bad.”

“Good,” He nodded, then stood, “Make your way back to camp, I’ve cleared the forest between here and there, so you should be fine if you hurry.”

Ururaka nodded and the girls were about to leave when they heard rustling in the trees. All three tensed and prepared to fight, but instead of a villain, it was Bakugo who entered the clearing. He was carrying another student on his back and looked halfway between exploding and crying.

“Bakugo?” Aizawa said, “You were paired with Todoroki for the exercise, where is he?”

Bakugo shook his head, “They took him. Those damn bastards stole Icy-hot!”

Aizawa’s stomach dropped, this was bad. In terms of worst possible scenarios, a kidnapped student was pretty high on the list, “Did you see where they took him?”

Bakugo just shook his head again, “It was some asshole in a yellow coat. He collapsed Icy-hot into a fucking marble and took off through the treetops. I tried to follow them, but..” he grimaced, “I overused my quirk fighting the one who was trying to kill us and the bastard was too fast for me to follow on foot.” All of a sudden he screamed and kicked at the base of a tree, “I just feel so fucking helpless!”

Aizawa put a hand on his shoulder, “Bakugo, you and the girls get this student back to safety. There’s not much else you can do out here anyway if you’re suffering from quirk exhaustion. I’ll find Todoroki.”

Bakugo looked like he wanted to argue, but instead he just scoffed, “Fine. They were headed east when I lost track of them.”

Aizawa nodded and ran east. It was a long shot, but if there was any possibility Todoroki was still here, he had to try and save him.

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“Now we just gotta wait for the others to regroup here. This place was supposed to be hard to find because of the wall of flames and poisonous gas,” Dabi sighed, “but it looks like the gas is gone.”

Aizawa hid in the trees, following the flame villain from earlier and a guy named Twice who kept arguing with himself. At one point he’d seen Aoyama cowering behind some bushes, but Aizawa had just put a finger to his lips and gestured for him to leave.

Aizawa wanted nothing more than to take both villains down right now, but he held himself back. Bakugo had said the one who stole Todoroki had a yellow coat, and the forest was large enough that Aizawa would never be able to find him on his own. His only hope was to follow Dabi and Twice to the meet-up point and retake Todoroki from the villain who had him.

Dabi and Twice stopped walking as Toga emerged from the trees.

“Hey, Crazy, did you get the blood? How many different kinds?” Dabi asked.

“One person!”

“Just one?” Twice whined, “Good job! Weren’t you supposed to get three?”

“That’s just the way it went down. I thought those brats were gonna kill me and then a pro showed

up!”

“Whatever, it’s fine.” Twice said, “Shouldn’t you be full of shame?”

“Both of you shut up.” Dabi ordered, “You’re too loud. Welcome Mr. Compress. You get the kid?”

Aizawa moved the moment a yellow coated figure jumped down from the trees, tripping him with the capture weapon and activating his quirk. A ripping sound filled the clearing and suddenly Mr. Compress’s coat was in tatters and Todoroki was kneeling on the ground looking disoriented.

“Todoroki!” Aizawa ran toward him and saw his eyes widen before a massive wall of blue flame blocked his field of vision.

“It’s been five minutes since the signal,” a voice declared, “let’s go.”

Aizawa activated his quirk and tried to see anyone, but the flames were too bright and Dabi made sure to stay hidden behind them so Aizawa couldn’t see him. When the flames finally disappeared, Aizawa readied his capture weapon for the fight and looked around for the villains.

But all he saw was an empty forest.

# To Be a Hero

## Chapter Summary

Shouto wakes up in the league of villains hideout.

Shouto woke up dazed and disoriented. By the time he was aware enough to look around the room, he'd been tied to a chair with quirk suppressant cuffs. A man with painful looking scars sat in a chair across from him, but from what Shouto could see, they were the only two in the room.

"Hey Shouto," the man said softly, "It's good to see you."

Shouto frowned slightly, he didn't understand why a villain, even one who just kidnapped him, was happy to see him, "Who are you?"

The man smiled slightly, "I go by Dabi, but I think you can guess that's not my real name." He leaned forward, "We actually knew each other once, back before I got these scars."

"Am I just supposed to know who you are?"

Dabi shrugged, "It's not like you knew a whole lot of people back then. That flaming bastard kept you isolated so no one could *distract* you from your training."

That made Shouto pause. He'd never heard anyone else talk about Endeavor that way, with the same intense hatred he himself felt. Against his better judgement, he found himself actually *liking* the villain that had kidnapped him. But how did he know about Shouto's isolation?

"My hair was red then, too, kinda like yours." Dabi continued, producing a brilliant blue flame and watching it flicker with brilliant teal eyes.

Shouto wracked his brain, trying to think of who this guy could be. Red hair, like his left side...strong flame quirk, like his left side...teal eyes, like...Shouto's eyes widened.

"Touya?"

The man smiled, "Hey there, little brother."

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Aizawa rested his head in his hands as he sat in the interrogation room waiting for Tsukauchi. Dozens of students hurt by the gas or the other villains, another in critical condition from a classmate's rampaging quirk, an abducted pro hero, a kidnapped student, and a dead child. The three measly villains they'd managed to capture were nothing in comparison to the unmitigated horror that the training camp had been.

Aizawa looked up when he heard the door open. Tsukauchi looked at him sympathetically and set a cup of coffee down in front of him, "How are you holding up?"

"I couldn't save him," Aizawa said, "I knew they'd taken him and I got *so close*, but at the last minute, I was too weak." He looked at the detective, "What kind of a teacher lets his student be kidnapped?"



Tsukauchi sighed, “We’re dealing with elite villains the likes of which we haven’t seen since before All Might’s debut. The blame for this incident is theirs and theirs alone. This was the same group that managed to kill the symbol of peace, so don’t blame yourself that you couldn’t take them all out. That being said, we do need your statement of the incident. Maybe it can help us find Todoroki in time.”

“Do you know why he was taken?” Aizawa asked.

Tsukauchi shook his head, “We were hoping you knew. The best we can come up with is that he was probably abducted to use as leverage against Endeavor. These villains are targeting hero society itself, so it’d be in line with their goals.”

Aizawa nodded, “The first I knew of the attack was when Mandalay sent out the message. I left Vlad King with the other students and left to go fight. As soon as I left the main building, I was confronted by a flame user who implied that they were after the students. I tried to interrogate him, but he dissolved into goo before I could get any information out of him.”

“Goo?” Tsukauchi questioned, “I thought you said he had a fire quirk?”

“He did,” Aizawa sighed, “I think the goo was some kind of cloning quirk belonging to another villain.”

Tsukauchi nodded, “What happened next?”

“I took out Muscular as he tried to chase one of my students. I then went into the forest, sending any students I came across back to camp. I had just saved Ururaka and Asui when Bakugo found me and told me Todoroki had been kidnapped by a villain in a yellow coat that compressed him into a marble. I searched and found the flame villain I’d fought earlier talking to someone else. I followed them until I saw the villain that had taken Todoroki, then canceled his quirk, which temporarily freed Todoroki.” He grit his teeth, “Then everything went to shit. The fire user used his flames to block my field of vision. I couldn’t see him to cancel his quirk and I couldn’t see any of the other villains either. By the time the flames disappeared, they were gone, taking Todoroki with them.”

“What did the villains look like? Can you give me any physical characteristics?”

Aizawa nodded.

“Let’s start with the fire user,” Tsukauchi said, “What did he look like?”

“Tall, black hair, teal eyes. His skin was pale, but his neck and arms as well as part of his face were covered in large burn scars that appeared to be stitched together with his normal skin.”

Tsukauchi paused in his notetaking, “You said he was held together by stitches?”

As soon as Aizawa said yes, Tsukauchi stood and opened the door, “Sansa, bring me the reports on the canvassing operation!”

“What’s wrong?” Aizawa asked.

“Nothing,” Tsukauchi smiled, “But we might have a location on the League of Villains.”

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“Father told us you died.”

Dabi scoffed and rolled his eyes, “Yeah, cause after all the shit that guy’s done, he’ll *definitely* draw the line at lying.”

Shouto frowned. It made sense, a little too much sense actually, but he still wasn’t sure Dabi was telling the truth, “If you’re really my brother,” he said suspiciously, “what did we do on weekends when Endeavor would meet with the hero commission?”

Dabi’s eyes lit up, “Mom would gather us all in the front room with all the pillows and blankets in the house. Then she and Fuyumi would make hot chocolate for all of us and we’d watch a movie. Then we’d make a game of cleaning up so there was no trace of what had happened by the time Father came home.” He frowned, “We stopped that tradition when Endeavor locked Mom away.”

Shouto stared. None of them had ever told anyone about that tradition so that Endeavor would never find out. There was no way he could have known about it, much less spoken about it with so much happiness, unless he really was Touya.

“I also remember that Mom would ice your bruises and burns after Endeavor’s *training*, ” He spit out bitterly, “After she was gone, Fuyumi took over that job,” Dabi met Shouto’s eyes, “They did the same thing for me when I was subjected to the bastard’s training before you got your quirk.”

“You went through it too?” Shouto breathed out. Dabi nodded, “It was hell. He’d make me work past my body’s limits, producing fire for hours even though it hurt. He’d kick me when I was down, then blame me for being *weak* when I couldn’t stand up again. He’d constantly remind me that I wasn’t good enough, even though I was the best shot he had at beating All Might at the time.” He scowled. “And when you finally got your quirk, he tossed me aside as just another failure, forgetting all the abuse he’d put me through in favor of abusing you.”

“I’m sorry.” Shouto said, “I’m sorry he forgot about you.”

Dabi shrugged, “It wasn’t your fault. I’m sorry you got the perfect quirk and had to go through that hell disguised as training longer than I ever did.” He chuckled. “Even back when I was living at home, I’d fantasize about what I’d do the bastard if I ever got the chance. How I’d kill him when I got strong enough, even as he was pounding me into the floor. I hated him even then.” He looked at Shouto. “You hate him too, don’t you?”

Shouto swallowed, but nodded. Absently, he knew that as Endeavor’s masterpiece, he shouldn’t be bonding with a villain, but Dabi was his *brother*, his brother who *understood*. His brother who had the same burning hatred as he did for their father. Even Natsuo and Fuyumi couldn’t understand, not in the same way.

“That’s why you don’t use your fire isn’t it?” Dabi asked. “Because you hate him.”

Shouto nodded, “It’s *his* quirk. I don’t need his power, just like I don’t need him.”

Dabi shook his head, “There’s a better option here.”

Shouto tilted his head in a silent question and Dabi continued, “Endeavor gave you that fire so you’d become a hero. So what if you were to use that fire for something that dear old Dad would *hate* .”

Shouto started, remembering Midoriya’s words back at the sports festival, *you could always use it to do things your father would hate*.

“How would you like to use your fire to show Dad how wrong he was? How would you like to use it to show him how much you hate him?”

Shouto thought for a minute. He was supposed to be a hero, that was what he'd been raised to do, but the idea of showing his father how much he'd hurt him was tempting. Father was the one that was always pushing Shouto to become a hero, but had he ever really wanted that?

Maybe he had once, back when he was a little kid, back before his mother had been forced away from him, but that small desire had been burned and kicked out of Shouto by a decade of abuse. The only reason he was even at UA was because of what his father wanted.

But what did Shouto want?

He clenched his fists as the hate burning in his heart grew even hotter. He wanted to show the world what kind of a person Endeavor really was and hurt him like he'd hurt Shouto. He wanted to hurt everyone who thought that heroes were perfect and would always save the day. He wanted to prove to them that heroes weren't gods. He wanted to hurt all the heroes who must have known what was going on, but who never once came to save him. He looked at his brother with fire in his eyes.

"So Shouto," Dabi asked, "how would you like to be a villain?"

# All for One

## Chapter Summary

It's time to rescue Todoroki.

“Ok, I hate to be the one to say it, but I’m just gonna come right out and ask,” Yamada said, “Is there a possibility Todoroki was taken because the league thought he had One for All?”

Nedzu shook his head, “They shouldn’t have. That’s why we went on with the sports festival like we did, despite All Might’s death. All the students’ quirks were on display and none of them were similar to All Might’s.”

“That being said,” Tsukauchi said, “We are fairly confident that All for One is behind the league of villains. The existence of the Nomus confirms that much.”

“So what are we supposed to do?” Midnight asked, “We can’t just leave him alone, not if he’s going to go after our students.”

“Do we even have a choice?” Snipe asked, “If All for One is really as strong as All Might was at his prime, then how are we supposed to counter that?”

“If his quirk is what makes him so strong,” Aizawa said darkly, “then we’ll just have to take it away.”

The teachers looked at each other and nodded. They would take down this villain no matter how strong he was.

They owed it to Todoroki.

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Shouto sat unbound at the bar, watching with a mixture of amusement and horror as Dabi tried to hit an increasingly enraged Shigaraki with peanuts. Toga was sitting beside him, cheering Dabi on as one of Twice’s personalities did the same and the other pleaded for him to stop annoying Shigaraki for all of their sakes. Kurogiri simply shook his head fondly and continued cleaning glasses. Already there was more love and camaraderie in this group than Shouto had ever felt at home and he wasn’t quite sure how to deal with that.

“So, Todoroki, I see you made the right decision.”

Shouto looked up in shock to see a smiling Midoriya sitting in the window, “Midoriya? What are you doing here?”

Toga almost knocked him over as she ran past him and threw her arms around Midoriya, who hugged her back without hesitation, “Mind-chan! Mind-chan! You’re back!”

“Mastermind,” Kurogiri said, “It’s a pleasure, as always. May I get you a drink?”

Shouto’s eyes widened. Midoriya was *Mastermind*? He looked over to see Midoriya shaking his head, “I’m afraid I’m here on business this time, not pleasure.”

“Then get to the point!” Shigaraki grumbled.

Midoriya had finally untangled himself from Togas arms and he sighed, “I just thought you guys might like to know that the heroes and police are gathering outside. It looks like they’re planning a raid to come rescue Todoroki.” He looked at Shouto and gave him a knowing smile, “Too bad they’re a little too late for that, huh?”

Shigaraki scratched his neck, “Annoying heroes! How did they find us? Cheaters!”

“Now Tomura,” Shouto flinched as an unfamiliar voice came from the television, “It does not matter how they knew where to find you. All that matters now is that Mastermind was kind enough to tell us of their plans. How long do you think we have before they strike?”

Midoriya shrugged, “An hour at the most. If I were them, I’d likely use the planned press conference as a cover.”

“Might I suggest retreating?” Kurogiri said calmly. “We have other properties that the heroes will not have discovered, and Mastermind has given us more than enough time to clear out this location.”

Shigaraki stopped scratching, “I guess you’re right, Kurogiri. Come on, guys, grab your stuff and let’s go.”

Kurogiri was already busy warping away his vast stores of alcohol as many of the others left to go pack. Shouto himself didn’t have anything to do, seeing as they didn’t bother to grab any of his things when they kidnapped him. He turned his attention to Midoriya, who was wearing what he now recognized as Mastermind’s villain costume, but with the hood and mask down, “Are you a member of the league?”

Midoriya laughed and shook his head, “No, I’ve found I work best if I don’t tie myself down to any one group. But I’ve done a few jobs for the league now, and I like working with you guys.”

Shouto started when Midoriya referred to him as part of the league. When he’d agreed to become a villain with his brother, joining the league hadn’t really been on his mind, but...he supposed that *was* what he’d done, wasn’t it? It was weird being referred to as part of a group, like he’d finally found a place to belong. He shook his head.

“But you showed up in person for the USJ attack. Why go that far if you weren’t a member?”

Midoriya’s face soured, “Killing All Might was...personal.”

Shouto waited for him to continue, but it appeared he’d said all he was going to say on that subject, so Shouto asked another question, “Then, why are you helping us now? From what the news has said about Mastermind, you mostly wait for people to hire you, but don’t care what they get up to when they aren’t consulting with you.”

Midoriya smiled softly, “I see a lot of myself in you Todoroki. I was abused for years by the person who was supposed to be my hero while the people who were supposed to protect me turned a blind eye. No one ever saved me, not because they couldn’t, but because no one ever wanted to. Ever since I turned to villainy, I’ve been happier than I ever was before and I want the same thing for you. I just couldn’t let you go back to living in hell, not when I had the power to get you out.”

Shouto found himself blushing. No one had ever cared about his happiness before, certainly not his father. And yet, here Midoriya was, acting like Shouto’s happiness was important enough to work for. Even back at the sports festival, before Shouto even considered becoming a villain, Midoriya

was there, letting him know that he was more than his father's abuse.

"Todoroki? Are you ok?" Midoriya was looking at him with concern.

"Shouto." He replied before he could help himself and he blushed a little more, "I don't want to go by my father's name anymore."

Izuku smiled and nodded his head in understanding, blushing a little himself, "Alright Shouto. You can call me Izuku, if you want."

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Aizawa crouched on a rooftop halfway between the two raid locations. Vlad King and Principal Nedzu had just started the press conference, which meant that it was almost go time. Aizawa was just grateful that his quirk was part of the plan so he didn't have to deal with the vultures. He couldn't imagine the disaster it would have been if the villains had taken another student, say Bakugo. Aizawa shuddered. If they'd taken Bakugo, the school would have been blamed for broadcasting his violent behavior and UA would be in a lot of trouble. As it was, the blame was resting solely on the villains, for now, but a press conference was still deemed necessary for this big of an incident.

A voice came over his earpiece, "The Nomu factory has been secured."

"Thank you, Best Jeanist," Tsukauchi's voice said, "You and your team keep an eye out. The villains might try to recover them."

Aizawa sighed, one down, one to go. If he had to guess where All for One would show his face, he would bet on the bar, since that's where they were keeping Todoroki and where most of the villains were located. That meant that the most difficult part of the mission was still to come.

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"Pizza delivery!" Edgeshot called out, then nodded to Gang Orca, who used a sonic attack to knock down the wall. Kamui Woods ran in after him, ready for his first major battle since he had been injured by Mastermind months ago.

"All clear."

"What?" Edgeshot unlocked the door and walked in, "Where are they?"

The heroes looked around the room for a moment before seeing a yellow post-it note stuck to the counter. They crowded closer to read it.

*Just missed us ; )*

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"We have a problem," Aizawa frowned at Edshot's voice, "They're not here."

"What do you mean they're not there?" Endeavor growled. He had been sent to the Nomu factory, since his fire was one of the few things that could harm a nomu and they were concerned this whole thing might really be an elaborate trap for the number one hero.

"I mean, the only sign anyone was ever here is a post it note saying, 'Just missed us' with a winky face. They obviously knew we were coming."

Aizawa ignored Endeavor's frustrated rant. If the villains weren't at the bar, where were they? And how would they get Todoroki back?

Suddenly the radio went silent and there was an explosion in the distance.

“Jeanist, come in, what the hell is going on over there?” Aizawa held his breath, but there wasn’t an answer.

“Aizawa, go help them!”

Aizawa ran as fast as he could to the Nomu factory and almost jumped off a roof before he realized that the building that was supposed to be there... wasn’t anymore.

“I don’t need your quirk,” a voice was saying, “It wouldn’t pair well with Tomura’s disposition.” A grunt and Aizawa looked down to see Best Jeanist’s eyes glaze over as a man in a black mask punched a hole through his gut. Endeavor was just starting to stand back up with rage in his eyes, while Tiger had been knocked unconscious by the blow.

“Tsukauchi,” Aizawa whispered into his radio, “I have eyes on All for One.”

“My apologies, *heroes*,” All for One said, “But I simply cannot allow you to take these Nomu. They are essential to young Tomura’s success.”

“Surrender, villain.” Endeavor declared, “You have nowhere to run!”

All for One chuckled, “If I wanted to run, *you* wouldn’t be able to stop me.”

Endeavor shot a wave of fire at him, but All for One simply stepped aside and let the flames pass by him harmlessly.

Endeavor growled, “Flashfire Fist - Jet Burn!” He used both hands to create a massive wave of flames.

“Air cannon plus spring like limbs,” All for One said calmly as a massive wave of wind blew the flames off course, sending them flying toward a bank of apartments that was engulfed within moments.

Screams sounded from the apartments and Aizawa swore, “Tsukauchi, get Backdraft or someone over here! I can’t intervene yet, not if we want to capture this bastard.”

“I already called him” Tsukauchi said, “Wait for backup and stick to the plan.”

All for One and Endeavor kept fighting, neither landing a hit on the other but increasing collateral damage with every attack.

“Flame Tornado!” Endeavor yelled, jumping into the air and using his flames to propel him forward as he spun toward the villain.

“Air cannon plus spring-like limbs, kinetic booster x 4, strength enhancer x 3.” He seemed almost bored as his attack flung Endeavor straight through the nearby buildings. Already weakened from the fire, they started collapsing almost immediately. It was only by using his fire to melt through the rock that Endeavor managed to survive. He wasn’t going to last much longer if this kept up.

“Is everyone in position?” Aizawa whispered impatiently and almost sighed with relief when a chorus of affirmatives came over the radio.

Aizawa took off his goggles and set them on the roof. Powerloader had made him a special version of his hero costume just for this fight. It looked mostly like his standard one, except this one was

made to withstand the heat of Endeavor's flames and had a hood and mask that he pulled up to protect his hair and face. Finally he put on the new goggles, still painted gold, but this time fully enclosed with a mirror effect. A temperature regulator wrapped around his chest and he turned it on, shivering at the artificial cold.

After he finished adjusting his new suit, Aizawa took a deep breath and jumped off the building, landing in a roll. All for One and Endeavor were still exchanging blows as Aizawa crept closer. Despite the fact that he was in full view, All for One didn't seem to notice him, which was when Aizawa took note that his mask didn't have any eye holes. He must be using some sort of infrared heat vision to see, which made Aizawa almost invisible in the flames. All the better.

The fight shifted and Endeavor caught sight of him, nodding silently and retreating a few steps to put some distance between himself and All for One. Aizawa ran to stand in between the two fighters so that he could see All for One but not Endeavor and he activated his quirk.

"Now!"

"Prominence Burn!" A massive beam of fire shot past him, turning quickly from orange to blue and Aizawa started sweating as the temperature regulator on his suit struggled to keep up. He held his quirk for as long as he could, but he had to blink eventually.

"Midnight!" He yelled above the noise of the flames and Endeavor stopped his attack. Midnight quickly ran out from behind a building and cranked her quirk up to full force, completely shrouding the area in purple mist.

Aizawa heard Endeavor fall to the ground behind him and saw All for One collapse in front of him, heavily burned, but not dead. As the gas took hold and the police surrounded the area, Aizawa finally closed his eyes.



# Threat

## Chapter Summary

Overhaul approaches Mastermind.

“So let me get this straight,” Izuku said tersely, “you want me to *join* your little yakuza, rather than have me in a consulting role as was the *agreement* when I showed up here.”

Overhaul simply looked unimpressed, “You’ve done a few impressive things in your short career,” he said, scratching at his wrist, “But with the recent defeat of All for One, villains will be looking for a leader to fill that vacuum of power. Your actions strike fear into people’s hearts, but you have no vision. No plan for society beyond making a quick buck. I have a plan, and a vision of the world without the infection of quirks. A vision you no doubt agree with, being quirkless yourself, if the rumors are true.” He clenched his fist. “Put yourself under me, and I’ll show you how well I can use you.”

“I think you deliberately misunderstand me, Overhaul,” Izuku grit his teeth, “I have no intention to join any group, nor do I particularly care what happens to *society*, as you put it. I’m not even trying to be the leader of the underground! I am more than happy to let you or Shigaraki or whoever the hell else has the desire for the throne take it. What *I* value is having the freedom and power to do what I want when I want to, and that sometimes means working with rival groups, so joining any organization would be counterproductive to my goals.”

He leaned forward, “And as for the issue of quirks, don’t presume that you know what I want. Quirks are tools, nothing more, nothing less. I don’t hate them or see them as an *infection* that needs to be eradicated, unlike you. What I *do* hate, though, are people who act like the world belongs to them, simply because they have a powerful quirk. In other words, Overhaul, I hate people like you.” Izuku stood up, and walked toward the door, fingering his throwing knives and getting out of the range of Overhaul’s quirk, “So, no. I will not be joining your yakuza, and this meeting is over.”

Chronostatis tried to follow Mastermind as he left without being dismissed, but Overhaul simply held up a hand, “Don’t worry, Chrono. I have ways to convince him.” He glared at the door where Mastermind had disappeared, “Find out everything you can about Mastermind. He will be my disciple soon enough.”

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Inko walked home carrying a bag of groceries in each hand. Normally, she wouldn’t go to the store so late, but they were out of milk and she’d had a late shift at work, so here she was, walking back to the apartment an hour after dark. Hopefully Izuku would be home by the time she got there. He had been spending a lot more time out with his friends lately, which made her really happy, even though she hadn’t met any of them yet. Lately he’d even been texting a boy named Shouto almost constantly, something Inko had never seen him do before, not even with Katsuki. Maybe she should ask what Shouto’s favorite food was and have Izuku invite him to dinner? Maybe Himiko or Tomura would even join them! It would be nice to finally have faces to put to the names. All she knew about them so far was that Shouto was sweet, Himiko was high energy and Tomura was a little *too* into video games.

Maybe she should ask Izuku when their birthdays were? They could shop. For the perfect gifts together, maybe even make a day of it! It would be the perfect excuse to hang out of her son now that he was finally thriving and out the weird depression that had taken hold of him for a few months almost a year ago.

Inko couldn't help but be proud of her son and how he was finally living his best life because he gave up on that impossible dream. She had always done her best to discourage him from being a hero because it just wasn't a realistic dream for someone quirkless and she didn't want him to be disappointed. Above all, Inko just wanted Izuku to be safe, and that included him not trying to face down villains who were so much more powerful than he could ever hope to be. Inko didn't know what she would do if Izuku ever got hurt. After Hisashi's work transferred him shortly after Izuku's fourth birthday and his quirkless diagnosis, her baby was all she had. It was important that he stayed safe!

She knew that it had hurt him when he finally came to terms with the fact that his dream was impossible, but he got past it and now look! Izuku had friends now and he was so much happier than he had ever been while he was still trying to be a hero. And now that Izuku was finally happy, that meant that Inko could be too!

Suddenly, Inko felt a rough hand on her collar and she cried out as she was yanked backward into an alley. She tried to run but was suddenly hit by a wave of dizziness and nausea and it was all she could do to stay on her feet.

"Give me your money!"

"Ok!" She cried, dropping her groceries and taking out her wallet. What with both the darkness and the dizziness, she couldn't see her attackers clearly, but it looked like they all had bird mutation type quirks. No wonder they turned to mugging, it had always been difficult for obvious mutation types to find good jobs.

"Alright," a bored sounding voice said, "let's finish this up."

Inko flinched back as a hand reached for her, but the hand grabbed her anyway and suddenly she was engulfed in red hot pain. Inko didn't know how long she was in pain, but then it was over. She briefly realized she'd collapsed at some point and could hear her attackers' footsteps retreating. Once they were gone and she'd recovered a little, she felt around for her purse and grabbed her cell phone, which was miraculously still there.

"Hello, police?"

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"Mom?" Izuku cried out as he saw his mom sitting on the back of an ambulance talking to a police officer as a paramedic looked at her, "Mom, what happened?"

"I'm fine, Izuku." Inko said. "The paramedics say I'm better than normal. Even my old root canal somehow fixed itself up."

Izuku paused, "What happened?" he asked lowly.

"Midoriya? I'm Officer Sansa. Your mother appears to have been mugged," an officer with a cat head said, "although we're not sure what their motivations were. All her cards and cash are still in her wallet. We think they might simply enjoy causing pain, since one of their quirks seems to be causing an immense amount of pain without permanent damage."

Izuku was practically vibrating with rage at this point, "What did they do to you Mom?"

Inko shook her head, “One of them just touched me and everything kind of exploded in pain for a minute or two until everything was fine again and they left. I’m fine Izuku!”

Izuku did not think that this situation *was fine* by any stretch of the imagination. He didn’t care how long it took, he thought as he started to run his hands through his mother’s hair to comfort her, he would track down the thugs that hurt her and make them pay.

“Midoriya-san,” Officer Sansa asked, “can you give us any physical descriptions of your attackers?”

Izuku perked up as Inko shook her head, “It was dark and one of them had a quirk that made me really dizzy. The only thing I noticed was that they all had bird mutation quirks, so I assume they’re related.”

Izuku stilled. Bird mutation types, or just bird masks? A dizziness quirk, or a drunkenness quirk? A quirk that caused immense pain, or a quirk that was able to disassemble and reassemble matter to the point that even a decades old root canal was suddenly gone to the point that it seemed that it’d never been there?

Izuku wrapped his arms around his mom as she finally broke down and started to cry. This wasn’t a mugging, this was a threat. *Be careful, I know what’s important to you and I’m not afraid to kill to get what I want.*

Izuku’s eyes took on an intimidating fire. Overhaul had just made a huge mistake.

# Overhaul

## Chapter Summary

Izuku pays Overhaul back for threatening his mother.

## Chapter Notes

So, you might have noticed I added a violence warnings to this fic. I realized that a lot of people die in this story in sometimes very violent ways, so hopefully this will help so no one gets surprised. Speaking of warnings, there is blood in this chapter. A lot of blood.

It had been a month since Inko's "mugging", as the police had called it, and Izuku was finally ready. The day after his mom was attacked, Izuku had pretended to go back to Overhaul with his tail between his legs, but he was really playing the long game, making sure his mother was safe until he was ready to destroy the yakuza himself.

Being part of the yakuza was...interesting, for lack of a better word. For all that Overhaul bragged about "using him to his fullest potential" Izuku had basically been doing glorified busy work every time he was at the compound. He was seen as a 'new member' and so was at the bottom of the pecking order, a fact that irritated him to no end. He wasn't even allowed to be involved in real work of the yakuza. All he knew was Overhaul's glorified rhetoric about a *quirkless world*. It was getting really annoying.

Shouto had offered to come along and help him get his revenge, but Izuku had respectfully declined. Overhaul had threatened his *mother*, the only person who had even given a damn about him before he became a villain, so leaving the job to anyone else would have been supremely unsatisfying, even if that someone was close friend like Shouto.

Izuku pulled his mask up over his mouth and jumped down onto street level, staying in the shadows as he sneaked up on the guards. A few slit throats and a stolen keycard later, he was wandering the silent halls of the upper compound. He knew there were only a few guards on this level, with most of the Yakuza living and working in the labyrinth below, so it didn't take Izuku long to track down the dozen or so low ranking members on duty that night and take them out. A simple throwing knife through the eye or a slit throat was a quick enough death for most of them. Izuku wasn't about to waste time and energy playing when any of them could easily raise the alarm. Besides, these small fry were nothing more than collateral damage in his complete annihilation of Overhaul and an effective message to anyone else who might get it into their heads that it was a good idea to go after his mother. Izuku had bigger plans for the night.

