## Post

### **1 - Hero Named Deku-kun**

Midoriya Izuku got to have about 20 minutes of peace and between blinks, he found himself in the hospital. He grunted at the pain that laced his entire body, and he looked at the bandages that wrapped around his chest and his arms. From the looks and feel of it though, his legs were in the best condition out of his body. He gave a long sigh.

How? He was literally just walking to school for the graduation party. He was literally just walking. It was peaceful. It was quiet. It was the closest thing to perfect that he had experienced in years. How???

“Well, Deku-kun,” the nurse next to him said, “It looks like you failed again.”

He frowned, vividly remembering that rush of victory when Shigaraki gave up-when he won, but before he could say anything else, the nurse gave a long-suffered sigh. While he didn’t think he deserved respect, he thought that being treated like this was a little rude. It had been so long since someone had sighed like that-sighed like he was a waste of all his mother’s love and his father’s income.

“But, with a name like Deku-kun, I guess that makes sense. But really, this is the second time you’ve been in here. If you’re not going to get it out, stop coming in and wasting our resources. We have better uses for them.”

And wow. Ouch.

Midoriya, so stunned that someone like a nurse could say that to anyone inside of a hospital, or the fact that someone could say that at all, did nothing but nod along.

What was going on?

The day inched by like forgotten roadkill on the side of the road, and he found a phone by his side. It looked old, like the model he used to have in middle school, and the thought of it made him all nostalgic and warm all at once. It died a sad death in the middle of his second year when Kacchan tossed his bag out into the river. He had come a long way from then. They both did. The memories he thought he would only see before.

And then he flipped it open and stared at it.

There was no way.

No fucking way.

But indeed, the numbers in his contacts were gone. The articles that he had saved were gone. The music files, all of All Might’s Theme songs, Aoyama’s personal recommendations, lecture recordings, were all gone. Text messages from the late nights, the encouraging things and the sad things and the funny things that defined his friendships and defended his heart over the past few years were gone like they never happened. Saved texts from people who will next text again were all gone. Right when he thought that this might not be his phone, ignoring that the passcode was still the same and his fingerprint worked, he found the gallery.

In place of all the blurry pictures of heroes in action, screenshots of schedules, memes, and pictures where all his friends tried to cram into the screen, were copious amounts of photos of himself, in various positions, beaten an inch into his life, humiliated and mutilated.

He flipped it off and placed it facedown.

His stomach churned, because it can’t be real. That wasn’t something that happened, and even though he recognized the uniform and the person on the screen as his own reflection, he didn’t recognize who he was with. He doesn’t, not even at his very worst, when that little boy slipped through his fingers and died in his arms, did he ever look in the mirror and saw those lifeless eyes look back. His head swam and when he reached to grab his head, felt the bandages against his temple.

There was one other way to check.

He yanked at the hospital gown, trying to catch eye of any available skin to prove that this was a lie, a sick prank, and a single word was scarred and slit into his thigh, right between the slits of his bandage.

< Quirkless >

His hands stilled, a tremble ran through them, and he tried to enter full-cowling. And then, he tried again. And he tried again and again as too many questions ran through his head, and all the answers he managed to salvage together were making it harder and harder for his eyes to stay clear as his throat closed.

This couldn’t be real.

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This was real.

He had to sign himself out, when they told him to leave. Of all the times he had to leave the hospital, he had never been treated like this before. They told him that no one would be coming to get him. They told him that his father was working, and when he asked about his mother, they gave him the most disgusted look.

“The least you can do is remember who killed your mother, Deku-kun.”

And just like that Midoriya Izuku learned that his mom was dead. He accepted it at face value, couldn't quite ask him why everyone was calling him Deku-kun, where the photos on his phone came from, and then walked out with the same bloodied clothes that he apparently came in. His hands trembled.

His shirt was stained with old blood. His pants were ripped from the knee down on the left leg and there were several holes appearing in his gakuen jacket. It was, by no means, comfortable. But it was that for the hospital gown, and he didn’t want to attract anymore attention.

Well, it didn’t seem to matter anymore.

He didn’t really get it then, but that would be the first day where he was Midoriya Deku-kun, a 13 year old boy who tried to kill himself by pitching himself off a building for the second time that month.

He doesn’t know what he was expecting when he got home, but the same apartment wasn’t it.

Nor was the graffiti that coated his apartment complex. His place was up on the fourth floor, but the streets were a mess on his way in. The area was familiar in an eerie way, like this was the place he grew up running through, but he didn’t recognize any of the areas.

He walked up and down this street too many times to recognize the sidewalk where he skinned both his knees and the telephone that he ran into headfirst once. The neighbor whose dog never stopped barking at him was right around the corner, but it was now an empty lot. The area around it, however, could have been sculpted perfectly from his memory with how perfectly they held.

Those little things really made him feel like he was losing his fucking mind.

And everything was almost uncannily familiar, from the way the stairs creaked under his weight to the way the second floor railing were still loose. The door and everything looked the same as he remembered, if a little older and he didn't know what he was expecting when he opened the door, but it wasn’t the pigsty he walked into.

Why wasn’t his apartment even locked? The answer scared him but he was never one to choke just because he was scared. Move cautiously. Move certainly.

Plus Ultra.

And it was here that he learned what kind of homelife Deku-kun wanted to be free from. It was a home where the man with the face of his father stumbled in, reeking of beer, and greeted him with several blows to the face. All the air would be kicked out of him soon after. His ribcage would creak before his head was dragged up by the hair.

Fierce words from a face he only saw in old photos. Blood filled his mouth before it splattered across the carpet. Dread flooded his heart even though his eyes remained dry. Midoriya had been beaten up several times. Midoriya was not a stranger to a beatdown.

Going back in time, being alone in the hospital, finding the scars on his body, receiving those cold glances from those who take an oath to save every life, seeing his phone memory packed with human cruelty, all of that didn’t feel real.

None of it really felt real. None of this really felt like it was his. He was just an outsider observer, floating about and watching bruises bloom across his body.

Reality should have been a villain attack during graduation. Reality should have been the media ruining the walk across the stage. Reality should have been Midoriya tripping in front of all his fellow graduates or dropping his diploma because he was so nervous.

Instead, reality was Deku-kun’s father.

He was the slowest and weakest lowlife scum that he has ever faced. The typical business man who blew off his money on buying hostess’ gifts and smokes. The kind of drunk that never tried to be sober because his wife was dead and he was left with a worthless son. He was a particular kind of scum that the media shunned and Midoriya never saw as redeemable-the type that their kids need saving from.

He’s handed men, women, uncles and aunts, teachers and villains like that to the police before.

As it was, and this would be his second lesson about this world, his body didn’t listen to him. With his face pinned down against the ground, the blood from his nose oozing out and staining the carpet below, Midoriya was forced to confront the idea that this was now his reality.

The funny thing was always about how similar Deku-kun and Izuku were.

Izuku leaned back and stared at his arms. Just like he remembered, they were carved up. His entire body was, of course, but he remembered the scars on his arms the most vividly. However, where his wounds were a byproduct from using a power he couldn’t control, Deku-kun’s scars on his arms were a byproduct from having no power. It’s not hard to figure out.

But it’s hard to think that this was his body now.

Some, of course, weren’t his fault. They were from glass shards when he fell or when he had been hit or slid against something that wasn’t smooth. There were some burn marks, that was the same in any world, but there were perfectly straight assortments that ran across his arms or followed his veins. They followed patterns and shapes and sizes, varying in time but seemed to have a schedule, and all his time rescuing people from a home that wanted to kill them came to the forefront of his mind.

There were scars too, profanities and insults and slurs of all shapes and sizes. He can’t see his back, but from the way it aches and pulls and itches, he’s certain that it was a canvas to someone with too much ambition and time.

He had an idea on how Deku-kun tried to kill himself, even if no one told him. The fact that no one was here at all told him enough.

He’s not proud of it. But to hide it would be like saying that Deku-kun never existed and that Deku-kun didn’t try fighting. To pretend that it didn’t happen would be to admit that he was ashamed that someone like him, someone who he could have been, had crumbled against a wave of hurt that no one could protect him. He didn’t think he could do that. He can’t pretend that people who were fighting this whole time were actually not. It wasn’t in him. And he didn’t want to be someone like that either.

He was, even if this world doesn’t seem to have them, a hero.

### **2 - Middle School Student Not Kacchan**

Time passed quickly when he didn’t know what was going on. When in doubt and in confusion, he needed to start with what he did know.

This wasn’t a world that he was used to. First of all, heroes weren’t plastered all over the buildings and on every tv screen. The stores that used to be dedicated to hero merchandise and apparel have all been replaced as otaku-stores for a variety of different idol groups and anime series that he felt like he should recognize but didn't.

Watching the lines the world drew, before breaking fragments of his greatest joy off and be replaced so silently made his heart waver.

As it turned out, a world without heroes could easily be mistaken for a world with them. It was, if anything, a little quieter.

The second thing was that his body was weak. Partly because his body had been crippled by injuries that couldn’t be fixed by any hospital, and the other part because this was a body that accepted and sought death. As heavy as it made him feel, his body was weaker than Midoriya ever thought that he could be. He would work on that.

Deku-kun was probably him, if he didn’t have heroes growing up. Or rather, if Deku-kun had heroes, he would have become Midoriya. Something like that. With hope, this was just the work of someone’s quirk, and he would be able to escape after he clears some conditions or what not. There had to be, at some point, a way for him to return to his world.

Right now, that should be a priority. He wished to return to his mother’s stern warnings and watery eyes. As expected, a stagnant apartment smelling of dried blood and alcohol just wasn’t home to him.

He didn’t even realize that he should be in school until a pair of cops asked him why he wasn’t in school. To which he stared at them blankly. Like, he was about to graduate? From high school? Start his new life as a full-time, all-the-time, friendly neighborhood hero, Deku-kun?

Except he wasn’t “the Hero who Does his Best, Deku-kun,” but a middle school student named “Deku-kun.”

Well, anyways, he was in school now. That’s the important part.

At school, in case he didn’t mention it before, it was like he didn’t exist. People who he smiled at and greeted when they made eye contact stared at him blankly, and started whispering when he turned his back. For being a decent human being, he was treated as a lunatic.

He can’t believe he was saying this, but he missed back when Kacchan and the kids who followed him used to pick on him all the time.

At least then, he knew he existed.

He stared at his books, ripped to shreds, stained and the text all smudged through, and thought that some things were the same after all. His desk (or what he assumed was his desk) had all sorts of graffiti and trash. There was an awful stench, and he wondered who would waste food and smear their expired milk all over his desk. There were other people in this classroom that would have to smell it.

Still, looking at it, even though it was ‘his’ it didn’t feel like it. It felt like he was someone else’s life, a stranger’s life, entirely. The names were similar, but the feelings were too different. He would never wish this kind of treatment to anyone, but that was it. Aside from feeling a little sad, a little lonely, Midoriya felt nothing.

Nothing, until he saw a particular blond brighter than everything else.

Then, Midoriya Izuku felt pain.

Kacchan sat three rows in front of him, and for the most part, Midoriya couldn’t see him unless everyone was sitting and he was the only one standing. This Deku-kun was the same as him, in the sense that they were just uncomfortably smaller than everyone else in front of him. In all honesty, he didn’t even realize that Kacchan was even in his class until he strolled in the middle of sixth period, an hour before the bell rang to dismiss them for the day.

The teacher broke out into sweats, but didn’t say anything. His eyes darted around the room, and started to mumble the rest of the lecture.

Kacchan didn’t look at anyone and just sat down.

The split lip and bruised face was unmistakable, but the real telling-sign to Midoriya was the fact that there was no soot on his uniform, he didn’t smell like burnt hair, but his knuckles were caked with dried blood.

It weighed hard on Midoriya, but after about 15 minutes, Kacchan stood up and left. He didn’t even look at Midoriya, or anyone for that matter.

He never associated the word pitiful with his best friend, but he came close that day. He apologized to Deku-kun in his head, and stood up with his hand in the air.

"I gotta use the bathroom!" He called out, and without waiting for anything, ran out after the blond.

The teacher didn't even pause in the middle of his sentence. That’s how invisible he was. In these moments, it was a good thing.

"Kacchan!" he called out.

The blond didn’t stop. Either he was ignoring him or he didn’t think that Midoriya was calling him.

Logically, that made sense. They might not be anything more than strangers. A long time ago, Midoriya wanted that kind of relationship with Bakugo, but as expected, it looked wrong. Bakugo didn’t look like someone that should be alone. Even if it was just some groupies that were in awe of what he did, he wasn't alone.

Midoriya reached out, the same way he wanted to reach out all those years ago before Bakugo was nothing more than a picture frame to mourn over.

“Kacchan,” he said, as he managed to grab the man by the shoulder.

The blond stared at him, eyes wide and mouth agape as he stared at Midoriya like they had never seen each other before.

“...What did you call me?”

Apparently, it was possibly very likely that they had never met before. Bakugo was never the type to memorize and care about the people in their class, but still, the thought that there was a Bakugo who wasn’t a ‘Kacchan’ was foreign to Midoriya.

It could have been that, in this world, where there were no ‘heroes’ and ‘villains’, there was no ‘Kacchan’.

“Kacchan,” Midoria said, barreling forward with a stupid amount of courage that had no basis in this reality, “Where are you going?”

The blond narrowed his eyes, his body tense like a cat preparing to leap. “...What’s it to you?”

The young man thought about it, how he was going to go to the library to try and start some research to see what the fuck was wrong with this world and if there was a way to get out asap. He wanted to return home, to his home, to his apartment and to his mom, and pretend that this was all a bad dream.

“Let me come too,” he said.

“Huh? No way, fuck off.”

“No,” Midoriya replied, certain and confident in a way he never was like when he was in middle school. He shook his head, “I don’t think you should be alone right now.”

“...What the fuck? Does it look like I give a shit about what you think?” he scowled back. He slapped Midoriya’s hand off, “Fuck off.”

The young man stared for another moment, and figuring that it was okay to skip school every once in a while and swearing that he will pass with flying colors, jogged up to walk next to Bakugo.

He had forgotten how young Bakugo could look. The round cheeks, and the permanent scowl. He wondered when all of that evened out to become the person that fought back-to-back with him until he couldn’t anymore.

“I don’t want to,” Midoriya said.

Because once upon a time, he listened to Bakugo and fucked off and never saw the blond again.

Even if it was possible that Bakugo died because he was someone's 'Kacchan', Midoriya didn't think it was the right thing to do. There had to be a better option. There had to be a perfect solution.

"What the hell? What's it to you?"

To see someone who looked like they wanted to be saved and turn away just wasn't the kind of hero Midoriya wanted to be.

"I'm a hero."

### **3 - Lonely Widow Hisashi**

Midoriya’s dad didn’t exist.

