

2am Knows All Secrets

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2am Knows All Secrets

by [Unbreakable_Red_Riot](#)

Summary

... It wasn't that he was annoyed.

Okay, maybe he was a little annoyed, but that was just the lack of sleep talking. Because a certain explosive punk thought it was a good idea to test the flammability of his sheets at 2 in the morning. Every single morning.

(In which Bakugou's quirk wakes Kirishima up, and Kirishima gets way too invested in his bro's well-being.)

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Things Go Bump in the Night

The first incident happened the Sunday that Class 1-A moved into their new dormitories.

It had been a busy day of getting settled in, saying goodbye to parents, and showing off their rooms. Eijirou treated everyone to Bar-B-Q, and when they returned to the dorms, they stayed up far too late socializing. The idea of living together was just too exciting for Class 1-A, especially after the attacks and scandal involving UA, so a majority of the kids stayed up well past midnight talking about this-and-that. It was exhausting, but no one was ready to go to bed quite yet.

The first-floor common space was honestly the perfect environment for getting used to each other's casual presence. For the most part, the topic of Bakugou's rescue was avoided, and everyone just acted like the teenagers they were -- making their own house rules, learning each other's pet peeves, planning pranks, and just generally figuring out how they were going to live with one another. It was really nice, actually being able to be act their age without having to train or fight for even just a day. And it wasn't until Yaoyorozu, the class' voice of reason, pointed out the late hour that most everyone said their 'goodnight's and wandered to their rooms.

That had been a few hours ago. Currently, it was something like 2 in the morning, and Eijirou was lying on his new bed, staring at the ceiling. It was dark, but his eyes had long ago adjusted to the dim moonlight that crept in through the window, so he could barely make out the shapes of his new room. Being in an unfamiliar place with new sights and sounds and smells, after such a busy and thrilling day, sure was making his brain and bones buzz with excitement.

Now, Eijirou was quite the heavy sleeper. He had always been that way — when consciousness finally slipped away, he was like 98% *out*. His mom always told him that it was because his quirk made him feel safer, so he could sleep sounder. Maybe there was some truth to that. Ever since his quirk manifested, his sleep-walking had stopped. But being a heavy sleeper didn't mean shit if he couldn't actually fall asleep in the first place.

He turned this way and that, trying to find a comfortable position. Nothing had worked for him so far. Maybe his room was too warm? He could open the window, but the hot August air probably wasn't too much better, *ohhh man*, he should have brought his fan, and the mattress sure was softer than he was used to, and he groaned in frustration because now his brain was churning out thought after thought and that needed to *stop*.

He brought a hand to his mouth as he stifled a yawn, settling down under his duvet, trying to empty his head of all thoughts, just dream of something, anything, please, *God*. He was starting to count sheep at this point. He rolled to his side, curling in on himself, slinging one arm over his eyes. Clearing his mind, letting it drift away... After several still minutes, it felt as though maybe sleep was finally coming, when—

There was a loud *bang*, followed by a yelp.

Eijirou bolted upright, gasping. It felt as though all the air had left his body, and oh god, his heart felt like it just wanted to beat itself out of his chest cavity. His breaths came out in shaky gusts that echoed in his ears along with his stammering heartbeat. Before he even realized he was doing it, his arm was positioned in front of him, quirk activated and ready to defend. His eyes darted this way and that around his room, urgently searching for the source of the commotion.

What... What was that???

He was overreacting. Of course he was, because he wasn't in any danger, at all, obviously. He took deep breaths, willing the nausea in his stomach to go away. His heartbeat finally slowed bit by bit as he came down from his disoriented panic. He canceled his quirk, resting his hands in his lap and regarding them in stunned stillness. It seems that the trauma of being the target of villain attack after villain attack had accumulated into some pretty unfortunate reflexes.

He sighed, willing the dread to fully exit his system before rubbing his eyes and plopping ungracefully back onto the bed. As the gears in his brain slowed, he was finally able to process what he had heard. The sound had come from the neighbor to his right — Bakugou's room. Which was strange, Bakugou had gone to bed hours before everyone else. Perhaps he had fallen out of bed...?

... And wait, was that unmanly yelp *his*?

That would have been some good laughing material... except that Eijirou had been literally prepared to fight for his life just a few seconds before, so it kinda lost its charm.

They were a bunch of kids trying to sleep in the same building, and he happened to be neighbors with the most volatile of the bunch. There were bound to be some noise disturbances. As long as whatever the hell *that* was didn't happen again, he wouldn't complain.

It took several more minutes after that, as his body continued to rid his bloodstream of adrenaline. But finally, he fell asleep.

The next day was nearly as busy as the previous one. Class 1-A was busy in school, creating and training their super moves. And perhaps the novelty of living in the same building hadn't quite worn off yet, for they stayed up far too late again, working on homework and chatting about nothing in particular. All the physical training and socializing was exhausting work that had left Eijirou completely ready for sleep. In a wonderful turn of events, sleep came easily, nearly as soon as his head hit the pillow. He slept soundly, and was almost beginning to dream of heroes and villains.

That is, until he was rudely awoken by a loud *boom*.

He groaned as he awoke, his heart stuttering. He muttered a "*What the hell?*" as he reached a hand out blindly for his phone. He winced as the bright screen displayed the time. 2:13. He all but tossed the phone back to his nightstand and reshuffled the blankets.

It was Bakugou again. No doubt about it.

Is he activating his quirk?

... *Why the fuck is he activating his quirk?*

Something is wrong.

That thought was kind-of out of the blue, and it was probably just him worrying too much. Bakugou could just be training. Or trying out a super move. Or otherwise being an insufferable little *shit*. (Okay. Eijirou wasn't usually this salty, he liked to think that the two of them were friends after all, but even he could get grumpy if he was rudely awoken at 2 in the morning.) But all of these possibilities seemed out of character, even for Bakugou. The guy was an asshole sometimes, sure, but not *that* big of an asshole. He wouldn't go out of his way just to be rude. Which brought Eijirou back to his previous worry. Maybe something really was wrong.

It made sense, really. Bakugou had been even more insufferable than usual during their classes that day. He had been downright grumpy and ill-tempered. Eijirou couldn't blame him too much — the kidnapping had shaken up the whole class, so he couldn't even imagine what effect it had had on the actual victim. But it was honestly his exhaustion that was the most concerning. Maybe he wasn't really going to sleep early? Or at least, he wasn't sleeping well. Maybe he just kept falling out of bed? Wait, or maybe his own quirk was waking him up?

And *oh dear*, now his brain wasn't stopping. He turned to his side, curling into a loose fetal position, staring at the wall that separated his room and Bakugou's as if it would give him answers. He sighed. His brain was not going to let him sleep until he got to the bottom of this.

In that moment, the redhead made a decision. Without too much deliberation, he got out of bed and slipped quietly into the corridor, approaching Bakugou's door, hesitating for only a moment before giving it a slight rap.

"Hey, Bakugou?"

For a few seconds, time was frozen, and *ohhh dear*, he had probably made a very bad mistake. It was late, he was tired, Bakugou was probably tired, they had classes bright and early, yet here Eijirou was, knocking on Mr. Anger-Management-Issue's door in the middle of the night as if he needed to borrow a cup of sugar. At any normal time, Eijirou could handle Bakugou perfectly well, but it was far too late for his shit right now. The last thing Class 1-A needed was a tired, pissed-off human bomb causing a scene at 2 in the morning.

After a few seconds of considering where in the building would be the most effective bomb shelter (followed by a few more seconds of his inner voice reminding him how unmanly that was), Eijirou's thoughts were interrupted by the tell-tale sound of approaching footsteps. *Ohhhhh hoh dear, here it comes*. He stood up taller, bracing himself for the worst.

The door creaked open several inches, revealing a pair of deep red eyes that stared at him blankly. "What the hell do you want?" came a bite-y but otherwise disinterested mumble.

Eijirou blinked. That was certainly milder than he had been expecting.

"I just heard something coming from your room and wanted to make sure you're okay?"

The scowl etched onto Bakugou's face didn't seem to be directed at him, which was... strange. "I'm fine." The explosive teen looked off to the side, the slight dusting of pink coloring his cheeks and the tips of his ears. Embarrassment? Now *that* certainly wasn't normal.

"You sure, man? If you ever need to talk, I'm here—"

"I said I'm fucking fine, alright?" Seemingly involuntary eruptions like firecrackers danced around Bakugou's fists that were balled up by his sides. The explosive boy jumped, just a little bit, as if he had startled even himself. The explosions stopped.

"... Okay..." Eijirou blinked again, unfazed by the outburst, which he was used to after all. He was instead taken aback by how red Bakugou's ears had gotten. Was this what a flustered Bakugou looked like? It was... strangely endearing. And, okay, wow, that *definitely* was not a normal thought, but he could roll with it.

"Are you going to let me sleep? Or are you just gonna keep standing there like a goddamn idiot?"

"Oh. Right." Eijirou scratched the nape of his neck, suddenly finding anything that wasn't Bakugou to be incredibly interesting. "Sorry for bothering you I guess?" He finished lamely.

“Yeah.”

“Anyways. Goodnight.”

Bakugou tch-ed, mumbling a half-assed “*G’night*” before shutting the door rather firmly in Eijirou’s face.

Well.

Eijirou returned to his room, plopping down onto his bed. That was... not as bad as it could have been. For one thing, he had been expecting more explosions. More cursing, at the very least. But it seemed Bakugou has kept both of those to a minimum. Maybe he just wasn’t in the mood. Maybe he was more docile when he was sleepy? Maybe... whatever he was using his quirk for was a secret or something.

Well, whatever it was, hopefully it wouldn’t become a habit or anything. Since he had brought it up, hopefully Bakugou wouldn’t do it again.

... It wasn’t that he was annoyed.

Okay, maybe he was a little annoyed, but that was just the lack of sleep talking. Because a certain explosive punk thought it was a good idea to test the flammability of his sheets at 2 in the morning. Every single morning.

But really, Eijirou reminded himself the next night as he lay in bed after a third round of explosions, he wasn’t *annoyed*. He was concerned more than anything. Like, what if something was wrong? Bakugou was his friend. His *bro*. And if something was bothering his bro, it bothered him as well. Which brought him to his next problem — now, he was worried all over again. Pretty soon, he was gonna start losing serious sleep over this whole ordeal.

So Eijirou ignored the red sirens that were blaring in his head, and slipped out of bed and into the hallway. His fist hovered an inch or two away from Bakugou’s door. *Don’t hesitate now, dammit!*

He knocked. “Hey, Bakugou?”

This time, there was a groan of frustration, followed by a few quick footsteps, and then the door was suddenly open. Eijirou’s eyes widened as Bakugou stepped into view. His eyebrows were scrunched over his very red, very angry eyes, his jaw set, his posture rigid. This time, he looked *pissed*.

“What the *fuck* could you possibly want now?”

Gotta play it cool. Eijirou’s deer-in-headlights expression morphed into a playful smirk. “Three nights. In a row. Should I be concerned?”

“No. *Leave*. I was trying to sleep.”

“And failing, by the sound of it.”

“Shut up. You’re one to talk, keeping me up.”

“Hey. Last I checked, I don’t make explosions. That’s all on you, buddy.”

“Fuck off.”

“Fine! Fine,” Eijirou held up his hands in surrender. “Whatever! But if it happens again, I’ll be back.”

“No the fuck you won’t be.”

“Hm. We’ll see.”

“Whatever,” Bakugou yawned. He actually, honest-to-God yawned, rubbing his eyes and smacking his lips when it was over, like he couldn’t help himself.

Oka-ay. Whoever had possessed Bakugou’s body needed to take lessons on how to stay in character. Or, on a more serious note, perhaps something was very terribly wrong.

“So. Completely ignoring the fact that whatever you’re doing consistently wakes me up on a nightly basis... You know you can come to me if something is bothering you, right?”

Bakugou’s face fell into a deadpan, his lips pursed. “Goodnight.” He slammed the door.

And in that moment, as Eijirou’s face was met with a gust of air from the forceful closing, he made up his mind. If it happened again... he had a plan.

Miles to Go Before I Sleep

As the following school day wore on, Eijirou quietly observed Bakugou. The blond didn't eat his lunch, and instead opted to sneak a few minutes of rest in before their break was over. That just couldn't be healthy. He seemed increasingly more worn out and irritable, and even the other students were starting to notice the perpetual gray clouds that hung around him all day. No one bothered him. They left him alone, keeping their distance even between classes. Which was probably for the best, Eijirou mused. The guy seemed to have developed a wacky sleep schedule – who knew what that was doing to his already inept social skills.

In the dorm common space after quirk training, Ashido and Hagakure were getting people on board for a group study session, and it came as no surprise when Bakugou ignored them and continued up to his room. The others' sights trailed after him. There were hushed whispers, even some worried muttering from Midoriya. No one knew what was wrong with him, but they valued their lives enough to not mention it around the blond.

"Hey, Kirishima?" Kaminari pulled Eijirou aside, his whispering barely in earshot. "Um, what's up with him?" He gestured to the direction that Bakugou had gone.

Oh man.

There was this little pang in his chest every time he thought about Bakugou, and this time was certainly no exception. But no one else knew about the late nights. As far as he knew, no one else heard the explosions. He wasn't just going to expose his bro like that. So Eijirou just shrugged, feigning ignorance. It seemed as though he wasn't the only one who missed the extra excitement that Bakugou added to their days.

For the rest of the evening, Eijirou worked on his homework with his classmates and even accompanied a majority of them to dinner at the campus cafeteria, but it kind of felt like he was just going through the motions. His brain was elsewhere, huddled in on itself with worry. If Bakugou's state had deteriorated so much that other people were starting to worry, then that just justified why his plan was so important. Someone needed to step in, and sooner than later.

As evening became night, he excused himself to his room. After showering up and putting on fresh pajamas, Eijirou stayed up late -- when the time came, he needed to be 100% ready. He talked to his family over Skype for about an hour, did some working out, anything he could do to procrastinate on sleep. He had just finished a particularly amusing compilation of cat videos when, like clockwork, a series of short *booms* erupted from Bakugou's room, followed by a stream of colorful cursing.

Eijirou raised his eyebrows. He knew they guy had anger problems, and probably some demons of his past haunting him, but *dang*. It was impressive, really, how imaginative Bakugou's language got sometimes.

But enough with that. It was intervention time.

Eijirou jumped out of bed and sauntered to his door. Upon opening it, he heard a faint "shit" through the wall. No doubt about it, Bakugou knew what was coming. Eijirou relaxed against the doorframe, completely ready for whatever would come when the door opened.

And open it did, quite fiercely. He didn't even have to knock.

“I swear to God, Shitty Hair, if you don’t get out of my goddamn business—”

He put on the prettiest shit-eating grin he could muster, saying a cheerful “Good morning to you too, Bakugou!” as he gently pushed back the blond, and flipping on the lights. “Thanks for inviting me in!” He closed the door and locked it behind him.

Bakugou gaped at him, shocked disgust filling his eyes, his throat making a strained sound from his codfish-like mouth as Eijirou strolled over to his desk and made a show of sitting in his chair.

At that, Bakugou unfroze from his shock. “Get out.”

“Dude. You have woken me up pretty much every night since we’ve been here, my pal. My buddy. I think I deserve an explanation. I’m not leaving until I get one.”

“What the ever-loving fuck. Leave. I am so serious right now.”

“So am I.” Eijirou grasped the chair’s armrest, using his quirk to harden his hand, making him unmovable.

“You motherfucker—”

“You keep going all explode-y. This is an intervention. Because, I’m worried about you, man.”

Cue obligatory eye-roll. “Fucking don’t be, shitty hair. Your hair looks like shit, anyone ever told you that?”

Hey. *Hey now*. Did... did it really look like shit? Eijirou didn’t think it looked like shit. He put a lot of effort into his morning routine to get his hair to look like it did. He reached up and grasped into a strand near his shoulder. Maybe it only looked bad when it was down? That’s why he styled it in the first place, dammit! Bakugou just didn’t understand!

Hold up...

“Bro. *Bro*. You’re changing the subject. Seriously, my dude, don’t think I won’t pick up on that.”

Bakugou huffed. “Fucking whatever.”

“You’ve just seemed a bit off lately. I’m not leaving here until I know what’s wrong.”

“I don’t give a flying fuck if you attach yourself to the goddamn furniture. I will roll your sorry ass out of here if I have to, desk-chair and all.”

“So something is wrong.”

“*Excuse me?*” His eyes practically bulged from his head, his expression scandalized.

Eijirou simply shrugged. “You didn’t deny it.”

Bakugou’s face pinched into this scowl. “I... I-I, fuck. *Fuck*. Fuck *off* already.”

“Nahhh.”

His response was light-hearted, but Eijirou couldn’t shake the feeling of unease that settled in his stomach. Bakugou stared at him with contempt, but something, an essence that made him the Bakugou everyone knew and cautiously loved, was lost. He wasn’t feisty, his threats were empty, like he had just given up being himself. Maybe the answers had to be drawn out of him.

“So. What’s up with you? Can’t sleep? You aren’t, like, scared of the dark or something, are you?”

“Shut up.”

Eijirou’s jaw dropped. “No. Way.”

“*What?* No! Do I look like some weak fuck-munch to you?”

He shrugged again, saying nothing, but looking as though he wanted to say everything.

“Oh my god. Actually fuck yourself.” Bakugou flipped the bird, and to be honest, this whole exchange would have been hilarious if neither of them were tired and if the concern wasn’t constantly nagging at the back of Eijirou’s brain.

“I just want to help you out, bro.”

“Well good luck with that,” he spat, running his fingers through his hair in exasperation. “If you won’t leave that chair, I guess this is going to be one long-ass night for you. I’m going to sleep.”

“Alright-y.”

“If you snore, I will not hesitate to explode your face off.”

“Noted.”

It wasn’t until the blond teen had crawled into bed and began tugging his duvet over his legs that Eijirou realized he was being 100% serious.

He blinked. “You’re... really not going to talk about it? Like. You’re actually, currently going to bed, as we speak, and you’re not going to talk about it.”

“You’re one intelligent fuck, aren’t you?” It was dry. Indignant, and Eijirou couldn’t help but feel uneasy as red eyes pierced straight through him. Bakugou then winced, burying his face in his hands. “Fuck. I just really need sleep. Like, ‘I-haven’t-slept-in-72-hours-and-I’ve-started-hallucinating’ I need sleep. My head echoes when people talk. Words float off of paper. And today in class, *I shit you not*, my hand phased through my desk. It’s really fucking with me.” He finally began lying down, vehemently bringing his duvet to cover his face, stifling his voice, “So please, for the love of *God*...”

“...Alright.” Eijirou frowned. Bakugou really did not look good. Maybe this was a bad idea, maybe he was overstepping his boundary too much, *ohhh man*... He sighed. “Alright. Okay. If you don’t want to talk about it, then I won’t make you.” He unhardened his hand and slowly stood up.

“Fucking finally—”

“—But I am so serious, bro. If you ever need to talk about *anything*—”

“—Oh my fucking God. *Leave.*” There was a pause. “...And turn off the lights.”

Eijirou huffed, partially in amusement. “You’re so hard-headed,” he mumbled as he made his way to the door. “Just... promise me you will actually sleep, okay?”

“Whatever, *Mom*,” came a muffled reply from the mound of blankets that lay on the bed.

“I can tuck you in if that’d help.”

“Okay, I will literally kill you—”

He snorted, flipping off the light and swiftly closing the door behind him so Bakugou wouldn't have a chance to see his threat to fruition. Immediately, his face turned somber.

So... something really was wrong. Something was making Bakugou exhausted, and he wasn't going to talk about it. Maybe the poor guy did just need sleep. Maybe he really should just let it go or something. But as Eijirou lay in bed, his brain on hyper-drive, going through everything that could possibly be wrong, it was becoming clear. He was too invested in this now.

He didn't sleep a wink.

... Which was pretty ridiculous, Eijirou sulked as he sat in his desk the next day. He was tired as *fuck*. His classmates were already avoiding Bakugou, and when he arrived in class with the same bags under his eyes, they steered clear of him, as well. Eijirou couldn't blame them. He looked like shit and he knew it.

Bakugou was one of his bros, sure, but if he was going to lose sleep every time he was worried about that guy's well-being, he would probably never sleep ever again.

But he couldn't erase the thought – the way Bakugou's eyes practically begged for sleep... Maybe, his plan really hadn't been a good idea. Maybe, if he left Bakugou alone so he could try to sleep, if he never brought up the nightly commotions again... maybe he would be doing his friend a favor.

Which of course made Eijirou feel even more like shit. He had just wanted to help. That's what good friends do, right? And sometimes, he got the feeling that Bakugou wasn't used to having friends. So Eijirou just wanted to be the best friend that he could ever ask for. But he couldn't be a good friend if all Bakugou saw in him was an annoying fuck-munch. Plan Intervention had failed. He didn't help Bakugou, he had only annoyed him.

Oh man, that really sucked. Eijirou crossed his arms on his desk, laying his head down. He earned a sideways glance from Kaminari, one that was full of pity. He was acting pretty pathetic, wasn't he? But he was too tired to really care.

When their hero training came around, he couldn't focus. Neither could Bakugou, apparently, and after only a few minutes of work, Eraser Head had sent him to the nurse based on his ghastly appearance. Which was unheard-of, for Eraser Head, and for that, Eijirou felt a little jealous. He was severely underperforming as well, after all. But at least he no longer had to worry about his explosive pal overworking himself and getting hurt.

Overall, the day passed much too slowly, and when it was finally night, Eijirou couldn't sleep again. So he lay awake in bed, just thinking.

He was mostly thinking of Bakugou, to be honest, and how he could best deal with this situation. He still felt guilty, but as he lay there, grumpy and futilely attempting sleep, his exasperation was getting the better of him. He needed sleep, Bakugou needed sleep. Maybe what the poor guy really needed was just an outlet to vent, or confide in, or something. Anything. Maybe if that happened, he would find comfort or whatever, and he wouldn't stay up anymore.

So maybe... he should just keep trying until Bakugou opened up? Maybe, he could be annoying, if the end justifies the means? But he didn't even know if Bakugou trusted him enough! Should he leave him alone? Should he try one more time? The dilemma he faced should be really simple, but

he was beginning to sound like Midoriya with all of his over-thinking. Oh god, why must his brain torture him awake like this? Maybe it was his complete and utter exhaustion talking, but the whole situation was starting to become so damn frustrating. He groaned, bringing up his hands to grab fistfuls of hair as he let out a huff. And then...

Boom. Boom boom boom.

Okay. That was the last straw.

Eijirou bolted up and slung his legs over the side of the bed, dashing to the hallway. Maybe Bakugou was rubbing off on him too much. But kindness be damned! He was going to get to the bottom of this, even if Bakugou's angry explosions killed him!

He banged on the door a few times. "Yoo-hoo! Is this going to become like a nightly ritual or something?" he half-shouted through the door as he knocked. "You blow shit up, I check in to make sure the shit you blew up wasn't your face or something, rinse and repeat, the circle of life..." He did a few *shave-and-a-haircuts* for emphasis. "Hello-o?"

"Jesus fucking— Go away."

"I need answers, bro. I was gonna be nice to you, but this is keeping *me* up now. I'm *invested*. I suppose you could keep ignoring me? But I'm not gonna stop, so..." He knocked especially frantically, as if to emphasize his point.

His voice was met with footsteps. As his palm still pounded on the door, he prepared himself for the inevitably *serious* backlash, already applying his quirk to his entire body to avoid being scorched. "It's honestly a wonder that I'm the only one who ever hears you, dude, so you should be pretty grateful that it's just me who..." The door swung open. He trailed off, mid-sentence and mid-knock.

... Oh my god.

That was... a rather shocking sight. Even as he stood in the hallway and Bakugou stood in his room, he could see it. The bags under his eyes were gray and moist, his eyes red all over, his face pale with blotches of color, he looked like a zombie who had just risen from the grave, and before Eijirou could stop himself—

"... Dude. You look like shit."

"Well fuck you too."

"Sorry, sorry, just..." He didn't mean to stare. He *really* didn't. But at this point, Bakugou looked *sickly*. His face was so very pale, and... oh god, his whole body was trembling. "Woah, man... You're not okay."

"Fuck off. I told you, I'm fine."

"Dude, you are literally shaking."

"I said, leave me alone—"

Oh dang, at this rate, he was going to get a door to the face. Eijirou stepped into his room, quickly, gently closing the door behind him. Oh god, what was he doing? He faced the blond, who was scowling at him, and he stopped dead in his tracks. Now what? He was in Bakugou's room, uninvited, just making him pissed off all over again, *ohh man*, he couldn't afford to mess this up

like he did last night. But when he looked at Bakugou and saw how unwell he appeared, he knew he had to try something to comfort his friend, help him through his struggles, anything, and quickly.

Eijirou took a stride closer to Bakugou and wrapped his arms around him tightly.

He immediately tensed. His “*what the hell, get off me you bastard*” was muffled by Eijirou’s shoulder, and it lacked its usual bite.

“Shh. If you really want me to let go, I will. But something is wrong, and I think this could do you some good. Just, 20 seconds.” He tightened his hold.

Bakugou began pushing him away. “I will blow you up, I swear to God—”

“—20 seconds. That’s all, please. Then I will let go, and this will have never happened, and you will feel better, I promise.”

“... I told you, shitty hair, I’m fine...”

But slowly, Bakugou relaxed, his fingers shakily reaching up to grip onto the hem of Eijirou’s night shirt. They stayed like that for a long while, neither of them bothering to pull away or protest when 20 seconds had clearly passed. And then, with an air of desperation, Bakugou grasped onto Eijirou fully, his arms coming up to squeeze around his torso, so so shakily, as if he had only just mustered the courage. He let out a shuddering breath, and Eijirou couldn’t help but think that it was in relief.

A gruff voice permeated the stillness. “If you tell a *single soul* about this...”

“I won’t.”

Maybe Bakugou did trust him, just a bit. The redhead hugged tighter, hoping the embrace would ease the ache in his chest, the one that made it feel as though thousands of tiny strings were pulling his heart inward, making it collapse in on itself. Maybe Bakugou felt something similar. Maybe that’s why he was clinging onto him so urgently.

As the two stood there, holding each other, Eijirou’s thoughts suddenly flashed to the night of Bakugou’s rescue. Through the memories of fear and nauseating anxiety, he remembered what Midoriya had told him, that he was the only one in the class who Bakugou saw as his equal. That he was the only one Bakugou would take a hand from. This was kind-of the same thing, wasn’t it? Maybe he was the only one in their class who Bakugou would willingly take help from, the only one he was willing to show any weakness or vulnerability to. The privilege and responsibility that came with that was nearly overwhelming, but he had to do whatever he could do to help Bakugou through his distress.

Neither of them released their hold as Eijirou began maneuvering them further into the room. It was a fairly difficult task, but what was honestly the most surprising was that Bakugou complied. He sat them down on the edge bed, slowly unwinding his arms and placing firm hands on Bakugou’s shoulders, holding him out at a relaxed arm’s length.

“You alright? That wasn’t so bad, was it?”

Bakugou looked at anything but him, his face grumpy and red from humiliation. Eijirou ignored the wet spots on his nightshirt, ignored how Bakugou must have been crying into his shoulder. He needed to know that his dignity was preserved.

Eijirou took a deep breath. “I want to say something, and I wanna ask that you don’t just immediately write off what I have to say, okay?”

Bakugou’s eyes were still stubbornly fixed on something to his bottom right, his lowered eyebrows and pursed lips giving him a mopey pout, but he nodded.

“If you need to talk to me about anything, *anything at all*, I am here for you, bro. Like, honest to God. What is said in this room stays in this room, just between us. Okay?”

Bakugou scrunched his eyes shut. He breathed several times, slowly, perhaps calming his own nerves. “... Why?” His voice was quiet.

“Bro code!” He grinned, if a little sheepishly, nudging Bakugou lightly on the shoulder. “Gotta be there for my bro!”

“You are fucking insufferable.”

Eijirou snorted. “That makes two of us, buddy. But... do you get what I’m trying to say?”

Slowly, so slowly, Bakugou’s eyes met his. He looked... terrified. He nodded.

“Okay. Good. That’s... good. Um, I can stay if you want to talk about it? We could have a sleepover or something.”

Bakugou stared at him blankly, and *Jesus*, it felt like he was peering into his very soul.

“Um...” He let out a nervous chuckle. “Did you... not hear me?”

“No, I heard you. I just can’t believe you made me hear those fucking god-awful words with my own two ears.”

Eijirou couldn’t help the laugh that burst from his lips. It rang out, clear and refreshing, and maybe it was just him, but it felt like a fog that had settled over them had suddenly dispersed. “No, no, hear me out! Now that I think about it, it’s actually not a bad idea. My mom made me pack a futon, so it doesn’t have to be weird. We can stay up talking about whatever you need to talk about.”

“No way in hell.”

Eijirou nudged Bakugou’s arm. “Aww, come on man! It’ll be a normal sleepover, just between two pals, ya know?” Bakugou glared at him absolutely murderously. “Ahh, don’t be like that, it’ll be fun, and I think it’ll make you feel better.” He shrugged. “I just want to help. You tell me what you need me to do.”

“Fucking whatever,” He rolled his eyes. “I’ve had enough of this. I’m going to sleep.” He climbed the rest of the way into bed, covering himself with the duvet.

“Oh. Um... Okay.” Eijirou looked away, the smile disappearing from his face. He began standing up. “If that’s what you need right now, that’s okay. Just... Um. If you ever need me, you know where to—”

“Tomorrow.”

He froze, looking down at Bakugou slowly. “... What?”

Bakugou turned his back to Eijirou, curling in on himself, and for a moment, Eijirou was worried that he wouldn’t respond. But he did. “I really need to try to sleep tonight. But... tomorrow night.

Bring your futon. I'll talk then."

"Right. Right. Sweet. I'll be here."

Promises to Keep

All through training and lunch, Eijirou just could not stop thinking about the upcoming sleepover. He had to keep up appearances around the rest of his classmates of course, so they wouldn't suspect anything was up, but in reality, he was a little ball of nerves. A little ball of tired, sleep-deprived nerves.

He wondered if Bakugou was regretting ever agreeing to this. Like, what if he showed up ready to have some deep conversation between bros, only to be kicked out? Honestly, Eijirou had no idea what to expect; as soon as classes had ended, the blond had grumpily bypassed everyone and gone straight up to his room, so it wasn't like he could ask either.

But regardless, the guy didn't seem to be on good terms with anyone in the class, and he seemed to like making rivals more than making friends – so all things considering, it was really cool that he had been willing to talk to Eijirou at all, even if he does end up backing out in the end. It was nothing short of amazing, really.

The hours continued to pass much too slowly. He worked on homework, had some small talk with Ashido and Kaminari, but he wasn't very invested in the conversation or in his work. He was too busy counting down the minutes until... *wait*. They hadn't even set a time. Oh dang. If he showed up too early, his eagerness could make things awkward. But if he showed up too late, Bakugou might already be asleep.

It wasn't that he was giddily anticipating Bakugou pouring out his tragic misfortunes to him or anything that cynical. He felt more curiosity than anything. Well... maybe he was hoping to stop Bakugou's outbursts so they could get a good night's sleep again. And he was definitely happy to be helping out. But one thing he was excited for was experiencing companionship with someone again. Or... something like that.

In middle school, Eijirou had been quite the popular guy, and he had made some very close friendships with kids who had meant the world to him. But none of them had come to UA, and sometimes he felt lonely. He had been trying to branch out with his classmates, to start forming deep connections with the new people in his life. He yearned to share that level of camaraderie with someone again. So maybe this sleepover would be another step toward that.

Suddenly, his phone buzzed, bringing him out of his reverie. He looked at the time – 8:31, had he really been zoned out that long? – and read the message.

[090-1790-1357:]

Are you coming or not??

... *Holy shit*.

It must have been Bakugou. It had to be. Wait, how did he get his number...?

Eijirou just couldn't be bothered to dwell on that. He sent a quick '*omw*' and quietly excused himself from the common room, making sure no one followed him upstairs. He had always loved sleep-overs and was of the opinion that they were suitable for all ages, but Bakugou seemed to disagree and Eijirou didn't want to embarrass him. The poor guy seemed to be going through enough shit as it was.

After a quick wash-up and changed into his pajamas, Eijirou tugged his futon from under his bed

and gathered the thin mattress, a pillow, and comforter in his arms, some of it spilling over and dragging along the floor. He peeked into the hallway. Once he was sure that the coast was clear, he shuffled along and rapped on Bakugou's door.

"Yo. I'm here."

The door opened almost immediately, like he had been waited on. Bakugou's eyes widened at Eijirou's overly-cheery "Good evening!!" and the futon that overflowed his arms, but he rolled his eyes and beckoned him in. While Bakugou moved to sit on his bed, Eijirou began laying out the mattress on the floor between the bed and his desk. It was a tight fit, but he was managing.

"Oh man, it's been forever since I've had a sleepover," he beamed mindlessly, slipping the soft cover over the corners of the futon. "I mean, the onsen doesn't really count because it was a field trip. I don't think I've had a real sleepover since my first year of middle school." He unfurled the comforter and laid it gently over his mattress. "What about you?"

Bakugou scowled and looked away, remaining pointedly silent. Eijirou, who had been busy fluffing his pillow, paused and looked up slowly in disbelief.

"No way. Bakugou. My man. *Please* tell me you've had a sleepover before."

"Course I have, moron, when I was in fucking *elementary school*."

"Aw come on, don't let the kid in you die so easily!" Eijirou jumped up, admiring his futon handiwork. After nodding in approval, he looked over to his friend, flashing a grin. Now what?

After a split-second of deliberation, Eijirou plopped down on the bed next to Bakugou. He half-expected the blond to get kind-of explosive about the breach in his personal space – he had just made up a futon which he could sit on after all, and maybe he should have asked permission before flopping on the bed – but it was too late now. And anyways, Bakugou wasn't really reacting to him. Maybe he was busy working up the nerves to talk about their inevitable conversation. Maybe this was the type of thing that Eijirou needed to ease them into with some chitchat.

"So..." While racking his brain for what to talk about, he spayed his hands on the bed behind him, using his arms as support as he leaned back. "I never really got to talk to you about it before, but... you *really* didn't have to give me that money to pay for the night vision goggles, you know."

"Well I wanted to, alright?" Bakugou mumbled rather tetchily. "For the last time, keep the goddamn money—"

"Hold up, I wasn't finished. I just want to thank you."

There was a beat of silence before Bakugou huffed, exasperated.

"No, really. I treated everyone to Bar-B-Q like I said I would, and after everything that happened with..." *Ouch*, maybe it was best if he didn't bring up that night. "Well. It really lifted everyone's spirits, and brought the class together again. So thank you."

The blond was strangely quiet, his cheeks ever-so-slightly dusted pink. He finally mumbled an obligatory "Don't worry about it."

Eijirou smiled a little to himself. Seemed as though Bakugou was capable of courteous conversation after all. "I just wish you would have joined us. Then it really would have been everyone." No response. "Maybe next time," the redhead finished quietly.

Bakugou didn't say anything to that either, his leg had a slight bounce to it and he was too busy playing with the hem of his boxers. Maybe he was too anxious about the unavoidable topic of conversation to have small talk. *So much for trying to ease into it.* Eijirou laid his back on the bed, his arms over his head, legs still dangling over the side. Might as well get it over with, for his sake.

"So. No use beating around the bush. Spill. Or... or don't. Whatever makes you comfortable."

At that, Bakugou just kind-of froze in place, staring out the window into the slight fog of night. He wasn't saying anything, but he wasn't telling Eijirou to leave, either. So the redhead stay put. He could be patient, if time was what Bakugou needed.

Finally, the blond spoke. "Do you... do you remember the slime monster? From almost 2 years ago?" His voice rung out in the room, uncharacteristically tentative.

Eijirou sat up, resting his palms on the bed underneath him again. Great. Barely even a sentence in, and he was already lost. "...Slime monster?"

"The one that All-Might defeated when he first came to town?"

"... Yeah...?"

"And you remember how the slime attacked some middle school-ers?"

Silence hung thick in the air, almost palpable, as realization set in. "That was you."

Bakugou took a deep breath, clenching his jaw, seemingly preparing himself for a reaction that he knew was coming.