It took him a few minutes to find the secret entrance to the rest of the compound since he'd never been allowed to find it unaccompanied, but it only slowed him down a little. He kept to the blindspots in the halls, silently killing everyone he came across until he found the barracks. He almost felt bad as he viciously slashed each one of the sleeping men's throats, but the feeling didn't

last long. Yeah, none of them had made the call to attack his mother, but they had all made it known in the past month exactly how they felt about *weak, quirkless people* like him. And they were following an idiotic psychopath, so there was that.

Izuku followed his same pattern as he gradually cleared the compound, picking the lock on every door and killing everyone inside. He hadn't been surprised to find a variety of labs tucked away, but was surprised at how little raw material they had stored. Shouldn't there be a lot more chemicals involved in the production of quirk erasing drugs?

He pocketed a few vials of the quirk eraser that he found in the lab and used them to coat some of his knives before heading toward Overhaul's room. The only other room left aside from his was a door that locked from the outside. Izuku didn't know what was in that room, but whatever it was would still be there after he had killed Overhaul and his inner circle.

The expendables all stood up when he entered the small guard room he had to go through to get to Overhaul and he smiled at their shocked expressions as they took in his blood soaked costume.

"Mastermind," Chronostasis said, carefully keeping his voice even, "you're not supposed to be here."

"You're right," Izuku smiled, "I'm not."

In a flash, Izuku had thrown two of the knives he'd dipped in quirk eraser at Setsuno and Sakaki, since their troublesome quirks could affect him directly. He smirked when Setsuno's eyes widened as he tried to steal the knife Izuku had just grabbed, only to be left grasping air.

"What?" He taunted. "Having trouble with your quirk?"

Rappa pounded on his chest, "I'm not! And even if I was, I wouldn't need a quirk to kill the likes of *you* ! Just be sure to give me a good fight first!"

Izuku simply dodged out of the way of Rappa's quirked punch and attacked the other members. He first ran toward Tengai, who threw up a barrier to block him, but neglected to remember that Rappa was running after him full speed. Izuku smirked as he dodged at the last minute, subjecting Tengai's barrier to the full force of Rappa's quirk, which broke through it almost immediately, allowing Izuku to step right up behind Tengai and slit his throat.

Rappa gave a scream of rage and ran at Izuku again, but he was already on the move, this time headed toward Hojo, who had already covered his body in crystals. Just like before, Izuku waited until the last minute before dodging and letting Rappa tear through his opponent's defenses before finishing him off.

"Enough! He's using you to hurt your own men!" Chronostasis yelled and extended the hour hand of his hair to hit Rappa, immobilizing him. Izuku didn't waste the opportunity and Rappa was dead before anyone had the chance to blink. Tabe immediately ran at him, mouth open wide, but Izuku simply shoved a knife down his throat before he had the chance to bite down. Four down, four to go, five if Izuku was counting Chronostasis.

Katsukami ran to try to touch Izuku and sap his energy, but Izuku didn't let him get in close, dodging while slashing with one of his longer knives and following it up with a throwing knife to the back of the head.

"Who will you be going for next?" Nemoto asked.

"It doesn't matter much at this point." Izuku answered honestly. He didn't have much of a choice,

afterall, “Your quirk doesn’t help you in combat and both Setsuno and Sakaki are functionally quirkless right now. I’ll beat you all easily.”

All three rushed him at once, trying to overwhelm him with numbers, but Izuku had analyzed all of their fighting styles extensively over the last month and had *much* more experience fighting quirkless than they did. Chronostasis also couldn’t hit him without the risk of hitting one of his teammates, a mistake he wasn’t about to make again, so the fight didn’t last long.

When they were all dead or bleeding out, Izuku finally turned to Chronostasis, who was staring at him in shock.

Izuku smiled and lazily tossed a knife at him, forcing him to dodge, “It’s a pretty cool quirk you’ve got there Chrono,” he tossed another knife, “too bad it’s got such a big weakness.”

Izuku forced Chronostasis to keep moving, which prevented him from using his quirk, all while Izuku gradually moved closer. After a few minutes, Chronostasis was panting and finally stood still, apparently deciding that the benefits of using his quirk outweighed the potential danger. It was the wrong decision. Izuku slashed his throat before Chronostasis had even had the chance to extend his hair.

Izuku straightened as he heard the door to Overhaul’s room open behind him.

“What is the meaning of this?” Overhaul looked on his dead underlings, crinkling his nose in disgust.

“The meaning of this,” Izuku said, carefully coating a knife in the stolen quirk eraser behind his back, “is that you threatened the wrong person.”

Overhaul sighed and removed his gloves, “It will be a shame to have to kill someone so uncontaminated, but oh well.”

He ran at Izuku, who watched him get closer without dodging. At the last moment, he ducked underneath Overhaul’s outstretched arm and sunk the knife into his gut. Overhaul let out a grunt, but simply slapped Izuku on the back.

Nothing happened.

“Nice quirk eraser you’ve developed, isn’t it?” Izuku taunted as Overhaul’s eyes widened. “Too bad you haven’t practiced being...perfect? Wasn’t that the word you used to describe people like me?”

Unlike his men’s, Overhaul’s death was not quick. Izuku took pleasure in slowly taking the man apart like he’d taken apart his mother. When he was finally done, Izuku gathered up all the knives he’d used during the fight and headed down the hall to the mysterious locked room. Whatever was inside must have been important if it was so close to Overhaul’s own residence, and maybe prone to escape if it had to locked inside the room. After picking the lock, Izuku quickly grabbed a knife and shifted into a battle stance. It paid to be prepared for anything.

Izuku was not prepared. He didn’t know what he was expecting, but it definitely wasn’t a little girl huddled on the bed staring up at him with wide red eyes. Izuku was suddenly very aware of the fact that he was covered in blood and holding a knife. The little girl seemed very aware of that as well, if the way her wide eyes were tracking his every movement was any indication.

Izuku hurriedly put his knife away, putting his hands out in front of him in a belated attempt to be non-threatening, “Hey there. I’m not gonna hurt you.” The girl didn’t look like she believed him,

but she also didn't start screaming, so Izuku figured that was as good as it was gonna get. "My name is Mastermind, what's your name?"

The girl fiddled with her hands in her lap and now that he'd gotten over the shock of seeing a little girl locked in the middle of a Yakuza compound, he noticed that her arms and legs were covered in dirty bandages, just barely covered in most places by her too thin nightgown.

"Eri." Her voice was small and hesitant, like Izuku's had been when talking to teachers in middle school, and he felt his heart break. What was she doing here?

"Eri, is it ok if I sit next to you?"

Eri hesitated, but nodded, allowing Izuku to sit on the bed beside her. He pointedly ignored the fact that he was staining the sheets red as he looked her in the eyes, "What are you doing here, Eri?"

Eri trembled for a solid minute before replying, "...I have to help Overhaul. I'm sick."

Izuku tried to ignore his anger. He didn't need Eri getting any more scared than she already was, "What do you mean, Eri? What did you have to help Overhaul with?"

She tugged at the bandages on her arms and Izuku's eyes widened at the deep lacerations underneath, "My sickness makes other people not sick anymore, so Overhaul takes the sickness from my blood so he can put in other people so they're not sick."

Izuku's eyes widened. The quirk eraser he'd stolen was made from Eri's blood? Izuku wanted to march back to Overhaul's body and somehow bring him back to life so he could torture him to death all over again. What kind of monster tortures a little girl to get his hands on her quirk?

Izuku looked at her softly, "You don't have to help Overhaul anymore, ok Eri? Overhaul's gone."

Eri looked Izuku up and down, wide eyes taking in the blood and her lip started to tremble. Izuku panicked, worrying he'd said the exact wrong thing. What if Overhaul had somehow convinced Eri that he loved her and he had just killed the one person she thought meant the world to her? Why was he so stupid!

Suddenly, Eri's arms wrapped around his waist and she started sobbing, "Thank you" she sniffled quietly, either not noticing or not caring that she was getting blood all over her hair and nightgown. Izuku awkwardly patted her on the back as he waited for her tears to pass. This poor girl had been through too much already.

That brought him to the question of what was he going to do with her. He couldn't just bring her home. His mother and the cops would ask where he'd gotten her and it could reveal his identity all too quickly if they linked Eri back to Overhaul. Even if that wasn't an issue, Izuku wasn't ready for the responsibility that would come with raising a traumatized child. He wasn't about to entrust her to another villain group either. They would just use her for her quirk the way Overhaul had. Izuku sighed, there was only one option left.

He gently grabbed Eri's shoulders and pushed her back so that he could look into her eyes, "Hey Eri. Are you ready to leave?"

Eri nodded eagerly, eyes bright with hope and Izuku knew that if she still knew how to, she'd probably be smiling. Izuku lifted her up so that she was clinging to his back before making his way outside. He wished that he'd left a path cleared of bloodshed, but he hadn't exactly been planning on carrying a five-year-old on the way out. If anything, he at least hoped Eri realized that the bodies they passed meant no one would be coming after her. It was probably a sick sort of comfort,

but there was a chance it might make the whole ordeal less traumatizing.

The sky was just starting to get brighter as it got closer to sunrise and they had an excellent view as they ran across the rooftops toward Nighteye's agency. Izuku had figured out that Nighteye was investigating Overhaul while he was gathering his own info on him. The hero didn't know about Eri, as far as he knew, but despite his serious appearance, he had a good heart. Hopefully, he'd be able to help Eri recover and find a good home that would protect her from anyone who wanted to use her.

When they reached the roof of the agency, Izuku slowly crouched down and pulled Eri off his back so she was facing him. He cringed at how she looked like she'd just come off the set of a horror movie, but sighed when he realized that that wasn't too far from the truth. At least none of the blood was hers.

"The man who works here is a hero who was investigating Overhaul." Izuku looked her in the eyes. "He's going to take good care of you and make sure no one hurts you ever again. Ok?"

Eri nodded, but hesitated a moment, fiddling with the hem of her blood-stained nightgown.

"Mastermind-sama?" Eri's quiet voice trembled slightly. "Why did you save me?"

Izuku hesitated for a moment before deciding that Eri had already been fed far too many lies in her short life, "To be honest, I wasn't trying to save you. Overhaul threatened someone I care about and I couldn't let that stand. But I'm glad I was able to save you, even if it wasn't why I originally killed Overhaul. I know what it's like to have people hurt you just because they can and it's something I wouldn't ever wish on anyone."

Eri stared up at him with wide eyes. "You were hurt too?" Izuku nodded and her voice dropped to a whisper. "But you're so strong."

"Even strong people get hurt sometimes, and sometimes the people who hurt them try to make them feel weak. That's what happened to you and me." Izuku smiled and ruffled her hair. "We're strong people and it's not our fault that others chose to hurt us."

Eri's eyes lit up, "I'm strong?" she asked in wonder.

Izuku laughed, "The strongest." He stood up. "I'm happy I was able to meet you, Eri. Wait a few minutes after I'm gone, then knock on the door and tell them what happened. The heroes here will take good care of you."

Eri looked up at him for a long moment before flinging herself over to hug his legs, "Thank you so much Mastermind-sama! Thank you!"

Izuku smiled and ruffled her hair again, "No problem, Eri. Be safe."

Eri nodded and let go, waving to him as he got a running start and jumped onto the next roof. He only ran a few roofs away before stopping and crouching down. Eri was still standing on the roof, looking small against the skyline. She waited another two minutes before walking over to the door he had shown her. She hesitated a long moment before pounding hard with both fists.

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Bubble-Girl thought it was much too early to be dealing with anything, especially teenage pranks. And it had to be teenagers, she thought as she trudged up the stairs, coffee in hand. Who else would climb up to the roof of a hero agency just to knock on the door? If it was anyone *normal*, they would knock on the front door at a *much* more reasonable hour.



She threw open the door, already mentally preparing the rant she'd give to the hooligans who had dared to disturb her this early in the morning, but stopped short when she saw a scared little girl who couldn't be more than five with blood smeared all over her.

Bubble Girl dropped her coffee.

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Izuku smiled as he watched one of Nighteye's sidekicks usher Eri inside. The heroes would undoubtedly set up a perimeter to try to track him down, but he should be able to avoid all that if he left right now. He headed back to his base to shower and get dressed for school, sending a text to his mom telling her that he had gone for an early morning run.

# Eri-chan

## Chapter Summary

The police and heroes have a chat with Eri.

## Chapter Notes

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

“Is this her?”

Tsukauchi looked through the glass at the girl Nighteye had brought in, who he’d said was named Eri. Officers had already taken samples of the blood covering her, but they hadn’t had time to clean her off yet, so most of it had already dried to a dirty brown and was starting to flake. Recovery Girl was on her way to take a look at her, since they didn’t know if Eri would be safe in a hospital because of her ties to the Yakuza.

As soon as Eri had mentioned that Overhaul and all of his men were killed by Mastermind, Nighteye had sent his sidekicks and a whole team of police officers to investigate the base, only to find a bloodbath. There hadn’t been a single person left alive, with the exception of Eri, and Overhaul himself had obviously been tortured to death, Mastermind’s signature M carved into his body over a hundred times. The police were still in the process of taking pictures of the scene before they could remove the bodies and they had already had to set up a perimeter to keep out the media, who had flocked to the compound as if they’d smelled the blood.

Tsukauchi sighed and walked into the interrogation room, Nighteye and Nedzu right behind him. He hated that they had to interrogate this little girl who had obviously been through too much in the last 24 hours, but anything they could find on Mastermind put them one step closer to discovering his identity, which was essential to resolving the high stakes hostage situation he had set up.

“Hello, Eri.” He spoke softly, sitting down across from her and putting his files for both Mastermind and Overhaul down on the table. “My name is Detective Tsukauchi, this is Nedzu and you already know Sir Nighteye. Is it alright if we ask you a few questions about how you ended up on Nighteye’s roof this morning?”

Eri nodded, her wide eyes scanning the room in a clear display of hypervigilance. Seriously, Tsukauchi knew that Mastermind was depraved, but traumatizing a child? That was a new low.

“Who left you on the roof, Eri?” He asked.

“He, um, said his name was Mastermind.”

*True*

“What did he look like?”

“He was short and, um, he had pretty green eyes. He smiled a lot too, I think. He had a mask covering his mouth, but, um, his eyes were smiling.”

*True*

Tsukauchi looked at Nedzu and Nighteye who returned his glance and nodded. It matched what they knew of him, so it probably really was Mastermind, but why would a villain, especially one as powerful as Mastermind, drop a little girl off at a hero agency when he could have just kept her for himself or sold her off?

“Do you know why Mastermind kidnapped you?” Nighteye asked with a frown.

Eri looked confused, “He, um, didn’t kidnap me. Mastermind-sama saved me.”

*True*

Nighteye’s eyes widened and Tsukauchi knew that he looked much the same.

Nedzu seemed to be the one who maintained the most composure in light of this new revelation, “What did he save you from?”

“Um, Overhaul...he was a bad man. He told me I was sick and that’s why he hurt me.”

*True*

Eri was starting to tremble and Tsukauchi realized that she was more terrified of Overhaul than she was of Mastermind. The child was obviously traumatized, but the question now was who was responsible for that.

Nedzu hummed, “Do you know why he saved you?”

Eri nodded, “Mastermind-sama, um, he said that he wasn’t trying to save me. Um, he’d already killed all the, um, the bad men by the time he found me.”

*True*

“Did he tell you why he killed Overhaul and his men?” Nighteye asked.

Eri frowned, “Um, I think, um, he said...” Eri’s frown deepened as she tried to remember. “Mastermind-sama said that Overhaul had, um, threatened someone close to him? I think he killed him so he couldn’t hurt them anymore.”

*True*

Tsukauchi rapidly scribbled that down in Mastermind’s file. Maybe they could find people who Overhaul had threatened and it could lead them to Mastermind’s identity. It was a thin lead, since Overhaul had undoubtedly threatened a lot of people as a Yakuza boss, but it was more than they’d had in months.

“Did Mastermind tell you anything else? Maybe why he decided to leave you with Sir Nighteye?”

Eri fisted her hands in her dirty nightgown and bit her lip, “He said he was like me...” she whispered.

*True*

“What do mean?” Nedzu asked patiently.

Eri stayed silent for a long moment and Tsukauchi was starting to worry that they’d pushed her too

far when she started speaking again, “Mastermind-sama said that, um, that people hurt him too. He said that, um, strong people get, um, get hurt sometimes and he said, um, that I was strong too, just like him.”

*True*

She looked up at them. “Was he telling the truth? Do strong people get hurt sometimes, too?”

Nedzu took her hand and smiled, “Yes, even strong people sometimes get hurt by others. It wasn’t your fault that Overhaul hurt you and it doesn’t mean you’re weak. If people were weak simply because others chose to hurt them, I wouldn’t have ever been able to become a hero, because they hurt me too.”

Eri’s eyes brightened and there was a knock on the door, “Is everything alright, dearies?” Recovery Girl poked her head through the door, “I’m here to take a look at that little girl.”

Tsukauchi nodded, “I believe that we’ve asked all the questions we had about Mastermind.” He turned to face Eri. “Although, we’ll probably have to ask you more about Overhaul and his operation. But that can wait for another day.”

“Alright then! Everyone out!” Recovery Girl said sternly as Eri started to shake and she rapped Tsukauchi on the head with her cane, “I need to check on the patient and you all are going to make her claustrophobic. Out!”

They quickly complied, leaving Recovery Girl to comfort Eri and examine any injuries she might have. As soon as they were outside, they stopped and looked at each other.

“Mastermind was most likely a victim of abuse as a child.” Nedzu said. “If not at the hands of his parents, then likely at the hands of teachers or peers. This abuse might explain why he goes after heroes, since it is likely he wished heroes would save him, but they never did.”

Tsukauchi nodded, “I’ll run a list of domestic violence survivors with green eyes. That’ll at least give us a start, since it’s most likely the violence happened in the home, and then we can expand the search if that doesn’t turn up any leads.”

“Make sure you cross-reference that list with anyone with connections to the Yakuza.” Nighteye said. “Mastermind only got involved with this because Overhaul threatened someone, which means he does have people he cares about. Whether they know his identity is still up in the air.”

Nedzu clapped his hands together, “Perfect! I do believe we are closer to catching this monster now than ever before!”

Tsukauchi tried to rub the budding headache out of his forehead, this case was terrible. Nothing for months and then their best leads come from an unlucky little girl. He needed a break, “Hey Nedzu, how is your search for Todoroki coming?”

Nedzu frowned and shook his head, “Not well. The league has practically disappeared since we took down All for One and there are no leads on any of the members. I hate thinking of one of my best students being held captive for this long.” He shivered slightly. “But the alternative is worse. At this point we are having to confront the possibility that Todoroki may be dead. With Shigaraki’s disintegration quirk to dispose of the body, we would never even know.”

Tsukauchi sighed, “Do you have any leads on why he was taken? Has Endeavor received any ransom demands?”

Nedzu shook his head, “We still think that is most likely why he was taken, but perhaps they are waiting for things to calm down a bit before they enact the second part of their plan.” He sighed. “Endeavor isn’t helping the investigation either. He simply blames us for letting his son get kidnapped and then not being able to find him. He doesn’t seem to care that we have zero leads and he puts everyone on edge, always hanging around and saying hateful things whenever he is at UA. Having a student kidnapped is a nightmare scenario and something I hoped never to have to deal with when I became principal, but it’s even worse that the victim is so high profile.”

“How are the other students dealing with it?” Nighteye asked.

“Not very well.” Nezu frowned. “We have every member of class 1A meeting with Hound Dog weekly, but they still feel Todoroki’s absence sharply. I believe they have started mourning him. The last time I checked, they had set up a small memorial on his desk. They change the flowers every few days. Other than that, they have been adjusting well to the dorm system and there haven’t been any more major incidents, so it’s going about as well as we can hope for.”

“It’ll take time.” Nighteye said sadly. “Hopefully we will find him soon. If what we just learned leads us to Mastermind, perhaps he’ll be able to lead us to the league.”

Tsukauchi nodded absently. He couldn’t let himself get his hopes up that they would find All Might’s killer, not when Mastermind was so slippery. Who knows, Todoroki had a strong quirk, so maybe he would be able to escape and find his way back to them. But Eri’s words echoed in his head as he said goodbye to Nighteye and Nedzu and sat down to do paperwork on the Overhaul massacre.

*Even strong people get hurt sometimes.*

## Chapter End Notes

I created a series for my works!

# Home

## Chapter Summary

Izuku hangs out with some of his friends.

## Chapter Notes

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

Izuku and Shouto were busy making katsudon in the kitchen of the apartment that acted as Mastermind's base while Toga and Twice chattered away on the couch and Dabi glared at them from the armchair.

"And then, he had the audacity to look surprised when I stabbed him!" Toga smiled widely, showing off her fangs.

"That makes sense. You're lying!" Twice was wearing his mask inside, but no one really minded, since it made him more comfortable. Izuku had a theory that breaking his arm might help Twice realize that he was real and not a clone, but that wasn't really something he was comfortable bringing up with Twice, even if they could tentatively be called friends.

Toga nodded seriously, "Yep! It was such a cute expression, too! All wide eyed and bloody! It was a shame it didn't last longer!"

Dabi groaned and threw a pillow at them, "Ugh, just get a room you two! Just because you decided to get together does *not* mean the rest of us want to be subjected to your crazy bullshit."

"Be nice, Dabi." Izuku wiped his hands on a towel as he walked in from the kitchen. "I for one, am very happy Himko has finally found someone as crazy as she is."

"Aw, Mind-chan!" Himiko jumped up and threw her arms around him. "That's the nicest thing you've ever said to me!"

Izuku laughed as Dabi rolled his eyes, "Go ahead and laugh Midoriya, it's not like you have to live with them."

Shouto came up behind Izuku and raised an eyebrow at his brother, "I'm pretty sure you're just jealous cause there's no one as crazy as you."

"That's it!" Dabi jumped up and grabbed the seat cushion from his chair and ran at Shouto, whose eyes widened as he dodged Dabi and grabbed a pillow from the waiting Twice.

"Ten out of ten! Hit him harder, you're so weak!" Twice cheered. "Go Shouto! Go Dabi! Be nice you two, stop fighting!"

Himiko and Izuku were holding their sides laughing as Shouto and Dabi chased each other around the apartment. From what Shouto had said in their text conversations, Izuku had gathered that Endeavor hadn't ever really let either of them just play around and be kids, instead insisting they train constantly while isolating them from their other siblings and from kids their own age. Once the rest of the league had discovered this fact, they had taken it upon themselves to introduce the

two to everything they missed out on during their childhoods, resulting in them being the second and third most immature members of the league. First place still went to Shigaraki.

Izuku ducked back into the kitchen to check on the food, “Alright you two, calm down and come set the table. Food’s ready!”

Dabi reluctantly put his cushion back and Shouto looked like he was about to do the same, but at the last minute hit Dabi in the face while he was unarmed.

“Hey! You little...”

“Boys...” Izuku said warningly. Shouto stuck his tongue out at Dabi before tossing the pillow down on the couch and walking to the kitchen. Himiko handed Dabi a stack of plates before turning to fix Shouto’s hair, which had gotten disheveled during the pillow fight. He’d cut it shortly after joining the league and it was now an undercut which he usually wore up in a pompadour style. The way he styled it made the red and white swirl together while still remaining mostly distinct. The first time Izuku had seen it was when he’d gone over to the league’s new hideout about three weeks after the move and he’d promptly had to leave until he’d gotten his blush under control. Himiko still hadn’t let him live it down.

Dinner at his mother’s house was always a quiet affair, just the two of them, but dinner with his friends was loud. Between Toga’s laughter, Dabi’s sarcasm, Twice’s personalities, and Shouto’s conspiracy theories, it couldn’t be called dinner so much as *controlled chaos*, but Izuku wouldn’t have it any other way.

“I’m telling you,” Shouto pointed his chopsticks at Dabi, “there is an extra-governmental group constantly watching our every move through Feel-Good Incorporated’s satellites!”

Dabi sighed and took another bite, “Why in the world would a multi billion dollar tech company sell out to a secret organization?”

“Maybe they were promised power.” Shouto shrugged.

“But they already have power and they already have money.” Izuku said. “What could this hypothetical secret organization possibly have to offer that would convince a respectable company to do something so illegal?”

“Respectable? As if!” Twice said. “I’ve never heard of a better company!”

“Oooh!” Toga pounded on the table as her face lit up, “What if it’s not just Feel-Good Inc.? What if there’s all sorts of big companies helping them and it’s like the latest fashion trend for the rich? Those don’t make any sense either and some of them *should* be illegal.”

Shouto looked at Toga, awestruck, while Dabi groaned, “Toga! Don’t encourage him!”

“I like the way you think!” A small smile stole across Shouto’s face and Izuku felt his heart skip a beat. He took another too-hot bite. Maybe he’d be able to pass his blush off as from the heat?

By the end of dinner, the theory had somehow grown to include a worldwide conspiracy and aliens that worshipped the ancient Egyptians. Toga, along with Izuku and both of Twice’s personalities, thought it was hilarious and Dabi looked exhausted. He looked at Shouto incredulously as he finished wrapping up a convincing argument that Officer Sansa from the police department was actually an ancient cat god in disguise and thus the reason that the aliens had chosen Japan as their home base.

“How are we even related?”

Shouto smiled and shrugged, gathering up the dirty dishes and heading over to the sink. Toga volunteered to dry, since she was finding Shouto’s theories too entertaining to stop. The others put away the leftovers and went to go watch the news.

“Toga, can I ask you a question?” Shouto asked as he handed her a plate.

Toga hummed, “Does it have to do with if I’m an ancient cat god too?”

Shouto chuckled, a reaction that was becoming more natural the longer he was out from under his father’s thumb, “No, but we should come back to that another day. Umm...” He busied himself with scrubbing a pan, trying to work out exactly what he wanted to say. “Why did you decide to start dating Twice?”

Toga thought for a minute, “I guess I didn’t really think about it. We’re best friends and I feel really comfortable around him, so it just seemed like the natural next step. Well, that and,” she shrugged, “like Mind-chan said, it takes a special kind of crazy to fall in love with me. Twice and I have that in common, so it feels like we’ve gotten really close because of it. Then, with all the time stuck inside while we were waiting for Sensei’s capture to blow over, I guess we just got to know each other better.” She shrugged again. “I don’t know, it’s just kinda weird. Why? You got your eye on someone?”

Shouto took his left hand out of the water so he wouldn’t accidentally boil it. “N-no! Why would you think that?”

Toga cackled, “Yeah, sure Shouto, you’re just bringing up romance for no reason!” She winked at him. “If it’s any consolation, I think he likes you too.”

“I don’t have any idea what you’re talking about.” He denied, but knew it wasn’t very convincing, considering the fact that his face was bright red.

Toga laughed, “Sure you don’t...”

“Himiko! We need to leave for our date night!” Twice came in and hugged her from behind. “We have plenty of time, there’s always tomorrow.”

Toga gasped in excitement, “Oh yeah, I saw this super cute boy earlier I want to kill! Come on Jin, let’s hurry!” She grabbed his hand and dragged him out the door, giving Izuku a quick hug on her way out.

Shouto finished up the dishes, then joined Izuku and Dabi, who were sitting at the table, wiping his hands nervously on a rag as he sat down. Even though he and Dabi had spent weeks discussing this and Shouto was sure it was what he wanted to do, it was still nerve wracking.

Dabi looked at him and raised his eyebrows, asking for silent confirmation. When Shouto nodded he turned to Izuku, “Midoriya, um, we actually wanted to talk business for a bit, if that would be ok?”

Izuku looked a bit surprised, but nodded, leaning forward in his seat, “What’s up?”

Shouto took a deep breath, no going back, “How much would you charge us for a plan to kill Endeavor?”

Izuku hummed and nodded, “I was wondering when you two would ask. Will the rest of the league



be participating as well, or will it just be the two of you?"

"Just the two of us, if possible." Dabi said. "We already cleared it with Shigaraki, since it'll probably be associated with the league whether or not the other members are there, but...this is personal, so we want to do it ourselves. I'm sure you can understand that."

Izuku nodded again, "Yeah, I get it, it was the same for me with Overhaul." He turned to Shouto. "It's a pretty big crime for your debut, Shouto. Are you sure you don't want to start with something smaller?"

Shouto shook his head. He'd considered it, just starting off with robberies or something until he got used to being a villain, but, "I want my debut to have an impact. If the first thing I do as a villain is kill my father, then it sends a message, not only to him, but to all of hero society that *he's* the one who drove me to this. It wouldn't have the same effect if I started off with any other crime."

"I think a hero student turning villain would have an impact either way," Izuku smiled, "but I agree that doing it this way will be the most impactful." He pulled out a notebook and pencil. "I'm proud of you Shouto."

Shouto smiled at the praise, "Thanks, Izuku. It means a lot."

"So," Dabi looked at Izuku, "how much is this plan going to cost us?"

Izuku looked at him like he'd grown a second head, "Oh, I wouldn't dream of charging you for this one."

"What?!" Shouto couldn't believe his ears. Surely Izuku wouldn't help kill the number one hero for free?

Izuku smiled, "You're my friend, Shouto, and you deserve payback for what that bastard did to you." He started scribbling down ideas.

"No." Shouto said. "It's too much. At least let us pay you something!"

Izuku laughed and shook his head, "Nope! Just consider it an early birthday present or something."

Shouto glared at him, "My birthday isn't for months."

Izuku shrugged, "Maybe it's for Dabi's birthday, then."

"His birthday is after mine."

"I don't care!" Izuku looked at him as Dabi lost control of his laughter. "Seriously, Shouto. It's the least I can do."

Shouto pouted, but knew he wasn't going to be able to change Izuku's mind. Izuku smiled widely as he realized he'd won, "So, have you thought about a villain alias yet? You should probably have that picked out before your debut."

Shouto shook his head, "Honestly, I hadn't really thought about it. I've just been going by Shouto."

"No! That just won't do!" Izuku shook his head "You need a name that strikes fear into the hearts of your enemies. Think about what you'd want on your wanted poster!"

Shouto just looked at Izuku confused, "Why? Wouldn't any name strike fear into people's hearts if I do things people are afraid of?"

