## Schedule (?)

Ch1 + 2 + 3 -> Twice

Ch 4 -> Dabi

Ch 5 -> Kurogiri

Ch 6 -> Shigaraki

Ch 7 -> Dabi (reprise)

Ch 8 -> Spinner

Ch 9 -> Aizawa

Ch 10 (?) -> Midoriya

## Twice

### **Festival**

“Ooooh! Look! Look!” Twice tore the paper off the wall and thrust it into his boss’s face. “They got festivals here and stuff! // Betchu it’s gonna be lame!”

“Hm, shall we go? We only got to see the fireworks from afar last time, didn’t we?”

The blond jerked to a stop, turning to Midoriya and looked wholly confused.

“I uh…”

He stared at his employer for a moment longer, and seeing his calm expression, closed his mouth and nodded curtly. The memory of flashing lights and a weight on top of him made his entire body run hot and his mouth dry.

“Yeah, that sounds great.” He took a deep breath and grinned back, “Yosh! I’m sure the others have no lives so let’s invite everyone! // They’re all going to die alone!”

“...No,” Midoriya said, dragging his eyes up from his chest to his eyes. “Just the two of us.”

And how could Twice ever say no?

### 

## Spinner

### **Accidentally Sign Your Life Away**

"You can't keep doing this," he heard a young man say. "And more importantly, can you kill this guy next for me?"

Iguchi felt his heart stop. What did he just walk into? He was just out to grab something to drink, but now, he was in the center of something. It was like a badly written manga or something, where the main character ends up stumbling into this huge crime-thing from a totally normal occurrence.

He took a step back, and a can was crushed under his foot. His heart caught painfully in his throat.

In an instant, he was tackled down.

"You... How much did you hear?"

Oh no. Iguchi thought. Oh no, he was going to die. Right then and there, he was going to die. There was a guy who was made of purple skin and stitches that had his foot right on his neck. The carefully applied pressure, in addition to his growing panic, made it hard to breath. He could feel his eyes water and burn. He didn’t really have anything to live for but that didn’t mean he wanted to die.

"I didn't hear anything about a murder plot!"

And his mouth was going to make sure that he died in a gorey and painful way.

"Wait, Dabi," another man, but the voice was a little high, so maybe a little younger, said. "I think we can use him."

No, no, Iguchi thought, rather than be involved with whatever scary plot they had, it would be better to die. Please let him die instead. No need for being saved needed. He was fine here. Look, look how fine he was. He would do everything in his power to forget about this incident as soon and as fast as he could.

"...You sure? I can get rid of him in an instant."

Iguchi tried really, really hard not to cry. Okay, that might not work, but he would do everything if it meant that he wouldn’t sit and bawl like a lost child at the park.

"Hm, I think he can make that decision for himself."

A hand came down to his hair, and he met eyes with a pair of spring green eyes. With the streetlight behind him, it gave him an ethereal glow. That smile made his internal organs crawl in on themselves and scream. He watched his entire life flash before his eyes. There wasn’t anything particularly amazing and awe-inspiring. Since he wasn’t an amazing or awe-inspired person. But-

"Good evening," he said, "I'm afraid I can't let you go after what you've heard."

Iguchi's first impression on Midoriya Izuku was that he had fucking baby fat on his face, but was making murder plots in the middle of the night, behind a convenience store. Slowly, the man on top of him got off. He took a few steps back, and even though Iguchi was the stranger, eyed the young man he was with warily.

And well, if a guy with scares like patches-here was wary of a kid who looked like he came crawling out of the nursery (with a murder plot, his mind added helpfully), Iguchi felt righted in his gut wrenching fear that a fate worse than death was staring him in the face, and smiling. Sweetly. In this alleyway, tucked away from the light of society and the safety of streetlights, no heroes would find them.

In a word, Iguchi was fucked.

"So let's strike a deal. If you do something for me, I'll do something for you. I’m sure a guy like you have a few people you want to silence," baby-faced murderer said. If he was a salesperson, the only thing he would sell was death.

Iguchi looked at him, and slowly got up to his feet. He wasn't sure what either of their quirks were, but they were confident. While Iguchi didn’t spend much time outside, he did spend a lot of time day-dreaming of what would happen if he met a specific brand of Bad Guy. In front of him, plain and simple, were the type of Bad Guy he thought only gave good, upright citizens and heroes pain. Not him. Not mediocre guys who had no future ahead of him.

So he was certain of one thing. If he played this wrong, he had a feeling that he was going to die painfully. The guys in front of him just made him feel like they were going to kill someone and probably commit more crimes on the way. So like, adding another body, adding Iguchi’s body, to that mess was not anything to them.

"And... And if I say no?"

“We’ll kill you, here and now,” the child murderer explained, all gentle gaze and small smile.

Spinner licked his lips.

"What... Why me?"

Green eyes blinked at him, surprised. Like Spinner was the strange one for asking.

"You look bored."

Bored? Was he bored? Was he really bored? Did he have nothing to do?

Nonscenese. He had to go home. He had to check the hero forums, because there was a thread going on concerning the recent change in the Hero Association's Grand Brass. He had to check social media and see how the people he graduated from high school with are still pretending to be happy when all they've done was become office drones. He had so many things to do, so many people to hate, and it was such a pain to make the time and effort to come outside and grab something to eat because he was a very busy man, who was very busy doing things that he-

"Alright," Spinner nodded. "What... Did you have in mind?"

Midoriya smiled, a bright smile that fit perfectly on his young face. It was so bright, his black-eye didn't look at all out-of-place, like a kid who was about to go home and brag to his mom that he won a fight or something.

"We're going to go hero-watching,” the young man said.

"...Huh?"

### **Botched (1)**

“Spinner, get back!”

Spinner jerked around, “Huh?”

And just like that, the man sprinted into him, running him down. A quirk that made his chest expand into the front of a car was something that this man had no qualms of using to run people down. Spinner went sprawling onto his back, losing his breath on impact and watched the money run away upside down from where he was still trying to pull air into his lungs. After a few seconds, which he was still trying to get his shit together, Dabi and Midoriya came running up to him.

“Damn it,” Midoriya gritted his teeth, his eyes electricity and bright, even in his disappointment. He took a sigh, as he rubbed his neck.

Dabi, who looked ready to sprint-or perhaps, burn the entire town down to smoke the rat out, looked at Midoriya, furrowed brows. He didn’t say anything, but somehow, Midoriya knew what the question was.

“No, we lost this time,” the curly-haired man said, shaking his head. He looked down to Spinner, “Are you okay?”

Was he… Was he okay? He was breathing better than he was before. But that was scary. He almost died. That guy, who ran over him, used his quirk to run him down into the dirt without a second glance. If he died or not, he didn’t care.

“Of course he is,” Dabi snorted back, “He didn’t even try to stop him.”

“Don’t be like that,” Midoriya said, his gaze warm and at the same time, condescending. No one could be understanding and gentle like Midoriya could be and still make him feel even more useless. “We all start somewhere.”

A hand came out to grab the front of Midoriya’s chest, and he yanked him forward. Briefly, Spinner thought that, if he didn’t die then and there, he was going to be collecting his employers dust to send to his family. Or something.

Whatever, the point was that someone was going to die. It was supposed to be carman over there, but since Spinner fucked up, it was probably going to be him.

“And next time,” Dabi said, face inches from Midoriya as he shook him hard, “will be your last.”

The young man blinked at him, and despite being in the hands of a furnace, smiled back.

“Be careful, Dabi,” he said quietly, “Or else someone might think you’ll notice when I’m gone.”

With that, Dabi threw Midoriya back onto the ground and turned away.

“I’ll collect my pay tomorrow. Don’t be late.”

And he left without bothering to wait for a reply.

With a sigh, the employee got up. He turned to the lizardman, looking about as amiable as he did when he asked Spinner for his life, all those months ago.

“Ready, free labor?”

### **Car Driver**

“...Spinner,” Midoriya said, in a tone that made Spinner’s entire body tense up in preparation for an incredible amount of stress, “Do you know how to drive?”

The lizardman blinked and then shook his head.

Midoriya sighed deeply, and took a long drag from his cigarette. He blew out all the smoke, and Spinner, who already knew that he was never going to escape, gave a long sigh.

“Alright, I’ll work with it,” he said.

Midoriya gave a breathless laugh, one as small as the smoke from his cigarette, and disappearing just as fast.

“I suppose that’s all I could ask for,” he said, rubbing the back of his head. “Thank you. It’ll make our jobs easier.”

But Spinner wouldn’t have never guessed that he meant that he needed to be adept the following week.

### **Q’s about payment**

“What’s all the money for?” Spinner asked one day.

Midoriya stilled for a second, tilting his head with a small frown. His eyebrows creased, just a little bit, and Spinner couldn’t help but feel like the room was getting colder.

“Why do you ask?” he asked, sounding as though this was a normal question.

A cold shudder ran down his spine, and it almost felt like there was a knife to his neck.

“Ah, I was … just curious,” Spinner quickly stammered out. “I was just… just uhn… It’s just that, you’re… you’re really smart. And it really feels like you know like, everything and everyone and all the things that they’ve been doing around here.”

Midoriya’s eyes were wide and open, like a curious child, but without any of the innocence from the sentiment. Spinner couldn’t lift his eyes up, feeling as though he would lose them sooner.

“So if you… if you really wanted a lot of money, you would have it, but you don’t… You don’t feel desperate for money,” he tried to explain.

The more people that Spinner had interacted from these meetings, the more blood that he spilled, the more he was beginning to understand what people were really like. Moreso than people who type in forums and spam in games, the people who smelled like blood were replacing his original thoughts about humanity.

In some places, heroes just don’t exist. Some places just never see light. Things that are simple when he said them aloud but punctuated by the splash of red.

“So I was … wondering then, what the money was for.”

“...Spinner, greed and ambition goes hand in hand,” Midoriya said, “and if you want to live, you need to have some level of both of those.”

He took a quick whiff as he stood up, and made his way over to Spinner. The older man tensed as Midoriya raised his leg to rest on the couch cushion next to him. He leaned over, and sitting down like this, they are almost at eye level. Midoriya exhaled all the smoke in his face.

The lizard choked, his eyes watering as he leaned back, and Midoriya laughed.

“You got off with a whiff today, Spinner, but if you’re not capable of handling the consequences, you shouldn’t say anything. We call that street-smarts, you know. The ability to know when to shut your mouth, and when to cover your ambition,” he said with a smile deadlier than any weapon, “is the ability that will keep you alive, free labor.”

And for a guy who was dragged around in exchange for his silence, Spinner felt like this was a lesson he still had yet to learn.

### **Q's About Dabi**

“He’s right, you know,” Spinner said quietly. “Dabi can just betray you.” In fact, thinking of how Dabi was like an active bomb, ready to detonate at any second and take everything out with him, Spinner never understood how someone as careful as Midoriya would keep him so close.

Midoriya nodded, “He could.”

The man nodded back, thinking and truly believing that he had let Midoriya to see the light.

“But I don’t think he will.”

The lizardman turned to stare at him, and the young man smiled back. The way he smiled, it looked like he could have been a random kid walking home from school, instead of a young man walking out of a crime scene, wiping blood off his knuckles with an All Might handkerchief.

“Dabi isn’t a liar,” he said. “And he said that he’ll protect me until our contract runs out. So far, he hasn’t lied yet, so I don’t see why I should think that he’ll start now.”

“Most people don’t want to die, and they take measures to prevent their life from ending prematurely,” Spinner deadpanned, and Midoriya laughed outright.

“Yeah, I guess so,” he said. “But I don’t want to live like that. Besides, Dabi… I don’t know, I feel like if Dabi betrayed me, I might be happier.”