"Oh my god..." Eijirou knew he couldn't allow himself to freak out, that had been months ago, years, and Bakugou was probably tired of hearing about it. But when he remembered the news, watching some poor kid his age caught up in an attack with a villain, being suffocated, almost dying, he couldn't stop the concern that bubbled out of his mouth like a water spring. "You're ... You're Bakugou. *That* Bakugou, the one who... Oh my god..."

"How the fuck did you not know that?" The explosive teen clenched his fist, pushing his words through gritted teeth. "People recognized me for months. I thought everyone on this shithole planet knew who I was."

Eijirou shook his head, still wide-eyed. "I honestly had no idea. Oh man. If something like that ever happened to me, I would be scared absolutely shitless. But... I don't see what this has to do with..."

"That's because you didn't let me finish, asshole." Bakugou glared, but he looked away quickly, taking a slow breath as if to compose himself. "After that shitstorm happened, I... started having nightmares about the attack. It took months for them to go away."

And just like that, understanding dawned on him. Of course, it had to be something obvious. Something that, somehow, he had overlooked in all of his late-night worrying. Suddenly everything that had been happening this past week – the restless nights, the explosions, the shouting – it all fell into place.

"Bakugou... are you having nightmares again?"

The blond's body became even more rigid, his breath becoming shallower, like he was feigning off panic. He was exposing a deep secret, what was possibly his greatest weakness, so the anxiety was

understandable. Eijirou held his breath, giving Bakugou the silence that he probably needed.

It was so slight, barely discernable from his trembling, but finally, Eijirou saw a small nod.

“It’s the kidnapping this time. *Every fucking night*, I have a nightmare, and every time I bolt awake with my explosions firing off. In defense, I guess? Hell if I know. But I’m not doing it on purpose, I swear.”

Eijirou recalled their first night in the dorm, and awakening to Bakugou’s quirk. He had immediately engaging his own quirk. So, in a way, he knew the feeling. But he had never been prone to nightmares, at least not chronically, and...

And then, this feeling of doubt started creeping into his skin. He had never had to deal with nightmares before, his own or otherwise. This sounded way over his head, like something a specialist would fix, not some high-schooler who had no training. But he could still help, in his own way, couldn’t he? He had to be there for his friend, no matter what he was going through.

“Have you... thought about seeing someone about it?” he prompted carefully, not wanting Bakugou to get insulted by the implication of getting outside help.

“Like a counselor?” His reaction was strangely subdued. “My shitty dad wanted me to, after the sludge guy. But I didn’t. I wanted the dreams to stop on my own terms.” That was Bakugou’s pride for ya. But, it also wasn’t a highly unreasonable request.

“That’s fair, man.”

Bakugou sighed, rubbing his temples. “Sometimes, though, I wonder if... maybe that wouldn’t be such a bad idea? Because... don’t you fucking dare misunderstand me, it’s not because I’m a weakling or something, okay? But... sometimes I lay awake for hours, like, procrastinating on sleep so I can’t dream. And that’s pretty fucking messed up.”

“Well. You don’t have to talk to anyone about this if you don’t want to.”

“That didn’t stop your shitty ass from barging in here.”

“That’s because you’re my pal!” Bakugou gave him a look of pure exasperation, and Eijirou couldn’t help but grin back at him, absolutely glisteningly. “I care about you, bro. So, so much.”

At that, the room fell quiet. Bakugou wasn’t looking at him anymore, and his cheeks were a little rosier than they had been before. *Oh man*. He had just made things awkward, hadn’t he? Eijirou scratched the nape of his neck, trying to avoid the embarrassed atmosphere that was threatening to swallow him up.

“Hey, man,” he offered, hoping the mood would dissipate, “if the dreams went away last time, they will go away this time too.”

“They fucking better,” Bakugou practically growled, and it was as if a switch was flipped, his body shaking, his works calloused and rough, and once he started talking he couldn’t get himself to stop. “It’s just so goddamn annoying, you know? Like... all these shitty nightmares won’t piss off and it’s fucking exhausting. I’ve been way too emotional, and things that have never bothered me before are starting to get in my head, making me nervous all the time, and sometimes I don’t want to be awake either because I know that I would have to think about things like... like...”

Eijirou felt as though his heart was caught in his chest, but nothing could prepare him for the weight of Bakugou’s next shaky words.

“... How the fuck am I supposed to be a hero like this?”

His voice was empty, yet somehow heavy with pain, his words becoming more and more raspy with each inhale. “That’s what I was thinking about last night, when you were here,” he gasped out, “and even now, the thought won’t go away. It happened with the sludge monster, it happened with the villain alliance, it’ll happen again!”

The panic that was beginning to wreck through Bakugou’s body was like no emotion Eijirou had ever seen from him, like he was coming apart at the seams. And Eijirou didn’t know what to do. He watched his friend, on the verge of tears, bury his face in his hands, and was unable to do anything about it.

“I know that every hero has a weakness, but if I have nightmares of every fight I have with a villain, then what sort of hero would that make me? I can’t live like that! A hero can’t live like that!” Bakugou finally took his hands away from his face, straightening up. He let out one final, long sigh into the hazy silence. Then, Bakugou laughed, but it was dry, with a hint of cynicism. “I don’t even know why I’m telling you this. I was hoping they would stop before coming to the dorm, but they won’t go away, and I’m not getting any sleep, and I’m way more emotional than normal, and now you know about this complete fuckfest and probably think I’m a weakling, so it’s just an overall pissy situation.”

There was a beat of silence.

“I don’t think you’re a weakling.”

“Fuck off. I don’t need your pity.”

Of course, he would take it as an insult. Eijirou didn’t blame him, but he needed to be mindful of who Bakugou was and what he needed. He tried again. “I’m not saying it out of pity. You really are brave. Trust me.”

Bakugou stare at him, and when he spoke, it was with an air of finality. “Whatever you fucking say.”

And that was the end of that. The room fell into an uncomfortable silence once again, the two just sitting in each other’s presences.

“Get your ass off my bed. I’m going to sleep,” he finally yawned.

Eijirou blinked. “Oh. Are you tired already?”

“And you’re not? I thought you were up all last night being ‘invested’ or some shit.” Bakugou flopped to the mattress, rolling on his side.

“Awww, but it’s only 10:30! And it’s Friday night! We could talk about all sorts of things.”

“If you’re just gonna keep me up then I’m calling the damn sleepover off.”

“Oh.” Eijirou deflated. Seems as though plans for the sleepover weren’t 100% set in stone after all. He stood up, walking to turn off the light. “I’ll be quiet, I promise,” he said as he blindly made his way back to the futon. He sat down slowly, bringing the duvet over his legs. “I love sleepovers and all, but if I’ve overstayed my welcome, I can go.”

“Well it’s too late for that now, dumbass. You’ve practically moved yourself in.”

“Oh. I suppose I have,” Eijirou hummed. His eyes wandered around the dim room, watching shadows creep across the wall. “To be honest, I don’t understand why you agreed to this in the first place. I thought you would kick me out in the first couple of minutes.”

The blond let out a groan, rolling over to face where Eijirou was on the floor. “I don’t even know what I was fucking thinking either...” he mumbled, shaking his head. “I probably have piss-poor judgment right now, after having only 6 hours of sleep in three days. Not to mention that, maybe... It’s probably selfish or whatever, but maybe I was hoping that having someone in the same room will stop my subconscious from giving me nightmares? Anyways, I’m probably just not acting like myself.”

Well, that certainly was true. Bakugou had been very subdued around him all evening. Eijirou knew that his chill personality seemed to have some sort of a calming effect on people, but his explosive friend was just so volatile, he hadn’t expected to see a noticeable difference. So the lack of sleep made sense, as did Bakugou’s other reasoning.

“Well,” he lay down on the futon, his voice ringing out clear into the darkened silence. “Whatever the cause, my promise still stands. All of this, everything we have talked about, stays between you and me. I’m not going to compromise your reputation or anything.”

He heard the shuffling of covers coming from the bed.

“Go to sleep already, goddamnit,” finally came an exasperated grumble.

“Okay, okay. Goodnight, Bakugou.”

“Good *fucking* night, Kirishima.”

He stayed up until he heard Bakugou’s breathing even out. Only then did he finally allow himself to drift to sleep.

When he awoke, he was disoriented and had no idea what was going on. It was dark, he was in a strange room, on the floor, there was the sound of sheets rustling, and the occasional crying out...

Eijirou bolted upright, eyes wide. “Bakugou?”

The blond teen in the bed shifted, rolling to his side, his face now just a few feet away from Eijirou’s. He was whimpering, his face scrunched in pain, gasping for breath.

“Bakugou, wake up,” he said, a little louder.

There was a slight popping sound, and the room erupted with light as tiny, tiny explosions danced on Bakugou’s hands. These were not the big explosions that he was used to waking up to. This was like calm before a storm.

Eijirou’s fears were confirmed as Bakugou became more restless, as the explosions on his palms became bigger, and brighter, and louder, shit, shit, *shit*.

Eijirou didn’t even have to think, he just acted – he scrambled to his feet, rushing onto Bakugou’s bed, remembering to activate his quirk in the last moment before he reclined beside his friend, his arms wrapped around his torso.

At first, the dreaming Bakugou pushed him away, whining in alarm, his explosions igniting right into Eijirou's chest, feeling like nothing more than pinpricks against his quirked skin.

"Shh, calm down, it's me, it's just me..."

Bakugou let out a choked sob, the explosions stopping and his body relaxing almost immediately at the sound of Eijirou's voice.

"Shh, shh..." He brought his hand up to rub against Bakugou's back, hoping that his friend would find some comfort in the gesture, even in his sleep. "You're just dreaming. You're okay..."

As he talked, Bakugou became jarringly quiet, as if a lethargic wave had washed over his entire form. After several seconds of sitting like this, Eijirou rubbing lacy circles onto a shaking back, panicked breaths slowed, gasps became more even breaths.

"It's okay. It is all okay. You are okay." He could hear the words coming from his own mouth, and he wasn't controlling them, but he knew they were falling on sleeping ears. "Whatever you're dreaming of right now, whoever your fighting in that dream, you can win, I know it. Shhh..." He continued babbling nonsense, anything that he felt would help. "You're not hurting me, just let it all out... I've seen you do amazing things and you've grown so much just since the beginning of school, and it's so inspiring. You're going to be an amazing hero, shhh..."

Bakugou's arms slowly wound their way around his torso before the blond fell completely limp in his arms, nightmares making way for peaceful sleep. As the two lay there, holding on to each other, Eijirou felt his own heartbeat calm down, and consciousness began slowly slipping away once more.

Lay Me Down to Sleep

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

The noise from his phone was strangely quiet, like it was further away than usual, but his trained ears could hear it. Eijirou groaned, ever so softly. Was it really time to wake up already? The warm sunlight that shone through the window was young, but still bright. He brought his free hand to his mouth to stifle a yawn.

His... free hand?

Eijirou's eyelids flew open, his vision immediately landing on an All Might poster on the ceiling. He blinked a few times, squinting, before...

Oh no.

He was in Bakugou's room. He was in Bakugou's room... lying on Bakugou's bed, with his arm around...

Ohh no no no.

Slowly, so slowly, he looked down. And he had to completely restrain himself from yelping because holy *fuck*.

Bakugou. Bakugou was sleeping next to him. Bakugou's head was on his chest. Bakugou's legs were intertwined with his. He was in Bakugou's bed, his arm wrapped around Bakugou, sleeping next to Bakugou, ruining his extremely delicate friendship with Bakugou. Bakugou was going to wake up any second now and he was going to die and it was going to be because Bakugou killed him.

He couldn't breathe. A thousand thoughts raced around and around in his head, but ones related to his survival stuck out the most. It was a good thing Bakugou still seemed to be asleep, because that meant Eijirou still had a chance to turn off that fucking alarm and get out of this fucking bed before the entire fucking prefecture was burnt to a crisp.

He took his free arm and reached toward the floor. That's where his phone was, on the futon, thankfully on the corner closest to the bed. He could barely reach it from where he lay, but with some gentle stretching, he was able to tap the alarm off. It was his 7:00 weekday alarm. His dumb, forgetful ass must have forgotten to turn it off before Saturday.

Eijirou looked back to the pile of blond hair that still lay on his chest, trying to work out what to do next.

How in the world had Bakugou slept through that? The redhead was a pretty heavy sleeper, and even he had woken up to the quiet alarm. But... the blond did need the sleep, desperately, even more so than Eijirou did. Maybe his brain just had not let him wake up, at least not yet. Well whatever the reason, asleep was exactly how Bakugou needed to stay.

Next was the tricky part, a very delicate process that could wake Bakugou up at any time. Eijirou was careful – ohhh boy was he careful – as he slipped his other arm out from underneath his friend. Slowly, he untangled their legs and began shuffling his torso out from the dead weight that rested on him. He breathed a sigh of relief as he managed to free himself from the strong arms that were wrapped around him, and he gently rolled the duvet off of himself and sat up, swinging his feet to rest on the floor. He was cautious as he rose, eyes squeezed shut, listening for any mattress squeak that could give him away. As his weight finally lifted from the bed, he all but collapsed onto his futon.

A part of him was scared to look up. A part of him was scared to see two beady, livid eyes staring him down. But even with his hammering heart warning him, Eijirou lifted his head and peered over the side of the bed.

And oh, wow. He couldn't help but gaze at the wonderful sight.

The soft rise and fall of Bakugou's chest, the sunlight filtering gently through his golden hair. His face was lax and missing his characteristic scowl, was missing the angry creases around his eyes, and his lips weren't turned down in a frown for once. He looked so... innocent. Sure, any sleeping person tended to have such a look, but with Bakugou, it was especially amazing, like comparing night and day. He was just so calm. Eijirou had never seen him like this before.

A wave of relief passed over him. He had done it. He had actually done it! Yet, Eijirou couldn't help the feeling of guilt that snuck into his gut. His memory of waking up the night before was hazy at best, and when he had jumped into Bakugou's bed, he had probably been acting on instinct. But still. It wasn't like he had asked permission to intrude like that. Maybe it was a good thing that his alarm had gone off when it did. He had no idea how Bakugou would have reacted if he had woken up to the two of them cuddling like that.

Eijirou looked away.

Right. *That* had just happened.

His cheeks and the tips of his ears were heating up, he could feel it. He buried his face in his pillow, hoping the cool of the fabric would relieve his blush. It wasn't like he had never cuddled with any of his bros before. He was an affectionate guy, after all. But he had never felt this way about it. Why was Bakugou any different? Maybe he was just being dumb.

But as Eijirou lay there, calming down from his previous distress, he couldn't help but feel like he was missing something. Like there was a gap within him that he couldn't fill. He brought his pillow between his arms, hugging it, trying to fill at least some of the empty space that surrounded him.

Eijirou couldn't pinpoint the moment he fell asleep again, but he must have at some point because here he was, waking up to the bright sunlight once again. And he actually felt incredibly well-rested and refreshed, for the first time in several days. He stretched his arms over his head, feeling the tug and pull of his muscles and he let out a yawn. It was amazing — just one night of good sleep had released tons of pent-up tension that he hadn't even realized had accumulated.

He checked his phone. Eyes widening in shock, he sat upright, suddenly feeling very, very awake. It was 12:47.

He heard a slight wrestling of sheets, followed by a long groan. It seemed as though Bakugou was waking up as well. Images of earlier that morning appeared in Eijrou's head, oh right, *that had happened*, and his heart suddenly felt as though it was stammering uncontrollably. He looked to his left, watching as Bakugou turned to his side, facing where Eijrou sat on his futon, his face scrunching up as consciousness came to him. His eyelids fluttered open.

Their eyes met, and the air between them stilled.

He held his breath. Bakugou's gaze was absolutely piercing, and a chill crawled up and down Eijrou's spine. God, did he remember? Did he *know*?

But as he studied the blond's face, Eijrou relaxed. Surely, he was just being paranoid. Even though he was awake, Bakugou still retained a calmness that he did not otherwise possess. The bags under his eyes were still there, but they were less pronounced, and his skin was more colored, his eyes more life-like. His hair was illuminated by the sun's rays, giving it the appearance of a fiery halo, the soft shadows falling across his cheekbones making his face seem less rigid, and everything about this picture just looked incredibly dreamlike, like a spell had blanketed them. He knew he should probably stop staring, but he couldn't bring himself to look away.

"Good morning Bakugou," he finally whispered.

He smiled warmly, gently. And it was small, so small that he was not even sure he saw it correctly, but maybe, just maybe, Bakugou smiled back at him. Just for a moment, before it was replaced by a hefty yawn.

The blond rubbed his eyes with a loose fist. "Mmmm. What time is it?"

"Almost one."

Bakugou froze for a second, before flopping his hand back on the bed. "*Fuck*. Really?"

"Yup. But, I think we both needed to catch up on sleep. How do you feel?"

"Like I've been run over by a fucking garbage truck," he grunted as he sat up. "But otherwise, I'm fine."

Eijrou sniggered. "Little steps, little steps."

A strange rumbling filled the room. Bakugou looked down at his stomach in absolute horror.

Eijrou could not contain the laughter that bubbled up inside of him, and he let it out freely.

"Sounds like someone needs breakfast! Or, erm... lunch?"

"Does it matter? I'm fucking hungry."

"I could tell," he he raised an eyebrow pointedly. "Good thing the cafeteria's open on weekends now, huh?"

Bakugou hummed, and he began climbing out of bed. Eijrou followed suit, trying his best to act as natural as possible. The two of them began some semblance of a morning routine, but as they got ready for the day, Eijrou couldn't help but feel a little on-edge. His brain would not stop wondering, how would Bakugou have reacted that morning? What if he had woken up? Would he have been angry? Disgusted? Too tired to care? And oh no, now Bakugou was looking at him strangely. Maybe he was thinking too hard.

Don't think about the cuddling, don't think about it, do not think about it at all and you'll be absolutely fine...

He did his best to look as unassuming as possible. But as the two of them got dressed, brushed their teeth side by side in a strangely domestic setting, Eijirou couldn't help but consider – perhaps the confusion of his awakening had sent him into a little bit of an exaggerated panic? It was just Bakugou, after all. Bakugou was his *bro* now, right? Sure, maybe he would have been a little pissed off. But as Eijirou recalled his calm, sleeping face, he doubted that the guy would ever seriously hurt him.

But... did he really know for sure? It was this uncertainty that was driving him up the wall. Did Bakugou even think of him as a friend? If he didn't think they were close, then Eijirou's actions the previous night would have been completely out-of-line. He wanted Bakugou to consider him as a friend, but if the blond didn't think he was, then maybe he really did deserve a blast to the face.

Well... what Bakugou didn't know wouldn't hurt him, a part of Eijirou's brain reminded. But the guilt was still there, tugging at his conscious. Regardless of if Bakugou would have gotten angry or not, there was one thing that was undeniable: the cuddling had stopped the nightmare. Maybe Bakugou deserved to know at least that much.

The two of them had just begun fixing their hair in the tiny bathroom mirror, when Eijirou decided to finally test the waters.

"Hey, Bakugou? You aren't... usually very sociable, with anyone." He cringed. Great start.

Bakugou looked up at him, frowning, with hard eyes. "What are you going on about?"

"Like... No offense, but you don't strike me as the kind of dude who hangs out with people a lot, much less all of..." he waved his hand around, gestured to everything and thereby nothing in particular. "All of *this*. So why me?"

"I... don't fucking know. I don't have a reason. It's not like I have to have one. You just think too goddamn much."

"Yeah, probably. But that doesn't stop me from being curious, man."

Bakugou shrugged. His voice came out in a mumble, like he couldn't be bothered to speak clearly. Or maybe he was self-conscious about the question? "I just... fuck, it's not really something I can explain. I like having my distance from people, so this 'friendship is magic' shit isn't exactly something I'm used to, but... I don't... *hate* you, I guess."

"Aww, bro!"

Coming from Bakugou, that was quite the compliment. All things considered. And as far as opening up to his peers, it was a fantastic start. Maybe... maybe with a little nudge of encouragement, Bakugou could learn to make more friends.

"Well, maybe you branching out is a good thing. There are merits to having friends," Eijirou pushed gently, suddenly turning thoughtful. "More support in the professional hero world later on, for one. And the more people you are friends with, the more you can learn from them. And... it feels nice, being kind to people, ya know? You have the power to make or break people's days. It feels good, knowing that you made a positive impact on someone." He smiled at Bakugou.

He was speaking from raw experience. In that moment, Eijirou himself could feel that fulfilling sense of satisfaction of knowing that his bro was feeling better, and the slight pride in knowing that

he was the one who had helped. It blossomed in his chest, making him feel warm and fuzzy all over. It felt amazing, and he couldn't help but smile. Bakugou looked otherwise disinterested, but Eijirou could see the blond watching him curiously from the corner of his eye. Maybe he was really listening?

He continued, slowly. "To me, friendship has a lot of value, Bakugou. There's more to growing as a person than just growing in strength and skill, you know."

Bakugou paused the fingers that were fixing up his hair, looking at his own reflection in the mirror. He seemed to think hard about that.

After a few moments, though, the blond finished his hair and had shoes on before Eijirou had even left the restroom.

As the redhead strung up his shoes, Bakugou groaned, standing up from his bed. "Quit your fucking dilly-dallying, asshole. My stomach feels like it's trying to eat itself alive."

"I'm coming, I'm coming," Eijirou rolled his eyes, a slight smile tugging at his lips as he finished lacing up his right shoe.

"Well, I'm *going*. Hurry up."

Bakugou made his way to the door and swung it open. The, he paused, as if contemplating something. Decided, he threw one last comment over his shoulder.

"By the way? That alarm of yours is fucking annoying. It better not go off next time."

The door slammed, leaving Eijirou alone. And when Eijirou finally processed what he had heard, he nearly choked on his spit.

... Next time? There would be a *next time*?

Oh my god.

Surely, he had misheard or something, he had to have! But the words repeated over and over in his head, clear as day. Bakugou wanted there to be a next time. Bakugou was asking for another sleepover, no way...

... Hold up. Hold the *frick* up.

Eijirou's face paled, his eyes widening, jaw dropping.

Holy shit. The alarm. He had heard the alarm. That meant... That meant...

He knew.

Holy shit.

He *knew*, and he wanted there to be a *next time*.

Holy shit.

Eijirou laced his other shoe as quickly as he could and dashed after Bakugou, almost tripping over his own two feet in the process.

Holy shit, holy shit, holy shit...

He sprinted down the hallway, turning corner after corner down the stairwell, hoping to catch up. He ran through the common space, across the campus.

When he burst into the cafeteria, a few heads turned his way. There were only a few students in the room. It was past 1:30, so much of the lunch crowd had already moved out, but there were still some lingering groups. Eijirou paused to catch his breath, scanned the sparse crowd, looking for a head of explosive blond hair. He needed answers, dammit! Where did Bakugou usually sit? He swiveled his head this way and that, trying to capture an image of every table, searching, searching...

Bakugou was nowhere to be seen.

Of course. Eijirou sighed. Bakugou kinda did whatever he wanted whenever he wanted, so if something else had caught his attention, he probably wouldn't have hesitated to ditch the cafeteria. Whatever. It wasn't that big of a deal.

So why did his heart feel like it was sinking?

He was about to turn on his heel and go back to his dorm to whip up some cup ramen or something when movement from across the room caught his eye. Ashido and Kaminari were waving at him. He grinned, trying to hide his disappointment, and waved back. They motioned for him to sit with them. He held his thumbs up reflexively — whoops, looks like he was eating in the cafeteria after all — before working his way to the lunch line.

The line wasn't long, and he got his food quickly. He moved toward his friends, sliding into a seat across from them. He broke his chopsticks apart, muttering a quick 'itadakimasu' before digging in to his natto and rice.

"Yo, Kirishima, fancy seeing you around here!" Kaminari flashed him a goofy grin. "What have you been up to this morning?"

"Ah, well to be honest, I woke up like less than an hour ago."

"Holy crap. Dude. Is something keeping you up?"

"Yeah, I... um..." He couldn't tell them about Bakugou. He really couldn't. Crap. Eijirou racked his brain, trying to formulate a passable excuse. "I haven't been getting enough sleep, because of the new dorms?"

"Yeah, being in a new place is super weird, isn't it?" Ashido joined in, bringing a spoon of broth to her lips, "And exciting. But I haven't been sleeping the best either."

Kaminari nodded, "Yah, same. But we'll get used to it eventually! Now that you're here, wonder if anyone else is gonna join us?"

Eijirou shrugged, trying his best to keep his mind off of the disappeared Bakugou. Trying his best to ignore the uncomfortable squeezing in his chest.

The three of them continued small talk about this and that, asking about their weeks, and how school was going, and how their families were fairing without them. It was a pleasant conversation, but Eijirou knew that his mind was elsewhere. It's not like he could help it — everything that had happened that morning left him in a little bit of shock. It was happy shock, as he looked forward to spending more time with his bro, but after that cliffhanger, it still consumed his thoughts.

Why wasn't Bakugou there? Was he embarrassed about what he had said? Embarrassed about the

position they were in that morning? Embarrassed about being okay with it? *Was* he okay with it?

Suddenly, Ashido trailed off in the middle of a sentence, her eyes widened in confusion, looking at something behind Eijirou. He didn't think too much about it, until she quickly nudged Kaminari, who then donned the same expression, his chopsticks frozen halfway between his mouth and his plate. Now, *that* got his attention.

"Um. Guys?"

The slamming of a plate onto the table made Eijirou jump. A figure took the seat next to him. "Fucking took you long enough to get here, fuck-munch."

And just like that, a wave of relief washed over him. Bakugou hadn't abandoned him after all! "Oh! Hi, Bakugou! I didn't see you when you came in."

"You walked right past me, dumbass."

"Really?" Eijirou laughed, rubbing the back of his neck. "My bad!" One of those weird bushes must have been in the way or something. Seriously, what school puts foliage in the cafeteria?

Bakugou's voice came out extremely bitter. "I even texted you," he spat.

"Sorry, sorry!" Eijirou brought his hands together in a mock bow as he grinned from ear to ear. He quickly went back to eating his food. But when he looked back to Ashido and Kaminari, they had gone completely silent, watching this scene play out, exchanging bewildered expressions.

Oh. Right.

Eijirou had always tried to be friendly toward everyone in the class, even Bakugou. Because of the nightly explosions and following confrontations, Eijirou had gotten quite comfortable around the blond, no matter how foul the mood. Maybe it was just him, but he felt as though the two of them had grown a lot closer. The sleepover had exemplified this, and now Eijirou was happy to call Bakugou a friend. Maybe... maybe even his closest friend at UA. And maybe, Bakugou even felt the same way about him. But it never occurred to him that other students would still feel uncomfortable in the guy's presence.

Oh well. If he just acted chill around Bakugou, treating him like a human being rather than a ticking time-bomb, then hopefully his classmates would eventually follow suit.

He tried striking casual conversations, ones that included all four of them. About school, families. Simple things without a lot of risk. It took a bit of prodding, but eventually, Kaminari and Ashido opened up. Before long, they were laughing and chatting like they usually do about their class' shenanigans, despite being in the presence of such a volatile peer.

Bakugou didn't say much, other than the occasional snarky remark. He looked a little uncomfortable, actually, and a little red in the face as if he was doing his best to seal all of his rage into a bottle, but he was being unexpectedly civil.

As he noticed this, Eijirou thought back on their conversation that morning. He recalled what he had told Bakugou about friendship. And now, as he continued to watch their meal play out, as Bakugou became more involved with their conversation, and as Ashido and Kaminari continued to relax and accept a new member to their peer group, it occurred to Eijirou that he was *trying*. The guy was actually *trying* to be nice, trying to make friends, possibly for the first time in his life.

Pride blossomed in Eijirou's chest. Bakugou had listened to him. He had taken his advice to heart,

and was trying to put it into practice.

He knew the smile that was plastered into his face probably looked ridiculous, but it refused to go away for the rest of the meal.

Afterwards, the four of them continued talking as they walked to the dormitory. If Ashido and Kaminari were still uncomfortable with Bakugou being nearby, they didn't show it. Eijirou was thankful for that. There were a few other students in the common room, and Eijirou said hello to everyone. Bakugou didn't follow him, but he didn't exactly stray too far, either. Some kids gave him a questioning glance, but turned away quickly as soon as they caught his eye.

When Eijirou had said his hellos to everyone, he started heading toward the stairs, and Bakugou quickly joined him. The two of them made their way up to the 4th floor. They were mostly silent, until they reached the last flight of stairs. Then, Bakugou spoke.

"Why are people so damn nervous around me?"

Eijirou turned to him, his steps faltering for just a second as his brain blanked. Bakugou just kept walking. He quickly caught up.

"What... what do you mean?"

"Like. You talk to people so easily, and they look so fucking happy to be around you. But at lunch today, the conversation stopped as soon as I got to the table. It took a while for it to pick up again. It was starting to piss me off."

"Bakugou. My man. I don't know how to break this to you, but you are scary."

"What?"

At that, Eijirou stopped walking completely. Bakugou quickly turned to him, his eyebrows scrunched together in irate contemplation.

"You mean... You mean, you aren't trying to be? Like, you honestly aren't trying to be intimidating, it's just... your resting bitch face?"

"No, I *do* make it a point to be intimidating," Bakugou corrected. "And my resting bitch face is a fucking masterpiece. And I *am* kind-of almost always pissed off..." he froze. "... Oh."

"Yeah. *Oh*."

The look of puzzlement on his face was nearly laughable. Like... how had that realization never occurred to him? Maybe it was just that the guy had never stopped to consider another person's opinion of him. The fact that he was doing so now spoke volumes about how hard he was trying. Had Eijirou's words really meant that much to him? Was this more of that respect that Midoriya had mentioned before?

The two of them stepped into the corridor, and Bakugou seemed to snap out of his stunned silence.

"But, they're *scared* of me? Like... even when I'm not pissed off or anything?"

Eijirou stared at him blankly. "... *Dude*."

Bakugou huffed, his face falling into a puzzled pout that was almost cute. "But you're not scared of me?"

“Well, I have my quirk. It’s not like you can hurt me or anything. Plus, you’re my bro!” He fist-bumped his friend's shoulder. "Since I've gotten to know you more, I think you’re a pretty cool dude.”

“But... but they’re fucking *scared* of me? Like, actually frightened?”

“Well. Maybe not frightened? But definitely cautious.”

“Oh.”

“Um." Eijirou looked away. "Isn’t that... a good thing? To you? Like, isn’t that the vibe you’re going for?”

“I... don’t know.”

Eijirou couldn't quite read the expression on his bro's face. Contemplation? *Concern*?

With that, Bakugou opened his door, beckoning Eijirou inside. The red-head took one look at the futon and took a deep breath.

Right. He had legit almost forgotten about that. If Bakugou wasn’t going to bring up the cuddling, then neither was he. But, he couldn't make any assumptions. He had to know one thing.

“With what you said before... Do you want me to stay over again tonight?”

“Fuck,” Bakugou mumbled.

Oh. Maybe he was regretting saying it. Eijirou tried his best to look indifferent.

The blond cleared his throat. “If you don’t want to, then *no*, that’s definitely not what I want.”

“Um. Okay...” Eijirou blinked. “... Is that a yes?”

“Yes, moron.”

He felt his heart soar.

The two stayed up working on homework for a few hours, Bakugou sitting on his bed with his notes splayed out around him, and Eijirou making due at the desk. They didn’t chat much, but they didn’t have to. Being in each other’s presence was enough to make them content. Not to mention that Bakugou still looked pretty exhausted, and Eijirou didn’t want to annoy him with his constant yammering. He wanted Bakugou to feel comfortable with him.

But as the sun set and the sky outside the window became darker and darker, Bakugou stopped trying to conceal his yawns. The two agreed to go to bed, and after settling down under the cover of his futon, Eijirou all but passed out.

And several hours later, when he was roused by the popping bright lights that became more and more intense with each second, Eijirou didn’t need to hesitate. He didn’t need to worry about how Bakugou would react in the morning, because in his own strange way, the blond had given his approval. He was there to help his bro, any way he could.

So in the blur of his half-asleep state, he climbed into the bed, usng his quirk as a safe-guard

against the explosions as he took Bakugou into his arm, running his fingers through soft, yellow hair, rubbing circles into his back, whispering gentle words of encouragement, before giving in to sleep.

And the next morning, the too-bright sunlight flitted across his face, awakening him. He started to pull away, to leave the bed for his futon, but strong arms wouldn't let him leave. He looked curiously at the blond, whose face was the embodiment of sleeping innocence, but whose arms were much too sturdy.

He tried again, gently pushing Bakugou away so as to not disturb him. But there came a whisper, so soft that he almost missed it:

“Stay.”

“... Okay,” Eijirou breathed, clinging on to his friend with new resolve before falling asleep once more.

I'll Protect You from Harm

Chapter Notes

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

As Eijirou woke, a surreal aura of calm surrounded him. He didn't even have to open his eyes, he knew where he was — lying on his side, in Bakugou's bed, in Bakugou's room. He knew whose body his arms were still wound around, whose soft, yellow hair was tickling his chin and lips, whose forehead was resting against the dip between his collarbone and his shoulder. But this time, he didn't feel the need to panic. This was okay now, wasn't it? Bakugou had given him permission, in his own strange way, right?

He took a deep breath, basking in the young morning sunlight, taking note of the soft scent of musky campfire, immersing himself in every surrounding sensation.

Wow.

Bakugou's body just felt so relaxed against his own. The feeling of his chest expanding and contracting with every breath cast a soothing spell over him. It was slow and even — he was definitely asleep.

This window of serenity gave Eijirou an opportunity to reflect. As he felt the strong arms that were wound around him, arms that belonged to the thorniest person he knew, he reminded once more of how uncharacteristic his relationship with Bakugou was. Bakugou didn't seem like the type of person who would let many people enter his space like this. Yet here was the blond, willing and comfortable. And over the past few days, Eijirou had seen emotions from his friend that he reckoned not a lot of people got to see. Bakugou trusted him enough, and was able to forget his pride long enough, to allow Eijirou to help him when he needed it.

Honestly, he felt honored to be there. His heart swelled with pride.

Wow, wow, wow...

A back part of his mind wondered what time it was, but a majority of him didn't care. Thanks to him, Bakugou was sleeping better every night. He was *helping*. No matter how late it got, he would stay like this, silent and still, for as long as Bakugou needed him — no hesitation. But as Eijirou lay there in complete content, an inkling of a doubt began to tug on his thoughts:

How many more times would Bakugou let this happen?

He frowned.

Soon, he wouldn't even be needed anymore, would he?

Just that thought was enough to send low tides of bittersweet emotions rampaging through Eijirou's soul. A strange feeling overtook him, like his heart was struggling to connect with the emptiness that was beginning to fill the rest of his body, and he pressed tightly into Bakugou, trying to suppress that void. The notion that he would eventually have to let go of this, and so soon...

... He would stay like this for as long as Bakugou needed him, but...

It was selfish, really. And confusing, as he struggled and failed to place a finger on exactly why these emotions were so strong. But a rather large part of him was hoping that this would never

stop. Wished that he would never have to pull away. It went beyond wanting to be there for Bakugou, it went beyond the yearning to help a friend.

Who was to say that things like this needed to happen out of necessity? Why couldn't friends talk through their problems, and support each other, and comfort each other like this just out of virtue of being good friends? Why was this only acceptable when it was tied to unfortunate circumstances?

It was ridiculous to think like that, though, Eijirou knew. And anyways, Bakugou certainly wouldn't see things the same way. He didn't ask for sleepovers so they could bro-bond. This was just so he could sleep, so he could be prepared for hero training. Any emotional baggage that was revealed because of this was just a result of his exhaustion and subsequent lack of inhibition. That realization sent a stab of disappointment through him.

Eijirou sighed. He would just have to make the most of this while it lasted, right? He tightened his hug, just barely, nuzzling gently into blond hair, letting the soft smell fill his lungs some more. He could feel Bakugou's warm breaths against his skin, coming out in relaxed puffs of steam that tickled his very nerves. He could feel his own heart beating, perhaps even racing, and a part of him wondered why it was so fast, but he didn't dwell on it.

And then... he couldn't help the yawn that bubbled up inside of him, he really couldn't. So he yawned a big, hefty yawn, and he brought his hand to his mouth to stifle it. As soon as he took the hand away from the shoulder blade that it was resting on, the body next to him roused, and then suddenly tensed up.