Izuku groaned and hit his head against the table while Dabi laughed, “No, I’ve got the perfect name for you! Peppermint boy!”

Shouto scowled and Izuku raised his head up to reveal a terrifying glint in his eye, “No, what about Endeavwhore.”

Dabi grinned, “Daddy Issues!”

“Father Killer!”

“Ice Princess!”

“Don’t I get any say in this?” Shouto grumbled.

“Nope!” Izuku and Dabi said in perfect unison and then Dabi gasped in delight, “I’ve got it! Icythot!”

Izuku had tried taking a drink of water, but ended up snorting it out his nose.

“You two are terrible.” Shouto shook his head. “We should just leave now and prevent a disaster. Besides, Shigaraki doesn’t want us home too late.”

Dabi didn’t stop laughing, but stood up and grabbed his coat, “See you later Midoriya! Don’t get into too much trouble!”

“Me? Trouble?” Izuku said innocently. “I would never!”

Shouto shook his head, “Yeah, cause you’re just a paragon of perfection.”

Izuku gave him a bright smile that made his heart skip a beat, “Obviously! I’ll send you the completed plan within the next week or so and we can go over and see if you want to make any changes. And keep thinking about a villain name!”

“Alright, alright! I get it!” Shouto said. “See you later, Izuku.”

The door shut behind them and Shouto pulled up his hood to hide his distinctive hair. Beside him, Dabi had already pulled a medical mask over his scars.

“He must really like you, you know.” Dabi said as they started walking.

Shouto looked at him in confusion, “What? Who?”

Dabi rolled his eyes, “Midoriya. He never gives plans away for free. And he lets you call him by his first name. If that isn’t love, I don’t know what is.”

Shouto sighed, “With our family, I don’t think either of us would know love if it bit us in the butt.”

Dabi shrugged, “Fair enough. But still, he must really care about you, even if it’s just as a friend.”

Shouto paused and looked up, back at Izuku’s apartment building, “I hope you’re right.”

Just letting people know that, yes, I am aware of the app situation and no, I'm not planning on restricting my fics.

# Endeavor

## Chapter Notes

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

Endeavor was hosting a press conference.

He practically growled when yet another reporter had the audacity to question his property damage. Seriously? Who cared if a few buildings burned down as long as he put those villain scum where they belonged? He wouldn't even be holding this press conference but his PR team insisted that it was important to be visible if he wanted to maintain his place as the number one hero, especially since some idiot wannabe reporter had released his *sealed* property damage reports yesterday. He was going to find whatever idiot thought *that* was a good idea and ruin their career, but first, he had a press conference to get through.

"Endeavor, what do you have to say about your missing son, Shouto? Are you any closer to finding him?"

Endeavor grit his teeth. Of course they were trying to bait him by reminding him that his masterpiece was still missing, "There have been no leads at this time, but I assure you that I *will* find Shouto and bring him home. Those villains are going to regret taking my son."

"Well, that's rather rude, isn't it Father?" All eyes went to the speaker and Endeavor's eyes widened as he saw his son walking up behind the mass of reporters, the villain Dabi smirking beside him, "If you wanted to talk to me so badly, you could have just asked. No point in making threats if you can't follow through with them."

The reporters parted to let Shouto and Dabi through, most scrambling to get out of the way of a known villain while the braver ones shoved mics in Shouto's face. Both kinds were ignored as Shouto and Dabi continued moving toward Endeavor, staring at him steadily. Endeavor cursed. He wanted to attack Dabi, but couldn't risk harming Shouto, not to mention the impact it would have on his rating if any of these stupid reporters ended up as collateral damage.

Shouto had changed since he last saw him. He'd cut his hair, for one, wearing it in some ridiculous style that was popular among the uncultured masses for some reason. Endeavor scowled. He'd have to make sure Shouto grew his hair out again so he looked dignified and set himself apart from the rabble. He also carried himself with more confidence, which Endeavor would be almost proud of if his masterpiece wasn't walking side by side with a villain without attacking him.

Shouto's outfit was frankly ridiculous, it was almost as if he'd picked it out to *match Dabi*, but that couldn't be right. His masterpiece would never sink so low, so it was probably some horrific coincidence or something the villains had forced him into. He wore a dark red tank top and black jeans with holes in them. He'd paired the outfit with a billowing navy overcoat similar to Dabi's, except without sleeves, showing off his muscular arms. Another unfortunate choice Endeavor would have to beat out of him.

Shouto felt powerful. He could hear whispers running through the crowd, wondering if he'd escaped and what he was doing with a member of the league. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see a few horrified expressions as some of the smarter reporters connected the dots. Good.

Endeavor was scowling at him, most likely judging his new aesthetic and fantasizing about the best way to beat it out of him. Too bad he'd never get the chance. He could see Endeavor mentally

weighing the benefits of flat out attacking Dabi right then, but Shouto knew his father wouldn't be able to without risking his ever important popularity rating. Endeavor was predictable, if nothing else.

It was going to make him easy to kill.

"Shouto. I give you permission to freeze that villain." Oh, so that's how Endeavor was going to play this, huh? Just give Shouto emergency permission, then he won't have to worry about his popularity going down even if there was collateral damage because what father wouldn't encourage his son to protect himself?

Shouto gave his best innocently confused expression, "But, Father, why would I attack my own brother?"

Whispers broke out among the reporters and Shouto glared at Endeavor, "Oh, that's right. I don't think you ever told them about Touya, did you? Afterall, he didn't have the *perfect quirk* like I did," Shouto spat, "he was just another one of our mother's failures. Isn't that what you told us growing up?"

"Hey Dad." Dabi smiled. "Did you miss me?"

Some of the reporters were on their phones, trying to figure out if Touya Todoroki really existed. The records wouldn't be too difficult to find, Izuku had made sure of that. Endeavor himself looked like he'd seen a ghost, which in a way, Shouto supposed he had. It must be difficult to have the runaway son you'd written off as dead come back into your life as a villain.

"By the way Father, I won't be... how did you put it? Ah, that's right, *coming home* anytime soon. In fact, I don't intend to come home at all." He felt a thrill at Endeavor's enraged expression. "I'm not just Shouto anymore." Shouto said, tossing his arms out to his sides dramatically as he stared down his father, "I go by Freezerburn now."

In unison, both he and Dabi shot fire at Endeavor, who simply scowled and remained unmoved. Some of the smarter reporters started to run away and Shouto rolled his eyes and froze them in place. Their plan relied on having a *captive* audience, after all.

"Ah, ah, ah! We can't have that!" Dabi sent a jet of superheated flame out to the side and ignited a trail of gasoline they had set before the press conference, creating a massive wall of flame around the area. The reporters started to scream and push against each other as they realized they were boxed in.

"Give up this childish rebellion, Shouto." Endeavor's voice rose above the sounds of the flames, "I don't know what poisonous lies this man been telling you, but I created you to be a hero, not whatever this is. Don't ruin your future."

The media had started to calm down despite the hostage situation and had their cameras trained on Shouto, waiting for his next move. He returned his father's glare, "What future? My future as a hero? Or a future as your masterpiece?" Endeavor's eyes widened minutely. "Either way, it's no great loss. I didn't ask for either one."

"Shouto..." Endeavor growled, but Shouto ignored him, making sure to speak loud enough that the cameras could hear him.

"You were the one that forced my mother into a marriage she didn't want, just to get your hands on her quirk. You were the one that isolated me from the world from the moment my quirk manifested

so that others wouldn't *get in my way*. You were the one who beat me black and blue every day of my childhood and called it training."

The only sounds that could be heard were the roar of the flames and the approaching sirens. The media held their breath as they waited to see how Endeavor would respond to his accusations.

"Come home, Shouto. You *will* become a hero."

Shouto sighed and shook his head, "If being a hero means being like you, I'd rather be a villain." He looked up at his father, "At least I'm being honest about who I really am."

"Enough, Shouto." Endeavor growled. "I will not stand for this!"

"Then fall." Shouto stomped down with his right foot and sent a river of ice toward the podium his father was standing behind, encasing it in solid ice. Endeavor simply kicked the block, knocking it to the floor where it shattered with an icy crash. He ran at Shouto, but had temporarily forgotten about Dabi, who came at him from behind, barbecuing his back with blue fire.

"Hmph," Endeavor turned toward Dabi with contempt, "did you forget that never worked when you were younger, Touya?"

"Oh, I'm just warming up!" Dabi taunted. "Besides, you can't even go all out right now because of all these reporters, so you can't hurt me either."

Endeavor shot a ball of flame at Dabi, who dodged to stand beside Shouto in front of the reporters, effectively using them as a shield.

"If we're going to fight, let's fight!" Endeavor yelled. "Only cowards use hostages."

"And only cowards beat their kids, so I guess that makes us even!" Dabi yelled back.

The sirens were getting closer now, they'd probably arrive in under a minute along with at least a handful of heroes. Shouto and Dabi exchanged a look before turning around and firing into the crowd, superheating the air, but being sure to keep their attacks weak enough that the reporters would only be injured, not killed. Arriving heroes wouldn't be distracted by rescuing corpses, after all.

Endeavor tackled Dabi, obviously seeing him as the bigger threat. Shouto rolled his eyes switched to ice. Might as well create a variety of injuries for the heroes to deal with when they arrived. Dabi and Endeavor grappled on the ground for a few moments before the fire trucks arrived and water started falling. A few hoses focused on carving pathways through the wall of flames, allowing some heroes through. They took one look at the hundred or so injured, screaming reporters and cursed.

"Let's take this elsewhere, yeah?" Dabi smiled. "You wouldn't want to get in the way of the rescue efforts, would you?"

He got up and ran away with Shouto on his heels, letting Endeavor chase after them. Apparently the area of the city they were in had already been evacuated, because they didn't run into anyone else. The other heroes apparently trusted that Endeavor could take care of his sons and didn't come to help. Everything was going according to the plan.

Shouto caught Dabi's eye and they headed into an evacuated office building, making it a few floors up before turning around and letting Endeavor catch up to them. Endeavor burst in through the door, rage mixing with betrayal in his eyes, which just made Shouto angrier. What right did he have

to feel betrayed after what he had done to them?

“You’re weak, boys.” Endeavor advanced with flames in both his hands. “I thought I raised you better than this.”

“Oh Dad.” Dabi replied, “This *is* what you raised us for.”

Endeavor sent a stream of fire at Dabi, who returned it with one of his own. The enclosed space turned into an oven as the flames burned hotter and the heat was unable to escape. Shouto used his right side to cool both himself and his brother, but left Endeavor to overheat.

“I’ve indulged you for far too long. Let’s finish this.” Endeavor said. “It’s a shame to have to damage my masterpiece, but it’s worth it to get you back on track. *Flashfire Fist: Prominence Burn!*”

Shouto created a massive dome of ice just in time to shield them from the attack, but it was vaporized almost instantly. The jet of fire ripped through the wall behind them and pushed both him and Dabi out onto the street. Shouto could dimly hear a helicopter recording the fight from above.

“Dabi? Are you ok?” Shouto crouched next to his brother, who was kneeling on the ground, and cooled the air around them.

“I’m fine, Shouto.” he grunted, standing up. “It’s not like I’m not used to it.”

“Surrender now.” Endeavor ordered, jumping down to the street and walking toward them. He was breathing hard and sweat had soaked through his costume, which was only made worse by the raging fire behind him. Shouto gave Dabi a small smile, who returned it with a grin and created a firewall around the three of them.

“Seems like you’re looking a little worse for the wear there, huh Dad?” Dabi taunted. “Isn’t Prominence Burn one of those special moves that makes you overheat?”

“It doesn’t matter, villain.” Endeavor kept advancing. “This fight won’t last much longer.”

“Are you sure about that?” Shouto stood up straight and frosted over his left side. “I can go on for hours.”

Endeavor scowled and shot another fireball at Shouto, who blocked it with an ice wall, “The more you use your fire, father, the more I can use my ice. You should know that, considering that it was you’re the one who wanted this quirk so badly.”

Endeavor was panting now, but stubbornly kept up his attacks, even letting loose another Prominence Burn, though the second was much weaker than the first had been. Shouto smiled slightly when Endeavor went to take a step, but stumbled, swaying slightly as he regained his balance. Shouto nodded at Dabi, who shot another fireball at Endeavor’s back. His heat exhaustion made him too slow to dodge it and he cried out as the flames burned him.

“How do you like *that* , Dad?” Dabi spat. “How does it feel to burn as you’re forced to overuse your quirk?”

Endeavor just grunted and shot another attack. Shouto glanced up at the news helicopter circling above them. They needed to wrap this up before more back up came.

“Well, Father,” Shouto started Endeavor in the eyes when his father whipped around to face him,

“I’d say goodbye, but it’s really more like good riddance.” He slammed his right foot to the ground and sent jagged spears of ice toward his father. Endeavor’s eyes widened and he tried to dodge, but between Dabi’s flame wall and his own relentless attacks, he had gotten far too hot to continue to the fight. A thick icicle hissed as it struck his chest, but as soon as it melted, it was replaced by another, each one penetrating deep into Endeavor’s torso.

Dabi extinguished his firewall and watched as Shouto’s ice stopped melting immediately and instead turned red as it was coated with blood. He went to stand next to Shouto and watch their father’s face as his angry expression turned to one of pain, then faded all together as the life left his eyes.

There was a long moment where everything was silent. Shouto couldn’t hear the roar of fires, or the sound of the helicopter, or the approaching sirens, or even Dabi asking him if he was ok. The only thing he could think was what he had just done. Shouto had actually killed that bastard for what he’d done to their family. Suddenly, he threw his head back and laughed. As hard as he tried, he couldn’t stop it as he ran out of breath and felt his cheeks start to ache as Dabi joined in.

He was free.

## Chapter End Notes

Shouto and Dabi's [villain outfits](#)



# Reactions

## Chapter Summary

The aftermath of Freezerburn's debut.

Ashido slammed the doors open and ran into the common room.

"Ashido!" Iida jumped up from his place on the couch, "Please be respectful of school property."

"Have you seen the news?" She leaned down with her hands on her knees as she caught her breath.

"Does it fucking *look* like we're watching the news, Pinky?" Bakugo rolled his eyes.

"Turn it on! Channel 5!"

Kirishima ignored Iida's protests that they should be doing homework instead of watching TV as he grabbed the remote and switched channel.

"...won't be...how did you put it? Ah, that's right, coming home anytime soon. In fact, I don't intend to come home at all." A chill went through the room and even Iida shut up as they watched Todoroki stare down Endeavor, a member of the league of villains by his side. "I go by Freezerburn now."

"He can't be implying..." Yaoyorozu glanced toward the others, who were all staring at the TV with horrified disbelief. A short scream from Ururaka drew her gaze back to the TV, where Todoroki and Dabi had released fire on Endeavor.

"No!" Kirishima shook his head. "It's gotta be a body double or...or they're threatening him or something. Todoroki wouldn't turn villain, he just wouldn't!"

"How do you know, ribbit?" Asui said. "None of us were very close to him and he never really showed a lot of emotion, so he could have been considering this for months and we wouldn't have known."

"As much as I hate to agree," Shinso drawled, "Tsu's right. None of us know him well enough to know if this is real or not."

"Well," Ururaka frowned and clenched her fists at her sides, "shouldn't we be giving him the benefit of the doubt? I choose to believe he's being forced and this is all just an act! As soon as the other heroes show up, they'll save him!"

"Come on, Ururaka!" Kaminari gestured wildly to the TV, where high walls of flame were keeping the reporters in place. "He's holding people hostage! What kind of a hero does that?"

"...as a hero? Or my future as your masterpiece? Either way it's no great loss..."

"Apparently a hero who doesn't see himself as one." Shinso said.

The class listened as Todoroki described the abuse he'd suffered and they felt their hearts sink. It

did sound like a realistic motivation if Todoroki really had decided to become a villain.

“That can’t be true.” Kirishima said. “He’s gotta be lying. I know Endeavor isn’t the nicest guy, but child abuse just isn’t manly.”

They all waited for Endeavor to deny that he had beat Todoroki and the mood in the room crumpled when he didn’t even bother. Ururaka burst into tears while Asui and Yaoyorozu hugged her. Bakugo’s hands started popping with tiny explosions as he yelled at the television set and Kaminari accidentally shorted himself out.

“The other heroes should be showing up soon, right?” Jiro asked hesitantly.

“Well, yeah.” Sato said. “But will they be able to do anything? They’ve taken over a hundred hostages.”

“Is that why Endeavor isn’t fighting back?” Sero asked. “Normally he’d have barbequed Dabi by now.”

“He probably doesn’t want to hurt Todoroki.”

“Doesn’t sound like that’s stopped him in the past.” Shinso grumbled.

Todoroki ran at Endeavor, trying to catch him in ice, while Dabi came in with a sneak attack from behind.

“He’s...” Ashido couldn’t tear her eyes away from the TV.

“Acting like a villain.” Bakugo finished.

The room exploded in yells when Dabi and Todoroki turned their fire on the hostages and some of the students jumped to their feets as though they thought they could do anything to stop the fight. The footage had erupted into chaos as the cameramen and reporters were injured and some of the cameras stopped working due to the heat.

“Fucking change the channel!” Bakugo yelled. “One of these stations has gotta have a working camera!”

It took a minute of channel surfing until they managed to find another station. This one had obviously not been at the press conference, but had shown up for the fight, because they were standing outside the police line as flames raged in the background and an entire fleet of ambulances drove by.

“There do not appear to be any fatal injuries at this time, although from what we are seeing almost everyone present was injured. The villains responsible for this attack are Dabi, a known member of the league of villains, as well as Shouto Todoroki, who was going by the name of Freezer Burn. Until recently, Todoroki was assumed missing after he was kidnapped by the league of villains at a UA training camp over the summer. All previous attempts to rescue him have ended in failure and well, now I guess we know why.” The reporter held a hand to her earpiece for a moment, then nodded. “Dabi and Freezerburn fled the scene shortly after opening fire on the hostages. The number one hero, Endeavor, is currently in pursuit. We’ll take you now to our chopper for a bird’s eye view.”

“Well, we currently have eyes on a building that Endeavor chased the villains into just a few minutes ago. It appears that the fight is taking place inside...oh my god...”

A massive jet of flame erupted from the side of the building and Endeavor jumped down onto street level. The camera zoomed in on Todoroki and Shouto, who were both crouched down the street, looking a little worse for wear. They stood up slowly and stared down Endeavor and the students held their breath as they saw Todoroki frost over his left side.

“They’ve gotta give up, now, right?” Kirishima asked. “I mean they’re facing Endeavor, they can’t win!”

Endeavor shot a fireball at Todoroki who blocked it with an icewall and created an opening for Dabi to attack Endeavor. The students gasped when the attack not only landed, but appeared to hurt Endeavor.

“I hate to say this,” the reporter in the helicopter said, “but it looks like Endeavor might need a little help with this one. Where are the other heroes? Are they all still on rescue?”

“That’s what we’re all wondering.” Shinso said. “That’s probably why they attacked the reporters in the first place.”

“Oh! Oh my god!” The reporter couldn’t even bring herself to give any commentary as Todoroki slammed his right foot down and shot knives of ice at Endeavor, who couldn’t dodge fast enough. The dorm room went silent, the only sound the reporter’s frantic muttering at the scene below her.

At first, Endeavor was burning hot enough that the ice melted, but after a few seconds, the ice stuck and from the angle the helicopter was recording at, they could clearly see the massive icicles going in his chest and coming out his back coated in blood. Todoroki stood still for a long moment after Endeavor went limp and the class wondered what he was going to do? Would he regret it? Would he turn himself in? Would he just disappear?

On the screen Todoroki threw back his head and *laughed*. He was surrounded by ice, fire, and blood, standing in front of the person he had just killed and *he laughed*. The class sat frozen as Dabi joined in his laughter and pulled him through a familiar purple portal just moments before heroes arrived at the scene. They looked at each other as the horror and realization of what had just happened set in.

*That was the first time they’d seen him laugh.*

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Tsukauchi straightened his tie and let out a long exhale as he sat down across from a reporter from the most popular newspaper in Japan. Normally in a situation like this he’d hold a press conference, but well... Many of the nation’s top reporters were still in the hospital being treated after yesterday’s attack and the rest were understandably nervous about being targeted, so a private interview it was.

“Hello, Detective Tsukauchi.” The reporter was a pretty woman with blue skin, lavender hair, and perfectly straight teeth that looked vaguely threatening from Tsukauchi’s spot in the hot seat. “My name is Chitose Kizuki. Thank you for having me today.”

Tsukauchi nodded, “Thank you for coming. I understand the media’s hesitance to attend a press conference considering the situation.”

“You mean how the reporters on scene were viciously targeted by Dabi and Freezerburn during yesterday’s attack?” She laughed. “It’s an occupational hazard. If you’re chasing the biggest stories, you’re always going to be the biggest target. We all knew that when we signed on!”

Tsukauchi was slightly taken aback by her slightly laissez-faire attitude toward the injury of her

colleagues, many of whom were undoubtedly her friends as well as rivals, but nothing she said registered as a lie, so she at least she was honest about her attitudes?

“All right, so let’s begin!” Kizuki leaned forward eagerly. “So, there were a few *juicy* revelations yesterday, weren’t there? What do you have to say on the subject of Dabi’s identity?”

“We are unable to confirm or deny Dabi’s claims of being a Todoroki at this time.” Tsukauchi replied calmly. “Endeavor did have a son named Touya Todoroki who was reported missing about five years ago. Touya did have a fire quirk similar to Dabi’s cremation as well as a similar eye color, but his scars make facial recognition impossible. So, there is a possibility Dabi really is Endeavor’s oldest son, but there is no way to know for certain until we can obtain a sample of Dabi’s DNA.”

“But don’t you have a lie detection quirk?” Kizuki asked with a gleam in her eye. “Surely you can tell if he was telling the truth from the footage.”

“Normally, that would be the case.” Tsukauchi nodded. “His words registered as true according to my quirk, but there is always the possibility that he is delusional and simply believes that he is Touya Todoroki, in which case he wouldn’t be lying, at least from his own perspective. Therefore we are waiting on genetic testing before we can confidently confirm Dabi’s identity.”

Kizuku nodded, satisfied, “Alright, next question. Both Dabi and Freezerburn accused Endeavor of abusing them as children, including accusations of him participating in a quirk marriage. Did Endeavor abuse his family?”

Tsukauchi sighed heavily, “Unfortunately, according to the evidence we have gathered in the past 24 hours, those accusations do appear to be accurate. We are still in the process of taking official statements from Endeavor’s two remaining children as well as his wife, but the evidence as well as my quirk indicate the Dabi and Freezerburn were telling the truth.”

He didn’t want to give those details to the media. Already there was huge public outcry against the hero commission and the hero system at large even without confirmation of Endeavor’s abuse, but the fallout would be so much worse if they were tried to cover it up and it got out anyway. Tsukauchi knew that there would be inevitable changes in the hero system as a result of Endeavor’s abuse and Todoroki’s turn to villainy, but hopefully they would be able to do enough damage control in the next few months that they could curb the worst of it.

Kizuku was smiling slightly and he could see the hunger in her eyes, “So I guess here’s the million dollar question: how did a child abuser get to be the number one hero?”

“We are currently running internal investigations of both the police force and the hero commission to find the answer to that question.” Tsukauchi said. “That being said, it appears to have been a mixture of bribery and people’s willingness to turn a blind eye out of the belief that Endeavor could not be guilty of crimes simply because he was a hero. His violent attitude, which would have been a red flag under other circumstances, was glorified and popularized in the media because we most often saw his violence directed toward taking down villains. It is also important to remember that the hero ranking system is based not on the hero commission’s data, but on popular opinion polls. We, as law enforcement, have to take responsibility for the fact that Endeavor was allowed to remain a hero in spite of his crimes, but society at large is responsible for putting him in the number one spot.”

“So, Tsukauchi, you said that the responsibility lies both with the hero commission and with the people who voted for them.” Kizuku leaned forward. “Do you believe the hero system is broken?”

“I would not go that far.” Tsukauchi replied. “But I can confidently say that reforms are obviously needed if we expect the system to fulfill its responsibility to keep the people of Japan safe. Part of the purpose of our ongoing investigation is to determine what reforms need to happen so that nothing like this happens again.”

Kizuku smiled, “Next question. In the last year and a half, a majority of hero deaths have been linked to Mastermind, most notably the death of the former number one hero, All Might. Do you believe that Mastermind was behind Endeavor’s murder as well.”

Tsukauchi grit his teeth at yet another reminder of his failure. “Mastermind has been known to work extensively with the league of villains, of which both Dabi and Freezerburn are members. There were also a lot of moving parts in the operation and the plan relied on exploiting the weaknesses of Endeavor’s quirk, both of which are hallmarks of Mastermind’s murder plans. So while we have not recovered any written plans tying Mastermind to Endeavor’s murder, it is safe to assume that yes, he was most likely involved.”

“The police and media have known about Mastermind’s existence for quite some time.” Kizuku smiled. “So why hasn’t he been caught yet? He is obviously a serious threat to society, and isn’t it the heroes’ job to eliminate those?”

Tsukauchi clenched his fists. He couldn’t let her get to him. “We have people working around the clock to uncover Mastermind’s identity, because we believe that is the only way we will be able to safely resolve the situation without risking more lives, especially since Mastermind has proven time and again that he is willing and able to kill both heroes and civilians. However, the same qualities that have enabled him to kill so many top rated heroes are the ones that make him so difficult to find and catch. He is highly intelligent and extremely careful, but we have heroes working the case that are able to match him in intelligence, so it is only a matter of time before we catch him.”

“Alright.” Kizuki said. “I believe we are almost out of time, so this will be my last question. In the last six months, we have lost two number one heroes to Mastermind, who is beginning to be called the number one villain in Japan. How do you think this bodes for hero society as a whole and, more specifically, Hawks, who is next in line for the number one spot?”

Tsukauchi shook his head. “I honestly can’t say. Both heroes were killed by villains who had a distinct reason to target them, All Might because he was the symbol of peace and Endeavor because of a personal grudge. Mastermind himself, however, is not purposely going after number one heroes, so I do not believe Hawks is in any more danger now than he was a few months ago. As for society, we will simply have to wait and see.”

Kizuku nodded and stood. “Perfect. Thank you again for this opportunity detective. I hope to see you again.”

Tsukauchi gave a strained smile and walked her out. He gave a sigh of relief as she got into a car that was waiting for her at the curb. He never wanted to do that again.

He went back inside and got out the Mastermind file, even though he’d practically memorized it at this point. It had been months since All Might’s death and still they were no closer to catching him. Nedzu had complained that his fur was losing its shine because of the stress of the case, but he was the only one capable of getting inside Mastermind’s head. Tsukauchi shook his head and closed the file. Maybe it was time he got a little sleep.

# What Happens Next?

## Chapter Summary

Some meetings, both for business and other things.

## Chapter Notes

Alright! Those of you who also read my Hero!Deku story already know this, but I am going to be slowing down my update schedule due to midterms and stress from school. This means that rather than getting a chapter every two days, you'll get one about every four days.

Shouto adjusted his beanie one more time before entering the train station to make sure it covered all his hair. His scar was a bit more difficult, but thankfully in this age of quirks, it wasn't terribly odd to see someone wearing an oversized eye patch. He got a few weird looks, but no one started gasping or screaming about a member of the league of villains, so he figured his disguise must be at least somewhat convincing.

He picked a random bench within sight of the platform and sat down, reading a newspaper. He was all over the front page, but then again, he knew that already. He and Dabi had wanted to make an impact, so he would have been disappointed if they'd failed. Part of him wished he was like Izuku though, a faceless villain who could go about daily life without worrying about being arrested. Before long a student in a UA uniform came and sat down next to him.

"Do you really think it's a good idea for you to be out and about right now?" Monoma scoffed. "You might not be in 1A anymore, but you're still an idiot."

Shouto rolled his eyes, "Yeah, yeah, 1B is superior and all that, spare me your superiority complex, I got enough of that from Bakugo, thank you very much. What have you got for me?"

Monoma shrugged, "The school's being careful right now. They're planning the school festival, which my class is totally going to win by the way, but I'm pretty sure Gentle and La Brava called disrupting that, so the league going as well would probably just get everyone caught. Other than that, I think they've started suspecting there's a traitor, they'd be idiots if they didn't, but they're looking into the teachers first, so we don't have anything to worry about on that front. How are things at the league? I heard you guys lost Kurogiri. Tough luck there."

Shouto groaned, "The new base is too small and we're running low on funds. I'm pretty sure most of the money used to come from All for One, but the heroes froze a lot of his assets when they arrested him. We were doing fine still when Kurogiri was around, since he could just warp money in from literally anywhere, but it's a lot more complicated now. So far, we've been robbing some rich looking houses, but a lot of them are fronts for cults and the like so they don't have a lot of sellable assets either."

Monoma looked at him like he was an idiot, "With all the powerhouse quirks you've got, are you

telling me you haven't even *tried* robbing a bank?"

Shouto huffed, "We thought about it, but part of the reason we're so big right now is because of the ideals we embody, and those will crumble if we openly turn to petty crime."

"Then just find a bank that does something sketchy or whose CEO is racist or something." Monoma said haughtily. "You can say you're only attacking those who go against your ideals or something, but at the end of the day, you still have cash. It's a win-win!"

Shouto thought about that for a moment, "That...would probably work. But how would we know which banks to attack?"

Monoma stood, "That, my dear Shouto, is above my paygrade. Good luck. Do try not to get caught."

Shouto mumbled an affirmative as Monoma hurried off to catch his train. Rob a bank, huh? If they could find the right target, it might even further their cause. He was sure Izuku or La Brava could probably point them in the right direction if they got a cut. And that'd give him an excuse to talk to Izuku again. Not that he was trying to find reasons to talk to him. Why would he do that?

Either way, he got out his phone and dialed Dabi. He should probably call Shigaraki for something like this, but the guy still got on his nerves. He hadn't been allowed to play videogames growing up, so half the time Shigaraki may as well be speaking greek for all Shouto could understand him. His brother was much easier to talk to.

"Don't tell me you got caught?"

Shouto huffed, "Come on, Dabi, try to have a little bit of faith in me! I haven't even been recognized."

"What? Do you want me to give you a pat on the back or something for doing your job?"

"No." Shouto said. "It's just the copycat gave me an idea on how to get funds and I need to talk to Izuku about it, so I won't be home for a while."

"You could have just said you had a date." Dabi laughed.

"It's not a..."

"Wait, you've got a date!?" Toga had apparently stolen the phone. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't tell you because it's not a date!" Shouto growled. His face was turning red and he was starting to get strange looks. He stood up and started speed walking out of the train station. Even if they didn't recognize him, he still didn't need an audience to his humiliation via annoying older sibling.