Someone who just tortured a man and his entire group, leaving them crippled and babbling incoherently, should not be capable of such an innocent thought. It was disjarring, but looking at the smile Midoriya gave his ice cream as he took a bite, knew he wasn’t lying.

Not for the first time, he would think that Midoriya didn’t belong on this side of the world.

### **Spinner & Aizawa**

Spinner, at the very least, could say that he did learn his lessons. Walking like a ghost, he kept an eye on his surroundings as he made his way from the convenience store back to his apartment.

He wasn’t about to end up in the debt of another dangerous demon with the face of a child.

“Are you going to take me?”

His steps stopped cold, hearing the voice of said demon with the face of a child, and all the air in his lungs turned to ice.

“It’s okay. I won’t fight it.”

He peaked over, and indeed, there was his boss. His Midoriya, standing in front of a suspicious man in all black. From the manilla folders, Spinner could tell that there was an information exchange of some sort. But still, he didn’t know what to do, or what to say.

Was Midoriya getting taken in? By that man? Was it an undercover cop? Did someone rat Midoriya out? If Midoriya went to jail, what did that leave the rest of them?

Spinner almost hit himself, his employer was about to get arrested? Killed? Whatever it was, it was possible that he never saw him again. His debt and secrets would nerve get out. Which was stupid, since this was Midoriya. Midoriya was always prepared.

Even when it didn’t make any sense for him to be prepared he was prepared. It was the hardest part about him to deal with. His infinite calm and steady even if he could look like a ball of anxiety. He could smile like an angel while breaking bones. Spinner knew. Spinner was there.

So Spinner tried to convince himself that he wasn’t a coward for leaving Midoriya there. He was a good employee who trusted his employer. That’s it.

### **C**

## Dabi

### **3rdish meeting**

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“...Ewww,” Twice said with a big frown, “That looks awful.”

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### **habitual**

The number of places where he could use his fire had decreased.

The fire on his fingertips died as his eyes found the fried chicken restaurant on the second floor. Shit, he liked eating there. They just got the tenth stamp on their card, so they were going to get the jumbo wings next.

Dabi sighed back, because it shouldn't matter. It really shouldn't matter. Fried chicken shouldn't matter.

But still, the target escaped. Having preferences could really tie up to be a pain in the ass.

He whipped his phone out, "Spinner, he's going to you."

"Huh?!?"

He supposed that was why Midoriya sent him out with a single-pinch hitter like Spinner.

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"Dabi, Spinner," Midoriya called out, "Good work today."

Spinner shot Dabi a look, but nodded and didn't say anything other than, "Yeah, it was fine."

"I let him get away," Dabi blurted out, feeling weird to get complimented when he messed up. Why couldn't Midoriya just be like everyone else? Even when things don't go wrong, he should be upset and angry and in general, an asshole.

"No, you drove him to Spinner, and Spinner took care of it, right?" Midoriya asked. "We didn't catch the eye of law enforcement or heroes, and we got all the information that we came for."

Like that, he just sounded like an ignorant idiot. That's where it should have ended, and then, Dabi would be able to calmly dissociate himself from the situation. He worked for assholes or idiots, and nothing in his life would change. He wouldn't change.

"But, since you guys were in the area, I thought that it would be nice to get some fried chicken for our midnight reward," Midoriya said.

It would have been fine, but his knowing gaze rested on Dabi's face. Their gaze locked, and this was the part that bothered him the most. This was the part that stuck with him the most. This was the part that made this stop being a job and made it interesting.

Midoriya fucking knew.

### **Jacket**

"Thanks for the jacket," Midoriya said, hading a gift bag towards Dabi.

"... Don't want it."

Midoriya left it by his feet. Dabi never wore it again, or at least not until the smell of Mudoriya's detergent and cigarettes left it.

Because he hated cigarettes, obviously.

### **Sick**

What a fucking joke.

Dabi turned his head into the mattress, growling and sighing in absolute misery.

He can’t even get up. He feels absolutely awful. Laying on the side, he can’t even remember the last time he had gotten so sick-

No, that’s a lie. He remembered. It was a long time ago, when he was still a brat who cared about earning someone else’s affection and pride. It was a long time ago and he didn’t want to remember it. The last time he tried so hard for someone else was something he wanted to be burned out of his memory. Sweating bullets, he hoped that he doesn’t set the fucking bed on fire again.

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There was a hand in his hair, and he knew that this was a dream.

“Wow, the great strong and amazing Dabi, bedridden because of a cold-”

“Get out if you’re not going to help.”

His eyes opened, blearily. It must be a dream. There was no way someone would be here with him, right now, working to make him feel better or give him any form of comfort.

It was such a comfort that he could gag.

“Dabi, it’s okay, just go back to sleep.”

It honestly disgusted him that his heart still looked for things like this. It was even worse that his mind immediately jumped to use his current employer to fill that vacancy inside of him.

There’s no reason for him to be here. There was, no matter how soft those green eyes were, how warm his smiles were, or how soft his tone could get, that would lead to him coming over to Dabi’s place to play nurse for him. He had, in his arsenal, several other people that could replace Dabi easily.

He had no doubt that he has more that Dabi knows nothing of.

“Tonight, we won’t let anything happen to you.”

And this must be a dream, because Dabi doesn't entertain guests. This had to be a dream, because Dabi leaned into the touch and sighed deeply. This must be a dream, because there was no one in the world that Dabi would have believed so readily.

He drifted back to sleep.

Dabi blinked twice, and sat up on the bed. He felt like his whole body was made of lead, super parched, and groggy all at once. Someone groaned next to him and his eyes slowly widen in realization that Deku was by his side.

Sleeping with his head slumped forward, arms crossed over his chest, in a foldable plastic chair, looking uncomfortable was his employer Deku.

What.

He doesn’t know how long he sat like that, but it must have seen some time, as the young man suddenly jolted himself awake. He groaned as he rubbed the back of his aching neck, and yawned as he looked up.

His green eyes met blue, eyes wide and his mouth opened. Right when he was about to say something, Dabi scowled.

“Get out.”

Deku, unlike the other street rats here, nodded and stood up without a fight. He was understanding in a way that no one ever was before. Dabi, in moments like this when all he wanted to do was prevent him from leaving and simultaneously wished that they never met.

He hated Midoriya.

“There’s food in the fridge and some soup on the stove,” he said as he grabbed his jacket, “Medicine on the counter, too. Let me know if you want anything else.”

And more than Midoriya, Dabi hated himself.

### **Shira v Dabi - out of shape**

“We’re not covering enough ground.” Dabi said. “We’re covering even less ground than before.”

He shot Shigaraki a glance.

“At this rate, we’ll be out here until morning light.”

Midoriya stopped and pulled his phone out, “Wow’s it’s already two?” He sighed, and rubbed his neck. He put his phone back and pulled out his small notebook, “...And I gotta hit back before the subway before they stop for the night,” he said. He looked at Dabi, then Shigaraki, and then back to Dabi. “Let’s stop here for tonight.”

“...You say we’re going to stop, but you’re going to keep going, aren’t you?”

“Well, I only pay you enough for three,” Midoriya replied back, “And I want to save any extra hours for when I need it.”

“If you go out and die, I won’t have any money ever again,” Dabi replied back. “It’s fine.”

“If I die…? You’ve tried to kill me eight times, Dabi. I think it’s a little late to be the one that cares if I live or die.”

The older man snorted back, “Consider this service, then.”

Shigaraki and Midoriya snorted at that. Dabi scowled back.

“Whatever, let’s just go.”

“Alright, alright,” and Midoriya peered at Shigaraki and gave a smile back. “Let’s get you back to the bar.”

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“...You get it now, right?” Dabi said, “You’re just holding us back. Unlike you, the rest of us have ends to meet.”

Shigaraki remained silent, keeping his eyes on the ground as the words sank in.

“Pretty much a fucking mute,” the other man sighed, tipping his head back. “What a waste of space. I don’t know what Midoriya sees in you.”

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Kurogiri was in for the shock of a lifetime when he woke up at noon and found Shigaraki sitting at the kitchen table with his head on the table.

“...Shigaraki Tomura-kun?” he asked quietly, approaching warily. The last thing he needed was for his table or chairs to decay away because he surprised the younger man.

“...Kurogiri-san,” Shigaraki said quietly, “...The training ground that sensei left us… Can I go to it?”

“...Why?”

“...I’m out of shape,” he said. “And I don’t want to lose to him.”

And on those lost days when Kurogiri once wondered what All-For-One saw, he now saw Shigaraki Tomura.

On occasion, waiting paved way to hope. And hope made waiting bearable. It was a vicious cycle. One that Kurogiri could not see a way out of.

### **Spinner**

"You knew that he was there, didn't you? You knew, but you said everything anyways."

Midoriya's smile was knowing, but he didn't say anything.

Dabi snorted back. The more he knew about him, the less he understood. Or something like that.

“You know, if I were capable of it, I would pity him,” he said, nodding at Iguchi who had ran off to run their errands.

“Dabi, don’t say things like that,” Midoriya said, a laugh curling on his lips, “People might start to believe you.”

### **Under the Rain**

Dabi fucking hated the rain. He had a thousand reasons why: it's humid as fuck, it made his scars all itch, his staples could rust, his fire was especially exhausting, people bitch more, etcetera.

But, since meeting Midoriya, he felt like this list had increased exponentially.

He narrowed his eyes at the downpour.

“Wow, it’s really coming down,” Midoriya commented as he came up to stand next to him.

Standing in the abandoned and run-down factory, the two tried to stay dry under the patchy ceiling that did a poor job keeping the cold autumn showers outside.

“Sorry about this, Dabi,” he said.

“Yeah, you should be,” Dabi grouched back, glaring at the sky above. Well, it wasn’t like his shithole of an apartment would be any better than this, but at least he didn’t have to worry about getting wet.

“Haha,” Midoriya gave a nervous laugh, looking up at the skyline with him, “I’ll make it up to you.”

Before Dabi could stop himself, his eyes fell to Midoriya’s lips.

“...Yeah? What were you thinking?”

Green eyes batted up at him, he had to be doing this on purpose. From the way his cheeks darkened to the way he gnawed on his bottom lip, the image was stoking the fire inside of Dabi.

He hated the rain, because it did things to him. This was something that they, under normal circumstances, would have never thought to do.

“It looks like… it’ll be storming for a while. I think… there’s a few things we could do to pass the time.”

Who said that Midoriya was naive? Where in that boy was anything resembling innocence? The stare that he trained on Dabi was anything but innocent. His hand came up to grip at Dabi’s sleeve. And Dabi, even though he knew that there was no pretty end for dumbasses that fell for tricks like this, couldn’t pull his eyes from the light dancing across Deku’s eyes.

Dabi hated the rain. It was cold and miserable. It made his scars itch and made it even harder to control his fire than usual. It was a reminder that he still had nothing and no one. It made him lethargic, and he hated the humidity that came with it.

It fuddled with his mind and memory, fogging his ability to think clearly better than any alcohol.

He’s certain that was the reason why, when he leaned down to kiss Midoriya, he went back for seconds.

Midoriya’s hands carded through his hair, being the most gentle gesture that Dabi’s received in years. When he rolled their hips together, Midoriya arched into the touch, like he wanted it. The rain poured down, and the droplets that hit Dabi’s back evaporated with a sizzle when he pushed Deku onto his back.

The rain was driving him insane. It had to. Why else would Dabi ever think that Deku had such a sweet voice?

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“So, that just happened.”

“Yep.”

Dabi side-eyed him before he looked back forward.