Okay that’s a lie, because Midoriya’s dad did his best to do video calls and come home for some obscure weekend, but the time he spent with his dad was way less than the time he spent with Bakugo’s dad. Which was telling, since he didn't even see Bakugo's dad often enough to call him by name.

Because of that, the memories of Midoriya’s dad were foggy and hazy at best. He remembered a man who was worn by his suit, with bags under his eyes and cheeks sunken in. He was thin, and didn’t look much like him at all. Really, Midoriya took much more after his mother. However, even though he couldn’t remember the exact pitch his laugh was, Midoriya never questioned his father’s love and devotion to his family.

How could he? The few memories he had of his father was of love. What else do you call a man who sends overtly romantic and cheesy letters with pressed flowers through snail mail? But, it always had his mother aflutter, her hands pressed over her chest, deep sighs, wide grins, and eager to send a letter right back.

Never let it be said that Midoriya Izuku grew up in a household without love.

On the other side, Deku-kun’s dad came home every day.

He came with the stench of rose-scented perfume and smoke, with a bottle or a can of some alcohol in his hand. He was thin like an old tree, and it made his protruding beer belly look that much more unnatural. Deku-kun can’t recall his mother’s smile but he could sense when his father was walking up the hallway to the front door. Midoriya knew, because his hearing became suddenly sharper and his body tensed.

It was a learned response, where his body knew something before he did, like feeling like he had forgotten something and then realizing that he didn’t turn the stove off before he left. Except, where Midoriya had innocent memories (that led to long lectures from Deatharms and Iida), Deku-kun knew from the way his father walked that he had a bottle not a can.

He was right, every time.

Deku's dad swung and hit Midoriya with a scary amount of precision and fearlessness, as though he knew exactly how much he could get away with, and it made Midoriya’s wrists itch. Deku-kun’s dad’s suit jacket was tossed over his chair, and it was a comforting thought to think that Deku-kun’s dad at least tried to go and work and be a productive human being. He wasn't all bad then, Midoriya thought.

He was an awful dad, of course, but perhaps he wasn't an awful person.

Despite the new bruise on his face, Midoriya couldn’t help himself.

His heart ached from the memories that he couldn’t share, and even though this body wasn’t his, he moved out of habit. The times where he was the first one home was few and far in between, and after a childhood where he wanted to make his life easier for his mother, he felt trapped. This was Deku-kun’s dad. This was not his dad.

He should be working on getting back home. To his home.

And just when he thought that, he realized that he never got to cook for his dad, in his world. Actually, he didn’t remember the last time he cooked for his mom. Or anyone really.

The thought wrapped itself around his neck like a chain, tightening with every breath.

So here he was, a week’s worth of curry for two, a dented rice-cooker packed tight with hot, steamy, sticky white rice, a big grin on his face as he called out when the door swung open.

Bottle day, by the way. A little past two in the morning. Earlier than usual.

“Welcome home, Dad! We’re gonna eat curry tonight!”

His dad never had that kind of look on his face. From the pixelated camera of an online call a lifetime ago, Midoriya tried to remember when he ever saw that expression on his face. Or anything resembling it.

It was enough. It reminded him that this wasn’t his dad, but Deku-kun’s. And Deku-kun’s father had this look on his face as though he had socked him across the face. Which was funny because Midoriya’s black eye was from him and a different beer bottle.

However, it clearly had him dazed and confused.

Eventually, he came in. It was a slow movement, like he was struggling to process what was happening, and then he started to move at his regular tempo, like this was a regular occurrence even though no one has been assaulted. Still in his sweaty, alcohol-stained, perfume-stenched suit, he sat down at the dinner table. Perfectly happy to pretend that this was his dad, that this was something they looked forward to in the day, that this was normal, Midoriya poured some curry over his rice and set it down.

His black-eye still stung, but he only needed one eye to eat with Deku-kun's dad.

When he left, he hoped that Deku-kun would be able to enjoy these kinds of nights. Nights that smell like hot and fresh food and not cigarettes and blood.

“Let’s eat,” Midoriya said, sitting down on the left of him and leaving the right open, as though his mother would come in at any time and get herself some food while complaining about how much laundry the two could accumulate.

It didn’t happen. Midoriya didn’t know what he was waiting for. It wouldn’t even be his mom, if she did come.

Deku-kun’s dad stared at the food for another moment, expressionless, or maybe this was how he expressed something that Midoriya didn’t know because it wasn’t something his nonexistent dad ever did. He wondered what his mom would do, what she would say. He wondered, because he wanted to save… something. Salvage it.

For Deku-kun, who had lost himself in his despair. For himself. who wanted to be a hero.

Deku-kun’s dad took a bite. Midoriya pretended that he didn’t notice.

There was a bit of a pause. He chewed a bit and swallowed and then, the tears came. The younger man snapped his head over in shock as Deku-kun’s father, with the same face as his dorky father who used to dress up as All Might with him, through the screen and halfway around the world, started to cry. He gave this open mouth wail as tears ran down his face. Amazingly, it didn’t hit the plate, and instead, he picked up the spoon in his hand and threw it at Midoriya.

Midoriya winced, and stood up from his seat. He didn’t know what to do, but that moment of hesitance was enough.

Deku-kun’s father didn’t say anything coherent, but he lifted his hands to beat Midoriya. He screamed and cried, even though he was the one that was beating Midoriya. For a brief moment, he was reminded of a small child trying to beat up a larger child for taking his toys, until the thoughts were beaten out of him when a particularly well-placed kick knocked all the air out of his lungs.

And when Midoriya was nothing more but a big bruise on the ground, Deku-kun’s dad finally stopped. His chest heaved as he just walked away into the bathroom, and Midoriya hated how normal this felt. He sat up, wincing as he jostled new wounds and sighed.

Normal Tuesday night.

His eyes looked up to the mess of dinner, and couldn’t quite tear his eyes from the fact that Deku-kun’s dad left his food perfectly alone. Deku-kun’s dad smashed Midoriya’s plate of curry over his head sometime during the fight, and their two plastic cups of water broke against his shoulders. So he stared at Deku-kun’s dad’s leftovers, and wondered what he was supposed to think.

His appetite was gone, so he better get started on cleaning up instead. Hot dinners were great until you were slathered in it.

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The following day, Deku-kun’s dad slipped out in the early mornings for whatever it was that he did. When Midoriya returned from his job, it was particularly quiet. Normally, he passed out, painfully hungover on the couch until Midoriya was leaving for school. Without any extra sounds, the snoring, the faint groans, it felt deafening.

Was silence supposed to ring like this in his ears?

As always, Midoriya went about his day, wincing occasionally at the dull aches decorating his body. It would appear that he and Deku-kun had a lot of similarities in this sense. He took a deep breath, felt like he was suffocating against the pungent smell of cigarette smoke and alcohol and spilled curry, so he teetered over to the window and opened it.

Against the quiet breeze, the cool morning air, he closed his eyes and basked in the fresh morning.

It was hard to breathe, but he knew that the longer he waited, the worse it would get. He wanted to, as soon as possible, see the world that Deku-kun saw and tried to escape from. Perhaps, if he could see something worthwhile and great in this world, Deku-kun would return and he could leave. He didn't even know where to begin with his search to find a way back home, but maybe he could start here.

Perhaps that was what he needed to do. It was probably irresponsible to think that, but it was too far ingrained into him at this point. He had to stick his nose where it didn’t belong. There was something here that he felt like he could do.

He stared at the world outside and got ready for school.

Midoriya didn’t expect to see Deku-kun’s dad come in at five pm, with a bag of groceries, and not smelling like the red light district. He wasn't sure what part of this equation was the hardest to believe.

He stared in open-mouth shock as the man went into the kitchen, and proceeded to make the worst fried rice he had ever tasted. The rice was burnt, the meat was undercooked, and the vegetables were overcooked. All the seasoning clumped to one part of the dish, and chunks of rice were hard to bite through.

But in any world, this was the first time he ate Hisashi's food. They sat through the entire thing until all the food on both their plates were gone. It was silent aside from the sound of their spoon scraping against the plate.

And it fueled so much hope inside of Midoriya that he felt like his chest would split open. Surely, if this could be fixed, then the guilt that he was abandoning Deku-kun to this would subside, right? At the very least, he needed to do something, right?

“Thank you for the food,” Midoriya said when he was done. His stomach was already churning. He was sick, either because of the cooking or because it reminded him how much he wanted to go home. And feeling particularly brave, said, “I was thinking of making katsudon tomorrow, what do you think?”

“Fine.”

It would be the first thing he said to him without hitting him. In fact, the whole day, he didn’t get hit at all. He didn’t realize that someone could sound so different when they weren’t yelling. Midoriya felt his eyes water, something that didn’t happen when he did get hit, and he gave a watery laugh.

“And for the leftover curry yesterday, I was going to take it in for lunch tomorrow. Would you like me to pack you some, too?”

“Fine.”

Ignorant, naive, and arrogant, Midoriya beamed back and believed that everything was going to be okay.

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The katsudon, in Midoriya’s humble opinion, was perfect.

“...How did you make this?” Deku’s dad asked.

“Hm? I just followed the recipe,” he said.

“...There’s no way…”

Midoriya looked up and a pair of chopsticks came flying at him. For once, it seemed like his self-preservation instincts kicked in, and he inwardly sighed at the thought that the katsudon he worked so hard to make was going to go to waste. He managed to dodge the second swing, it was harder than usual if only because the other man was sober, but Midoriya really didn’t want to lose an eye.

This man was good at not breaking bones. Midoriya imagined it came from practice. And well, Midoriya didn’t really think he could ever fight against someone who looked like his father, but he knew how to mitigate damage from a civilian. Normally, it was always easier to just wait it out, since it felt like his body wouldn’t listen to him no matter what he did. But, he dodged when it looked like Deku-kun’s dad was going to skewer him with the chopsticks again.

He really, really didn’t want to go back to the hospital. With how well Deku-kun’s body seemed to react and move the way he wanted it to, despite the dull aches, he understood that it’s a shared sentiment.

“Stop it! Stop being like her! Stop looking like her! How can you cook the same way she does when you killed her!”

Midoriya felt his heart stop, and in his confusion, Deku-kun’s dad made contact. Not with the chopsticks, thank god, but with his fists. (And wasn’t that a strange thought? He was glad that the fist made contact.) For some strange reason, at that second, he could hear Kirishima explaining that fist-fighting was the manliest way to fight, because it was skin-contact with the person you are willing to hurt, and be hurt by. Hitting someone with your fist was hard for both parties.

Midoriya went down when he slipped on the ground because of his socks and his head slammed into the countertop.

It wasn’t bleeding, or it didn’t feel like it, but it was going to hurt a lot when he woke up in the morning.

Then the blows rained, or they would have normally, and he looked up to see what stopped Deku-kun’s dad. Instead, he saw him crying again. Briefly, the thought that he didn't take after his mother crossed his mind. Because where his mother can burst into tears, Deku-kun’s dad cried like a steady stream and his nose ran hard when he did. It was such a strange thing to notice, but it was clear that this was what he had inherited from both his parents.

“Inko,” he sobbed out, “Inko please. Inko, please, please, please forgive me. Inko.”

And suddenly, Midoriya understood where Deku-kun’s mom was, why Hizashi was home, why he beat his kid, and why Deku-kun wanted to kill himself.

He wasn't trying to escape. He was trying to reunite with his mom.

Deku-kun’s dad ran out, and Midoriya took a moment to remain laying down on the ground, wondering how the hell he was going to save Deku-kun’s dad. Or even Deku-kun.

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He didn’t.

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There was a note on the table.

Midoriya stared at it for a long time, and for the first time since coming to this world, felt the tears come forward. It was undoubtedly his father’s handwriting. It didn’t matter how long it had been, how many years, or whatever parallel world he did end up in, it seemed that his handwriting was exactly the same. In his childhood, his father was a pixelated man frozen on the computer screen due to slow internet and loving notes from all around the world. Of course Midoriya knew this handwriting.

The note was wrinkled, like it had gotten wet by a few drops, and he cried.

When I come back, I swear I’ll be a real dad.

He didn’t mind that his father here beat him. He didn’t mind that his father yelled at him and used all their money and drove another him to his death. He didn’t mind, because at least finally, he had a world where his dad did come home. He didn’t mind because he knew how to save people when he could find them.

Sitting down at his designated seat, he placed his head on the table and cried.

This wasn’t Midoriya’s dad. This was Deku-kun’s dad. And like he couldn’t save his other self here, it seemed he threw this man away too. Unable to save either of them, even though they were within grasp, Midoriya felt an irreparable emptiness open up inside of his heart.

Every month, without fail, his bank was updated. Someone continued to give him a generous amount of money, every month, on the same days. Midoriya used it carefully. All the bills were paid, the services updated, broken dishes replaced, fridge well-stocked, and small home repairs to the furniture.

But when those were paid, and he didn’t have anything else to spend it on and no willingness to spend it, he kept working out. His wounds healed, they left scars, and he built his body back up. He cooked for himself, cleaned everything several times over, and every morning, opened the window even though there was no smell to banish.

More so than the money, he wished for the people to fill his dining table again. He was sick of eating by himself.

He just wanted to go home.

### **4 - Dumpster Child Shigaraki**

While throwing out the trash, Midoriya found a human being.

A literal human being. Just. In the dumpster. Super casual Tuesday evening.

He took a deep breath, figured he had nothing to lose, and grabbed the human being by their legs and yanked them out. The stranger’s head made a painful sound and their arms rammed up against the side of the dumpster twice, and Midoriya managed to get them out after a few extra minutes of struggling. It would have been much easier if he wasn’t so weak, but it was a work in progress. It would have also been easier if the stranger didn’t start to flail, but Midoriya supposed that wasn’t something he had control over.

With that said, that black hair was unfamiliar until he could see his face, and Midoriya wanted to cry. It would have been better if it was a stranger. It would have been better if it was some lost alcoholic or homeless person. Anything would have been better than that unforgettable face.

“Why are you crying?” the man asked, voice breathless with a wide-eyed stare. His lips were so chapped that just speaking tore something in his bottom lip. “I was the one in a dumpster.”

As a response, Midoriya sniffled. He just wanted to throw his trash away, but here he was, tearing open his old injuries under the guise of 'doing the right thing'.

“...Who are you anyways?”

Shigaraki Tomura, the man that once stood at the top of the biggest Villain Organizations, stared back at him with an expression he’s never seen on him before. Instead, he just looked part curious and a large portion shocked and just a little bit scared.

Did that make sense?

Shigaraki once stormed a school for people learning to be heroes. Why was he scared? How could he ever feel fear, when he wanted to embody it the same way Midoriya wanted to embody hope? His eyes watered, an unforgivable guilt wrapping around his heart to squeeze it painfully.