"Yeah, sure." Dabi drawled. "It's not a date just like you don't perk up everytime you hear about Mastermind on the news. Gotta hand it to you, Shouto, you sure set your sights high."

Shouto groaned, "Shut up! We're just friends."

"Sure." Dabi laughed. "Well, be safe, use protection!"

Then he hung up before Shouto could yell at him. Shouto glared at his phone for a long moment before checking the time and calling Izuku. He should have just gotten home from school, unless

he'd let his bullies chase him around today. The phone rang a few times and Shouto was just about to hang up when Izuku answered.

"Hiya, Shouto! Sorry it took so long for me to answer, I had to lose my daily thugs."

Shouto sighed, "I don't understand why you still let them bully you, Izuku. You could kill any of them without even breaking a sweat."

Izuku laughed, "Oh, but that wouldn't be nearly as much fun as letting them think they're stronger than me. Besides, it's not like I don't know what I'm doing. It's all part of the plan."

Shouto pouted slightly, "Fine, have it your way, still doesn't mean it makes any sense to the rest of us, genius." He paused for a moment. "Hey, is there any way we could meet up for a coffee this afternoon."

There was silence on the other end for a long moment, "Is this about business or is the great Freezerburn asking me on a date."

Shouto knew he was bright red, "Umm... business." Izuku didn't respond and Shouto took a deep breath, "But, um, it can be a date. I mean, if you want it to be. What I'm saying is that, if you wanted to see it that way, then, um, I guess I wouldn't be opposed?" Shouto cringed. Well, if Izuku *had* wanted it to be a date, he certainly wouldn't now.

"Oh Shouto!" Izuku said finally. "You sound so cute when you're nervous! I think my habit of rambling's rubbed off on you, though."

Shouto smiled sheepishly, even though he knew Izuku couldn't see it, "So, um, about that coffee..."

"I can make it to that new cafe on Hero Boulevard in twenty minutes. Does that work for you?"

Shouto looked at where he was, it should only take him about fifteen minutes to make it to the cafe. "Yeah, that works."

"Ok!" He could practically hear Izuku's bright smile. "It's a date!"

And to think that Shouto had been finally starting to regain his original color, "Y-yeah. It's a, um, a date."

"See you soon Shouto!"

Izuku hung up, leaving Shouto frozen, listening to a dial tone as he tried to process what just happened. Finally, someone bumped his shoulder and yelled at him for just standing in the middle of the sidewalk like an idiot, which jarred him from his thoughts enough to get him moving again. He dialed yet another number as he started walking toward the cafe.

"Hi cutie! This is Himiko!"

"He said it was a date! What am I supposed to do?!"

Toga squealed, "Oh my goodness everyone! Our little Shouto's going on a date! Shouto, you're on speakerphone, come on! What happened? I need details, now!"

"Slow down, Toga." Dabi groaned. "You're gonna make him freeze up!" He sighed. "So Shouto, what happened."



"I don't even know!" Shouto whined. "I was just trying to meet up to talk about business and then he asked if I was asking him out!"

"Please tell me you said yes!" Twice exclaimed. "You should've turned him down!"

"Um, I said no..."

"What?" Toga yelled. "Dabi, kick some sense into your brother!"

"Kick it into him yourself." Dabi grumbled. "But seriously, Shouto, you're an idiot."

Shouto groaned, "I know, but then I said that I wouldn't be mad if he thought it was a date."

"Nice save." Shigaraki said and everyone was silent for a long moment. "What? You guys are being loud. If you didn't want me to be involved you should've had this conversation somewhere else."

"Aww, Dusty." Dabi teased. "I didn't know you cared about our dear Shouto's love life."

"I don't!" Shigaraki denied. "Like I said, you guys are just being loud."

"So, anyway," Shouto said, "then he gave me a time to meet him and said it was a date. So that means it's a date, right?"

"Aww! Our cute little Shouto's becoming a man!" Himiko squealed.

"But what am I supposed to do? I'm just...I'm gonna ruin this!"

"You're not going to ruin it, Shouto." Dabi said. "He asked you out, so he's not going to just drop you just cause your a dork."

"Gee, thanks."

"You'll do amazing!" Twice yelled. "He's going to hate you!"

"You should stab him!" Toga said. "Tell him how cute he looks in blood."

"Do not listen to anything Toga says." Shigaraki groaned. "Play video games with him."

Shouto got more and more overwhelmed as they kept throwing out more and more ridiculous suggestions of how he should get Izuku to notice him.

"Enough!" Spinner growled. "Just be yourself, Shouto. If he didn't like who you were, he wouldn't be asking you on a date. Just go and talk with him how you always do and ignore the rest of these idiots. Good luck."

He hung up and Shouto put the phone away and tried to calm his breathing. He was pretty close to the cafe now, which wasn't helping his nerves at all. He had to resist the urge to take off the hat and fix his hair. Izuku wasn't going to see that his hair was a mess, but Shouto *would* get caught if anyone else saw and then he wouldn't be able to go on his date because he would be too busy running from the heroes. He took one final deep breath before opening the door to the coffee shop. It was busy but not terribly so. Izuku waved to him from one of the tables and held out the coffee he'd bought him.

"I could have bought my own coffee." Shouto mumbled as he took it. "You didn't have to do it."

Izuku laughed, "I wanted to. Besides, this is a date, and I can afford to treat you."

Shouto blushed again at the reminder and he cleared his throat, "So, um, how are you today?"

"I'm good." Izuku said softly. "Um, sorry if you didn't want this to be...you know..."

"No!" Shouto winced at how loud he was, but it made Izuku laugh, so it must not have been too bad. "Um, I, um, I'm happy you said something. I guess I was too nervous?"

Izuku nodded and sipped his coffee, "It makes sense. With your upbringing, I'd imagine it's kind of hard to openly display emotion."

Shouto nodded and Izuku gave him a bright smile, "Then I'm glad I said something! So, you did say you wanted to talk shop too, right?"

"We don't have to do that today." Shouto said. "It can wait for another day."

Izuku gave him a look, "We're both nervous, Shouto. Business is good for breaking the ice, since it's something we're both comfortable with. Unless you'd rather sit here in a meaningless loop of endless small talk because neither of us has ever been on a date before."

"Wait, you've never been on a date before?" Shouto said, shocked.

Izuku chuckled wryly, "Quirkless, remember? Turns out, not many people want to date the freak of evolution."

"I don't think you're a freak."

Izuku smiled, "Thanks Shouto, but it's ok. I get it. I'm not as evolved as the rest of you. Still, I always wished people could see me as more than just a quirkless kid." He took a long drink of his coffee. "And now they do! So it's all good!"

Shouto nodded and smiled, "I was wondering if you knew of any banks with corrupt or abusive CEOs? The...our group is a little short on funds right now, but we don't want to do anything that'll go against our ideals. We'd be willing to give you a cut as payment for the info."

Izuku hummed, "I think the real question is which banks don't have terrible CEOs at this point. I'll do some digging, though, and see what I can come up with. Will you be wanting a full plan?"

Shouto shook his head, "I don't think so. As long as the place isn't super secure, I'm pretty sure my brother and I can handle it. He can melt through most metal and I can easily keep people from escaping."

Izuku nodded, "I'm so proud of you, Shouto! I was scared that you might lose your conviction after your father's death, but you seem to really be coming into your own. You really are amazing."

Shouto blushed but gave a small smile, "I'm not really that special, Izuku. I mean, I haven't even accomplished anything compared to what you've done. You're already one of the most powerful people in Japan and you're only my age. And you're so caring..." Shouto trailed off when he realized he'd been rambling and hesitantly looked at Izuku, who was staring at him like he'd hung the stars. "Um, it just means a lot, you know," Shouto said, "that, um, you were willing to help me out of that house and help me go after what I want. I don't think I'll ever be able to repay you."

Izuku smiled brightly, "I don't want you to pay me back, Shouto, I want you to be happy! As long as you're living your best life, that's all I need. And that's what you're doing, so it's perfect!"

Shouto smiled, an action that was becoming easier the longer he was out from under his father's thumb, "Thanks for helping me."

Izuku nodded, "So how are you adjusting to your life now? I can imagine it's probably kinda difficult."

Shouto shrugged, "I can't really go anywhere, so there's that, but I couldn't really go anywhere before either. It's just higher stakes now."

Izuku hummed, "That's not really what I meant..." He thought for a moment. "You don't have to answer this, you know, if you don't want to, but I know that when I first made this...career choice...I felt really guilty for the first few months. Has that happened to you?" His eyes widened. "Not that it has to! You know, everyone's different and there's not really and good or bad and I'm sorry if I made it seem like..."

"Izuku!" Shouto interrupted. "It's fine! My brother's already kinda talked to me about it, and, honestly, I don't really know. I don't really feel guilty for what I did, you know? He deserved it. Even the media deserved it, because they're the ones that put him there." He shrugged. "I think the hardest part's been adjusting to the idea of the future. I'm afraid that one day, I'll have to hurt someone who *doesn't* deserve it, and then what'll I do? What happens if I freeze up? If it comes down to me or them, will I be able to do what I need to to stay free, you know?"

Izuku looked at him softly, "I understand completely. I mean, maybe not completely because I never really had that moment of truth. Pretty much everything early on, it wasn't a matter of who deserved it as much as it was if I was capable, but maybe that's why I felt so guilty until I embraced my role." He gave a sheepish smile. "Sorry I don't have anything better to tell you. This life is messy, it always has been and probably always will be, but at least we get to make our own decisions, right?"

Shouto smiled and lifted his cup, "I'll drink to that."

Izuku laughed and raised his own. Yeah, Shouto thought, it might not be the most conventional conversation for a first date, but it suited them just fine.

# Closer

## Chapter Summary

Nedzu and Tsukauchi meet up to discuss the Mastermind case.

## Chapter Notes

I can't believe we've gone over 50,000 hits! You all are amazing!

In other news, I got some [fanart](#) for this story, which always makes me super happy!

Tsukauchi was considering quitting. In the last month not only had villains managed to infiltrate the UA cultural festival, but the Todoroki brothers had started robbing banks. Any and every CEO had somehow decided the best course of action was to put Tsukauchi on speed dial to ask for constant updates on who they were going to hit next. The only link they had found so far was that the CEOs of the targeted banks were all guilty of crimes, but their crimes ranged from felony tax evasion to sexual harassment. The police had had to open investigations on the management of every major bank in Tokyo just to stay ahead of them, which had led to a fair amount of arrests, but so far the actual villains they were looking for stayed elusive.

The government was actually looking into changing the laws to prevent corruption in business as the result of the whole fiasco, though, so at least there were some positive changes coming out of it. It seemed that wherever Freezerburn went, he sparked major outrage and reform, a detail that the media hadn't been kind enough to miss. In the month since his villain debut, he had already managed to gain a cult following rivaling Stain, which was even more troublesome because it meant that the league had increased in popularity and support as well. It was a headache and there was now an entire task force trying to crack down on those selling villain merch, especially since the Todoroki brothers' signature trench coats were quickly becoming a trend.

It also seemed that the league had somehow acquired another warp quirk which was less powerful than Kurogiri's warpgate, but the police had been hoping Kurogiri's capture would cripple the league more. The giant villain Kurogiri had been looking for when he was captured hadn't made another appearance and they didn't have any way of knowing if he had made contact with any other members of the league of villains, though Tsukauchi figured it was probably only a matter of time until he did. There had been reports of earthquakes in the area a few days ago, but by the time heroes showed up, there was no one there, just a massive amount of destruction, so they were no closer to capturing that villain either.

Tsukauchi looked at the clock, then grabbed his coat and headed for the door. Nedzu had invited him to lunch, supposedly to discuss the Mastermind case, but he suspected part of it was just Nedzu trying to keep him from burning out. He appreciated the thought, but he was pretty sure he'd burned out months ago and was just running on fumes now. Still, it would be nice to eat something besides coffee and instant ramen.

He gave his name to the hostess at the restaurant and was led to a booth near the back where

Nedzu was already waiting. Nedzu gave him a signature smile and gestured for him to sit.

“Hello Tsukauchi! How are you today?”

Tsukauchi sighed, “You really don’t want to know. I don’t even want to know and it’s my life.”

Nedzu chuckled, “Well then, I’m glad that I’ve given you an excuse to get out of your office at least. How are things at the station?”

“Hectic.” Tsukauchi said. “What with all the bank robberies and the open investigations of corruption in the industry, we could hire an entire other force and still not have enough men. It really makes me miss Toshinori, you know?”

Nedzu nodded, “He fulfilled his role as symbol of peace very well, but that has just made the difference all the more obvious now that he is gone.”

“I wish he were still here.” Tsukauchi frowned at the table. “I just feel like he’d know what to do. Even if he didn’t, his smile might help everyone feel like the world wasn’t crashing down around our ears.”

“Just one more thing these villains have taken from us, Mastermind in particular.” Nedzu sighed. “I do have to wonder if he knew what he was doing when he killed the symbol of peace. If there was ever any way to make a lasting influence on society, that was it.”

Tsukauchi shrugged, “Have you had any luck with the leads we got from Eri?”

Nedzu’s eyes brightened, “As a matter of fact, I have! First of all, I believe I have ruled out the possibility of an analysis or intelligence quirk.”

Tsukauchi gaped at him in shock, “What? How is that even possible?”

Nedzu smiled, “My quirk makes me more intelligent than *most* humans, not all. It is within the realm of possibility that there are humans naturally just as smart as I am, regardless of quirk. During Eraserhead’s brief interaction with Mastermind before school started, he reported that Mastermind continued fighting with the same tenacity even after his quirk was erased, which leads me to believe that he does not use his quirk when he fights or when he strategizes. This, combined with the indications we received from Eri that Mastermind was abused, leads me to believe that he most likely has a very weak or undesirable quirk.” He met Tsukauchi’s eye. “There is even the possibility, however slight, that Mastermind might be quirkless.”

“Quirkless?” Tsukauchi said in disbelief, “How?”

Nedzu shrugged, “The quirkless face extreme discrimination. Bullying of quirkless children often goes unreported and a vast majority commit suicide before they turn 18. If one were intelligent enough, they might have become frustrated with society’s treatment of them and decided to mistreat society in return. I sincerely hope that is not the case, but we would be wise to not discount the possibility.”

Tsukauchi sighed, “Alright, so Mastermind likely has a weak quirk, or none at all, which is... crazy. What else can you tell me?”

“Well, since he likely has a weak quirk, Mastermind’s short stature is most likely not due to his quirk.” Nedzu said. “Which means that we are almost definitely dealing with a teenager. This is only more likely if Mastermind turns out to be quirkless because of the high suicide rate.”

Tsukauchi ran his hands through his hair, “You mean we’ve been being outsmarted at every turn by a *child*? ”

Nedzu was no longer smiling as he nodded, “That does appear to be the case. I only wish that I could have met him before he turned to villainy. Such a brilliant mind deserves to be nurtured and I would have loved to teach him.” He sighed. “But unfortunately, I have to catch him instead.”

“Alright,” Tsukauchi said, still reeling, “any luck with the Overhaul lead?”

Nedzu shook his head, “There are still too many possibilities. He threatened a lot of people during his short life, which, though impressive, means we will have to narrow our search by other criteria before that particular clue can prove useful.”

Tsukauchi nodded, “Anything else?”

“Nope!” Nedzu chirped. “That’s everything I know for now.”

Tsukauchi sighed, “Well, it’s double what we had before. Is it bad that I kinda wish we *didn’t* know?” He shook his head. “I can’t believe that Mastermind is a kid. Seriously, what drives a teenager to kill hundreds of people?”

“I’m sure it wasn’t just one thing.” Nedzu shrugged. “It was most likely a variety of little failings that all added up until he just couldn’t take it anymore. But it does raise a very uncomfortable question.”

“Oh?” Tsukauchi asked. “And what’s that?”

Nedzu met his eyes with intensity, “Are we responsible for creating the very villain that will destroy us?”

## Hints of What's to Come

### Chapter Summary

Izuku learns about the Meta Liberation Army, we check in to see how some other characters are doing.

### Chapter Notes

Alright! We are beginning to enter manga only territory, you have been warned.

\*If we already did, sorry, I haven't actually be watching the anime too much this season, so I don't know how far the episodes have gone.\*

Also I finally got a TicToc and part is me is like *why didn't I do this earlier* and part of me is like *this was a mistake!*

"I was right!" Shouto slammed open the door to Izuku's base with zero preamble and Izuku was off the couch with a knife in his hand before he realized who it was.

"Oh, it's just you." Izuku put the knife away and sat back down, "And what were you right about?"

His boyfriend looked at him intensely, "It's a conspiracy."

"Another conspiracy?" Izuku laughed, "Is this the one Officer Sansa being a cat god?"

"No..yes...maybe, that part hasn't been proved yet." Shouto took off his hat and ran his fingers through his hair. "I'm talking about the one where a bunch of major companies, including Feel Good Inc., are part of a major extra-governmental group that's trying to take over the world!"

"Mhm." Izuku raised one eyebrow. "Not that I don't believe you Shouto, but what actual evidence do you have?"

Shouto sat down, "So, you know how you were complaining last week that nobody could get ahold of Giran?"

Izuku nodded, "I mean, now I'm pretty sure he's been kidnapped if the fingers and clothes the police have been finding are any indication."

"Bingo." Shouto smiled. "So, we were off in the mountains trying to let Shigaraki beat Gigantomania, right?"

"Right." Izuku nodded.

"Well then, we got this call on Twice's phone from the people who kidnapped Giran, giving us an hour to meet them in Deika City if we wanted to save him. When we showed up, they basically attacked us on sight to prove they were *stronger*. Not only is it Feel Good Incorporated, but they've got Detnerat and the leader of the Hearts and Mind party, not to mention a handful of heroes! Seriously, it was crazy!"

“Really?” Izuku hummed thoughtfully and leaned his chin on his hands. “With such powerful backers, I’m surprised I haven’t heard of them.”

“They haven’t really done anything hugely criminal yet.” Shouto shrugged. “Just some black market support items and stuff like that. They call themselves the…” Shouto struggled for a moment. “Oh, that’s right! They call themselves the Meta Liberation Army.”

Izuku’s eyebrows shot up, “You mean like Destro? I thought that cult died out decades ago?”

Shouto hit himself on the head, “*That’s* what they were acting like!” He laughed and put his feet up on the coffee table, “And I don’t really know, I’d never heard of them before, I think the leader called himself Re-Destro, though.”

“So basically,” Izuku hummed, “this Meta Liberation Army tried to challenge the league in order assert their dominance. Considering you’re here, I take it they lost.”

Shouto nodded eagerly, “Yep. Oh, and your theory on Twice needing to be injured to overcome his psychological trauma was correct, by the way. We probably wouldn’t have made it out alive if he didn’t turn the tide by cloning himself. Well, that and Gigantomania showing up to try and fight Shigaraki again. As it was, Toga was pretty badly injured, but the doctor treated her wounds, so she’ll probably have a few scars, but he said she’d make a full recovery.”

Izuku clenched his fists, “Were you injured, Shouto?”

Shouto wrapped him in a hug, “Don’t worry about me, I’m fine.”

“But they tried to kill you! And you said for yourself that they hurt Himiko! What if they’d killed her? I don’t have that many friends Shouto,” Izuku’s voice cracked, “I can’t afford to lose any of you.”

“Yeah,” Shouto said softly, “but I’m strong and so is Toga. We wouldn’t be in the league if we couldn’t defend ourselves and we never go into battle alone. Dabi was there to protect me, and Twice protected Toga. We’re ok.”

“I should destroy them for trying to hurt you guys.” Izuku said darkly.

“We can take care of ourselves, Izuku.” Shouto gave him a look. “I mean, you can do what you want, but for right now we won and they lost, and they agreed to give us access to their resources. And besides,” Shouto shrugged, “at this point we’re basically just biding our time before stabbing them in the back and they’re doing the same to us.”

Izuku took a deep breath, “Alright, I trust you. But if they try to hurt you again, they’re dead, ok?”

Shouto nodded, smiling, “Thanks, Izuku! They also want to meet you. They apparently already know who you are, since they’re basically running a surveillance state behind the scenes, but they said they had some questions for you.”

Izuku looked at him skeptically, “They have questions or they have a job? Because those are two completely different things.”

Shouto shrugged and leaned back further into the couch, “They didn’t specify. I do know, though, that they aren’t lacking for cash. They can afford even your ridiculous prices.”

“Fine.” Izuku huffed. “I’ll meet with them, but if I don’t like them, I reserve the right to kill them.”



Shouto laughed and kissed him, “I wouldn’t expect anything less. Now, since this part of the conspiracy has been proven true, I just need to find undeniable evidence that Sansa was present in ancient Egypt.”

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Keigo Takami frowned as he looked in the mirror after his meeting with Dabi. He’d begged the Hero commission to pull him out after Endeavor’s death, but they argued that he’d already laid the groundwork and it was too late to send in anyone else. Keigo didn’t think it was good for the number one hero to even *pretend* to be a villain after what happened to the last number one, but maybe he’d be able to catch a glimpse of Mastermind or even identify him, considering his close relationship with the league.

The latest JP Hero Billboard announcement had been...tense, for lack of a better word. After he’d been announced number one, the other heroes kept glancing at him like he’d been given a death sentence, which maybe he had. Hawks sighed and began washing his face. It was just so frustrating. The point of having popular heroes was to reassure the public, but with Mastermind on the loose, the more popular heroes were having the *opposite* effect. At the afterparty, there had even been rumors that this would probably be the last JP announcement until Mastermind was safely behind bars, to avoid giving him more targets.

Dabi had yet to introduce him to any other members of the league, Keigo hadn’t even met Dabi’s brother yet, though Tokoyami had mentioned Shouto a few times during his work study. Keigo dried his face and scowled. To think that Endeavor really... he shook his head. It didn’t matter. Endeavor may have been an inspiration to him, but he wasn’t the reason he became a hero.

*My future as a hero? Or my future as your masterpiece? Either way, it’s no great loss, I didn’t ask for either one.*

Keigo pushed those thoughts from his head as he got ready for bed. No. He wasn’t like Freezerburn. So what if neither of them had been given a choice when it came to their career path? He wanted to help people, not hurt them, so at the end of the day, they weren’t the same at all. Besides, growing up with the hero commission hadn’t been *that* bad. Sure, it’d been a lot of training, but... it’d all been worth it, hadn’t it?

Dabi had mentioned a new group the league was partnering with, something called the Meta Liberation Army. Keigo would have to look into them more tomorrow, see what they were about and what their ideals were. Hopefully there was a weakness the Hero Commission could exploit when the two groups came together. He didn’t know what they’d do if the league didn’t get taken down soon, the media was already tearing the Commission apart as it was.

They couldn’t afford any more failures.

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Giran jumped when a loud bang sounded in the alley outside his office and he froze for a solid minute before realizing it was just a cat that had just knocked over a trash can. He shook his head. He’d heard that same sound hundreds of times during the decades he’d been in this office, so why was he getting so freaked out now?

He grimaced as he finished adjusting the mechanical hand he’d ordered and tried to flex the fingers. The hand moved sluggishly, giving Giran the feeling that everything was just slightly to the left of where it should be, and it hurt. As if having his fingers removed one by one hadn’t been bad enough, now he had to deal with pain every time he wanted to move his fake ones.

His cell phone rang and he tried to answer it, only to drop it as his mechanical hand refused to

cooperate. He tore the hand off and threw it down on the desk in frustration, glaring at it for a long moment before using his left hand to answer the call.

“Hey Dragon, what can I do for you?” Giran tried to smirk like he usually did, but the expression slipped from his face almost immediately.

“Glad to hear you’re alright after your kidnapping, Giran. You had us worried there for a minute.” Dragon’s voice was harsh and somewhat gravelly, a side effect of his fire-breath quirk.

“I’m fine.” Giran said too quickly. “But you didn’t call to enquire after my health.”

Dragon laughed, “You’re right. Glad to see you haven’t lost your head for business. I want you to set up a meeting with Mastermind.”

Giran sighed, “Like I told you the last three times you asked me, he refuses to work with you. Sorry, Dragon, but you should know better than to make Mastermind do something he doesn’t want to do. Those who try are lucky if they only end up dead.”

“Why? I’m willing to pay his prices!” Dragon yelled and Giran knew he probably had literal smoke pouring from his nostrils.

“I don’t know why.” Giran tried to rub the bridge of his nose, only to realize at the last moment he didn’t have the fingers required for the action. “Look, he didn’t tell me why he doesn’t want to work with you, just that he won’t. I’m not gonna go behind his back to set up a meeting, I value both our lives far too much for that.”

On the other end of the line, Dragon huffed, “Fine, have it your way. But just let Mastermind know he’s not the only villain capable of holding a grudge.”

Dragon hung up abruptly and Giran took a deep breath before putting the phone down and picking up his new hand again. Mastermind wasn’t usually picky about who he worked with. Normally even if he didn’t like someone, he’d still meet with them if the payoff was right. That’s what made it so odd that he outright refused to meet with Dragon or his gang, The Dragon’s Horde, no matter how much the man offered to pay him. When he’d asked, Mastermind had mentioned it was personal, but refused to explain any more than that.

Giran shook his head. One thing was certain, whatever Dragon had done to piss Mastermind off, it had to have been big.

# Legacies of Our Fathers

## Chapter Summary

### Mastermind meets with the Meta Liberation Army

Izuku scowled at his reflection as he untied the tie for the tenth time that night. They were going to be late if he kept this up.

“Here, Izuku.” Shouto grabbed his hands and placed them at his sides, “Let me do it. If there was anything that bastard did right, he at least made sure I knew how to tie a tie.”

Izuku huffed, “Yeah, well, I guess that proves there are multiple breeds of dead-beat dads, huh? The overbearing abusive assholes and the ones that fuck off into the sunset the moment the doctor says *quirkless* .”

“There.” Shouto smiled at him and Izuku rolled his eyes when he looked down to find a perfect triangle knot. How come Shouto had to be so good at everything?

“Re-Destro said he was sending a car, right?” Izuku grabbed his bag, filled with probably too many notebooks and knives, but hey, it paid to be prepared, right?

Shouto nodded, “Dabi texted and said they already got picked up, so they should be here any minute.” There was a knock on the door. “And there they are now.”

Izuku straightened his tie one last time before opening the door with a smile. A chauffeur led them down to the waiting limo that looked amazingly out of place in the bad neighborhood Izuku’s base was in. Izuku almost laughed as he imagined the shiny black covered in graffiti like the walls behind it. Inside the car, Dabi was laughing as Shigaraki tried to disintegrate his tie and Compress scolded him. Compress was pretty much the only one who didn’t look vaguely uncomfortable in his evening wear, but the Meta Liberation Army had insisted that they pull out all the stops when they met the infamous Mastermind.

It didn’t take them long to reach Re-Destro’s mansion. The limousine pulled up and a butler opened the doors and took their coats while another led them up an elevator to where the surviving members of the MLA leadership were waiting around the already set dinner table. Re-Destro himself smiled amiably and stood when they entered.

“Hello Mastermind. I must say it’s a pleasure to finally meet you.” He gestured for them all to sit. “You’ve acquired quite a fearsome reputation.”

Izuku chuckled, “A fact I’m proud of, Re-Destro. Your own reputation, however, leaves something to be desired. Perhaps you’d care to enlighten me on what your group hopes to accomplish, because for now it seems your only great accomplishment is staying in the shadows.”

Re-Destro’s knuckles turned white as he clenched his fist around his chopsticks, but he smiled. Izuku’s eyes narrowed. So he was easily stressed, but gave a great effort to hide it, why?

“Our group is called the Meta Liberation Army.” Izuku recognized the speaker as Koku Hanabata, the leader of the Hearts and Mind party, and the one Shouto called Trumpet. The man had quite a

bit of political power, something that could be very useful in the future if they were to work together.

Izuku turned to him, “Yes, Shouto told me as much, but what is your vision? I assume you’re taking cues from the original movement?”

“The original Destro was my father,” Re-Destro replied, “a little known fact that even the man himself was unaware of.”

Izuku laughed, “Well, I can understand the perils of absent fathers, but normally you’d expect a kid like that to avoid anything to do with their father, not follow in his footsteps.”

Re-Destro grit his teeth, but hid it with a smile, “Yes, well, my father may not have been there physically, but he made sure to provide for me well in terms of ideology. He taught us that the power is everything, a fact that has only become more obvious in our age of quirks, and that it is, quite frankly, idiotic to pretend otherwise. People should be allowed to use their quirks freely and let their power determine their place in society.”

“Well, I’m all for encouraging people to use their quirks,” Izuku hummed, “but I’m sure you understand why someone like me might be hesitant to have a societal structure completely based on quirks.”

“Of course, of course.” Re-Destro waved away his concerns. “But in our vision of society you would never have to hide such a powerful analysis quirk, not that I understand why you choose to pretend you’re quirkless anyway. But that is, of course, something you wouldn’t have to worry about in the society we are working to build.”

A heavy silence enveloped the room and Izuku blinked a few times as he tried to comprehend what Re-Destro had just said, “What?”

“He said you won’t have to hide your quirk anymore.” A man with long, greasy hair said sharply. “I thought you were supposed to be intelligent.”

“Now, now, Skeptic, don’t insult our guest.” Re-Destro smiled. “I apologize for the behavior of my associate, he has little patience for stupidity, a trait that I’m sure you share.”

Izuku frowned, “*I* am patient enough to understand not everyone can match my intellect, and am also intelligent enough not to jump to unfounded conclusions.” He turned to Skeptic. “I would think that with the level of surveillance you’re capable of, it would be quite obvious that I am, in fact, quirkless. If I wasn’t, I would most certainly *not* hide it, considering how poorly I’ve been treated my whole life. The illegality of this treatment did nothing to prevent it, and now you’re telling me that you are trying to make that mistreatment not only legal, but encouraged.”

Re-Destro scoffed, “Please. Do you really expect us to believe you’d have gotten as far as you have if you were actually quirkless? You’re one of the most powerful men alive, Mastermind, so you obviously have a powerful quirk that has catapulted you to where you are now. If you were, in reality, quirkless, there is no way you would have risen through the ranks of the villain world as quickly as you did. The quirkless are worse than useless, so no, Mastermind, I refuse to believe you’re quirkless.”

Izuku glared at the MLA executives, clenching his fists beneath the table and subconsciously reaching for his knives. Shouto put a hand on his shoulder and gave him a reassuring glance. Izuku smiled at him and forced himself to relax.