“You regret it?”

He wouldn’t be shocked. He wasn’t the kind of person that people found attractive.

“Hm, I don’t know,” he said.

“You? Don’t know something?”

Midoriya’s smile was damning, and Dabi made the mistake of looking at it.

“Well, I have some ideas, but I think I need some more data to make a conclusion.”

He licked his lips and these days, the older man was beginning to understand that he didn’t pledge his fire to someone. He pledged his fire to the fucking devil. And the damned devil, with a smile made of honey and eyes as gentle as sunlight, sank his scarred fingers into his heart and seeped in.

Like some fresh idiot, Dabi truly and honestly thought that he had the upper hand. What a joke. A farce.

“Well, I guess I can work that out for you,” he said, leaning in to take what was offered.

Could you blame him? He’s never had something given to him before. Everything that he learned about life, was that if you wanted it, you had to take it. If it really matters, if you really want it, then make it yours. Even if someone knew how bad drugs were, some addicts will choose that path anyways.

A willing victim, if you would.

Swallowing down the giggle Midoriya let out when their nose bumped together, he wondered if this was how it felt to turn to ash.

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After cremation, a human’s ashes will be anything from 3 to 10 pounds. Normally, however, it’s four pounds.

Even though Dabi knows that, he doesn’t think that Midoriya’s heart, burnt down to ashes, could only be four pounds.

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"Do you sleep with all your employers or am I special?" Midoriya asked.

"You're special," Dabi said, revealing something he didn't know he had. He closed his eyes, because he always had to remind himself to stop staring at him and this was the fastest way to do that. So to clarify, he added, "Like wow, you're easy. Maybe I should be the one asking you that."

"Dabi, you're single for a reason, aren't you?"

He snorted back.

"Well," Midoriya said, looking up, "the rain's slowing down, ready to head back?"

"Like this?"

"The rain will wash away the worst of it," Midoriya said, "I can only pray about the smell."

Dabi didn't tell Midoriya about the huge hickey he left on the back of his shoulder, right where his neck met his chest. He thought about it, but there would be no fun in that.

"Didn't realize you cared about the smell," he said,

Midoriya pulled a cigarette out and placed it between his lips. "Of course I care about how I smell," he said, lighting it.

The taller man gave him a pointed look.

His employer blinked at him, and realizing what he was referencing, started to laugh.

"Dabi, you think that cigarettes smell? How cute," he said, covering his mouth with a hand.

The older man scowled back, making way to ruin Midoriya's and his entire box of cigarettes to get rid of that knowing smile on his face. It was better than the alternative of wondering if he was special to Midoriya as well.

At the very least, he didn't ask such a stupid question.

### **Hope**

The first time Dabi, or at least since becoming Dabi, hoped it was because of Midoriya. Figures, right? Of course it was.

He didn't even notice.

He just, one day, wondered if Midoriya switched out lighters. He didn't mean to, but he noticed. Midoriya smoked a lot but his lighter didn't change often.

If Midoriya used him like a lighter, wouldn't that mean that he wouldn't change either?

It was so stupid.

### **Fireworks at tanabata (or something)**

If he could see the whole world as a reflection from Midoriya's eyes, he thinks that he'll see something worthy of being called <beautiful>.

Instead, a few flowers explode out in the sky behind him, and he saw himself dyed in Midoriya's green eyes. Bright and illuminated, a smile growing on his face, Dabi wondered if it was possible that his fire wouldn't be blue but all those colors too.

His fire was like him, not the other way around.

### **Need You**

Dabi swam just fine, but he and Midoriya were punted off the side of a three-story building and into the swimming pool below. Crashing into water, at that height, fucking hurt.

To begin with, his clothes weren't really made for him to swim in. His trenchcoat was probably caught on something, and his entire body felt like he was a rock. He was sinking, and in all honesty, he just didn't want to try anymore.

The lights of the swimming pool dyed his whole world in a fluorescent blue. Fake or not, he's never seen this much blue before without feeling anything. His breath left him, or the water came in, he wasn't sure which, but in just a few seconds, he stopped feeling.

It was liberating. It was peaceful. It was ending.

Two hands grabbed his face, and a pair of lips came over his. Air was forced into his mouth before he was dragged up, painfully slow, or maybe he was just thinking of it like that.

Let him go. Let him rest.

He...

-

They broke the surface of the water, and Midoriya managed to haul Dabi and his soaked ass up and over the ledge. He got out and yanked the man out, eyes desperate.

"Dabi!" he yelled out, slapping his cheeks quickly. “Dabi, please!”

Dabi rolled over and threw up all the water he consumed. Fuck, he was still alive? It was so painful. Why was it so painful to be alive? How was it possible to simultaneously feel nothing and pain all at once? If people could feel so empty that it hurt, why were they born alone?

He sat up, what a waste-

“It's not a waste!" Midoriya shouted.

His hand grabbed the front of his shirt, shaking him as he yelled in his face. If Midoriya wasn't reading his mind, then he must be speaking aloud. He must have been really out of touch with his own body. From the moment he met Midoriya, he didn’t know who he was anymore. Weren’t people supposed to be defined by their desires? What did that make Dabi, who was drenched to the bone and still only thinking about someone he couldn’t burn?

If Midoriya, the only person who asked how Dabi was and if he had eaten yet and what his favorite movie was, didn’t need a lighter, what would he become?

The lights from the bottom of the swimming pool casted the refractured lights to ripples across Midoriya’s face. His eyes, brighter even though he wasn't smiling and bubbly because the deal fell through, why didn't Midoriya understand that the deal fell through-

"That's not important! There’s not a price in the world, any information-just-there’s nothing, Dabi!” Midoriya snapped back, his thin hands clutching his jacket with more strength than Dabi ever expected him to have, “Dabi, listen to me! There is nothing in the world that’s worth more than your life to me, okay?!”

The older man stared back, his chest heaving as the world slowed down. Their eyes met, and Dabi wondered why it was becoming easier to breathe. Was it because they were out of the water? He wished that the breath that Midoriya gave him lasted longer-or that that would have been the last breath he had in this world.

“Okay?” Midoriya said. His hands loosened their hold on his front, but he remained in Dabi's lap. The warmth felt invasive, like it was creeping in and filling in something that Dabi didn't want full. “This trade, information, money… all of that, it’s something that I can get again. It’s something that I can always get more of.”

He made a fist with his hand and gently pressed it against Dabi’s chest, right above his pulsing heart. He's almost certain that, without it there, his heart might have just jumped out. At this point, it was strange to think that it was still considered his, when it jumped whenever Midoriya’s eyes met his.

“But you? I can’t lose you,” Midoriya said, bowing his head. “I need you.”

“...You can... just hire someone else.”

Who spoke? Dabi couldn't even recognize his own voice. His thoughts and his words were all muddled up, and it felt like Midoriya's words were the line that might catch him.

“I could get a new bodyguard,” Midoriya agreed, never one to lie, “but I can’t get a new ‘Dabi’. I … If I lost you…” He took a deep shuddering breath, dropping his hands into his lap and he gave a small, hopeless smile, “...god, I thought I lost you for a moment and I just… I felt so sad.”

Midoriya placed his head into his hands. Dabi remained numb and unfeeling, sitting there after narrowly missing death again. The smell of chlorine was so strong that he felt like his notrils were burning. Or maybe he lost control of his quirk, and they were sitting around in a field of fire. The junction of shadow and light that crashed across Midoriya's face might be caused by his flame, not the pool.

The only thing that he couldn't burn, those green eyes that stared back at him. He couldn't burn rocks, after all. He could melt them, but he can't burn them. Midoriya and his stupid gemstone eyes were something that would require all his fire, and probably all of his life, to melt down.

Sad? What did that have to do with anything?

“Please, Dabi-san, I’m begging you,” Midoriya said, eyes welling with tears, “Not as your employer or… or a business partner but please, please don’t die. I don’t think I’ll be able to handle that.”

Dabi could hear, in the back of his mind where he tried to pretend his life never happened and that he was no one and nothing, his father’s certain voice. He can hear the man explaining the world, the expectation, the ideal. It was something so far away but certain, like rain clouds coming to muddle his thoughts.

<< “Only weaklings cry.” >>

It repeated in his head, over and over, he looked forward to where tears streamed down Midoriya’s face, and hoped that his employer would remain weak forever.

Because then, when Dabi dies, he will be able to say with certainty that someone will cry over him. Someone will mourn his loss. To someone, his death will be a loss. His weakass boss Midoriya would feel like he had lost something precious, even though all he had lost was Dabi.

These are all certainties that he never had before. These are all realities that he had to face now. It, at once, made him giddy and dumbfounded. If he was capable of it, he might have even pitied Midoriya for wasting those kinds of emotions on him. But he was a selfish and greedy bastard, so he eagerly soaked in the attention instead.

“...I get it-”

“No,” Midoriya said, “You don’t.”

And he said it like it’s something that hurt him.

“You don’t get it because it’s something that you don’t want to get. It’s something that no one here wants to get, and I don’t blame them. I know. It’s useless to… to feel like this, or to feel anything at all, but I don’t want to not feel. I want to feel things and I want people to know that they are important to me,” he said. He sniffled loudly, angry eyes filled with tears coming back up to meet Dabi’s again. “You’re important to me. You are more important than any information I can gather and any money I can amass. I’ll always choose you.”

“...If you keep thinking like that,” Dabi said, the words ringing hollow because he didn’t believe it anymore. It wasn’t what he wanted to believe anymore, but someone had to say it, “you’ll never get anywhere in the world.”

“If I can manage to keep you,” Midoriya croaked out, “I’m fine with that.”

“...Midoriya,” he said quietly, relishing the way the name rolled off his tongue and he swore that he felt something tighten in his chest. It felt uncomfortably tight and hot, like his own body couldn’t handle how much Midoriya was forcing his way into his life. He wished that he never felt like this, because living without this was going to be unbearable. “You’re smart, but really, really stupid.”

His father’s voice in his head faded a little more, replaced by Midoriya’s soft chuckles. It’s the quietest it’s ever been, and he thought that he could forget everything and just be Midoriya’s Dabi.

He dared to think that it’ll be a future worth seeing.

### **Fire Feet**

In a desperate attempt to escape, Dabi swung his leg and shot fire from it. The effect was immediate. Three dead since the fire consumed them, two more on fire, but it bought Twice just enough time to break in and do some damage control.

His eyes found Midoriya, the new bruise on his face, his broken arm, and the worry in his eyes.

Dabi rolled his eyes, wasn’t he supposed to be smarter than him? He should be able to see that, of the two of them, Midoriya was the one that was worse off, right? Still, he couldn’t stop himself from smiling a little.

Another person’s worry didn’t feel suffocating, when it was the right person, he supposed.

-

Midoriya kneeled in front of him, gently pulling off his shoes and socks and staring at the mess of burns coating Dabi’s legs and feet, took a shaky breath. What should have smelled like dirty laundry and sweat only smelled like charred meat. It was a scent that Dabi was familiar with, but Midoriya’s eyes watered.

“...You don’t have…”

He trailed off, when stormy green eyes, welling with tears, glared up at him. And after a moment, as though realizing that his anger was misplaced, he gave another breath. He leaned to rest his forehead against Dabi’s knee.

“I’m sorry,” he said quietly.

Dabi’s hand came up to Midoriya’s curls. His employer sniffled loudly, but didn’t stop. Figures that he would notice. Figures that he would come and check.

Faintly, he wondered if Midoriya ever gets tired of caring. By the time Dabi was Midoriya’s age, he had long since lost anything resembling emotions like that. No, that was a lie. He had one feeling, a shimmering feeling that thirsted for vengeance, that sat in his gut and festered. But he couldn’t feel anything else. Not like Midoriya did.