Of all the people to end up in the dumpster behind his apartment, why did it have to be Shigaraki?

But what was he going to do? Abandon him? After everything?

“...My name is Midoriya Izuku,” he said, an uncertain smile flitted across his face and his eyes burned and his heart broke, “...I’m… a hero.”

Shigaraki, however, didn’t mock him or laugh at him or sneer or anything. There was no spiel to explain how awful heroes were in a world where people waited to be saved. There was no lecture for Midoriya and his easy-peasy life. He just stared at him, his incredulous shock turning into confusion instead.

Midoriya didn't know that those red eyes could hold anything other than disdain.

“What?”

“Do you… want to come with me? I live on the fourth floor."

In reality, Midoriya became a hero to help people, to save people, with a smile on his face. In front of him was someone that he really wanted to save, but ultimately couldn’t. It was an old thing. It was a painful thing. It wasn’t relevant. It was so irrelevant that there were no villains and there were no heroes and the Midoriya family was fraying at the seams instead of being spotty at best.

Even if he didn’t [save] Shigaraki Tomura in this world too, he didn’t have to abandon him either. It might sound half-hearted, but Midoriya didn’t care. He didn’t have the energy to anymore.

"C'mon," he said, reaching his hand out to the man. "It's better than being out here."

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“It’s a bit of a mess, so please excuse it,” Midoriya said nervously, eyeing the stacks and stacks of books that lined the wall. It looked like Deku-kun’s mom and dad were bookworms too, since they had all these books. Or at least, he hoped that it was theirs and not stolen or something.

He wondered if it was something that Deku-kun was used to. And that’s why he never thought it was strange or a mess because he was so conditioned to think that it was normal to have books piled up like this. There were no bookshelves or desks or anything. Furniture was so minimal that aside from a tv stand with an unconnected tv and a couch, there was nearly nothing in the living room. Just books.

But now that he was the only person that inhabited this place, he still didn’t think it was right to make changes to a home that wasn’t his. As far as he was concerned, this wasn’t for him. This wasn’t his. He didn’t deserve to enjoy himself like that. He would do his best to keep it the way it was, for the people who might return one day.

And also, so he didn’t grow attached to something that wasn’t his.

Still, he thought as he shot Shigaraki another glance, he supposed he was bringing in people here like it was his place.

It was a simple calculation. He thought that it was worse to abandon someone in need even more. Dealing with things as they came, one at a time. No one was here to stop him, and he would return everything back to its proper place. Definitely. Probably. Shigaraki would be fine, eventually. It didn’t look like he had a century-long grudge looming over him or anything, so at least he had that going for him.

And so, he'll be alright. Maybe not [saved] like how All Might would have, but he would be okay. It would be enough for Midoriya, who still needed to go home.

“There’s a bathroom in the back. I have a t-shirt and some sweatpants, but they might be a little small for you. Go ahead and take a warm bath. I’ll throw your clothes in the wash, and you can leave whenever you want.”

He said that, but Shigaraki’s clothes were ragged and tattered. He remembered a time when his mother spent all night making him a hero suit out of homemade goods, and something inside of him emptied out. He never really learned how to sow outside of the little trinkets he did with Kosode and Sato, a long time ago, but hoped that he retained it.

Shigaraki didn’t say anything, but he walked to the bathroom. Once the sound of water came, Midoriya went ahead to collect the clothes, a crumpled pile next to the door.

They smelled putrid. Deku gagged on the awful smell emulating off of them, and almost threw them out then and there. There were some maggots that had caught onto it, probably from the dumpster. How long had he been in there? With no choice, he took it to the kitchen sink and plunged it into a collection of disinfect and bleach. There was no other way he could think of salvaging this mess. He better make sure his carpet was okay.

...Was he supposed to wash it and then mend it? Or should he mend it and then wash them? He hesitated, wondering and wishing that he could just ask his mom, and wished that this place had internet or that his phone worked and could connect to the internet.

Well, now that he thought about it, he remembered his mom working on mending things late at night, right? So it would have to be after the wash, right? He doesn’t remember clearly. Hopefully, he wasn’t wrong. Or if he was wrong, it wouldn’t lead to some disastrous and irreparable mistake.

He tossed the clothes into the wash. He returned to the kitchen, and started cooking the next week’s worth of curry. All the while, he felt his heart ache to return home. He wondered if this was homesickness, if he didn't even know how to get home.

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“Oh, the clothes fit you better than I thought.”

He said that, but Shigaraki was still way taller than Midoriya. It should worry the young man that he was thin enough that he managed to fit into the clothes of someone half his height, but the sweatpants came up to his knee and his shirt sat uncomfortably high up his chest. There was a towel over his head, and his hair was still dripping. It felt too familiar to reach and dry his hair for him or something, so he didn’t do anything.

More importantly, the laundry would be done soon. He would have to sit this uncomfortably just for a little bit longer.

“I hope you like curry,” Midoriya said, getting up to get him some rice and placing some curry onto it. “I didn’t know what you liked, so I hope it’s okay that it’s mild. I don’t think it’s that bad." He hesitated, clearly remembering that one incident where he made dinner and his class all came down with a stomach bug except Kirishima and Tsuyu. "It’s edible," he tried again. And then, remembering the sound Deku-kun's dad made when he ate his food, amended it with, "It won’t kill you.”

Well, this was curry. It was like, the one thing he did know how to make somewhat consistently.

He placed the bowl down at the placement where he normally would have sat, and took a seat across from him. It made his stomach twist around. Would he be able to eat? What was he doing? Why was he doing this? How could he take one look at the guy who once terrorized him and his friends and all of society and feed him dinner?

"...Is it okay…?" Shigaraki’s cracked lips barely even moved to speak, and he was so quiet that Midoriya had to stop chewing to hear him.

Come to think of it, Shigaraki's name wasn't Shigaraki, was it? He thought back to those moments. Wondered if he knew Shigaraki, but the person in front of him was someone else. If he differentiated them like that, would it be easier for him? If he didn't differentiate them, would these awful feelings finally pass on?

"... You eat because you're hungry, that’s it," Midoriya replied back, tucking his heart away. His breath was shaky, so he took another spoonful. “Do what you want, but I would rather you didn’t waste food here.” And he ate it.

As it turned out, the world without the Symbol of Peace and the Symbol of Fear was a world where he and Shigaraki can sit together at the same dinner table and eat curry.

He didn’t know what to do with this thought. He didn’t know what to do with this feeling. But he’s not someone that could look at the Shigaraki in front of him, a Shigaraki that floundering in a dumpster like trash, and turn away. He doesn’t know how to. As awful as Shigaraki was. As terrible as the things he did was. He.

He swallowed his food.

"Bringing you here was my selfish desire. You don't owe me anything."

When someone looked at him like that, looked at him like they wanted to be saved, Midoriya only has one instinctual response.

"When you're done eating, you can put the bowl in the sink. If you need to call someone," he thought to the pictures on his phone and shrugged, "There's a payphone down the street. I'll leave some cash here. The door auto-locks behind you, so be careful."

He thought about it, was that too much? But it would be better to get it all out and just be done with it, right? The words spun around in his head, and he risked a glance at Shigaraki. Oh no, red eyes stared at him like Midoriya had grown a second head.

Maybe he had something on his face. Maybe he just needed to clean up instead.

"...You can take the bed in the back, if you need a place to stay," he hesitated, keeping his head facing anywhere other than Shigaraki. This was driving him insane. What was on his face? "I get up early, so do what you need to."

And Midoriya rushed out of the kitchen he didn't belong in.

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He learned later that there was nothing slathered on his face.

### **5 - 3PM Behind the School**

Well, real or not, fake or not, Midoriya was never one to just sit back and watch things happen. Maybe it came from an entire childhood or wishing and wanting someone to come and save him from the shit that he was watching right now. It would have been different if they did this to him.

He knew he could handle it.

“What’s the matter, Bakugo? Aren’t you gonna go all ‘explosion’ right now?”

As it was now, however, he knew that if he stepped in, it would make things much worse for Bakugo. If he stepped in right now, Bakugo would resent him and he would martyr himself. Then, starting tomorrow, both of them would get targeted. He knew how these tended to play out, when there wasn’t a good way for it to end.

“C’mon, where did your bark go, you stupid mutt. Maybe we should make your muzzle a part of your uniform!”

From the way the teachers weren’t stepping in and the way the bullies weren’t even trying to hide this, this was something that everyone was used to. For his classmates, this was a normal occurrence that no one did anything about or tried to stop. If anything, this was something that was just annoying and they wished that this would hurry up and end. Like seeing bugs in the spring, it was annoying but altogether an accepted hindrance of life.

It was the worst type of person Midoriya had met. The type of person that pretended to not see what was going on.

"Are you that scared of getting suspended again?"

Which means that the current head honcho of the bullies was either someone with ties to a very powerful someone, or certain that this would always end up in their favor. Midoriya couldn’t help but snort, why would any of that ever bother Kacchan? Why wasn’t Bakugo fighting back? It was so bizarre.

To Midoriya, Kacchan has always embodied the word [strong].

He stared, and the blond met his eyes for a fraction of a second before his gaze dropped down to his desk.

But this wasn’t Kacchan that Midoriya grew up with, was it? This was Bakugo-kun, the quiet kid that stood comfortable in his solitude, and not the Kacchan who was like the sun of a heliocentric world back when all they chased after that blue cape.

“...Kacchan!” he shouted out, standing up suddenly. His chair screeched behind him.

Good, he caused a diversion. The silence of the classroom was disorienting.

“My… My stomach hurts!” he yelled out, and then, belatedly, realized that he should hold his stomach. He wrapped an arm around his stomach and hobbled over to his...friend? Classmate? The guy who looked like Kacchan if Kacchan had no hope, dreams, aspiration, and was under 150cm. Whatever, he grabbed his arm, “Help me!”

And his eyes widened and with one good yank, hauled Bakugo to his side and they rushed out of the door. As expected, the teacher didn’t even notice. No one seemed to. It was like they pressed pause on this world and moved on without it.

Perfect, Midoriya thought, believed.

And then Bakugo snatched his arm away from him, and with a chilling glare, walked away. Too shocked, since that wasn’t an expression he’s seen since they were freshmen at UA, Midoriya stood there limply.

In another world, he would have left Bakugo to his own devices. He would have let him be because Kacchan was strong and he was proud. He didn’t accept help because he didn’t need it. He stood at the top and only looked to higher heights. Nowhere in that visionary did he ever need help. Especially not for him.

But Midoriya spent an entire lifetime chasing after that back.

He knew better than anyone that people aren’t meant to stand alone. That’s why he chased so hard.

And so, he hoped that Deku-kun wouldn't mind the fact that he was going to make him a friend.

“Stay out of it, shithead,” the blond said, his lips pulled into a deep scowl.

“Nerd.”

“I, what?”

Midoirya stared back. Confusion made Bakugo look, somehow, even younger.

“If you aren’t going to call me Deku, you should call me that.”

The blond squinted at him.

“You want me to call you ‘Nerd’.”

Midoriya blinked twice and then gave a sheepish laugh. He scratched the back of his head as a sudden bout of embarrassment colored his cheeks.

“Uh, I mean…”

Maybe he missed Kacchan a lot more than he thought.

“You freak, you asked me to call you ‘Nerd’.”

Saying it like that made something inside of Midoriya twinge painfully.

“W-Well, I ‘m just saying-”

“I’m not calling you anything. Don’t talk to me. Don’t look for me.”

And Bakugo walked away again, as though the world was something he could carry alone. It made Midoriya’s limbs feel like lead, and he wondered how he wanted to be a hero when he couldn’t even find courage.

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Despite what certain people might say and think, Midoriya didn’t actually go out of his way to break the rules. It just… happened.

He was putting some supplies away. Happily, even. It was so rare for his teachers to see him and recognize him, even if it was only because they needed something done. Well, Midoriya wanted to encourage good behaviors, and so he got to work.

He wasn’t someone that turned another person’s plea for help so easily, after all.

And that’s why he didn’t think twice about it. He didn’t question why he suddenly existed to these people until he got to the door to leave and realized that it was locked.

He tugged at the door. Wasn’t this a huge security oversight? This was awful, wasn’t it? What was the school doing, that there was a door that could lock people into the room like this?

“...Hey! This is locked!” he yelled out, banging on the door.

And then, he heard it. The unmistakable sound of someone giggling. He had thought that, since the only people that were egging Bakugo on were boys, that the girls didn’t exist in this equation outside of bystanders. The thought sent chills down his spine, because this wasn’t an oversight he would have ever made on the field. If they had been in the field, someone would be dead because of this kind of oversight.

Bakugo would die again.

The sense of panic threatened to drown him, until he pulled at the door again.

“What an idiot,” he heard.

“Shouldn’t have gotten involved.”

Ah, someone had locked him in here. It wasn’t a villain. It was a classmate. Because there were no heroes and villains here. Just school-related people. Like students. Students locking students in. Civilians fighting civilians.

This hadn’t happened to him in so long… well, it might be a normal thing to Deku-kun, huh? He pulled at the door again.

“C’mon, they should have gotten him by now! Let’s go and watch!”

Go… and watch?

For a strange reason, probably because Midoriya never really did learn how to ‘get over’ the deaths of his classmates and his peers and his senpais and everyone, he got that awful feeling again. That something bad was going to happen.

The worst thing that ever happened to Midoriya was that he was left behind. The worst thing that Midoriya ever did was leaving someone behind.

He took a few steps backwards. He took a deep breath, he would apologize later. He would explain and take whatever punishment later.

But this was a world without heroes. That meant that, someone as alone as Bakugo wasn’t waiting to be saved, if he was waiting at all. It meant that, no matter what these students did, it would be written off as ‘kids messing around’ because there weren’t any villains here.

Of course, Midoriya could be wrong. It could be that there was no fire. It could. It was possible.

With an apology in his head, he ran forward and jumped up. Doing a double drop kick would be a first in this body, but he wasn’t in as awful of a state as he thought. Breaking the door clear off his hinges, he cheered internally. Thank god he went to such an old public school that couldn’t afford sturdier doors with terrible locks.

Cleared out of the room, he turned to the girls standing in the hallway. Good thing they were planning on leaving. They could have been hurt if Midoriya had got them.

“Which way!?” he demanded.

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Like they were in some cliche shounen manga, he ran for the back of the school. There, by the bike rack and the school’s back entrance, there were about 15 people. Some were his classmates, and some were from the class next door.

On his knees, with two people holding one arm each, Bakugo kneeled with his head bowed.

Did that make sense? Even though it was right in front of him, Midoriya didn’t get it. How could that be Bakugo?

For as far back as he could remember, Bakugo was strong. He had beaten up sixth graders as a second grader, that’s how invincible he’s always been. He wasn’t someone that would kneel, even if he was going to die.