And just like that, the spell was broken, and everything shifted abruptly into focus. For a split-second, doubt permeated Eijirou's mind once more, along with the butterflies that fidgeted in his stomach. Bakugou was awake. For the first time, the two of them would have to address their position, actually acknowledge it without the pretense of night or sleep, and he just hoped that Bakugou would take it well.

Bakugou shifted, looking up to catch him at the tail-end of his yawn. When their eyes met, the butterflies in Eijirou's stomach fluttered with new fervor, but his doubts disappeared instantly. Bakugou's eyes were wide, tinged with vulnerability, with an underlying sense of trepidation. There was embarrassment, and some sleepiness, sure. But his eyes were not angry. After a few seconds of staring, the blond gave in to his own yawn.

"Ha," Eijirou grinned, partially from mild amusement, partially from his hopes of easing any lingering apprehension. "Guess those really are contagious. Sorry for waking you."

There was a pause as Bakugou finished his yawn. "'S fine," he grumbled, his voice grouchy, but Eijirou was starting to realize that 'grouchy' was just how his bro spoke sometimes, and it often had nothing to do with how ill-tempered he was feeling that day. "Time?" The blond asked.

Eijirou hummed, turning to his side, making a grab for his phone. The arms that were still around him loosened their hold, and he hid his reluctance as best he could as he shuffled away to sit up on the bed. "9:45-ish." He set the phone on the mattress. "A full 11 hours."

"Fan-fucking-tastic."

Bakugou sat up as well, and the two of them slung their feet to the floor. Now that they were seated side-by-side, with distance between them, Eijirou started feeling awkwardness circle around them. Perhaps he was reading the atmosphere wrong and it was all in his head, but as the quiet dragged on, with neither of them moving or looking at the other, he felt the urge to say something, anything, to quell the tension.

“You slept really well last night,” he began encouraging, his voice barely carrying above a whisper. “You started having a nightmare, but I, uh... Well. The nightmare stopped.”

There was a grunt, prompting the redhead to watch Bakugou from the corner of his eye. He saw his friend’s face morph into that pout, the one that meant he was disgruntled for whatever reason. The one that Eijirou was beginning to find very alluring. *Wait, what?*

“Hey... Uh,” He began, trying to distract himself from his own weird head-space, “However long this takes, I don’t mind, really. It’s, uh, actually kinda nice.” Eijirou winced. *Oh my god.* Did he really just say that? “I mean, uh. Getting to know you better. It’s nice.” *God, why.* If he had been misreading the atmosphere before, he certainly wasn’t now. His ears were flushed, he could feel it, and he kinda wanted to slink into the shadows and hide.

In his embarrassment, Eijirou felt as though he was hyper-aware of every detail that surrounded him as well, like how Bakugou was now avoiding his gaze entirely. How his red face looked like he was about to blow his top. How his jaw was set and his nostrils flared for just a second. He also noticed how how well-rested Bakugou looked now. How he was probably rested enough to send Eijirou on his way and never ask to hang out ever again. At his core, he didn’t want to leave, not yet. He wanted to be there for Bakugou, for whatever he needed. But his dumb, sappy self had just gone and fucked up an otherwise perfectly wonderful morning, and if Bakugou felt the same discomfort that he did... *Oh god*, he had to get out of there, he had to escape, before the awkwardness swallowed him up whole.

“Um, I forgot to stop by my dorm yesterday, and I don’t have clothes here? So I’m gonna go get dressed.”

Bakugou tensed up even more, completely avoiding eye contact, his eyebrows pinched together. It... almost looked as though he was trying to say something, but couldn’t.

“Right. Well, I’m gonna go...” He stood up, remembering to grab his phone at the last second before crossing the room to the door.

“Uh, Kirishima?” It was rushed, like Bakugou had spit it out in panic before he lost the nerves.

The redhead paused and looked back over his shoulder, praying that the hopefulness he felt wasn’t too obvious on his face. “Yeah! What’s up?”

“Um.” The blond shifted in discomfort, and Eijirou couldn’t shake the feeling of recognition – this was the posture of someone who was hesitant about asking for a favor. He didn’t want to jump to conclusions, but...

“... Same thing tonight?” he prompted slowly. Hopefully.

At first, Bakugou didn’t give any sign that he had even heard. But then gave a little shrug, looking away with that adorable pout of his, trying his best to look disinterested. “Fucking whatever.”

An amused grin spread on the redhead’s face, and relief spread in his pulsating heart. “So, I have some laundry that I want to get done, but I’ll head over after dinner or something. Text me.”

Bakugou nodded, and while it was still stiff, some of the tension visibly left his shoulders.

Eijirou gave one last smile before closing the door behind him and dashing to his own room. He leaned against his closed door, clutching at his heart, letting out a breath. He was happy, sure. Very happy. It was nice, feeling like he was helping a friend, and he was looking forward to hanging out with Bakugou more. But that didn’t explain his overwhelming relief. Even if they didn’t have

another sleepover, he would still see Bakugou at hero training on Monday, and every day that week. It wasn't like he would never see Bakugou again when the sleepovers stopped. So why were his palms sweating? Why his heart felt like it wanted to pound itself out of his chest? Why did he feel so strange? What was wrong with him?

He probably just missed his middle school friends so much that he was craving closeness with his new peers. Or something. Probably.

He needed a shower to clear his head.

It was evening. Eijirou had finished heating up a plateful of microwave gyoza, and was trying to simultaneously shove them into his mouth and bring his drying laundry inside before the sun finished setting, when his phone let out a ding.

[090-1790-1357:]

Finished homework. Was fcking easy. wbu

Eijirou squinted at the notification in confusion for only a second, before he realized that it was Bakugou's number. He smiled to himself, punching in a new contact page and saving the number before responding.

[Me:]

Yah, I finished <(´~´)> You still down to hang?

Maybe it was just in his head again, but the reply seemed to take forever to come in, and Eijirou's nerves decided to start acting up for absolutely no reason. When his phone buzzed again, he let out a sigh.

[King of Explodo-Kills:]

Fuckn whatever, dipshit

Which, Eijirou was quickly beginning to figure out, meant 'yes'. So he finished moving his food and laundry as quickly as he could, before heading over to Bakugou's. When he was settled on his futon, the two didn't talk about much. They mostly were on their phones, with the occasional comments about their classmates and training lessons.

Then, they went to sleep rather early, so they could be well-rested for hero training the next day.

Then, when Bakugou had a nightmare, Eijirou was there to comfort him, easing him out of his distress with soft encouragements and gentle hair pats, staying by his side until morning.

Then, they woke up together at the alarm, got ready for school together, went to class together. The afternoon, they separated to work on homework, or socialize, or eat dinner.

And then, Eijirou got a text.

And the cycle repeated.

Tuesday passed, then Wednesday. By Thursday night, Eijirou didn't even need to wait for a text, he just knew to head over as soon as he was done with dinner. By Friday morning, Eijirou had

accumulated his own drawer in Bakugou's dresser filled with toiletries and pajamas, and an extra uniform hanging in Bakugou's closet.

Every night, Eijirou would feel happiness in his gut as he helped his friend rest. And every morning, he would wake up, feeling both content and confused as he battled with an array of emotions that he didn't have words for.

This routine was so easy to fall into. And it was really, really strange, once he thought about it. Like, this was totally not a normal habit for two teenagers to have. Eijirou knew this, and he suspected that Bakugou knew it as well. Yet, neither of them gave any indication of wanting to stop anytime soon, regardless of how strange it was.

Plus, there was always the futon. That was the safe-guard. Bakugou had the bed, Eijirou had the futon, and their two spaces only meshed when it was necessary. This was the one justification that stopped this whole thing from becoming too weird.

It seemed to be working, too. Eijirou started noticing on Tuesday that Bakugou's nightmares didn't seem as bad. Maybe, he was quicker to comfort his friend, cutting the dreams off sooner, but Bakugou's explosions didn't seem as loud, nor his cries as panicked. Which was just a constant reminder of how few nights they probably had left together. That thought still made him sad, but if it was a result of Bakugou getting better, then he should be happy, shouldn't he?

But during the days, Eijirou started noticing another pattern. It was slight, so slight that the other students may not have even noticed it. But Bakugou was starting to fit into the class, just a little bit better.

He was starting to remember everyone's names, for one. He called Iida by his name on Friday – well, he actually called him 'Class-Prez Iida-sama', and in a totally disrespectful and mocking tone, but it was a start. Kaminari's name had been promoted from the general 'fuck-munch' to a more personalized 'Pikachu you fuck', which Eijirou still considered an upgrade.

Bakugou would also give out suggestions during their training. Sure, sometimes the suggestions were uncalled for, making him look like a complete smart-ass, and other times they sounded more like insults than advice, but it was progress nonetheless. Eijirou always knew that the guy was smart. But now, he was applying his smarts to helping his classmates succeed, and that spoke volumes about his improvement.

And bit by bit, Bakugou's temperament improved as well. Everyone still treated him like the same antisocial, raging fuse that could go off at any second, and many times the blond did act like it. He was still Bakugou, after all. But he wasn't nearly as hostile.

Was this what Bakugou looked like when he was trying to make friends? Even if his efforts were lackluster, it was the thought that counted, and it still made Eijirou overflow with pride.

But Friday night, something was different.

At first, it resembled every other night from the past week. Eijirou had been fast asleep, on the verge of dreaming, when the explosions started, just like the nights before. But when he looked over to Bakugou and saw the sweat beading on his forehead, heard his whimpering, he knew something was wrong. The explosions became louder faster, and Bakugou's cries were much more frantic, he was shouting out, his face twisted in anguish. This was far, far worse than previous

nights, and for several seconds, Eijirou couldn't even move, he was in such shocked distress.

Then, Bakugou started hyperventilating, and it physically hurt in his chest, seeing his friend so undone, he had to do something. Eijirou forced his body to move, as quickly as he could, and he did his best to slide next to his friend, embracing him.

The explosions immediately stopped, and a strangled cry filled the room. "Kirishima?" Bakugou choked out, disoriented and in a panic as he awoke, his body shaking.

"I'm here. I'm here."

"Kirishima," he rasped out again, clutching onto Eijirou like his life depended on it. His broken voice whimpered, a quiet wail filled with pain and relief and anger, but he sounded restrained.

"Shhh, I'm here, it's okay. It's all okay. Let it out. Please, you need to let it out..."

And Bakugou did let it out. He threw a fit, tears and sweat streaming down his face, letting out cries in frustration as he pounded his fist into the bed, over and over again, and each impact was like a blow to Eijirou's heart. Tears brimmed on his own eyes, because honestly, Bakugou was so broken, it was causing all sorts of emotions to well up inside of him. But he had to hold them back, for Bakugou's sake.

"I got you, Katsuki, I'm here, you're fine. Let it all out, shhh..."

He pressed into Eijirou, his face hidden against the redhead's chest, his arms squeezing Eijirou's torso so tightly that it hurt, his voice catching as if he was trying to suppress the sobs that continued to wreck through his whole body. There he cried, until he was so tired that he couldn't anymore. Eijirou just did what he could, running soothing fingers through Bakugou's hair, rubbing slow circles into his back. He kept speaking, the words falling from his mouth without much thought, anything that might bring his friend some reassurance.

It took a very long time for Bakugou to calm down, much longer than any other night. But eventually, his gasping leveled out, just a little, turning into softer snivels. Slowly, his body fell limp, his arms releasing much of their hold, and Eijirou couldn't tell if he was asleep or awake. After several more minutes, Eijirou's words came out quieter until they were nothing, the silence in the room pressing against his eardrums. He himself was beginning to drift off, when into the still darkness of the room, Bakugou let out a shaky breath.

"I can't keep fucking relying on you, you know."

Eijirou blinked his eyes open. His heart sank. He tightened his hold. "I know."

"I need to work this out, by myself if I have to."

"I know."

"We can't do this forever."

Why not?

"I know."

Wow, this fic has fanart inspired by it now!! That is so incredible, please be sure to check the artist out!

By tumblr user santeria, a [piece inspired by Chapter 5](#).

I Hear The Secrets You Keep

Chapter Notes

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

Eijirou shifted under the covers, just beginning to grab onto consciousness. Oh boy was he comfy, he mused in his near-asleep state, clinging tighter to the form underneath him, the scent telling him that it was Bakugou. He let out a content sigh.

“You finally up?” The quiet but gruff voice jolted him fully awake.

He gave out a slight groan and opened his eyes. “Hm?”

“You sleep like a fucking rock, you know that?”

Eijirou lifted his head, squinting against the light of morning, taking in his position. He was laying partially on his stomach, his chest flushed against Bakugou’s side with part of his weight resting on him. His head had been resting on one of the blond’s shoulders, with his arm slung across his broad chest.

His attention shifted up to Bakugou’s face. From Eijirou’s perspective, his jaw was quite pronounced due to the shadows, with the rest of his face otherwise lacking harshness. His red eyes were trained on the ceiling, seemingly disinterested, but he glanced down – perhaps he was curious after all – and he caught Eijirou’s gaze out of the corner of his eye. It only lasted a second, and then as if he had been shocked, he quickly looked back at the ceiling, his Adam’s apple bobbing with a swallow. *Uncomfortable.*

“Ah,” Eijirou pulled away, beginning to sit up. “Sorry, sorry.” He rubbed at his eyes with his wrist.

As soon as his weight was off of Bakugou, the blond placed his elbows on the mattress underneath him as leverage, slowly shifting to a sitting position as well. He grunted in acknowledgement, but otherwise remained quiet.

That was the first time Bakugou had awoken before Eijirou, and he had presumably been up for a while. Had he remained quiet, not waking Eijirou up out of consideration? And oh, that thought made his heart feel fuzzy and warm. Bakugou had been very thoughtful — that was a good sign.

“What time is it? How long have you been awake, anyways?”

“Couple of minutes. It’s like 9 or something.”

Eijirou nodded, shuffling his position until he was sitting with his back against the headboard. Bakugou followed suit. For just a moment, as silence surrounded them, Eijirou wished he could know what his friend was thinking. How had that night’s nightmare changed their relationship, in Bakugou’s mind? But he didn’t have a mind-reading quirk, so he wouldn’t know unless he asked, right?

“Listen, Bakugou. About last night...”

The blond grunted.

Too forward, too forward. “Well... um.” Suddenly, Eijirou was hyper-aware of how his voice was cutting through the still air, of how Bakugou was barely responding. He took a step back, allowing

his voice to fall to a more comfortable volume. “Did you sleep well?”

“Fuck yeah.”

At first, Eijirou grinned. What an extremely Bakugou-like response. But then, he furrowed his brow, a pout tugging his lips forward, eyes downcast as he absently studied his hands. *Then why*, he wanted to ask, *why does this have to end?* But that would be selfish, wouldn't it? And weird. This wasn't about him. He couldn't allow himself to be selfish.

“I mean. I am just here to help, and if that help is unnecessary, then I get it. But, if being here does help, and if I can help you more, then that's what I want to do, and... and...” Great, now Bakugou was giving him a sideways glance, one that was nearly impossible to read. He was getting ahead of himself, wasn't he? He took a breath. “Look. Bro. I don't want to push you or anything. But last night, your dream was worse. Much worse. And I can't help but think that there is more that I can do to help you out.”

“But that's exactly why this has to stop.”

Eijirou's brain stalled. “I don't follow...” he finally mumbled out. “Is it... you think that I'm losing my effectiveness or something? Like when someone takes a lot of medicine over time and it stops working?”

“Fuck. Nothing like that.”

“Then...” *Then why?* “... I don't see how...” Eijirou just trailed off though, keeping his thought unvoiced, but perhaps Bakugou caught his drift. But when the blond remained quiet, without so much as a hum of acknowledgement, he felt pressured to continue. “Bakugou, last night, I was so worried.” He could hear how quiet his voice was, because his heartbeat was so loud in comparison. “I just want to be there for you, and your reaction to the nightmare was the worst I have seen—”

“It was a different nightmare.”

Eijirou looked up. Bakugou looked away. The blond shifted, awkwardly.

“Then, uh, if you don't mind me asking... what are your dreams normally like?” No response. The redhead looked down, hoping that he hadn't offended by prying too much. He was taking a risk, he knew it, and if Bakugou didn't respond well, then he had messed up.

Finally, Bakugou let out a puff of air that strained against his lips, absentminded fingers pulling at the hairs at the nape of his neck. “I dunno,” he shrugged, tense, rigid. “Like... usually, it's that fucking night in the woods, and the villains are coming after me. But since I'm dreaming, I know how it's going to end, so I do everything I can to stop it from happening, but... it always happens anyways. Every *fucking* time.”

The words were forced out between his clenched teeth, his hands balled into fists, and for a second, Eijirou wondered if he needed to back off, to let Bakugou simmer down before he got too upset. But maybe he needed this outlet, maybe he needed to vent. So he stayed quiet, patiently waiting for the blond to continue.

“There are some variations,” he explained. “like sometimes they hurt me, or they torture me, or sometimes... sometimes they kill me, right before I wake up. But they always end up getting me.”

Oh. A wave of cold alarm wove through his body. It sounded terrifying, and the thought crossed Eijirou's mind that he should stop the conversation now, before he uncovered even worse

memories, but some deep part of him had to know: “What was different about last night?”

Bakugou was pointedly quiet. When he finally did respond, his voice was hollow.

“It was you.”

“Me...?” Eijirou felt his heart drop, felt the blood drain from his face. *Surely not...*

“They changed targets for whatever fucking reason, I don’t know, it was a dream, but they were coming after *you* instead, and they hurt you, and they... uh, they...”

The room fell silent. Bakugou’s fists were balled tight, his teeth clenched in a snarl, and he was shaking again. Eijirou could only watch in silence.

Bakugou’s dreams... he knew they were bad, they had to be. But he had no idea they were *that* bad. It was a harsh thing to think about, and his friend was in so much pain just remembering them that Eijirou knew his imagination would never be able to recreate the terror that he had to live through every night. A part of him didn’t want to hear anymore, insisted that he had heard enough heartbreak for the entire day, but this was not about him.

This is what Bakugou needs, he reminded himself. *This is what he needs, let him talk...*

Bakugou closed his eyes, letting out a sigh. “And I know it’s just a shitty dream, I know that,” His words started as a rushed mumble, but they slowly built in volume and urgency, becoming more and more frantic with each exhale. “It’s so *fucking dumb*, but dreams always feel real when you’re in them, you know? It was so disturbing, and scary, and I couldn’t help it, I was so fucking relieved when I woke up and you were there, and you were safe and moving and *breathing*, and...” One of his clenched fists hit hard on the bed, he let out a frustrated rumble. “Oh, God, I feel so stupid, what the fuck is wrong with me?”

Eijirou held his breath, each word stabbing through his lungs, making it more and more difficult to breathe. “Hey... It’s okay,” He began, carefully, reaching out a hand to grab onto Bakugou’s forearm. “Let it all out.”

“Stop that,” Bakugou growled, his entire body freezing at the touch. Eijirou quickly took his hand away. “Stop it, I don’t want to rely on you. I don’t want to rely on anyone. Like, what if this gets so bad that I can’t fucking fall asleep without you being in the same room? Dependency is unhealthy, right? Just because you’re there, doesn’t mean I can use you.”

Was that... guilt? Eijirou couldn’t help but wonder – did Bakugou feel guilty because he felt that he was taking advantage of his help?

“I promise, you’re not using me. I offered to help, and I am happy doing it.”

“See?” Bakugou groaned in frustration. “You care so goddamn much, it’s maddening! And it’s not like that’s the only reason this needs to stop, either. Look, I’m not a fucking sap. But my nightmare was so much worse when you were there. And the closer I get to you, or to anyone – the more I care about people in general – the worse they’ll get. That’s why this needs to stop, sometime soon. Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow. But soon.”

That’s what was bothering him? Eijirou nodded slowly, a weight in his heart tugging downward, his eyes stinging from the sudden moisture. He wasn’t crying, he *wasn’t*, but a small part of him wanted to. All of this, the trust that had built between them, the affectionate bond that Eijirou felt they shared... would it really have to end soon?

“I understand... but...”

He struggled, grasping desperately at words that would best explain himself, words that didn't seem to be there. He needed to comfort Bakugou, as best as he could while being reasonable, so he took his chances and wandered in blind.

“We're trying to be heroes,” he began. “No matter how much you try to distance yourself from others, there are always going to be risks. It's part of the job description. And this is a crude way of looking at it, but with my quirk, it would take a lot to hurt me, so I'm a safer bet than most people to be friends with, aren't I? I'm indestructible!” At that, Bakugou let out a huff, and when Eijirou looked at him, there seemed to be a small smile on his lips. His words seemed to have done more than just calm his bro down, they had lifted his spirits too. Encouraged, he continued, “And anyways, you can't be a hero at all if you are under-rested. I just think help is better than no help. We can deal with any consequences as they come. Do you get what I'm saying?”

Bakugou looked down, moping. He nodded.

“But this is more than that, isn't it?” Maybe his voice was too hopeful. He didn't even know what he was hoping for, but he could hear it in his own tone. “I'm helping you in other ways. Aren't I? Cuz I noticed, all this week, you were becoming closer to the class. You dropped the brooding outsider act—”

“—The *fuck*—?”

“—And I'm just... I'm really proud of you,” he smiled. Bakugou slowly looked up at him in disbelief. “I'm serious. For going out of your comfort zone, with me. With our other classmates.” Suddenly, Eijirou felt self-conscious under the blond's hard gaze. He brought his arm up to rub the nape of his neck to ease some nerves. “I mean, hey. I've always thought you were a cool person, but now other people are seeing that in you too. That just makes me so happy.”

At that, Bakugou was rather quiet. He cleared his throat, his voice coming out rather shaky. “Why do you care about that?”

“Well, because... I don't know. I just don't want people to see you as some sort of an enemy, just because you're brash sometimes.”

“You mean... you don't?”

“... Don't what?”

“See me as... an enemy? Like, some sort of a villain?”

Eijirou blinked, at a loss for words. “Um... Why should I?”

Bakugou sighed, exasperated. “Listen. I don't care about what people think about me, or about my personality, or how I go about being a hero. That's a part of who I am, and if they don't like it, then that's their fucking problem. But... I went over-the-top at the sports festival, when I was on the podium. I admit it, I'm owning up to it, so fuckin' whatever. But since then, it seems like everyone had made certain *assumptions* about me, and those assumptions became how the entire world sees me. And then, when I was kidnapped, a lot of people thought those creepy bastards at the Villain Alliance would actually get to me, and...”

Eijirou ducked his head. He always knew that Bakugou had a thick skin, dishing out insult and vulgar language without any thought about what people thought of him, so the redhead had never considered that something like this would be any different. But, he could see the distress in

Bakugou's sullen face. The knowledge that some people thought he was better suited to be a villain... This was affecting him, deeply.

"And yet, despite all of that, you... you never thought I would go bad?" The blond's voice was softer. Hopeful, perhaps.

Eijrou didn't hesitate. He didn't have to, the words rolled freely off of his tongue. "No. Never."

"Why not?" Bakugou's head snapped up to look at him. His eyes were searching into Eijrou's own, as if he was trying to find something.

Eijrou stared back, his heart beating faster, his confidence not faltering for even a second. "I'd like to think I know you, Bakugou. Just a little. Despite how you act sometimes, you care about people. I can tell. How could I see you as a villain, when you are trying so hard to be a hero?"

Bakugou looked away. Maybe he found what he was looking for. Truthfulness? Eijrou's words were sincere, so he hoped the blond believed him.

His voice was soft, barely audible above Eijrou's thumping heart.

"... Thank you."

Eijrou's lips broke into a smile. He fist-bumped Bakugou's shoulder. "No problem, bro. I mean every word."

"I know."

At that, a silence fell over the two of them, but this one didn't pound away at Eijrou's eardrums. It was comfortable. And maybe Bakugou was considering everything they had spoken about. Eijrou hoped that his friend would at least consider taking his help for a few nights more, but the ball was in his court now. There wasn't much else the redhead could do, and strangely, he felt some comfort in that.

"Well, I'm gonna go shower now," Bakugou eventually spoke. "I feel fucking gross after last night. But... I'll, uh, think about this."

There was still some hope, it seemed. "Right. Take your time. I'll be here to talk when you get out."

Bakugou grunted in his general direction before clambering out of bed. It took only a handful of seconds for him to wander around his room, collecting his showering supplies, before promptly leaving for the bathroom. Leaving Eijrou alone with his thoughts.

Eijrou moved to sit on the side of the bed. He needed to think about getting ready for the day too, but once again, his brain would not shut up. Was what he said enough? Did he convince Bakugou? Why did he even feel the need to convince him? It was true that he thought that Bakugou needed his help, but if the blond didn't think so, then it really wasn't his business to try to change his mind. So why did it matter so much to him?

He sighed, his foot banging against his futon that was on the floor in impatience. That drew his attention to it, and as he stared at the small mattress, a thought tugged at the back of his mind.

Oh right. The futon. It was Saturday, so it had been in use for almost a week. Which meant...

Eijrou groaned, slinking off of the bed. He hated doing this, but if his mother had taught him

anything in the last 15 years, it was that he could not abandon his chores. And it was time to air the futon.

So he dragged his futon to his own room, checking the hallway first to make sure it was clear of any observers, and hung it over his veranda railing. One hour should be enough time, and then he would have to go back and flip it over to make sure both sides were dry. Until then, he would just work on homework or something. So he got dressed and washed up, went back to Bakugou's room with his schoolwork in tow, hunkering down on the bed to start on some English conjugation. Anything that would take his mind off of its constant wondering.

He was only a minute or two into the fourth exercise when his phone buzzed. His eyes scanned over the message, muttering as he read: "... Curry rice with the class...?"

Just then, the door opened, and Bakugou emerged from the shower, his towel wrapped around his waist. He froze in the doorway, surprised.

"Hm?" Eijirou looked up, wondering why his friend had paused so abruptly. Bakugou had his head cocked to the side, a frown on his lips, regarding the empty floor with... was it disappointment? "Oh right! The futon's out drying. I'll, uh... bring it back in when it's done I guess?"

"Yeah, don't bother."

Suddenly, Eijirou's throat felt dry. "W-what?"

Had Bakugou had a change of heart in the shower? Did that mean... did that mean that Bakugou had had enough? Surely he had caught up on sleep, so it was only a matter of time. But even though he had been low-key preparing himself for this day, it still caused an ache in his chest.

But then, Bakugou cleared his throat, his words nervous. "I mean, why do we even need it? You never end up using it for long anyways."

Wait. Butterflies in Eijirou's chest fluttered. He looked up slowly to Bakugou. There was a blush on the blond's cheeks, and he was looking at anything other than Eijirou.

"You mean...?"

He scowled. "Fucking whatever."

"Right. Right."

At that, Bakugou started getting dressed right then and there, as if it wasn't that big of a deal, and it *wasn't*, except for the blush that began blossoming on Eijirou's cheeks. He averted his eyes out of courtesy, trying not to think so much about how shameless Bakugou was, trying not to notice how his face burned what was probably a very bright shade of red. What was up with that?

"Uh... I'll be a little later than normal tonight," Eijirou spoke up, keeping himself distracted. "I got a text from Momo, and she somehow got permission for the class to leave campus to go have dinner before the term officially starts, so I think I'm going to join them. Should be done around 8 or so, though."

"What time are we heading out then?"

"Um." Eijirou blinked. "What?"

"I *said*," Bakugou pressed harshly, tugging a fresh shirt over his chest, "what time are we heading

out? Or was this one of those RSVP things.”

“Around 5:30...” He trailed off in confusion. Wait, did that mean...? “Oh. My. God. You want to come, too.”

“Don’t look so fucking surprised,” he *tch*-ed. “We’ve been cooped up here for 2 weeks. I’m tired of shitty cafeteria food.”

Eijirou beamed. “Uh-huh. *Ri-ight*.”

Bakugou was full of surprises. The whole sleepover situation, for one. The whole ‘tough-guy act’ being more or less a front, his concern for how people thought of him as a hero, and now... Eijirou looked over his steaming curry and across the table. Among the rest of the rowdy class, sandwiched between Kaminari and Asui, was Bakugou.

He wasn’t very talkative, either listening to the others speaking around him or cutting the outside world off entirely and retreating to his phone. But not only had he tagged along, he had all but invited himself.

His other classmates had been happy to see Bakugou when the two of them arrived in the common space, without a hint of apprehension, and for a moment, he thought it was too good to be true. He worried that something catastrophic would happen, like a classmate picking on Bakugou, or Bakugou blowing his top. But of course, the night had been going smoothly so far. They were about half-way through the meal, without a hitch!

Honestly, it was a wonder that he expected anything different to happen. Class 1-A was full of some amazing kids – if any group were going to accept Bakugou despite his harsh attitude, it would be them.

Eijirou’s gaze swept the room. He and his classmates had reserved a back room at a curry rice restaurant. Aizawa sat on one end of the table, and the homeroom teacher of Class 1-B sat on the other side, the two keeping a watchful eye on the students as well as any potential threat that would come. With this protection, and the knowledge that their plans had been rather last-minute with a low possibility of villains crashing their party, Eijirou and his fellow students were finally able to relax and have a fun night out. And Bakugou had actually joined them.

Perhaps it was finally being able to leave campus that was making everyone giddy. But there was definitely a starch difference between how some of the students acted in the common space, and in this restaurant. And as Eijirou’s classmates continued to unwind and delve into their free, fun sides, there was a particular moment that stood out to him.

Sero had started it with a dare. Among insinuations of ‘no, hold on, I can do this I swear’, Kaminari was trying to balance a spoon from his nose. Which prompted Iida to recite proper table etiquette, demanding that he follow proper manners. At this point, the entire table was giggling.

And then, Bakugou snickered. Eijirou looked to him, quickly, eyes wide. Their gazes met.

“You’re having fun,” he mouthed across the table. It was not a question.

Bakugou ducked his head, quickly, his face morphing into his characteristically disinterested scowl. A slight shrug lifted his shoulders. And Eijirou was getting way better at reading the blond’s body language, because he knew exactly what that meant: *Fucking whatever*. The redhead

smiled, fondly.

Bakugou really was full of surprises, huh?

As soon as they got back to the common space, Kaminari pulled Eijirou aside. “Hey, Kirishima? Can I ask you about something?” His voice was hushed, his words coming out a little faster than normal.

“Yeah, what’s up?”

“Ahh, nothing much, man. I was just wondering... actually a few of us were...”

And oh boy, Eijirou had a hunch on what this was about. He nodded, prompting Kaminari to continue.

“Well, we just noticed that Bakugou seems different lately? Like, for the past few days, he’s been a lot more tolerable. And, sociable? Like... he tagged along to dinner, and didn’t make a scene or anything, not that I expected him to or anything, but... uh, you seem to be the closest to him, so...”

“You’re wondering what’s changed?”

“Well, I was wondering more along the lines of ‘what Pavlov-like conditioning magic are you doing to get him to behave’, but, uhh,” he let out a nervous chuckle, “Yah, we’ll go with yours.”

Eijirou sighed, grinning. Kaminari was just so ridiculous sometimes. “Well, I didn’t force him to come, if that’s what you mean. I mentioned it to him, and he invited himself. Um. Was that... not okay?”

“No, no it’s great!” Kaminari smiled, “The invitation was open to everyone in the class, we were all happy to have him. It was just... *unexpected*, is all. I think it’s good that he’s branching out. But... Bro. You’re being serious? You’re not forcing him or, or bribing him, or anything at all?”

“Nope. He actually asked to come. In his own strange way.”

Kaminari nodded, wide-eyed in awe. “No way. Don’t get me wrong, dude, whatever is happening, it’s a good change. It really is. But... well, what’s up with that?”

How could he describe it? Eijirou paused for a moment, looking thoughtful. As he did, his eyes wandered to around the room, finally falling on Bakugou, who stood across the way and was regarding him curiously in turn. A fond smile played at his lips as the best answer came clear to mind.

“I think he just wants to make friends.”

Chapter End Notes

Here's some more lovely fanart!

By tumblr user zoluffs, a [scene from Chapter 6](#).

Please support this artist by looking at their amazing works!

Waking Up From a Good Dream

Chapter Notes

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

Eijirou and Bakugou got ready for bed quickly, washing up, putting on pajamas. And as the seconds ticked closer and closer to bedtime, nerves started acting up. And when the two boys emerged from the bathroom, faces washed and teeth brushed, it was time to confront a very serious question, one that had been bothering Eijirou all evening.

“So... Um.” He trailed off, gesturing vaguely at the bed. He could feel his cheeks burning up. “How exactly is this going to work?”

“Just get in the damn bed or something, I don’t know.”

Well. That certainly wasn’t enough information to ease his doubts. Like, what amount of physical contact was acceptable? None? They didn’t have the futon, after all, so their cuddling could no longer hide under the pretense of ‘comforting a bro’ without a nightmare happening first. Their safety net was gone, and if Eijirou made the wrong assumption, things would get very awkward, very quickly.

The silence had settled over them must have irritated Bakugou, because he spoke up rather indignantly. “Stop thinking so fucking much,” he mumbled, flipping off the light and climbing into bed. “Your thoughts are so goddamn loud, they’ll keep me awake if you keep it up.”

“Sorry,” Eijirou laughed nervously, making his way to the bed as well.

He sat on the edge, looking down at the body that lay behind him. Even though the room was dark, he could see that Bakugou was on his back, right in the middle of the bed, so there wasn’t much room for Eijirou to have his own space. Which, if he knew anything about Bakugou, meant...

He threw any and all hesitation out the window, shuffling under the covers, until he was snuggled tight against his friend’s side. Bakugou tensed, for just a moment, (he still wasn’t used to things like this, Eijirou remembered), but then he turned to face Eijirou, his eyes already closed, bringing an arm around him, gently tugging his even closer. The redhead mirrored his movements, until they were both fully immersed in the other’s body heat. He felt every shift of Bakugou’s body, no matter how small, felt his own heart beating, hammering, *yearning* to be somehow closer.

“You know, if we’re like this, you might not even have a nightmare at all tonight.”

“That’s the plan.”

Right. Their actions had a reason. He wasn’t just cuddling with Bakugou, sleeping next to him, to keep him company. He had a duty. He needed to stop forgetting that. Maybe it was because this was the first time both of them were fully awake and alert when it happened, the first time they didn’t have the futon as a shield covering the bizarreness of the situation, but it hit Eijirou, full-force.

This was really, really strange, wasn’t it?

“Hey, Bakugou?”

Bakugou’s eyelids opened. He looked over to Eijirou oddly. “What is it now?” His words were

gravelly, but that was from sleepiness and not actual annoyance.

“Ah... Nothing much, just... If you think about how this all started... it’s a bit crazy, isn’t it?” His voice was breathy, barely there. “Like, two weeks ago, you wouldn’t even let me in your room. And now... now, not only are you interacting with other classmates, but you are letting me help you like... like *this*. Two weeks ago, I would never have imagined it.”

Bakugou merely hummed, closing his eyes once more, letting him continue talking. And Eijirou felt like talking. He couldn’t help but feel talkative – he was just so content, so proud, he couldn’t stop from smiling. His heart felt like it was bursting. How could he not want to share the feeling with the world?

“It’s... kinda weird,” he laughed to himself, his words buzzing with excitement. “Not that I’m complaining or anything. I’ve thought this all along, but I really feel privileged when I hang out with you. I’ve just watched you grown so much, it’s amazing.”

“Whatever...”

Eijirou held onto him tighter. There was a grin on his lips, tears threatening the corners of his eyes, ones that felt joyous. “I’m always here for you, bro. I’m just really glad that you feel comfortable with me.”

“Yeah.”

There was no empty space around him, no void within him to fill. He was at ease, and everything felt so *right*. He felt a connection with Bakugou, something that attracted them, like two opposite ends of a magnet. Kinship? Was that what it was called? Well, whatever he had with Bakugou now was the closeness that he had been looking for, for months. Perhaps, he had never felt this close to anyone before. It was strange. Wasn’t it?

“Bakugou?”

“Hm?”

“You do know that most friendships aren’t like this, right?”

The words hung in the air, their bluntness taking even Eijirou himself by surprise.

Bakugou frowned, his brows furrowed in uncertainty. “I... I mean, I guess.” There was an unspoken *‘I wouldn’t really know’*.