So he’s not sure what he was feeling, when he ran his hand underneath his chin and tilted it up. It was something soft and gentle, something that clearly only Midoriya would ever bring out in a person, and it was much softer than the cut on Midoriya's lip resting against his.

Dabi wondered if he'd ever be enough to protect him. This.

### **Christmas**

“Dabi! There you are! I’ve missed you.”

Even though they’ve spent quite some time together and Midoriya almost always does this, Dabi still felt something wrap around his heart and squeeze. It’s been getting worse and worse, he swore, but Dabi was nothing but adaptive. He kept his face neutral, and his eyes flickered to the man before he turned his head.

One week from the last time he saw him, he saw that his blackeye has been replaced with a swollen cheek, but the man looks otherwise fine.

“Oh, hey boss,” he greets casually, “New mission?”

Because it’s easier to pretend that Midoriya only talks to him because of missions and that he needed a new guard. It’s better and he didn't feel anything when he thought of the world in terms of how much people want to use him than whatever it was that Midoriya operated on.

“Not quite. Though we’re going to get busy in the next few days until February, but right now, I have something more important,” Midoriya said, as he rummaged through his backpack. He made a triumphant sound, like he found something particularly interesting, and passed a small, carefully wrapped box to him. “Merry Christmas!”

The whole world slowed down. He didn’t realize that the young man could still shock him bad enough that his brain could stop functioning for a second.

He stared at the box. It was a thin box, but a little bigger than his hand, and it had bright-green and red striped wrapping paper with small reindeer prints and adorned with a big blue ribbon. The package wasn’t stiff, and there were little wrinkles forming just from Midoriya holding the thing in his hand. He stared at it dumbly, and Midoriya gave him a warm smile that didn’t fit in with the temperature around them.

“Dabi, it’s yours now.”

“...How much?” he asked on impulse.

“It's a gift,” Midoriya spluttered back, truly shocked that Dabi would ask such a thing, “You know? Christmas? The whole gift-giving thing that capitalism loves? Can you… Can you just take it?”

“I…” his mind couldn’t keep up with the series of events, Dabi could walk off a gunshot but apparently, he stuttered when given a gift. “I didn’t get you anything.”

“That’s fine,” Midoriya said, “But this is for you.”

Dabi took the gift. If his hand was trembling, Midoriya definitely noticed but didn’t say anything.

-

It was a scarf.

Dabi didn’t know shit about fabric and cotton, but it was soft and it didn’t irritate his scars or catch on his staples. There was a fucking note inside of it, telling him how to wash it and that it was fire-proof. And then, Midoriya’s handwritten notes were written on the back, and Dabi doesn’t know when he became intimate with this man’s handwriting, but the trembled between the lines and the spacing between them lets him know that this was written on his desk, half a month ago when his nails weren't fully healed.

Briefly, he thought that it was funny that his meeting notes that he scrawled down were never this neat, and the thought of Midoriya painstakingly writing this, as slowly as he could, on those rare days he suffered no injury to his hands came to him easier than remembering what he had for breakfast that day.

Dabi, while it says that it’s fire-proof, I have no doubt that you would find a way to cremate it. Please don’t take it as a challenge.

He snorted.

Just for that.

He ignited his hand, and brought it towards the scarf. It was like a rite of passage for almost all of his belongings.

Dabi ultimately decided not to burn it, and instead, wore it to their next meeting. As it turns out, there were going to do an outdoor stakeout at the top of one of the buildings. Shivering and trembling against the blistering cold, Dabi was thankful for the scarf.

It felt a thousand times warmer that his fire, even if it was resistant.

More importantly, the look in Midoriya’s eyes when he came to the meeting sight, the way that it felt like he couldn’t take his eyes off of Dabi…

Priceless.

“...You look good,” Midoriya whispered, a little quiet as though he hasn't been able to take his eyes off of him for longer than a minute the entire time.

“...If I’m distracting you, I must be the most handsome man around.”

The young man’s hands flew to his face, his face bright red like the lights around them. Dabi snorted, a small sound to smoother the dumb grin his face was twitching to stop.

“...Maybe you are,” Midoriya said, a thousand times more bolder than Dabi remembered as his green eyes met his and his breath caught. “But… since you’re so tall and handsome, I doubt that you could look bad in anything you wear.”

Dabi didn’t know what he needed to do, but he would do just about everything, if it means that those eyes will stay on him forever. The thought scared him. And he didn’t know if a hypothetical future without Midoriya scared him more than losing himself.

### **Protection**

“Don’t be stupid,” Midoriya said, stepping out and dusting hismelf off. “Dabi won’t hurt me.”

He smiled down at the men writhing at the ground.

“You don’t… you don’t know that.”

“...Between you and me, I’m pretty sure I’m right,” he said, gesturing to the fact that Dabi was next to him and he didn’t even have a spec of dirt on him. “But I suppose illusions are your specialty.”

The head scowled back, his entire eyes still completely black. Really, with a weakness like that, he can’t believe that he only came here with a pair of sunglasses. But he supposed that it was a good thing that he was underestimated. It only made their job that much easier.

“You fuckin bitch! That’s the Cremator! He’s only using you anyways! You think he’s loyal?!”

Midoriya’s smile was gentle, like he was looking at a particularly cute dog, and shook his head.

“I don’t owe you anything. But you, on the other hand, owe me quite a bit, don’t you think?”

He scowled back, and Dabi burned off his hand without any form of hesitation. Steeling his heart, Midoriya crouched down in front of him.

“C’mon now,” he said, “You only have four limbs. If you make me ask five times, I'll have to get creative, you know?”

-

On occasion, Midoriya’s eyes follow the lights of the traffic from their hotel room. With an unlit cigarette between pale lips, he looked like he was waiting for something to come and take his soul. His fingers trembled , right on his knees as he continued to stare out.

In these moments, Dabi felt as though Midoriya really didn’t belong in this world.

His fingers reached out, tracing the bags under his eyes. Midoriya flinched, surprised at the contact and whipped his head around. Dabi’s other hand came to catch the cigarette before it fell to the ground. The two stared at each other for another moment.

“...Sorry, I wasn’t paying attention. Did… something happen?”

Dabi stared for another moment. He leaned in to kiss Midoriya's lips, as though that would be enough to protect him from whatever otherworldly force was coming for him.

Midoriya gasped, a quiet sound that slid against his lips, and Dabi pushed in further. One knee up next to Midoriya, he forced the young man against the motel's creaky couch. Two small hands came up to his chest, but they only clutched onto Dabi's shirt.

The taste of cigarette was revolting, burning him in a way unfamiliar to him, but addicting nonetheless. His hand clenched into a fist, crushing Midoriya's cigarette as his other hand came to grab Midoriya's head.

He wasn't sure why he was so surprised, but his employer was warm. Like a living human should be. It impeded on the earlier figure he saw, and brought a small amount of relief to his heart. Tilting his head for a better angle, his tongue coaxed Midoriya's.

The ones who remained, the ones who won, they weren't alone.

Dabi was certain that Midoriya just needed that reminder.

### **New Years**

“Ah,” Midoriya said suddenly, as he and everyone else stared in surprise as the skies lit up with fireworks and cheers filled the distant land. And then, their employer who didn’t flinch when a gun is fired at him and narrowly missed his eyes, screamed out, “Oh come on, we missed the countdown?!”

He sighed, running his hand through his hair.

“Damn bastard, if only he just didn’t stutter.”

“What’s up?” Shigaraki asked, strolling up next to him.

The young man looked at him and then turned around, “Well, better late than never I guess… Everyone,” he said, a small smile on his face as they turned to him as one. “Please take good care of me this year too,” he said, giving them a big formal bow.

“Oh! Me too, me too!” Toga cheered back, hearts in her eyes as she waved her sleeve in the air, “I’ll take great care of you, Izuzu!”

Twice fired his finger guns, “I love all of you damn bastards! This year is going to be great! // Now, let’s go kill someone!”

Magne wiped at her eyes, a laugh bubbling out of her and Spinner gave a satisfied sigh.

“Oi, Kurogiri has the party set up,” Shigaraki said, getting off the phone with the man as a portal opened in front of them, “Let’s go. I’m cold and hungry.”

As everyone walked into the portal, buzzing with excitement, Dabi dropped his hand onto Midoriya’s curls. The young man has grown a little, but Dabi still towered over him. In a little bit, he might lose his favorite armrest, but maybe his neck won’t hurt as much for looking down at him when he talks all the time.

“Next year,” he said slowly. He was about to say something he never thought he would say, and the message and words felt foreign and unreal to him, but as he said it, he felt the weight of a promise ground him to reality, “We’ll do the countdown together.”

Midoriya’s eyes shined back, and Dabi knew that he’ll burn the whole world down if it means that the light never strays from those eyes.

“I’ll hold you to that, Dabi.”

This was their reality.

### **Suspicions - me beeches**

“I think they’re onto me. They really want me to get a girl or four.”

Dabi, laying on the left of him, yawned back, also fully naked underneath the covers, “Ask Twice to make some fake women then. I’m sure plenty of women at Magne’s place will throw themselves at you, too.”

Midoriya ran his hands through his hair, “I don’t have time to care about shit like this. Why can’t they go back to caring about the stupid Hero thing?”

“Shut up and go to sleep,” Shigaraki, on the right of him, replied back.

When Midoriya looked like he was going to protest, both men reached a hand up to grab him by a shoulder and pushed him back down.

“I don’t wanna see his ugly mug when I wake up,” Dabi stated flatly.

Shigaraki grunted. “I don’t want to see that disgusting ikeman.”

Midoriya sighed back.

## Kurogiri

One day in between one moment and another, his window shattered, his blinds broke, and a young man was literally thrown into his room.

“Augh…” the young man groaned as he slowly rolled onto his side.

He was bleeding all over his floor, and shocked, Shigaraki Tomura did nothing but stare back.

As far as he was concerned, this was the first person he has seen in years.

“Shigaraki Tomura, is everything alright?”

Kurogiri’s voice sounded from the other side of the door. He opened his mouth and then closed it. He hadn’t needed to speak in so long, that for a moment. Shigaraki didn’t think he knew how to.

“...Shigaraki Tomura, I’m coming in,” he said, and forced his way into the room.

-

Midoriya Izuku was about as impressive as he looked, meaning, he didn’t look much like anything. As in, if he died, Kurogiri thought that it would be hard to identify the body, because he was so plain.

Blood coming out of his forehead, wincing at every move he made, the young man worriedly stared at Shigaraki.

“Are you sure that you’re okay?” he asked again, “You took the brunt of the fall.”

And Shigaraki, who had scooted all the way to the back of the room, opening and closing his mouth in erratic ways, gave a few seconds. Just then, all of his features twisted into one of absolute rage and he screamed out, loud enough for the whole world to hear.

“Get out!”

And Kurogiri, not at all interested in finding a new bar because Shigaraki decayed everything away, did just that.

Supposedly, that should have been the last time he met Midoriya.

But life was cruel to Kurogiri, and it wasn’t.

### **Coincidence**

For Kurogiri, who was brought into the world with a purpose and a master, time moved in parallel to his master.

“Oh, what a coincidence?”

How others may measure time by the number of times that the earth revolved around the sun, Kurogiri counted time by the number of times he was able to be with his master.

But, it has already been a year since their last conversation. His master, who left his most precious student Shigaraki with his most trusted aide Kurogiri, used to contact them every day. But it has been a year.