Midoriya would know. Kirishima explained what happened while choking back his tears.

The thing about doing the ‘right’ thing was that it was different for every person in every situation. Midoriya understood that, and had these alarms in his head that rang when he strayed too far away from logic.

“Hey!” he yelled out, as his heart raced in his chest. Oh no, he thought, what was he doing? This wasn’t even his body!

Still, he caught everyone’s attention.

He took a deep breath. On occasion, there was only one thing to do. And that was, when someone came at you swinging, you had to take them down quickly and efficiently, to minimize damage to everyone and everything around you.

Midoriya’s next lesson was untrained middle schoolers, even with the added bonus of quirks, were rather weak compared to an experienced hero, even in a weaker body. The more he fought, the calmer his mind became.

These were kids. From their clumsy steps and wide swings, they were more like puppies who haven’t realized that they were full-grown dogs now. It would be endearing, if they didn’t use their beautiful quirks and their strong bodies to hurt other people like this.

A stray shot hit his face, but instead of falling with the hit, Midoriya pushed right back. A flicker of fear crossed some of the boys’ faces, to his surprise. If this was surprising, then they shouldn’t fight.

Their blows lost momentum and strength with their hesitance, but Midoriya wasted no time. Swinging a leg up, he knocked one of the boys out when it made contact with his temple. The harder he fought, the less resistance he encountered.

At least, he thought that until his eyes met with a guy standing by the wall. Eyes wide because he recognized that flash of purple anywhere, he scowled.

“Why aren’t you fighting?!” he shouted out, but it probably wasn’t very convincing since there was blood dribbling down his nose. Still, he was the one standing while they were all on the ground. All except the other third year leaning against the wall.

He narrowed his eyes back.

“These are your friends, aren’t they? Aren’t you upset that they just got beaten up!?” Midoriya shouted out, and okay, maybe he was a lot more angry than he thought. Maybe he was frustrated.

Maybe this guy shouldn’t have shown up with the face of the guy that should have graduated with them instead of dying before they became third years.

“Those guys,” Shinsho Hitoshi, the revealed center of the people who trashed Kacchan, spoke clearly. His voice was a little higher than Midoriya remembered, or maybe he couldn’t remember his voice after all, and he wasn’t sure what was worse, “aren’t my friends.”

Rage? Or rather, grief? He didn’t know. He just felt that surge of emotions consume him from the inside, eyes bright, he prepared one of his fingers.

“They’re getting beat up-”

It happened. Shinsou’s grin was proof of that. It happened and Midoriya felt the fog, but unlike that time when they stood on that platform, he was ready. He flicked his finger right as that familiar sensation settled in (and it was a slow thing, but he didn’t know since it had been so long since he felt like this at all), and his fingernail fell to the ground.

“-for you,” he managed to finish.

Shinso’s eyes, wide in their surprise, stared back. Midoriya stared back.

“They stood so that you didn’t have to fight. But this won’t end until I get to you.”

It had been some time. In all honesty, Midoriya actually never liked beating people up. But, Shinso made winter come early that year when Midoriya thought he would lose his mind between funeral proceedings. His hands tightened into fists, because how dare someone desecrate his memory of Shinso like this.

“Grit your teeth and understand that this isn’t anything compared to what you did to Kacchan.”

And he swung.

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“...That was stupid.”

“Yeah, it was.”

Bakugo’s eyes were red. They were vibrant. They were alive. He had a few bad bruises, a split lip, and some scratches, but nothing was broken. The sight of him like this felt nostalgic. Surely, if it didn’t remind him of something so painful, he might have even cried.

Instead, he gave a lopsided grin, like a hero should. “But I think being stupid is better than standing by when I know I can do something.”

Bakugo stared at him for a moment longer, his eyebrows furrowed, the way he used to when he was trying to tutor everyone on a math problem he didn’t understand either. Midoriya thought for certain that Kacchan would have said something harsh that would make him smile because words didn’t hurt Midoriya.

Until he remembered that this wasn’t Kacchan.

When he got back, he should go place some flowers on his grave.

“...What are you doing?” Bakugo asked.

“We should get them to the infirmary,” Midoriya said, leaning down to pick up one of the boys by the arm. “If we leave them out here like this, they’re going to catch a cold.”

“Wait, what?” Bakugo blanched, risked a look at the unconcious and bloody mess Midoriya left Shinso as and then turned back, “You want to, what?”

“I want to take responsibility for what I did,” the young man said, hefting one of the kids onto his back and standing up. “Ah, I can walk you home once I’m done with this.”

“I don’t need to be walked home,” Bakugo hissed.

“But you should get looked at in the infirmary. It’ll worry your parents less.”

“What do you know?” that hostile tone came back.

“Because I think that the Kacchan that didn’t fight back was a Kacchan that didn’t want to worry his parents by having them come in to deal with their trouble-making son.”

The blond’s jaw clicked shut. He looked ready to leave. Please don’t go, Midoriya wanted to say, but he knew Kacchan.

He knew Kacchan, which was why he was pleasantly surprised when Bakugo scowled before he grabbed one of the guys roughly.

“Yeah whatever,” he said. “We’ll get this done faster if we do it together.”

Midoriya managed a smile. As the blood cooled on his knuckles, he felt like he lost something important.

### **6 - 11 PM Drinks**

“Hey, I found some beer. Can I have it?”

For some strange reason, Midoriya felt his entire body stiffen at the mention of the drink. He rolled the words in his head for a bit and then nodded. It was probably a leftover from Deku-kun’s dad, and he never had a chance to clean up everything. He must have missed it completely.

“Uh… Yeah, sure.”

Beer expires right? Well, when Deku-kun’s dad comes back, he would tell him to buy some more if he wanted it so badly. He knew that it’s bad to waste food, and alcohol isn’t cheap, right?

A wide grin came onto Shigaraki’s face, nearly predatory in nature, and the young man watched him leave dubiously. He didn’t doubt the man, couldn’t find it in his heart to doubt him, but Midoriya really hoped that he wasn’t supporting bad habits or anything like that. He didn’t really know how to deal with alcoholics aside from handing them over to the police after they caused an incident.

Well, one beer couldn’t be that bad, right?

He should feel happy that Shigaraki was taking the initiative to do something. He had worried for a bit, since it looked like all he was doing was reading the stacks and stacks of books that Midoriya had in Deku’s apartment. They didn’t really talk or anything, just… shared the same living space and occasionally ate together.

A sharp yelp and a loud crash came from the kitchen, not even three minutes later.

Midoriya abandoned his studies and ran for the kitchen, and promptly blacked out.

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The next time he came to, he was bent over the toilet bowl, staring down at vomit floating around in the water. Someone’s hands were on his back, and he stiffened as a gut-instinct fear that he was going to be kicked to death instead. His eyes turned and found Shigaraki’s wide-eyes instead. Pale-faced and trembling, he never knew that the man could make that expression and when he realized that he had probably caused that expression, felt a flood of guilt and relief all at once.

Like, good, Shigaraki can still feel concern. But bad, because Midoriya never wanted to be the one to trigger it.

“...Sorry,” Midoriya said, his voice hoarse.

“Yeah, you should be,” Shigaraki replied back, but his voice was too shaky to come off as heartless as he intended it too. “W-What the hell is wrong with you? If it bothered you this much, why did you keep it?”

The smell of alcohol was pugnant, and Midoriya couldn’t remember ever smelling something so awful before. He wasn’t much of a drinker where he was from, but he was no stranger to it. It has never smelled that bad before. Just the thought of it had his stomach churning again.

“I…” he what? What could he say? “I thought I was stronger,” he decided instead.

Right when he thought that he was getting stronger and that he was getting used to the life he tries to have here, it seems reality is hellbent on making sure he couldn’t. He clenched his jaw tightly.

“Sorry,” he said. “Go ahead and enjoy a drink, I… I think I’m just going to go to bed early today.”

-

The following morning, he found several empty bottles of alcohol in the trash can. The sight of it made his heart heavy with an emotion that wasn’t his, and he wondered if Deku-kun was actually alive somewhere deep and far away in Midoriya’s subconsciousness or something. If this was a gut-reaction from being in this body, then Midoriya despaired for small Deku-kun to have these kinds of reactions.

“Aw shit, I missed some,” Shigaraki said behind him. He startled and spun around to see those piercing red eyes land on him. “Sorry about that. I’ll take care of it.”

“No, it’s okay,” Midoriya shook his head, “Sorry for ruining the mood. I don’t… I don’t want you to think that you have to change yourself for me. It’s not like I can just live without ever interacting with alcohol, so don’t worry-”

A gloved hand, the gloves that Midoriya got him, landed on his curls and ruffled it.

“You know, I would have never ever thought that I could ever touch someone like this,” Shigaraki spoke up instead, silencing the younger man. He stood there for a moment and took a deep breath, “If it’s about change and stuff, you’re way too late.”

Curious green eyes stared up at him and the man gave him a small smile. When? What had changed? From the times that they shared curry on the same table, or Midoriya grabbing him a towel before he headed into a shower, when? The stretch of lip was clearly uncomfortable, and it was obvious to anyone with eyes. Shigaraki wasn’t used to it, and the smile looked awkward as a result.

“Let’s both live selfishly, alright?”

His eyes welled up with tears, another similarity between Deku-kun and Midoriya. And if Deku-kun’s life is even half as hard and awful as Midoriya thought it was, then he’s glad that Deku-kun still had the capability to cry.

The awkward-looking smile fell off of Shigaraki’s face. “...Are you… crying?”

“No, no,” Midoriya said, sniffling, “I’m just glad.”

“Huh?”

Green eyes met red eyes and Midoriya couldn’t believe that a day where having a (not) villain in his house could make him so relieved.

“I’m really, really glad that we met.”

The man quickly looked away, as though suddenly uncomfortable with the situation. And he walked away.

“God, what a farce. Hurry up and go to school,” he said, but Midoriya was observant. So even if he would never point it out, he could see that Shigaraki’s ears were bright red with his blurry vision.

That morning, when they ate curry for breakfast, Midoriya made sure to give Shigaraki the biggest cuts of potatoes.

The older man ate all of it without complaint, so Midoriya has reason to believe that his gratitude reached him today.

Shigaraki didn’t know it, but he saved Midoriya.

### **7 - Drowning Dabi**

Midoriya was on his way home from school when he found a man laying face down in a puddle.

It was raining, and with his new black-eye from a stray elbow during gym class, Midoriya knew that he would have to play another game of “there’s nothing on my face” when Shigaraki caught eye of it. It’s already been an hour longer than it should have to get home, and no matter what he said, Midoriya knew that he'd probably been watching the clock since noon.

And at the same time, he can’t pretend he didn’t see this man. At the very least, he could figure out if he needed to call the cops or an ambulance for him.

“Hey, are you okay?”

He looked exhausted, and like he was waiting for death itself. He had nothing to live for, no reason to even try to avoid death, and looking at him, Midoriya would never wish this upon anyone. He almost missed it. His face, Midoriya realized, was facing him, half in the dirty puddle, and with the broken streetlights.

It’s a face that he’ll never forget, if only because he used to be haunted by it. The staples are gone. He had some burn scars, but nothing as bad as what he remembered. It was a small mercy, he supposed, but that wasn’t what he was focused on.

That blue, that summer sky-blue, came out in the middle of the night again, but a feeling different to fear settled in Midoriya’s heart.

“...Hey,” Midoriya said, tipping his umbrella over him so that he got a temporary reprieve. He waited, and watched as lifeless blue eyes finally looked up at him. “If you don’t have any place to go, would you like to come with me?”

-

Why did he do that? Why did he just ask him to come with him? Why was this his new gut reaction to a familiar face? How come he still doesn’t know how to say no?

However, the most important question was standing right behind him.

Why did Dabi agree?

If, after he had offered help, Dabi had said no, Midoriya could have said that he tried and would have left him there and would have forgotten about him… No, that’s a lie. Even if Dabi refused to come with him, Midoriya would have bought him something to eat and left his umbrella with him. To stick his nose into other people’s business is what he’s all about.

But those were actions that he would take. Those were things that he did.

Still, and he risked a look at Dabi, who didn’t even pretend to notice, he didn’t know what to think about Dabi. He seemed to be Dabi, but his scars were nowhere as bad as he remembered. For one, there was some discoloration, but they looked like old scars. There were no metal staples to be seen either. He wasn’t a medical expert or anything, but maybe it meant that he wasn’t as injured? Or never had to be that injured?

But the part that bothered him the most was something else. He was… like a doll. The ease that Dabi followed him was unnerving. When they got to the staircase for his apartment though, he was a sweating and panting mess, even though his facial features didn’t change.

Midoriya stared for a moment longer before he crouched down in front of him and pulled him onto his back. He slumped like he couldn’t keep himself up anymore. The man was running a fever, was that why he wasn’t putting up a fight? Does that mean that he did want to live?

Deku-kun carried him up two and a half floors. The heat that Dabi emitted was unnerving. Was he sick? He could feel him sweating down onto his back.

This man, who once laughed as he set fire to their summer vacation, seemed to be staring off into space. But Midoriya could feel his gaze. It was heavy, and it took everything inside of him to keep from getting jittery. He could only hope that he didn’t come off as nervous energy.

Please, Midoriya begged inwardly, please just say something. The suspense was awful and bad for his heart.

“I’m back,” Midoriya said, opening the door as best he could while making sure he wasn’t dragging parts of Dabi. Honestly, he was just so… long. He shoved the thought to the side, as he heard footsteps coming closer. Somewhere inside of him, he still felt a little fluttery at the thought that he had someone waiting for him.

“Oh, you’re late. What took…”

There was a short silence before Shigaraki’s hand shot out to grab his cheek. Even without looking at him, he could feel the piercing stare landing on his black eye.

“Who did this,” he demanded.

“I did. You know how clumsy I am-”

“Clumsy enough to bring home another man? What’s that.”

If possible, his voice turned even colder.

Times like this, Midoriya thought that coming from another world was useless, since he still had no fucking clue what made Dabi work for Shigaraki in the first place. They had to have gotten along to some degree, right? As it was, he just wanted to put the man down. Dabi was not nearly as light as he looked, and Midoriya was as weak as he looked.

“No idea,” he said, “But he’s staying with us until he leaves. C’mon, let me come in, okay?”

With us. It came out without him really thinking about it. Should he ask? Did Shigaraki have plans? Why was he in that dumpster all those weeks ago? Was that something he could push for? Did anyone miss him? Did he miss anyone? When was he planning on leaving? Was he planning on leaving?

Midoriya so caught up with everything that was happening at school and work and getting back home, he totally forgot to ask anytime before. The fact that he had started to look forward to their dinners together and gentle greetings had nothing to do with this.