“Don’t get me wrong, I like this. I really do. I feel like I’m helping you and that makes me really happy. But normal friends don’t usually do things like this.”

The frown didn’t leave Bakugou’s face. He shrugged, slowly flipping over so his back was to Eijirou.

“Then normal friends are dumb.”

It was not one of Bakugou’s nightmares that first pulled Eijirou out of his restful sleep. Nor was it the rising sun. It was the sound of the door bursting open.

The bridge of his nose scrunched in confusion, and he let out a long groan. Judging by the shuffling

of the body that was in his arms, Bakugou was beginning to stir as well. And then came the words.

“Hey bro, sorry to barge in – please don’t blast me – but I ran out of shaving cream, and I was going to ask Kirishima for some but he isn’t in his room and you’re right next door so...”

At the sound of his name, Eijirou jerked fully awake. He sat up groggily, rubbing the sleep from his eye with one hand, mumbling in a half-yawn, “Wha...?”

When he took his hand away from his face, his eyes locked with Kaminari’s. His breath caught in his throat.

Oh, shit.

“Uhhh...?” Kaminari was paused in the doorway, with his head tilted to the side, his lips pursed in mild confusion. He quickly glanced around the room, as if making sure he was in the right place. Then, location confirmed, he was staring at Eijirou in shock, wide-eyed, drop-jawed. “Uhhhhhhh...”

Eijirou stared back at him, equally as wide-eyed, his mouth opening and closing, his brain blanking on speech. Then, there was a groan from the bed next to him. And his stomach dropped.

Ohhhh no, no, no...

Bakugou rose, still half-asleep and yawning, letting out a “who the fuck?” And Eijirou could actually pin-point exactly when the ‘*oh shit*’ moment happened – his eyes bulged, a tiny squeak was forced out of his throat, and his entire body just froze.

In fact, the entire room felt frozen in place, as all three looked on.

Kaminari gaped, looking from Eijirou to Bakugou, then back to Eijirou. Then back to Bakugou. Each head-swivel widened his eyes even more, making his cheeks and the tips of his ears turn beet-red. He coughed deep in his throat once, then twice, as if trying to find his voice.

“Ahhh, wow. Okay, umm... Sorry to interrupt.” With that, he turned on his heel, strolling out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

For a few more seconds, the remaining two stayed unmoving, stunned.

“Ahhh shit.” Eijirou finally breathed.

And at that, all hell broke loose.

“You motherfu—Get back here!” Bakugou barked, his hands smoking, eyes completely livid as he scrambled out of bed.

“Shit, shit, *shit*...”

“I said, get back here you *bastard*, I’ll kill you!” In trying to untangle his legs from the blankets, the blond fell to the floor with a loud *thunk*, a string of curses and small explosions following.

“Wait, wait, wait, wait, hold up, Bakugou--” Finally able to take control of his limbs, Eijirou clambered after him, grabbing onto his shoulders, turning his friend until they were kneeling face-to-face. “Bakugou! Calm down.”

He struggled against Eijirou’s grasp, trying to push himself onto his feet. “He’s gonna jump to the fucking wrong conclusions—”

“I know, I know, just... Hang tight, stay put, let me talk to him, *please*.” The redhead gave a gentle squeeze, releasing Bakugou’s shoulders and darting to the door without even waiting for a response.

“Oh no you don’t!”

“Please! Trust me!”

When his pleading eyes met Bakugou’s, the blond pursed his lips. He gave a single, curt nod. ‘*Okay*.’ Eijirou gave him a blinding grin before closing the door behind him. With Bakugou’s go-ahead, he didn’t waste any more time. He sprinted after Kaminari, who had just passed through the door at the end of the hallway. A few seconds later, Eijirou burst into the stairwell after him.

“Hey! Dude! Wait up!”

At the words, Kaminari paused for just a second before continuing down the stairs. “You don’t have to explain yourself, man, I get it. We’re all teenagers here. Stuff happens.”

Eijirou let out a dry laugh, leaning onto the railing as he bent down to yell, “But I promise, it’s not what you think!”

“Not what I—But *how*??” Kaminari, now at the first landing, turned to face him, his face taken aback. “You were in his bed!” He squeaked out, flailing his arms with the lunacy of a man whose world had just come crumbling down around him. “In his bed, in just *boxer-briefs*!”

Eijirou glanced down. Oh. So he was.

“Could you maybe keep your voice down?” he hissed. “Not my fault it’s hot as balls in here! I must have tossed stuff off in my sleep!”

“Su-ure, dude.” Kaminari took a step back up the stairs, letting his voice fall to a whisper. “You sure there’s not something you want to tell me? I won’t judge, bro. Promise.”

“Before you start making stuff up, can I please explain?”

Kaminari shrugged, smirking. “Whatever makes you feel better, buddy.”

Eijirou retreated up the stairs toward his room, Kaminari only pausing for a second before following suit. Once they were behind a closed door, the redhead shuffled through his drawers quickly, settling on some old jersey basketball shorts – great, his sweats were at Bakugou’s – and a tank-top. Kaminari sat on the bed, watching him with bewildered amusement. With a snap of the waistband on his hips, Eijirou fell onto the bed next to him.

“Okay. So.” He let out a huff. “I know this sounds crazy, and it wouldn’t feel right if I went into details because there’s some baggage involved that isn’t mine to tell. But Bakugou needed comforted about some things, so we stayed up last night talking, and...” he made a vague gesture, “... yah. But there isn’t anything between us, I swear. I was just helping him with some bad stuff he’s going through.”

“Okay...” Kaminari nodded slowly, a look of doubt still on his face. “Rewind a bit for me: when did all of this start?”

“Um.” Eijirou blinked. “What do you—?”

“Come on, Kirishima, I’m not stupid all the time,” Kaminari snorted. “Bakugou has been nicer

these past few days, especially to you. So I'm guessing this has happened before?"

Eijirou looked away.

"Bro. Whatever you're up to, at least let me know how long it's been going on."

He closed his eyes, clenching a fist. No use hiding it now. "A week...?"

His friend's eyes widened in alarm. "Oh my god. *Dude*. And... and he just, lets you?"

"Yah, so?"

Kaminari let out a low whistle that was all too suggestive.

"What?" Eijirou glowered. "He's my *friend*. I just want to help."

"And you help all your friends like that, do you?"

"Hey. You know me. If they need it, then sure."

"So you say..." Kaminari looked at him curiously, a crease in his brow. Then, a gentle smile tugged at his lips. "You know, you're a great friend, Kirishima."

"... Thank you." Eijirou gave a small, hesitant grin in return. "So does that mean you believe me?"

"Well, even if you're lying, it's not really my business anyways. But yeah. I believe you."

That had been... surprisingly easy. Eijirou sighed and looked ahead, nodding slightly, contented. The two fell into a silence.

"Hey, uh," Kaminari's voice was just above a whisper, and a little higher-pitched than normal, as if he was nervous. "I have a question for you, do you mind if I ask?"

"Not at all."

"It's kind of a weird question, I'm warning you now..." he scratched the nape of his neck tensely.

"Yeah, what's up?"

"Do you like Bakugou?"

The words hung in the air, heavy and significant, and Eijirou's brain drew a complete blank, trying to process them. Then, brain on overdrive, he seized up, a pit widening in his gut.

"You mean... *like* like, don't you?" he asked, slowly.

Kaminari nodded, looking away.

"No way man. I mean, Bakugou is cool and all, and I really like hanging out with him a lot, but... but..." he trailed off, becoming quiet. His mind wasn't working like he wanted it to, it was short-circuiting as a sense of confusion took over. "I...I-I..."

Kaminari's eyes widened. "No way, man! You totally have a crush on him!"

"Oh my god, shut up, I don't... That's not..." Eijirou's words were still just not coming out, why wasn't his voice working? His chest felt awfully funny as well, and somewhere in the back of his mind the thought occurred that he was terribly embarrassed. His face was absolutely blistering hot

so he buried it in his hands.

“Aww, you’re blushing, that’s adorable.”

“Shut *up*,” he let out a noncommittal groan, curling in on himself, trying to hide his face even more. “I-It’s not like that!”

“Come on, be honest with yourself, man. Do you like him or not?”

“I mean, yeah— no, I don’t know!”

“You don’t know? Like, you aren’t even denying it or anything, you just *don’t know*?”

Eijirou whined in frustration, running frantic fingers through his hair. “It’s not my fault, it’s not like I’ve had a crush on anyone before.”

At that, Kaminari simply tilted his head to the side in surprise. “Wait, seriously?”

Eijirou sucked in a breath, looking down with a slow nod. “I mean, nothing more than passing thoughts or whatever, like if someone is really nice maybe. But everything I’ve been feeling lately, it hadn’t even crossed my mind that it could because I... you know.” He couldn’t even say it, his heart was beating too fast, his face blushing up even more at just the thought. “But what if that’s not really how I’m feeling? I want to be close to him, sure, but maybe I just want to be his friend. This is so confusing. And I can’t afford to be wrong about something like this.”

“Okay. Here’s my two cents: the way you’re acting now, I think it’s possible that you like him, and for whatever reason you’re just having trouble recognizing it.” Kaminari shrugged. “But maybe not. So let’s break it down, start with the basics: how exactly do you feel about him?”

How did he feel about Bakugou? Eijirou pouted his lips, deep in thought, trying to sort through the whirlwind that was running rampage in his head.

“I dunno, I mean, we’re friends. And I admire him, and he has this strength that I aspire to have as well. And... I know that the, uh, cuddling is a little weird, but I don’t think I’ve ever been closer with anyone, so it just, makes sense to me. I trust him so much, and he trusts me. And that means a lot.”

Kaminari had an odd shine in his eye, his lips upturned, but he was quiet, waiting for Eijirou to continue. And Eijirou couldn’t help but think that it felt like a part of him was floating. He had never talked to anyone about this before, and it felt freeing to get it off of his chest, but there was still so much more he wanted to say. He felt like he was sitting on the edge of something big, some huge precipice that he was stumbling upon with every word he spoke.

“Sometimes, though,” he started again, a crease in his brow, his words starting to run together in a haze, “I get upset when I think about not being with him. I want to hang out with him all the time, studying or talking about whatever, just to make sure he’s okay, ya know? And sometimes I worry that maybe I’m overcrowding him, but he never seems too bothered by it and that makes me so happy. I just want to be there for him, give him a shoulder to lean on if he needs it, and hug him, and cuddle with him, waking up in the morning next to him, his face being the first thing I see... and...”

And then it hit him.

It gripped his heart, squeezing it tighter, making it difficult to find his words. Eijirou nearly doubled over at the brute force of it, like a wind-wall that knocked the breath out of him.

Everything, all that he had been feeling, for days, snapped into place in the blink of an eye. The thumping pulse, the sweating hands, the blushing, the want, the *need* to be there for Bakugou, to help him and protect him... The pure, unadulterated caring he felt, all the damn time, wanting to be closer, as close as he could get, the yearning to pull Bakugou into his arms and never let him go for even a second.

He jolted up, meeting Kaminari's watchful gaze, his face drained of all color, eyes frantic, lips only able to form one syllable:

"Oh."

"...Oh?" Kaminari prompted carefully, buzzing with excitement.

Even now, he could feel his face heating up, his heart beating out of control, his thoughts a hurricane that he would never be able to sort through in a million years. It left him breathless and dizzy and so overwhelmed. The feeling in his gut, the same feeling he had felt for days, was amplified to its fullest intensity as he finally, finally realized what it meant.

"Oh my god. I-I... Fuck, I..." he swallowed, his tongue feeling rough like sandpaper in his mouth. "I like him."

With just those simple words, came the relief – pure, raw relief, *acceptance*, blossoming in the center of his chest, making him gasp. It bubbled throughout his entire mind and body, finally letting him breathe, letting him feel free. *He liked Bakugou*. He wanted to pump his fist in victory, he wanted to laugh until his sides hurt, he wanted to cry the tears of joy that were threatening to pool past his waterline. But instead, Eijirou let out a slow, shaking breath.

"You okay, man?"

"Yeah. Okay, wow, I..." he sniveled. "I like him, I really, really do."

"Dude, are you tearing up?"

"Shut *up*."

And then came a wave of sadness. He was already on the verge of tears, so the feeling of gloom that was consuming him was the last thing he needed to feel at that moment. Of all the people in the world, of course he had to have a crush on *Bakugou*, the grumpiest, most anti-social person he had ever known.

"What do I do? Kaminari?" He all but choked out, an edge of panic creeping into his voice. "What do I even do, this is *Bakugou* we're talking about."

"It'll all be okay, ya gotta think positive and stuff," Kaminari encouraged, his gentle smile bringing an air of optimism. "Like, I can't think of anyone else who Bakugou would willingly have a sleepover with, so you must be pretty important to him. And he did ask me for your number a few days ago. He thinks of you as a friend, at least."

Eijirou looked up to him desperately, watery eyes hopeful like a stray puppy who just found a home. "Really? He asked you for my number?"

"You are a lost cause, my dude."

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I just..." Eijirou could hear his voice shaking, maybe his whole body was shaking too, he didn't even know anymore, he was existing on some astral plane where only words

and emotions exist. He took a deep breath, wiping away a tear that was starting to form. "I think I'm just a little overwhelmed right now. I'm not used to all of this."

"Hey, don't sweat it. You should have seen me in middle school with my first crush, I was a mess. Heck, I never thought I would see anyone willing to date Bakugou of all people, so this is a little unexpected for me, too," Kaminari let out a chuckle, before making a quick correction, "Not that there's anything wrong with Bakugou. Although, I am curious, how did it happen? Like, I'm not judging you, sometimes crushes are completely unexpected and all, but I'd imagine that Bakugou is a rather difficult person to *like* like. Um, if you know what I mean."

Eijirou shrugged, hopeless. "I've always known that I admire him. Even if he was a little... well, you know how he can be sometimes. But when I got to know him, like, *really* got to know him, I just... I couldn't stop thinking about him, and I didn't know why, I thought it was concern or something, because of how grumpy he was getting, but now it makes sense, I can't stop thinking about him because I like him, that's so crazy! I like his dumb face and his dumb overconfident attitude and..."

And once he got started, he couldn't stop. So he kept going, his words becoming more and more frenzied, both from overwhelming misery and general bewilderment, tears starting to sting the corners his eyes.

"... And he has this scowl whenever he's like generally displeased about something, and it's so cute, I think that every time he does it, and that made me so confused, but now I understand why I think that and it's such a relief. He wears a blanket like a cape when he studies, for fuck's sake, it's adorable! And he literally explodes his hair to make it spiky, he just, shoves his fingers in his hair and *poof*, and I watch him do it every morning and I still honestly have no idea how it doesn't catch on fire, he's just so ridiculous like that, and so *extra*, even the way he eats kit-kats is extra, like seriously, he just, *takes a bite*, out of the *whole thing*, like who even does tha-a-at?"

Oh god. Eijirou was too far gone now, a complete blubbering mess, somewhere between hysterical laughter and gross-sobbing, but he couldn't help it. He knew what he was feeling, what he had been feeling for so long, but now he finally had a word for it. He felt so happy, and so utterly *hopeless* at the same time, and it all felt so intense that it *hurt*. He buried his face in his palms again, letting out a couple shaky breaths.

Kaminari placed a gentle hand on his shoulder, patting it a couple times, giving him the time he needed to let it out. "Woah. You are in deep," he finally said.

Eijirou let out a hiccup, nodding as he wiped a tear from his blotchy cheek. "I feel like an idiot."

"Hey, I'm not judging," Kaminari shrugged, before turning thoughtful. "And I can tell you care about him a lot. It's really sweet. If anyone could make it work with him, with healthy communication, and support, and all that, it would be you."

"You... you really think so?"

"Definitely. You do no harm, but take no shit. That's a good attitude to have with him, I think. I've noticed this for a while now, but he actually treats with respect, and I think maybe that's why he's gotten nicer. Now that the two of you are closer, maybe he's started following your example. That's really, really good. And if it works out how you want it to or not, I know you'll be a good friend to him no matter what."

"Kaminari," Eijirou whimpered, resting a head on his friend's shoulder. "Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

“No problem, Kirishima.”

“Don’t tell anyone though?” He pleaded. “Especially not him, please?”

“Of course not, man, my lips are sealed.”

Eijirou hummed, pleased.

“But what about you?” Kaminari prompted carefully. “Will you tell him?”

Eijirou paused. This was all so new, he hadn’t even considered that. “I... I don’t want to lose his friendship, you know? I mean, maybe it wouldn’t make a difference to him, as long as I treated him the same as always, but I just don’t know. But... I would feel guilty if I didn’t. Like, if we keep, you know, cuddling or whatever, I would feel like I’m using that just to feel intimate with him, and... yeah.”

Kaminari nodded, letting out a breath of air with puffed cheeks. “Wow, yeah, that is a tough call, and I don’t think I can help you much there. But I think you’ll make the best decision for you.”

Eijirou nodded. At that, silence blanketed the two of them again.

Kaminari scratched the back of his neck, “Hey, uh. I’ve got to keep getting ready for the day, maybe ask around for some shaving cream...”

“Yeah, sorry. Mine’s at Bakugou’s, otherwise I’d...”

“I gotchu, no problem,” He started standing up, Eijirou following suit. “Sorry for leaving you so suddenly, but thank you for telling me all of this. Really.”

Eijirou nodded.

“And good luck, man. Let me know if anything... you know, if anything develops.”

“Yeah, I will. Thanks.”

Kaminari turned the doorknob, “No problem,” he gave a thumbs-up and a half-smile before the door closed behind him.

Eijirou just stood where he was dumbly, staring blankly ahead. His brain felt blank, but like it was working on overdrive at the same time, and the sensation left him feeling a little lightheaded. That had been one hell of an emotional rollercoaster, huh? And all before 11 in the morning. Ridiculous.

When he finally regained motor control of his legs, Eijirou slumped to the bathroom, splashing some water onto his face, hoping it would help with how warm he still felt. He then lifted up his head to look at himself in the mirror.

Oh god, he was a complete mess. His face was blotchy with red blush, his hair unkempt. But it was nothing that wasn’t unfixable. He braced himself against the sink, taking a few deep breaths before running fingers through his hair, blinking as he did to try to diminish the watery redness of his eyes. He couldn’t look like he had just had an embarrassing freak-out moment, because he most definitely *hadn’t*, and Bakugou didn’t need to see him like this.

Oh right. Eijirou’s heart fluttered. Bakugou was sitting in his room, waiting for him. They had to talk. They had to. Even if he didn’t confess, just yet, he had to explain what happened with Kaminari.

He turned his head, looking at the wall that acted as a partition between them, praying that Bakugou hadn't heard anything. That slight anxiety squeezed his heart, making it pump even faster. But he and Kaminari had been relatively quiet – the only reason he had ever heard Bakugou before was because the guy had woke up shouting. There was no way they had been overheard.

He looked back to the mirror, making some last-minute adjustments to his clothes, splashing his face once more and drying it with a towel. Once he was sure he looked fine, he started going over to Bakugou's.

Bakugou.

Oh god. He was about to see Bakugou. He felt the rush of his pulse in his ears, like it had so many times before, except now he knew why. He knew why he always felt so giddy, why he looked forward to seeing his friend. And that knowledge made it so much worse. He lifted his fist, about to knock, but his hand was trembling, and something in his gut was being eaten away by his nerves, trying to pull his arm back. He stood for a moment too long, his hand hovering as a war raged in his head.

Then his knuckles rapped gently on the door. There was a moment of internal victory, but it was drowned out by his heart that was pounding, faster and faster. After waiting for an agonizing time that couldn't have been more than a couple seconds, it was opened.

Eijirou's heart stopped. Red eyes pierced through his own, and he couldn't look away. The world stopped turning, melted away, ceasing to exist. He took a breath. "Hey."

Bakugou grunted, looking to the side awkwardly, motioning him through the door.

The two sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Did you get everything sorted?" Bakugou was calm, very calm, all things considered.

"Yeah." His throat was dry. Why did his voice sound so distant? It rang around in his head a few times. "I didn't tell him *why*, so you don't have to worry about that. That's still between us. And he won't tell anyone else about what he saw, either."

"You sure?"

"Pretty sure," he let out a nervous chuckle. "I trust him."

"Okay. Good."

Then for several moments, neither of them spoke. He knew he was shaking, just barely, maybe not even enough for Bakugou to notice, but his jitters would not go away no matter how hard he tried to smother them. Bakugou was just so close to him, just a few inches away at most. He could literally reach his hand out, he could grab Bakugou's hand if he wanted to. And... he really wanted to. His fist clenched at the fabric of his shorts, thwarting the temptation.

Oh god, it was like Kaminari said. He was in too deep.

He looked down at his shoes that were on the floor by the desk. And he thought. He thought about everything that had happened. The nightmares, the help. The connection he felt with Bakugou. Maybe, these feelings were inevitable. He knew for a fact that he had never felt this close to anyone ever before, and it had only been a few days. It was the rush of time, the rush of familiarity, of emotions, of trust and respect, of...

Eijirou didn't want to think the 'L' word. Not yet. He was completely infatuated, sure, but he was still within his right mind enough to know that it was far too soon for *that*. He still held some concern that his hormonal teenage brain was mistaking friendship with romantic feelings. But, if things kept going how they were going... maybe in the future, that wouldn't be too crazy a word to think. For a brief moment, he wondered how Bakugou would react if he ever said it to him.

Eijirou shook his head, quickly.

He liked Bakugou. And Bakugou was sitting next to him, comfortably even despite the awkwardness of the morning. His friend, his crush, was right there, within his reach. In a way, he had been taking their sleepovers for granted, hadn't he? If he had known what his feelings were the whole time, he would have paid attention more, he would have cherished Bakugou even more. He would never make that mistake ever again.

"Hey, Kirishima?" Bakugou's voice rung out, quiet. Hurting.

Eijirou looked up, and when he found Bakugou's eyes, he once again felt breathless. "Yeah?"

"I think... you should probably sleep in your own room from now on."

Chapter End Notes

By tumblr user candy-fluffs, the moment when [Kaminari walks in on them!](#)

By tumblr user crabbng, an adorable comic of [Kirishima talking to Kaminari](#).

By tumblr user fullocoal, [Bakugou's morning routine, as described by Kirishima!](#)

Thank you guys so so much! Please support the artists by checking out their works!

Can't Escape My Nightmares

His heart felt empty.

No warmth of the blankets, no cocoon of night, nor amount of squeezing his pillow between his arms was enough to fill it, no matter how hard he tried. Thoughts swam around in circles in his brain, heavy and gray and mind-numbingly meaningless, mixing unpleasantly with the anxiety that made his lungs ache with every shaky snivel.

"I can't allow myself to become dependent on other people."

They had talked, for just a few minutes. Well, Bakugou talked, mostly, and Eijirou listened as every word chiseled away at him a little bit more. Several hours later, and the memory still rang clear in his head, on repeat like a broken record.

"I need to try doing this on my own."

Eijirou pinched his eyes shut, tighter. Clung onto the pillow, tighter.

On his own.

He felt like crying. He probably already was crying, he didn't really know, but there was this perpetual thrumming ache in his head that hadn't gone away even though it had been hours, and his breath kept catching in his throat, and for a moment Eijirou wondered if he was heartbroken. But everything was so real and so much, he *knew* it was true. He was heartbroken, he was mind-broken, he was all sorts of broken.

He wanted to be with Bakugou. He wanted to feel strong arms around him, wanted to feel soft hair between his fingers as hot, sleepy breaths against his skin lulled him to sleep. He wanted to know what it would be like to sleep next to him knowing that they were friends, knowing that they were something other than friends too, wondered what it would be like to feel a soft palm against his own, fingers intertwined with his, lips against his own, lips that would be soft and rough and lazy all at the same time. He hid even further under his blankets, a feeling of shame enveloping him.

It was stupid, so frustratingly stupid, and it made his heart ache as he had to remind himself, again and again, that it would never, ever happen.

It was painful. It kept him awake, nagging at him, as if he needed any reminders of how absolutely lovesick and absolutely alone he was. He made himself even smaller, hoping he could somehow disappear completely.

This is for Bakugou. He needs this.

His brain took a lot of convincing. If only he were asleep, at least then he wouldn't have to think about this. But a part of him, the loudest part, didn't want him to fall asleep. Not yet. He had to know if there would be a nightmare. It wasn't as if he could help, even if Bakugou did wake up shouting and cursing with his quirk burning up the night, but he had to know.

Two o'clock passed. It was slow and agonizing, but it passed. Then 3 o'clock, without so much as a firecracker, and a shattering thought occurred.

Maybe... maybe Bakugou didn't need him, after all.

That hurt even more.

As the night wore on, Eijirou slept rather restlessly, phasing in and out of consciousness, keenly aware of a lack of *something*, even when he wasn't truly awake. And when his alarm the next morning blared out into the quiet streams of sunlight, rousing him at last from his fitful sleep, raw misery began seeping into his brain once more. Being awake was becoming more of a burden at this point.

He blinked his eyelids open, feeling the crust of tears trying to stick his lashes shut. And wow, falling asleep crying hadn't been very respectable of him. And neither would waking up crying, but if the past 24 hours had taught Eijirou anything, it was that he couldn't always get what he wanted. And then the thought occurred that he was being *way* too melodramatic about this whole ordeal, but the dull pain of heartache in his chest stopped him from caring.

If Bakugou saw him now, he would probably snort, muttering a 'get a fucking grip, shitty-hair' under his breath.

Oh god. Right, it was a school day. Bakugou would be there. Eijirou wasn't sure if he could face him yet, not after yesterday. The realization that he liked Bakugou – *liked* liked him – was enough to leave him incredibly flustered and embarrassed, but the added exhaustion and feebleness was just a little too much at the moment.

So there he laid, too tired to turn off the alarm but not tired enough to fall back asleep. He brought his blankets up to cover his ears, blocking out the incessant alarm of morning, blocking out the day, the very passing of time itself. And he pouted, just a little bit more, wallowing in the heartbreak and all-around pitifulness that consumed him.

There was a knock on the door, so gentle that he almost missed it. Eijirou's thoughts snapped back into himself. He didn't respond -- maybe, if he was quiet, the person would go away? Hopefully he had remembered to lock the door?

No such luck. The door opened, then closed only a second later. He shuffled further under the pile of covers, making himself small, hiding. The intruder turned off his alarm and sat on his bed, his voice low.

"Hey."

It was Kaminari. Eijirou sunk even lower still, curling into himself, a small hum his only acknowledgement.

"You didn't answer my texts, so I figured something happened. Do you need to talk about it?"

Eijirou shrugged, letting out another hum. *I dunno*. Even if his body movements and voice were muffled by the blankets, Kaminari seemed to catch his drift.

"You don't have to, man, I'm just checking in on you. Do you think you'll make it to class?"

Despite everything, Eijirou knew that he should. He sighed. "I guess."

The weight on the mattress next to him shifted before lifting from the bed completely. "Then you better hurry up, dude, it's a quarter-to-8."

He hummed again, nodding.

Soft footsteps padded across the room. But before they reached the door, there was a pause.

“I’ve never been the best at comforting people. Not like you are,” Kaminari’s voice rung out, weighty, “But you are so used to taking care of other people, that I think sometimes you forget to take care of yourself. So if you need to talk to someone, I’m here for you, Kiri.”

Eijirou clung onto his pillow, arms squeezing a little tighter, the gentle words having warmed his heart. “Thank you.”

“Don’t mention it, man. See you in a bit.”

The door opened and closed, leaving him alone once more.

Well. He was going to have to face Bakugou at one time or another. And it wasn’t like he had confessed already, so he didn’t really have anything to be embarrassed about. Eijirou just needed to get the day over with as fast as possible, rip it off like a Band-Aid.

So Eijirou dragged himself out of bed and got ready for the inevitably long day that was ahead of him. Sometimes, he half-expected his elbow to bump into Bakugou’s as he brushed his teeth, like it had a few times before. He half-expected to hear a snarky comment about his tedious hair routine as he gelled it up. But there was nothing, like a part of himself was void. Gone.

He glanced in the mirror, quickly, avoiding looking at his sunken face, not caring that his hair and uniform looked slapdash at best. After gathering his things, Eijirou finally headed out for breakfast and training, each step down the stairs making his pulse pick up, his whole brain screaming at him to turn around, to save himself the pain of seeing Bakugou. But if he stayed in bed, he would get behind on work, and he would probably end up thinking himself to death anyways. So he kept walking.

And then, he was in the classroom, and Bakugou was there, sitting one desk over, and... it was bad, but not as bad as he had been expecting. It still hurt, a lot, and constantly, but it was more like a thrumming pain, nothing sharp or too intense. If he tried, Eijirou found that he could ignore the squeezing in his chest, the urge to escape to somewhere far, far away. When he was preoccupied with work, or with talking to his classmates, it melted away to the back-burners of his mind, and it was a lot more bearable there.

So he focused on trying to act as normal as possible. Which... wasn’t that simple, actually. Eijirou didn’t know what was normal for him anymore. That past week, he had been with Bakugou a lot, but that had been because of the sleepovers, right? And the two of them weren’t having sleepovers anymore. So how was Eijirou supposed to act now? After their conversation the previous morning, Bakugou probably needed some space, not to mention that Eijirou didn’t want to worry him with his uncharacteristic lack of enthusiasm. So with a steely resolve, he settled on remaining friendly while keeping his distance. Maybe that would help distract him, too, shield his heart a little bit more. Numb everything a little bit more.

But it was difficult, not letting his emotions interfere with his schoolwork and interactions with his other friends. He would often find himself looking over to Bakugou in worry, accidentally catching his eye, before turning away quickly. And Bakugou wasn’t helping, either. It was probably just his dumb brain singling the blond out of the crowd, but the guy seemed to linger around him, all the time. He kept shuffling closer during training, glancing his way at every opportunity. It made Eijirou jumpy, and nervous, and achingly sad all over again. Bakugou just looked so drained. Worn-out. *Lost*. And it was probably Eijirou’s imagination, but maybe... maybe he looked a little bit sad as well.

The day was exhausting, but Eijirou was managing. But after training, when everyone was heading up to their dorms, Kaminari pulled Eijirou aside in the common room.

“Homework buddies!” he had proclaimed, steering Eijirou toward the stairs before the redhead had a chance to make a break for the privacy of his room. Once out of everyone’s earshot, Kaminari’s voice turned low in concern, “And, I think talking to someone about what happened would do you some good, too.”

Eijirou looked up to him, then out toward the common space that they were leaving behind, eyes briefly falling on Bakugou, who was uncharacteristically sprawled out on a couch. In that moment, he happened to look up as well, and the second their gazes met, Eijirou’s heart was swimming, sinking, *drowning*. He turned back to Kaminari, eyes downcast, nodding.

Kaminari lead him up the staircase to his room, where they each plopped their book-bags on the bed. The blond took a seat, crisscrossed on the floor, his back leaning against the side of the bed. He patted the ground next to him until Eijirou followed suit.

They sat in complete silence for several seconds, neither knowing quite where to start.

“So...” Kaminari began, slowly, as if testing the waters. “You didn’t really talk this morning when I came to get you, and you’re been off all day. I take it something went wrong?”

Eijirou shrugged, noncommittally. His brain was numb.

“Did he... did he reject you?”

“No, nothing like that...”

At that, Eijirou felt humiliation. This was all so silly. He was being ridiculous. No, he hadn’t confessed, no he hadn’t been rejected, or broken up with, he was just being a stupid teen with oversensitive emotions. Eijirou planted his feet on the floor, hugging his knees close to his chest. He was so pathetic.

Kaminari wasn’t saying anything, allowing him to explain, so Eijirou continued. “I didn’t get around to telling him anything, but he... he wants to be alone, to work through some stuff by himself, without me. He’s being cautious about relying on people, and I get that, I really do...” he trailed off, defeat filling him. “It just kinda sucks, you know? Because, I dunno...”

“You miss him?”

Eijirou turned away, pouting. “Well, when you say it like that, it sounds dumb. This whole thing is dumb. I hate being a teenager.”

“Honestly? Same. Dumb rampant hormones. Dumb increased yet repressed sex drive. Dropping a dumb dumpling on the floor during lunch and then having the urge to cry about it for a few hours. It’s the worse.”

“Dude.” Eijirou blinked. “Should I be worried about you or something?”

“Nope, nope, no no no, don’t do that! It’s me who should be worrying about you right now,” Kaminari slung his arm onto Eijirou’s shoulders, as dudes do. “My bro’s facing his first heartbreak, he needs to be consoled!”

“Geez, it’s not *that* big of a deal.”

“A-ha, but lemme guess,” he clicked his tongue, winking as he finger-gunned, “It still hurts, don’t it?”

Eijirou looked down with a slow nod. "... It still hurts."

Kaminari had an all-too-knowing glint in his eye. He returned his arm to his own personal space, taking a rather reflective moment to glance into the distance. Finally, he spoke up.

"You're right, though." There was a profound pause, as he seemed to gather his thoughts. When he continued, his voice was strangely airy, enlightened. "Heartbreak isn't really a big deal in itself. But sometimes, I like to think of it as a rite of passage. It happens to everyone eventually, but it's still significant. Some people handle it better than others, especially if they're used to it, like the novelty wears off or something, but it still affects them, and... um... I'm rambling a bit and I literally have no idea what I'm saying, so please feel free to stop me at any time."

"You sound like a poet or philosopher or something."

"Yikes."

Eijirou snorted, appreciating the sudden lighthearted turn the conversation had taken. But then, realizing how strangely calm the words made him, he turned still. "So this is normal, then? All of..." He trailed off, making vague gestures to himself, his head, his heart, "all of *this*? I still don't like it."

"Dude, not a single person in the world likes having their heart trampled on, you can trust me on that!" Kaminari let out a laugh, but it was dry. Perhaps he was speaking from raw experience?

"So, I take it you've felt broken-hearted before? What happened?"

"Nope, no sir-ee," He shook his head frantically, holding up his hands in objection, "This isn't about me, we're here to work through your tragic misfortunes, not mine!"

"Come on, man, I'm pouring my heart out to you here, you can't just give a half-ass answer like that and leave me hanging."

At that, Kaminari huffed, bringing his hand up to scratch the back of his neck before giving a little wobbly shrug. "... I dunno. Normal stuff, I guess. Disinterest, getting my hopes up over nothing, things like that. It's really embarrassing," his face turned into a grimace, but he seemed to snap out of his reverie quickly. "Meanwhile, you're facing heartache of the unknown! You're in a gray area, you don't have an answer, but you haven't been flat-out rejected yet. Uh, not that you will! Not that you will, just..." his nervous chuckle pricked the still air, "Yeah, sorry, I'm bad at this."

"Not at all. You've helped me a lot, I think." It was the truth. For some strange reason, Kaminari's words truly struck a chord with him. Eijirou smiled warmly, genuinely. "It's nice knowing I'm not alone. Like, someone else out there probably feels the same way I do, right? That's... really comforting."

"Yeah..."

And Eijirou could feel Kaminari watching him, carefully, his smile weakening for just a second before he looked away, his voice turning hollow.

"... Yeah, I know what you mean."

That night, there were no explosions. And again, on Tuesday night, not a peep. It was bittersweet at

first. Bakugou didn't need his help anymore, maybe they would never be as close to each other ever again, but that was because he had gotten over his nightmares. That was something to celebrate, right?

Except, as the school days wore on, Bakugou was exhausted, falling asleep in class, acting more and more irritable, and Eijirou began to suspect that he just wasn't sleeping at all. *Again*. And the bittersweet feeling made way for this depression that was like hopelessness and frustration and gloom all wrapped up into one terribly warped emotion. It was so discouraging, everything he had told Bakugou, the example he had set for him...

It wasn't like Eijirou had been actively trying to change him. In his eyes, Bakugou was pretty much fine as he had been, even if some of his behavior was undeniably problematic. But still, Eijirou wasn't trying to save him from anything, or erase his fiery personality, he was just trying to set a good example, show Bakugou how to treat others with kindness and respect. And, it was incredible, because Bakugou seemed to be making the decision to follow his lead all on his own.

But now, with every worried glance he threw in the blond's direction, a look of concern etched deeper and deeper on Eijirou's face. It was like Bakugou was relapsing, retreating back underneath that mean mask he used to wear, like nothing had happened between them. Nothing had changed. In a way, that was the most upsetting thing of all.