A year, in regular human time, because Kurogiri would lose touch with the world otherwise. Would it be possible, if he just relaxed enough, for all the mist to dissipate away? If he actively willed himself to spread out, wasn’t it possible that he would stop existing? And, if he spreads out that much and that far, wasn't it possible that he might even see Sensei again?

He thought that it would be easier than waiting.

“This… was the bar I crashed into a few weeks ago, right?”

And instead, he met a human who refused to stay away.

“You…”

“I left in a rush last time,” he said like Kurogiri didn’t shove him through a portal to the outside, “My name is Midoriya Izuku. I came to pay you back for the damages. Can you give me an estimate?”

The dumbest human in the entire world stood right in front of him. With the idea to expand and use this man until his master returned surfaced in his mind. Those long periods of time, where he didn’t know that he had been standing at the bar for days or minutes, could be punctuated by a toy instead.

And so, Kurogiri gave Midoriya an exorbitant sum of money. Because he could. Because he was bored.

While thinking of a way to quell his boredom, Kurogiri had unexpectedly ended up paying the price instead.

### **Little steps**

These days, Shigaraki has shown up to work.

Kurogiri was shocked the first time, but it wore off quickly when he saw Shigaraki’s lazy way of working. He wiped down glasses and washed supplies. And of course, that meant he never left the bar, leaving Kurogiri to still go and wipe down the tables and glass as needed. He never helped with the setting up or taking down at the beginning or end of the night.

However, he has seen Shigaraki more this week than he has in the last year Shigaraki had holed up in that room of his above the bar. He has yet to decide whether or not this was a good thing, since he frequently got in the way, doesn’t make eye-contact (or any contact actually) with anyone, and scared away some of their less-violent customers. However, whenever he thinks about saying something, he remembers his old friend and keeps it on the inside.

Patience, he thinks to himself. Shigaraki was finally recovering so he must be patient.

The door cracked open, and the bell rang to signal that they had a new customer. A welcome distraction, even if a little early and they weren’t completely set up yet. No matter.

“Welcome, ah… Midoriya.”

It was subtle, and if Kurogiri was a lesser, unobservant man, he wouldn’t have noticed the way Shigaraki stopped wiping the glass. But as always, as soon as <Midoriya> was mentioned, Shigaraki lifted his gaze just a little bit. It made Kurogiri wish that he was a lesser, observant man.

He didn’t know what the white-haired man saw, and it's not like he would ever get an answer if he asked. He pretended that he didn’t know what was going on. It was better. For him.

“Ah, good evening Kurogiri-san. Do you need any help?”

Kurogiri suppressed a laugh, “So that I’ll allow you to loiter here without buying anything?”

“Nothing gets by you, huh?”

The mist man, despite himself, chuckled back. He couldn’t help it. Just a few months ago, he would have said that someone as kind and as honest as Midoriya would have been eaten up and spat out.

As it was, the kid’s eyes remained as bright as they were when he first came crashing in, and was amassing an undeniable strength.

“You wanna try a pina colada shake?”

“Oh, that sounds good.”

Shigaraki, who was still wiping the same glass he was ten minutes ago, stared at Midoriya in such a way that made Kurogiri wish he could just disappear.

### **Shiga v Dabi**

“Good evening,” Midoriya’s voice, as always, carried in as soon as he walked in but today was a little different.

By his side, instead of Twice, was another man.

At first, Kurogiri was happy. Beyond ecstatic. He hated Twice. Oh good god, he hated Twice like he hated the sun and the twittering birds and weaklings.

The man behind Midoriya who was not Twice shuffled in, silent and confident, barely a foot behind Midoriya. The sight of him had the bar silenced and focused in a heartbeat. Moreso of the man, it was his scars that confirmed who he was. Just the sight of him made Kurogiri’s mist to fray around a little and his eyes narrow.

“Welcome back, Midoriya-kun,” Kurogiri called out with a calm that could only come from a lifetime of dealing with unpredictable and volatile things, and gave a polite nod to his patron, “And I see you brought a friend.”

Dabi, the Cremator.

Where he walked, nothing but ashes would remain. For every person that hated him, there was a trail of ashes and a grin on a face made of nightmares. He was known for those scars, his color disfigurement and the stitches that held it all together, and in terms of street-danger level, he sat near the top. Kurogiri had heard that Dabi had gotten a little more active recently but this...

Run on sight, and if you’re lucky, he won’t even notice you. Here he was, in his bar instead.

“Ah, Twice is taking the night off,” Midoriya replied back, like he was explaining to the man about the weather. “This is Dabi. He’s my guard for the night.”

“I see. I wasn’t aware that Twice needed to take nights off. Well, no matter, I will save his drink for the next time. Nice to meet you, Dabi-san,” Kurogiri said with impeccable manners as always. However, he wondered if the young man could set fire to him and his bar faster than he could open a portal to send him away. At the thought of his portal getting singed, he hoped that he never needed to find out. “I would like to remind you both to keep the fights out of the bar.”

“Of course, Kurogiri-san,” Midoriya replied back. He turned to the man behind him, a hesitant look on his face, “Do you want anything?”

Dabi’s eyes looked around the bar, relaxed despite the tension before his eyes fell back to the younger man he followed in, “This is a waste of time.”

The young man gave a nervous laugh back, and shot a look to the bartender, who pretended that he wasn’t looking. “We’ll leave soon, then,” he said, like he wasn’t the boss in the relationship. He turned to Kurogiri and pulled his thin planner out. He opened it and pulled out a small photo, “Sorry to cut to the chase, but have you seen this before?”

Kurogiri leaned in to stare at the photo. It was a small calico, in the arms of a young child, but the face was cut off. From it, he can be certain that Midoriya was asking about the cat.

“There’s a lot of strays all around,” he said, “Between alleys nearby restaurants will be your best bet. You finding lost pets now?”

He couldn’t imagine the Cremator looking for lost cats. He didn’t want to imagine it. Was there nothing he wouldn’t do for money? He banished the thought from his head as fast as possible. Cats or ash, they were all dead.

“Aren’t I always?” Midoriya replied back. He looked at the picture for another moment and gave a sigh as he put it back into his pocket. “Thanks, though, Kurogiri-san. See you later,” and right before he left, his eyes found Shigaraki’s figure.

The young man was holding his rag to the glass, but wasn’t moving. In all honesty, he might as well have been a statue. A really ugly, poorly proportionate, scarred and slouched statue that may serve better as a scarecrow or gargoyle than anything else.

“...Have a good night, Shigaraki-san.”

“...You too.”

Kurogiri, if he had one, would have choked on his tongue and died in that moment, out of sheer shock.

It had been a long time since he had heard his voice like that. He whipped around to Midoriya, but the young man and the strange guy he was with, was already out the door.

### **Kurogiri, the Lost and Found**

The worst part about regulars was that they were regulars. As much as they came to Kurogiri’s bar, Kurogiri (against his will) began to remember them as well.

“Oh, you remembered my drink!”

It wasn’t because he wanted to.

“Thank you, Kurogiri-san,” he said, with a wide-toothy grin. Kurogiri suppressed the urge to throw dishwater at him.

Midoriya took the cup in both hands, because he was a child, and Kurogiri’s eyes caught on how three of his fingers were casted. It wasn’t his problem. Midoriya wasn’t blabbering on. He didn’t care.

Midoriya Izuku was a child who came to a bar and ordered orange juice with a splash of sprite. He’s asked for milk with strawberry syrup. Once, he even ordered for Kurogiri’s expensive peach-mango juice over crushed ice.

A fate worse than death awaited Midoriya. Kurogiri just couldn’t wait to deal it.

But the money was good. That was the only reason why Kurogiri would even entertain this foolish notion. Otherwise, Midoriya would be dead, dumped somewhere no one would ever find him, and Kurogiri would be back to first-time customers that knew how to shut up and stay away. The bar would be quiet again.

“Delicious as always,” Midoriya said, with crushed mint leaves in pineapple juice because he was a heathen. “I heard you had some business earlier, good for you.”

Kurogiri didn’t have teeth, but if he did, he would be grinding them. Business? Was that what Midoriya could call them? Four different businessmen that came in and out at different hours, buying this and that and ultimately leaving a USB behind.

“I am not a carrier pigeon,” he snapped, placing four USBs onto the bar counter.

“Not at all,” Midoriya said, taking the USBs from him, “Don’t worry, I’ll give this back to the right people.” He stared at them wistfully, just for a second, and then gave a smile to the misty man.

Kurogiri didn’t know exactly what Midoriya was going to do, but he had a good idea. And he hated it so much, because he knew someone that would have loved to meet him.

### **Terrible Villain: Giran -> Kurogiri (needs to be changed)**

"No, no," Midoriya shook his head, a laugh playing on his lips, "I'd make a terrible villain."

"Oh?" Giran grinned back, because it was polite where he was from.

"Yes, villains are people who don't change. They're dedicated to their ideal and their lifestyle, so much that they wouldn't mind making an enemy out of the rest of the world if it meant that they don't have to change."

"And you? You don't want that?"

"It would be nice, but I'm neither strong or dedicated," the young man said, a sheepish smile on his face. "I'm barely passing high school chemistry and paying my bills," he said, and his weaknesses and worthlessness seemed to only be accented by the bruise on his face. "I wouldn't make the cut to be a villain, I'm trying too hard to survive as a law-abiding citizen."

More than any weapon and any quirk, however, Midoriya scared Giran. When everyone was clawing for the top and demanding every scrap of attention they could get a hold of, people like Midoriya who willingly passed it up terrified him. Because Midoriya was smart.

Midoriya, who killed people and tortured people, could smile like he was a civilian who had never witnessed violence before.

"And that includes working in a yakuza?"

"Being in debt is a totally normal thing for law-abiding citizens. I would know."

### **Twice v Kurogiri**

“I like Midoriya,” the blond he hated the most in the entire world admitted, “I like being with him. I like who I am with him. I feel that, as long as I’m with him, I don’t care what I have to do or who I have to be.”

Preposterous.

What would Twice know of loyalty? With Midoriya, no less. Kurogiri, who lived and breathed and existed for his master, didn’t know whether to feel insulted or laugh at this joke of a man. This blond, who carelessly followed after Midoriya like a puppy wouldn’t know anything about the joy of serving and being useful to anyone.

And, there was great pride that someone could take in what their Master did. Twice definitely didn’t know anything about that. Midoriya looked like a used rag on most days, and scrambled to make whatever little bits of his wallet float.

There was nothing about Midoriya that inspired that kind of loyalty. Twice was just an idiot who knew nothing about the world.

Kurogiri was certain of it, because he was waiting for someone like that.

“But why,” Kurogiri sighed, still confused on how Twice had made it this far in life, “Are all of yous telling ME this?”

“You’re like our getaway bar,” the Twice by the door said. “One of us without being one of us. //Like a double-agent!”

"Pew-pew!" the one by corner added, making Kurogiri consider mass-murder. If he killed a hundred copies of the same man, does it count as mass-murder or just one? It was time to find out.

“That’s not what that word means.”

### **Shira’s Graduation**

And just when Kurogiri thought he was finally accustomed to Midoriya and the changes he brought into his life, he was proven so, so, so wrong.

“Kurogiri-san, we’re here!”

These days, his regulars aren’t here to drown their sorrows away. These days, his regulars aren’t people who are stuck in a tragedy and diving in deep to the next one. In fact, these days, his regular was a young boy who can’t even legally drink, and the strange assortment of rotting corpses he hauled in with him.

Today, they’re all there.

Dabi, looking like he would rather be anywhere but here, Toga eagerly snuggling Midoriya’s arms in between her ample assets, Midoriya and his embarrassed flush, and Compress was humming something this and that, practicing a variety of card tricks next to Dabi towards the back. Twice, who was carrying a box like it was the world’s greatest treasure.