Well, Midoriya had a good idea on what the answer to those questions must be. So, for the time being, he supposed that it was fine if Shigaraki was here, no matter how long that would be. He doesn’t know why Shigaraki became a villain in the first place, so maybe it was better that he was here, so he could keep an eye on him and stuff. Then, maybe Shigaraki could help him with Dabi, and eventually the others, and then the whole ‘League of Villain’ thing could be totally put down before any high schoolers get involved.

Obviously, it wasn’t a priority, because he needed to go home, but. Options.

Midoriya placed his dripping wet umbrella to the side, pushing past Shigaraki and took a step in. In times like this, he couldn’t falter. He toed off his shoes (they were soaking wet and he was so grateful that he had hardwood because that’ll be easier to clean up), and as gently as he could, placed Dabi onto the ground. He leaned the man against the wall.

“I’ll get you a towel, and then something to eat.” He turned and gave a smile to Dabi, “Make yourself comfortable.”

Right now, he’ll leave the last choice to Dabi. Without looking backwards at the man, he meandered to the kitchen. It’s Dabi’s choice if he comes in. If he doesn’t come, it’s not Midoriya’s problem anymore. Yup.

And then, to his surprise, Shigaraki walked by him and threw a towel at him, and another towel to the man against the wall…

“You’re dripping everywhere. Stop that.”

Dabi stayed, huh?

He could think of a thousand reasons why this was a bad idea. Dabi’s quirk is cremation and there were a lot of books here. And if this apartment would be ash in a second, then what will Deku-kun’s dad come to? Augh, in addition to that, it was clear that Dabi had nothing. No clothes, currency, possibly injured. Midoriya was barely able to keep himself and Shigaraki floating above water, but another person?

Dabi was silent and shuffled into the kitchen, dripping wet with a towel over his head and those tired blue eyes that could end night with a fire’s might remained on the ground.

Of course, Midoriya doesn’t think he’s a burden.

“Is curry okay?”

He didn’t respond, and Shigaraki scowled.

“I can’t fucking believe you just brought in some random fucker,” he sighed, running his hand through his hair. He started grumbling and griping under his breath, and Midoriya distantly remembered a time when they coincidentally ended up at the mall together.

Progress was a strange thing.

-

The three of them sat down to eat dinner. It was the same curry that they have been eating since Monday. He doesn’t like how unresponsive everyone is, and he felt his stomach knot at the thought that his cooking was trash. Shigaraki has been mechanically eating and avoiding all of his questions about his day.

Introduction! Midoriya could slap himself in his stupidity and lack of foresight.

“Uh, Dabi, this is Shigaraki,” he said, motioning at the man next to him. He turned to Shigaraki with the most patient smile he could manage, “Shigaraki, this is Dabi. We met earlier today.”

Dabi wasn’t even eating, and Shigaraki stopped to give Midoriya this Look. While he applauded himself for getting a different reaction out of the two, he didn’t think this was any better.

They could be quiet but Midoriya swore that it’s never been like this. Please, he wanted to beg Shigaraki, please work with him. Laugh at him and call him a hopeless hero or something. The silence was reaching an unbearable amount and he couldn’t taste dinner anymore.

No, no, Midoriya, he tries to tell himself. He needed to calm down and think. Why are they so quiet? Let’s see…

The curry was made two days ago, and now that he thought about it, he and Shigaraki have just been changing flavors of curry, but essentially, they’ve only been eating curry since he came to this world. Was he tired of it? And this was how he was going to show it? He could just say it. Shigaraki once destroyed the foundation of a building so that it fell on him, so surely he’ll be able to tell him that he wants to eat something else. Unless...

Could it be… that his curry tastes bad? He knows his cooking could… be questionable at times. He once spent four months once in Kacchan’s Brutal Cooking Training From Hell and it was fucking awful. He had diarrhea for weeks. His mom was so worried about him that she started to try and teach him too, and that led to the Disaster of May that made Kamui Woods come to help them out. But he thought he got better.

Uuuu. Facing the past is as hard as trying to make a new future.

He looked up at Dabi and then the food and was certain that whatever Dabi’s facing is 1000x worse than having to explain to Aizawa why he was in trouble with the law for the second time that week, but when he thought about the people he used to have, he felt cold.

He missed them. He didn’t ever think that he took them for granted but god, he missed them.

“...Help yourself. And if you’re not hungry, you don’t have to force yourself,” Midoriya said. “I selfishly brought you here, but you are free to do what you want to. You can stay, you can leave, I don’t really care. If you want to live selfishly,” he slowly brought his eyes to the man who only stares at him when he wasn’t being stared at, “then I think that’s fine too.”

How do you save someone when there were no heroes here?

“I’m done eating,” he said, even though he has no idea when he finished eating. What a waste of seafood curry, he thought to himself, if he doesn’t even remember what it tasted like. He turned to Shigaraki, “Thanks for the food. I’ll be studying until work. Let me know when you’re done and I’ll do the dishes.”

Shigaraki didn’t even look at him, and Dabi’s eyes never left his bowl.

“...You can take a bath, too. Just toss your laundry in with the others. I’ll get you something to wear.” Midoriya said, more to Dabi. Shigaraki was, apparently, bigger than his dad, and Dabi was bigger than Shigaraki, but surely they’ll have something that could fit, right?

Despite having people at his dinner table, it was stifling.

-

When Midoriya got out of the shower, he saw that everyone had finished eating and put their dishes in the sink. He’ll get to that, and he’ll start on his homework.

Shigaraki was reading on the ground against the wall. It looked uncomfortable, but he didn’t know if he had enough money to get a sofa. The thought ran through his head and he swallowed it down. This wasn’t even his place, he shouldn’t do anything like that.

The bathroom door was closed though, he hoped that Dabi was taking a much needed shower.

When he got out, he will need to rest, fever and all. With that in mind, he went ahead to grab some blankets. Realizing that he didn’t have any pillows (and he didn’t want to enter Deku-kun’s parents room under any circumstances), he gave up his. It’s fine, he didn’t really need a pillow anyways. The weather wasn’t too hot, but he knew that the man would need a blanket.

Hopefully, Dabi will find some comfort here.

-

Midoriya nearly jumped out of his skin when he realized that there was someone climbing onto the futon he was in. He could feel cold sweat dripping down his face and closed his hand into a fist. His mind raced for a memory, but he couldn’t find anything.

And then, he realized that it was Dabi.

He blinked and sat up. The man had laid down on top of the futon, pinning the blanket down and making it hard for Midoriya to make any adjustments without losing the part of the blanket he had. He’s not sure why that made him wake up in a fright, so he chalked it up to some lingering trauma Deku-kun had that he had to deal with. And honestly? He was really tired and just wanted to sleep at the moment. He doesn’t want to deal with unseeable nightmares or strange strays that were giving him mixed emotions and conflicting thoughts.

His emotional state was making him run on fumes, and today really didn’t help. Still, he caught a shiver run down Dabi’s body and knew he had to do something.

“...At least get under the covers,” he sighed, tugging on the blanket under him, “You’re going to catch a cold.”

Shockingly, Dabi obeyed. He kept facing away, however, and Midoriya didn’t bother him. At least he brought his blanket.

“...Thank you, Dabi,” he said quietly.

He’s not too sure for what. Was he thankful that Dabi showered? Was he thankful that Dabi listened to him? Was he thankful that Dabi hadn’t lit his entire apartment on fire? He didn’t think that was it. Laying on his back, he thought a little longer about it. It wasn’t like he was going to be sleeping anytime soon.

Sharing the covers with someone that once made every effort to kill him and all his friends (even if it was from another world) made him uncomfortable. Still, as someone who had never had another body in the bed next to his since he was a child, the warmth at his back felt overwhelming and too little all at once.

His eyes watered and he closed them.

-

“...Hey, how come you guys were having a sleepover out here?” Shigaraki asked at the breakfast table.

Midoriya yawned back, still tired after the plaguing nightmares and the uncomfortable feeling of someone sleeping next to him. The morning run he had was particularly gruesome, failing to refresh him for the first time. He didn’t think he would be so uncomfortable with it, but he had woken up every ten minutes or so. As sad as it made him to think it, he had to chalk it up to something that Deku-kun’s body had learned.

It might take some time, but he would like to unlearn it for this body. Then, Deku-kun would have an easier time living in the world. It was one of the only things that he could do for the guy he stole the body from, and hoped that it’ll be enough to warrant forgiveness.

“It just happened,” Midoriya replied back, stifling a yawn behind his bowl. “It’s probably hard to sleep in a new place anyways.”

“So he slept with the guy who brought him here?”

The young man frowned. Did Shigaraki sleep wrong or something? It’s been a while since he’s sounded so… grouchy. “Don’t word it like that. We barely even touched,” he said. It wouldn’t be good for those kinds of rumors to start dogging Dabi. “Besides, between the two of us, I’m harmless.”

The older man thought about it, “Still, that’s just weird. Like, we don’t do any of that either. I’ve been here longer, too.”

There was a beat of silence as Midoriya’s mouth unhinged in his shock and Shigaraki’s ears turned red. He looked absolutely mortified, and briefly, the younger man thought it was endearing. Not grouchy then, he thought to himself.

“I-I didn’t mean-”

“Well,” Midoriya said, in a shocking moment of courage, “There’s plenty of room if you bring your own blanket and pillow.”

Shigaraki stared back at him, and Midoriya tried his best not to look at him in the face, knowing that his face was just as red. He stood up and put away his dishes.

“Let Dabi know that he’s welcome to the books and everything, okay?” he said.

-

When he came back, they were still tense and uncomfortable with each other. Or at least from Shigaraki’s end. He was glad that Dabi’s fever had subsided and he was better already.

Now that he thought about it, his Todoroki-kun once explained to him that he and his father could outburn their fevers. Maybe it was something that people with fire-based quirks could do.

--

That night, Midoriya slept in between two S-class criminals, although they were just a pair of lost boys here. He wondered what had happened in his world to turn them into criminals, and wondered if all it took to stop an S-Class criminal from becoming a criminal in the first place was a warm meal and safe place to rest their head at night.

Hah, if only.

To his left, Dabi was curled up so that his back was a few inches away from him, and on his right, Shigaraki laid on his back, stiff as a board. His living room must be more cramped than he thought, if there was barely half a foot of space between them. It must be the books, he decided, since there was nothing else in the room to blame.

“If you sleep like that your back is going to hurt when you wake up,” he whispered quietly.

“I can’t believe you just invite men to sleep with you,” Shigaraki hissed back.

Midoriya huffed a sigh and burrowed deeper into the covers. Fuck this, he’s going to bed. “You agreed, so what are you doing, jumping under the covers with some stranger? For all you know, I could drug you and sell your organs or something.”

For the record, he wouldn’t.

“You wouldn’t,” Shigaraki snorted back, “If you did, you would have done it by now.”

Proving him right made him upset, but proving him wrong would be awful and Midoriya didn’t think he could live with himself afterwards. Well, whatever. He pouted and turned towards Dabi’s back. At least Dabi’s silent back wouldn’t bother him.

“Izuku,” Shigaraki said quietly, and Midoriya wondered why he was calling him by his first name to begin with. Why was the only person who called him by his name *him*? His heart ached. “Why’d you let me in?”

Honestly, he had no idea. Sometimes, he wished that he could go back in time and slap himself silly, but he knew better. Despite better judgement, Midoriya turned all the way around, to face Shigaraki, and watched the way his ashen bangs parted to see that Shigaraki’s eyes were closed. Since the curtains for his veranda did nothing to keep light in or out, the moonlight poured in. Against Shigaraki’s light blue hair and pale complexion, it looked like he was glowing.

“...Was I supposed to leave you there?”

“Everyone else did.”

The words stung Midoriya much more than he thought, and almost bitterly, he scowled. That kind of piss-poor inaction is the reason why so many people suffer everywhere. He doesn’t consider himself a saint, and in this world, he doesn’t want to take anymore from Deku-kun, but the thought of abandoning someone down on their luck because it wasn’t convenient made him upset. That was why Deku-kun was driven to such an awful mindscape. He couldn’t help but think that it was so easy for someone to just reach out their fucking hand-

“Whatever, that’s dumb. I didn’t do that because I…” he looked at Shigaraki and sighed deeply, expelling all his misplaced anger in a second. “I don’t want to be someone that pretends it’s okay when it’s not.”

He sighed, feeling way too riled up to sleep, but too tired to get up. He laid flat on his back.

“Don’t read too deeply into it. I just… don’t think,” he said. “G’night.”

There was no response, but he’s not shocked. In the time it took for Midoriya to formulate a response, he probably fell asleep.

And then, right when he was about to fall asleep, he swore someone wished him a good night back.

### **8 - Alarmed Mother Mitsuki**

That was terrible, no beyond terrible that was… something worse than terrible. Midoriya was certain that there was a word for it, but he didn’t have it at hand. He had more important things to worry about. Like Bakugo not going to class.

Which was unheard of. Bakugo missed class two times in the entire time he’s known him. Once in the fourth grade to go to his grandma’s funeral, and once more when they were in middle school to go to his grandpa’s funeral. Both times were single day absences. When Bakugo was hospitalized and sick, he might have been excused from some classes, but he was eventually in class at some point in the day.

Point was, Bakugo had perfect attendance.

A week? It’s been a whole week since he’s last seen Bakugo. Aside from the fact that it was normal not to see people for that long, Midoriya couldn’t accept it. Somewhere in his heart, he was terrified. That the seat where Bakugo sat would be empty again.

Empty. He was sick of being empty.

Before he knew what he was doing, he was already running to Bakugo’s house. Muscle memory, even in a different world.

“Kacchan!” his voice ripped through time, space, agony and everything in between in hopes of reaching him this time, “Kacchan! Let’s go to school together!” He banged on the front door of his house, desperately hoping that the blond was just oversleeping.

30 minutes into Homeroom, Midoriya Izuku was in the wrong body in the wrong universe, running out of class to get to the wrong Bakugo.

-

Mitsuki was as young and beautiful as Midoriya remembered her being from all the times he remembered her before Kacchan’s funeral.

The last time he saw her, her red-rimmed eyes found his and she said that she was glad he was there. She hugged him, and briefly, Midoriya wondered if it would have been easier if she blamed him instead. Her hand came to ruffle his curls gently, and she repeated it again. At the funeral of her only son, he broke down sobbing while she comforted him.

That Mitsuki, except taller, as she stared at Midoriya in front of her.

“Whose house do you think you’re yelling in front of?”

“K-Kacchan hasn’t come to school today,” he stuttered out, trying not to break down in tears because he forgot that she could look so vibrant, just standing there. “I-” his voice strangled in his throat, “-I came to deliver th-the handouts from class-” he bit his tongue, “an go tomorro togetha.”

“Kachan?” Mitsuki asked.

Shit. They didn’t know each other. They were “Midoriya and Bakugo” and not “Deku and Kacchan.”