But then, that Wednesday night, he heard them. They were quiet at first, little rumbles that could have been mistaken for any number of things. They woke Eijirou up, though, and with a shudder, he recognized them instantly.

Eijirou bolted upright, his blood turning cold, his lungs becoming ice. His thoughts were screaming, demanding with every breath he took, help, help him, *help him*, but all he could do was lean against his headboard, bring his knees to his chest, rocking slightly, his breaths coming in and out in heaves, his entire body trembling. The explosions grew in volume, and in urgency, and with a whimper, Eijirou clamped hands over his ears, trying to block out the thoughts, the explosions, and the entire universe along with them. His friend was in pain, suffering, hurting. He could not help. He was so fucking useless.

After a shout from the other side of the wall, there was only silence.

Slowly, so slowly, Eijirou lowered his hands from his head. Let out a shaky breath. His whole body was trembling, so he had to focus on relaxing his muscles, one by one, slowly, in a futile attempt to release tension. He hadn't even realized he had been crying until that moment, touching the wet trails that fell down his cheeks, dripping from his chin. He brought a hand up to wipe them away, trying his best to control the hitching of sobs deep in his throat.

Fucking useless.

He tried his best to fall back asleep, but his pulse was pounding out of control, even several minutes later. Maybe he slept, maybe he didn't, he didn't really know. But the morning came too soon and he had to start the day anew, as if nothing had happened the night before. And in class, Bakugou got worse and worse.

And then, it all happened again Thursday night, leaving him panicking and alone, wishing, desperately, *if only I could help*. Friday was spent picking up the pieces, trying his best to not fall apart. Trying his best to keep up appearances, even as his heart was breaking over and over again

before it had a chance to heal.

“Are you avoiding him?”

Eijirou looked up from his algebra homework. Currently, Kaminari was in his room, and they were working on basic quadratics. He enjoyed it when the two of them hung out, just studying and stuff. It usually helped keep his mind off of everything. But occasionally, he got asked a lot of questions about the very thing he was trying to ignore.

He blinked, confused. “What do you mean?”

“Before last Sunday, you two hung out a lot. Like, other than the sleepovers,” the blond shrugged. “It’s Friday evening now, and I haven’t seen you eat lunch with him once or anything! Did he tell you to stay away or something?”

“No...” Eijirou sighed, closing his textbook and setting it on the floor beside him. “It’s not like I’m not trying to avoid him, I just want to give him some breathing room.”

“Well, from where I stand... it kinda looks like you just cut him off.”

“... Really?”

“Yeah.”

Whoops.

Now that Eijirou thought about it, he realized some things. Bakugou had just asked him to stay in his room – he probably hadn’t expected to be completely ostracized by Eijirou. Oh man. Oh man. He was messing up again, wasn’t he?

He swallowed the lump that was in his throat. “I was just... trying to act normal.”

Kaminari nodded, but he seemed to be holding something back, like he was deciding whether to say it or not. He gave a little shrug. “You know, I catch him looking at you a lot. Just, a few times here and there... Kinda makes me think he’s lonely. And I can tell that you’re lonely, too.”

There was a pause, as Kaminari seemed to gauge Eijirou’s reaction. The redhead didn’t respond, but the pit in his gut opened wider, leaving him feeling more drained than before.

Kaminari looked away, clearing his throat. “Look, I’m not saying you need to get in his business again. If he asked to stop the sleepovers, then you gotta respect that. But that doesn’t mean you need to stop hanging out altogether, right? I think you both miss each other, and if you keep this up, it’ll only hurt both of you more.”

Eijirou sat, a little stunned, deep in thought. “So you think I should act like I did when we were having the sleepovers, just... minus the sleepovers?”

Kaminari nodded. “I know you’re still upset, but... Just, be his friend. He needs it, I think.”

“You’re right... I don’t want to lose his friendship just because we don’t cuddle anymore. That would be dumb.”

“That’s exactly what I was thinking.”

“Well...” Eijirou sighed, rubbing his temples. “Now I feel shitty. Well. More shitty.”

Kaminari snorted. “Hey, hey, you’re still figuring yourself out. Maybe you’re the one who needs a little space or time or whatever, not just him. Nothing to beat yourself up over.”

“Yeah, yeah, maybe you’re right.”

He was reaching. For something. What was it?

He was reaching. Into the darkness. Where was he? Shadows moved and shifted in ways that weren't quite real, but were real enough to be disturbing. He was flying. He was in the sky, flying, and a scene blossomed and unfolded in the space below him. It was a raging battle. He wanted to fight, but he couldn't. Why couldn't he? He couldn't remember. But he was the only one who could do this. Only him.

He was reaching. Outward, to someone. He was shouting something, a word straining through his vocal chords, ringing in his ears, like an echo, a memory.

He was reaching. Searching, grasping, hoping, for something, but there was nothing. There should be something. A hand. It should be there. Where was it?

He was reaching. Bakugou was there, but falling away, into darkness, away from him. He had missed. He had failed.

The world was burning up, blast after blast detonating, breaking it apart at the seams, growing louder and louder—

~

Eijirou jerked awake, gasping out ragged breath after ragged breath into the night air. There was sweat on his face and neck and back, making his hair cling to his forehead and his skin feel clammy and absolutely disgusting.

The explosions that had woke him up, Bakugou’s explosions, stopped with a shout and an abruptness that signaled the blond’s awakening as well. The night fell into near-silence once more, allowing his gasps to be the only sound he could hear. It was deafening.

Tears were brimming on his waterline, falling as they pleased, his brain on repeat, droning on and on, over and over again:

He needs this, Bakugou needs to do this on his own, he said so, he needs this without me, there's nothing I can do, he doesn't need me now...

... But what about me?

Shaky sobs filled the night air, muffled by the pillow that he was so desperately trying to stifle them with. And then, everything compounded. Everything he had been feeling for an entire week, all of the sadness, hopelessness, desperation, *fear*, it hit him all at once, like a tidal wave, smothering him, taking his breaths away. He felt like he was trapped in his own head, the walls closing in, his thoughts becoming unfocused and gray and it was so so scary, his breathing was not his own, it filled his lungs, exhaled, too quickly, rasping, his entire body shaking, his heart trying to pound out of his chest, but he couldn’t feel it. He was gone, his mind melting as absolute panic

completely consumed him, oh god, *oh god*, he was pathetic. He clung onto his sheets, desperately, praying, begging for everything to just stop, make it stop, please, just *stop it*.

And then, there was a soft knock on the door.

To Sleep, Perchance to Dream

Chapter Notes

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

There was a soft knock on the door.

~

At the faint sound, the air became still.

In a way, the noise had been a relief. It snapped Eijirou out of his head, out of his terror and back into the familiar safety of his room. His heart was still beating so fast it felt like he had forgotten how to breathe, his head thrumming with a dull ache, eyes still burning. But the knock had anchored him to the present, and his erratic breathing calmed. Slowly, slowly, he was able to lower shaky hands from his ears as he blinked his eyes open. It had just been a dream. No reason to panic. He was okay.

There was another knock, somehow even softer than the one before.

He didn't wonder who it was for very long because honestly, it was 2 in the morning, who else could it even be?

If it really was Bakugou, he probably wanted to ask for help. Or... as close as Bakugou would ever get to 'asking for help'. Why else would he be there? And Eijirou had to help. He needed to make sure that his friend was okay. He had to.

He reached for the tissues on his nightstand, wiping the dripping snot from his nose. Some back part of his brain insisted that he couldn't let Bakugou see him like this. But also, he had seen Bakugou at his worst, hadn't he? It wasn't anything to be embarrassed about. But still, Eijirou could not help the feeling of shame that overcame him. It had only been one dumb dream, yet here he was, tears streaming down his face, sweat beaded on his forehead, his heart still pulsing with residual adrenaline, every nightmarish shadow from the disrupted moonlight making his spine chill.

Well, at least now he knew how Bakugou had felt only a few nights ago.

He shuffled the covers away and slung his legs over the side of the bed. He wiped at his eyes a little bit more, attempting to dry them, before shakily standing to his feet. Lightheadedness washed over him, making his head swim. He paused to take a few deep breaths, to stop the room from spinning. Then, after tossing his tissues into his waste basket by his desk, he shuffled to the door, one foot in front of the other, leaving his shame behind him. He didn't care how he looked, didn't care if his face was damp and puffy. His friend needed help.

His arm reached for the doorknob, but it wavered, faltered, for just a second, a stray thought stopping him in his tracks.

Maybe Eijirou needed help, too. And maybe that was okay.

He opened the door. Red eyes bore into him, exhausted, maybe a tad bit relieved, before flickering away.

"Hey," Bakugou grunted.

Bakugou...

The tightness in his chest relaxed, and Eijirou could breathe again, actually breathe a sigh of relief. Forget the crush, forget the emotional ups and downs from the past week, forget the nightmare – at his core Eijirou just missed his *friend*, so much that it hurt. And finally, *finally*, there he was.

Bakugou looked uninterested at first, seemingly quite contented with looking at the bottom of the doorframe. But his eyes glanced once more to Eijirou, their eyes meeting, and immediately his face turned grave with concern.

But his *eyes*, they drew Eijirou in. Legs moved on their own, making him stumble forward, until they were face to face, eye to eye. Eijirou couldn't stop himself from slowly bringing his arms around Bakugou's torso, hugging him carefully, as if any instant could whisk him away. He couldn't help the way his arms trembled, couldn't avoid the desperation.

Bakugou froze at first, for just a second, but he quickly gave in to the embrace, bringing his own arms up to surround and comfort, hands rubbing designs into Eijirou's back, just like Eijirou had done to him only nights before.

The redhead clung firmly, urgently, and he could feel tears forming all over again, his breath hitching as an array of overwhelming emotions seized his entire body. There was happiness, of course, raw and powerful, but there was also heartbreak – a stale left-over from the past week. It still tugging at his heart, but this time it was okay. He took a deep breath, catching the soft, familiar scent of firewood and shampoo. Everything was okay now.

Who knows how long they stood in the hallway like that. Time didn't exist anymore. It was only the two of them.

Bakugou rested his chin on Eijirou's shoulder, arms squeezing just a little tighter. "What the fuck happened?" he finally whispered.

Eijirou let out a small hum, letting out a little shake of his head.

"Okay, okay, fuck," Bakugou pulled away slowly, looking at Eijirou with an intensity that stopped his heart altogether. "Let's just, go inside or something, okay?"

Eijirou nodded, sniveling, wiping at his nose with his wrist, pulling away from his friend even if it made his chest ache.

Bakugou grabbed a forearm and gently tugged him through the still-open doorway of Eijirou's room, not even bothering to turn on the light. But now that Bakugou was there, the soft, soft moonlight that blanketed the space was peaceful. The shadows were no longer ominous.

The blond climbed onto the bed until his back was against the wall, pulling Eijirou to join him. So Eijirou sat down next to him, their thighs touching. The slight contact was comforting, but it wasn't enough. He wanted, needed, to be closer to Bakugou again. It strained inside of him, moving his arms slowly, without his permission, until he had Bakugou's forearm in a death grip.

Bakugou seemed to understand. Without a word, he shuffled until they were even closer, letting Eijirou rest his head onto his shoulder, curl his body up against Bakugou's side. And that's all it took. With his friend there, he could feel his anxiety melt away, like a large weight had been relieved of him.

Bakugou lifted his arm, carefully slipping it behind Eijirou's back, bringing it up to squeeze at his shoulder, bringing him even closer. He felt a little stiff, though. Uncomfortable, perhaps.

“I don’t... do this sort of thing.”

“I know. I’m sorry, I’m sorry...”

“Don’t apologize. Dammit, don’t you dare apologize...” Bakugou’s voice was gruff, yet underneath the surface, it overflowed with emotional depth. He let out a shaky breath. “You helped me so fucking much, alright? This is the least I can do.” He tightened his hold, leaning his head on top Eijirou’s, his palm tracing comforting designs up and down Eijirou’s upper arm.

Eijirou simply nodded.

The two sat in silence for a moment, lost in every physical and emotional feeling that was shared between them. It was calm, safe. Eijirou’s eyelids were heavy, so he closed them, feeling the gentle lull as Bakugou’s body rose and fell with each breath he took. This was the closest he had been to a good night’s sleep all week. But he couldn’t allow himself to slip away, not yet.

“Why... why did you come over?” He all but mumbled out. “Is something wrong?”

“Stop that,” Bakugou pulled back, and for a moment, Eijirou was alarmed at the lack of contact. But then, there were two strong hands on his shoulders. He found Bakugou’s eyes, red and concerned and so very determined. So very close. “It doesn’t fucking matter why I’m here, not when you’re like this, got it?”

Eijirou looked down to his left, nodding, a dusting of pink on his cheeks.

“If you showed me anything these past few weeks, you showed me that it’s okay to talk about things. Even if they embarrass you or make you feel scared. Right? So talk to me. What happened?”

Even though Eijirou wasn’t looking, he could feel Bakugou’s gaze. It was too intense. He couldn’t avoid it, it bore into his soul. He closed his eyes. “... Bad dream.”

At those words, Bakugou tensed immediately, his grasp becoming so tight it almost hurt. Maybe he was recalling his own nightmares. But he did not speak, only giving a curt nod, prompting Eijirou to go on.

He didn’t really want to explain himself. Not really. But he remembered being there for Bakugou, hearing him talk about his nightmares. If Bakugou was as worried as he appeared, then he probably really did want to know more, just as Eijirou had back when their roles were switched. So Eijirou took a deep breath, hesitantly allowing the memory to flow through his mind once more.

“I-It wasn’t really clear,” he began slowly, “Everything was blurry, and vague. But you were there, and as soon as I saw you, I knew that it was that night. When we helped you escape. I was trying to reach out for you, take your hand but... I missed.”

At this point, Eijirou’s voice barely carried above a whisper. The memory was tearing at him again, making his entire soul feel panicky. He buried his face in Bakugou’s shoulder, a stray arm finding his way around his friend’s waist, clinging on to him with desperation.

“... I missed, and you fell, and there was nothing I could do to save you, I was so scared, I woke up a complete wreck—”

“*Kirishima.*” Bakugou’s voice sliced through the night air, anchoring Eijirou’s restless mind back to the present. “You... don’t have to fucking be alone for something like that. Why didn’t you come get me?”

“It hasn’t happened before. And, I wanted to give you space. I thought that’s what you wanted, but I may have taken it to the extreme...”

“... Ahh, fuck.” At that, Bakugou closed his eyes. His voice was soft, as if he had been overwhelmed by realization and could only bring himself to speak the bare minimum. He brought a hand up and ran fingers through his hair. “That’s why you weren’t talking to me. I didn’t know.”

Eijirou couldn’t help but wince. “I didn’t mean to cut you off. I’m sorry. It was just difficult, because... because...”

I like you. I like you, I like you, I like you.

Oh god. Oh god, he wanted to say it. He wanted to say it so badly, it was an itch that would not go away, it danced on his tongue, hammered in his chest, spreading to every nerve in his body. But he had to stifle it. He couldn’t say it, not yet at least.

“... I don’t know why,” he continued lamely, a weak shrug lifting his shoulders. “But I knew you weren’t sleeping well. I saw how you acted in class, and I could hear you wake up sometimes, and it broke my heart. I wanted to be there with you because I know that being there helped you, but I couldn’t do anything, and it made me feel really helpless. I was just so worried about you, and... I’m just so thankful that you are here now.”

The room fell still. Bakugou looked at him, a bit side-ways, his brows furrowed in a cute little crease. He looked down into his lap. “These last few nights have been hell,” he conceded. “Tonight wasn’t any fucking different. ‘S why I came here. Because I trust you, and... um.”

Bakugou seemed at a loss for words, lost in thoughts. It was etched as confusion into his face, and Eijirou couldn’t help but hold his breath, anticipating the significant words that were sure to come.

Then, Bakugou lifted his head, straightening up, clearing his throat. His next words were jarringly brash. “Okay. This has been fucking bothering me for weeks now, so I *gotta* ask about it. When you helped me escape, you knew you would get in trouble, right?”

Eijirou blinked.

Wait, what?

That certainly wasn’t a turn that he had expected the conversation to take, and it completely caught him off guard. “Um... Yeah...?”

“So. *You’re telling me*, that you knew that you could face *expulsion*, not to mention that you could have gotten seriously hurt, or even *killed*, and you went through with your plan anyways just to get me out of there?”

“Well...” Eijirou shrugged. “Yeah.”

Bakugou pursed his lips, and just stared. Then, he turned away. “You’re a goddamn moron, you know that?” He murmured under his breath, shaking his head in disbelief. “How can you even make a decision like that so fucking easily? What made you think that was worth the risk? That *I* was worth the risk? I don’t get it.”

For a long moment, Eijirou could only sit in silence. His heart felt like it was thrashing, drowning in his chest, being twisted so tight that it physically hurt. How could Bakugou not see how incredible he was? How could he think so little of himself that he didn’t think he deserved saving?

“Because, you’re... you’re my bro. My friend.”

He smiled, softly, trying his best to be warm and genuine, but he couldn’t shake the sense of apprehension. His words were true, of course they were, but something about them made Eijirou feel uncomfortable. Because, there was more to it, wasn’t there? More that he was not ready to tell, feelings that were, in a sense, far more intimate. Or, a different type of intimate at the very least. But even if Bakugou didn’t learn the true nature of his feelings, even if he never knew of the way he made Eijirou’s heart leap and the butterflies in his stomach dance, he needed to understand just how much Eijirou cared about him.

So he brought his hand to rest on Bakugou’s forearm. At the contact, the blond looked up sharply. Their eyes met, and Eijirou couldn’t resist the urge -- he gently press their foreheads together, noses brushing against each other, and just allow serenity to fall over them.

“You’re my best friend,” he whispered.

The room fell completely still.

They were so close. For the first time in days, Eijirou could breathe freely, without anything tethering him down and it was incredible. He could feel his breath mix with Bakugou’s with every soft exhale, could feel their eyelashes brush together ever-so-slightly.

Then, the blond brought his own hand to grab Eijirou’s forearm in turn, and he could feel his own heart skip a few beats. Maybe Bakugou could feel the beating, too, or maybe it was Bakugou’s own quickening pulse that Eijirou was feeling underneath his fingertips.

“You’re... hm,” Bakugou swallowed, clearing his throat, ever-so-slightly nodding his head. His voice was so, so soft that Eijirou couldn’t even make out his words clearly. But he knew what Bakugou had said.

You’re my best friend, too.

And Eijirou felt like he could cry all over again – good tears, this time. He had never felt so moved, so privileged, so happy. His hands were shaking, ever so slightly, excitement thrumming through every vein, and he felt *alive*.

“You’re my best friend, you really are,” he muttered out, his thoughts and words in a blur, “You’re my best friend in the whole wide world, I care about you so much, Bakugou, thank you. Thank you for coming here. Thank you for listening to me, and helping me tonight. Thank you.”

Everything was just so serene, peaceful. Beautiful. And maybe it was Eijirou's imagination, but Bakugou seemed to lean into him a little bit, like he was melting. They were so close, so comfortable, so worn-out, and maybe, just maybe...

“... Can I stay here tonight?” Bakugou’s voice was soft, hopeful. It was everything Eijirou ever could ever want to hear, and more.

Eijirou squeezed his hand on his arm tighter, holding on for dear life as his heart tried its best to beat its way out of his chest. “Of course.”

“Oh thank god,” he nearly whined, and after a bit of hesitation, the blond slowly pulled their foreheads apart. He rubbed lazily at his eyes, letting out a mighty yawn. “I’m so fucking tired.”

Eijirou let out a hum, a grin on his lips. Honestly, his face was going to get stuck like that if he kept it up.

There was a little bit of awkward shuffling as the two made their way to the head of the bed, arranging the blankets over them and lying down, but they managed pretty quickly. And once they were under the blankets, legs intertwining, arms tugging to be closer and closer... it was amazing. Honestly, Eijirou could not stop the smile that was plastered on his face, even if he tried. So there he lay, a grin on his face, noting the familiar scents of Bakugou's hair and cologne, simply allowing himself to embrace, to hold, and be held, surrounded by the realness that was Bakugou.

"I missed you."

The words were out before he had a chance to stop them, and Eijirou's first instinct was panic. They were too much, too clingy. But they were true, so perhaps that didn't matter.

He opened his eyes, peering over to Bakugou, trying to make out his reaction in the dark. The blond's eyes remained closed, his breathing slow, and for a moment, Eijirou was worried that he had already fallen asleep. Goodness knows he needed it.

But then, their embrace tightened, just a little bit, and Bakugou's gruff voice filled the room. "Missed you, too."

And it was all so much, so overpowering, and he wanted to say more. He needed to say more.

"Thank you, Bakugou..." he whispered, so delicately, his breaths shaky with elation. "Thank you for trusting me. Thank you for taking my hand that night. You mean so much to me, Bakugou. You are my most important person. You bore your spirit to me, showed me your fears and vulnerabilities and allowed me to help you. When I was feeling down, you didn't hesitate to help me. You respect me and care about me, it is such an honor. I just want to know you, more and more. I want to be closer to you, spend time with you. You have given me so much inspiration, so many reasons to be proud, and happy, and I... I-I..."

Eijirou's eyelids flew open, shocked, as pure, unadulterated clarity washed over him.

I... I think I love you.

He could say it. He really could, right then and there, it would be so easy. He could just let out the emotions he had been holding on to for so long, and it would be a relief. But he was scared. Scared of Bakugou's reaction, scared of how it would change their relationship.

... What was he doing? This was wrong. He couldn't take advantage of Bakugou like this, just to fulfill some perverted sense of self-indulgence. He couldn't allow his feelings to get in the way of... whatever *this* was. He felt guilt, and shame, and it was so strong, so overwhelming. He had to let it out, before the feeling ate him alive.

"Hey, Bakugou?" he choked out, "I... I need to tell you something."

The body in his arms didn't move. There wasn't even a hum of acknowledgement. Eijirou pulled away, ever so slightly, observing his friend's face. Nudging him gently in the side with an elbow.

"Bakugou?"

... Bakugou was asleep.

Of course he was.

Eijirou sighed. He had rambled too much. He still felt guilty, but also, there wasn't really anything he could do now except sleep. He was exhausted, too, and it was honestly a wonder he didn't pass

out as soon as his head hit the pillow. And Eijirou was tired, so tired that, in that moment his actions did not seem strange. He brought his head forward, and placed his lips on Bakugou's forehead, just for a second.

“Goodnight, Katsuki.”

~

And if Eijirou had kept his eyes open, if he had stayed awake just a little longer, maybe in the darkness he would have seen two deep, red eyes flutter open. Perhaps he would have seen how they studied him, for just a minute or two, confused and entranced and maybe just a little bit hopeful.

Chapter End Notes

By twitter user @kirisbaku, another [scene from Chapter 9](#).

By tumblr user zoluffs, a [scene from this chapter](#).

And by tumblr user candy-fluffs, a [comic from Chapter 9](#).

Wow guys, I am overwhelmed by your support, thank you so so much!

I Bite My Tongue When I'm Awake

Chapter Notes

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

With a rather unattractive snort, Eijirou abruptly awoke. He cracked his eyelids open, taking in the faint blue glow of very early morning. Peering over a tuft of blond hair, he blinked at a poster — his poster, on the wall over his bed, ‘*Certain Victory!*’. Eijirou hummed. His motivational posters always gave him a reason to smile.

As his other senses slowly came into focus, he heard a soft snore coming from between his arms. He could feel his chest against Bakugou’s back, could feel the way his knees were tucked up into Bakugou’s. And wow, this was the first time they had ever spooned, and it was almost too intimate, but it was so early and Bakugou was still asleep. Eijirou figured that he could forgive it just this once.

But his left arm was numb from the dead weight that lay on it, and it was starting to hurt — maybe that had been what woke him up in the first place. He tried wiggling his fingers, willing feeling to return to them. The tingling was uncomfortable at first, but he began to regain some muted sensations when...

Eijirou gasped, and every drop of blood in his veins turned to ice. Bakugou’s hand was resting in his own.

No. No, no, no.

Sleeping and cuddling for mutual comfort was one thing. But holding hands in their sleep — oh god, they were *holding hands* — that was another thing altogether. He couldn’t allow himself to do this to his bro, or to himself. He had to stop this.

After tearing his hand away from Bakugou’s, Eijirou tried pulling his arm out from beneath the dead weight, in too much of a determined fright to really care if Bakugou’s sleep was disturbed. He shuffled away, giving Bakugou as much personal space as possible, scooching as far back as he could, he had to keep his distance—

Thunk.

Eijirou yelped, his quirk activating a second too late as a flash of pain turned his world white. Oh god, oh god he couldn’t breathe, why couldn’t he breathe? It was like the wind had been knocked out of him or something. He sat up, his chest heaving as he struggled to take in air, rubbing the back of his head, whimpering at the echoing ache in his skull. Disoriented, he looked up from where he was on the floor.

On the floor?

There was a long groan, followed the creaking of weight shifting on the mattress.

“What the *fuck* are you doing?”

At the voice, Eijirou froze. Slowly, slowly, he brought his head up and peered over the side of the bed. Bakugou was awake, facing him now, eyes tired and annoyed. No, more like *amused*.

“I, uh,” Eijirou gasped, still struggling to regulate his breathing. He scratched the back of his neck,

trying to cover his pained wince by glancing unassumingly around the room. “I fell out of bed.”

“No shit, I fucking gathered that much.” Bakugou glanced out the window, and then with a grunt, brought his hands to cover his face. “The *fuck*, fuckin’ seriously, Kirishima, it’s like the ass-crack of dawn, now’s not time for you to have some weird freak-out moment,” the blond mumbled, probably still half-asleep. He rubbed at his eyes. “*Fuck*. You tugged all the fucking covers down with you too, asshole.”

“Heh, sorry, sorry...”

“Just get the fuck up here and go the fuck to sleep. *Fuck*.”

With the glare that Bakugou was giving him, Eijirou didn’t need to be told twice. So he scrambled up as quickly as he could, bundling the blankets in his arms and dropping them haphazardly onto the bed. Then he crawled underneath them, being very mindful of where his and Bakugou’s bodies were.

He couldn’t put himself in a position where that morning’s mistake could happen again, even subconsciously. So he turned his back to Bakugou, curling in on himself, trying to stay on his side of the bed. Which was difficult, considering it was a twin. In previous nights they hadn’t even bothered with personal space, so the small mattress had never been a problem, but now... Well. It was different now.

“You’re a goddamn klutz is what you are, honestly...” he heard Bakugou continue to murmur behind him. “You made us lose all of that stored-up heat.”

There was the shifting of covers, then the shifting of a body, and then Bakugou was behind him, arms wrapping around his torso, slowly tugging himself closer, closer, until their bodies were completely flush against each other. And Eijirou could hear the pounding of his pulse in his ears, could physically feel his stunned brain turn into goop.

“Sounded like it fucking hurt, you sure your head’s okay?”

And honestly, how was Eijirou supposed to be able to respond to any of this? It was like 5 in the morning, his head was still pounding from his fall, and now the two of them were just so close, and Bakugou was okay with it – not only that, Bakugou had *initiated* it... It was a lot to process.

“Hey, you there?” Bakugou sat up a little, propping himself on his elbow, looking down at Eijirou with concern. *Concern*. “You’re being too fucking quiet, it’s starting to freak me out. You aren’t, like, concussed or something, are you?”

“No, no, I’m... fine, I’m...” Eijirou glanced up to meet Bakugou’s eyes, and his thoughts were lost all over again. “I’m great,” he managed to breathe out.

Bakugou raised an eyebrow, unconvinced, before plopping back onto the mattress, wrapping him in an embrace again. “Cuz seriously,” his voice rumbled as he made himself comfortable, “it takes me ages to wear you down in battle training, so you getting KO’d by falling out of a goddamn bed would be pretty fucking embarrassing. Not sure I could respect you after something like that, ya know.”

The slight tittering hum that followed Bakugou’s words, the tightening of arms around his torso, reassured Eijirou that it was just a joke. So he let out a huff, his lips pursed in an amused pout. Bakugou was just being his snarky self, like always. As if all of this was completely normal.

Eijirou frowned.

Bakugou still didn't know. He didn't know how warm his voice made Eijirou feel. He didn't know how giddy Eijirou became whenever they were this close. How much he longed to be closer still. He didn't know the shame Eijirou felt in keeping his true feelings a secret while sharing something as intimate as this.

"... Bakugou?"

"Shh," the blond mumbled, crankily, burying his nose in Eijirou's hair. "Go the fuck to sleep."

With a demand like that, how could he refuse? But, before nodding off again, Eijirou made a decision – one that terrified him, but he was too determined to back down. Come morning, *real* morning, he had some confessions to make.

And late morning came all too soon, the sunlight blaring through the window harsh enough to wake Eijirou up on its own. He opened his eyes groggily, trying to blink away the sting that the bright light caused. Immediately, his vision fell on Bakugou's sleeping face. There must have been more shifting in their sleep because they were now facing each other, and Eijirou couldn't stop himself from staring in wonder.

It wasn't like this was anything new. Eijirou had seen this view, over and over again, just a week or two ago. But he had seriously taken it for granted. Now, with his feelings realized, it was so much more striking. And the thought crossed his mind that he could get used to this. That this was the sight he wanted to wake up to every morning, for... well, forever.

And then, his heart was drowning.

Eijirou was the type of guy who, once he made up his mind, would follow through with a particularly steely resolve. He couldn't stand not telling Bakugou how he felt, not for a day longer. Today was the day, he had decided, and he wasn't going to chicken out no matter how nauseatingly nervous his mission made him feel. But, depending on how Bakugou takes his confession...

Eijirou looked on, realization setting in, trying his best to smother the stinging tears before they could even start.

... Depending on how Bakugou takes his confession, this could be their last morning together like this.

And, well... He could let himself savor this moment for just a little longer.

So that's exactly what Eijirou did. He gave himself this one morning, possibly one last morning, to just *feel*. He let himself melt into that instant, taking note of every sensation, trying his best to imprint them into his memory. The way their legs were intertwined with each other, the way they were breathing in tandem, the way Bakugou's eyelashes gently fluttered when he dreamed. The way his hands grasped limply at the back of Eijirou's shirt, even in his sleep, just barely pulling them closer together, almost as if he too didn't want to let go. Eijirou didn't want to let go either. Not for anything. Not ever.

I love you.

His lips formed the words on their own, without even the ghosting of a voice to accompany them, and his arms were shaking, trembling from the weight of his silent declaration. Oh how badly he

wanted to bring his hand up, gently touch Bakugou's cheek. He clenched his fingers into a fist, holding himself back.

I love you.

It was becoming easier to think. Easier to say. But it still made the butterflies in his stomach flap with new passion. It was so intense to even whisper, but Eijirou felt more at peace with his feelings now than he had even the night before. Perhaps, he really had needed the past week to come to terms with how he felt, all on his own.

I love you.

He mouthed it again. And again. And again, taking these last few moments before Bakugou awoke to imagine exactly what it would feel like to actually say the words out loud. Just these voiceless admissions were enough to make Eijirou feel giddy and breathless and just a little bit woozy. He never wanted to forget any of it.

Gradually, the body in his arms shifted, followed by a low groan. Eijirou watched as Bakugou's nose scrunched, eyebrows pinched together, in a way that was just so cute. And wow, Eijirou's sense of alarm must have been delayed because, before he had the chance to play possum, red eyes blinked open and promptly found his own. And the thought crossed his mind that maybe he should feel a little bit embarrassed at having been caught staring, but the moment their eyes met, his hesitation faded away. Because Bakugou was staring at him, too.

And not in a 'What the hell are you looking at, fuck-munch' type of way, either. In a way that Eijirou could only describe as *wondrous*.

Wow, wow, wow. It felt as though Eijirou was in a dream. His heart was thrumming, beating, maybe Bakugou's was too – and he couldn't help himself, his eyes wandered, following the curve of Bakugou's jaw, the slope of his cheekbone. He allowed himself to study Bakugou's hair as it flitted onto his pillow, he studied how red eyes contrasted with the soft cream of his skin. His eyes explored the filtering of sunlight through Bakugou's hair, the way his expression was at-ease, radiating content.

He was just so beautiful.

Was that an okay thing to think? In hesitation, his gaze flickered back to catch Bakugou's, but the look in his eyes eased any lingering doubts. It was almost as if he was just as entranced as Eijirou was. No words were exchanged, none had to be. There was no sense of shamefulness, only this shared awe as the two silently gazed on, soaking in every trait, every feature of the other, as if they were scared that they might never see each other again.

But then, Bakugou blinked, as if his eyes were only focusing for the first time. He looked away awkwardly, a blush on his cheeks, and Eijirou's stomach dropped. Was this too much?

Bakugou began sitting up. "You gotta move, I need to go to the bathroom."

Oh. "Right."

And just like that, in a single instant, whatever magic spell had been cast over them was broken. Of course, with a reason like that, it couldn't be helped. So Eijirou sat up, giving Bakugou room to more easily maneuver around him. The blond's feet found the floor and Eijirou watched him pad to the restroom, the door closing firmly behind him.

And as soon as he was alone, Eijirou buried his face in his hands, hoping to ease the fiery blush

that had taken over his cheeks. Oh god, they had been so close. Oh god, what had he been thinking? He took deep, shaky breaths to slow his racing heart, gently smacking his cheeks a few times, *snap out of it*. As he heard the faucet running, Eijirou straightened up, trying his best to preserve a nonchalant attitude even as his pulse was pounding wildly out of control.

The door creaked open, footsteps making their way across the room, and Bakugou's voice casually rang out. "What was up with falling out of bed this morning, anyways?" He began crawling onto the bed. "Not gonna lie, you scared the shit out of me when you hit the floor."

Eijirou shrugged, distracted eyes trailing a stray particle of dust that was highlighted by the sun's rays. Anything to calm his panicking nerves.

"Damn, not even an apology?" Bakugou studied the redhead with an eyebrow quirked. "Come on, that's not fucking like you at all. Something bothering you?"

And at that, Eijirou turned to him in surprise. Bakugou was a lot more perceptive than he let on. "Actually, um. Yeah." His pulse pounded in his ears. It was maddening.

Bakugou paused, giving Eijirou a probing look, one that was full of apprehension. One that prompted Eijirou to continue. And oh god, oh god, this was happening. This was happening *now*.

"Yeah, I... I need to talk to you about something."

Eijirou leaned back against the headboard, feet planted firmly on the mattress. He motioned for Bakugou to follow suit. The blond complied, taking a seat next to him, watching him, carefully, and *good lord* his gaze was piercing. Eijirou couldn't meet him in the eye, couldn't bear to see red irises staring into his soul. His stomach was doing flip-flips, and for a moment he wondered if Bakugou could see how he was shaking. Surely he could. Eijirou inhaled, struggling to maintain any sense of composure.

"You gonna spit it out or not?"

Too late to back out now. "Sorry, sorry, it's just..." For a second, it felt as though he had lost his voice. It was stuck in his throat, and his stomach was twisting, churning, like he was going to be sick. "... It's kind-of a big deal."

"You don't fucking have to apologize, stop freakin' me out," Bakugou mumbled, and by now, his concern was nearly palpable, even as he was trying to conceal it underneath a more passive frown. He shrugged, "'S not like I got anywhere to be, so whenever you're ready."

And... he was ready. This was happening, now, and that was okay. Eijirou nodded, staring blankly ahead. He took a deep breath, filling his lungs, willing, praying for his mouth to work.

"Um. I like you."

The room became still. So still that a pin could drop and it would sound like the bang of a brass gong. Eijirou's voice echoed around the room, pressing against his eardrums, or maybe that was just all in his head, but it was unbearable. He looked down, watching how his hands were trembling in his lap.

"You... What?" Bakugou finally squeaked out.

"I like you, Bakugou."

And if it didn't feel quite real before, it certainly did now. The realness of the situation crashed

down on Eijirou's shoulders all at once. All of the anxiety, the implication of what he had done sending his nerves on a rampage, filling him with the unquenchable urge to justify himself.

"I don't know when it started, I really don't." His mouth wasn't his own any more, spewing words like a spout that wouldn't shut off. "But when I finally understood these feelings that I've been having for days, *weeks*, it started haunting me, made me feel like I was taking advantage of you, so I had to come clean."