That better not be another bomb.

The door pushed open and Shigaraki walked in.

“Hey,” he said as a greeting. He walked around the bar and immediately, Twice put the box on the counter so he, Toga, and a reluctant Midoriya, could form a circle around him and skip merrily around him. “Stop that,” he said without any energy.

What was going on.

“Congratulations!” Midoriya said, his laughter bright and genuine whereas the other two with him sounded more deranged even after they disentangled from each other.

“...Congratulations?” Kurogiri repeated back.

Dabi slid into one of the barseats, and despite how far he was from the festivities at the other side of the bar, looked more relaxed than he had ever seen him. “Scotch,” he said, quick to get down to business as always.

“Midoriya-kun’s tab?”

Dabi nodded, it was a formality between the two, but Kurogiri was never good at breaking habits.

“Yeah, I can’t believe they’re making it such a big deal though. It’s just graduation.” the man said.

“Ah, I see, Shigaraki-kun graduated,” Kurogiri nodded, and then, as the words registered in his head, spun around, “Graduated?”

“Ah, I forgot to tell you,” Shigaraki said. He lifted his bare hand threateningly and Twice dropped Midoriya’s hand so that he could leave their stupid circle. The man left the room for a couple of moments and came back with a crumpled piece of paper. He handed it to the bartender. “I graduated.”

Kurogiri took the paper gingerly in his hand. He flattened it against the counter and, if he were capable of it, would have started crying.

To think that, this Shigaraki, after all this time, would go and get a certification that he completed high school. He gaped in absolute, awestruck amaze. It was a little annoying to think that he had gotten to abide by the societal norms and got a fucking GED but he did something. He did something, worked with a goal in mind, and achieved it.

He thought about how often Shigaraki was leaving at night. He always assumed and believed that Midoriya was the cause of it, and while he was right, he never thought that it would be like this. And working so hard on trying to process this, he missed the joyous celebration on the other side of the bar.

“So, what are you going to do now?” Toga asked, “Go to college?”

“Eat the cake, the cake!” Twice cheered back, “C’mon Kurogiri, we gotta break out the big guns tonight! // I’ll kill all you bitches who try to eat my cake!”

“Wait, I want my shot first,” Dabi replied back, though he didn’t look nearly as annoyed as he sounded.

The door swung open, “Sorry we’re late,” Spinner called out.

“Oh! Shigaraki! Congratz on being a nerd!” Magne called out, blowing kisses all along the way, “I’m so proud of you!”

Shigaraki shot Midoriya a look as he ducked behind him in an effort to avoid everyone. The young man shrugged back, “The more the merrier.”

“Augh,” the man sighed back. He looked at their empty hands, “I just graduated, where are my gifts.”

“Don’t be so callous,” Spinner replied back, “Our good wishes are more than enough for you.”

“But if you want to join me in the bedroom, I won’t mind,” Magne added, giving him a wink. “You can graduate properly.”

Shigaraki, instead of disintegrating them on the spot or yelling or fighting, just snorted back and rolled his eyes. Kurogiri wondered who this was.

“Yeah, whatever. You don’t get any cake.”

“Noooooo, you don’t mean that,” Mange pouted back, and then eyed the box, “Oh wow, you guys really went all out for this huh?”

“What do you mean?” Shigaraki frowned.

“That’s the expensive cake store down the-”

“Waaaaah!” Midoriya yelled out, sudden and loud, startling all of them. He blinked, and realizing that he had all of their attention, turned to the man next to him, “A-Anyways, instead of just staring, why don’t we just get started, right? Uh, ahaha, what are you planning to do now, Shigaraki?”

He gave pleading eyes to Magne, who gave a predatory smile back. He paled, but Shigaraki scowled.

“Jeez, it’s always about the next shit with you guys. I’m not going to go to college, I have no way of paying for it and I hate people,” he said, missing Midoriya’s sigh of relief as the attention focused back to him. “So I was thinking that I’ll just work here for now and eventually get back to Giran or the Doctor’s side.”

“I thought you wanted to be a villain?” Midoriya asked, “And destroy all the heroes?”

The man stared at him for a long, long moment, and Kurogiri felt something click into place when he looked away.

“...Yeah, I’ll get to that eventually. But I don’t think that’s what Sensei wanted me to do.”

“What did he want you to do?”

Shigaraki stared at Midoriya really hard, like if he just stared at the young boy long enough, he would have an answer. He didn’t get what he wanted though and looked away. He scratched at his neck a little as he gave a quiet, “I’m figuring that out.”

Midoriya tugged on his sleeve, as though to remind him not to scratch at his neck and the man scowled back. Ultimately, his hand did drop down to his side.

Kurogiri felt something tighten in his chest. “Ahem,” he said to his fist, “Your scotch,” he said, giving Dabi his drink as he pulled a knife out, “and the knife for the cake.” He opened a gate and pulled out his nice plates, knowing that they will all be broken before the end of the night, but didn’t mind it. It would be wrong to use anything else for the occasion. “Ready?”

“Yay! Cake!”

“Ohhh, about time,” Dabi said, happily downing the alcohol.

“You know, you probably should have told him first,” Midoriya said quietly to the man next to him.

“...I wanted to surprise him,” Shigaraki said. He shrugged, “It’s funnier.”

“Tomura-kun,” Kurogiri said, lifting the plate with a modest slice of cake on it towards him, “Congratulations.” He hoped that the young man could feel it, his pride, his joy, his warmth, through a single word. He wasn’t as adept at the whole, being understood by others, like Sensei was, but it also felt like for the first time, time was beginning to move again for them.

Shigaraki stared at the cake, like it was so much more than the pink frosting and vanilla bread, and accepted it into his scarred hands.

“...Yeah… Thanks.”

## Stain

### **Important Lesson**

Before Akakuro was Stain, he was Stendal.

-

The man crouched down next to him, lifting the little notebook Midoriya had in front of him.

“...Where did you get this information?” he asked.

Midoriya, bleeding out with a concussion in the dirty alleyway, groaned back.

“...Well, I suppose I’ll find out if it’s true or not soon enough.”

Midoriya Izuku learned a valuable lesson that night. Unless he was going to actually deal with information and evidence that night, he really needed to keep the information in his head where no one else could get to it and there was a little more value in his life.

-

It must have been true, because come Saturday evening, Midoriya had a blade going through his shoulder as he was pinned to the wall.

“Where did you even come from?!” he hissed out.

But Midoriya thought that he was really getting stronger after all. Things that would have sent him into shock or make him cry don’t hurt as much as they used to.

“Information on Kariya Hijimura,” Stendal said slowly, “The scumbag that works in between scenes at the cosmetic store. Give it.”

“My information comes at a price,” Midoriya gritted through his teeth.

Stendal responded by driving the knife in deeper. The younger man hissed, and his hand flew to cover up his mouth.

“...Well, I suppose that I don’t really need information.”

“And moreso than him, Mariko’s new florist has some connections to the Phillipino ports,” he said slowly, “When it comes to scumbags, I always thought the ones that smelled so nice were the worst ones.”

Stendal paused and stared at the young man, “If you keep giving information like that out, you’ll never get paid.”

“If it means that my information will lead to scum getting taken out, I would rather you make them pay.”

There was a brief second, but Stendal was gone like he was never there. As expected, the messy job that he left behind didn’t make the news-but had the boys at home fluttering.

### **Stain**

“I’m sorry,” Midoriya almost choked, “You go by what now?”

“Stain,” he replied. “Figured it was time for a change.”

“Change?” Midoriya replied back, dubiously. “What changed? You’ve been Stendal for,” his hand came up to his shoulder, “two weeks?”

Stendal, Stain,the asshole who left a scar on his shoulder, gave him this look. It said a lot but Midoriya didn’t want to acknowledged the fact that he spent enough time with him to know what that look meant.

“You’re not dumb,” he said. He tilted his head, “No, wait, you are, aren’t you?”

He flashed this crooked smile. It looked sharp enough to slit someone’s throat. Midoriya pursed his lips, acutely aware of the artery in his neck.

Stain leaned back before jumping out of the window like some ninja, and Midoriya couldn’t fucking believe that this man didn’t stab him or poke him or squeeze information out of him before leaving.

Instead, on the desk where Stain just was, was a manilla folder (presumably of all the things Midoriya asked him to look into and then some) and a plastic bag filled with convenience store food. It tasted like how convenience store food tasted like, and a hint of something else that Midoriya didn’t know if he wanted to know.

### **Ingenium**

“If you want my money and my information, you do what I ask,” Midoriya said.

“I’m not sparing him.”

“Just cripple him. Don’t kill him.”

The older man paused, looking from the picture on Ingenium on the desk to his face.

“Don’t you have money riding on this?” he asked.

“Yeah, and I thought that you would have messed up by now,” the young man replied, running his hand through his hair like this whole thing was just a giant pain in the ass. “The last thing I need is for them to start suspecting that I’m cheating.”

The hired-hand looked unimpressed, but if he’s ever learned anything, it was that Midoriya was paranoid on a good day.

Well, it’s what’s kept both of them relatively safe.

“Don’t kill him or this is the last I help you,” Midoriya said, as he popped open the container of Chinese food that Stain had brought him this time.

“It’ll depend on him,” Stain said, taking the money and the information into his hand.

Both of them knew that he was lying though. Stain didn’t do sloppy jobs.

### **Nighteye**

“So, I guess the real question is,” Midoriya said, pushing the two folders in front of him.

He gave a bitter smile, and Stain glared down at the seemingly innocent-looking folders.

“...Do you want to kill all the non-heroic heroes, or the people poisoning heroes?”

Because seriously? Child trafficking?

Well, Midoriya supposed he couldn’t complain too much, when he was going to be profiting off of this.

Either Stain leaves to… silence Nighteye and his agency, or he’ll take care of the less savory people among the hero’s association. And if he doesn’t if he left the table right now, Midoriya knew plenty of people that would love to have this kind of information.

Whatever, at the end of the day, he didn’t care as long as these people stopped investigating The Family. The last thing he wanted to deal with was a raid when he finally managed to scrape something on every local government official in the surrounding four cities.

### **Attack dog**

"Ah, you know, I heard the strangest thing about Matsumoto-san-"

"I get it. I'll get him on my way out."

Midoriya smiled back, it looked much more certain than it used to.

"I knew I could count on you, Stain-san."

### **Come with Me (1)**

“I’m saying that I’m weak, uninfluential, and poor. But there’s something that I want to do in this world, and I want you to be with me, ” Midoriya said, “So… What I’m trying to say is … is that you should come with me?”

Stain stared, for a long time, at the hand that was extended out to him.

“...I can’t,” he said. “I’m tired.”

“That’s fine,” Midoriya said, “Just... don’t forget my words, okay?”

The young man’s hand remained where it was, trying to bridge the gap between them.

This fragment of a memory accompanied him right before he fell asleep, right before the alcohol hit, right when he walked outside. It echoed in his head, playing over and over again. If it didn’t, he’s certain that he would have died.

He didn’t even realize that he was waiting for him until the second time Midoriya came around.

## Aizawa

### **underground hero-san & informat - kun**

When Aizawa followed (read: stalked) Yagi around the block, he wasn't expecting to see a young boy leaning against the wall, clearly waiting for him.

Oh no, Aizawa thought. He didn't want to do this. And while he knew that he would get back-up and that justice would prevail, he really, really, really didn't want to be the one that had to put-down All Might's career. Not like this. What was a trip to the groceries, with a side-quest to pet some cats, had quickly dissolved into this mess.