“Oh! Ba-Bakugo-san!”

“We’re all Bakugos here,” she replied back, flatly.

“No, I mean, Kacchan!”

“Who?”

His face fell, and his thoughts finally seemed to catch up to him. Brightening up, he finally pieced together what he was supposed to say.

“Katsuki-kun!” he said.

It would be the first time he said that. Instead of his hero name and his surname and [ Kacchan ] since-since…

His eyes watered, because he didn’t remember. In these moments, it made him understand that precious memories weren’t actually precious memories, if he didn’t remember them in these kinds of moments. The previous relief at having the answer made him feel like he committed a grievous sin instead.

Lost in his thoughts, he missed the horribly endeared expression on Mitsuki’s face. The expression that he saw back when they were kids and he didn’t know what that expression meant. She turned back into the house.

“Oi, Katsuki! Your friend came to deliver you something! Stop moping and take it from him!”

“Kacchan?” Midoriya perked up, because he was starved to see the blond again.

“Shut up, hag! I don’t have friends!”

“Oh, shut up and answer the door!”

Between the yelling and shouting, Midoriya felt peace. Eventually, the yelling quieted down, Mitsuki swatting at Katsuki’s head as the blond came to the door. Red eyes narrowed immediately.

“Ugh,” Bakugo recoiled at the sight of him, “You.”

“Me,” he said, “Oh, uh… My name is Midoriya.”

The blond gave him this stare.

“Invite your friend in. You want dinner?”

“Oh, uh-”

“We’re not friends,” Bakugo said, so bitterly that Midoriya flinched.

If Mitsuki noticed, that’s why she was frowning. “Oh? So who’s this?”

“An outside that got involved and beat up everyone,” Bakugo replied back, much more honest than the Kacchan he remembered. “And got suspended for ending a fight.”

“Hello,” Midoriya bowed his head politely, a wistful smile on his face because he never thought that he would ever have to introduce himself like this, to her, “My name is Midoriya Izuku.”

“Huh? So that’s why Katsuki came to the door,” Mitsuki said, as though she knew something no one else did. A big grin came onto her face, she motioned for Midoriya, “Take good care of him for me, okay? He sounds like me, but he’s shy like his father.”

Midoriya choked on his spit. Katsuki, any Katsuki? Kacchan, who told everyone that he would win their freshman Sports Festival as the freshman representative? Katsuki, who faced off 15 people by himself after school? Shy?

He looked at the bright red blush on Bakugo’s face. The blond turned away, flushed and scowling, the same way Kacchan did all those years ago. It was painful to look at. He prayed that, when Deku-kun returned, they would be great friends like he and Kacchan almost did.

“Okay,” he said, because there was so much in the world that he wanted to protect. “I will definitely protect him.”

Because he couldn’t before, even though they were friends and they were comrades and peers and heroes.

-

The following morning, they went to school together.

### **9 - Cologne, Cigarettes, and Aizawa-sensei**

Life was fine and almost okay and right when he thinks he can get used to living here, something like this happens and he has to pretend that he is willing to accept this as his life. It also, to put it crudely, lit a fire under his fucking ass to get his shit together.

He was walking back from the convenience store, and in his plastic bag was the ice cream that he wanted to share with Shigaraki.

He was quickless. This is a fact of life that seems to be constant wherever he goes. It’s something that used to really bother him, but these days, he only regrets it in moments like this.

“What’s the matter? C’mon, if you don’t fight back, I’ll just cut that fucking face of yours-”

And Midoriya thinks that Deku-kun has always wanted to be saved. He has always wanted to be saved but that was never an option for him. It’s a shame, but for the guy that he could have never saved, he swears up and down that he will save anyone and everyone that he stumbles acorss.

In a world where there are no heroes, there are no villains, everyone is lost and it’s just a matter of when Midoriya finds them. But those that he finds, he swears that he’ll save them.

“Hey!” he snapped out, pulling a Power Ranger mask over his face as he ran into the alleyway at full speed. He tackled one of them down and quickly got up to his feet.

He moves faster and he is stronger. His hard work was really starting to show.

He stood there and pulled his fists up. His mind and heart raced a thousand miles a minute, but he wasn’t going to just abandon someone to this.

“This is uh… really bad!” he yelled out, hoping that the sound will attract more people. “So uh! Don’t do it!”

He has never been good at talking to people. Since coming here, it feels like he constantly puts his foot in his mouth. Back when he was a licensed hero, it never felt this nerve-wracking.

“Who the fuck are you-”

“I already called the police,” Midoriya continued, waving his phone around, “You sure you wanna stick around?”

“Fuck… whatever it’s not worth it.”

“Yeah, c’mon Kiina.”

And they left.

Midoriya took a deep breath, dropping his hands to his side.

“Wow, to think I’d be saved by some virgin kid. But thanks,” the familiar voice came from behind him, sounding overly sarcastic in a way he thought only villains could manage. “A host’s face is his livelihood.” Midoriya felt all the blood in his body turn to ice. He turned in absolute, gobsmacked horror, as his former Homeroom Teacher stared right back at him.

The first time he saw Aizawa Shota in a suit with his hair pulled back, he was standing in front of cameras and apologizing for something he had no control over. Tsuyu once mentioned that their teacher was a handsome man if he would just clean up, but he couldn’t see anything past the guilt. Since then, the only time Midoriya saw him ‘cleaned up’ was when someone died and they saw each other at the funeral. Needless to say, Midoriya does not have good connotations with a ‘cleaned up’ Aizawa.

As it was, the sight of him right now made his stomach coil uncomfortably and his eyes water instinctively. Cheap cologne and the stench of alcohol reached all the way to him.

“...You know, you’re the one that jumped in. Why are you the one crying? Was it that scary?”

The man stood up, towering over him as he tugged on his tie and stared down at the young man. His voice started to come out as a low purr.

“So what, should I be comforting you, then? Should I take you on a date while I’m at it, my heroic savior? You’re a little young, so I bet you want something sweet will be fine, wouldn’t it?”

He took a bold step forward, and Midoriya froze where he stood. A fear he couldn’t name crept up inside of him, making him feel as though time stopped.

“...Well?”

“Uh…” Midoriya’s brain short-circuited as he tried to find his words. He tried to remember who he was, what he was doing, where he was going, but all he saw was the red eyes of his teacher and felt his heart break. “No, I’m okay. I-I need to go home now.”

And with a control he didn’t think he possessed, he left the alleyway, scurrying out like a rat and right when he got to the place he abandoned his shopping goods and stopped. He reached into the bag, where he had bought some new bandages and ointment to replace the ones that he used up at home, and turned over his shoulder. The man stared right back at him, watching him in a way that made his skin crawl and stomach churn. Did his teacher always look that heartless? Was he able to look that heartless?

If Midoriya had met Aizawa on the wrong side of the law, was that an expression he would have seen?

He marched right up to where the man with the face of his former homeroom teacher stood and thrusted the bag towards his chest.

“Ah,” he said. And the man stared at the bad and then back up at him. “Uh. Ah…” he blinked, words failing him but all he could see was that there was no scar under his eye. Both eyes. Both as in two.

If people could miss someone so bad that they could get sick, Midoriya was about to die.

His eyes watered as he remembered the teacher who once told him that he would keep an eye out for him. He tried to remember that dead-eye smile that only Aizawa could manage, and thrusted the bag into the man’s broad chest. His eyes watered and burned and he turned on his heel without further fanfare and ran.

-

He made it home, and Shigaraki came out to greet him, as he always did.

“There you are. Well? Did they have any pota…?”

He trailed off, and Midoriya looked up at him. It felt like he was exchanging one heart sickness with another.

“...You’re crying?” he asked, voice low and dangerous.

“...I’m not crying,” Midoriya said, sniffling. “I’m hungry.”

The older man looked like he didn’t believe him for a second.

“...Alright, so where’s the groceries?”

“I gave it to a guy on the street.”

The taller man blanched. “What’s the point of helping people if we’re the ones that suffer because of it?” he asked.

Midoriya shook his head.

“It’s suffering because no one got helped,” he said, because he didn’t even know where to begin with Aizawa.

### **10 - Convenience Store Part-Timer**

### **11 - Not a Hero Shinso**

By itself, his job isn’t hard. Neither is his workout. Neither is school. His emotional stability never existed, and he’s always been good at taking things one day at a time. Which was fine. He was fine.

He placed his head underneath the running water of the outdoor faucet. The water ran down his head and neck, and he reminded himself that he’s not tired. He had to find out a way to get back home. Quickly. Or else he might actually lose his mind.

But he’s not tired. He’ll get through this, the same way he got through everything else.

He wiped down his face and took a deep breath.

Going home, getting back, that was his first priority. That was the most important thing for him to do. That was his absolute first priority, and it must be his only priority. For himself, he cannot let that change.

And so, since this isn’t his world and there are no heroes here, he made the solemn promise to himself. He will not save anyone here. He will not help anyone here. He knew this, and he needed to embody that. He needed to…

Walking by the convenience store, he saw a shock of lavender. He stared, tilting his head as he tried to remember why this felt so familiar when the man with lavender-hair turned around and he felt his heart drop.

It was Shinsho.

It was(n’t his) Shinsho.

It couldn’t be, since Shinsho would have grabbed something off the shelf and pocketed it. Uh what?

No, no nononono.

No Shinsho, in any place, in any world, should ever be shoplifting-

“You haven't been coming to school,” he said, standing at the end of the aisle.

Shinso stared at him, dispassionate and empty like his body was just going through the bare minimum effort to be alive.

“Fucking christ. Are you going to beat me up in the parking lot this time?”

Midoriya stared at him, looked at his hands, and then back to his face. Those weren’t injuries that Midoriya made. Some were fresher. None looked tended to.

“If you don’t want me to, go to the Employee’s breakroom.”

“Am I allowed there?”

“Yeah,” Midoriya nodded, “Because I invited you. And the thing in your pocket...”

Shinso tensed, eyes narrowed into slits.

“Give it to me, I’ll buy it so you can have it.”

“I don’t want it anymore.”

Midoriya’s heart might as well go through a meat-grinder, given the workout he was getting since he got here.

“It’s a gift.”

“Hah, from the guy who beat me up and got me suspended?”

“From the guy who wants you to graduate with you.”

Shinso stared at him, wide-eyed before something must have broken. His face flushed and he threw what was in his pocket into the shelf.

“What the hell do you know?! Where the hell do you get off, saying shit like that?! You think I wanted this? You think I care about this?” He kicked the shelf breaking it. “Why does the only person who wants to talk to me have to be some goody-two-shoes like you!?”

And Midoriya, who only saw a hurting child with strikingly familiar facial features as an old time friend, moved without thinking. He reached out to grab Shinso’s wrist.

“I’m done with my shift in thirty minutes,” he said. “If you can wait, I’ll listen to you then.”

-

Shinso waited. All 38 minutes, since Midoriya had an additional shelf to fix. He waited in the employee’s only room, where Midoriya brought him the things that he broke three plastic bags (rip his paycheck) and a bottle of water.

After locking up, at nearly 1 AM, they moved to the park. One of the streetlamps were broken, so it looked doubly sketchy than it normally did. The two sat down at the bench with the broken lights.

“Does it matter if I go to school?”

Midoriya had been in this world for a bit now (and much longer than he wanted to be here for). Looking at the person next to him, he had a good idea on what he should say, what society expected him to say, what he, as a hero, should be telling lost middle-schoolers in a park with bad lighting.

“....No, I guess not,” Midoriya said. “But looking forward, there isn’t a lot you can do without at least graduating from high school.”

“What if I’m not looking that far ahead?”

His Shinso never shared anything about himself, but Midoriya could just tell. He’s met a lot of people. He’s met a lot of hurting people, suffering people, but he also knew people who were getting better and were almost fully healed. It wasn’t like Midoriya knew exactly what Shinso was going through, and could open a book to lecture him on how he was feeling and prescribe him something out of a pharmacy.

“I think it’s sad,” Midoriya admitted.

“...Then, what are you looking forward to?”

Going home, he didn’t say. He knew what he should say. He knew what was expected of him to say. He knew, but he couldn’t, in good consciousness, lie to Shinso like that.

“I think that… by living, I will find that,” he explained quietly. He thought about it. It was something he spent a frightfully long period of time thinking uselessly about. “I hung on, and I’m okay now. That doesn’t mean it’ll work for you but that does mean that you won’t be alone.”

He turned to Shinso. As his eyes finally adjusted to the dark, he felt like he could see him a little better.

“If you want,” he hesitated because this was a weird transition to go through. On his end, this was someone that looked like someone but acted completely different, and on Shinso’s end, this was the kid that got him suspended. Still, Midoriya ventured forward on the road that he thought was right, “you don’t have to be alone.”

He was quiet for a long moment. And Midoriya sat right next to him in shared silence. He felt dead on his feet, like he was about to lay down and sleep for a year, but his mind felt strangely alert now. He didn’t want to leave first.

Just like that, Midoriya watched the sunrise.

“...Okay,” Shinso said quietly. “I’ll come to school today.”

-

He did. At lunch. The students whispered, but the teachers didn’t say anything. From that alone, Midoriya understood too much about the kid who didn’t come to school even after his suspension ended.

### **12 - Baby Steps**

### **n**

## [Start]

### **Shinso & the infirmary**

Shinso woke up when the sun started to dip.

“You’re awake? The nurse was gone so I did the first-aid. Out of everyone, you’re the only one left.”

Midoriya watched as the young man groaned as he tried to get up. It looked like he was in a great amount of pain, and never one to see someone with a familiar face suffer, Midoriya reached out to grab his arm and his back. Stabilizing him into a seating position, he spoke again.

“Easy. I have some painkillers to help you. Do you have anyone you want to call?”

And that did it. His eyes widened dramatically as he stared up at the student that single-handedly beat up him and all his brainwashed followers. His mouth flapped uselessly as all coherent thought escaped him until he managed a breathless. “What?”

“Painkillers,” Midoriya repeated slowly. “You took a hard blow. I thought you would be in pain.”

Shinso nodded slowly.

“Why … Why did you respond? Don’t you know what my quirk is?”

“Brainwashing, right?” Midoriya replied back, bold and certain, “And well, I responded because you asked a question.”

“Stand in front of me.”

Midoriya’s eyes hazed over, a dark cloud flooding up his mind. For a moment, he felt that again, it’s been so long since he’s felt like this, and he could almost laugh. Almost, because this wasn’t his Shinso. Nothing was more clear to him.

Blood started to drip from Midoriya’s nose.

“Ah,” Midoriya said, wiping the bottom of his nose. “I guess your quirk doesn’t work on me.”

Either because he’s been brainwashed so many times before that this weak grab on him wouldn’t work, or because this wasn’t his body to begin with, or something that Midoriya had no idea of. Regardless, all he smelled and tasted was blood now.