“Perhaps it’s best if we save here and keep playing another day?” Shigaraki said.

“But we haven’t even brought out the main course!” Trumpet pouted.

“Yes, well,” Compress stood, “unless you’re particularly fond of blood sausages, it is time for us to take our leave.”

“Don’t worry, Re-Destro, we’re still on to work together.” Dabi shrugged. “But it’s getting late and you’re putting your foot so deep down your throat you’re gonna need surgery to get it out, so believe me, this is better for everyone.”

Re-Destro glared at them, but didn’t get in their way as they left and called the limo back to take them home. Izuku was sure it probably hadn’t been the shortest business meeting he’d ever had, but he was blanking on any that had ended more quickly or abruptly. How blind could they get to insist that he *had* to have a powerful quirk, simply because he was a successful villain? Especially since he probably wouldn’t be a villain at all if he’d gotten a quirk like he was supposed to.

Shouto squeezed his leg, “Calm down, Izuku, we’re almost home.”

Izuku took a deep breath and nodded. The entire league ended up getting out when they arrived at Izuku’s base and tipped the driver to just go home. Izuku slammed open the door and yanked off his tie as he screamed, “Just who do they think they are? Of all the biased, prejudiced, *quirkist*...”

“Yeah, that seriously did *not* go well.” Dabi went to the pantry and grabbed enough instant ramen for everyone, since they’d left before they really had the chance to eat. “I had no idea they were gonna take it that far. I thought they knew you were quirkless, since they knew everything else about you and all.”

Toga nodded and pouted, “That was seriously not cute.”

“It wasn’t that bad.” Twice said. “It was terrible!”

Izuku finished his tantrum and took a deep breath as he ran his hand through his hair, “What has the Meta Liberation Army offered the league?”

“It doesn’t matter Izuku.” Shouto sat down and pulled at Izuku’s hand until he sat down as well. “We aren’t going to choose them over you.”

Izuku face hardened, “What have they offered you?”

Shigaraki shrugged, “Access to their satellites, money, that sort of thing.”

Izuku took a deep breath and nodded. He could work with that. “If I call in a favor to La Brava and have her transfer those resources directly to you, can I destroy them?”

“You don’t have to...”

Izuku shook his head, “She still owes me for making sure the media covered their UA infiltration. Gentle’s videos have been going viral ever since, so she’ll be more than happy to help. I don’t want to leave you guys in a lurch just because those idiots chose to piss me off.”

“Even if you did,” Spinner smiled, “you’d still be doing the right thing taking down those false heroes that aligned themselves with their rebellion.”

Shouto nodded, “We’ll even help you bring them down. It matches well with the league’s image,

taking down a few corrupt organizations just seems like the natural sequel to robbing a few corrupt banks and killing a few corrupt heroes.”

Izuku laughed, tears welling up in his eyes, “What did I do to deserve friends like you?”

Dabi raised one eyebrow, “You helped us kill people.”

# The Meta Liberation Army

## Chapter Summary

The MLA gets what's coming to them.

## Chapter Notes

We got fanart! There's a [picture of Mastermind](#) as well as [Izuku's guide to making friends](#) from the last chapter.

Keigo stood at Hero Commission headquarters, looking up at Yokumiru Mera, who was practically falling asleep behind his oversized, elevated desk. Keigo rustled his wings nervously as he debated what he was going to say.

“The league has invited me on a mission.” He said finally.

Mera raised his eyebrows, “That’s a good thing, Hawks. It means you’re finally making progress and gaining their trust.”

“I know, but...” Keigo hesitated, “People are probably going to die on this mission. The league might even ask me to kill someone as proof of my loyalty. If that happens, what are my orders? As the number one hero, I can’t in good conscience let people die, not when I have the ability to save them, much less actually kill them myself. Do I have your permission to pull out?”

Mera’s gaze hardened, “If you do that, you’ll have wasted months of time and effort. For right now, consider the league’s orders as if they were coming from the Hero Commission itself. Stopping Mastermind and the league is worth a few lives.”

Keigo swallowed, but nodded, turning around and leaving as soon as he was dismissed.

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“Yo Dabi!” Keigo faked a smile as Dabi and Freezerburn climbed up onto the roof.

“Hey Hawks” Dabi nodded at him. “This is my little brother, Shouto, but you already knew that.”

Keigo nodded, “Kinda hard to miss, considering your debut. Nice to meet you!”

Freezerburn looked at him skeptically, “You know, I kinda get how people are starting to call the number one spot the cursed throne now. Two number ones get murdered and the next gets assigned to infiltrate the league. Kinda bad luck if you ask me.”

Keigo sputtered for a minute, “I’m not *assigned to infiltrate the league* . I have reasons to be here, same as you.”

Freezerburn rolled his eyes, “Yeah, sure. And if the Hero Commission just *happens* to get inside information, you had nothing to do with it.”

Dabi cuffed Freezerburn over the head, “Ignore him, birdie, Shouto’s just a little too fond of conspiracy theories. That being said, we may have invited you on this mission, but don’t think that means we trust you yet.”

Keigo nodded, “So what’s the plan, boys?”

Dabi and Freezerburn both smirked and Keigo felt his stomach drop. That couldn’t be good.

“Just some good old fashioned arson.” Dabi said. “There’s a rival group that we were going to partner with, but they made the mistake of pissing off Shouto’s boyfriend, so we’re taking them out instead.”

Keigo looked at them curiously, “Boyfriend?” He hadn’t been told Freezerburn was dating anyone, that could be valuable information.

Freezerburn rolled his eyes, “He’s referring to Mastermind.”

“Oh?” Keigo blinked a few times before smiling. Now that *was* valuable information. “Should I be saying congratulations or is this one of those sibling teasing things I never got to experience? Because I was an only child, you know.”

Freezerburn laughed, “We’re still pretty new, so yeah, you can say congratulations if you want. It’s not like the league doesn’t know, but it’s hard to have a more open relationship when he has a secret identity and I don’t. Makes going out a little more difficult, if you know what I mean.”

Keigo nodded, “Yeah, I can understand that. Can’t just go to the movies in full villain attire, right?”

Dabi laughed, “Please try it, Shouto! That would be hilarious!”

Freezerburn smiled, “We’d have to go to the All Might memorial documentary. Iz...Mastermind would love that, if only to see people’s faces!”

Keigo schooled his expression. It wasn’t much, but a few letters of a name could be valuable in the right hands, “Um, so if it’s arson today, then why am I here?” He ruffled his feathers. “I really hope barbecue wings aren’t on the menu.”

“You’re actually here to be a hero, Hawks.” Dabi said. “Part of the league’s power comes from the ideology we inherited from Stain in that we go after false heroes and corruption. Killing a lot of innocents could potentially damage that reputation.”

Keigo raised an eyebrow, “You two didn’t seem to care about that during Freezerburn’s debut.”

“That was different.” Freezerburn said. “We targeted the media to send a message about who put that bastard in the number one spot, so they weren’t *innocents* in the traditional sense of the word.”

Dabi nodded, “But today, Shouto and I’ll be setting fire to Detnerat headquarters, and it’s really only the higher-ups that are involved.”

“Detnerat?” Keigo’s eyes widened. “The support company?”

Dabi laughed, “Yeah, turns out the CEO’s running a cult called the Meta Liberation Army. Don’t worry about it too much, it’ll be all over the news tomorrow. Your job is to just happen to fly by at the right time to save the people working inside. These people however,” he handed Keigo a paper with around twenty photos, “you just weren’t fast enough to save. Understand?”



Keigo swallowed thickly as he looked at the faces of the people he was supposed to let die. He was a hero, it was his responsibility to save people, right? He couldn't just let them die! But...the hero commission said that his mission was worth a few lives...he supposed it was easy for them to say, since he didn't have to be the one to kill them.

He gave the paper back to Dabi and nodded, "I understand."

Dabi smirked, "So let's go, birdie. The building's just a few blocks away, we can get there through the alleys so we're not seen."

Keigo nodded and followed Dabi and Freezerburn down the fire escape. The alleys were narrow, but he was able to get through them no problem as long as he folded his wings just right. The Todoroki brothers were both thin enough that they didn't even seem to notice how small the alleys were. Keigo wondered if that was a genetic thing or if it was a result of the training Endeavor had put them through when they were younger.

"So..." Keigo said when they finally stopped in the alley beside Deternaut headquarters. "What was it like growing up with Endeavor?" They glared at him and he panicked slightly. "I mean, I know it sucked, but you didn't really go into detail and Endeavor used to be one of my favorite heroes when I was kid, so I was just curious about what it was that made the both of you go villain, you know?"

Freezerburn blinked at him a few times, then scoffed, "Yeah, I get it. I'd probably be curious too if I hadn't lived it. Like you said, it sucked. Neither of us was really given a choice on if we wanted to be heroes, you know? We just had the bad luck to be born with strong quirks."

Keigo nodded, thinking about how the Hero Commission had only picked him up after his quirk got their attention as a kid. He shook his head. No, he wasn't like the Todoroki brothers. The Hero Commission had saved him, he'd still probably be living in poverty if it wasn't for them.

"Yeah, he told us that it was our responsibility to be great masterpieces." Dabi scowled, "*You wouldn't even be alive if it wasn't for me! I'm the one who puts a roof over your head, you would all be on the streets if it wasn't for me! Do you want to starve?*"

Freezerburn laughed, "Yep. And if he wasn't guilting us, he was hitting us. If we ever tried to say no to training, we'd be dragged to the training room anyway and forced to train until we threw up, then the bastard would call us weak because he was pushing us too hard. Fun times."

The Hero Commission hadn't ever forced him to train even when he didn't want to, had they? Keigo could remember saying no a few times, and he'd been allowed to stay in his room, but...he'd always gone back to training within a few days. He hadn't been able to stand the disappointed looks and no one would talk to him if he wasn't training. Had that been...a punishment? Had they known how social Keigo was and used that to get him to do what they wanted?

"It was even worse when he threatened to hurt Mom, though." Dabi said seriously. "Like it was our fault she was hurting, rather than his."

Keigo nodded numbly, trying not to think of all the similarities. Sure, he hadn't really had parents that cared about him, but the commission was always talking about all the people who would get hurt if he didn't train hard enough to save them...

No! *He was not like the Todoroki brothers!*

A beep sounded from Freezerburn's pocket and pulled out his phone, "Mastermind gave the go

ahead.” He smiled widely. “Let’s light ‘em up!”

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Himiko put her phone back in her pocket and drank a swallowful of blood straight from her victim, knowing that each of her clones were doing the same thing. Each of her clones had one of Twice’s clones with them to guard the person Toga was imitating, but they would stay out of sight unless something went south. Himiko grinned as the reporter they’d kidnapped stared up at their own face in shock and she laughed as she skipped away and into the broadcasting building.

“You’re late!” A person Toga assumed was the stage manager yelled at her and Toga gave her best contrite expression.

“I’m sorry, traffic was horrendous.”

The stage manager huffed and rolled his eyes, “Whatever, I don’t care.” He waved a few assistants over. “Get her a mic! We go on in five!”

Himiko’s eyes lit up in excitement as she was prepped to go on the air. These networks didn’t know how lucky they were, she was handing them the story of a lifetime!

“Alright! Quiet on set!” The stage manager yelled. He used his finger to count down from five and pointed to Himiko, who followed the teleprompter for a few minutes before going off.

“Oh, and for our next story, multiple broadcasting stations have actually been hijacked, including this one, and their news anchors have been kidnapped so that I could impersonate them!” She smiled, enjoying the gasps from the crew as her personality shone through. “Now, on to the real story, the Meta Liberation Army. Did you know that they were trying to make a comeback? They tried to challenge the league of villains, but,” She flipped the newcaster’s ponytail off her shoulder, “we won, obviously. It wasn’t really even a contest! So, now we’re going to out their leadership to the world! Not that you’d have had to worry about them after today anyway, considering they’ll be dead.”

La Brava had hacked into the news feed and was showing photos of the MLA executives, “Let’s start with Rikiya Yotsubashi, the CEO of Detnerat! He calls himself Re-Destro and claims to be the son of the original Destro.” She giggled. “Hopefully there’s enough of him left at the end of this to confirm those claims. They’ve been flooding the black market with illegal support items for the past few months. You know, those ones that self-destruct as soon as the villain’s caught? Yep, that’s them! Next, Feel Good Incorporated!” She pointed to the picture of Skeptic. “Tomoyatsu Chikazoku, besides being guilty of horrendously bad hygiene, has been using his company’s satellites to spy on *all of you*! Isn’t that amazing? Then, of course, there’s Koku Hanabata, leader of the Hearts and Minds party. Just remember during the next election that he’s one of the leaders of a movement designed to completely destroy the Japanese government!” The image changed and Himiko grinned wider. “And then there are these heroes, all of whom are on the payroll of the Meta Liberation Army and have been working to hide their existence from both the Hero Commission and the world! Memorize those faces, ladies and gentlemen, these are the heroes who are supposed to protect *you* from *villains*, not *villains* from *you* !”

There was a commotion behind the cameras and Miruko and a handful of police officers scowled as they ran onto the stage. Himiko let her transformation melt away before pulling out a knife and stabbing herself in the gut, “This is Toga Himiko from the league of villains, signing off!”

By the time Miruko reached her, Himiko had already dissolved into goop.

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“We have a problem.” Skeptic entered the boardroom at Detnerat headquarters, where the other MLA executives were already waiting.

Re-Destro glared at him, “What’s wrong.”

“Someone hacked us.” Skeptic put his laptop down on the table and began to type. “They drained our assets and put spyware in our satellite feeds. I’ll be able to reverse it if given enough time, but I knew you’d want to be informed.”

Re-Destro nodded, “Good. Get to work on fixing it and find out what weakling thought that was a good idea. We don’t need any problems, our partnership with the league of villains is tenuous as it is.”

“Actually, at this point I’d say it’s non-existent.” Shigaraki effortlessly disintegrated the wall they were hiding behind and grinned. Izuku smiled behind his mask as he took in the shocked faces of the executives. Serves ‘em right. Quirkist bastards.

“Hello there!” Compress waved cheekily, then ran at Trumpet, compressing a large chunk out of his abdomen. “It’s a shame to kill a fellow showman like yourself, but you know what they say, the show must go on!”

“You...” Skeptic tried to do something on his laptop, no doubt trying to turn the security system against them, but Izuku knew La Brava wouldn’t give up control of that easily. Not that it mattered much, since the fire alarm chose that moment to go off. Good, Dabi and Shouto must not have run into any complications.

Izuku ran forward and slit Skeptic’s throat while he was distracted, leaving only Re-Destro who was hulking with the power of his stress. Izuku went to lean against the wall next to Compress so they wouldn’t get in Shigaraki’s way. This would be good practice for fighting Gigantomachia, at least.

It was like watching a high stakes version of Whack-a-Mole. Re-Destro would smash his fist where Shigaraki was standing, but he would either dodge or just disintegrate the floor beneath him, then pop up and land a hit on him. Re-Destro might have been stronger than Shigaraki was, but his bulk slowed him down and made the fight a very poor match up for him. Before long, the various patches of disintegration had grown together, making his arms practically useless and Izuku could tell that Re-Destro wouldn’t last much longer. Shigaraki could tell too, because all of a sudden, he switched from defense to offense, slipping past Re-Destro’s literally crumbling defense and shoving both his hands in his face. Re-Destro barely had time to scream before his head and neck blew away in the breeze and what was left of his body crumpled to the ground.

“Well,” Shigaraki dusted his hands off and made his way over to Izuku and Compress, “that boss was slightly disappointing. I was expecting a higher HP at least.”

Izuku laughed, “Your agility stats were higher than his, which was what let you bring his health down to zero while avoiding damage yourself. Good game, Shigaraki.”

Shigaraki grinned, “Yeah!”

“I must say that was quite the show.” Compress said. “And I hate to be the one to yell fire in a crowded theater, but perhaps it’s time we bow out.”

Izuku nodded and sent a text, “I guess we get to see how loyal Dabi’s new recruit really is. I hope this works, cause I really *hate* Johnny’s warp quirk.”

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“Hey birdie.” Dabi’s rough voice echoed unpleasantly through his earpiece. “We need you to pick up a few people from the top floor. Don’t worry about who, you’ll know ‘em when you see ‘em.”

Keigo frowned slightly, he’d hoped Dabi wouldn’t ask him to do anything else after he’d saved everyone he was allowed to from the fires, but flew up toward the penthouse anyway. There was a hole in one of the walls that looked like a giant fist had been rammed through it and Keigo used that as his entry point, perching on what was left of the wall as he looked around.

Most of the floor had either been punched through or disintegrated away, and what little furniture there was left was overturned. Keigo’s stomach turned as he took in the sight of multiple bodies, all of which seemed to have died very painful deaths, but he dragged his eyes away toward the people who were still alive. Dabi was right, Keigo didn’t need any introduction to know who he was supposed to pick up.

“Hello Hawks.” Shigaraki grinned. “Glad you could make it.”

Keigo nodded quickly and grabbed all three villains. He wished he could just take them straight to the Hero Commission, but he knew he’d get in trouble if he did that, considering that Mastermind’s hostage situation was still going strong. He quickly flew them a few blocks away to where Dabi and Freezerburn were waiting, being careful to avoid any media cameras that would question why he was saving the villains.

“Shouto!” Keigo watched as Mastermind, the guy who had threatened and killed more heroes than almost anyone else, practically bounced as he ran over to hug his boyfriend. Wait, Freezerburn was a teenager, did that mean Mastermind was as well? Just who was Mastermind?

“Well, um...” Keigo started awkwardly, “I’m sure people are probably wondering where I am after all that so...”

Mastermind nodded and put his hand on Keigo’s shoulder, “Thank you, Hawks. You saved a lot of lives today.” Then his voice dropped to a mutter so even Keigo had to strain to hear him. “Just so you know, you shouldn’t have to be held captive by the hero commission just because they happened to find you as a child. No one has the right to force you into a role you never asked for, even if that’s how they raised you. Remember, I helped save Shouto, I can help save you too.” Keigo looked at Mastermind in shock, but quickly schooled his expression to something more relaxed and controlled. Did Mastermind have a mind reading quirk?

Mastermind laughed and spoke again at a normal volume, “Just food for thought Hawks. You should get going.”

Keigo nodded and flew off. That mission hadn’t been at all like what he’d expected.

# Giran

## Chapter Summary

Izuku decides what to do about Giran.

## Chapter Notes

I'm sorry.

Izuku ducked into an alley as he waited for his bullies to follow. He didn't have any big meetings for a few days, so he figured now was as good a time as any to let them leave a few bruises. Ito, or knock-off Kacchan as Izuku liked to think of him, charged into the alley with his fists raised and Izuku resisted the urge to roll his eyes. All of a sudden a taller man with a similar build to Ito followed him into the alley.

"Yo, Mom wanted you home early today, or did you forget?"

Ito scoffed at the man, who was apparently his brother, "I'm kinda in the middle of teaching some nerd a lesson, I'll be home soon."

The man glanced over at Izuku, then froze. Izuku could see the gears turning in his head and Izuku smiled slightly. He remembered hearing that Ito's older brother was a drug dealer for one of the local gangs, Izuku couldn't remember if he'd ever gotten around to working with them, but the brother had apparently heard of him, if his obvious fear was any indication.

"Dude." The brother grabbed Ito's shoulder and turned him away. "Don't mess with that one."

He glanced back at Izuku, who smirked and raised an eyebrow at him. Ito followed his brother's gaze and Izuku gave his best terrified teenager look, laughing internally at the intense confusion that crossed the brother's face.

"What the fuck are you talking about? This nerd's a good for nothing quirkless weakling!"

"Shut up!" The brother hissed, then turned to Izuku and bowed slightly. "I am so sorry about my brother's behavior, I'll take him home now."

He grabbed Ito by the arm and dragged him out of the alley as Izuku tried not to laugh. As he climbed the fire escape to take a shortcut to his base, he could still hear Ito yelling, "What was that? Why did you protect that damn nerd?"

Izuku shook his head. Looks like he might need to find a new bully.

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"Ugh." Izuku groaned as he hung up the phone and Shouto started to rub circles onto his back.

"What is it? Are your clients being annoying again?"

Izuku shook his head, “No, it’s just...Giran hasn’t really been the same since he was abducted.”

Shouto nodded, “Yeah, I mean they did torture him for no good reason, but he refused to talk, so I mean, he’s still Giran, right?”

Izuku huffed, “You’d think so, but I think staying silent took the last bit of backbone he had left.” He dragged a hand down his face. “I hate to say it, but...I think Giran’s gone soft.”

Shouto sighed, “That’s annoying, he was one of the best brokers in the underground. It’s a shame to lose someone like him.”

Izuku looked at Shouto, “Have you been having any problems with him recently?”

Shouto shrugged, “I remember Shigaraki complaining about some of our shipments being sub-par, but then again, it’s Shigaraki, so he’s always complaining about something.”

Izuku nodded absently, “I remember hearing he’d dropped a few clients too. I mean,” Izuku thought for a minute, “I feel bad, because he really helped me get on my feet when I was just starting out, but I’ve been finding clients almost entirely on my reputation most of my career, so I don’t really *need* him anymore, especially not if he keep going this way.”

“So you’re going to drop him?” Shouto asked.

Izuku frowned, “Yes, it’s just...” he groaned. “I’m concerned that things are going to get worse. I’ve heard of what happens to villains who start going soft. First it’s just sub-par work, then it’s losing the conviction to do what needs to be done, then soon enough, they’re turning to the heroes and asking for a plea deal.”

Shouto’s eyes widened, “You think that Giran’s going to betray you?”

Izuku shrugged, “I don’t know. What I do know is that he knows too much, and that he could destroy me if he really tried.” He groaned. “What am I supposed to do, Shouto?”

“You could always take him out.”

Izuku searched Shouto’s face for any indication that he was joking, but couldn’t find any, “You-you can’t be serious. Why would I take him out?”

Shouto shrugged, “It seems to me that right now, Giran is more of a liability than an asset and it might only be a matter of time before he betrays you, but if you play your cards right and send a message, he could be worth more to you dead than alive.”

Izuku frowned, but his brain started running through the possibilities. He didn’t really *need* Giran anymore. He had enough of his own connections that it wouldn’t hurt his business if Giran were to die suspiciously. He had La Brava’s program to run his hostage situation, so he didn’t even need Giran for that anymore. It had been a while since he set up his hostage situation, and he did need to make sure the police remembered he was the one calling the shots here. Izuku smiled slightly at his boyfriend.

It just might work.

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“Detective Tuskauchi! We just received an anonymous tip about a broker who might know Mastermind’s identity.”

Tsukauchi looked up from his notes and stared at Officer Sansa in shock for a few moments, “What? How soon can we bring him in?”

Sansa smiled, “We already had a team go pick him up. He should be here in a few minutes.”

Tsukauchi nodded and stood, straightening his tie and making sure he had everything he needed for the interrogation. The Mastermind case had outgrown its case file and had been transferred to a box, so Tsukauchi gathered only the most important pieces of evidence before heading to the interrogation room. When he got there, the broker was already sitting, handcuffed to the table. Tsukauchi’s eyes widened when they fell on the mechanical fingers of his right hand and he was willing to bet this was the guy whose fingers they’d found placed around the city last month. Had Mastermind been responsible for that?

“Hello, my name is Detective Tsukauchi. My quirk...”

“Yeah, I know who you are Detective Lie Detector.” The broker twitched nervously. “That still doesn’t explain why I’m here or how you found me.”

Tsukauchi sighed, “Since you know my quirk, I should let you know that it is always active and I will be using it during the course of this interview, which is being recorded. Can you state your name for the record.”

“Giran.” Tsukauchi’s eyes widened. He’d heard of Giran, he was one of the most successful brokers in the underground, but from what he’d heard Giran was always smirking and was unconcerned with everything. That just didn’t match with the man in front of him, unless...Tsukauchi’s eyes flicked to the mechanical hand that was on full display on the table between them. An experience like that...probably left more mental scars than physical.

“Alright, Giran. Are you going to give me a real name?”

Giran scoffed and Tsukauchi rolled his eyes, “Ok then, what can you tell me about Mastermind?”

“I can tell you that only an idiot would turn on him.” Giran gave a strained smile. “And I’m not an idiot.”

Tsukauchi sighed, “Any information you give us will be invaluable, Giran. I’m sure we’d be able to negotiate time off your sentence. Your blackmarket dealings come with quite the penalty. We’ll even protect you from Mastermind.”

Giran looked at him skeptically, “Like you protected Wash?”

Tsukauchi’s blood ran cold at the reminder. Even though it’d been months, he still hadn’t completely gotten over watching the hero he was supposed to protect die in front of him while he couldn’t even move. He took a deep breath to clear his head and Giran laughed humorlessly.

“Look, I’ve known the kid since the beginning, and in all the time I’ve met him, I’ve never seen him fail at something that was important to him. You don’t mess with someone like that, Detective, not if you want to stay alive.”

Tsukauchi schooled his expression as he realized Nedzu had been right about Mastermind being a teenager. Giran hadn’t seemed to notice he’d let Mastermind’s age slip, so if Tsukauchi played his cards right, he might be able to get him to slip up again.

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Izuku quietly slipped out of the ventilation shaft and made his way toward the security room at the

police station. At this time of day, there should just be one officer assigned to watch the monitors, so the first order of business was to make sure he couldn't raise the alarm. The door opened silently and Izuku kept his footsteps light as he slid his favorite knife from its sheaf and slit the officer's throat before noting which interrogation room they'd put Giran in. He cleaned the knife and put it away, adjusting his gloves and medical mask before heading back out into the hall. He was dressed as an intern today, with simple grey slacks and a dark blue button up, and he'd put charcoal powder in his hair so it looked more black than green. All in all, it was a meager disguise, but Izuku was plain-looking enough that it wouldn't matter.

He made sure to act confident as he made his way to the coffee machine, but not so confident as to draw attention to himself. He grabbed one of the paper cups from the stand on the table before taking a black sharpie from his pocket and writing something on the bottom of the inside and filling it with coffee. Finally, he took a small packet that looked enough like sugar to not cause alarm and stirred in the contents with a fork, then hunched his shoulders slightly and made his way to the interrogation room.

"O-officer Sansa, s-sir?"

Sansa looked at him in surprise, "Hello. Who are you?"

"M-mikumo A-akatani, sir. I j-just started my internship in the records department. I, um, I thought the suspect m-might be thirsty, sir." He bowed slightly as he held out the coffee.

Sansa nodded, "Good work Akatani. He has been in there a while, and maybe this will help him be a bit more talkative. In the future, though, it's probably best to wait for the detective to make the call." Sansa panicked slightly as Izuku's eyes watered with fake tears. "Not that you did anything wrong! It's just sometimes the detectives are particular about their interrogation styles. You know what, I'll just take this in. I'm sure the suspect will enjoy it."

Izuku bowed, "Thank you so much!"

Sansa smiled, "Yeah, sure. Have a good day Akatani, say hi to the records department for me."

Izuku smirked and nodded, then walked out the front door as Sansa took the coffee to Giran. As much as he'd enjoy watching the show, his plan was reckless enough as it was.

---

"Detective?" Sansa poked his head through the door and Tsukauchi broke away from the staring contest he'd been having with Giran.

"What is it Sansa?"

"One of the interns made the suspect some coffee." Sansa said, setting the cup down in front of Giran.

"Oh thank goodness, I'm parched!" Giran grabbed the coffee as best he could still handcuffed to the table and drank half of it in one swallow before grimacing. "Ugh. I've had better coffee from gas stations. This may as well just be bitter water."

Tsukauchi rolled his eyes and waved Sansa back out of the room. Despite his protests about the quality, Giran was still happily sipping the coffee.

"Alright. How about you tell me how you met Mastermind?"

Giran raised his eyebrows, "You don't just *meet Mastermind*. You only find him if you're looking



for him, and even then you won't realize it's him the first three times you see him."

Tsukauchi nodded as Giran took another drink, "So you sought him out. Was this before or after he started having face to face meet-ups with clients?"

"What's it matter?" Giran dissolved into a coughing fit and frowned when he caught his breath again. "It's not like that changes who he is."

Tsukauchi sighed, "It matters for you. Say, if you forced him to escalate, it might be worse for you than if you'd met him afterwards."

Giran rolled his eyes and coughed again, "If I encouraged him to meet face to face with clients, I'd be proud, not scared. Besides, Mastermind scares me more than you do." He downed the coffee and did a double take as he took in the empty cup.

"I can have Sansa get you more coffee if you'll be agreeable." Tsukauchi said.

Giran's eyes widened and he threw the cup down on the table like it'd burned him as he stared at it with something akin to betrayal, "Who gave you the coffee?"

Tsukauchi looked at him with confusion, "What?"

"The coffee! Who gave you the damn coffee?" Giran was becoming manic and Tsukauchi grabbed his shoulders as he tried to calm him down.

"I don't know, just an intern, why does it matter?"

"I didn't say anything." Giran muttered. "I didn't say anything. Why? Why would he...? I wasn't going to say anything."

Tsukauchi glanced at him, then grabbed the cup to see what had freaked Giran out so badly. His stomach dropped as he saw Mastermind's signature M sprawled across the bottom in black sharpie.

"Sansa! Get a doctor in here now!"

Sansa threw open the door and took in the scene before running off as Tsukauchi knelt beside the frantically muttering Giran.

"Giran, Giran, listen, he obviously doesn't care about you. I don't know how much time you have left, but tell me about him. It isn't going to make any difference at this point. Tell me."

Giran was starting to breathe harder and cough, but Tsukauchi didn't know if that was from a panic attack or poison, "H-his name...His name is Mid..."

Giran went limp and Tsukauchi cursed as he checked his pulse, then frantically unlocked his handcuffs so he could move him to the floor and start chest compressions.

"Don't you dare die on me, Giran." He muttered, knowing that it was probably useless to do chest compressions on a poison victim. "Don't you dare die."

The medical examiner, the closest thing they had to a doctor in the station, burst through the door, "What happened?"

"He's been poisoned." Tsukauchi yelled.

“Do you know what he was poisoned with?”

Tsukauchi shook his head and the medical examiner pushed him gently to the side as he grabbed an epipen from his bag and shoved it into Giran’s thigh. They waited with bated breath as the examiner got out a stethoscope and checked him for a pulse for a solid minute before looking up at them and shaking his head.

Tsukauchi crumpled.