Aizawa tugged out his capture scarves. Not sure how well they would work on Number One hero, but Aizawa is nothing but practical.

"Did you bring what I asked for?" the kid asked.

Aizawa clenched his jaw.

"Midoriya-shounen, we really shouldn't be meeting like this."

"Well, when else should we meet? Do you remember how our last early morning job went?"

"Yes, but this looks strange, too."

"Then let's make this fast."

Clothes were being shuffled and Aizawa crouched down, ready to take the plunge.

"They aren't original at all, it's in the abandoned warehouses. But if you go, be careful, I don't think everything that they're selling is dead."

Aizawa froze. What?

"I was scared of this," Yagi said, shaking his head. "And you too, Midoriya-shounen. I don't know how you got this information but you really shouldn't put yourself in danger-"

"Yagi-san," Midoriya cut it. "I'm not a hero. I can't even be a vigilante. This," he motioned to the manila envelope that he passed to the blond, "this is the best that I can do. Please," he bowed his head forward, "Please help them."

-

Midnight was asked to be apart of a case. Aizawa, who had to cover her classes, had an inkling feeling.

Of course, he didn’t get any confirmation until it came onto the news, but at that point, he had a good idea about what was going on.

-

The first time the underground hero met All Might's Informat, officially, he caught the kid smoking behind a building.

"Eh?" he gasped, shocked, and when his eyes caught on the fallen cigarette, moaned. "Noooooo," he said.

"Kids shouldn't be smoking," Aizawa said, frowning, "Or be out this late."

Informat-kun whined back.

"And heroes should be like, helping people, saving them, instead of bullying kids."

Aizawa arched an eyebrow back, not that it could be seen with his goggles.

The kid sighed back. "If you're here Eraserhead-san, does that mean you're looking for information about the lost kid down the street? It's not the serial kidnapping," he explained. "Satoru-kun’s down in the abandoned apartment building that way with some college students. As strange as it sounds, there's nothing bad going on," he said, pointing in the general direction to his left. "They're pretending to be ghosts. It's pretty cute."

Aizawa didn't say anything, but took a step closer.

The kid didn't even tense. He wasn't planning on escaping, or he was really confident in his ability to. Both of them, Aizawa was prepared for. No doubt, if the kid knew his hero-name, he knew what his quirk was. Aizawa would have to be quick and efficient.

"But Eraserhead-san, are you sure you should be here? There's an explosion down west and the suspects are getting away. Four of them ran south, but one of them gave police the slip. The guy who started the explosion isn’t apart of their group, I do hope you’ll cut him some slack. The rest are the remains of Crane that got away last month."

Aizawa, at the same time, heard the call for help on his commlink, repeating back the exact same information that the kid said. He narrowed his eyes, as the kid turned to give him a smile.

"Told you so," the kid said. "I'd have given you a better heads up, but you ruined my smoke break."

Aizawa narrowed his eyes.

The kid smiled.

"The guy that set off the building does a trick of light. It's a cool quirk, but I think you'll be fine."

And then, he remained there, until the call for help appeared again-

“Hero-san, isn’t there more important things to do than stop a minor from smoking?”

-and Aizawa went to answer it. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw that the kid was pulling another cigarette out of its case.

-

"Truly, Eraserhead-san. I know that you were technically off-duty but thank you for the help."

"Not at all," Aizawa replied back. He looked back at the burning building. It was a shock to think that they only needed to call one ambulance, and half of the firefighting force was already here.“I’m glad that no one got injured in this.”

“Ah yes, it really was a miracle. The fire alarm went off ten minutes before it exploded, so the building was mostly evacuated at that point,” the officer explained. He rubbed the back of his neck, “The property damage reports will be hard to fill, but I am grateful that it will only be property damage reports we have to fill.”

“...Miracle, huh?”

The words echoed in his head, floating around him like a plume of smoke. And wrongfully (not that he could really do anything about it), he was credited with this arrest.

### **Smokebreak - [deku]**

Deku barely had the cigarette lit and in between his lips when something slaps it out of his hand. It fell pitifully into the puddle on the ground, immediately extinguished. It provided an accurate depiction of his life and he wanted to cry. Thinking carefully through his current life-choices, he was left to do nothing other than take a deep, long, slow breath, without the assistance of nicotine.

Dreadful.

“It’s illegal for minors to be smoking.”

He looked up and met eyes with a man in all black. He sighed back.

“Surely,” Deku started, hoping to express exactly how sick and tired he was about his every day life and how much of a shit storm it can be within two minutes, “There are real crimes, where people are getting hurt and possibly dying. Surely, surely those are more important than if a minor smokes, right, Eraserhead-san?”

“Then, you shouldn’t have smoked in a place where you can be easily caught.”

Deku scrubbed his face with his hand. Couldn't he just go home? He missed their old contact. At least that old man let him be. Sort of.

Okay, Aizawa might have trashed his cigarette, but at least his ribs haven't been rearranged yet. He supposed that was the silver-lining about this.

“Isn’t it a little late for you to be out anyways?”

“Maybe you should stop beating around the bush and say what you really want to,” Deku snipped back. It probably wasn’t a good idea, since this was Pro Hero Eraserhead they were talking about, and he’s certain that he’ll be taken out before he could even call out for help.

But it was his last cigarette, okay?

He wouldn’t be able to get another case for another day, alright? It was a big fucking deal to him, alright? No one bought for him because they want to, and they always squeeze some ridiculous amount of money for these shitty cigarettes. He liked the weight of it on his fingers, on his lips. The smell lingered and contaminated all his shit, so at least it felt like something belonged to him. And his favorite part about them was that it did take the edge off sometimes, especially when he has to deal with guys like Eraserhead.

Sneaky, smart, and strong. The worst fucking combination that a person could be. He hated this. He hated him. He hated himself.

“...I heard you have some information about Present Mic.”

Oh, this must be about the incident at the Red Light District. He didn’t actually have any concrete information, but he has a few cameras that he access to, and second-hand information based on what the other men at homebase were talking about. However, he can't be easy about this, could he?

Like, Eraserhead trashed his cigarette. He didn't even apologize.

“I might,” Deku said, “He’s blond, works at UA, voice-quirk, ah… your graduating class, right? You guys are pretty close.”

He would have to pull his book out back at base for more information. It was rare for anyone to ask about heroes, but old habits die hard. Even now, he felt like his heart thundering in his chest at the thought that Eraserhead was standing right in front of him. How embarrassing.

What does the hero want? Why do they want it from him? If they want something, isn’t it because they want to better the world? The part of Deku that he couldn’t get rid of, the one who diligently collected all of the All Might figurines and decorated his room with the fantasies of becoming a hero and saving people, couldn’t look at Eraserhead and pretend that this didn’t involve him.

But how was he supposed to play this?

“But, I’m honored to think that my information has made it up to you, Eraserhead-san. Might I inquire on where you got your information?”

Smile, Deku. Don’t let him see how much this is bothering you. You can't save anyone, but it's never a bad fallback.

“The information you got about the incident last week,” Eraserhead replied back, as though Deku didn’t talk at all. He sorta wished that they had better manners, but concerning where they are, he didn’t think that was something he could rely on. “Give me everything you got. People involved, the incident itself, the events leading up to it, the fallout, everything.”

“...There’s going to be a price,” Deku replied back. “And my information isn’t cheap.”

Eraserhead sighed back, and rubbed the back of his head, “How annoying. I didn’t want it to come down to this.” He faced back forward and then asked, “How much are we talking?”

The young man blinked back, “And… you’re just going to take me for face-value? Not going to try and beat it out of me instead?”

“...No deal? I want this done as fast as possible. If it's faster to interrogate you with my fist...”

“No, no, very deal,” Deku stuttered back, getting up to his feet and nearly tripping on the sidewalk. He stumbled forward and although he couldn’t see it, could tell that the older man was judging him hard. Ugh, leave it to Deku to have a great opening and ruin it himself.

They exchanged the amount. Eraserhead’s hands stilled when he was told the amount, but it was the same amount that Midoriya would charge anyone for the information that he was going to give. And then, once he confirmed the amount and tucked it away into his jacket smiled back.

He gave the rundown of the situation that happened. He gave time-stamps as needed. Midoriya does not deal incomplete information when his customer has paid in full, upfront, without any questions. He gave the information that he thinks matches the price. And the silence between them was suffocating when he finished his report.

“Do you need anything repeated?” he asked quietly. "The first time, I won't charge."

“I’m more impressed at the amount of information that you gave for this amount,” Eraserhead replied back.

“...The amount of information I give is equivalent to the money that I paid. Any extra,” he gave a little smile, “is service.”

“I’m not interested in kids.”

“And I was really looking forward to sucking on that cigarette. Take responsibility for that, Hero-san. Come and save me.”

Eraserhead turned forward, his hand shooting out to grab Deku by the back of the neck and yanked him closer. Deku's eyes widened comically and his hands flew up to grab Eraserhead’s shirt in an attempt to steady himself.

“...I suppose I did. That doesn't mean you should be tripping over yourself for me, brat,” he said. He took a step back, “thanks for the info. I’ll be around.”

Deku's heart, thundering in his chest, refused to calm down.

### **anon-tip**

"Ah, Eraserhead-san," Deku said.

Eraserhead had a long list of things to do and say to this kid. Starting with, "why are you still out this late" to "who did that to your face" and ending with, "do you have nothing else to wear but that?"

Because there were holes in his sneakers. His socks, a dirty-gray that looked like they used to be white until he got caught outside, could poke out of the front. The area around the ball of his shoe was duct-tape, probably to keep the bottom half of his shoe from flapping around. His sweater, a dark green that had several mystery stains on it, and blood. Definitely some bloodstains from his bloodied nose.

If he didn't look like such a rag-torn doll, Eraserhead would have believed that the ripped and dirty jeans was part of the current fashion fad. Instead, it just helped frame Deku as a truly pitiful victim of the cruel, cruel world.

The part of Eraserhead, who was on the way to get some more supplies to the newly mama-cat in the alleyway next to his apartment, was ready to take Deku away. This was just pitiful.

"Great timing," Deku said. one hand on his still-bleeding nose as he reached into his back pocket. He pulled out a USB. "Here. I was going to turn it into the police, but I think I'll get taken in for questioning."

Eraserhead, warily, eyed the USB.

"You need first-aid," he said.

"And 15 girls are about to get their nudes leaked on the internet," the young man replied. "Please help them, because at least, I can help myself."

Which Eraserhead had serious doubts about, because, look at Deku. He was thin and pale, with bags under his eyes so dark it looked like someone had beaten him an inch into his life.

"Do I believe that?"

"We met again, didn't we?"

He gave a grin. A grin that would fit on any one of his students back in the school. Right when he was about to say something else, do something else, he made the mistake of making eye-contact with Deku.

These were not the eyes of someone who was a victim. Those were not the eyes of someone who was beaten down with no place to go.

"Eraserhead-san?"

"Give it here," he said, reaching for the man. "I'll get it to the police. But first," he grabbed Deku's wrist, instead of the USB, "You're coming with me."

"Uh, this is kidnapping," Deku replied back, tugging back at his wrist. He winced hard, and seeing his reaction, Eraserhead made the mistake of loosening his grip.

"Look, Eraserhead-san, I get that I... look like this so you're uh... Hero-instincts are kicking in, but please," he said. "I don't need help right now."

His eyes were firm. He wiped his mouth, smearing the blood all over his upper lip.

"Please," he said. "There are plenty of people in the world that need to be saved but cannot be saved. These girls don't have to be them."

"...How did you…” No, no that wasn’t what Aizawa wanted to know. Because Aizawa had a good gut instinct. In reality, what he did want to know what, “What did you do to get this information?" he asked, lifting the USB in front of him.