"Kirishima..."

"You're my best friend, Bakugou. You're my best friend and I care about you, *so much*, and that won't change. That'll never change, ever, there's just... more to it now. And I don't want that to ruin our relationship, but if that makes you uncomfortable, then I understand—"

"Kirishima."

"—But I can't lie to you anymore. I want to be your friend, and help you, and do all the things we did before, but I also want to go on dates with you. I want to hold your hand and kiss you and I-I... I..."

"*Eijirou.*"

There was more. Dammit, there was still more, but at the sound of his name, the words stopped. Eijirou took a deep breath, battling the lightheadedness that threatened to consume him.

"Yes?" he choked out.

He peeked a glance at Bakugou, which was a mistake. Bakugou was just blinking at him slowly with wide, disbelieving eyes, his cheeks pale, jaw set, remaining pointedly silent as if his brain was full of static.

The atmosphere was too stale, too *suffocating*. Eijirou couldn't stand it. He closed his eyes, feeling the familiar sting of waterworks under his lids. And he waited for Bakugou to respond with something, *anything*. Rejection was better than silence.

"Please say something," his voice cracked, barely straining above a whisper.

There was a shifting on the mattress.

And then, lips gently pressed against his own.

Chapter End Notes

Tumblr user candy-fluffs drew a comic for this entire chapter, please be sure to check it out, it is absolutely stunning! [Part 1](#) // [Part 2](#)

By tumblr user and deviantart user The FoxWalker, a [scene from Chapter 10](#). Also on [Deviantart](#).

By tumblr user whaticalldoodling, the same [scene from Chapter 10](#).

Please be sure to check out these amazing artists and their works!

Last Night I Woke The Fuck Up

Chapter Notes

Rewind

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

Fuck.

Katsuki flung his arm over his eyes and groaned.

Not this shit. Not again.

His heart was still stammering, beating so hard in his chest that it was painful, sweat beading on his forehead, palms smoking. It hurt to breathe, the air catching in his throat over and over again, with every inhale. They hadn't even been in the dorms for a full 12 hours yet, and his subconscious had already decided to go and be a complete fuck-up.

Stupid fucking fear response. Stupid fighting instincts. Goddamn quirk was too loud, and of course he just had to let out the most undignified yelp ever. And he had *neighbors* now.

Fuuuuck.

Katsuki closed his eyes with a huff, trying to settle down under the covers again. But then there were shapes, faces, the shadows of his nightmares reaching out to him, threatening to take him back, claim him. His eyes snapped open again. Looks like he wasn't going back to sleep anytime soon. Shit.

This shit had better fucking *stop*.

Fucking hell.

Katsuki panted, taking in what breath his lungs could manage, trying to shake off the disturbing images that chilled him to the bone. It was the same goddamn thing, all over again. Nightmares, or whatever. He rolled to his side, clutching a pillow, doing everything he could to stop the adrenaline that felt like it was pumping through his veins by the gallon.

The only way he could restrain himself from blowing up his pillow: Breathe in, breathe out.

Eight counts in. Eight counts out.

In.

Out.

Right as his system was finally starting to return to normal, the closing of a door in the hallway snapped him to alertness. Sounded like a neighbor.

No way. No fucking way. He was Bakugou Fucking Katsuki. There was no way someone would risk waking him up to ask about the noise disturbances. Not unless Anal Glasses happened to be his neighbor. Or nosey Shitty Hair. Katsuki didn't really pay attention to the room assignments, but there were a ton of guys in his class, so the chances were extremely unlikely.

There was a knock on his door. "Hey, Bakugou?"

God fucking *dammit*.

Honestly, the next few days were a blur. When it came to no sleep, it's at about the three day mark when Katsuki *really* started feeling the effects of exhaustion take over. Most of the time, he didn't know what day it was, and his brain kinda felt like it wanted to fucking pass-out on him all the damn time. It was freaky, but Katsuki wouldn't care too much except that it was starting to affect his training, and that was not going to fucking work.

And a certain piece of *shit* redhead thought it was a good idea to come prancing over to his room every night to ask about the disturbances. As if he didn't have enough shit to deal with.

Fucking stupid no-good piece of shit dreams. Fucking loud quirk. Fucking Shitty Hair butting his nose in places it doesn't belong. Shit. *Shit*.

Why did his quirk have to be so goddamn loud? Why couldn't Shitty Hair just leave him the fuck alone? Why did he even have these fucking stupid dreams in the first place? What was wrong with him?

And then Katsuki figured that there must have been something messed up in his brain because *why wouldn't they go away?* Pro Heroes didn't deal with this bullshit. Pro Heroes couldn't afford to deal with this bullshit. It was fucking pathetic is what it was. Weak. Fucking weak.

And then, Friday night, it was worse. Those thoughts started amplifying, manifesting in his dreams, faceless forms whispering to him, a constant drone of *weak, pitiful, good-for-nothing, coward*. He covered his ears, trying to stifle the taunts, trying to escape, but fingers wrapped in shadows pulled at him from behind, dragging him backwards, further and further away, no matter how much he struggled there was nothing he could do, he really was weak, and pathetic, *worthless*—

And when Katsuki jolted awake, crying out and shaking, he buried his face in his pillow. He was so close to fucking screaming into it, punching it, letting fists fly without anything holding him back. Let out frustration with every blow.

If only he were home, then he could keep his secret. He wanted to go home. Away from UA so he didn't have to be reminded of how goddamn average he was on a daily basis. Away from the dorms with prying ears. Away from nosey piece-of-shit Shitty Hair.

And then that *motherfucker* had to show up again. When shouting at him through the door to leave hadn't worked, Katsuki tried to cover the persistent knocks and callings with a pillow, but they still drilled into his ears and it was the single most fucking insufferable experience in his entire goddamn life. Fuck that.

With a snarl, Katsuki swung his feet to the ground and stomped his way to the door, wrenching it open, not caring about how miserable he probably looked.

And the sight of Shitty Hair definitely should *not* have made him feel as relieved as it did.

Yet, even when the guy had the nerve to step into his goddamn space, touch him, *hug* him... none of his Physical Contact Alarms were going off. There wasn't any panic, or discomfort, or urge to get away. There was only reassurance.

He was confused, and it was frustrating. Why was Shitty Hair bothering to comfort him, of all people? Why was he doing all of this? Why bother?

Katsuki realized that Shitty Hair *cared*. For some reason, the guy actually cared about him. And in that moment, as gentle arms surrounded him, making him feel safe and secure and *cherished*, Katsuki could feel his tough mask crack. It fell away in an instant, and he couldn't hold himself together anymore. Tears brimmed at his water line, overflowing and falling away silently.

It was all so overwhelming – a hug like this shouldn't make him feel so fucking *much*. He should have met the embrace with more protests, or at least bitter indifference, but... it felt nice. As if it was something he had been missing out on his entire life. So he brought his arms up, shakily, and allowed himself to melt into Kirishima for just a moment. And from Kirishima's whispered promises of secrecy, from the honesty that radiated from him, grew trust.

Although in hindsight, agreeing to the sleepover had been a fucking stupid idea. There was no way that he, Bakugou Fucking Katsuki, was going to allow himself to show any thread of vulnerability to some background character ever again. But he wasn't a fucking coward, either, so he couldn't exactly back out on his word. So with a disgruntled glower, the sleepover began.

And anyways. At least it was Shitty Hair. At least it was Kirishima, and not someone else.

So Katsuki slowly, carefully took apart his façade again, piece by piece, allowing himself to open up. Which was not something he had ever done before, for *anyone*. And maybe it was just the exhaustion, but in only a few minutes, it didn't matter that he was vulnerable. It didn't matter that he was exposing his insecurities, his deepest secrets, because it was Kirishima. Kirishima listened to him. Kirishima *cared* about him.

Maybe there really was something behind that therapy shit, because getting all of this off his chest felt good. Like weights that had been pressing down on him were lifting one by one with every word he said, his mask crumbling away faster and faster until nothing was left, and it was absolutely liberating.

And that night, in the midst of his nightmares were strong arms embracing him again, soft trailing fingers against his back, soothing whispers against his ears, the best sound he had ever heard, and the storms in his dreams calmed.

And after several hours, when Katsuki awoke to the dim, still-rising sun to strong arms around him, a head of soft hair on his chest, he knew that he should probably be very fucking disturbed by this development. But in his exhaustion, he couldn't find the will to push away.

And later that morning, when an alarm blared off, and the weight on top of him left the bed in a panic, leaving him feeling alone, Katsuki couldn't help but think that, maybe it was better when

Kirishima was there with him, and that maybe... he wouldn't mind all that much if it happened again.

As a rule, Bakugou Fucking Katsuki didn't answer to anyone but himself. He didn't care what people thought of him. He didn't do what people told him to do. And he certainly did not take advice from fucking fuck-munches.

That should definitely include Kirishima. But, there was just *something* about Kirishima that made Katsuki want to reconsider a few things.

Like, the guy had some pretty fucking strong opinions on the magical powers of love and friendship, apparently, and just a few days ago, Katsuki would have scoffed it all away. But as the two of them maneuvered their way through a routine that morning, Katsuki couldn't stop himself from thinking: *it's working fine for Shitty Hair, isn't it?*

It didn't take long for Katsuki to realize that the *something about Kirishima* was his own guilt. Kirishima had done so much for him. He had risked his life to save him, offered to help him work through his nightmares, listened to his worst fears, swore to keep it all a secret, just between the two of them. The least he could do was not be an asshole towards the guy. And if Kirishima thought that he needed to make friends, then Katsuki would make himself some goddamn friends. How hard could it be?

But when he slammed his lunch-tray onto the table that day, and the Pink Girl and fucking Pikachu gave him a *look*, Katsuki had to reevaluate if this was all really worth it. He was out of his element, having to pretend to be invested in other people's lives, and those people were giving him a fucking *look*.

But Shitty Hair was there, and for whatever goddamn reason, he cared about Shitty Hair, so he sat down anyways. And then Kirishima was smiling at him, friendly and genuine and so bright that it was blinding, and he had to force his eyes away. A warmth blossomed in his chest like nothing he had ever felt before, and it quickly spread to his cheeks and the tips of his ears.

It was foreign, and really fucking disturbing too – it made him want to stay anchored by Kirishima's side like some sort of dog on a leash. But at the same time, he didn't want the feeling to go away. And Katsuki found himself wanting to listen to Kirishima, wanting to follow his lead and give him a reason to be proud, all the goddamn time. Wanting to do anything to make him give him a smile like that again, all dazzling like the sun.

So that's what he did.

During the days, he tried being more civil to his classmates, tried being more respectful. Tried making friends. It was difficult, really fucking difficult – sometimes, people were just so fucking stupid, or they gave him sass, or he just really did not care about how they viewed him. But he cared about how Kirishima thought of him, so he kept trying.

And every time he did something even remotely nice, Kirishima would give him a smile, the one that make him feel happy and warm all over again, and just a little bit proud of himself too.

And after the sun set, Katsuki allowed Kirishima to see him at his worst, his weakest, most pathetic, every night, over and over again, and that was okay. It was as if some outside forces were strung between them, drawing them together, nurturing some mutual understanding, respect, trust,

and pretty soon, Katsuki started thinking of Kirishima as a friend. His first friend, really. Katsuki hadn't really ever had anyone like that before.

The only reason he was letting his guard down so much was because of how exhausted he was. At least, that's what he kept telling himself. It was certainly easier to accept than the truth.

But thanks to Kirishima, he was sleeping again, so with every night that passed, the excuse disintegrated even more. The truth was, Katsuki was acting like this because he *wanted* to. For Kirishima. And that pill was a lot harder to swallow. So he was just going to ignore it until it could not be ignored any longer.

Kirishima was dead. They had gotten to him, killed him, he was fucking dead, body limp and mutilated, and Katsuki wanted to cry, he wanted to scream, he wanted to tear every single one of them apart with his bare hands like a rabid animal, rip at their flesh with his nails and make them explode from the inside out, he wanted to fight, destroy, *kill*, bring him back, bring him back, *bring him back*—

And when Katsuki woke from the nightmare and felt strong arms squeeze around him, tugging him closer, a soft voice whispering over and over again *I'm here, I'm here*, he really did cry. He wailed out into the night until his jaw and voice and chest and heart thrummed with pain, his brain foggy and disconnected and nothing felt real anymore. And he just breathed, in and out, in and out, until he could just barely hold the broken pieces of himself back together again.

This was bad.

Kirishima was becoming too important. He was getting into Katsuki's head, and Katsuki was letting him — even worse, he *liked* it. He liked Kirishima, liked his kindness, his trustworthiness. Liked how special Kirishima made him feel, how it seemed as though Kirishima cared about him with every fiber of his being. Liked Kirishima's smile, the one that brightened up his whole world, making him feel warm, and appreciated, and *loved*. He liked Kirishima, so, so much. Too much.

This was really fucking bad.

It was getting out of hand. This was going to have to stop. Maybe not that day, or the next, but it definitely had to stop, and soon.

But the next morning, his resolution shattered in a single instant.

"I'd like to think I know you, Bakugou."

Kirishima was a goddamn idiot.

"Despite how you act sometimes, you care about people. I can tell."

He could say it so easily. It didn't make sense.

"How could I see you as a villain, when you are trying so hard to be a hero?"

But in that moment, as he searched in Kirishima's eyes, Katsuki felt like he was seeing him for the

first time, *really* seeing him. Something clicked, and everything just, snapped into place.

This was the first time anyone had ever seen him for who he really was. Not only that — this was the first time anyone had even tried.

Katsuki was mean, and rude, and he had bruises and thorns, and he was so fucking broken, and somehow, Kirishima still tried to understand him. Kirishima wasn't intimidated by the walls that he had build around himself -- he barged through them, ripped them down until Katsuki was exposed, vulnerable, bearing his soul, his heart, with thorns and bruises and all, and it was so so scary being open like that, but Kirishima didn't laugh. Kirishima didn't run away. In fact, Kirishima had run *towards* him, reached out a helping hand, offering a shoulder for support, in spite of everything. Somehow, Kirishima looked past his rough exterior, looked past the kind of person that Katsuki was, and instead saw within him the potential for Katsuki to be the kind of person that he *wanted* to be.

And in Kirishima's eyes, Katsuki found the an answer that maybe he hadn't been expecting.

I'm in love with this idiot.

"... Thank you," is all he could mumble.

And Kirishima smiled.

And that's all it took.

And apparently when Katsuki fell, he fell really fucking hard, and all at once. As a result, some of his judgments were probably a bit clouded. Like, agreeing to another sleepover, even though he knew he shouldn't. One without the futon, no fucking less. God dammit.

Oh, and inviting himself out to dinner with the class, that had been fucking stupid, too. Everyone was being too nice to him, acting too comfortable around him, and it was starting to freak Katsuki out. But Kirishima was there.

And when Katsuki let his guard down and actually chuckled at God-knows-what, of course Kirishima had to notice. And their eyes met, and the doofus just had to give him one of his lopsided grins, and then Katsuki's stomach was doing flip-flops like he was going to be sick, his face heating up like some stupid character from a goddamn Shoujo and he had to look away before anyone saw.

It was fucking stupid is what it was. All of it. His own emotions felt alien to him, unlike anything Katsuki had ever felt before in his life, and he couldn't help any of it. It was scary, and above all, really fucking frustrating. But as the two stayed up talking, and then fell asleep together at last — as Katsuki allowed himself to indulge in selfishness — he slowly began to accept his new reality.

He liked Kirishima. A lot. Loved him, even. As a friend, or as something else, he sure as hell didn't know, and that was scary too. But even if his emotions were new, they were his, and only his, and it would be really fucking dumb if he tried denying something that was a part of him. The only thing he could do was accept it. So he did.

And as Kirishima's arms wound tighter around Katsuki even in his sleep, bringing them closer together, the soft scent of his shampoo comforting and relaxing, Katsuki sighed in content. This was definitely something he could get used to.

But then, fucking Pikachu had to ruin the goddamn moment.

Of course.

And Katsuki felt embarrassed, more embarrassed than he had ever felt in his entire life, so strong it was nearly paralyzing. He and Kirishima were friends, goddammit! Just friends. Kirishima would explain it to the guy, that there was nothing happening between them. Nothing. At all.

And *shit*. That really threw things into perspective.

He and Kirishima were just friends. And Kirishima was a really fucking nice guy — to *everyone*. He probably did shit like this for any friend who needed help. And Katsuki just had to go and be a fucking idiot and fall for it. Fall for *him*. Dammit. *Dammit*.

The idea of having to go through this alone really hurt though. Now that he had a glimpse of what it felt like to have someone care, actually care about him, having to let that go was not going to be fucking easy. But there were so many things that could go wrong with letting himself get too close to others. Especially Kirishima. And he would be really fucking dumb if he let his feelings control every action he ever made. Emotions couldn't be allowed to do that.

He had to learn how to fix himself without dependency. Without help. Without Kirishima.

So Katsuki called it off.

Katsuki discovered pretty quickly that Kirishima was kind of like an addiction. And he also discovered pretty quickly the hell that was withdrawing. But no matter the number of sleepless nights, no matter how bad the nightmares, no matter how many times he awoke in a sweaty, blasty, hysterical mess, his brain crying out, *I need you, I need you, I need you*, he couldn't allow himself to relapse. No matter how much it hurt.

I need you. I need you.

He would lay in bed, every night, and everything would feel wrong. There was no-one there to talk to him, to bother him, to roll his eyes at or to embrace when his dreams came back. Kirishima was all he had, and now he had nothing. It hurt.

I need you.

He brought a hand to cover his mouth, stifling a sob.

I love you.

Why did it hurt so much?

“You could have just asked to meet me out here, ya know,” he shrugged. “No need to man-handle me like that. I wouldn't have ran away.”

Katsuki snorted. The way the guy's body moved, eyes darting to find an escape route, said otherwise.

"So, uh. What's up?"

And at that, Katsuki blinked. He hadn't really thought this far ahead yet, and it wasn't like he wanted to have this conversation anyways. But he was desperate. Wearing his usual scowl, he crossed his arms tightly against his chest. "Why do you look so fucking tense, Shitty-Hair?"

"Oh, so now *I'm* Shitty-Hair."

"Your hair is pretty damn shitty."

"Right." The blond standing across from him raised an eyebrow, unimpressed. "It's Kaminari, by the way. In case you, I don't know, *forgot* or something."

And fucking hell, the sass was the last thing Katsuki needed right then, but the angel on his shoulder was beginning to sound a lot like Kirishima nowadays, so instead of physically lashing out like his impulses were telling him to do, all he did was let out a *tch* and look to the side.

"Seriously. Dude. You can't just drag someone behind a building after school hours all intimidating like this and not expect them to be a little tense. Just saying. Like, not gonna lie, for a while there I thought I was two minutes away from becoming a pile of ashes or something."

And, *ouch*. Katsuki ducked his head. That wouldn't have hurt him a few weeks ago. But it certainly did now, and that was really fucking dumb but maybe he deserved it.

Well. So much for talking to someone about it.

"I just wanted to ask you a damn question. That's all," he mumbled. Shifted his weight from one foot to the other. "But if you're just gonna be a smart-ass about it, then I guess I'll go."

He stuck his hands in his pockets and turned on his heel, walking away with the full intention of retreating to his room, shutting himself off from the rest of the world and never coming out ever again.

"Wait!" The voice behind him called out, rushed. "This is about Kirishima, isn't it?"

Katsuki froze in his tracks. And there was that fucking guilt again. It was too strong, intense, and it wrecked through him like nothing he had ever felt before. Katsuki closed his eyes, let the air flutter through his hair for several moments, counting the passing of time with his own heartbeat until he couldn't stand the quiet anymore.

"Did I do something wrong?"

At the sound of his cracking voice, the wind stilled, and it felt like the world had stopped turning, like the entire universe was holding its breath. And Katsuki had to break the silence before it surrounded him completely.

"Kirishima's not talking to me anymore, and I don't know why. I'm really bad at this sort of thing. I probably fucked up or something." He turned to Kaminari, and he could feel the desperation in his eyes but he couldn't for the life of him make it go away. "So if you know anything, *anything at all* about what's going on..." He clenched his fists. Gritted his teeth.

"I, um." Kaminari looked away. "I don't know much. But I've also noticed him being a bit, you

know, reserved. And tired? And he and I talked about it a little, and I think what this all boils down to is that he wants to hear from you.”

For a few seconds, Katsuki could only stare. Snapping out of it, he looked away, muttering a curse under his breath. “You can’t be serious. He’s the one not talking to me, so it’s not that fucking simple.”

“Hey, do you want my help or not?” Kaminari shrugged. “You wanted an answer, and that’s my answer. I don’t think you did anything wrong, I think maybe it’s just something you two need to work through. And if he’s not talking to you for some reason, then you need to be the one who talks to him.”

“But that’s not fucking what I asked for, *stupid, fucking*—” Katsuki groaned, bringing his fingers up to press circles into his temple. He took a deep, deep breath. His voice turned quiet. “I just want him to be happy, okay? And I know he isn’t right now, and if it’s because of something I did, I need to know so I can fix it. I need to fix this...”

Please, he’s all I have.

Katsuki closed his eyes, his fists clenching and unclenching at his side, waiting for something. But Kaminari was silent. He took another breath, trying to keep his crumbling composure seem a little more intact. He opened his eyes, looking across to Kaminari, jaw set.

“Please.”

And Jesus Fucking Christ, he did not like the look on Kaminari’s face. It was as if the guy had just noticed something, just realized something so utterly profound that his brain couldn’t fucking handle it. His shocked, yellow eyes were unsettling as they studied him, astonished, as if unlocking all of his secrets with just a stare.

Then, snapping out of his daze with a swallow, Kaminari looked to the ground, kicking his heel into the pavement.

“I care about him too, you know.”

And he way he paused right there, looking up Katsuki like he was trying to send him a hidden message via telepathy was goddamn infuriating.

He continued carefully, treading over landmines. “I think, maybe, we’re more alike than we thought.” Kaminari paused again. There was a slight smile on his lips, a slight nod of his head, but everything else about his expression seemed... downcast. “You said you want him to be happy, yeah? Because that’s what I want, too. I’m tired of seeing him look like a kicked puppy — which, by the way, is how he has been acting lately. That’s why, even in spite of,” he gestured to his own chest, “all of *this*, I’m still trying to help *you*. So you need to actually listen to what I’m saying.”

Katsuki pursed his lips, restraining himself from snapping at the patronizing tone.

“Look,” Kaminari looked away again. “I can talk to him first, maybe tell him to talk to you or something if that would make things easier. But I still think that you need to talk to him.”

“I don’t need a fucking lecture.”

“Talk to him.”

Katsuki didn't need Kirishima. He didn't. That sort of dependency was gross. But the fact was, that week had honestly been one of the most torturous weeks of his entire life. It had drained at his energy and his abilities and his sanity like a leech. But, perhaps it had been necessary. He tried to work through his problems on his own, but it was time to reconcile with the fact that it was so much easier with help. With Kirishima, right there, by his side. Just like it always was. And maybe that was something Kirishima needed to hear, as much as it was something Katsuki needed to say.

And now, as he stood in front of Kirishima's door, ready to knock, the thought occurred that — as much as Katsuki would hate to admit it — maybe he really had needed that shove from Kaminari to get to this point.

He rapped on the door, and then, Kirishima was there, and he was upset and crying into his shoulder and Katsuki had never had to deal with anything like this before. But also, Katsuki knew exactly what to do. Kirishima had taught him well, after all. He still felt concern — of course he did, his friend was distressed — but there was also this sense of peace that blanketed over him. Like he was finally, finally able to return the help he had received so many times.

So they just... talked through it, all of it. Everything that had caused the past week to happen, the sleepover. Clearing the air like this, was such a relief — Katsuki didn't lose his friend, he never had. And he certainly hoped that he never would.

And the joy of having a not just a friend, but a *best friend*, someone he could trust and respect and be close to and bear his heart to... it left him smiling even long after they had fallen asleep.

And that early, early morning when Katsuki stirred awake, everything was like a dream — a good one, this time, one he never wanted to wake from. Kirishima was still asleep, legs tucked into Katsuki's own, arms wrapped around him, his soft, even breaths tickling the back of his neck. He was right there, so close, and he wasn't going to leave. And Katsuki wasn't going to push him away, either. Never again. So he reached out, finding Kirishima's hand, intertwining fingers with his own before drifting off to sleep again.

"Um. I like you."

Katsuki was sure he must have been hallucinating. There was no way. No fucking way.

"I like you, Bakugou."

He could only sit in shock. The blood in his veins felt like it had just stopped all at once. This had gotta be some sort of sick joke.

But Katsuki knew Kirishima. He wouldn't joke about something like this.

Which meant...

Katsuki had been so sure that Kirishima acted like this to all of his friends. And, he had been so caught up in accepting his own feelings that he hadn't even considered the possibility that the feelings being mutual.

Honestly, he wanted to laugh. Like, an awkwardly robust laugh, and for an awkwardly long amount of time. Because seriously. *Seriously.*

Except, he realized that he hadn't responded yet, and now it seemed that Kirishima was full-on

panicking, his words coming out so damn quickly that Katsuki could hardly keep up. He let out a few calls of Kirishima's name to try and calm him down, but then the redhead started rambling about things like holding hands and dating and kissing, all these things that, in that moment, Katsuki realized that he wanted too. And Kirishima was just so *honest* about it, no inhibitions holding him back, just raw truth, and there was a rush of adrenaline and Katsuki was fairly sure that he had never felt more thrilled in his entire goddamn life.

But then, Kirishima went quiet, waiting, and Katsuki realized that he *still* hadn't responded. Kirishima just closed his eyes, his body shaking.

Katsuki wasn't good with words. He never had been, he usually just acted on instinct. But in this moment, he was at a complete loss.

Sitting in front of him was the person who had seen how ugly he could be and didn't run away, who knew about his his insecurities, his deepest fears, and didn't laugh, who kept his darkest secrets between the two of them and the night. This person, who had torn down Katsuki's walls without even trying to, accepted him for who he was while pushing him to be better. This person, who inspired Katsuki, make him want to be the best hero he could be -- the best *person* he could be. This person, who had cared about him so fucking deeply that Katsuki couldn't help but feel the same way in return, a feeling that was so strong that it could only be described as love. This person, who had rescued him, from villains, from himself. This person, who had saved him. It was him. It would always be him.

What could Katsuki even say to a person like that?

And in that sudden moment of clarity, there was only one thing Katsuki could think of to do. Only one thing that could portray the joy, the inspiration, the gratitude, the trust, the *love* — the very amalgamation of every emotion that Kirishima made him feel all at once. All in one action, one kiss.

So that's what he did.

Chapter End Notes

By tumblr user risartblog, a [lovely piece](#) inspired by Bakugou's POV!

Pull Me Closer

Chapter Notes

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

Then, lips gently pressed against his own.

It was slight, just a ghosting of sensation, but it was enough to make Eijirou's eyelids fly wide open in surprise. And when he finally registered what he was seeing, what he was *feeling*, his entire brain just... went blank.

And then came the shock.

Because holy shit. *Holy shit*, he was being *kissed*. Holy shit, he was being kissed by *Bakugou*. *Bakugou was kissing him*, and it didn't make sense, why was Bakugou kissing him?

But he couldn't dwell on it, or live in the moment like he would have wanted to, because then it was over. Bakugou pulled away, slowly, and when he opened his eyes, they pierced straight through Eijirou's, taking away what little breath he had left, leaving him speechless, his jaw opening and closing with no sound to accompany the movement.

With each silent second that passed, Bakugou's expression morphed from a dark, unwavering gaze, to an uncertain chew of his lips. Then his eyes widened, darting, searching for some sort of reaction that Eijirou was frankly just too dazed to give.

And then, Bakugou looked scared. Very, very scared.

He ducked his head and turned to sit stiffly against the headboard, seemingly determined to look at anything other than Eijirou. And even still, Eijirou could only stare.

The silence was tense, painfully awkward, before...

"What was that for?"

At that, Bakugou glanced down at his fiddling hands. *Shrug*.

"Bakugou..." Eijirou breathed, finally taking control of his thoughts again. A notion dawned on him, so astronomical that it made him feel dizzy. But at the same time, he also felt like maybe he was starting to understand. The beginning of a smile formed on his lips, and he couldn't help but shake his head in disbelief, because *honestly*, "What was that for?"

Bakugou still just sat there frozen, body rigid. Eijirou could actually see his chest rising and falling much too quickly with each shallow breath, could make out the tremble in his fidgeting fingers that meant he was on the verge of panic. Bakugou's eyes glanced briefly from the door to the window behind him, as if gauging which was the closest escape route.

No way was he thinking about running away after something like that! They had to talk about this, dammit!

"Hey..." Eijirou moved his hand, slowly, carefully, to rest it on top of Bakugou's, anchoring him, praying that Bakugou wouldn't push him away. The effect of the touch was nearly immediate – as

if in a trance, red eyes followed where Eijirou's thumb rubbed gently against his knuckles. Bakugou's tensed shoulder dropped, his nervous fingers steadied.

There they sat, for several moments, hand over hand, allowing this strange lethargic wave to wash over them.

Finally, a gruff voice permeated the stillness, so quiet that if Eijirou's heart had been pounding any louder, he might have missed it.

"... I wanted to."

A breath caught in Eijirou's throat. He hadn't really been expecting an answer at all, and he *definitely* hadn't been expecting an answer like *that*. It took him a solid 20 seconds to find his voice.

"Why?"

"I just wanted to, alright? *Fuck*, is that..." Bakugou trailed off, swallowed a lump in his throat. Brought his eyes up tentatively. "Is that really so hard to believe?"

In that moment, as their eyes met, everything finally sank in. Everything that had happened these past few weeks – the closeness they developed, the intimacy they had shared... Bakugou respecting him, learning how to trust him, caring for him... Even now, the look on his face, so honest and open and vulnerable, the one that meant that he was baring himself, to *only* Eijirou, just as he had time and time again... All of the pieces were finally starting to fall into place.

Perhaps, this entire time, Bakugou had liked him just as much as he liked Bakugou.

And no, that wasn't hard to believe. Not at all.

Eijirou laughed. He honest-to-god couldn't help it, he was just so happy, so *relieved*. "Well that's good, because I've been wanting to kiss you for *ages*."

As soon as Eijirou heard his own words, his hands flew up to cover his mouth. *Oh god*. The giddiness in his gut was uncontrollable, he could feel his own grin underneath his fingers, but with the look Bakugou was giving him, no amount of giddiness in the world would ever be enough to erase his embarrassment.

"Aha sorry, sorry, that was a stupid thing to say wasn't it? I feel really dumb now. But also, it's true, so..." With every word he said, Eijirou felt more and more like a complete and utter dork, but *god*, he was just so overjoyed, like he was gonna burst at the seams at any second. "... So yah. I wanted to kiss you, too."

Bakugou just stared at him, quietly, seemingly at a loss for words, and it was starting to make Eijirou's nerves act up even more than they already were. He chuckled nervously, scratching the back of his neck, avoiding the harsh gaze. "Is, uh. Is that okay?"

Bakugou looked down, the tips of his ears flushed pink. "Whatever."

The silence that filled the room was tense, as if it was waiting to be broken. Eijirou shifted where he sat, his mouth turning dry.

"Can I kiss you too?"

The question hung in the air, and for just a moment Eijirou regretted having asked it, because...

that was the type of question that changes relationships forever, wasn't it? But at the same time, they had already crossed that line. There was no going back. And it was something he needed to know.

Bakugou closed his eyes. Took a breath. Nodded.

Well okay then.

Eijirou's heart hammered so loudly in his chest, his fingers trembling, the feeling of excitement so strong that it was nauseating. For a solid moment, he seriously thought he wouldn't be able to muster the courage to go through with it. But, despite his foggy brain and racing heart and sweaty palms, Eijirou wanted this more than anything. He wanted to share this with Bakugou, and only Bakugou. And somehow, somehow, that's was what Bakugou wanted as well.

But how was he supposed start? With something like this, it was better to take things easy, rather than just rush through it, right? This wasn't something he could jump right in to, he needed to start off slow. Eijirou carefully brought his hand to rest on Bakugou's again.

Bakugou jerked slightly at the touch, surprised, and that didn't seem like a good sign. But before Eijirou could take his hand away, the balled-up fist slowly opened up, allowing Eijirou to intertwine their fingers, encouraging him to close some of the distance that was between them. His brain was whirling, on hyper-drive, his heartbeat so fast and loud it consumed him. He leaned in, until their faces were only a few inches apart. Oh god, this was happening. This was actually happening.

Eijirou paused.

This was all so overwhelming. He didn't want to mess this up.

Suddenly, red eyes opened, in an instant fixating on Eijirou's lips, making his heart flutter. Then they looked up and eyes met— half-lidded, intense, and absolutely mesmerizing.

And then, Bakugou gave his hand a little squeeze. *Go ahead.*

That's what spurred him forward. Eijirou shed off any lingering apprehensions he had, and allowed himself to just do whatever felt right. Supported by a palm on the mattress, he brought his forehead to rest against Bakugou's, their noses brushing, and time around them stood still. So close, just a tilt of the chin...

And just like that, their lips met. And it was so gentle, just like their first kiss had been, except this time Eijirou was ready. He was ready to close his eyes, let the word around them melt away, and just *feel*.

He felt Bakugou's lips pressed against his own, how they were chapped at the surface but still so very soft. He felt their noses side-by-side, could feel the air of their breaths mix. He could feel slight stubble against his chin, could feel his own heart, hear it beat so fast in his ears, his lungs becoming more breathless with every second that passed. He could feel the way Bakugou's hand was grasping onto his own for dear life, almost as if terrified that Eijirou would pull away at any moment. He squeezed back, reassuringly. He wasn't going anywhere.

And maybe a comforting gesture like that was exactly the kind of encouragement Bakugou needed, for he pushed forward, just a little bit, bringing his other hand up to cradle Eijirou's face. Eijirou couldn't help but lean into the touch, his head tilting to the side, and that somehow made it even better. But now there was an ache blossoming in his chest, an urge – he needed to be closer to

Bakugou, so much closer.

His veins were buzzing as exhilaration coursed through them, and Eijirou gave in to the sensation. Without breaking the kiss, he shifted his weight onto his knees, pressing a hand into the mattress on the other side of Bakugou's hip, leaning into him. His other arm, he wrapped around Bakugou's waist, fist clenching against his back, tugging until their chests were flush against each other, their hearts thumping together, finding a rhythm in tandem.

But when Bakugou's lips parted just the tiniest bit, and a tongue pressed gently against Eijirou's mouth, he gasped, every single one of his thoughts dispersing in a single instant. This was all so foreign, so new, so intense that he couldn't even think properly. Yet, his body seemed to know exactly how to respond. One of his hands found its way to Bakugou's head, fingers nestling in soft, blond hair, pulling them closer as he ran his tongue tentatively across a lower lip. At that, Bakugou gave out a hum – Eijirou could feel the rumble against his skin, could feel it spark in his chest, and it made him feel *alive*.

And then they were kissing, *really* kissing. There were tongues and teeth and a fire igniting in his veins, adrenalin running rampage, his lungs burning as their lips moved against each other, *with* each other, starting to form sighs, and eventually moans, mutterings of names against each other's lips, hands growing confident, frantic, wandering, and it was exhilarating. Addicting. With every moment that passed, Eijirou wanted more, more, *more*.

It was becoming too much. They were getting into dangerous territory. Eijirou didn't want it to end – of course he didn't, he wanted to savor the moment for as long as possible, imprint each and every sensation deep within his memory so he could cherish it forever. But at this rate... if this kept on for much longer...

Maybe Bakugou could sense his apprehension. Or perhaps, he and Bakugou were on the same page, for tongues withdrew, frenzied hands stilled to more tender tracings, their ragged, shaking breaths slowing against each other's lips as the two of them came down from whatever high they had been on.

And those kisses that followed... Eijirou poured his heart, his soul, every fiber of his being into those kisses. The lazy ones that he couldn't help but smile into. The soft ones, the kind that told of their intimacy. The gentle ones that were so full of adoration that it *hurt*, making his eyes sting and his heart overflow. Their lips joined, again and again, brief pecks of contact, and every single one Eijirou mentally punctuated with an *I love you, I love you, I love you*, wanting to show Bakugou just how important he was, just how much he was adored and treasured and *loved* through kiss alone. Nothing else mattered.