He grabbed a few tissues from the nurse’s desk and turned back to Shinso.

“How do you feel? Do you want me to call the hospital?”

The young man stared back, his mouth opening and closing again before he passed out again.

Midoriya supposed that he was Shinso’s worst nightmare right now. Someone that knew the ins and outs of his quirk because of another him that wanted to use it to save people. Petty crime and trivial school fights were meaningless in comparison.

Somewhere, deep in his heart, he hoped that this was something that could be salvaged.

Around that time, a teacher came to see what the commotion was. It shocked Midoriya, who thought that there were no adults here because of the lack of supervision that led to the fight behind the school. Well, he supposed it spoke measures about what he knew.

He was told to leave, and Shinso’s parents were contacted. Figuring that this was the most he could do, Midoriya threw one last look at Shinso and left.

### **Suspension [tbd]**

The thing about getting in trouble at school, was that it was just a big show.

It looked really bad on the school if there are suspensions and expulsions, so most schools avoid that route. So instead, they will make this huge fuss about it and threaten to call your parents in. It was a great threat, and he was glad that it was one that he never had to face since his teachers didn’t care. (And then, his teachers did care but at that point, it wasn’t something that they could easily share with his mother. He was always grateful for that.)

And as cold as it could sound, at least he didn’t have to worry about it at all here. For people like Deku-kun, who didn’t have anyone at home, it was an empty, lofty promise. They could call as much as they wanted, no one would come. Midoriya knew, because if a call was all it took, these kids would never “act out” to begin with.

It was, by far, the most liberating and painful thing he has faced since. Which was saying something because he once punched a robot in the face a hundred-something feet off the ground for an admissions exam.

No one would notice that he wasn’t the ‘right’ Midoriya. No one would wait for him if he was out for too long. No one would care if he got sick or if he was injured. It was an isolating thought, but it promised freedom.

Even if he got back home, he couldn’t help but wonder about Deku-kun. Was it really okay to leave it like this? No child should grow up like this, especially one that actively searched for death like his younger counterpart.

“They lost because they were weak,” Bakugo spoke up, “Should have had stronger kids if you didn’t want them to lose. What kind of idiot loses a fight after calling 15 people to help him?”

Midoriya turned to stare at Bakugo, like everyone else in the room, for a shocked second.

“How dare you!? Hiro-kun would never do that!”

“Hiro?” Midoriya and Bakugo parroted. They turned to stare at each other, and then back forward.

Said boy, Hiro, with his arm in a cast even though Midoriya and Bakugo didn’t break it, and a black-eye that Midoriya definitely gave him, blinked back.

“Who the fuck is Hiro?” Bakugo blurted out, furrowed brow and confused. “Where the hell is that Shinso-bitch?”

“Don’t refer to him like that,” Midoriya chided, out of habit more than anything.

The blond stared at him for a moment before he clicked his tongue and turned away.

“Are either of you taking this seriously?!” their homeroom teacher shouted back. “Midoriya! Is there any number to contact your folks!?”

Midoriya thought of the letter left on his dinner table. He shrugged back, because he didn’t know.

The teacher grimaced while Hiro’s mother sneered.

“Figures. Even without looking, I can tell what kind of parents you must have had.”

Bakugo turned, eyes narrowing into slits as he leaned forward, possibly ready to punch this lady too. But, Midoriya reasoned, surely, he wouldn’t. Because that was wrong.

The door suddenly slammed open then. And looking as though she came out of a fashion magazine, Bakugo Mitsuki walked in like a storm. As her eyes found her sun, they narrowed down into slits. Instantly, all doubts concerning this woman’s identity disappeared.

“Katsuki! What did you do this time?! I was in the middle of a shoot! Do you know how much Manager Kawahira was crying to get here?!”

“Haaah?” Bakugo Katsuki scowled back in the exact same way, “What are you saying, lady?! How’s that my fault!?”

No hesitation, Mitsuki slapped the back of his head. She turned to the teacher with a sheepish smile, “Sorry about all of this. He’s such a rowdy boy. No idea who he takes after. So, what did he do this time?”

“Bakugo-kun got into a fight-”

“I can see that the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree,” Hiro’s mother sighed, eyes narrowed at Mitsuki. “What a violent woman.”

Mitsuki stared at her for a moment.

“Then, I guess that your kid takes after you, huh? You must be a weak person then. You have anything better to do than interrupting the report before it even gets to me?”

“What? How dare you?”

“If your kid losing bothered you so much, then you should have raised him to be stronger.”

Midoriya stared for a long moment, a smile coming on his face as he turned to Bakugo.

“Your mom really loves you, huh?”

Because he never really got a chance to tell him that. Obviously, Kacchan knew, but it wasn’t a bad thing to remind him. The blond next to him stared back, his face twisting in mortification before he turned cherry red.

“Haaaaaah?!”

-

As expected, they all went home without any problems. A few suspensions.

While it wasn’t the first time Midoriya had to spend time away from school. This was the first time he was told he was suspended. For fighting, nonetheless.

### **Lunchtime - bakudeku**

Midoriya’s jaw unhinged when Bakugo placed his wrapped bento on top of his desk.

“Don’t,” he warned as he turned his chair around and unwrapped it. “All you ever do is eat curry. It’s starting to stick in the classroom. Don’t you get sick of it?”

Midoriya stared at him, eyes wide as he tried to find his voice. He tried to think of the last time Bakugo and him ever ate together, ever ate lunch together, and came to an old, relic of a memory, back when they were ten and the teacher told them to sit in their assigned seats and eat.

“Don’t say it,” the blond hissed, the tips of his ears already turning red.

## Spring

### **guy without common sense**

One of the first things that Midoriya learned was that this was a world where quirks are secrets. People do not share what their quirks are, unless they are amongst friends. People who ask what another person’s quirk is is shunned and usually looked down on.

It was, if Midoriya could compare it, like asking someone where their missing parent was, or why their parents divorced, or something along those lines. It wasn't unspeakable, but commonly accepted that people don’t mention it while in polite company.

“Well, I guess if you want to know what it’s like to get hit, you should talk to Midoriya. His dad beats him all the time.”

He looked up at the sound of his name. The boy who was speaking about him was about two rows in front and didn’t look at him. His friends, however, shot both of them surprised looks and Midoriya thought it was sweet of them.

It’s been a while since someone called him by his name.

### **Bakugo’s eyes -**

“They’re red.”

“What?” Bakugo’s first mistake this morning was replying.

“Oh, did I say that aloud?” Midoriya said, and then he laughed. “I just thought, your eyes are really red.”

Bakugo blinked at him before his face turned just as red. He looked away, a firm scowl on his face.

“Kacchan, your face is really red, are you sick? Maybe you should go to the nurse.”

“Maybe you should shut up,” the blond growled out, baring his teeth.

“Kacchan, I have some water, maybe that will help.” Clearly, Midoriya was unnerved by anything.

The blond narrowed his eyes.

Now that he’s met someone who doesn’t cower, even when they know what his quirk was, when he glared at them, he wished it wasn’t someone so annoying.

-

“Kacchan, can we compare answers?”

Bakugo wondered if he died, would be left alone?

“Kacchan? Did you hear me? Are you okay? Does your stomach hurt?”

He closed his eyes, no way. This was a kid that showed up to his house to pick him up so they could go to school together. He doesn't have any idea how he even knew where he lived.

“Don’t you have better things to do?” he tried, giving in.

He would rather the people that poured spoiled milk on him, or the kids that dedicatedly ruined his textbooks. Getting hit by a biker group would have been better than...

Midoriya’s beaming smile squashed any hopes to be left alone.

“What’s better than spending time with you?”

But the worst part was him and his stupid, stupid, stupid self who felt like it was nice for someone to care.

### **Night & Morning After a Warm Dinner - Shigaraki**

“Go ahead and sleep on the bed,” Midoriya said. “I get up early, so I’ll sleep outside.”

Shimura felt like something was misplaced, but watching Midoriya take the pillow off the bed, presumably his, and give him a wave, he doesn’t think it’s in his place to say anything.

Why was he here anyways? This.. did he die? Maybe he died, and that’s why it was like this. How else could he ever get something this nice? It must be true, that he died in that dumpster, finally starving or because someone knifed him in the back.

But at the same time, if he died and this was a dream, why couldn’t it have been a beautiful woman instead of some prepubescent brat?

With more questions than answers, Shimura didn’t know what to do. So instead, he accepted the situation at face value, laid down on the bed and slept. He was full, warm, and tired. There was nothing else for him to do right now, right?

If he woke up in the morning, and he’s still here, then he guessed that it really was reality now. He’ll deal with that then.

-

When he woke up in the morning, he understood that this was no dream.

He got out of bed, surprised that the young man was coming out of the bathroom, and kept quiet instead. It sounded like he had… come back inside after a run? From his clothes and the time, Shigaraki thought that it must be that the young man left to go on a run then.

Didn’t he sleep after him? How could he get up so early?

The energy kids operated at were ridiculous. Still, Shigaraki couldn’t help but notice that it was still just the two of them. The hallway had some more doors, and he assumed that there was another bedroom, but there were only the two of them here. Were his parents on a trip or something?

He didn’t know. He didn’t know anything. He barely knew the kid’s name. He was just some guy in a stranger’s house, after eating their food and spending the night. Shouldn’t he be kicked out by now?

He waited until Midoriya went back out to the kitchen, and he finally built up the courage to open the door.

On the ground were his clothes, neatly folded and a pair of archery gloves on top of them. Was it for him? Did he know what his quirk was or something? He looked down, and stared at his hands. Covered in bandages that the strange kid wrapped his cuts with, he wondered if it was kindness instead.

He’s never experienced it before, so he wouldn’t know.

### **“Shigaraki” & Deku-kun \*Names**

“...You’re a middle schooler?”

Midoriya looked up from where he was tying his shoes. He got up and gave a confused smile, before remembering that he’s wearing his school uniform and gave a nod.

“Yes?”

The red eyes stared at him and he looked down at the ground.

“Breakfast is in the kitchen, Shigaraki-san,” Midoriya said, a small smile on his face, not at all that hopeless, mangled thing that he showed Shigaraki when they first met.

Thinking back on it, Shimura didn’t remember the last time someone smiled at him.

More importantly, who the fuck was Shigaraki?

-

He doesn’t do anything except read. Well, to be fair, it wasn’t like there was much to do in this apartment other than read. He didn’t have a phone, and there was no computer or laptop so it wasn’t like he could play games or surf the internet. Although there was a TV, there was nothing else. No cable box, no satellite, no remote, and the other day, he learned that the TV wasn’t even plugged in, and that there was no outlet for the TV to plug into on the wall it was leaning up against.

But books? It felt like that’s all this place had. Books, so many books (but no bookcases) that there were stacks of books lining up the walls until they came up to Shimura’s chest. From his short gaze, he could see that there was all sorts of books, ranging from children’s fairy tales to plant encyclopedias to fantasy light novels.

Well, it would probably do Shimura some good to just stay the fuck away from the world so…

After spending the first week doing nothing but sleeping and eating when Midoriya left him something to eat, he started to read. Surely, if there was something this guy didn’t want him to know about, he would have put it away by now or told him so. He pulled out books and read them right in front of him, and even though he looked surprise, didn’t say anything. Didn’t even tell him to put it away when he was done.

Weren’t people supposed to be naggy and annoying? Were nosy people who shoved their way into another person’s life supposed to be this quiet?

So far, nothing. Not even a ‘lock the door behind you when you leave.’ Not that Shimura ever left, of course. But who trusted a stranger like this anyways? Shigaraki could have stolen… something worthwhile here, maybe ransacked the rooms or trashed the place, but nothing. Deku-kun didn’t even ask him to clean up after himself. He didn’t ask if he wanted seconds before dumping another fucking bowl of rice and curry into his plate.

(And no one needed to know that Shigaraki scraped that plate clean.)

Fuck, they didn’t even know each other’s name. Damn. Shimura couldn’t even remember the last time he gave a shit about someone and their name.

Shimura didn’t even know his name until he went digging through his schoolbag for his student ID.

… Midoriya Izuku, huh? Well, “Midoriya Inko” was the name that was written on the inside cover of most of the books. So he supposed that it was his family name, and he was the kid or whatever of this “Midoriya Inko.”

Okay, he thought. It’ll be easy, he thought. All he needed to do was say his name. Then, maybe he could fix the misunderstanding that his name was Shigaraki.

It wasn’t, by the way. He was Shimura Tenko. He doesn’t even know where Shigaraki came from. Did he mistake him for someone else? He had to, since otherwise, he just picked a stranger up out of the trash like some lost kitten.

He didn’t think that this guy even knew about who he was related to. Concerning the lack of outside information in his apartment, and modern technology in general, he’s not shocked. In fact, maybe this was a good thing. Shigaraki didn’t have to worry about… about being used by some stranger.

So, he’ll just suck it up. He can do this. He’ll start with this. It’ll be easy.

And really, if all he needed to do was say that something was easy for him to do it, he would have never ended up in that dumpster bin.

-

“You don’t have to wake up to see me off,” his middle school landlord said, as he slipped his shoes on. He straighted up, looking incredibly young in his stupid middle school uniform and a bulging, bright yellow backpack. “But thank you for it.”

“Don’t be stupid,” Shimura said, rubbing his eyes, “I’m going to go to sleep now,” he said. He sounded so tired that his voice slurred all his words together, but the young man smiled instead.

That smile didn’t feel like it was for him. It looked like the kid knew something that Shimura didn’t. It wasn’t pitying, but it just looked sad. Like Midoriya was a fundamentally broken kid that reacted to being sad with smiles instead. Like a nutjob.

Shimura shrugged back and ignored that blooming confusion in his chest again. Once upon a time, he once asked his mom why she bothered getting up to say goodbye to her husband or waiting up at night for him to return. She said that it was because they were married. Still, she always waited for his sister to come back after hanging out with her friends. When he asked, she said it was because his sister was family.

So what did that make him and his middle school landlord?

“Then, sleep well. I’ll be back around four,” Midoriya said, like they have been together for a long time.

“Yeah,” Shimura said, waving his hand dismissively.

“Oh, there’s some food in the fridge if you get hungry. Make sure to microwave it before you eat it.”

What, was he six or something? He rolled his eyes, but he didn’t feel annoyed. Maybe it was because Midoriya was two and a half heads smaller than him. Maybe it was because he didn’t care about anything anymore. Maybe it was because it didn’t sound like Midoriya didn’t trust him (like come on, he was just letting him stay here, if that wasn’t dumb trust, he didn’t know what else to call it), but that it sounded like he was just worried.

Bedies, it was just curry anyways. And Midoriy returned, they’ll eat curry again.