"Eraserhead-san," Deku said, "can you pay the price for that?"

Clenching his jaw tightly, Eraserhead left to give the information back. Because there wasn't a hero needed here. Because there wasn't someone here that needed to be saved.

### **Aizawa makes a decision**

The price that was given on that day, was the price he paid not for the information he got (and it was very nice report, he wished that his class and Midnight could take heed from it), but the information to learn about that Deku-kid.

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“Wow, he must be really interesting,” Yamada stated once Aizawa gave his report. “You’re sitting up straight.”

Aizawa felt his heart stop for just a second.

"...He's useful. It's a waste to let him rot out there."

He didn't know why he wasn't trying to be a hero. Did someone dissuade him? Was he being threatened? It didn't matter. He knew shit, and he was smart enough to stay alive with that kind of information.

Aizawa was a hero. Aizawa was a teacher.

Finding lost youth and leading them back to the path to becoming a productive and happy member of civilized society was what he did.

### **information cost**

"So, how much for some information?"

"My cigarette..." Midoriya mourned as Eraserhead made his appearance, kicking the cigarette out of his hands as he went to take a puff.

He sighed deeply. He ran his hands through his hair and turned to the older man. Next to him, the man sat, propped on the railing.

"You shouldn't be smoking anyways."

“You don’t even know how old I am,” Midoriya hissed.

“Old enough to face reality,” Eraserhead snapped back.

The young man rolled his eyes. He straightened out and dusted himself off. And Eraserhead’s eyes immediately zoomed in to his bandaged and casted fingers.

“So? How much?”

“Depends on what you want. But I’m going to have to charge you for my cigs.”

“I’m not paying for your cancer sticks.”

### **Roadkill**

These days, Midoriya looked like roadkill. Not saying that he didn’t before, but really, the kid looked like he was being put to the shredder. Cuts on his face, deep bruises on his neck, a fresh black-eye over his healing black-eye, and bags that ran inches down his face from under his eyes. The sweater that he wore looked like it was hanging off of him, small holes slowly growing.

Was he homeless? Was he in trouble?

Midoriya looked at Eraserhead, and gave a slow smile. He pulled a folder out of his (ridiculous) yellow backpack and handed it over.

“This is paid for,” he said.

Eraserhead flipped the top over, sat the first few lines, and closed it. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

He should have asked where he got this. He should have demanded an answer. He should have asked who paid for this and who asked for this. He should have made this his problem. He should have made this his first priority.

Guys like Midoriya don’t last. Guys like Midoriya, who smile when they lose and cry when they’re complimented, are the type of people that Aizawa became a hero to protect. Guys like Midoriya, who are slowly and surely chipping away, and have already lost anything and everything, but keep fighting to protect other people- those were the people that Aizawa wished to save the most. The people who propped up society by giving all and gaining none.

“Eraserhead-san,” Midoriya said quietly, “Please save them.”

Midoriya stared back, his smile didn’t fade, even though it looked like he would. Perhaps, when the body expired, even Eraserhead would only remember that smile as time took everything else away.

“...Let’s get your face looked at,” the underground hero said, because he could do this.

“...It’s okay, I’m used to it-”

“I can’t save you,” because if I do, we will lose all the people you’re working to save, he can’t admit. “But I can do this.”

Midoriya stared at him, his bottom lip trembling.

“That’s enough,” he said, even though it wasn’t for Eraserhead. “That’s… more than enough for me. Thank you for the sentiment.”

Eraserhead, file under his arm, watched as the kid turned around and left, a slight limp in his leg as he hobbled away.

He couldn’t do it. His hand shot out to grab snag his elbow, and Midoriya gave a sharp cry of pain. He jerked his hand backwards and Midoriya turned to him, almost fearfully.

“I-I-uh, what?”

The young man turned around, his back hitting the wall, and he stared at Eraserheard in confusion. Slowly, that confusion turned into understanding.

“...Are you going to take me in?” he asked quietly. “It’s okay, I won’t fight it.”

Eraserhead didn’t answer.

“If… If you’re the one that pulls me in, I won’t fight it.”

But he couldn’t. All the people that have recently been tossed in jail from Midoriya’s information would be all gathered in one place for the young man to be. Given the nature of information-gathering that was done, it was obvious that Midoriya probably had less-than-legal connections that brought them around.

And if the manilla file under Eraserhead’s arm was any indication, if a manager at the Hero Commission’s Business and Management section was a part of this, there was enough political power and money to permanently ruin this kid for the rest of his life.

And Eraserhead wanted to save this kid.

“It’s okay,” he said. “I’m a bad person. I know that I’ll just be getting what I deserve. It’s alright, Eraserhead-san. Please don’t look like that, you are going to save someone else like this.”

And Eraserhead doesn’t know when saving someone could be so dirty.

“Just be careful,” he said.

Green eyes widened. It pulled at the skin around his black eye, and it looked painful.

“...You as well. Don’t take the main route back.”

### **“Good Person”**

“...It’s not too late. Obviously, you would have to serve your sentence, but your life can be more than this,” Eraserhead said. “You aren’t a bad person, you just lost your way.”

Midoriya scowled back.

“And in your world, do good people extort, blackmail, assault and steal from people?” Midoriya asked back, but if this was the last time that he met Eraserhead, then he didn’t want this to be their last feeling. He sighed, and wondered if they shared any good memories. “It’s not long until it’s legal for me to smoke anyways, can’t you let me go?”

He said that, but if Eraserhead arrested him, if Eraserhead said that it was time to pay his dues, if he was still 14 and fresh, he would have. He wouldn’t have hesitated. Because Eraserhead was a hero and Midoriya Izuku loved heroes as much as he respected him. He’s done plenty of bad things, so it would be fine. He would have done that for Eraserhead.

But that wasn’t the case now.

Right now, he had people counting on him. He can’t go in now. If Eraserhead wanted to take him, then Midoriya would similarly do everything possible to make sure that he escaped.

“You won’t last long at this rate,” Eraserhead said quietly.

“I assure you,” Midoriya said, “I will outlive you, Eraserhead.”

They both knew that he was lying, but Eraserhead still let him go. It wasn’t because he couldn’t take Midoriya in. Anyone would know how their fight would end.

However, Eraserhead was a hero. He saved people. Good people.

And Midoriya was not a good person.

That was the fundamental reason why they met up, after all.

## Other (misc)

### **Toga & beauty of the misalligned**

But Toga wouldn't know. There was so many people in the world that she thought was beautiful. People that dazzled in font of her before their life was extinguished. People were truly like stars, limitless in numbers, bright and dazzling, and the rest of the world would only learn that they were gone long after their death.

It was sad, in a really beautiful and poetic way. As long as they could be framed and stained by that beautiful shade of red, Toga thought that she could fall in love with anyone.

It was okay, because she knew that she wasn't right in the head. Or right enough for society. And she didn't really care about that anymore. She didn't want to be someone she wasn't anymore. Even if the whole world lied to her all the time, she didn't have to. Because it wasn't like she fit into that perfect frame of a Himiko's Daughter anyways.

But maybe she was wrong.

## Midoriya

### **Fraud**

“...This is fraud,” Midoriya blurted out.

The hit was predictable, if Midoriya wasn’t in the situation itself.

“Shut up! Damn, where did they even find you!?”

The blows that came on his chest and legs were predictable, now that Midoriya understood where he stood in the cycle. He gave a cry, but it choked in his throat when he was kicked in the mouth. Tears always spilled easily down his face, but especially now more than before.

Stupid. Idiot. Dumbass.

Of course they don’t care about fraud when they’ve done far, far worse.

-

"Are you stupid? Of course this isn't illegal," aniki said, his voice barely louder than the crackle of fire, "since we didn't get caught."

Midoriya felt cold.

### **First boyfriend**

Midoriya’s first kiss reeked of cigarette smoke and alcohol. It made his stomach twist as a tongue forced its way into his mouth, but since he didn’t want to die, he leaned into it.

“Haha, a virgin,” the man laughed, grinding up against him. “Haven’t had one of these in a while.”

The night of his first kiss was also the first time he had sex. It doesn’t sound nearly as romantic as he hoped it would, but right now, he had more important things. He had to live. He didn’t want to die.

Briefly, he thought about his mother’s sweet smile, pushing his hair back and kissing his forehead, telling him that he would be a wonderful hero. He wondered if it would be better to die as her hero, than live on the way he was.

It was a stupid thought. He had his answer from the moment he walked in.

He placed his hands on sweaty skin, feeling the droplets drench his skin as he summoned all his strength in his legs.

“I’ll see you next week, alright? Ah, a week already feels too long.”

And that’s when Midoriya realized it. This was pretty much his first boyfriend, wasn’t it?

### **First “Uncle” Kill**

"They don't like me because I'm young," he explained. "So everything that they say is all 'you don't have any sense of respect or dignity,' and well, they're not wrong." Midoriya shrugged, "But dignity and respect won't fill my stomach."

He gave a smile, sharp like a knife, as he spun a pen in his hand.

"When I have money, that is, when I can afford to, I sure that I'll have enough dinigty and respect to crush all the bottom fodders who have none of their own."

He pushed the bag into the water.

"Until then, Kawasaki-san. I won't ever forget what you taught me."

In the dark of the night, the only light visible was when Midoriya lit his cigarette. A small bead of red light framed by the shadows came when he inhaled. A small light, but the only one anyone would lit for this man.

### **No Empathy**

Leaning against the wall, Midoriya placed his hand over his eyes in shock. He could hardly believe it. He wasn't crying. All this time, and he wasn't crying. Was he finally out? Was empathy something that could be wrung out of him like people squeeze water out of an old rag?

His mother's death was modest but beautiful. A photo of when she was vibrant was framed, decorated by flowers of every color, as though the palette from the petals would replace the fact that only Izuku was here.

His heart was empty. When he died, no one would remember him, because she just died. Cold and hollow. He wondered where Inko went wrong, that such a warm person would give birth to an empty and cold shell of a human being like himself.

Her son, the only person that attended her quiet service, did not cry at her funeral.

Her son, the only person who actually loved her as much as he was loved, found comfort in her death. Since she was dead, those damn hospital bills would finally end. He would inherit all that insurance money and everything that was left to her by her parents, and he would finally be out of this awful debt. He could run away from the yakuza, maybe from the country, and figure out what a quirkless person could do someplace that he defame.

In that moment, he understood what All Might meant by the fact that he could never become a hero.

### **Toga & Betrayal**

"But you're not going to betray us, right Izuku?"

The question was simple. His next words would effectively decide how the rest of their night will go. Depending on what he says and does, it's likely that this whole thing will go belly up in the future. He knew what he had to say to defuse the situation.

He knew.

"Toga-chan," he said, and going against his best plans, spoke honestly. "What does it mean, to betray you?" he asked. His expression scrunched, as though he was in an insufferable amount of pain. "whatever it is, it's fine. I won't fight you."

The blond stared at him for a moment.

"Likewise, if you decide to betray me or kill me or whatever, I won't blame you."

"...Because you know me?"

He smiled back. He wasn't a stranger to lying to get what he wanted. And Midoriya knew what he wanted for a very long time. Lying wasn't the worst thing he has done, or will ever do. Lying to someone who looked at him so earnestly wasn't hard.

"Because I trust you."

That's why,when Toga understood that he lied to her in this moment, he hoped that she would be betrayed. She would feel betrayed and she would come for revenge. Toga wasn't someone that left grudges go so easily, you see. Midoriya knew.

Midoriya knew, and could not wait to die by her hand.

### **[end]**