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Everyone at the station was thirsty, but there was no way anyone was drinking anything until the investigation was finished. They’d sent both the cup and the coffee machine down to forensics, who had identified the poison as a fast acting poison completely soluble in water. It had been found in the cup, but not the rest of the coffee, which matched what they had found on the security tapes. Sansa had checked with the records department and they had confirmed that there was no Mikumo Akatani interning there and in fact, all their interns had started months ago. The only fingerprints on the poisoned cup had belonged to Sansa and Giran, since the mystery intern had worn gloves. They had also found traces of charcoal powder on the cup, which Tsukauchi thought had probably been used to color the intern’s hair.

Tsukauchi walked out the doors and sat on the front steps of the police station in an attempt to get some fresh air. The media was already swarming, but officers were keeping them away for now. Nedzu had arrived shortly after Giran’s death and he came to sit beside Tsukauchi.

“The intern was the same height and build as Mastermind.” Tsukauchi said numbly. “The same age as well, since Giran basically confirmed we’re looking for a teenager.”

Nedzu nodded, “I suspected as much.”

“I just,” Tsukauchi groaned, “he was right here! He was in the police station and we still couldn’t recognize him!”

Nedzu put his paw on Tsukauchi’s shoulder, “I know, but we’re getting closer. We know his age, and we caught him on camera. We know his hair isn’t black, otherwise he’d have used charcoal powder. And you and Hawks have both obtained some letters from his name. We have all the pieces to the puzzle, we just need to find out how they go together.”

Tsukauchi took a deep breath and nodded, “You’re right.” He gave a weak smile. “Let’s catch the guy.”

# Upbringing

## Chapter Summary

There are a few important conversations.

## Chapter Notes

Hey guys! You may have noticed that the update is a day early. This is because I do best if I have a schedule and the quarantine has completely messed up the one I had. I will do much better mentally if I can post one chapter a day for my various fics, so we're speeding back up to every other day (One day on *Deku? I think he's some pro...* and one day on *Mastermind: Strategist for Hire*). As always, I will keep an eye on my mental health to make sure I don't burn out and will warn you if I need to slow down again.

In other news, Peacy7 gave us some more fanart of [Bad-ass Mastermind](#) as well as [Izuku and Eri](#) from chapter 23.

Hisashi Midoriya let out a breath of smoke as he watched the news. So Giran was dead, huh? It was probably for the best, he hadn't been quite the same since his abduction. It was time to get some new faces in the brokerage business anyway. On a more personal note, now that Giran was out of the way, there was nothing holding Hisashi back from meeting with Mastermind. He'd been in the villain game long enough to have gained a fearsome reputation, and Mastermind wasn't known for being picky about his clients, so Hisashi had no doubt that the one he'd somehow offended was Giran, not Mastermind. Still, it wouldn't have been wise to go behind the broker's back, but that wouldn't be a problem anymore.

Hisashi called in one of his underlings, "I need you to find out what meetings Mastermind has coming up." He grinned. "I think it's time we reach out, don't you?"

---

"I seriously don't know how you can eat that stuff." Dabi wrinkled his nose in disgust as Keigo destroyed yet another chicken wing.

"You're eating them too." Keigo said, not bothering to cover his mouth. If Dabi was already disgusted, why waste the extra effort?

"Well, I'm not..." Dabi gestured to his wings and Keigo rolled his eyes.

"What? Did you think that actual hawks only eat mice or worms or something? Newsflash." Keigo took another bite. "They eat birds, so I can eat all the fried chicken I want, ok?"

Dabi shook his head and went back to his own plate. Keigo didn't know exactly why Dabi had invited him over for takeout and video games, but he'd said it was something about building trust? Keigo wasn't complaining. Any time he spent with the league was an opportunity for to gather more information on how they worked and what they might do next. He'd personally been hoping

to spend some more time with other members of the league today as well, but so far it was just him and Dabi. Freezerburn was apparently on a date with Mastermind and Keigo couldn't help but be a little disappointed he hadn't arrived in time to see Mastermind's unmasked face. Maybe Dabi just invited him over so he wouldn't have to be alone? Did villains get lonely?

"So, birdie," Dabi said finally, "What was it like growing up with the Hero Commission?"

Keigo froze, "What?"

"I mean, sorry if I'm overstepping my boundaries," Dabi held up his hands placatingly, "but Mastermind let slip about...well, your upbringing, I guess. Sorry if that's something you're not comfortable with discussing or...just forget I said anything."

Keigo blinked a few times. On the one hand, the fact he was raised by the hero commission was classified info, on the other hand... he might be able to use it to cement his place in the league. Maybe if he gave himself a convincing enough backstory, Dabi would finally believe that he was an ally, not an infiltrator.

"It's ok, man." Keigo smiled. "I don't mind, ask away."

Dabi nodded, "How old were you when they picked you up?"

There really wasn't any way of knowing how much Mastermind knew, or how much he'd told the league, so honesty was probably the best policy for now if Keigo really wanted this to work, "I think I was like seven or eight? It was a few years after I got my quirk. My parents weren't really around a lot, and when they were, they were drunk, so I spent a lot of time either alone or with my friends, playing and messing around with our quirks."

"So you had a powerful quirk and knew how to use it." Dabi said. "Sounds to me like the perfect combination for the Commission to take advantage of."

Keigo nodded, because that was what Dabi expected, but that wasn't what the commission had been thinking when they took him in, was it?

"So, um, anyway, yeah, I ended up saving a bunch of people from a car accident and when the heroes arrived, well," Keigo frowned, "I don't really remember exactly, it was a long time ago, but these guys in suits went to go talk to my parents, told them they'd make sure I had a good life away from the poverty."

Dabi scoffed, "I'm sure they offered your parents a pretty comfortable life too, right?"

Keigo looked at him in confusion, "What do you mean?"

Dabi stared at him for a moment, "Do you really expect me to believe the Commission didn't give those bastards anything to let them take you away or to stay silent about the whole thing?" He shook his head. "Let's be honest, birdie, your parents probably sold you to the Commission for a six pack of beer."

Keigo sputtered for a minute. The Commission hadn't *bought* him! That was wrong, illegal, it was...exactly what Endeavor had done to get his hands on Dabi's mother. Thinking about it, it was kinda odd that his parents had never said anything about the whole thing, wasn't it? Wouldn't a mom and dad who thought they were giving him the best chance at life, like the Commission told him...wouldn't they step forward when he became a hero? Wouldn't they brag to their friends when he rose in the ranks and became number one? How much had the Commission paid them for their silence?

Dabi was looking at him sympathetically, “I guess you hadn’t figured that part out yet, had you?” He awkwardly put his hand on Keigo’s shoulder, “Don’t worry about it, birdie, those bastards at the Commission never deserved you anyway. I’m guessing they trained you relentlessly, like Endeavor trained me and Shouto?”

Keigo nodded numbly, then remembered he was supposed to be playing this up to get Dabi to trust him, “Yeah, actually. I basically trained everyday, practicing strength and control with my feathers. They even made me hit targets blindfolded until I didn’t have any feathers left to use. They said using all my feathers like that would help both with my control and with how fast they grew back in.”

Dabi raised an eyebrow, “Did it?”

Keigo shrugged, “I don’t know. I mean, it definitely helped with my control, but... I’d never really used all my feathers at once before the Commission took me away, so I don’t really know if it really made them grow any faster.”

Dabi nodded, “Makes sense. I’m sorry you had to go through that.”

Keigo didn’t really know how to react to that. No one had ever... *pitied* him for his upbringing before. The Commission always just told him how lucky he was they’d found him as early as they did. So which was it? Did he have a blessed upbringing, or was he bought and raised to...what? Be the Commission’s personal weapon?

“Don’t worry about it, man.” Keigo said finally. “I mean, it made me who I am now, right?”

Dabi frowned, “Doesn’t mean it didn’t suck.” He sighed and gestured to his scars. “I mean, these scars might look pretty bad-ass and add to my aesthetic, but that doesn’t mean getting them didn’t hurt.”

Keigo studied the burn scars for a moment, his stomach sinking as he connected the dots, “Did...did Endeavor give those to you?”

Dabi chuckled, “It wasn’t his fire that burned me, if that’s what you mean. But it was still the bastard’s fault,” He paused and frowned. “I may have been born with my father’s fire quirk, but my mom was an ice user. Shouto got lucky with his perfect quirk. As long as he uses both sides, his quirk won’t hurt him. Me, however,” Dabi ran his hand along his collarbone, fingering where his scars attached to the flawless skin on his chest, “I was born with the skin of an ice user. Every time I used my quirk as a kid, it hurt and I risked burning myself beyond repair. One day, after Mom got sent away, Shouto was being stubborn, so Dad decided to train me instead.” He took a deep breath, “He pushed me too far. He was angry and frustrated and just kept attacking me, even though he could see how much pain I was in. I seriously thought I was going to die. So, I did what I had to to survive and I went beyond my limits.”

Keigo watched as Dabi clenched his fists, seeing the way his skin, scars, and staples stretched. The scars...that was just Dabi. Keigo had never thought about how he’d gotten them, how much it must have hurt. Why was that? Was it just because he was a villain? Did that really make Dabi’s pain less than his own for some reason?

Dabi exhaled slowly, “Anyway, I ran away not too long after that. My scars are probably only as bad as they are because I didn’t really have access to a hospital while they finished healing. But, whatever.” Dabi shrugged. “The good thing is that I ended up killing a bunch of my nerve endings, so using my quirk doesn’t hurt nearly as much as it did when I was a kid.”

“I don’t think that counts as a *good thing* .” Keigo said, slightly horrified.

Dabi laughed, “Yeah, but it sure as hell makes torching things a lot easier!”

Keigo shook his head, “You’re insane.”

“Yeah, yeah, I never said I wasn’t, but whatever.” Dabi grinned. “But seriously, Hawks, if you ever want out of the Commission, we’d be happy to help. I mean, it’d be great if you were spying for us instead of them, but if you ever just want out, no one should have to do something they’re uncomfortable with.”

Keigo stared at him for a moment, so much for convincing Dabi he wasn’t a spy. And he didn’t need to be ‘freed’ from the Hero Commission.

Did he?

“Sure, man, whatever.” Keigo smiled, hoping it was convincing enough. “But weren’t you supposed to be destroying me in video games?”

# Date Night

## Chapter Summary

Mastermind and Freezerburn go on a date to the movies.

## Chapter Notes

Is this chapter shamelessly self-indulgent? Why yes, yes it is!

For the record, Shouto had only brought up the whole *let's go see the All Might memorial movie in full villain garb* thing as a joke. But then Izuku had laughed so hard he'd shot grape soda out his nose and well... disturbing the peace was kinda in the job description wasn't it? So, anyway, Shouto was seriously questioning all his life choices as he watched people literally dive to get out of their way as they walked into the movie theater holding hands.

"So, Shouto, do you want to buy the tickets and I'll get the popcorn?"

Shouto couldn't help but burst out laughing, "Do you really think they're gonna make us pay?"

Izuku's eyes sparkled with amusement, "I mean, probably not, but your whole thing is more of a vigilante, only hurting people who deserve it, type attitude. Besides, it'll be hilarious to see how confused everyone gets!"

Shouto chuckled, "Alright. I guess I'll get the tickets then."

Izuku practically bounced with excitement, "Perfect! Meet me back here?"

Shouto nodded and Izuku ran around the corner to the concession stand. Shouto strode confidently up to the ticket counter and smiled at the trembling attendant, "Two tickets to *All Might: Symbol of Peace* please."

The attendant stared at him for a long moment, but jumped into action when Shouto raised an eyebrow at him. He typed a few things into the register in front of him and printed the tickets, quickly handing them to Shouto.

"How much?"

"What?" The attendant's voice was practically a squeak as he stared at Shouto in shock.

Shouto rolled his eyes and pulled some cash from his wallet, "How much do I owe you for the tickets? I'm an upstanding citizen afterall, I'm not here to rob you." He laughed at the irony. The media would have a field day trying to figure that out.

"Um...3600 yen?"

---

Mina and Kirishima both groaned as the movie all of a sudden stopped and the lights turned on, but they weren't the only ones, most of class 1A looked annoyed as well.

"Come on!" Mina said. "We never get permission to leave the dorms! Just let us have our fun!"

Yaoyorozu shook her head, "I'm sure they must have a good reason for stopping the movie. Maybe there's a villain attack nearby and we have to evacuate?"

Iida stood, "If that is the case, did everyone remember to bring their provisional licenses? If we need to assist the pros, we will need to do so legally."

"Yes, Iida, we all have our licenses." Shinso rolled his eyes. "Or did you forget Aizawa checked them all before we left? We wouldn't have been allowed to leave UA if we didn't have them."

"It still kinda sucks Bakugo has to go through anger management therapy before they'll give him his." Kirishima sighed.

"Yeah, well, they can't risk any other heroes going Endeavor." Kaminari said. "That'd suck."

"Could I have everyone's attention, please!" A nervous looking usher raised her voice and the theater went quiet.

"They'd better have a good reason for stopping the movie." Sero grumbled.

"Shh!" Uraraka glared at him.

"Um, the villains Mastermind and Freezerburn have been spotted in the theater. We are going to evacuate out the back door, if everyone could please calmly follow me."

The theatre emptied quickly as people rushed the emergency exits. The members of class 1A looked at each other. Shinso stood and headed for the doors that led to the lobby.

"Shinso!" Iida called. "What are you doing?"

"We're heroes." Shinso said. "And they're villains. It seems pretty simple to me."

"Wait!" Yaoyorozu said. "We aren't authorized to capture Mastermind, we could just make things worse."

"Then we won't catch Mastermind." Kirishima said. "But what Todoroki did definitely wasn't manly at all."

There were nods all around and Yaoyorozu sighed, "Alright, but let's be careful about this. We all know how powerful Todoroki is and we can't forget that Mastermind is with him."

They rushed out to the lobby and saw Todoroki leaning against the ticket counter like he didn't have a care in the world, but Mastermind was nowhere to be seen.

A slight commotion caught Shouto's attention and he turned to see all of class 1A coming out from the theater area in their casual clothes. Huh, they must have been let out of the dorms for a night of fun. Bad timing. He scanned his classmates faces, ignoring the hurt, betrayal and anger he saw there. They'd ignored his pain, hadn't they?

He smiled cheekily at them, "Hey guys, are you here to see the All Might movie too?"

Uraraka was practically growling at him, but nobody made a move. Yet.



“So, where’s your boyfriend?” Kaminari asked.

Shouto tilted his head. Word must travel fast, considering this was his and Izuku’s first date in public, “You mean Mastermind?”

“What? No!” To his surprise Kaminari looked confused. But then again, maybe he shouldn’t have been surprised, this *was* Kaminari, afterall. “Isn’t Dabi your boyfriend?”

Everyone stopped glaring at Shouto to gape at Kaminari in disbelief. Shouto’s nose crinkled in disgust, “Ew, no! Dabi’s my *brother*, you idiot! Just...no!”

Jiro hit Kaminari in the eye with one of her ear jacks, “How did you even miss that, you idiot?”

“I don’t know!” Kaminari said. “I just, I guess I wasn’t paying attention! You know how I get when I go over my wattage limit!”

“Wait.” Ashido said. “Does that mean Mastermind *is* your boyfriend?!”

Shouto chuckled, “Why else did you think we were here? We’re on a date. We thought it’d be funny to go to the All Movie, don’t you agree?”

“You bastard!” Iida ran at him full speed, but Shouto simply froze the floor so he’d slip and fall, freezing the rest of the class to the floor while he was at it.

“Does this mean we’re not going to be able to watch the movie?” He pouted. “We were looking forward to it!”

“You sick...” Sato glared at him. “It isn’t bad enough that you joined the guys that killed him, now you have to mock his memory too?”

Shouto returned his glare, “All Might wasn’t a hero. A real hero wouldn’t have been too blind to see what was right underneath his nose. And I’m not even the only one All Might could have saved, could have given hope, but chose to crush instead.”

“Oh? And who else is that?” Shinso asked.

Shouto opened his mouth to answer, then slammed his jaw shut again, making Shinso curse. All of a sudden he was knocked off balance by Dark Shadow, who obviously hadn’t been frozen to the ground like his classmates. He rolled to his feet only to receive a hardened punch from Kirishima, who had managed to break through his ice. Sato broke the ice trapping him soon after and joined in the assault. Shouto lit up his left side to keep them at bay and disable Dark Shadow, but that meant that the others broke through their ice that much easier.

He dodged as Ashido skated by him and threw up an ice wall to block her acid attack, then had to shield his eyes as Yaoyorozu threw one of her flashbang dolls at him, giving Kirishima another opening to punch him again.

“Stop!”

Shouto blinked his eyes open to see his classmates frozen, staring at Izuku, who had one of his knives at the throat of a terrified concessions attendant. He shifted the knife slightly, making a drop of blood roll slowly roll down the attendant’s neck.

“Move again and she dies.” Izuku growled, then glanced at Shinso. “Same goes for if you speak. Nod if you understand.”

There was a round of nods from his classmates, none of which looked happy about it as they refused to take their eyes off Izuku's knife. His hostage whimpered slightly as Izuku chuckled.

"Right answer. Good to know you haven't forgotten the first rule of hero work. Come on, Shoto, it's time for us to go." He stepped forward, dragging the hostage roughly along with him. "She's coming with us. If you all stay put like good little heroes, we'll let her go in a few blocks."

Shoto followed Izuku to the door, feeling the frustration of his classmates as he left them behind.

"Why?" Shoto glanced back to see tears in Yaoyorozu's eyes as he looked at him imploringly, "Why Todoroki? Why did you do it?"

Izuku stopped, letting Shoto take his time. He knew if he were to just walk away right now, Izuku wouldn't think any less of him, but he was leaving that up to Shoto. It was sweet.

Shoto took a deep breath and looked Yaoyorozu in the eye, "Because this is what it takes to be free."

Then he and Izuku walked out the door. They'd have to find something else to do for their date.

# Dragon

## Chapter Summary

Hisashi crashes one of Mastermind's meetings.

“Alright, I can work with this.” Izuku put his notebook away as the future assassin in front of him stood and bowed. “I’ll get the plan to you by the end of the week.”

“There you are, Mastermind! I’ve been looking for you.”

Izuku scowled as Hisashi Midoriya, aka Dragon, aka dead-beat dad of the year, walked into the room like he owned the place. It had only taken a few months in the villain world for Izuku to figure out the truth behind the whole *working overseas* thing he’d been told his entire life. The worst part was, he wasn’t even surprised. Sure, Mom might believe that her loving husband was just working overseas because that was where his company needed him, but Izuku had always thought it was just a little too suspicious that he’d been unavoidably transferred right after Izuku was diagnosed quirkless.

Izuku glanced at the man his meeting was *actually* with, who looked just as surprised to see Hisashi as he was. Good, that meant he wouldn’t have to kill him. Izuku put enough hatred behind his glare to send most seasoned villains running and turned to his father, “Get out of my way, Dragon. I have no interest in talking with you.”

He moved to walk past Hisashi, who stopped him by grabbing his arm. His father really was an idiot wasn’t he? Did he conveniently forget what Izuku did to those who crossed him, or did he just delude himself into thinking that couldn’t possibly happen to him?

“Now, now, Mastermind. I just want to talk. Giran was being an ass and trying to keep us apart, but he’s out of the way now, so there’s no need to pretend you’re not honored to work with a major player in the underground such as myself.”

“I assure you, the decision not to work with you was entirely my own.” Izuku growled. Maybe if the guy wanted to work with him, he should have stuck around to raise him. As it was, Hisashi couldn’t even recognize his own son’s voice.

Hisashi frowned, “Come on, now, Mastermind, be reasonable! The Dragon’s Horde is an extremely successful gang, we have the money to pay you for your services.”

“There is no sum of money you could pay me to convince me to work with you.” Izuku wrenched his arm out of Hisashi’s grip. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have work to do.”

He kept a few knives ready in case Hisashi’s men tried to attack him on the way out, but apparently they were smarter than their boss because they let him pass. Someone followed him, but Izuku lost them easily enough on the rooftops. Izuku shook his head as he changed out of his villain outfit and walked home.

Why his mom had ever married an asshole like Hisashi, he would never know.

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Hisashi knocked the papers off his desk in frustration, “Who does that...snot-nosed kid think he is? I am Dragon! I am respected! Mastermind hasn’t even been on the scene two years! What gives him the right to snub me like that?”

Hisashi took a deep breath. He wouldn’t stand for this. Mastermind didn’t have a monopoly on threats and blackmail. The people he had taken out were weak or new to the game, but Hisashi had been doing this for twenty years and The Dragon’s Horde was a force to be reckoned with. He wasn’t about to take orders from some kid barely out of diapers! He just...had to find something to hold over his head.

“Boys, I need you to find everything you can on Mastermind.” Hisashi’s face broke into a feral grin. “I think it’s time that brat learns his place.”

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Hisashi looked at the photo his lackey had handed him, crumpling the edges slightly from how tightly he was gripping it.

“Are you sure this is Mastermind’s civilian identity?”

His lackey nodded, “Yes sir. The brokers would only sell it to me if I proved I wasn’t a cop. They did warn us not to get on his bad side, though.”

Hisashi hadn’t actually *seen* Izuku since just after his fourth birthday, when he realized his son was always going to be useless. If he’d thought it would work, he would have tried to convince Inko the boy wasn’t worth her time and dropped him off at the nearest orphanage, but Inko had always been too attached to go for that idea, so Hisashi had just decided to send child support checks and have done with it.

But it seemed that the apple didn’t fall far from the tree. Of course his son was cunning enough to become Mastermind, he really shouldn’t have been surprised. But that just made Mastermind’s refusal to work with him all the more confusing. Shouldn’t Izuku have some respect for his own father? Maybe he didn’t know?

Well, this made things much easier. All he had to do to get Mastermind on his side was to rekindle his relationship with his wife and son, then the world would be in his hands. Once Izuku realized that the illustrious Dragon was his father, Hisashi was sure he wouldn’t hesitate to obey him. That was what sons were supposed to do, right, obey their fathers? And if Izuku didn’t want to obey him out of love, then maybe guilt would do the trick? Make it seem like a nice father/son activity they can do to get closer and make up for lost time. His plan was flawless!

But...there was always the possibility that Izuku would be stubborn. Hisashi had heard teenagers were like that sometimes, it was an annoying trait that just came with age. Of course, his Izuku would never knowingly disobey his father, but it paid to be prepared. Hisashi thought for a moment. What would he do if, after everything, Izuku refused to obey him?

He frowned. It would be inconvenient, because he had always cared for his wife and he would inevitably be questioned if anything were to happen to her, but there were other women in the world, many even more attractive than Inko since she’d put on weight during the last decade. Hisashi nodded as he cemented his plan. In the *highly* unlikely event that Izuku refused to do his duty to Hisashi, then threatening Inko would be more than enough to keep him in line.

“Clear my schedule for tomorrow.” He grinned. “I’m taking a family day.”

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Izuku raised an eyebrow at his mother when somebody knocked on their door as they watched TV after breakfast. They weren't expecting anyone, were they? The only time they ever really got visitors was when the Bakugos came over for dinner, but they never showed up on Saturdays.

"I'll get it!" Inko smiled at him as she stood to go answer the door. "You just stay on the couch, sweetie. I'll be back in a minute."

Inko bustled to the front door and there was a long moment before Izuku heard her gasp. He jumped up from the couch and ran to the hall, already coming up with a dozen plans to protect her if it came to that. She was staring at the man on the doorstep, but turned around when she heard him behind her. There were happy tears in her eyes as she gripped the man's hand and Izuku carefully hid his scowl as he took in who exactly was at the door.

"Hello, son." Hisashi smiled. "Long time no see."

# Daddy Issues

## Chapter Summary

The confrontation between Izuku and Hisashi.

## Chapter Notes

Hey guys, we got [fanart](#) of Freezerburn this time!

Also, someone made a [playlist](#) for this fic so check it out!

I always love it when my stories inspire you guys to create, keep being awesome!

“Come eat with us, son!” Hisashi laughed. “Don’t be shy!”

Izuku wanted to scowl at him and tell him to get out of their house, but his mom was watching and she looked so happy that Hisashi was finally home, so Izuku settled for a strained smile. He sat down so he was facing Hisashi, who had taken the place at the head of the table like he actually deserved to sit there. Hisashi smiled at him as Inko finished putting food on the table and sat down.

“You’ve grown up so much, son.” Hisashi grinned at him widely. Izuku glared at him as Inko looked down to serve the food. Did he think Izuku was stupid enough to not see through his *loving father* act, especially since he waltzed back into their life right as Dragon is pushing to get something from Mastermind? Did his father think he was an idiot?

Apparently he did because he was smiling sweetly at Inko like he didn’t have a care in the world and Inko was eating it up. Izuku wanted to scream at her not to trust him, that the only reason he was even still sending money was because if he didn’t, the government might look into him and discover he was a villain, but then he’d have to explain exactly how he knew that and just because he knew a confrontation was coming with his father, didn’t mean he wanted it to happen in front of his mom.

“Thanks for the food.” Izuku muttered, then took a big bite so he wouldn’t have to talk to the asshole sitting across from him. He was having enough of a hard time sitting in brooding silence, he wasn’t sure his civility would last if he were forced to talk.

“So Hisashi.” Inko said. “Why didn’t you tell us you were coming to visit? I didn’t even know you were in town?”

Izuku resisted the urge to roll his eyes as Hisashi gave a booming laugh, “I just wanted to surprise my wife and son, what’s the harm in that? I’ve missed you two so much, I just couldn’t get away from work, you know how fast-paced things are in America. I don’t know how long I’ll be back in Japan, it depends on how well things go with a business associate I have here, but I’ll be pushing to stay as long as possible.”

Izuku huffed quietly. *Business associate*, yeah right. Hisashi would stay around for as long as

Izuku did what he wanted, playing the part of a loving father when really he was anything but. Hopefully Inko wouldn't be too sad when he inevitably disappeared again, but she'd survived over ten years without him, she didn't need him to be happy.

"Oh that's wonderful honey!" Inko gushed. "I hope you get to stay, it would be wonderful to have you around and you could get to know Izuku. I know you two are going to get along just great."

Hisashi laughed again, "Yeah, I sure hope so. Just looking at him now, I'm sure he takes after his father. Except the hair, of course, he got your beautiful hair, Inko."

Inko blushed as Hisashi smiled at her, "Oh, stop it, Hisashi. You can't just start laying on the compliments out of nowhere!"

"But you're just as beautiful as the day I married you. Why shouldn't a loving husband compliment his gorgeous wife?"

Inko giggled and Izuku finished his food, "Mom, I'll be in my room if you need me."

Inko frowned, "But Izuku, don't you want to spend more time with your dad? He doesn't get time in Japan very often, so we need to take advantage of it."

Hisashi put his arm around her, "I agree. Maybe we could go to the park like we used to, huh son? I bet you'd like that, wouldn't you?"

Izuku raised an eyebrow at him skeptically, "All three of us?"

Hisashi sputtered for a moment before smiling, "Well, I was thinking it'd be just the two of us, son. Have some father/son bonding time!"

"That's a wonderful idea, Hisashi." Inko clapped her hands together. "I'll pack you a few snacks for later and you two can head out, ok?"

Izuku frowned, but nodded as his mom bustled to pack a basket for them, "I just need to grab something from my room real quick, alright? I'll be back by the time we're ready to leave."

Inko nodded and Izuku went to his room and closed the door, feeling Hisashi's eyes on him the whole time. He knelt beside his bed and pulled a steel box from underneath it, entering the passcode to open it. He kept most of his knives at his base, but he was grateful he'd decided to keep a few here for emergencies, locked away where his mom wouldn't find them. He took off his shirt so he could attach the holsters underneath, then switched to a black long-sleeved shirt so he could have more knives accessible around his hands. He took a moment to make sure he could grab all the knives. Arms, check, waist, check, ankles, check. He smiled and went back out into the living room, where Hisashi was waiting for him by the door.

"Ready son?"

Izuku nodded, putting on his shoes and walking out the door, "So what park did you have in mind?"

"Oh, there's a really pretty one by the river I think you'll really like." Hisashi said. "It's kinda out of the way, but it's gorgeous, trust me."

Izuku had no plans to trust Hisashi on anything, anytime soon. He was pretty sure he knew what park Hisashi was talking about. It was isolated and basically under an overpass of a busy freeway, so it couldn't be seen or even heard by people passing by. Izuku had heard stories of gunshots

going off that no one had called in simply because they thought it was someone blowing a tire instead. Overall, it was the perfect place for back alley deals, but parents and kids avoided it like the plague, so there was no doubt in Izuku's mind on how things would go once they got there.

The train ride was awkward. Hisashi tried several times to ask him about various hobbies he had, but Izuku just gave one word answers until he finally stopped trying. After that Hisashi tried telling him stories he probably thought were funny, but that were really prejudiced, racist, or some other kind of messed up. Seriously, the man was such a narcissist that he didn't even realize what an asshole he was.

They got off the train and Hisashi led the way to the park Izuku had been thinking of. Izuku rolled his eyes when he saw it was busier than he'd ever seen it, but with adults, not a kid in sight. There were men pretending to talk to each other by the playground, and a few who were supposedly busy looking out over the water, but of course, no matter what they were doing, they all glanced up when Hisashi and Izuku entered and then pretended they hadn't. How did the Dragon's Horde even become so successful when their plans were this transparent?

Hisashi led him over to a picnic table and they sat down, "Now Izuku, I know that this may come as a shock to you, but we're really not so different, you and I."

Izuku raised one eyebrow and gestured for him to continue. The sooner they got this over with, the sooner he could go home.

Hisashi smiled, "Well son, unlike your mother, I know what you've been up to." He paused for dramatic effect. "I know you're Mastermind."

Izuku clapped his hands slowly, "Congratulations, *Dragon*, but I knew *that* from the moment you decided to walk in the door this morning. The question now is what are you going to do about it?"

Hisashi spluttered for a moment, "You *knew* who I was and you still refused to work with me?"

Izuku rolled his eyes, "I refused to work with you *because* I knew who you were. What? Did you think I was just going to roll over and work with you, just because you happened to knock up my mom one time?"

Hisashi's face twisted in rage, "I am your *father*, Izuku. I am the one who gave you life. You wouldn't even exist if it wasn't for me, so maybe, for once in your life, you should try showing a little respect. It is your duty as a son to obey me!"

"My duty?" Izuku laughed. "I don't have a duty to *anyone* except for me. That's why I'm a villain, because it offers me the freedom to do what I want, when I want, just because I can. No one is going to tell Mastermind he can't do something just because he's quirkless, like people have been doing my whole life. But I guess you didn't even think about *why* I became Mastermind, did you? You just thought I was one more thing you could exploit."