I love you.

Bakugou pressed their lips together with an air of finality before pulling away, slowly. Eijirou didn't want it to end, but then he cracked his eyes open, blinking a few times before taking in the breathtaking sight before him. Bakugou was peering at him, his cheeks flushed red, lips damp, hair a mess, expression peaceful and content. Eijirou's heart was flooding, bursting with all sorts of emotions, ones that were so intense that no words would ever be enough to describe them. Along with this tidal wave of feelings was the inexplicable urge to hold, and be held.

"Bakugou," he whispered, wrapping his arms around the blond's torso, resting his chin on a shoulder. "Katsuki, Katsuki..."

An arm wound around his waist too, Bakugou's hand came up to rest against his head, running fingers through his hair again, a hoarse whisper against his ear, "Eijirou..."

They sat in their embrace, so completely immersed in the other that their surroundings did not exist. It was just the two of them, and it was beautiful. Eijirou was just so very much in love.

Bakugou let out a shaky breath against his ear. “I... I’ve never... done that before.”

“Me neither,” Eijirou murmured into Bakugou’s shoulder, the smile on his lips widening. He brought their foreheads together again, unclenching a fist from Bakugou’s shirt, reaching out for a hand to take into his own, their fingers intertwining. He gave a little squeeze. Bakugou squeezed back.

“So...” Eijirou whispered, rubbing circles with his thumb. “Now what?”

Bakugou looked down to where their hands were linked, captivated. “What do you mean?” He finally responded.

“Like... ya know... I just want to be sure that you’re okay with all of this.”

The only response was a shrug.

Eijirou pulled back, watching Bakugou carefully before letting out an amused huff, “Cuz like, I like you. And you like me. But you’ve never really struck me as the type of person who is in to dating, and I don’t want to make you uncomfortable, or to make assumptions about our relationship without talking to you first.”

Bakugou remained quiet for several moments, thinking. When he finally spoke, the words were quiet. “I mean, you’re right.” He shrugged again. “I don’t really like being close to people.”

For a moment, it seemed like that was all Bakugou was going to say on the matter. But Eijirou needed some sort of affirmation. So he stayed silent for a little longer, encouraging Bakugou to elaborate.

“Like...” the blond sighed, seemingly trying his best to wrangle his thoughts together, “I’ve known what I wanted to do with my life since I was a kid. Hero work can be really fucking dangerous, and adding a relationship on top of that, there are just so many ways it can go wrong. I’m just, really fucking terrified of something happening, of me feeling like I’m being held back, or getting hurt, or someone important to me getting hurt. Intimacy, or whatever... it just hasn’t been something I wanted to deal with.”

Honestly, that was about what Eijirou had been expecting. But hearing it come out of Bakugou’s mouth was making his stomach drop. He could feel himself grasping onto Bakugou’s hand, squeezing so tightly that his knuckles were turning white. *Please, please.*

“But walking away from you hurt,” Bakugou persisted, his voice beginning to quiver. “It *hurt*, I thought I was losing you or something. You mean so fucking much to me, Eijirou. *So fucking much*. This week made me realize that I don’t want that to go away again. I want to be with you. Or at least, I want to try.”

Now, those words were *not* what Eijirou had been expecting. But they were everything he could have hoped for. They echoed around in his head, his brain playing them on repeat, over and over again, and it was all too much for him to handle. Eijirou couldn’t help the tears that overflowed his waterline, falling down his cheek.

Bakugou paled. “Oh fuck, you’re crying.” In a panic, he brought a hand to Eijirou’s face, trying to wipe away tears as gently as he could even as his hands were shaking. “God. Fuck, why... what did I—”

Through the snot and tears, Eijirou nearly burst into giggles. “Oh god, I’m okay! I’m okay, Katsuki, I swear!” He placed his hand over Bakugou’s, steadying it against his cheek. “See? I’m fine, honest, I’m just...” at that, he nearly tackled Bakugou, wrapping him up in a big hug, burying his face in his shoulder, his following words a muffled mess. “Oh god, sorry, I’m just so happy right now.”

“You are?”

“Yes.”

Bakugou carefully brought his arms to circle Eijirou in return, pulling him closer. “You’re a fucking mess.”

“Ahhah I know, I know,” Eijirou snorted, letting out a shaky breath.

There they clung on to each other, basking in every sensation that surrounded them. Finally, Eijirou could do things like this, without feeling guilt, or doubt. It was all okay. It was more than okay, it saturated his heart and mind, enveloped him completely. Eijirou was not going to leave Bakugou’s side. Not for anything.

He let out a long sigh. “You know I love you, right?”

Bakugou’s breath hitched, body turning rigid. And maybe it was too soon to say something like that, but he hadn’t said it hoping that Bakugou would say it back. He wasn’t expecting anything like that. He had said it because it was the truth. He had just needed to get it off of his chest, so everything was out in the open. Nothing more to hide.

But then, arms around him tightened, holding on to him for dear life. “Yeah.”

There was a pause, then a whispering of a breath against his ear, so soft he could have imagined it.

“I love you, too.”

And that wasn’t hard to believe at all.

Chapter End Notes

From tumblr user violet-sky, this [scene from Chapter 12](#).

Thank you so so much! These lovely pieces of fanart mean so much to me, thank you!
Please be sure to check these artists out!

The Darkest Nights, the Brightest Stars

Chapter Notes

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

The hours following such a pivotal confession – a confession, a kiss that made Eijirou feel like his whole world had been turned upside-down... it was strange how *normal* everything felt. Nothing too terribly special had happened since the kiss, the day had continued almost as normal. He and Bakugou had worked out, studied, watched videos on YouTube, and on the surface it was all very mundane. But every now and then there were these little snippets, brief moments shared between them that made Eijirou's heart flutter wildly in his chest, brought a smile to his face and the thought to his head, *I am so in love*.

One of these moments happened that afternoon, as the two of them studied. For the most part, it resembled any other day, but his and Bakugou's hands would occasionally brush against each, and neither of them would flinch or pull away. They would just let their hands linger, finding comfort in the contact. Sometimes, they would link their pinkies, then maybe all of their fingers, intertwining them, connecting them. But once, in a moment of boldness, Eijirou had brought Bakugou's hand to his lips, placing a gentle kiss on his knuckles, and the blond had turned away, covering his blushing face with his free hand, mumbling under his breath, "you're such a fucking sap, oh my god."

And look on Bakugou's face, like he was embarrassed and flustered and so very smitten all at the same time, and the fact that, even when he felt like that, Bakugou *still* hadn't take his hand away... Eijirou wanted to pinch himself to make sure he was awake because honestly, *how is this even real?*

That evening was pretty usual, too, microwave chicken curry and Netflix, but their hands were clasped together, heads leaning on shoulders. And then, they finished off the night in the best way Eijirou could imagine -- with a goodnight kiss, or two, or three, or thirty, and each one made Eijirou feel so soft he was sure he would melt away. There were affectionate whispers voiced shyly into the night, intimate words that were only meant for each other's ears, and moments like this made Eijirou certain that he had never been more open, or honest, or more *himself* around anyone else than he was when he was like this with Bakugou. It was these gentle murmurs that finally lulled the two to sleep, cozy in each other's arms, without a hint of a nightmare to disturb them.

But even with all of these lovey-dovey moments, the heart of their relationship somehow felt... unaffected. It was as if a strong foundation had been laid underneath them, a solid bond that could last anything that was thrown at them. There was this unspoken confidence within themselves and with each other – as if they both realized that, no matter how they may label their relationship in the future, at their core they were still friends. Bakugou was still his best friend, that would never change no matter what they went through, and Eijirou found a lot of comfort in that thought.

This is what Eijirou mulled over instead of working on his polynomial worksheet that Sunday early afternoon. What he shared with Bakugou felt special. It made him unexplainably happy -- how could he even think about working on homework? But if Bakugou noticed his pencil not moving, he didn't say anything. Sometimes, they didn't even need to talk. The sound of pencil on paper, of breathing, the slight touch of shoulders, the knowledge that Bakugou was right beside him, was all Eijirou needed to bring a smile to his lips.

"What are you looking at?"

At the voice, Eijirou blinked, snapping out of his thoughts. Bakugou had turned to him, red eyes piercing, a slight frown on his face. Eijirou shrugged. "Uh. You, I guess?" Whoops, he hadn't even realized he had been staring. "Sorry, sorry, you're just... really handsome."

Bakugou *tch*-ed and spun away, maybe to hide a blush, and imagining Bakugou flustered like that was really freaking adorable.

"Jesus Christ, you can't just fucking say stuff like that."

At that, Eijirou laughed, "Sorry, sorry, you just caught me off guard and I couldn't think of anything else to say! And, it is true, so..."

"Fucking whatever," the blond mumbled again, slowly bringing his gaze back to his worksheet. "You're getting distracted. Better not ask to copy my homework later."

"Yeah, yeah, I hear ya," Eijirou rested his head on Bakugou's shoulder, "I'm not too terrible at this math stuff anyways, I've just been thinking I guess."

"What about?"

Eijirou shrugged, a smile tugging at his lips. "I dunno, different things." Slowly, he reached out his hand to take Bakugou's, who opened his fist, allowing their fingers to intertwine. "A lot has happened, after all. Gotta let it sink in." Eijirou gave a gentle squeeze.

Bakugou squeezed back. Then he grunted, maybe in agreement.

Just then, Eijirou's phone buzzed. "Ah, let me get that..." Reluctantly, he took his hand away, grabbing for the phone and opening the incoming text. Immediately, he perked up. "Oh, are you hungry? Kaminari and Sero and Mina are about to go to the cafeteria for lunch, we could join them."

"Now?"

"Yup!"

Bakugou nodded, "Alright." And just like that, he set aside his work on his bed and started climbing out. Eijirou following suit.

Eijirou touched up his hair in the bathroom mirror quickly while Bakugou changed from his lounge sweats into some shorts. They had already gotten ready earlier that morning, so it was only a minute or two before they were both in shoes and at the door, ready to go. Eijirou reached for the doorknob and... paused, for just a moment.

They hadn't really left either of their dorms the day before. And as he stood there, facing the outside world, his reality sank in. This would be the first time since the confession that they would be out in public. It was nerve-wracking to say the least, but Eijirou couldn't exactly place why.

"Something wrong?"

"No, just..." He cleared his throat. "Are you okay with people knowing about us?"

"I'm—" Bakugou paused for a second. This must have been something that he hadn't considered until now, either. He looked to the side, his eyebrows scrunched in thought. He let out a huff.

"Fuck, it's not like being with you makes me embarrassed or anything. But... I don't think I'd be comfortable with just, fucking proclaiming it to the entire world, you know? So, maybe..."

“...We don't try to keep it a secret, but people find out when they find out?”

“I guess that works for now, if you're okay with it too.”

Eijirou honestly didn't mind that plan either. It took away the stress of a secret relationship, while also alleviating the pressure of actually having to tell people. He smiled. “That works for me, too.”

With that, he opened the door, and the two made their way to the cafeteria. As they walked down the corridor, their arms kept brushing against each other, and in the staircase, Bakugou even let them hold hands, for just a few seconds. Then they were in the common area, in the line of sight of a few of their classmates, and Bakugou's grasp went slack.

Eijirou looked over to him. He looked... nervous. Actually, legitimately nervous. Maybe holding hands was too much for him? And that was kinda cute. Eijirou took his hand away, giving Bakugou some space. Maybe this was something they could slowly work up to.

They arrived in the cafeteria and waited in line for their food before locating their friends and setting down their trays.

As soon as the two of them sat down, Mina let out a content sigh. “Oh man, it's so good to see you two hanging out again. I was starting to get worried!”

“No kidding,” Sero nodded as he shoveled rice into his mouth, “Friendship drama is always the worst.”

“Yeah, well...”

Eijirou looked over to Bakugou, who was picking at his food with his chopsticks and trying to feigning disinterest in the conversation. He reached under the table, letting the side of his pinkie rest against Bakugou's. He tensed up, and for just a second, Eijirou wondered if it was too bold of a move. But it wasn't like anyone could see through the table, so it should be fine, right?

Bakugou must have realized that too, so he let the contact persist.

Eijirou's heart was racing, and he beamed to his other friends, “There was a dumb miscommunication or something? So we talked it out and everything's okay now.”

Still out of sight, Eijirou inched his pinky closer to Bakugou's, hoping to link them together. Bakugou complied.

The others at the table remained oblivious, the chatter around them picking up again without a second thought of their close proximity.

Eijirou figured he couldn't eat very well left-handedly, but he didn't want to take his hand away from Bakugou's, either, so now he was facing quite the dilemma. He stared down at his utensils, hoping he wouldn't draw attention by making a fool of himself.

But it turned out he didn't have to face this dilemma for too long, because Bakugou tore his hand away again. Eijirou looked to him, startled — had nerves gotten the better of him again? Or maybe there was something else bothering him? But when he studied Bakugou's face, he was focused, like something had caught his eye. Eijirou followed his gaze, until his own eyes landed on Kaminari.

Had Kaminari noticed them? Is that why Bakugou had taken his hand away so quickly? Bakugou didn't look particularly flustered though. Rather, he looked deep in thought, like he had only just

come to realize something. Meanwhile, Kaminari's face looked a little... dejected? And Eijirou was starting to suspect that he had missed some important exchange, but then Kaminari looked to him, his face breaking into a smirk, and he winked. He had definitely seen them, and now Eijirou was blushing, his smile once again refusing to go away.

The five of them continued eating their food, talking about this and that. In terms of socialization, Bakugou still had an awkward air about him, but he was strides away from where he had been only a month or two ago. And he felt this way practically every few hours, but this time Eijirou was sure he could not be any more proud of Bakugou. It burst through him, making his heart beat with satisfaction. And just like before, their friends were more than happy to include him in their conversation, and that really helped the atmosphere settle into something more comfortable. So far, no one had said anything else about their relationship, friendship or otherwise, and that probably helped Bakugou feel more comfortable.

But by the time everyone had finished the meal, Eijirou got this hunch that Bakugou was reaching his social limit. He had turned quiet, settling on watching the interactions around him with mild disinterest. Bakugou had never struck Eijirou as being a shy person – unfriendly, perhaps, not *shy* – but with how he was acting now... Maybe, without his rough exterior to hide behind, his discomfort in social situations made him withdrawn and reclusive, rather than aggressively antisocial. And that was a rather interesting thought.

Well, whatever the reason, it was probably about time for them to head back to the dormitory. So Eijirou gathered his dishes, standing up with a “Thanks for the invite, but I best get back to work!”

Mina pouted, “Oh, you’re leaving already?”

“Yeah, gotta hit the books! Can’t fall behind this term!” He nudged Bakugou, “You ready too, man?”

Bakugou nodded, standing up and gathering his own items.

“See you tomorrow!”

“Bye, Kirishima, Bakugou~”

Eijirou didn’t miss the suggestive sing-song in Kaminari’s voice. He rolled his eyes, trying to stifle a giggle because Bakugou clearly didn’t find it very amusing, but that just made him want to laugh even more.

The two returned to the dormitory, quietly bypassed the common space and making their way to the 4th floor. Bakugou was still quiet — maybe he had something heavy on his mind? — but Eijirou tried not to let it worry him. They entered Bakugou’s room and settled on his bed, shoulder to shoulder. In the privacy of a dorm, without the possible scrutiny of company, Bakugou crept his hand over to where Eijirou’s lay on the bed, inch by inch, and Eijirou copied his movement. Then they were holding hands again, and a tightness in Eijirou’s chest that he hadn’t even realized was there suddenly released. His thumb traced lazily against Bakugou’s. It was nice to be back in solitude, just the two of them, no prying eyes.

Finally, Bakugou broke the silence. “They think of me as a friend.” It wasn’t a question, but his voice sounded... bewildered.

“Yeah. Course they do.” Eijirou looked over to him, watched him. When Bakugou looked up to meet his eyes, Eijirou smiled. “Do you think of them as your friends, too?”

"I...guess so." He took a deep breath, filling his lungs. His hand squeezed Eijirou's, tighter. "But, do you really think that they'll be okay with us? With me?"

And there was something there in his voice and on his face, something akin to insecurity, and Eijirou had a hunch that he was about to uncover whatever it was that had been bothering Bakugou all day. "What's this about all of a sudden?"

"I don't fucking know, it's stupid, I just..." He trailed off, and the look in his eyes was so... downcast. It didn't look like him.

"Hey..." Eijirou brought his forehead to rest against Bakugou's, hoping to encourage him to continue. "You know I'm here for you, right? You can talk to me about anything."

Bakugou's grip tightened. He nodded, and then he spoke. "I don't exactly have the reputation of being nice. But, I don't want people to think that I would be mean to you, or treat you badly."

And that hadn't been exactly what Eijirou had been expecting. Since when had Bakugou cared about how others thought of him? But, maybe this was different, he considered. Because this wasn't just the world's perception of Bakugou that hung in the balance. It was their relationship, the special thing that was shared between them. Maybe, Bakugou didn't want something like that tainted by other people's opinions of him.

"Well... you do have this image of being aggressive, I can't deny that," Eijirou pulled away to look him in the eyes. He smiled, warmly, bringing a hand to rest at the nape of Bakugou's neck. "But I think it's like a mask. I think you're starting to show more of yourself, not only to me, but to others too. And I think that's a good thing. If you just keep it up, show people this side of you, then they'll have no reason to think those things, right?"

"But it's too late now, isn't it? It's not like I can just start over," Bakugou pulled even further back. The look in his eye was unlike anything Eijirou had ever seen. It was like he was feeling shame, real shame, for the first time in his life. "I have months of bad impressions. Years. I was... In middle school, I was so fucking terrible to Deku. It was *bad*. You don't... you didn't know me then, you have no idea..." he closed his eyes. Took a deep breath. "That shit isn't just going to erase itself overnight. It's not gonna take long for people to work out what's happening between us, and the first thing that people will wonder is if I treat you like shit."

"Is that why you kept taking your hand away today?"

Bakugou looked down. Took several deep breaths. Nodded.

"Bakugou..." Eijirou sighed, wrapping his arms around him, tugging him closer. "Katsuki, Katsuki, Katsuki..."

"What?" He mumbled into his shoulder.

"If I know that you won't treat me badly, and you know that you won't too, then that's all that really matters, right?" Eijirou felt Bakugou shrug, so he continued. "The way you talk about how you used to be, seems to me like you genuinely regret it. That counts for something, doesn't it? And anyways, not to make light of your concerns, but I think you might be over-thinking this. I'm genuinely, so very happy to be with you, and I think once other people see that, then it won't even be an issue. I think everyone will be happy for us."

"Even Kaminari?"

"Kaminari?" Eijirou lowered his arms and pulled back. "Why wouldn't he be?"

“I don’t... fucking know, I get this vibe from him.”

“A vibe?”

“I don’t know. It’s probably nothing.”

Bakugou turned silent at that, thinking, about what, Eijirou wasn’t sure. He just gave Bakugou the silence he probably needed to work out whatever was going through his mind.

Suddenly, Bakugou turned and stood up out of bed. “I’ll be right back,” he mumbled as he headed toward the door.

“Hey, where are you going?”

“I—” Bakugou froze, his back to Eijirou, as if deciding what to say. He took a breath. “Look, there’s something I feel like I need to do.”

“Okaaay...?” Eijirou raised an eyebrow. This whole conversation had been a little weird, and he was sure he had missed a few things. He stood up, reaching a hand to Bakugou’s shoulder, his voice filled with concern. “Hey... Are you sure everything’s okay? You’re kinda being a little... cryptic? If something else is bothering you, you can always talk to me.”

“It’s just, what you said just now,” Bakugou turned to him. “I’m not about to go do something fucking reckless or whatever. There are just a few things I think I need to clear up with someone.”

Eijirou lowered his hand. “Okay,” is all he said, and then Bakugou was gone.

Katsuki took a deep breath. He knocked on the door.

“Coming, coming~” A voice sing-songed over some generic trash pop music. Then the speakers turned off, and then the door swung open.

“Bakugou?” Kaminari tilted his head to the side, his eyebrows arched high. “Hey! Uh. Can I help you?”

Katsuki shoved his hands into his pockets, avoided eye contact. “Can I come in?”

“Uh, sure thing,” Kaminari moved aside, granting him entry. He moved to sit on his bed, motioning for Katsuki to take the chair. “What’s brings you here?”

“I’m... um.” Katsuki glanced around the room, taking in all the gaudy décor, trying his best to look unassuming. He shrugged. Getting the conversation started had been a lot easier in his head. He looked to his fidgeting hands. “I’m really shit about this sort of thing.”

“Okay, now you’re making me nervous,” Kaminari chuckled a little, rubbing the back of his neck. “Is there something you want to talk about?”

“I don’t fucking know—”

But, he did know. He knew exactly why he was there, exactly what words he needed to say. But he was shit when it came to expressing his emotions and his breath kept getting caught in his throat. What he had to say, it made him feel vulnerable, and he didn’t like it. But if they didn’t talk, right now, then Katsuki knew he would never allow himself the opportunity ever again. He had to do

this.

Just say it. Just say it. Kirishima would want you to say it.

Katsuki nodded, to himself more than anything. He let out the breath he had been holding, swallowed the lump in his throat. "I wanted to thank you."

That wasn't all he wanted to say, there was so much more, so many things that he needed to understand, to be certain of. But it was a start. At first, Kaminari only raised an eyebrow. His scrutiny made Katsuki feel a bit defensive, but he held his tongue.

Kaminari then blinked at him a few times. "You're... you're being serious." It wasn't a question. Katsuki didn't know how to feel about how fucking *surprised* he sounded, though. "Why? What for?"

"For the advice you gave me."

"I... You're welcome, I guess?" There was a beat of silence as Kaminari worked through his confusion, but then he let out a big smile, teeth and laugh and all. "Wow, imagine that, I never expected you to thank me! Sorry, that was rude. But what brought this up?"

Katsuki kicked at the floor mindlessly a few times. Why did talking about things like this always leave him tongue-tied? It was frustrating. "I just, don't fucking understand why you helped me in the first place."

"Why wouldn't I help?"

"Well, because I'm... I'm me." And as Katsuki paused to find the words, there was a feeling that overcame him, like embarrassment. Shame. It's what he felt before, when he was speaking to Eijirou. He hated it. He hated how weak it made him feel. He cleared his throat, clinging desperately onto his will to keep talking. "You know how it is. I'm rude and pissy and sometimes I go fucking psycho, and it's like I can't even help it, it's just who I am, and it doesn't make sense why you would help someone like that."

As he finished, the room fell completely silent. Katsuki felt restless, this was an answer that he needed to know. He looked to Kaminari. Kaminari was just staring at him. The look on his face wasn't quite shock, wasn't quite pity, but it was intense. Katsuki wanted to look away, but he couldn't.

Kaminari finally glanced to the side. "I dunno, because..." he gave a little wobble of his shoulders. "I know this may be hard to believe, I don't even think he realized it, but Kirishima has had a crush on you for a really long time. I wanted to help him out."

The words washed over him, and Katsuki froze. His words were like sandpaper in his mouth. "That's bullshit."

"No, I'm being serious."

"How long of a time are we talking?"

"Well, I only asked him about it recently, but I've been wondering if he's had a crush on you ever since the sports festival maybe?" Kaminari tapped a finger against his chin, deep in thought. "And when you disappeared, before those dumbasses snuck out to get you, Kirishima was a wreck. He kinda had a big fit, said he couldn't live with himself if he didn't try to help you. Everyone saw it. He cares about you, so much, we all pretty much knew there was no stopping him. And I think that

was when I realized it. I'm surprised it took him so long to be honest, he just puts so much effort into being around you, getting to know you, *caring* for you. And when he finally did put two and two together, he was just so... radiant. That's a dumb way of putting it, but it's true. I don't think I've ever seen him happier than he was when he was talking about how much he liked you."

It was all so much to take in, spurring so many emotions that he didn't know how to name, but it still wasn't clear enough. It still didn't make sense, it was so fucking frustrating. "But that doesn't fucking explain why you would help me. Even if Kirishima liked me, all the way back then, I still don't understand why you would help him be with someone who acts like—"

"—Because you aren't like that anymore."

At the interruption, Katsuki looked up, eyes wide. It was almost exactly what Kirishima had told him, time and time again. That he was changing, growing. And he hadn't known whether he believed it entirely. But now, another person had noticed it. Maybe... maybe he really was improving. Maybe everyone could see it. Maybe he was finally becoming a person he could be proud of.

Kaminari continued, "Over the past few weeks, you've changed. So much, it's like you're a different person. And I think that's at least partially because of Kirishima. He really does bring out the best in you, you know. And after our last conversation, I think I know why." It was here that he paused, collecting his thoughts. Giving Katsuki the chance to let it all sink in. Then, Kaminari leaned forward, resting his elbows on his thighs, removing just an inch of the vast space that was between them. "That day, you were so worried about him that you threw away your ego and actually asked for help. And then, the look in your eyes when you said 'please', like you were just as heartbroken as he was, like you never wanted to hurt him again... I thought this even then, but... You love him, don't you?"

And then there was a feeling in his heart, like it was trying to hammer its way out of his chest, and his cheeks felt hot. He knew the answer to the question, had known it for a long time, had thought it again and again, confirmed it with whispers into the night for Kirishima's ears and his ears alone. But it was becoming easier to think, easier to say. Katsuki he nodded.

"It's normal to fall in love with your best friend, I think," Kaminari smiled, but something about it was bittersweet. "It's just so easy to do, you get to know someone well enough and eventually they just become your entire world. And you know, he might be too oblivious to realize it, but I think Kirishima's fallen for you, too. I can see it in the way he talks about you and acts around you. And if he isn't in love with you yet, it won't take long."

Katsuki could feel his blush spreading from his cheeks to the tips of his ears. He hated it so much, hated how much control he had lost. Even his words fell out of his mouth before he could stop them. "He told me he does."

Feeling even more embarrassed at the realization of what he had said, he looked down.

"Wow, really?" The sparkle in Kaminari's eye told of his exasperated amusement. "I'm just glad that he figured it out on his own this time."

"You don't seem very upset."

"Why would I be upset?"

"Because you, ya know..." he gestured wildly to Kaminari, who only tilted his head to the side.

Katsuki had to pause at that. He had been so sure that he had figured it out, but the perplexed look on Kaminari's face made him think twice about his assumption. Had he read the atmosphere wrong?

But he remembered their last conversation, words that Kaminari had said that had flown right over his head, words that he had forgotten about until lunch that day, lunch where he had caught a glimpse of that look on Kaminari's face when he had seen him and Kirishima holding hands... Katsuki may be absolute shit at reading people and at emotions in general, but he knew he wasn't wrong about this.

"Because you like him."

At the words, Kaminari's confused expression was quickly replaced by a jarringly somber look, and the guy looked down to his lap. If Katsuki had had any lingering doubts before, he certainly didn't have them anymore, but now he had the overwhelming feeling that this was the wrong place and the wrong time to bring it up. But it was too late now.

"Does he know?"

The voice was so weak. Katsuki shook his head.

Kaminari swallowed a lump in his throat. His eyes glancing around the room nervously, unable to settle on just one thing. Finally, he let out a sigh. "Yeah. Yeah, I do like him. I have for... phew, not super long, a couple months maybe? I don't know, but it feels weird, my first time saying it out loud." He scratched at the back of his neck, something that Katsuki was beginning to realize was some sort of a nervous habit. "But, I'm pretty easy, if a person is attractive, or funny, or nice, then it's only a matter of time. And, well, you know how he is. But, I *just* like him. That's all it is. Really."

Yes, Katsuki did know how Kirishima is. Did know how amazing and kind-hearted he was, knew how easy it was to fall in love with him. And even though Kaminari insisted that it was just a crush, just the inkling of attraction, Katsuki couldn't tell who he was trying to convince more. And some small part of him, buried deep, wanted to feel bad for him. Just a week or two ago, Katsuki wasn't sure he would have felt that.

Kaminari chuckled, but rather than a genuine laughter, it just sounded like an attempt to lighten the mood. "So, I promise you don't have to worry about me swooping in and stealing your man. We're chill. You and Kirishima are my friends, and I couldn't be happier for the two of you!"

Katsuki nodded. He still didn't really understand how someone could be selfless like that, he wasn't sure he could ever do it himself. But Kaminari had, for his friends, and... Katsuki figured he could learn from that, maybe a little bit.

"...Thank you again. For... everything," he finally let out.

"No problem, man."

There wasn't really much else to say. Katsuki stood up and started making his way to the door. Kaminari followed behind him.

"Hey, Bakugou?" he called out, grabbing onto the handle before Katsuki had a chance to shut it. "Um. Thank you for coming to talk to me, too. I... I feel a lot better. And Kirishima was right!" He smiled, beamed, like he had already bounced right back. "You're a pretty cool guy."

And that was something else that wouldn't have made him feel so much just a short while ago.

Gratitude, the feeling like he had made someone's day a little better. It lifted the weight off of his shoulders, dispersed the tension from his lungs. He felt refreshed and relieved all at once, and it was a lot of emotions to try to sort through so Katsuki only managed a grunt in response.

"Guess I'll see you tomorrow," Kaminari waved.

The door closed. Katsuki felt the rush of air against his face. He let out a sigh.

He really had changed a lot, hadn't he?

Chapter End Notes

From deviantartist LexisLovesRitsu, a [lovely study scene](#) fro this chapter! Thank you so much!

When We Greet The Morning Light

Chapter Notes

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

There was a slight shifting on the mattress and a movement from between his arms – nothing too drastic, but just enough to rouse Eijirou from his sleep. His eyes flitted open, adjusting to the bright light of another beautiful, sunny day. They quickly focused in on Bakugou, who had just turned from his back to his side, their faces now no more than a dozen centimeters apart. The blond's eyes were closed, his breath slow and even, but he had a habit of playing possum, and by now Eijirou knew better than to assume that he was completely asleep. At any rate, he looked peaceful, *happy* even. Which was a beautiful sight, and frankly a bit of a relief.

To be honest, Eijirou had been a little worried the day before, right after lunch when Bakugou had disappeared. He didn't know where Bakugou had gone – although if he had to guess, he'd say to talk to Kaminari, since Bakugou had mentioned him, but Eijirou couldn't be sure. And when Bakugou had returned, it was like nothing strange had happened before.

Even now, as Eijirou studied Bakugou, eyes following the gentle curve of his cheekbones, hands trailing softly up and down Bakugou's spine, feeling the way their chests deflated and expanded with every breath they took, he was overcome with the feeling that everything was fine. If Bakugou had a serious problem, they would have talked about it already, right? There was tremendous trust between them, after all, and Eijirou was certain that Bakugou would share with him anything that he felt needed to be shared.

And there was that feeling again, for the thousandth time, like pride and happiness and honor, that this trust that was shared between them was probably unlike any connection that Bakugou had ever allowed himself to have anyone else before. It felt good, knowing that he had helped Bakugou break down those walls, and it felt even better knowing that Bakugou was slowly learning to break down those walls for other people as well. He was growing right before Eijirou's very eyes, more and more every day, and witnessing such a transformation was incredible.

Without even thinking, he brought a hand to brush a longer strand of Bakugou's hair behind his ear, gently cupping his cheek. And Bakugou's eyebrows scrunched together, and he let out a long groan, turning his head as if trying to smother his own face in the pillow.

Through the fabric, Eijirou could just make out a muffled "you woke me up, you fucker".

Eijirou couldn't help but snort at that. "Sorry, sorry." He didn't take his hand away.

Though, Bakugou didn't really seem to mind. He wasn't hiding his face any longer, and if anything, he was now leaning into the touch. With a smile stretching from ear to ear, Eijirou scooped forward, bringing their bodies closer together, gently nudging his face against Bakugou's, placing the softest of kisses on his cheek, then another, and another, and another, coaxing Bakugou to give into the affection. Eventually, the blond leaned forward, allowing their foreheads to join together, their lips barely hovering apart.

Eijirou's thumb brushed gently against the corner of Bakugou's lips. He closed his eyes, hesitating.

"This okay?" he whispered, his voice turning so low he could barely hear it himself.

At first, Bakugou didn't respond. And maybe it wasn't normal to ask that question, especially since

they had already kissed a lot, but Bakugou was still so new to the experience of intimacy. Eijirou was too, for that matter, and he wanted to be sure that Bakugou still had the opportunity to choose if he wanted to or not.

Then, Eijirou felt a nod against his forehead. He grinned, leaning forward.

The kiss was soft, affectionate, breathtaking, and Eijirou firmly concluded that no matter how many times they do this, he was never going to get tired of it. The two of them allowed the kiss to linger, move, deepen a bit. Just enough to quicken heartbeats and feel a little exhilarating, and pretty soon, Eijirou found himself perched up on an elbow, leaning over Bakugou who lying with his back to the mattress, their kisses so gentle and loving it was as if they were scared they would never be able kiss again.

Eijirou pulled back, taking in the sight before him. Bakugou's sleepy eyes were finally open, widened in wonder, his lips upturned in a slight contented smile. Eijirou beamed, his lazy fingers brushing across a cheekbone, finding their way to ash-blond hair, combing through the strands.

Then, as if he had been overcome by something, Bakugou brought his own hand to the nape of Eijirou's neck, pulling him down for one last passionate, lingering kiss.

"Well, good morning to you, too," the redhead muttered, amused, against the lips that pressed against his own. Honestly, what a great way to wake up. Eijirou would treasure moments like this forever.

Into the stillness of the air, his phone let out a ding.

Against his lips, Bakugou sighed.

"Gahh," Eijirou let out a laugh, rolling onto his back, flinging an arm over his eyes. "Stupid phone."

He could hear Bakugou let out a yawn next to him. "It's been doing that all fucking morning," his voice grumbled. Even after the kissing, he still seemed to be half-asleep. "Just, silence the damn phone or something. I'm going back to sleep."

"No, nope, nope, I'm wide awake now," Eijirou elbowed the blond's side. "Seize the day, Katsuki!"

"No."

"Come on, dude," Eijirou nearly whined, continuing to prod at Bakugou. "We gotta get up!"

"Fuck off, 'm still tired," he mumbled again, bringing his pillow out from under him to cushion against his ears and block out the light. His voice came out all muffled. "Too goddamn tired for this bullshit. Seriously, the alarm exists for a reason, asshole."

Eijirou narrowed his eyes curiously, tilting his head to the side.

The alarm...?

His eyes widened, his stomach dropping so quickly that it felt like he had just gone plummeting down the first hill of a roller coaster. With a yelp, he lunged for his phone.

10:17.

Eijirou nearly screeched. “Oh nooo, Katsuki!” He ripped the pillow away from Bakugou’s head, patting his shoulder with crazed desperation.

Bakugou squinted up at him, “What the fuck—?”

“Katsuki, get up, you have to get up!”

“I said, fuck off—”

“—I forgot to set an alarm!”

At that, Bakugou bolted upright. His eyes were wild, tufts of hair sticking out every-which-way. “You *what*?”

“It’s past 10!” Eijirou’s voice was nearly an octave higher than it normally was. He held the phone screen out in front of him so Bakugou could see the time. “It’s past 10, we’re late for class, ohhh no, we are *sooo* late, oh my god...”

“Shit,” Bakugou hissed under his breath, scrambled out of bed, dashing to the bathroom. “Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit...” The door slammed behind him.

“Oh god, oh god, oh god...” Eijirou scrolled through the mammoth wall of notifications on his phone – messages from Kaminari, that must have been who had been blowing his phone up all morning – and each entry made him feel even sicker to his stomach.

[Pichu] 7:27

Hey, I’m not getting English prepositions, do u think we can meet up and compare the worksheet before class?

[Pichu] 7:48

Hey buddy I’m kinda stressing here, think u can get ready and get here any faster?

[Pichu] 8:03

Class is starting. Is something wrong? u sick?

[Pichu] 8:04

.....blasty’s not here either (¬_¬)

[Pichu] 8:04

And u know how my pervy mind can be sometimes (° _ 3°)

[Pichu] 8:08

(;3 丿 彡)

[Pichu] 8:52

yooohoo~

[Pichu] 9:03

Kiri?

[Pichu] 9:24

Okay seriously, both you and Baku are gone, did something happen?

[Pichu] 9:52

..... is something happening?