"What?" Hisashi stood. "I love you, *you owe me!*"

Izuku glared up at him, "I don't owe you shit."

Hisashi's scowl deepened, "I didn't want to have to do this, son, but you've forced my hand. If you insist on continuing this childish tantrum, I will have no choice but to punish your mother for your insolence."

Izuku scoffed, "And you pretend you love her." He shook his head. "Do you know who the last guy that threatened Mom was, Hisashi?"



Hisashi rolled his eyes, “Whoever he was, he was weak, but I assure you, I am different.”

Izuku chuckled humorlessly, “I don’t think *weak* was a word most people usually associated with Overhaul.”

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw some of his father’s men shifting uncomfortably, probably remembering that not only had Overhaul been destroyed, but his entire gang had been killed. Hisashi, however, just shook his head, “Overhaul was a child, barely in charge of a struggling yakuza because the old leader died.”

Izuku sighed, “Yes, and All Might was the symbol of peace for decades. Are you saying he was weak too?”

Hisashi’s face hardened, “You *will* work with me, son, or you *will* regret it.”

Izuku shrugged and stood, “I think you’ll be the one with regrets. I’m not the helpless little quirkless kid you abandoned anymore, Hisashi. I have the reputation I do because I’ve *earned* it.”

Hisashi sighed heavily, “Oh well, son, I hoped it wouldn’t come to this, but I suppose I should tell you we’re not alone here. Dragon’s Horde, be careful to just rough him up a little, we don’t want him dead. Yet.”

Izuku flipped the table up to shield himself from the quirked attacks that were thrown at him and got out two of his knives as he waited for the close range combaters to approach. Hisashi had brought along a dozen men in total, most of which were heavy hitters, but they also weren’t the smartest, since intelligent criminals didn’t follow idiots like Hisashi.

A man with a snake quirk ran up and tried to bite him, but Izuku simply dodged his fangs and slit his throat. The next two men who tried to attack him met a similar fate just as quickly. Izuku smiled as Hisashi’s men looked at each other hesitantly, clearly realizing they had underestimated him. Three of the men still standing looked at their dead friends, gulped, then turned and ran away.

“Come back here cowards!” Hisashi yelled. “You’ll regret this!”

“I really don’t think you’ll be alive long enough to follow through on that threat, Hisashi.” Izuku laughed. “And I also think you just lost your three smartest men.”

Hisashi growled and signaled the rest of his men forward, but Izuku was already running towards them, knives at the ready. One of the men managed to knock him off his feet with a rope quirk, but Izuku simply waited until he was dragged closer to the man before slicing through the rope holding his ankle and killing the man now that he was in range. He threw one of his knives into another’s throat, replacing it with one of the other knives hidden beneath his clothes.

Hisashi watched as Izuku slaughtered his men with disdain, “Weak, all of you! He’s a child! How is he giving you this much trouble?”

Izuku simply killed another lackey who’d made the mistake of getting too close. Another had followed the lead of the three that had run away earlier, clearly deciding he wasn’t getting out of this alive if he kept attacking. Izuku stared down his last two opponents and grinned as they screamed and rushed him at once. He ducked between them and sent one of them sprawling with a well aimed kick, using him to knock the other down, then killed them both before they could get up.

Hisashi frowned as he looked at his dead men, then sighed, “I suppose if you want something done

right, you have to do it yourself.”

He took a deep breath and Izuku ducked behind a tree as the scalding flames left his mouth. Hisashi took another deep breath, but Izuku threw one of his knives so it lodged right underneath his vocal chords. Hisashi tried to exhale, but half the flames came spilling out around the knife, burning the unprotected skin at his neck. Hisashi pulled the knife out in frustration and threw it to the ground, but that only made him bleed faster.

He tried to take another breath to fuel his quirk, but he got a lungful of blood instead. Izuku smiled as he walked up to his father, who tried to grab at him, but Izuku simply cut the man’s hands so that he couldn’t, then cut the tendons behind his knees so he couldn’t kick either before knocking him to the ground.

Hisashi coughed as he turned to stare up at Izuku with burning hatred. Izuku rolled his eyes, “I told you, Hisashi, I will never work with you.”

He left his father bleeding out as he gathered his knives and went to the river to wash the blood off his skin and hair. The black shirt he was wearing hid the stains well, but Izuku grimaced when he saw the red patches spreading across his jeans. He couldn’t go home like that!

He sighed and grabbed some of the mud from the riverbank, spreading it into the fabric of his jeans and putting some into his hair too, just to be thorough. When he was sure the mud had covered all the blood, he stood and went to leave, but a weak movement caught his eyes. He frowned when he saw Hisashi weakly struggling. Izuku had thrown his knife to compromise his airway and he must have missed the major veins and arteries in Hisashi’s neck, since it was taking him so long to die. Or maybe he was just stubborn. Either way, Izuku knelt beside him and looked into his eyes for a long moment before taking out one of his knives and slicing through Hisashi’s jugular vein. It would still take him a minute or two to completely bleed out, but there was no way he’d still be alive by the time someone else visited the park. Izuku kicked his father one last time, reveling in the way he tried to gasp but couldn’t, before walking away from the bloodbath with a smile.

He got a few weird looks on the train as the other commuters crinkled their noses with disgust at the mud on his pants, but he didn’t pay them any mind. The sun was just starting to set by the time he walked in the front door. Izuku took his shoes off, careful not to spread more mud in the entry than he had to and looked at his pants. What little blood he could see had dried brown during his commute, so Mom wouldn’t notice it even if she happened to get too close. From the kitchen, he could smell his mom cooking dinner for three.

“Izuku, Hisashi? Are you home?” Inko walked into the entryway and gasped. “Izuku? What happened to you?”

Izuku smiled, “I just tripped and fell in some mud at the park, Mom. It’s no big deal, but I’d like to shower before dinner, if that’s alright?”

Mom nodded and sighed in relief, “Yes, that’s fine. I’m so glad you’re alright Izuku.” She looked around and frowned. “Where’s your father?”

Izuku schooled his expression and shrugged, “He ran into some old friends at the park and I got bored, so I just came home. I don’t know how long he’ll be.”

Inko nodded, “Ok, I’m glad he was able to talk to his friends, maybe they’ll be able to convince him to stay in Japan a little longer. You go shower, sweetie, dinner will be ready in an hour. You can just leave your clothes and I’ll wash them tomorrow.”

Izuku smiled, “Don’t worry Mom, I’ll take care of it . You just focus on dinner.”

“You’re so sweet, Izuku!” Inko smiled. “I’m so lucky to have such a wonderful son.”

# Raised to be a Hero

## Chapter Summary

Hawks makes some progress.

Keigo wasn't doing too hot. On the one hand, the league seemed to be trusting him more, going so far as to invite him to hang out with them at least once a week, even when they weren't planning or doing anything nefarious. This, by all accounts, was a very good thing. The Hero Commission was happy with his work and Keigo was happy because the more time he spent around the league was more time he was gathering info. But on the other hand, the more he hung around them, the less they seemed like villains he was supposed to be spying on and the more they seemed like friends he was supposed to protect. That was weird, right? Maybe he was getting too close to the case and he should ask the Commission to pull him out?

Keigo felt a weird tug of... sadness? Reluctance? Was that what that was? Keigo sighed as he flew toward Hero Commission headquarters to give his report. He couldn't help it that spending time with the league was fun! Getting crushed at video games by Shigaraki, debating conspiracies with Shouto and Spinner, laughing with Dabi as Twice argued with himself and Toga cheered him on, Keigo had never felt anything like it. It felt...right, somehow, like this was how things were supposed to be. As weird as it was, he didn't think he'd ever been happier than he was in those stolen moments he spent with the league.

He shook his head. No! These were villains, they killed people. Keigo had *watched* them kill people and watched on national television as they slaughtered the last number one hero. These weren't his friends, they were....what? They were villains, that's all they were and all they needed to be. Besides, he didn't need *friends* anyway. Hadn't the Hero Commission always told him growing up that friends would just get in the way? He was a hero, so he was supposed to be above all that. He was a friend of the people, after all, and that was the most important thing.

But... would the Commission even let him pull out at this point? They never had before. They'd probably just tell him that it was a good thing the league saw him as a friend and tell him to stop complaining about nothing. He had a duty to the people. He had a duty to the Commission. Keigo nodded with determination. There was no point in asking to be pulled out. He could still spend time with the league and he wouldn't be wasting the Commission's time. It was a win-win!

He landed on the roof and made his way through the halls to Mera's office. The man was sleeping at his desk when Keigo walked in and snuck up to the desk. His handler had fallen asleep with a few open files and Keigo couldn't help being a curious little bird as he glanced over them before waking Mera up. Why was Mera looking over files for little kids? Were they missing? No wonder Mera was always so tired if he was trying to do the police department's job in addition to his own.

Keigo leaned a little closer as Mera shifted in his sleep, giving him a better view of the files. Each of the four children had their names and ages, none of them were older than ten, written beneath their photos along with height and their parents' names if they had any, which two of them didn't. Keigo peeked at the other data and froze.

*Candidate for the Legacy Feeder Program.*

He couldn't breathe. The Legacy Feeder Program was what the Commission had called it when they took him away to raise him into a hero. Were those kids...going to be like him? Were they going to grow up knowing nothing but training to be a hero until they were old enough to get a license, never going to school with kids their own age, never being allowed to do anything if it didn't help mould them into what the Commission wanted them to be? For the first time, Keigo processed the bright red ink stamped across each of the pages. *Approved.*

How many others like him were there? Did they see how well Keigo worked out and decide to keep the program going, or had he even been the first? Why had the Commission never told him? If they were hiding this from him, what else were they hiding?

Keigo took a deep breath and shook his head. It didn't matter. The Commission knew what they were doing. They weren't trying to hide this because it was morally wrong, it's just that confidentiality was part of the hero world, part of what made the hero system possible. Isn't that what they'd told him when he'd asked why he wasn't allowed to talk to people about his childhood? It was to keep him safe.

He forced a smile onto his face and slammed his hands on the desk, "Morning Mera!"

Mera jumped about a foot in the air and yelped, then glared at Keigo, "Just...why?"

Keigo gave him a shit-eating grin, "Why not? What'cha working on?"

Keigo didn't miss the way Mera discretely moved to close the files, "Nothing important. How is your work going with the league? Have you found anything useful?"

Keigo shrugged, "I think they're planning on going after the Dorado Casino next. Spinner was complaining that they have some super quirkest policies and don't allow some heteromorphic quirks or the quirkless in their high end rooms."

Mera was silent for a long moment and Keigo was just starting to think he'd fallen asleep again when he spoke, "For the amount of time you're spending with the league, you don't seem to be getting a whole lot of information."

Keigo froze, "Well, I mean, most of the time the league spends together is just hanging out, not planning stuff. I mean, they're just people like the rest of us, they need down time."

Mera's eyes hardened into a glare, "They are villains, Hawks, not people, and don't you forget it. They gave up their rights when they decided to disobey."

Keigo opened and closed his mouth a few times before nodding, "Yes sir."

"I don't mean to be harsh, Hawks." Mera continued softly. "But you know how important it is that we take down the league, and you are essential to that plan. People everywhere are relying on you to keep them safe from these monsters, and if you're not trying hard enough to get good information then...well, what happens to them is on you. Don't forget, Keigo, that this is your purpose, this is what we raised you for, it's your responsibility to take down the league, so don't disappoint everyone who's counting on you."

A familiar feeling of guilt settled in Keigo's stomach, "Ok, I'll try harder."

Mera smiled, "Good boy, now go out and be the number one hero we need."

Keigo nodded numbly and went back up to the roof so he could feel the familiar feeling of the wind rushing through his hair and feathers. He'd disappointed everyone again, he was...he didn't

even deserve the number one spot, did he? The Commission had raised him to...

Keigo gasped softly as everything finally fell into place. No matter how much he tried to deny it the Commission had raised him to be the number one hero, just like Endeavor had tried to raise Dabi and Shouto. He hadn't dissapointed the people at all, had he? He'd disappointed the *Commission* and they were just using the idea of protecting innocents to guilt him into doing what they wanted. Had he ever felt this guilt when he wasn't with them? Had he ever felt this when he was with the league?

What about those kids? Those kids were going to go through the same psychological torture and manipulation he'd gone through his entire life until all that was left were perfect tools for the Commission to use. Did the Commission even see him as a human being, or just as an object to use and exploit for their own gain? At least the league saw him as a person and liked spending time with him even when he wasn't doing anything for them. And how sad was that, that the villains he was supposed to be destroying treated him better than the people who raised him.

Keigo took one deep breath then flung himself off the roof, reveling in the freedom of flying.

# Asking the Right Questions

## Chapter Summary

Izuku talks to Tsukauchi. Keigo talks to the league.

“Izuku, can you come to the front room? There’s someone here who wants to talk to us!”

Izuku locked his laptop and put it away before leaving his bedroom, “What is it Mom? Who...”

Detective Tsukauchi stood in the entryway, and Izuku froze. What was the detective tasked with finding him doing in his house? Did he suspect Izuku? Was he here to arrest him? Izuku glanced behind Tsukauchi. If he was, then why didn’t he bring backup? Were they waiting outside? Izuku’s mind kept running through possibilities and escape plans as Inko took Tsukauchi’s coat and led him to the couch.

“Would you like some tea, Detective?” Inko asked.

Tsukauchi shook his head, “Not today, Mrs. Midoriya, I don’t want to put this off.”

“So, if you don’t mind me asking,” Izuku eyed Tsukauchi carefully, “what’s a detective doing in our house?”

Tsukauchi frowned softly, “There’s really no easy way to say this, but I have some bad news.” He looked at Inko. “Your husband, Hisashi Midoriya, was murdered sometime yesterday afternoon. I am so sorry for your loss.”

Inko gasped and tears started streaming down her face, “But-but I thought...he can’t be...he was only in Japan for a few days for business...we were going to be a family again...who would?”

Tsukauchi looked confused, “Why do you say he was only in Japan for a few days?”

“Hisashi, he-he worked in America, we haven’t even seen him for years because his company wouldn’t give him any time off. He came in for a few days to- to surprise us...” Izuku rubbed his mother’s back as she started sobbing.

“Oh...um, I’m sorry to have to tell you this,” Tsukauchi said, “but Hisashi Midoriya was the villain known as Dragon and the leader of a gang known as the Dragon’s Horde. There is no record of him even leaving the country in the past decade, much less working abroad. I have to tell you this because we believe that it may have been one of his enemies in the underworld who killed him. Was he acting suspiciously at all yesterday?”

Izuku scoffed, “Just him showing up was suspicious, considering he hasn’t visited in ten years.”

“Izuku!” Inko scolded, “He was your *father*! Have some respect.”

“Well, I still need to ask you both a few questions, if possible, to help us find his killer. What time did you last see Hisashi yesterday?”

“He and Izuku left to go on a walk right after lunch.” Inko said softly. “They were supposed to be

home in time for dinner and Izuku was on time, but Hisashi..." She cut herself off with a sob and Tsukauchi turned to Izuku.

"So you went on a walk after lunch?"

Izuku nodded as he reviewed what he knew about Tsukauchi's quirk, Lie Detector. It allowed him to know if what people were saying was the truth or a lie but as long as what Izuku said was technically true, the quirk shouldn't register falsehoods. He could work with that.

"Yes. Hisashi said he wanted to have some father-son bonding time and offered to take me to a park. It was a bit out of the way, but I wasn't the one that chose it."

*True*

Tsukauchi nodded. It was so strange to him that Dragon's family didn't even know of his double life. Had Dragon left the family to protect them? If so, why had he come back?

"Alright, about what time did you arrive at the park?"

Izuku shrugged, "It was early afternoon, I think. I don't know the exact time."

*True*

"Which park did you go to?"

"I don't know the name of it, but it's hidden under an overpass and there's a river that runs right by it. We had to take the train to get there."

*True*

Tsukauchi sighed, that was where Dragon's body had been found, which meant that Izuku was probably one of the last people to see him alive. He might have even seen his father's murderer. Tsukauchi hoped for the kid's safety that he hadn't. The intel they had on Dragon said that he'd been trying to push Mastermind for a deal, but Mastermind wasn't having it, so there was a good chance Dragon had been killed by number one villain in Japan. Izuku was an innocent kid who had just lost his father, he didn't need the danger that came along with being a witness in the Mastermind investigation.

"Do you know why your father took you to that park?" Tsukauchi asked. "There are others closer to here."

"I think it was because of how secluded it was. He had some things he wanted to talk to me about."

*True*

"Do you mind telling me what those things were?"

"He...wanted me to join him."

*True*

"Izuku..." Inko sobbed and wrapped her arms around her son. "Baby, why didn't you tell me?"

Tsukauchi frowned, "Did you know that Hisashi was Dragon?"

Izuku was silent for longer than Tsukauchi thought was strictly necessary, "He mentioned it when



we got to the park.”

*True*

“And how did you respond?”

Izuku scoffed, “I told him there was no way I’d work with him. I have no interest in joining a gang.”

*True*

Well that, at least, was a relief. And it seemed that Dragon hadn’t really pressed the issue, since Izuku was here, alive and well.

“Your mother mentioned that you came home on time, but Hisashi didn’t. Did you leave the park together?”

“No. Hisashi...ran into some friends while we were there and since our conversation was over, I decided to leave him with them.”

*True*

Poor kid, the dad wants him to be a villain, then runs into friends, probably also villains, so he gets bored and decides to go home. Seemed like a standard teenage reaction to a long winded parent. Well, except for the whole recruitment situation. But these friends...some of them were probably the other members of the Dragon’s Horde that they found dead alongside Dragon, but there was also the possibility one of them had been Mastermind.

“These friends of his, would you mind describing them to me?”

Izuku shrugged, “They were all just your standard street thugs.”

*True*

“None of them were teenagers?”

Izuku looked at him strangely, “No, they were all adults. Why?”

*True*

Tsukauchi breathed a sigh of relief, “We believe that Mastermind, who we have evidence may be a teenager, was involved with your father’s death. If you had seen him, you would most likely be in a lot of danger right now.”

“Oh my poor baby!” Inko hugged Izuku even harder.

Tsukauchi frowned. He’d asked all the questions he’d prepared, and it seemed like Izuku had already left the park by the time the fight went down, but something just seemed off. Maybe it was because most people told at least one white lie while talking to him, or maybe it was something about Izuku’s behavior and how calm he seemed, but...well, it wouldn’t hurt to ask just one more question, right? Just to make sure?

“Alright, just one last question and I’ll leave you alone.” He looked Izuku in the eye. “Was your father still alive when you left the park?”

Izuku thought back to how he’d left his father bleeding out with no hope of rescue, and had to hold

back a smile, “Yes.”

*True*

---

Keigo threw his controller down on the couch after losing to Shigaraki yet again. The entire league was together and Shigaraki had called them all cowards for refusing to play video games with him. Dabi, the traitor, had shoved a controller in Keigo’s hands and abandoned him to the unbeatable boss that was Shigaraki, king of video games. Half an hour later, Keigo had died five times, and he was pretty sure Shigaraki was still on his first life.

“Don’t feel too bad, Hawks sweetie.” Toga leaned over the back of the couch and handed him a slice of pizza. “Nobody can beat Shigi here. He’s basically the god of video games.”

“Toga, don’t give my brother any more ideas for conspiracy theories!” Dabi yelled.

Shouto looked up from where he was writing something at the table, “No, please, keep them coming.”

Keigo laughed as Twice decided to take up both sides of the argument, trying to convince everyone with nonsensical leaps in logic and pretty soon, everyone had made their way to the couch to watch the show. *This*. This must be what family was supposed to feel like. He...he wanted this.

Twice’s argument ended as he realized that whatever side won, he was still the winner, so there was no point. The group fell into companionable silence and Keigo bit his lip. Maybe now would be a good time?

“Umm, guys?” Everyone turned to look at him as soon as he broke the silence and Keigo tried to swallow his nerves. “You know how, well...you know how you’ve accused me of being an infiltrator a few times?”

Shouto nodded, “What about it?”

Keigo hesitated a moment, “What if that were true?”

There was a long moment of silence as the league processed what he’d said. Finally, Dabi spoke up, “It’d suck and we might have to kill you, but you’re a pretty cool guy, birdie, so we’d be sad about it if that’s any consolation.”

Keigo chuckled, but it felt flat. He stared at the floor as he debated his next words, “And what if I didn’t want it to be true anymore?”

“...What?”

Keigo looked up at his friends’ confused faces, “I...I’ve been thinking about it a lot and... maybe I don’t want to be a hero anymore. The Commission assigned me to infiltrate the league before Endeavor’s death, so that’s how this all started out, but...it’s different now. I wasn’t ever allowed to have friends growing up, since the Commission was focused on making me into their perfect little puppet, but...I don’t think I could ever ask for better friends than you guys.”

“Aww!” Toga rushed forward to hug him. “That’s the sweetest thing anybody’s ever said about us!”

“Let him breathe, crazy!” Dabi pulled her away. “But in all seriousness, birdie, thanks, but you can’t decide to be a villain just because you’ve got friends who’ve made some questionable life

decisions. If your heart's not in it, you'll just regret it later."

"My heart *is* in it and I want out." Keigo took a moment to gather his thoughts, "Ever since I was taken by the Commission as a kid, I've been their captive, letting them manipulate and brainwash me into doing whatever they want and I can't live like that anymore. I...I just want to be free."

Shouto came over and put his hand on Keigo's shoulder, "Don't worry Hawks, we'll get you out of there."

"Yeah." Spinner said. "You're one of us, Hawks, and you deserve to be free. I knew the Commission had to be corrupt to keep churning out all those false heroes."

Keigo laughed as his eyes filled with tears. He'd been hiding his true emotions for so long, first from the commission, then from the league, it was so refreshing to just be...him, "You guys are amazing, you know that?"

"Hmm," Shigaraki frowned, "the best thing for us would probably be for you to keep up appearances with the Commission, but give us the information instead of them. But based on what you just said, I'm guessing that's not what you want to do?"

Keigo shook his head, "I can't...I don't want to be their puppet anymore. Not now that I know how they're manipulating me. I either want to be all in or all out, and I'm here with you because I've chosen to go all out."

Dabi turned to Shigaraki, "Come on dusty, they've been keeping this birdie in a cage for too long, we've got to set him free!"

"Yeah," Spinner added. "And him turning openly will be the perfect chance to expose the Commission's true corruption!"

"I..I'm not the only one." Keigo said, turning to Shigaraki. "There are other kids like me that the Commission is raising to be weapons. If I can help them, I have to, but I can't do that if I stay there."

Shigaraki stared at them all for a long moment before sighing, "Whatever, I won't ask you to stay there if you don't want to, but you do know what you're signing up for, right?"

"You'll have to stay here in hiding like us." Spinner said.

"It's better to hide with friends than live openly with enemies." Keigo responded.

"Your family and friends will feel betrayed." Shouto added.

"I never had a family, and you guys are the only friends I've ever known."

"Your fans will hate you." Mr. Compress said.

"If they do, I will have at least shown them the true enemy."

"Well then," Shigaraki smiled. "Welcome to the league of villains."

# The Freefall of a Hero

## Chapter Summary

Hawks' villain debut.

“You’re a lot...different than I thought you’d be.” Keigo said slowly.

Izuku laughed, “What? Were you expecting some old guy with too many tattoos?”

“No!” Keigo denied. “I knew you were young, but...you just look so innocent!”

“Yeah, well how do you think he’s avoided detection for so long?” Shouto asked. “Nobody ever even looks twice at the quirkless kid, especially not one that looks as plain as Izuku.”

Keigo shook his head, “I guess that makes sense, it’s just...wow! I never would have suspected that *you* were the number one villain.”

Izuku shrugged, “I didn’t ask for that title, but I think I’ve earned it. You’ll probably be the last number one hero you know.”

“Yeah,” Keigo said, “I think the position’s probably been cursed for a long time, but it’s just been more obvious recently.”

Izuku smiled at him, “Well then, let’s destroy that cursed throne and make sure it doesn’t hurt anyone else.” Izuku pulled up his mask and hood. “Are you ready to show everyone what it really means to be free?”

//

Mera yawned as he oversaw the new recruits to the legacy feeder program. Some of them were a bit more rebellious than Hawks had been when he was younger, but that wouldn’t last long. One already seemed eager to please, so he would probably be used as the example for the others. By the time they were old enough to get their heroes licenses, they would be just as loyal to the commission as Hawks was.

The kids looked up from their training as a shrill alarm cut through the air and woke Mera up the rest of the way. They looked at him with fear and confusion, “Is there a fire somewhere? Should we evacuate?”

“Don’t worry about it.” Mera said. “This part of the facility is so far underground that we shouldn’t be in any danger. Most likely this is just some prankster sidekick pulling the alarm, so keep training and I’ll go investigate.”

The kids nodded and Mera turned around to go upstairs, only to find his way blocked by a scowling Hawks. Mera unconsciously took a few steps back as he was forcefully reminded that Hawks was a raptor, like an eagle or a falcon that could easily rip him limb from limb. He took a deep breath. No, Hawks was unwaveringly loyal to the commission, just like they’d raised him to be, so Mera wasn’t in any danger.

“Hawks! What a nice surprise! What are you doing down here?”

“I’m here to free those kids.” Hawks growled. “I won’t let them go through what I went through.”

Mera froze, “They are training to be powerful heroes, Hawks. I thought you were grateful for the training we gave you. After all, you wouldn’t have become the hero you are today without our help.”

“You’re not training them to be heroes.” The kids had stopped their training to listen, this was bad. “You’re training them to be weapons. Don’t try to pretend that this training is for their benefit, when you and I both know that you’re conditioning them to be unthinkingly loyal to the Commission so they’ll do whatever you want, even things that no real hero would be willing to do.”

“Hawks,” Mera said softly. “Perhaps it’d be best if we talk privately. Let’s go to my office, we can...”

“It’s too late to *talk*, Mera, and besides, why would I ever believe a word you say when everything you’ve ever said to me was to manipulate me into becoming the perfect little tool for the Commission to use? You kept me isolated from the world and never let me have friends so that I’d never realize how fucked up my childhood was, but guess what?” Hawks grinned. “Joke’s on you because I’ve got friends now that have opened my eyes, and I met them on a mission *you* assigned to me.”

Mera was filled with a cold dread as he connected the dots, “But...No! Hawks, you are a *hero*!”

Hawks was far too fast for Mera to dodge as he used one of his feathers as a sword and buried it in Mera’s gut, “Not anymore.”

//

Himiko stabbed and sucked as she, Spinner, and Compress steadily chopped their way through the army of agents defending the Commission. Twice was currently with Gentle, who Mind-chan had invited because he wanted help from La Brava and also because Gentle wouldn’t want to miss a high profile crime such as this. There were currently drones following each member of the league of villains that were live-streaming to Gentle’s youtube account to make sure the public didn’t miss any of the juicy details they were exposing today. La Brava was currently in the server room hacking into their mainframe and exposing all the Commission’s secrets to the world as Shigaraki and Mind-chan stood guard.

Spinner had pointed out that it was likely some of the Commission’s dirty laundry was kept off-line as a defense against hacking, which seemed complicated to Himiko, but she supposed it did make a certain kind of sense. That was why her sweet Twice was raiding the file room! The plan was to use Gentle’s rubberizing quirk on the boxes and throw them out the windows to the reporters who were obviously going to congregate on the street below during the attack. Who knows what juicy secrets they would find?!

All at once, each of the opponents they were facing fell to the ground as feathers slashed through their hearts. Himiko looked up to see Hawks walking toward her with four little kids cowering behind him.

“Ah Hawks!” Compress exclaimed. “I see you’re developing a taste for the dramatic!”

“What can I say old man?” Hawks laughed. “I learned from the best.”

“Flattery will get you everywhere.” Compress wagged his finger at Hawks as he pretended to scold him.

“You could have left some for us.” Toga pouted.

“Be patient Toga.” Spinner said. “False heroes will no doubt be showing up soon, lining up for us to cull them.”

Spinner went over to the kids and knelt down in front of them as they shrunk back, “You kids don’t have anything to fear from us. These corrupt men were going to turn you into false heroes like the ones Stain condemned, so you’re lucky we were able to save you from that fate before it was too late. Go on outside and find the police, a battle is no place for children.”

The kids hesitated for a long moment before Hawks rolled his eyes and just used some of his feathers to sweep them out the door by their shirt collars, “What? They’re already traumatized, they don’t need to be in here any longer.”

Dabi and Shouto came running in through a side door, out of breath.

“Can we finish torching this place yet?” Dabi snapped. “We were setting small fires outside, just enough to raise the alarms, like Mastermind said, but then the police started shooting at us!”

“Not yet.” Hawks said. “If we destroy the building before the other teams finish exposing the corruption, the Commission will just find a new building. We need to make sure there’s no way they can come back from this.”

Dabi chuckled, “I’m pretty sure the number one hero turning villain would be enough on its own, but this is your revenge mission, so whatever.”

“Weee!” Twice yelled as he landed on a bouncy patch of air at the bottom of the stairs. “What was that, Gentle? Why’d you push me?”

“I didn’t push you, my dear Twice.” Gentle said as he landed on the same patch. “Need I remind you that you jumped while yelling, *catch me, let me die.*”

Himiko snorted and hugged her boyfriend, “Oh honey! Did you have fun clearing out all those files?”

“So much fun! What a chore!”

“Alright, we’re just waiting for La Brava’s team now, right?” Shouto asked.

“Not anymore!” Mind-chan said as he, Shigaraki, and La Brava came up from one of the basements. Both he and Shigaraki were covered with a mix of blood and dust, so they must have run into some resistance. “Did everything go okay?”

Everyone nodded and Mind-chan cracked his neck, “What do you guys think, you want to stick around to fight some heroes, or just go home and celebrate?”

“I believe it is time to take our final bows.” Compress said.

There was a round of agreement and Hawks smiled, “Thank you guys for this. I know you weren’t planning on attacking the Commission, so it means a lot that you were willing to do this for me.”

“Whatever birdie.” Dabi said. “What are friends for?”

“Alright, Gentle, would you mind making a shield in front of us? Shigaraki, call the doctor and tell him to get Johnny ready.”

The group strode out the doors with Hawks at the front, bullets bouncing ineffectually off the rubberized air in front of them. Toga noticed Detective Tsukauchi in the crowd and stuck her tongue out at him right before she started choking on the nasty grey gunk and found herself back home.

# The Notebook

## Chapter Summary

Good Luck.

“Izuku, you’re going to be late for school!”