[Pichu] 10:01

now Iida's noticed. People are starting to wonder what's up..... talkin about how you two've been acting funny lately.....

[Pichu] 10:02

u do not want to know what Mineta just said, you really don't

[Pichu] 10:04

or the rest of the class for that matter

[Pichu] 10:14

probably bombed that assignment, thanks friendo (b-_-)b

[Pichu] 10:17

aaaaand now Mic's threatening to take my phone so I hope ur happy (;_;

As Eijirou read, his phone buzzed once more as one final text came through.

[Pichu] 10:18

~u best have an explanation, loverboi~

Bakugou burst out of the bathroom, darting around the room, trying to locate various clothing items, a mantra of curses being muttered under his breath without pause.

Eijirou's legs wouldn't move. He could only look up from his screen, bug-eyed, drop-jawed.

"Fuck. *Fuck.*"

"Nope, nope," Bakugou tugged a white undershirt over his head. "Less fucking, more dressing." After a beat of silence, the tips of his ears turned violently red. "...Not like that."

"Oh my god."

"Shut up! You know what I meant!" The blond began trying to hop into some pants, not even bothering to tuck in his undershirt. "Fuckin, quit sitting there and hurry up already!"

“Right, right,” Eijirou finally regained mobility in his limbs and leaped out of bed, rushing to the restroom to start a reader’s digest version of his morning routine. And it didn’t even matter if he had just woken up a few minutes ago, he was wide awake now.

When he emerged from the bathroom, Eijirou threw on some untidy resemblance of the school uniform. And then the two of them were brushing their teeth, rather furiously to make up for the lost time,, Eijirou barely even managing to comb fingers through his hair before they had shoes on, backpacks slung over their shoulders, and were rushing down the stairs and across campus to the academic building. They changed into their indoor shoes as fast as they could, and then were on their way to Class 1-A.

“It’s between second and third period now,” Eijirou huffed as they practically sprinted down the hallway. “If we’re lucky, we’ll make it just as teachers are switching classes. Either neither of us will get in trouble, or we both will. All or nothing, dude.”

Bakugou just grunted in response.

They got to the door, and before either of them could catch their breath, he immediately reached out to grab the handle. The door opened, and all the chatter in the room came to a grinding halt. Thankfully there was no sign of a teacher, but heads had swiveled and pretty much all of the students’ eyes were on them.

Eijirou smiled cheerily, “Hey guys!”

Some waved back at him, some went back to what they had been doing without a second thought. But others still were giving them a curious once-over, and that wasn’t the best of signs. Bakugou sulked into the room directly after him, ignoring some raised eyebrows as he headed towards his desk.

As Eijirou approached his seat, Kaminari just stared him down, arms crossed, expression, unimpressed. “...Dude.”

“What?” He slid into his chair.

“What the fuck, dude,” the blond whispered harshly, giving Eijirou a pointed once-over. “You’re like three hours late. Your uniform’s all wrinkly. Your hair’s not even up, you’re all sweaty and gross-looking. And you’re *not* the only one. Just... *what* have you two been *up to* this fine morning?”

“Bro,” Eijirou rolled his eyes. “Only a pervert would jump to that conclusion.”

“Then I guess half this class is perverted.”

Eijirou’s eyes widened. He peered around the room, noting how clumps of students would glance in his direction every now and then. He looked down to avoid any eye contact, a blush growing on his cheek. “Shit. Really?”

“Fraid so,” Kaminari nodded, gravely. Then he shrugged. “A lot of people noticed how close you two have gotten.”

And that was something that Eijirou hadn’t even considered – the consequences of both him and Bakugou showing up late for class – looking as disheveled as they did, no less. Frankly, it didn’t look very good, and he wasn’t sure he could blame any of his classmates if they made jokes about it.

“Now that I think about it, you two *do* kinda have a knack of getting into hard-to-explain situations, don’t you? And...” Kaminari glanced to his right, and then his left, and then he leaned in real close. When he spoke again, his voice was barely above a whisper. “You guys really *are* trying to keep it a secret. Hmm, risky stuff.”

“Not really, just...” Eijirou struggled to find his words. After a pause, he spoke up again. “Just more on the down-low for now. Neither of us had been expecting anyone to figure it out so soon. But if people are already talking behind our back about stuff like that... well, *crap*.”

“I mean, it’s not like there’s a reason to panic, pretty much everyone was joking, except for maybe Mineta, but you know how he is.” Kaminari was trying to pass it off as being casual, but Eijirou wasn’t entirely sure how much of that was truth and how much of it was Kaminari trying to avoid chaos. “I tried to cover you guys too, although I don’t think you two coming in together looking like *that* helped at all.”

“Well, what else were we supposed to do? We weren’t just going to skip an entire day of class!” Eijirou hissed, a little too loudly. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Shouji and Tokoyami look over at them. He ducked his head, bring his voice to a more sensitive volume. “My alarm didn’t go off, that’s literally all this is.”

“Really?” Sero leaned over towards them, seemingly having caught on to the tail-end of their exchange. “Seems unlikely. I mean, what are the odds of that? Both you *and* Bakugou’s alarms didn’t go off?” He grinned, wiggling his eyebrows.

The way he said it was... innuendo-y, but ironic. Not serious, as if Sero had just wanted to get a reaction out of him – a harmless punch on the shoulder, an exasperated ‘quit it already, man’. But still, without even realizing it, he technically wasn’t too far from the truth, and now that Eijirou knew what type of rumors had been spreading around about him and Bakugou, his cheeks felt like they were catching on fire, his mind drawing a complete blank.

“Uhhh yah,” he tried to chuckle, but his voice was coming out a little strained. “Yah, uh. Something like that.”

And that was possibly the worst way he could have responded, because now Sero had this look on his face, his lips pursed, eyes squinted, like he was trying to figure something out. He turned to glance across the room – in Bakugou’s direction – and then his head snapped back too face Eijirou, his eyes wide, as if a realization was just dawning on him.

Oh god.

“Kirishima~!” Pink hands suddenly splayed across his desk, and Eijirou had never been more relieved about a distraction in his life. Ashido rocked back and forth on her heels, a bright smile on her face. “Glad you’re here! You feeling okay? Kaminari was telling everyone about how you’re, like, deathly ill!”

“I’m...?”

Eijirou blinked a few times. He glanced to Kaminari for some sort of an explanation. But Kaminari was just looking right back at him, eyes wide in alarm, like a deer hypnotized in headlights seconds before a collision.

“I feel fine now, don’t worry!” He tried to laugh it off with a little wave of his hand. “Kaminari was exaggerating, I’m sure,” he pressed very pointedly through clenched teeth, turning to the blond in question with raised eyebrows. “Isn’t that so?”

“Well I figured that was probably the case, but you *are* kind of a mess?” Ashido tapped a finger to her chin.

“Yeah, well, you know how it is,” Eijirou shrugged, nonchalant. “Had to book it over here before class started up again.”

“Both you and Bakugou, huh?”

The tone of her voice... it actually seemed innocent enough, not implying anything inappropriate. But, there was something in the way she looked down at him out of the corner of her eye, then over to Bakugou, then back to him, suspiciously, like she was trying to read their minds...

Oh god.

Ashido brought her hands together, the clap making Eijirou jump. “Well I’m glad you’re okay, I was getting a little worried there! I got some homework to finish before algebra, so I’ll be sure to talk to you later!”

“Sure thing!” Eijirou waved her away with a smile that he was sure was oozing with half-assery. As soon as Ashido took her seat, towards the front of the classroom, he swiveled to Kaminari with a harsh whisper, “Oh great, so I’m supposed to be deathly ill now? That was your big cover?”

“I was trying to help!”

Eijirou set his elbows on his desk and planted his forehead in his palms. He let out a little giggle that sounded more manic than anything. “This is so stupid.”

“Tell me about it,” Kaminari patted his back, ‘*there, there*’. “But seriously, if you guys are trying to be on the down-low, you might want to avoid lunch. She looks a little suspicious, and it wouldn’t surprise me if she’s planning to corner you and hound you with questions in the cafeteria.”

“Great, just great,” Eijirou let out a sigh, composing himself, before bringing a finger to nudge Kaminari’s shoulder. “By the way, sorry about the English homework, bro. I know you were counting on me.”

“Don’t worry about it, man, stuff happens,” Kaminari waved his hand in dismissal. “Also, don’t look now, but Bakugou’s definitely looking this way.”

“Really?”

Eijirou snapped his head up and looked longingly across the room. Red met red, hearts fluttered in unison. Bakugou snapped his head away quickly.

Kaminari let out a low whistle. “Not the most subtle of guys, is he?” he muttered, amused.

“Leave him alone,” Eijirou laughed quietly, whacking his shoulder. “He gets flustered, just like everyone else.”

“You don’t say,” Kaminari regarded Bakugou from across the room with what seemed like genuine awe. Then he turned back to Eijirou with a wink. “Wonder what else you can do to make him flustered...?”

“Stop it, you. I told you like a week ago, it’s not like that. That hasn’t changed!”

“Whatever you say, loverboy!”

Just then, the door opened, and Midnight entered the classroom, calling for the beginning of their Hero History course. Eijirou hoped and prayed that everyone would just lose interest in this whole ordeal sometime soon.

But before the class got underway, he just barely heard a mumble coming from his left, under Sero’s breath.

“... *Loverboy*...?”

Oh god.

This was going to be a long day.

Bakugou blinked warily at the scenery around them. “Why the fuck are we up here again?”

“Well, in case you haven’t noticed, we’re in a bit of a *crisis* here,” Eijirou huffed out, sitting criss-crossed next to Bakugou’s feet. He patted the open space next to him, prompting the blond to join him. “I figured that avoiding all of our problems and pretending like they don’t exist was the best course of action.” Eijirou impatiently tore off the lid of the bento he had quickly snatched from the cafeteria.

Bakugou raised an eyebrow, but sat down anyways, their shoulders brushing against each other. He surveyed their surroundings some more, picking up a seaweed onigiri from his tray and taking a bite. Something about the way his mouth was quirked made him look incredibly amused.

“But the fucking *roof*? Seriously, Kirishima?”

“Listen—” Eijirou sighed, leaning his head back so it rested against the wall, “I didn’t have the chance to think about this earlier, because we were kind of in a rush this morning, yeah? But, well, we were both gone at the same time, and then we showed up, *at the same time*, looking like we had just rolled out of bed together...”

“We *had* just rolled out of bed together, dumbass.”

“Exactly!” Eijirou snapped a finger. “It did not look good. At all.”

“So?”

So...?

Was... was Bakugou not getting it? Like, there was no way he was being so calm about something like this, it was a goddamn *crisis*. But Bakugou had never been the best at jokes, or gossip, or social interaction in general, so maybe Eijirou needed to explain himself a little better.

He shook his head as if to clear it, and tried again. “*So*, apparently that got some people talking. Making some... *jokes*, about what we could have been up to.” He picked up some tempura shrimp with his chopsticks, taking a rather ungrateful bite and continuing to talk as he chewed. “I’ve heard some of them, and they are not the most appropriate.”

As understanding dawned on him, Bakugou looked down, a slight blush growing on his cheeks. His jaw was set, teeth clenched. “...So?”

And that entire reaction was a lot more subdued than Eijirou had expected it to be. Eijirou blinked, before eating another piece of tempura. “So, we’re avoiding it.”

The blond took a bite of his food, shrugging tensely. “It was a joke, right? So it doesn’t fucking matter, no one was being serious about it,” he mumbled through the rice. “This’ll all die down eventually.”

“Well, *maybe*, but...”

“Not very fucking manly, running away from something like that,” Bakugou quipped.

Hold up.

At that, Eijirou froze, staring into his bento, deep in thought. And the more he thought about it, the more he realized that *ahhh shit*, Bakugou had a point there. Things like this, silly gossip, it all fades out at some point. Had he been working himself up all day, freaking out over nothing? Running away from confrontation, like some sort of *unmanly* person?

“But that’s not all,” Eijirou murmured. He turned to Bakugou, his eyebrows low in concern.

“Because now they’re thinking about it, aren’t they? Thinking about us, being together. Even if they’re just having some fun, that’ll still make it easier for someone to add two plus two, won’t it?” He lifted the bento and practically shoveled some rice into his mouth. “Like, I’m pretty sure Ashido already actually thinks something is up. And I think Sero overheard me talking with Kaminari, so he’s suspicious too. One person figures it out, and the entire class will know in like two seconds, I guarantee you.”

“So?” It came out more like a grunt than a word.

Eijirou studied him out of the corner of the eye. The way his eyes were still soft, his posture relatively slack, his hair flitting gently in the wind without a care in the world... Eijirou rested his bento in his lap, tilting his head curiously.

“Are you... okay with that?”

Bakugou didn’t respond at first. He just looked out in front of where they were sat, out to the horizon.

Eijirou felt like he was holding his breath for something, anything. Some sort of a reaction, and when none came, he almost spoke up, just to ease his own nerves. But then, something brushed against his hand. He glanced down. It was Bakugou’s pinky, brushing against his, and Eijirou’s heart was fluttering. Their fingers crept closer together, hands were overlapping, intertwining.

Finally, Bakugou cleared his throat. “I... can’t really do PDA.”

Eijirou blinked down to where their hands were joined. “Well. I mean. Clearly, sometimes you can ___”

“But not in public, yeah? I can’t, fucking, put myself out there like that. I’m not even sure I can be comfortable with anything more than *this*,” His fingers squeezed Eijirou’s. “It not some easy thing for me, it doesn’t come naturally. And it probably never will. But if I ever turn away from you, or take my hand away, it’s not because of you. And it’s not because I want us to be a secret either. None of that bullshit, it’s just... I don’t know why, but that’s just how I am. I can’t do that sort of thing, not even for you, sometimes I wish I could but, I just, I can’t...”

“I know.” Eijirou squeezed his hand, giving him an anchor to latch on to, hoping it would reassure

Bakugou. “You don’t have to do any of that for me. It’s okay.”

Bakugou nodded. Took a deep breath, one that was a little shaky. Let it out.

And it really was okay. Eijirou never expected Bakugou to be the type of person who was okay with that sort of lovey-dovey stuff, especially when other people were around. And anyways, talking about this sort of thing, it was important. It cleared the air, made sure that both of them were comfortable and on the same page about everything. And, it meant that Eijirou was learning more and more about Bakugou, and that meant so much to him.

“I don’t want to keep it a fucking secret either,” Bakugou spoke again, his voice tearing through the quiet. “That’s not fair to you. And, I want people to know.”

The fact that Bakugou was considering both of them, left a smile on Eijirou’s lips. He turned to look ahead again with a content sigh. “So, what do we do?”

Bakugou didn’t respond. Maybe he simply didn’t know how to.

“It’s not like we have to tell the whole class,” Eijirou tilted his head in thought. “We tell like, two people, and everyone’ll know in a few minutes anyways. We could book it out of there before chaos ensues. We don’t even have to be there when most people hear about it. Less stress for us.”

“Yeah.”

“We could even do it this evening or something?”

Bakugou took a deep breath, perhaps calming his nerves, and for a second, Eijirou was worried that it was still too soon. But then the blond exhaled, nodded his head slowly. “Yeah.”

This was all a drastically different tune than the day before, but Eijirou wasn’t complaining. Openness like this, between each other and even with their friends, it was good. Like they wouldn’t be restricted anymore. He leaned his head against Bakugou’s shoulder, closed his eyes. Squeezed his hand. He’d been doing that a lot lately.

“What changed?”

“Hm?” Bakugou’s voice rumbled in his ears.

Eijirou shrugged. “Yesterday before when we went to lunch we talked, and neither of us really knew how open we wanted to be. And now, you’re okay if the entire class knows. You *want* everyone to know. Which is great, it really is, because I think that’s what I want too. But, what changed your mind?”

Bakugou was quiet at first. It honestly wouldn’t have surprised Eijirou if he didn’t have an answer at all, at least not a clear-cut one. So when Bakugou did speak, and so unflinchingly, it came as a bit of a surprise.

“It’s because of you.”

Eijirou’s eyebrows knitted together, confused. “Me? What did I do?”

“Well it’s not like you did one fucking miracle and now everything’s okay. It’s been a lot of things, building up.”

“Like what?”

“Like...” Bakugou waved his hands around, almost a little flustered, clearly knowing the gist of what he wanted to say but not quite sure how to word it. “You keep telling me how much you’ve seen me grow, but I couldn’t tell a single difference. But all these weeks, months of getting to know you, feeling like I actually have someone I can count on to always be by my side. It made me want to be better. Be more like you.” His voice had dropped, so low that it almost wasn’t there, but there was an intensity behind his words that was chilling.

“But it’s not just you who’s noticed it,” he continued. “Yesterday, someone told me that other people, they can see it too. And if other people see it, if they’ve noticed how you’ve changed me, made me a better person, then maybe it’s true. Maybe.... maybe I’m not...” Bakugou ducked his head. His words were strained. “Maybe I’m really not a bad person anymore. Maybe I...”

Bakugou trailed off at that, but there was something in his voice, this raw emotion – pain, and hope that was so strong that Eijirou felt the beginnings of tears stinging his eyes, and it was as if Eijirou could finish the sentence himself.

Maybe I really am worthy of being loved by someone like you.

And the fact that Bakugou had to realize something like this in the first place, as if he had thought that he wasn’t the type of person who deserved to be loved, as if falling in love with him hadn’t been the easiest thing that Eijirou had ever done...

Eijirou couldn’t help but latch onto Bakugou, bring his arm around his waist, press his forehead into the crook of Bakugou’s neck. “Of course you’re not a bad person, Bakugou,” he whispered. “You’ve never been a bad person. I think maybe it’s just taken you this long to realize it.”

The air between them was quiet and still, but there was an intangible energy flowing between them, an aching in Eijirou’s heart to be closer. To let Bakugou know just how amazing he was, how appreciated and loved he was. He lifted his head off of Bakugou’s shoulder, pressed their foreheads together. There was something about sitting like this that was so intense, so intimate. They were in such close proximity, holding each other, on equal ground, just the two of them in their own little world. Eijirou wanted in this moment forever, never let these feelings go away.

“I also didn’t change you,” he breathed. “Yeah sure, maybe I have encouraged you a little bit here and there. Help smooth over some of the rougher edges. But your heart, your soul, it’s all still you. This person who you feel like you can be proud of, it’s who you’ve always been in your core. It was just... covered up for a while. So really, it’s your mask that’s changing. It’s cracking, falling away, and now, for maybe the first time, everyone can see you for who you really are. Including yourself. And it wasn’t me who did that. *You* decided to do that, all by yourself. I am so proud of you.”

Everything went quiet again, a sliver of time frozen in place. It was so, so slight, but Bakugou was trembling against him, his hand gripping onto Eijirou’s with such strength that he could feel his fingers turning cold.

“I love you,” Bakugou’s hoarse voice broke through the still air.

It was just as much an ‘I love you’ as it was a ‘thank you’, and the second it was uttered, all of the pent-up energy that was surrounding them released at once. After a few steady breaths, Bakugou pressed his nose into Eijirou’s shoulder, pulling him into a tight embrace.

Eijirou couldn’t help his grin. Couldn’t help the pure joy that filled him up, couldn’t help how it engulfed him completely, saltwater stinging his waterline.

“I love you, too.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks to tumblr user honey-baes for lovely art of [these boys being cute](#)!!

Telling Secrets To The Dark

Chapter Notes

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

It started with just a gentle brushing against his hand, so slight he might have thought it was unintentional. But when Eijirou glanced up at Bakugou, whose eyes were set determinedly ahead, he knew it hadn't been a mistake.

There was no table to hide under this time. No place to go for cover. They were out in the open.

It wasn't that he was nervous. They had talked about this. Tonight, they were going to sit in the common space, and as everyone else talked about the day, they were going to hold hands. That way, they wouldn't have to make a big announcement of it. They just had to awkwardly wait around until someone noticed. That's all. No big deal.

Okay, maybe he was a little nervous. That's because his brain wouldn't shut up. Eijirou took a few deeper breaths, hoping to slow his brain down a bit. Take it easy, focus on one thing at a time. First of all, no one was going to think twice about their hands barely touching. For this to work, they had to actually hold hands, and make it obvious.

Bakugou seemed to be on the same page, for just then, his hand slid over Eijirou's. It was sudden, and blunt, and it really should have made Eijirou's nerves feel even more on fire. But, really, it felt more like a dream than anything. A part of his brain felt almost tranquil. He was ready for this. If Bakugou's bravery was anything to go by, he was ready, too.

Eijirou scanned the room. Most of their classmates were either unwinding a few couches over, or studying at the work tables at the other end of the hall. However, Ashido was lying on a couch directly to their left, playing on her phone, occasionally offering a snarky reply to Hagakure and Kaminari, who were chatting across the coffee table. Eijirou would have joined in their casual discussion, except that his breath was caught in his throat, his heartbeat pounding too loudly, for him to contribute anything meaningful. So instead, he nodded a few times, hummed in agreement every once in a while.

The way they were just passively sitting around, waiting for something to happen outside of their control... it made him feel a bit jumpy. It wasn't predictable. It could happen at literally any time. Or, it could just not at all. Maybe, he was just getting himself all worked up for nothing to happen. What would they do then?

... Maybe they hadn't thought this through enough.

In a moment of bravery, Eijirou overturned his hand. Bakugou's palm slid on top of his so effortlessly, fingers interlacing, like a jigsaw puzzle effortlessly falling into place. Almost immediately, his fingers clamped down onto Bakugou's in a death grip, and he was sure his knuckles were turning a little white, but Bakugou's probably were, too, so it was okay. He rubbed his thumb gently across Bakugou's, in a comforting gesture. He wasn't sure which of them he was comforting more.

The warmth, the pressure, in such a public space, was a bit startling, and Eijirou found himself peering around again, just to see if any wandering eyes had noticed this time. If anyone had given a second glance at how closely they were sitting, how their hands were overlapped.

No one had, not yet. But, someone could. And that thought made Eijirou's head spin a bit, and brought a sheepish smile to his lips. Now, they just had to wait.

There they sat, hand in hand, for what was probably no more than a few minutes. But it felt like hours, decades, *eons*. And once he overcame the initial anxiety, Eijirou kinda wanted to laugh. Because he and Bakugou had been sitting in the middle of the common room holding hands for at least five minutes and *no one had noticed*. On one hand, for how smart his classmates were, they sure were oblivious. But, on the other hand, Eijirou couldn't really blame them for not noticing something that they weren't looking for in the first place.

But then, Kaminari just had to ask a question about their English project.

Without looking up from her phone, Ashido shrugged. "I dunno, ask Kirishima".

And at that, Kaminari turned his attention to Eijirou. "Right, so, for the story part, do you know if we're supposed to use past tense, or—"

And, Kaminari noticed. Kaminari noticed immediately, his question trailing off, mouth forming an 'o' as his eyes locked on their joined hands.

And then, Hagakure let out a piercing squeal.

"What? No way. *No way*, are you two serious?"

Bakugou turned away, his eyebrows drawn in a scowl, his cheeks and the tips of his ears becoming flushed with bright red. "Course we're serious," he mumbled. He sounded a bit like he wanted to die.

But his hand stayed put, holding Eijirou's, for all to see.

"Oh my god," Ashido stared, her jaw dropped. She scrambled to a sitting position, practically bouncing up and down in excitement, finger pointing at them frantically. "Oh my god, I knew it! I knew it, I called it! I did, didn't I? Ages ago." She pointed her thumb over towards Kaminari. "He said I was crazy and that nothing had changed between you two but I was like 'nooo, there's definitely something happening there' and yes there was and I was right and now you two are a thing and *see*? I'm not crazy!"

Eijirou let out a nervous chuckle. He tried to smile widely, to hide his nerves, but his grin probably came across as more sheepish than anything. "Well..." he brought his free hand to scratch the back of his neck a little awkwardly, "It's all a recent development, it's not like we've been trying to hide things. Only since yesterday—"

"*Actually*," Kaminari interrupted, crossing his arms with a smirk. "These two have been dancing around each other for *ages*, of course I noticed. You have absolutely *no* idea how insufferable these past few weeks have been because of it. It was agony."

"You mean, you *knew*? You *lied* to me?" Ashido nearly shrieked, leaning over to swat at his shoulder lightheartedly. "You knew this whole time, and you didn't tell me?"

"Well... yeah?" Kaminari laughed, bringing his hands up in defense against her.

"I can't believe you! Meanie!"

"It wasn't exactly my business to tell, though? What did you want me to do, expose them in the group chat before they even had a chance to work out their feelings for themselves? I couldn't do

that to my bros!”

“I... I mean I *guess*, but still!” Ashido pouted, but she couldn’t seem to hold such a sour expression for long, because then she let out a giggle, turning back to Bakugou and Eijirou with the widest grin on her face. “So what started it all?”

Eijirou’s eyes widened. He hadn’t thought this far ahead yet. He glanced over at Bakugou – whose equally startled expression offered no help whatsoever. “Uhhhhh, well...”

“Hey, Sero! Perfect timing!” Ashido shouted across the room, waving to their classmate as he stepped off of the elevator. But before Eijirou had a chance to sigh in relief at the change in subject, Ashido continued, “Kirishima and Bakugou are dating!”

And the rest of the room fell totally silent, all eyes on them.

“Ashido!” Eijirou squeaked, ducking his head to avoid all the scrutinizing gazes. Beside him, Bakugou groaned.

“What? You’re the ones holding hands!”

“They’re *what*?” Sero yelled back, even though Eijirou suspected that he heard exactly what Ashido had said.

“Come see!”

At that, Sero nearly sprinted over, a few other curious students trailing behind him – Jirou, Uraraka, Asui, and Ojiro to name a few, and the increasing number of eyes on them sure did make Eijirou’s hands sweaty.

Sero’s eyes landed immediately on their hands. He glanced, dumbfounded, from Eijirou, to Bakugou, then back, like he couldn’t quite wrap his head around it. “So you’re...” He cleared his throat, trying his best at words, “You two really are...?”

“Dating?” Eijirou offered, trying his best to seem nonchalant even as his heartbeat was wildly out of control.

At his words, the room itself seemed to wait with baited breath.

All eyes were on him, and on Bakugou, and on them, being together, and the pressure was nearly too much. But when, he peered over at Bakugou, sheepishly, as if to ask for help – and as their gazes met, all he saw in Bakugou’s eyes was a fiery, steadfast resolve. It was mesmerizing. Calming. Comforting. *Certain*.

He could feel his own smile reaching from ear to ear, the butterflies fluttering madly in his chest. “Yeah. Yeah, we are.”

Eijirou was pretty sure that his heart would never again feel as full as it did in that moment. Being able to say it, out loud, for the world to hear, was more than he could have ever imagined. The happiness that coursed through him, the pride that he felt for Bakugou, was so overwhelming. And as their eyes met, everyone surrounding them melted into the background. Despite being the center of attention, surrounded by surprised gasps and bewildered confusion, Eijirou could not take his eyes away.

Sero was the first to speak up again. “I... honestly I did not see this coming, but, in hindsight...” He cleared his throat.

“I know, right?” Ashido groaned, exasperated. “Just look at them! Lost in each other’s eyes or whatever. This was bound to happen eventually. But seriously,” she turned back to them, demanding Eijirou’s line of sight, “we need details. You have to tell us *everything*.”

Eijirou could feel Bakugou shift uncomfortably beside him.

“Well...”

“Like, when did this start?” Ashido suggested. “Who confessed first? Was there like, a singular moment where you gazed longingly into each other’s eyes and just *knew*? Or was it more gradual?”

Eijirou blinked. “Uh... could you repeat all of that, maybe like, one at a time or—?”

“Ashido,” Kaminari laughed, “you don’t have to interrogate them!”

But despite Kaminari’s attempts to deter the questions, other voices began piping in, all overlapping each other, it was difficult to tell who was talking and when.

“This is so exciting isn’t it?”

“You owe me 500 yen.”

“Wait, since when are Kirishima and Bakugou—?”

“Since yesterday!” Eijirou tried answering, but it was no use – his voice was easily lost in the other murmurs that surrounded them.

“Who’d have thought the first couple of Class 1-A would involve Bakugou?”

“Yeah but also, with Kirishima, it kinda makes sense, doesn’t it?”

“Well, *maybe*, but how did Bakugou manage to score a date before the rest of us?”

Bakugou growled a little at that.

“Don’t be rude! I think it’s sweet.”

“Congratulations, you two!”

“You think they’re still virgins, or...?”

“Mineta I swear to god, you can’t just say shit like that.”

“That is highly inappropriate.”

Bakugou looked over to Eijirou, his wide, panic-stricken eyes twitching, and Eijirou immediately understood. If they didn’t leave soon, someone was gonna die.

“For someone who wants to be cool, you sure do nothing to help your cause, grape boy.”

“I vote we boot Mineta off the island.”

“I second that.”

“Me three.”

And just like that, the focus of the entire room shifted.

Which, larger groups did lend themselves to conversation derailment, so it wasn't entirely surprising. But what was jarring, was that Bakugou and Kirishima were somehow left largely forgotten about. Going from being the center of attention to no eyes being on them at all was certainly a drastic change – one that Bakugou seemed determined to use to his advantage, if his standing and tugging on Kirishima's hand was anything to go by.

"Come on," he muttered.

"What? Are we seriously just, ditching?"

"Mmhm."

Eijirou rose to his feet quickly and quietly, so as to not draw attention to himself. "There's no way this is gonna work," he muttered as they crept their way toward the elevator.

Bakugou pressed the elevator button, the doors opened, they shuffled inside. Eijirou quickly stole a peek across the room, where Ashido had stood to her feet and was addressing the room, "All in favor of booting Mineta off the island, say 'Aye'," followed by a chorus of 'Aye's. And then the doors slid shut.

Eijirou blinked in surprise. "It worked."

"They're too busy being fucking idiots, of course it worked." Bakugou selected their floor. "Felt like an animal in a goddamn zoo back there."

"Ahh yeah, sorry about that." He squeezed Bakugou's hand. "They're just happy for us, I guess!"

Bakugou nodded, swallowing a lump in his throat.

"You okay?" Eijirou leaned to nudge his shoulder against Bakugou's. "Something on your mind?"

At first, Bakugou just kept staring ahead. But Eijirou waited patiently. Eventually, Bakugou lowered his eyes.

"They really were happy for us, weren't they?"

"Well, yeah!" The redhead smiled, "Of course they were!"

Bakugou huffed.

Eijirou tilted his head to the side. "Bakugou...?"

Bakugou didn't respond. Just kept his gaze lowered.

And that's when it hit Eijirou – the conversation they had the day before, about Bakugou's insecurities involving their relationship. Something Bakugou had said played itself on repeat in his mind.

"...the first thing that people will wonder is if I treat you like shit."

Eijirou couldn't stop the feeling in his heart, like it was sinking just a bit.

"Hey..." he breathed out, encouragingly, his grip tightening even more on Bakugou's hand.

The doors slid open, cutting off anything he could have said in the privacy of the elevator. So instead, Eijirou pulled Bakugou out after him until they were standing in front of his door. He

rummaged for his key and unlocked the door, swinging it open and stepping inside, closing the door firmly behind them.

And he took a step towards Bakugou, bringing his arms loosely around his waist and resting his chin on his shoulder.

“This ok?”

Bakugou’s hum in response was all he needed.

“Good,” he muttered.

There they stood in the middle of the room, embracing each other. The silence around them was soft, not oppressive, like a weighted blanket. It was comfortable. Just the two of them again.

“Of course they’re happy for us,” Eijirou whispered, his arms around Bakugou’s torso squeezing just a little more. “And I’ve told you this before, but I’ll keep tellin’ ya for however long you need to hear it – you are not a bad person, Bakugou. No one in this class thinks that about you. So, they’re happy for us. They aren’t gonna worry about me or anything.”

Bakugou hummed again, leaning his head against Eijirou’s shoulder, bringing his hands to rest on Eijirou’s hips.

“It’s just... really fucking weird. I’m not used to that sort of thing.”

“That’s okay. There’s gonna be a lot of stuff to get used to, for both of us.”

“Yeah.”

There they stayed, hugging, taking in every sensation around them. It was a beautiful moment, serene, their soft breaths the only sound. Until a *bzz* filled the air. Then, another. And another. And another.

“Your fucking phone is blowing up again.”

“Gahh, I know, I know, I’ve been trying to ignore it.” Eijirou pulled away and grabbed his phone out of his back pocket. He paused to read the notifications. “It’s Kaminari. He’s asking us where we went.”

Bakugou snorted, taking a seat on the bed. Eijirou followed suit. His phone vibrated again.

“Oh jeez. Apparently, when they realized we’d left, everyone started asking *him* questions about us instead. Some of which are not appropriate.”

“Jesus Christ,” Bakugou plopped his back on the bed, his legs still hanging over the side.

“Some of them just really need a hobby,” Eijirou muttered, shaking his head in amused disbelief. “And gossiping about classmates does not count as a hobby.”

“No fucking kidding.”

“I’ll just tell him we’ll deal with it later. Put all the rumors to rest or whatever.”

“Hm.”

As Eijirou sat criss-crossed on the side of the bed, typing up the reply, that familiar silence

surrounded them once more. Then he flung his phone onto the night stand and sighed. He didn't know how they were going to appease their classmates while also keeping private things private, but they would just have to cross that bridge when they got to it, right?

"Let them wonder."

Eijirou looked over his shoulder to where Bakugou lay. "Hm?"

"It's not our fucking responsibility to worry about what they think of us, right?" Bakugou shrugged. "It's not their business, but if they want to waste all their goddamn time being nosey and gross teenagers, then let them, I don't care."

Eijirou blinked. "That, um..." he trailed off, reclining back so he and Bakugou were laying side-by-side. "That doesn't really sound like you, Mr. I-Have-A-Reputation-To-Uphold."

Bakugou huffed again, exasperated.

Eijirou let out a little laugh. Though, he knew Bakugou was right. It was their relationship, after all. It wasn't like they owed anyone an explanation. He smiled, to himself more than anything. The thought was really freeing. Turning to his side, he reached out his hand to grab Bakugou's. The blond mirrored his movements until they were facing each other. Eijirou watched carefully as their fingers unfurled, palms pressing together, captivated.

Looking at how their fingers fitted together so perfectly, Eijirou couldn't help but be reminded of the night that Bakugou had taken his hand. It had only been a few weeks, but it felt like an entire lifetime ago. He wondered if Bakugou was being reminded of the same thing.

It seemed as though, every step along the way, their relationship had been birthed from necessity – to escape the bad guys, to keep the nightmares at bay. No one else had any idea just how much that night had affected Bakugou, how much it had shaken him, changed him. How terrified he had been, how he was still suffering from the repercussions even weeks later. No one else needed to know that, either. That was their secret.

In a way, secrets were what had started this all, weren't they? Vulnerability, troubled memories, past regrets. Secrets, shared just between the two of them. With these secrets, came trust. And somewhere along the way, they lead to something more. A deeper connection between them. Something that was unshakable.

Their friends didn't need to know about the nightmares. Their friends didn't need to know about the vulnerabilities, or the insecurities, or the regrets. Their friends didn't need to know about the affectionate moments they shared, the intimacy. They didn't need to know about the soft kisses, the gentle whisperings, the 'I love you's meant for each other's ears.

Their friends didn't need to know any of it.

Those sorts of things were only meant to be shared between the two of them and the night.

And the night was really good at keeping secrets.

-FIN-

Well, guys. Exactly one year later, and this is it. The end of 2am Knows All Secrets.

This fic has been such a big part of my life, for an entire year, and honestly, having to end it was an emotional roller coaster. But I am proud of what I have created, proud of all of the people it has inspired. But knowing that it will continue to do so into the future is what motivated me to stick with it until the very end.

I just want to thank you guys so, so much for all of the comments, and fanart, and messages. Seeing fanart inspired by my fic, and reading the lovely words of encouragement that you left me, really gave me the confidence and inspiration to see this fic through to the end!

If you enjoyed this story as much as I enjoyed writing it, if this story has left you with something, if it has inspired you in some way, please let me know by leaving a comment, or reaching out to me on my Tumblr, [Unbreakable-Red-Riot](#)! Especially if you draw fanart, please let me know so I can add a link in the fic!

Once again, I just wanna thank you all. This has been such an amazing journey, and I absolutely could not have done it without your support!

Until next fic!

Works inspired by this one

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!