Izuku cursed and finished up his notes. He normally wouldn’t bring work home with him, but things had been crazy since the Commission fell. Villain activity had been at an all time high as society struggled to readjust and find where heroes were going to fit, so the demand for Izuku’s services had been overwhelming.

Izuku was about to shove the notebook in his backpack, but stopped at the last minute. His bullies often tried to steal his backpack and look through his “nerd notebooks” and things were already suspicious enough since Ito had laid off bullying him a few weeks ago. If one of his bullies were to accidentally read his Mastermind notes...that would be bad.

“Izuku! Hurry!”

He cursed and settled for just leaving it on the desk. Mom didn’t come into his room often and when she did, she respected his privacy enough to not open his notebooks. It’d be fine.

“Izuku!” Mom opened the door as Izuku shouldered his backpack. “You’re going to miss the train!”

“Alright, alright, I’m going!” He kissed Mom on the cheek as he closed the door to his room again. “Love you!”

Mom smiled, “Love you too, Izuku. Have a great day at school!”

---

Inko didn’t normally clean Izuku’s room. He was a tidy enough boy and Inko firmly believed in giving children space and trust, but when she’d peeked her head in that morning, his room had been a mess. And Izuku had seemed so stressed lately! Inko didn’t know if something had happened at school or if he was just worried over everything that had happened with the Commission, but either way she figured it was her duty as a mother to do something nice for her baby.

After she’d grabbed the mountain of dirty clothes from his floor, she could finally start vacuuming. She was just vacuuming by his desk when she accidentally got too close and bumped it with her hip, knocking off a notebook that had been balanced precariously on the edge. It landed open on the floor and Inko bent to pick it up and put it back. Before she closed it, she happened to glance at the page it had opened to.

*...the best way to combat Mr. Brave’s quirk is through a fire quirk. It’s too risky to simply cut the hair, since he can still control it while it is detached. Either burn alive or....*

Inko never read Izuku’s diaries. She knew they were all just rambling about heroes anyway, so there was no need for her to invade his privacy that way, but this was different. This was...violent.



Inko couldn't help herself as she numbly read through the book, the vacuum running forgotten beside her. What...what had her baby gotten himself into? Why was he writing things like this? These weren't just lists of some heroes' weaknesses, they were plans to kill them, sometimes by using specific quirks. Were these people threatening her baby? They must be, Izuku would never do something like this. Or maybe they had convinced him that they were his friends and this was peer pressure like the other parents had always warned her about?

Maybe she should confront him about it. He wouldn't try to hide something like this from his mother, right? But if he really was being threatened...Inko made up her mind, put the vacuum away and walked out the door with the notebook in her purse. This was bigger than her and it was bigger than Izuku.

If her baby really *had* fallen in with the wrong crowd, she needed help.

---

Tsukauchi stared at the ceiling above his desk unseeing. If someone had asked him two years ago what the biggest change would be in Japan in the next few years, he probably would have said it would be Toshinori retiring and allowing his successor to take up the number one spot. He never would have predicted Mastermind's reign of terror and the fall of the Hero Commission.

Japan would never be the same again. Crime was at an all time high, as was vigilantism, which the police now didn't have any way to fight. What was vigilantism anyway? Doing hero work without a license? Since the Commission had been responsible for issuing licenses, that was now everyone. Was it using your quirk in public? Well, lawmakers had been quick to repeal the law prohibiting that, since that was one of the main laws that allowed the Commission to rise to power in the first place and no one wanted a repeat of that disaster.

There had already been several new hero licensing systems proposed and analysts were predicting one would be in place by the end of the year, but in the meantime, it was chaos. However the licensing system ended up, though, it was clear that daylight heroes were a thing of the past. It had become far too obvious with Mastermind's hostage situation that being popular could get you killed, so most heroes had switched to going out mostly at night and support companies had been busy changing costumes to be more practical and less flashy. Hero schools were still running, but they were training their students to go underground and had stopped emphasizing popularity. Many students had dropped out and enrollment was at an all-time low. Even UA was only going to offer one hero class next year.

But there was something else bothering him besides the general state of society.

Tsukauchi just couldn't stop thinking about the interview he'd had with Izuku Midoriya. By all accounts, the interview had been routine, just inform the family of the father's death and clear them of suspicion. It should have been an open-shut case and have done with it, but the more Tsukauchi thought about it, the more it seemed like a puzzle was falling into place.

Midoriya was quirkless, which Nedzu had said was a very real possibility for Mastermind, as hard as that was to believe. That wasn't enough to damn the boy, but it also wasn't the only piece of evidence that pointed to him. He was the right age to be Mastermind, and there were even the initials! Sure, they had no way of knowing if Mastermind's initials were I.M. or M.I. but it fit.

But then why hadn't it registered as a lie when Midoriya had said his father was alive when he left? Had he found some way to trick Tsukauchi's quirk or had someone else killed Dragon? It just didn't make any sense. It felt like there was something just out of reach nagging at him, just one peice of evidence he was missing that would make everything come together.

“Tsukauchi?” Sansa pulled him out of his voice. “There’s a woman here I think you might want to talk to. I put her in interrogation room three for you.”

Tsukauchi nodded and stood, stretching out his back. Oh well, he’d have to come back to his Midoriya is Mastermind theory later. There wasn’t quite enough evidence to act on it yet. He grabbed a cup of coffee and almost stopped short when he opened the door to the interrogation room and saw Inko Midoriya waiting for him.

She’d obviously been crying and Sansa had apparently offered her a box of tissues because there was already a small mountain of them scattered across the table. In front of her was a plain notebook that didn’t seem too suspicious on its own, but Tsukauchi’s wild theory made it seem like the most conspicuous object in the entire room.

“Mrs. Midoriya, it’s a pleasure to see you again. What can I help you with?”

Inko sniffed loudly, “I-it’s my son, I-izuku! I think he m-may have fallen in with the wrong crowd and...Oh Detective! I don’t know what to do!”

*True*

Tsukauchi sat down across from her, “Why do you think that? Has he been acting strangely?”

Inko shook her head, “No, he’s still the same sweet boy he always is, but...” she pushed the notebook toward him, “I found this in his room this morning.”

*True*

Tsukauchi opened the notebook and gasped. After hours of poring over neatly written murder plans, he could recognize Mastermind’s handwriting anywhere. This could be the last piece of evidence he was looking for! Unless Inko was right and Izuku had simply accidentally made friends with Mastermind somehow. Mastermind could have just asked him to hold onto the notebook for some reason.

“Mrs. Midoriya, I’m going to ask you something and I need you to be completely honest with me.” Tsukauchi said. “Is this your son’s handwriting?”

“Yes.”

*True*

“Are you sure?” Tsukauchi couldn’t risk being wrong about this.

“Yes, it’s definitely Izuku’s handwriting, why are you...”

*True*

Tsukauchi stood, “I need to check on a few things, Mrs. Midoriya, before I can tell you anything more, so sit tight. Just know that you did the right thing bringing this to us and we’re going to help you. Is there anything we can get for you? I can have Sansa bring you a coffee if you’d like?”

Inko shook her head, “Just protect my baby.”

Tsukauchi turned away so she couldn’t see his face and left, already dialing Nedzu.

---

“And you’re sure?” Nedzu asked as soon as he arrived.

Tsukauchi nodded, "It all fits, Izuku Midoriya matches everything we know about Mastermind. There was even an incident where Mrs. Midoriya was mugged a few months ago and from what the officers said, it appears her body could have been completely taken apart and reassembled by someone who looked like a bird, which could mean she was threatened by Overhaul. He is the same age, build, and height as Mastermind, not to mention his hair color, which matches some of the earliest reports we ever gathered. His quirklessness practically guarantees he was bullied, like Eri told us, so this notebook is the nail in the coffin. Mrs. Midoriya said that it's definitely her son's handwriting."

"Well then," Nedzu smiled, "this is a very good thing."

"I don't know," Tsukauchi frowned. "I have a distraught mother in the other room who is pleading with me to protect her son and instead I have to tell her that her son is one of the most infamous villains in modern history."

Nedzu thought for a moment, "Perhaps it would actually be best to hold off on that revelation..."

"What do you mean? She has a right to know..."

"Oh undoubtedly," Nedzu agreed, "but the fact is that knowing Mastermind's identity does not resolve his hostage situation in and of itself. We may have won the battle, Detective, but we have yet to win the war."

Tsukauchi sighed, "I guess I just got so caught up in the euphoria of finally knowing that I..."

"It's alright, Detective," Nedzu said pleasantly, "It happens to the best of us, but the real question is where to go from here."

"And where is that? He probably doesn't keep the murder plans on him, since he said they'd be relaxed automatically if he was ever arrested or killed."

"Hmmm, yes, I agree. The word *automatically* makes me inclined to believe that they are most likely housed in some sort of computer program, especially with how closely he's been working with La Brava recently. It's very possible their partnership goes back much farther than we'd originally thought."

Tsukauchi let out a deep breath, "Alright, so if that's the case, he'll most likely have some sort of computer that he uses for work that we can get our hands on."

Nedzu nodded, "We'll have to be cautious though. If Midoriya gets wind of what we're planning, he will disappear and find a way to punish us for getting too close." He sighed. "This is a very precarious situation."

---

Inko looked up as Tsukauchi and Nedzu opened the door to the interrogation room, "What's happening? Is Izuku going to be alright? Do you know who's trying to lead my baby down the wrong path?"

Tsukauchi glanced at Nedzu, "All we can say about it at this time, Mrs. Midoriya, is that your son has definitely fallen in with the wrong crowd."

Inko sobbed and Tsukauchi awkwardly rubbed circles on her back as they waited for her to calm down, "What am I going to do? He's my baby!"

"We know, Mrs. Midoriya," Nedzu said softly. "Which is why we need your help. Izuku has

connections to some very powerful villains and if we aren't careful, a lot of people could get hurt."

Inko sobbed again and Tsukauchi tried to ignore the guilt he felt, "We're going to need your help, Mrs. Midoriya. Can you tell us if Izuku has his own computer? Maybe a laptop or a P.C. in his room?"

Inko nodded, "H-he has a laptop, hardly goes anywhere without it!"

"When did he get it?" Nedzu asked.

"He bought it on sale about a year and a half ago." Inko sniffed.

Tsukauchi caught Nedzu's eye. That was about when Mastermind had stopped using internet cafes.

"Mrs. Midoriya." Nedzu said. "We need you to do something for us. We need you to put this notebook back where you found it and don't tell your son that you read it or that you spoke with us. Can you do that?"

Inko looked up at them with wide eyes, "B-but, he's my son! I need to talk to him about this!"

"Mrs. Midoriya," Tsukauchi said earnestly, "if your son notices anything suspicious, a lot of people could be in danger, including you. We know that it will be difficult for you to lie to him, but it's what we need you to do to keep a lot of people safe."

Inko sniffed again, "Are you sure this is the best way?"

"We believe it is possibly the only way." Nedzu responded.

Inko nodded, "Ok, if you're sure, I'll do it for Izuku."

"There's just one more thing we need from you Mrs. Midoriya." Nedzu said. "If your son ever leaves his laptop at home, wait until you are sure he's gone, then call us immediately."

"We wouldn't ask you if it wasn't important." Tsukauchi added.

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"Mom! Did you clean my room?" Izuku yelled so Mom could hear him in the kitchen.

There was a long moment before she responded, "Yes baby, I noticed you've been stressed lately, so I thought I'd do something to cheer you up!"

Izuku glanced at his desk and sighed with relief when he saw his Mastermind notebook hadn't been moved, "Thanks Mom! You're the best!"

# Target Rich Environment

## Chapter Summary

Things come to a head.

## Chapter Notes

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

“Mom, do you want me to pick you up anything while I’m at the mall?”

“No, baby,” Inko said nervously, “I’m good. Have fun!”

Izuku smiled at her before closing the door and walking toward the train station. Inko let out a breath of relief. Yes, it had been just over a week since she’d found his notebook, but it had been the hardest week of her life! She just wanted to lock him in his room and keep him safe, but the Detective had said that more people were in danger than just her son, so she had to do the right thing no matter how difficult that was for her.

She peeked out the window and saw Izuku walk around the corner, then hurried to his room. Sure enough, there was a black laptop bag sitting by his desk. She opened it and pulled out the laptop before grabbing her cell phone.

“Detective Tsukauchi? You told me to call you if Izuku ever left his laptop at home...”

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As Izuku walked from the train station to the mall, he wished his friends were able to go with him. Wasn’t going to the mall something you were supposed to do with your friends? Too bad the league of villains would be attacked on sight, but maybe he could pick them up a few things?

Izuku had just been looking for an excuse to get out of the house, truthfully. Mom had been acting kind of strangely recently, probably because society was changing so much and she always was a worrier, but it made for an awkward atmosphere at home and today was Saturday! So Izuku had figured he’d go to the mall to get his mind off things. He’d heard rumors that villain merch had become more popular recently and he was excited to see how the stores were treating their Hawks collections now. Apparently quite a few stores had stopped selling it, since it was obviously qualified as villain merch now, but those that continued to sell it were apparently doing really well.

Hawks had decided not to change his name or aesthetic when he went villain because he wanted people to remember where he came from. There’d apparently been a mass burning of his merch the day after their attack on the Commission, but Dabi had kind of ruined the spirit of it when he’d shown up to light the pile on fire. Shouto had texted him pictures of it while laughing his ass off.

Izuku felt a tingle on the back of his neck as if someone were watching him and he glanced behind him. Where....? Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed Tsukauchi stop to look at a shop window. Had...had Tsukauchi figured him out? He couldn’t have, could he?

Izuku kept walking toward the mall and Tsukauchi always kept just a block or two behind him. He took a deep breath. Tsukauchi couldn’t touch him even if he’d figured out Mastermind’s identity. Not without risking the lives of the country’s top heroes. Izuku was still safe, so...there was no

reason for him not to have a little fun with the detective.

When he reached the mall, Izuku turned and smiled as he caught Tsukauchi's eye. He saw a look of fear pass over the detective's face as he opened the door. The poor guy was probably terrified because of how many hostages would be available to him once he got inside. Yeah, the mall *was* a target rich environment, but Izuku wasn't planning on causing any chaos today. That might change, depending on what Tsukauchi did, but for now, Izuku was content to simply tease him.

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"What do you mean my son is Mastermind?!" Inko asked shrilly. "You...you just said he'd fallen in the wrong crowd!"

"We are deeply sorry for deceiving you, Mrs. Midoriya." Nedzu said. "But we did not believe you would be able to continue acting naturally around your son if you knew. You must understand how important it was for us to get this right, since Mastermind is not in the business of giving second chances."

"B-but...my baby!" Inko crumpled to the floor and Nedzu motioned for some of the officers to comfort her as he opened the laptop, his paws flying across the keys as he began to hack his way through the password.

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Tsukauchi kept his distance from Midoriya as he wandered the mall. He wished he could give the order to evacuate, but they couldn't let Midoriya realize how close they were to catching him. He'd almost had a heart attack when he'd been spotted, but Midoriya seemed to think he was untouchable, which at the moment he was. So Midoriya seemed content to just rub his invulnerability in Tsukauchi's face as he wandered the mall, sometimes standing a little too close to an ignorant salesperson in a clear display that he could kill any of them at any moment and Tsukauchi couldn't do a thing about it.

"Tsukauchi," Nedzu's voice rang over his earpiece, "I managed to find the program, but it might take a while to disable it completely. Do you still have eyes on Mastermind?"

"Yes." Tsukauchi said quietly, pretending to look at some shirts. "He knows I'm here, but has decided I'm not a threat. I'll let you know if that changes, and I've got back-up waiting for my signal... I just can't wait for this to be over."

"I agree." Nedzu said. "Good luck, I'll work as quickly as I can."

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"Come on!" Ashido whined. "Stop being so depressed! We're out here as a class to distract ourselves from the world crashing down around our ears!"

"Yeah, well the last time we all went out as a class, we ended up running into a pair of supervillains." Shinso grumbled. "Or did you forget about that disaster?"

"And the time before that was a week before Todoroki got kidnapped." Kaminari added.

"Well, at least Bakugou was able to come with us this time!" Kirishima said cheerfully.

"Only because Aizawa gave up." Tsu pointed out. "You can't keep him cooped up for not having a license if nobody has licenses anymore."

"We still have our licenses." Yaoyorozu said. "Just because the Hero Commission that gave us our licenses isn't around anymore..."

“Let’s be honest,” Sero said, “right now, we’re all vigilantes. And nobody cares that Bakugo has anger management issues because that’s pretty standard for illegal heroes. Even after they sort out the licensing thing, we’re never gonna be popular anyway.”

“The word is eclipsed in darkness.” Tokoyami said softly.

“Oh stop it!” Jiro said. “You don’t even have that much to be sad about, Tokoyami, you were going to be an underground hero anyway. The rest of us have had to completely re-evaluate what our careers are going to look like. Or did you forget that Mineta and Aoyama dropped out as soon as they realized heroes weren’t going to be famous anymore?”

“Please stop arguing!” Iida pleaded. “We are UA students, we should be an example during these dark times!”

“I think that stopped being an option when one of our own turned villain.” Shinso said.

“Shut up losers!” Bakugo yelled. “Are we just gonna complain the whole time or are we actually gonna do something?”

“Yeah!” Uraraka looked determined. “This *is* a mall, afterall!”

Sato shrugged, “I’m kinda hungry, so we could stop by the food court if you guys want?”

“Anybody opposed to that?” Yaoyorozu asked.

Everyone shook their heads.

“Better than sitting here all day.” Bakugo grumbled.

“Kacchan?”

They all whipped around to see a green-haired boy around their age staring right at Bakugo.

Izuku had made eye contact with Tsukauchi before deciding to approach 1A. What better way to rub Tsukauchi’s own helplessness in his face than to surround himself with heroes? He knew he was probably having too much fun, but he couldn’t resist! It was turning out to be a pretty great Saturday.

“What are you doing here, Deku?” Bakugo growled.

Izuku smiled sweetly, “Shopping, Kacchan, same as you.”

“Kacchan?” Ashido squealed. “That is so cute!”

“Shut-up Raccoon Eyes!”

“Ah! So Kacchan’s given you a nickname too!” Izuku said.

“Oh, is Deku not actually your name?” Uraraka asked.

“No, my name is Izuku Midoriya. Deku’s just what Kacchan calls me to make fun of me.”

“Hey, at least it’s better than soy sauce face.” Sero laughed.

“Hey, since you already know Bakugo,” Uraraka said, “why don’t you join us?”

“That’s a wonderful idea!” Yaoyorozu said. “We were just about to get something to eat.”

“I wouldn’t want to impose…” Izuku said, knowing that would only make them try harder.

“Nonsense!” Iida said. “Any friend of Bakugo is a friend of ours.”

“I’m not friends with this loser!” Bakugo exploded, but the class just ignored him.

“Yeah!” Ashido said. “How long have you known Bakugo for? Do you have any juicy stories of him as a kid?”

“ Well, um…”

“Don’t answer that, Deku!”

“Oooh!” Kaminari grinned. “That’s a yes!”

“Come on guys!” Jiro said. “We’ve got to go get a table before it gets too full.”

Tsukauchi watched as Midoirya interacted with 1A, who had no idea how dangerous he was. If Midoriya was trying to torture him, it was working, because it was getting harder and harder not to just arrest him on the spot as he got his food and went to sit with 1A, who had pushed several tables together in the center of the food court.

He leaned against a wall, no longer pretending to shop, just trying to look natural as he waited for the signal.

“Any luck yet?” He whispered.

“Not yet.” Nedzu responded. “La Brava really is quite good at what she does, but I’m close.”

“Wait, is that Detective Tsukauchi?” He froze and saw Ashido waving at him. “Hey Detective! Come say hi!”

What should he do? On the one hand, getting close to Midoriya before he was cleared to make the arrest was risky, but on the other, it would raise more red-flags for him to ignore the greeting. Midoriya smiled at him and raised an eyebrow in challenge and Tsukauchi walked hesitantly toward the table.

“Ashido, stop bothering the detective!” Iida scolded. “He might be on duty!”

Tsukauchi forced himself to laugh, “It’s alright, I’m not busy.”

“Well then why don’t you sit with us?” Ashido said. “Midoriya, this is Detective Tsukauchi, he’s talked to us a few times when we’ve run into the league, Tsukauchi, this is Izuku Midoirya, one of Bakugo’s old friends.”

“We’ve met.” Tsukauchi said stiffly.

“Oh yeah.” Midoriya smirked. “I’d say the detective knows me pretty well by now, don’t you?”

If the others noticed the tension, they must have decided not to mention it. Tsukauchi forced his hand away from his gun as Midoriya enjoyed his obvious discomfort. He took a deep breath and forced himself to relax.

The detective was tense. Which was kinda the point, but…Izuku narrowed his eyes. It almost



seemed like the detective was waiting to make his move, but that was too risky. His program...was on his laptop...which was at his house...

Fuck.

Now it was Izuku's turn to act calm. He sent a quick text to Shouto telling him he loved him and instructing him to look in the box under the couch in his apartment, then deleted the text. Izuku put his phone back in his pocket and laughed at the stupid joke Kaminari had just told while eyeing Tsukauchi. Considering how long Tsukauchi had been following him and assuming Nedzu already had his laptop, he'd probably be getting the go-ahead to make the arrest any second now.

His phone started buzzing in his pocket, but he couldn't risk pulling his eyes away from Tsukauchi. Could he even get out of this?

Tsukauchi noticed the shift in Midoriya's behavior and mentally pleaded for Nedzu to speed up. If they didn't make the arrest soon, Midoriya might run. God knows the kid had enough resources and connections to make himself disappear if he wanted to.

"I beat the program!" Nedzu said. "Make the arrest. Now!"

Uraraka didn't know exactly how it happened. One moment they'd been laughing at something Kaminari said, and the next Midoriya was holding a knife to her throat as Tsukauchi pointed a gun at them.

"Whoa!" Kirishima yelled. "What the heck, guys? What's going on?"

Tsukauchi didn't look away from Midoriya, "Drop the knife, Midoriya. We found the program and disabled it. We aren't going to let you get away again, so just give it up."

Izuku tilted his head and shifted the knife so it was pressed even harder against Uraraka's throat, "Are you really willing to let a budding future hero die, just to catch me Tsukauchi? Aren't you supposed to be one the good guys?"

Tsukauchi's face hardened, "I'm afraid you don't quite understand your situation, Midoriya." He shifted his gun minutely so he was aiming at Izuku's head, "I am prepared to take the shot, and these are hero students who all have the necessary first aid training to keep Uraraka alive long enough to get her to a hospital. You are leaving here in handcuffs or a bodybag, but those are your only options, so choose wisely."

Izuku tightened his grip on the knife, but he could tell by the look in Tsukauchi's eyes that he wasn't lying. If he got arrested, there was no question he'd be going to Tartarus, but if he died then...then it was over. No second chances, no saying goodbye, nothing. He couldn't do that to his friends, he couldn't do that to his mom...he couldn't do that to Shouto.

Izuku sighed and dropped the knife, raising his hands above his head. Uraraka ran over to her friends, crying, as Tsukauchi kicked the knife away from him, forced him onto the ground, and wrenched his hands behind his back.

"Izuku Midoriya you are under arrest for being the villain known as Mastermind."

Well, the next chapter is the final update for this story which means Mastermind is almost over. I just wanted to take a moment to thank you all for reading. The amount of love this story has gotten has been overwhelming, considering that it just started as a plot bunny in my brain that I thought maybe two people would think was cool. So thank you all for coming on this journey with me.

I also decided it was probably time to start a [discord](#) for all my bnha fics, so you may check that out if you so desire.

# Why?

## Chapter Summary

Tartarus.

## Chapter Notes

First of all, lets get some housekeeping out of the way.

Will there be a sequel?

Yes, eventually. I love this world that I've created and would like to come back to it, but I have too many other ideas that I want to bring to life, so this world is getting moved to the backburner for now.

Is there another fic that will replace this one in my update schedule?

Yes. Starting Tuesday, my vigilante!deku fic *Viridian: The Green Guide* will be available here on Ao3.

I think that's everything! Thanks for reading!

Edit:

**THE SEQUEL IS NOW OUT!!!**

Nedzu handed Tsukauchi the results of the test, “Midoriya’s IQ is 205, which is on par with mine. We had already assumed he was a genius, but this simply confirms it.”

Tsukauchi sighed in relief, “I can’t believe it’s finally over. We’ve been trying to catch him for so long...”

“You did a good job, Detective.” Nedzu said. “It’s because of your hard work that Midoriya is behind bars now. He can’t hurt anyone else.”

The two looked through the glass into Midoriya’s cell. The walls were lined with a quirk suppressant to take sure none of his allies could try to rescue him, but Midoriya himself was free to roam around inside. He was currently laying on the bed staring at the ceiling.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” Nedzu asked gently. “Tartarus does have psychologists who could have this conversation.”

Tsukauchi shook his head, “I have to know.”

Nedzu nodded, “Alright. We’re ready.”

The guard nodded and Midoriya sat up and moved to a chair facing the window as the glass cleared, “Well, Detective, to what do I owe the pleasure?”

“We want to know why.” Tsukauchi said.

“You’re going to have to be more specific, Detective. Why what? Why did I become a villain? Why did I get caught?” Midoriya smiled, “Or are you more interested in why I killed your best friend?”

Tsukauchi jumped to his feet, “You bastard!”

“Calm down, Tsukauchi.” Nedzu said, laying a hand on Tsukauchi’s arm. “And Midoriya, we’re honestly interested in all of them, but let’s start with why you became a villain. Your mother told us you had your heart set on becoming a hero at one point. With your intelligence, you could have done well.”

Midoriya’s face twisted in grief momentarily but he quickly schooled his expression into one of disdain, “I don’t know if anyone’s ever told you, *principal*, but the quirkless can’t be heroes. In fact, the quirkless can’t be anything. According to society, the only thing we can be is forgotten.”

“You could have proved them wrong.”

Midoriya smiled, “I think I already did that.”

“So that’s what this is all about?” Tsukauchi growled. “All those people you killed? Just to prove a point about the quirkless?”

“I wasn’t trying to *prove* anything, Detective.” Midoriya glared at him. “I just wanted people to see me for who I was and give me a fair chance, was that too much to ask? Villains don’t care too much if you’ve got a great quirk as long as you’ve got the skills to back it up. You want to know why I became a villain? It’s because it was the villains who gave me the chance to shine while the heroes were too busy making sure I *knew my place*.”

“I’m sure not everyone was so bad.” Nedzu said. “Surely there must have been someone willing to give you a chance.”

Midoriya chuckled humorlessly, “You’d think so, wouldn’t you. But no. My best friend became my bully and even after he told me to jump off a roof, he was welcomed into UA with open arms. I was abused by my peers for years while the teachers watched, so it should come as no surprise that I bear more scars from my childhood than I do from my villainy. I didn’t want to become a villain at first, you know, but the world didn’t really care about what I wanted. If you think I’m lying, why don’t you look up the stats on quirkless unemployment. The world doesn’t give kids like me a chance. They don’t give people like Shouto or Hawks a chance either. I’m honestly surprised more of us don’t turn villain.”

“The world hurt you.” Tsukauchi said. “But that doesn’t give you an excuse to hurt it back.”

“Maybe not.” Midoriya shrugged and smiled. “But it sure is a lot of fun.”

“Maybe you were right, Nedzu.” Tsukauchi stood and turned his back to the glass. “It’s probably best to leave this conversation to the professionals.”

“But don’t you want to know why I killed All Might?”

Tsukauchi whipped back around to see Midoriya smirking at him and he charged up to him.

“Detective, please step away from the glass.” The guard said.

Tsukauchi forced himself to take a deep breath and took a few steps back. Nedzu looked at him with concern, but Tsukauchi shook his head and stared Midoriya in the eye.

"I met him once, you know, All Might."

"Yes, we're aware." Tsukauchi snapped. "You stabbed him through the heart, remember?"

"No, I meant before that." Midoriya said. "I was just a little kid who dreamed about being a hero. My life was hell. Bullied at school, beaten down at every turn for the crime of dreaming too big. All Might was the only thing keeping me going most days. The *symbol of peace*. What a joke, but even his existence gave me hope that things would get better. He used to say in interviews that anyone could be a hero, which meant that my dream wasn't so impossible after all."

Midoriya shook his head, a sad look on his face, "It all came crashing down when I actually met him though. He saved me from a villain, just like he was supposed to do. But then, then I asked him if I could be a hero." Midoriya looked up and Tsukauchi had to resist taking a step back at the sheer rage in his eyes. "He didn't even care about what other skills I had to offer. Just said it was too dangerous for a quirkless kid. Your system, Detective, creates people like me. You put people into these little cages based on their quirk. You did it to me. You did it to Shouto. You did it to Hawks. So what else are we supposed to do when this is the only way for us to be free?"

"What are you trying to say?" Tsukauchi asked.

Midoriya smiled, "I'm saying that All Might may have been the symbol of peace, but I am the symbol of freedom."

The glass darkened as their conversation time ran out and Izuku was left staring at his own reflection. He waited a few minutes for Tsukauchi and Nedzu to leave, then walked over to lay on the bed again. It's not like he had a lot of options for entertainment in this place besides thinking. He wondered how Shouto was doing. What had he been doing to pass the time since Izuku had been arrested? Had he managed to find the box Izuku had left for him?

Izuku stared at the ceiling that didn't even have cracks to count. Locked up in Tartarus, the highest security prison in the world, no hope of escape.

Good thing he'd planned for this.

The End.

## End Notes

Hey guys! This is my first fic in this fandom. I have always loved quirkless Izuku Midoriya stories, but ran out of ones to read, so \*sigh\* I guess I have to write my own. Funny how that works, right?

Works inspired by this [one](#)  
[Official Playlist for Mastermind: Strategist for Hire](#) by [murple](#), [\[Podfic\] Mastermind: Strategist for Hire](#) written by [myheadinthecoudsnotcomingdown](#) by [DragonheartDreamer](#), [BNHA reacts to Mastermind](#) by [Saint\\_Rat](#), [Mastermind - a different ending](#) by [kdaught](#), [Mastermind: Strategist for hire \(PODFIC\)](#) by [Calamity\\_Daedric\\_prince\\_of\\_Disorder](#), [After Capture](#) by

[Pauliestorylover](#), [You wanted a nail? You get a whole fucking hardware store!](#) by [asthmaticbee](#), [mom, am i still young? \(can i dream for a few months more\)](#) by [judicatoryPedant](#), [A Nail in a World of Rust](#) by [PsuedoVillainz](#)

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