Midoriya reached for the door and pulled it open. Down four doors, another door opened and a young elementary school child raced past Midoriya and their front door.

“Bye mom!” the kid yelled over his shoulder as his mother yelled after him.

“You have a good day, okay? I better not get another call from the teacher!” she called after him. It was such a normal and average occurrence that Shimura is certain that many other people in the neighborhood use them as an alarm clock. If he wasn’t already awake, this would have done it. Why were all mothers so loud?

“I’ll be back by dinner,” Deku-kun said, waving at the embarrassed mother down the way. If she was so embarrassed, why did she yell in the first place? “See you then, Shigaraki!” he called out as he stepped out.

Who’s Shigaraki? He wondered. Why did he keep calling him Shigaraki? While he was curious about it, he slipped up and said the thing that he had been practicing saying for the last week or so.

“Yeah, bye, Midoriya.”

The gentle smile that was always on his face was finally wiped clean off his face. His eyes were wide-open, his jaw hanging uselessly as he stared at Shimura until his grip on the door slipped and it came swinging back to hit his head.

It made an impact with a dull sound, but he didn’t even blink.

“...You… You’re going to be late,” Shimura said, his face turning red.

Oh god, this was mortifying. He knew he was cringey as a middle schooler but Midoriya was his own case of special.

“Y… Yeah,” the young boy, Midoriya Izuku, nodded slowly and almost tripped on his own foot on his way out. The door closed and Shimura took a deep breath.

“God, Tenko, you fucking idiot.”

He forgot to tell him what his name was.

Whatever, he’ll do it when he comes home tonight.

And Shigaraki would forget because Midoriya would come home with a blackeye and a lopsided grin decorated with a split lip. He would put those worries into the book he was reading like a bookmark and forget as he entered full panic-mode, even as Midoriya laughed it off.

As it turned out, people didn’t need to know each other’s name to care.

### **Convenience Store**

Midoriya is 13 for the second time when he gets his first job. He apologizes to Deku-kun in his head, but he had no way of contacting Deku-kun’s dad to see if there was a way they could figure out a budget, and he wasn’t going to use the money he sent in for himself.

It felt dirty. This was the money that Deku-kun’s father wanted to give to Deku-kun, so Midoriya didn’t want to touch it. And although Deku-kun’s dad somehow paid the rent and bills, it left their grocery bill unattended too.

And so, here he was.

One nice thing about everyone living in the gray-area of the law was that there was always someone that was just as desperate. Midoriya applies and gets the job because they’re in serious need for someone to do the closing shifts.

And Midoriya, who didn’t want to become desperate for money and didn’t want to spend the money that his dad was sending him every month, take the job. To keep it quiet between the law and avoid child labor laws, he and the manager agreed to pay in cash. Paperwork-wise, he didn’t technically work there, but was a kid that came in and helped out for chump change.

He may be paid less than his coworkers (which he expected) but he was also allowed to take anything that was going to expire at the end of the shift. Just like that, his food problems were solved.

And so, Midoriya worked the graveyard shifts between 11pm and 5am. This meant he spent majority of the time restocking and taking care of the shipments.

-

And then, he met Spinner.

He was obviously not Spinner, since he was driving a truck and waiting for Mdiroiya to finish signing off the delivery slip, but it wasn’t like Midoriya really knew his name either.

So he just stared at him, and never realized that the man who was a faithful member of the League back when they first formed, was someone who could look so tired.

“...Can you just sign this?”

“Oh!” Midoriya jolted out of his thoughts, and did just that. He gave a shy gaze upwards and then, despite knowing that he shouldn’t spoke up, “By umh… Uh any chance, would you like an energy drink?”

The older man turned to him and blinked back. “Huh?”

Midoriya could feel his face flush, but he managed to hold his ground, “You uh… you look really tired. And we’re just the halfway point for you, right?” he asked. His eyes flitted to the clock on the side of the wall, it was four am. And Midoriya knew very well how awful some of the last couple of hours can be on shift. “And I was going to grab something for myself, and I thought I could offer. Oh, you don’t have to, if you don’t want to, but I-”

“If you have any cold pocari sweat,” the man spoke up, and Midoriya watched him blush as he turned away. It was weird to not see him with a scarf or knives or the weird eye-mask thing, but he wouldn’t mind replacing those past images with the one in front of him, “...that would be nice.”

“Of course.”

### **Jun\*Recovery Girl**

Recovery Girl is Recovery Girl. Except, where he remembered everyone’s favorite nurse, was this angry woman that chased people away by throwing candy at them.

Huh.

### **Heat \*ShiMi**

“Aren’t you hot?”

Midoriya wiped at his chin, where the sweat from his face seemed to accumulate. It was a gross feeling, to be dripping in sweat and stuck in damp clothes, but he didn’t mind it too much. There were worse fates.

“Yeah, a little,” he said with a nervous laugh.

Why would Shigaraki ask that? He didn’t think that Shigaraki would notice, or even care, about Midoriya and his level of comfort concerning the weather. Oh, wait, could it be-

“Oh, are you hot? Do you want to get a fan?” he asked. Electric fans were all the rage, even if their apartment was equipped with an A/C unit. He doesn’t like raking up the bill to the place that isn’t his, but he didn’t want Shigaraki to be baking here if he could help it. That would just be rude.

“I… no, it’s not that,” Shigaraki said. His face flushed darkly, and Mirodirya frowned, was he sick? Was it heatstroke? The apartment was much cooler than it was outside, but he didn’t want Shigaraki to be too uncomfortable. Still, he shook his head, “It’s nothing, nevermind.”

Still, Midoriya cranked up the A/C. His scars got itchy when it got too hot.

### **Shopping Together \*ShigaMido**

“...What?” Midoriya gaped.

“It’s… heavy right?” he said, “So I’ll go too. Since we need rice.”

The old image of Shigaraki, laughing as people and buildings and society disintegrated at his fingertips, seemed so far away. And Midoriya nodded back, even though Shigaraki was looking at the wall, his bangs carefully covering his eyes, the young man could see that he was blushing from his ears to his neck.

It was so cute.

He pursed his lips, afraid he will say something dumb.

“It’s just around the corner,” he said, breathless.

“Then, let’s get going. C’mon, I’m hungry,” Shigaraki muttered back.

Since he got here, Shigaraki finally took his first steps out of the apartment.

-

“Oh, and Shigaraki,” Midoriya said as the door closed behind him. He waited for the taller man, who was sweating and panting a little after their walk, to look at him before he continued. “Welcome back.”

The red eyes widened comically, and if the circumstances weren’t so sad, Midoriya would have laughed.

Often, he had wondered if there was a way to save Shigaraki. These days, he was coming onto a conclusion that just made him sad.

“When someone says that to you, you should respond with, “I’m back.’”

“I…” he started, hesitated, stopped himself, but Midoriya patiently waited at the doorway. He would wait as long as he needed to, and was rewarded when Shigaraki took a deep breath. “I’m back,” he said, his voice as quiet as the breeze.

The time when Shigaraki broke into his school during a training exercise seemed so goddamn far away.

Midoriya grinned at him, and headed into his home. He didn’t know how long Shigaraki planned to stay, but he didn’t really care. Shigaraki could stay as long as he needed to.

In another world, he didn’t even know that he could be saved. That’s why, in this world, he won’t make that same mistake. Even if this wasn’t his body or his life or the Shigaraki that crippled so many heroes, he couldn’t turn away.

### **Dabi \*Eyes**

His eyes caught Midoriya, sitting on the couch with a book in his lap. Midoriya blinked at Dabi, and Dabi stared right back. His eyes were green, and he didn’t know why he focused on that. His expression twisted into something amused, and Dabi’s mind went blank. What was he reading again?

“...You know, that’s the first time you stared at me first.”

Midoriya grinned at him, and Dabi quickly averted his gaze.

His entire being warmed, like he just had a cup of hot chocolate. He’s certain that this must be embarrassment, since he had been caught staring, but he hadn’t felt embarrassment since he was a kid in that awful house. Somehow, he didn’t think it was this feeling.

He turned away, knowing that the young man was probably getting a kick out of getting a reaction out of him, but he couldn’t help but think that this wasn’t a loss.

Right when he fell asleep that night, he thought of those green eyes again. And wondered how being haunted by something could feel so pleasant.

### **Todoroki-kun & Midoriya-kun**

There were a lot of things like this, even back in his world. Maybe it was just what teenagers, in any world did, they’re bored, and then they get bored together. One thing that he was always thankful for was that he never felt that unending boredom haunt his steps before.

Midoriya didn’t think himself as pretty stupid, but he got into some bad situations when he used his head. He didn’t want to think about what might have happened if he was bored too. Well, probably not anything too awful.

And for a long time, he thought that his closest friends would be the same too.

Instead, he came face-to-face with Todoroki Shouto, leaning against the wall with a cigarette in his mouth. In an expensive-looking uniform, a light beige in sharp contrast to the blood that was being spilled at his feet, heterochromatic eyes stared at the scene in front of him with no emotion.

No, no, Midoriya thought. He was bored.

Between Todoroki (or the person that held the face of his longtime friend) and Midoriya was the stretch of four boys ganging up on the fifth. The purple-hair and black gakuran was unmistakable.

Todoroki’s… friends? Aquantaineces? Whoever they were, they were beating up Shinso senseless in the alleyway between them. Midoriya, who was stopping on the way to buy some more curry powder, stared at them in open-mouth shock. The sun was up, high in the sky. School had let out barely thirty minutes ago. Why was this-

“Hey, what the hell are you looking at?!”

This couldn’t be Todoroki. This couldn’t be Todoroki. This couldn’t be Todoroki, not in a million worlds or anything. Maybe, if Midoriya just chanted it enough times in his heart, it would be true.

“Is he crying?”

“Just turn around and leave and we’ll let you go!”

Midoriya wiped at his eyes. Something else replaced the incredulity he felt as he took a step forward.

“Get off my friend.”

-

While it was probably frowned upon for high school graduates, almost 20 and all, to go and beat up middle schoolers like this, Midoriya was a little disappointed. No one here seemed to be a good fighters. Their quirks were beautiful, amazing, articulate things, but none of them seemed to be good at them.

Experience was a powerful teacher, he supposed.

Standing, quirkless and surrounded by the fallen middle schoolers, he stared at Todoroki. The greatest disappointment of all of them was probably the person he knew the longest. He should get Shinso to some first-aid, or the hospital. He knew that, but his feet took him to the (fake) Todoroki on the ground.

Logically, there was nothing for him here. He stopped the fighting. No one was dead, and few would need medical attention. He wasn’t going to call the cops, since it was clear that it was going to make this whole thing even worse. He just needed to get Shinso and leave now. Right now.

Still, his feet took him to the person who sat next to him when he felt like he was losing chunks of himself at once. His steps took him back to the person who anchored him to reality with simple words and an earnest stare. Fond memories replayed until they spoiled into the scene in front of him.

“W-Who the hell are you?” he asked, eyes wide and his back against the wall of the alley. His uniform was dirty, but it wasn't ripped. A double-bloody nose, and several bruises that he would feel for days.

“...A friend,” Midoriya said, even though they were strangers. He tried to smile. “Stay out of trouble,” he said, because what else could he say?

### **Midoriya-kun & Todoroki-kun**

And nothing in the world could have ever prepared Todoroki Shouto for the natural disaster that was Midoriya Izuku.

“Wait, where are your… friends going?”

Todoroki looked to the side, where indeed, he was suddenly the only person except for Midoriya here now. Cowards. They probably ran at the first sign of trouble. He might have taken a hit, but he wasn’t going to lose.

“Hey, they left. Are you sure you want to keep going?”

The anger, that fire, boiled up inside of him again. He scowled, the fire licked up his arms and when he saw the gentle gaze of Midoriya, almost lost his grip to his rage. How dare this up-start look at him like that? How dare this person assume that the leeches that attached himself to Todoroki were his friends, his equals?

“They aren’t my friends,” he scowled back.

“Then,” Midoriya said, a frown on his face, “Who is?”

“I don’t need friends,” he spat back. No one was strong enough to handle him. Everyone wanted him because he was powerful. He was influential. He was everything that everyone wanted for themselves and he knew it. “No one is good enough!”

The fire burst out of him. If this bastard isn’t careful, he’ll get charred. He better use his quirk.

“...Todoroki-kun…” Midoriya whispered back, staring at him in a way that Todoroki had never been stared at before.

No, that wasn’t true, someone looked at him like that before. Someone looked at him like he did, someone who was gentle and distant, but he couldn’t remember who.

“Now, come at me with your full strength!” he yelled out.

Well, it didn’t matter. None of that mattered. Their fight was going to end in the next hit. Their fight will end, and Todoroki will win and none of this would matter anyway. Midoriya was nothing. He’ll burn like everyone else before him, and he wouldn’t put up enough of a fight for Todoroki to burn away instead.

-

Who said it? Todoroki had heard it before, but he couldn’t remember. His memory was hazy. It was like a cloud, and every time he reached out for it, his hand passed right through it. He knew what it looked like, and he had a vague idea, but he couldn’t grasp and truly remember the details.

Who said it to him? What exactly did they say? Why did it mean so much to him? Why did he forget it?

Laying on his back, tasting bitter defeat for the first time since he started fighting like this, Todoroki Shouto was alone. More than anything, he felt oddly reflective, as though something had been liberated inside of him and that he could think about it now.

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” Midoriya asked quietly, “How do you see yourself in five days, five months, and then five years?”

Normally, people would be angry. They would be pissed if they weren’t scared shitless, and they would come at Todoroki with the same kind of blind, prideful anger. All these people, who claim to be different and grew up differently and looked a little different, but they all were the same.

Then, those people would have screamed and cheered at the thought that he lost to them. When they saw his back hit the ground, blood spewing out of his nose and mouth, unable to even stand back up, they would have taken shameless advantage of it. He would have had all his fingers broken, gained traumatizing scars, and probably humiliated in several different ways.

There was nothing normal about Midoriya. Todoroki learned this as he laid on his back. Next to him, Midoriya looked down at him.

“What kind of man do you want to be?” he asked.

Why would anyone beat the shit out of someone, and then ask about their future aspirations? Most people would have humiliated him or abandoned him by now. Just look around, Todoroki was alone here.

“...What about you?” Todoroki asked quietly.

“I… In about five days, I want to do well on the group project between me and my friends. And in about five months? Well, I…” he hesitated, “I’ll have my friends. We’ll hang out and work hard to get into a high school we can all attend together. Then, in five years, I’m going to look back at this time and think that I was crazy.”

“...And then?” he asked quietly. His breathing was labored, a doubled effect after getting his ass beat and his double nosebleed. “What kind… of man do you want… to be?”

Midoriya’s grin was blinding when he turned back. “I want to be a hero!”

Even though it sounded like something a second-grader would say so proudly, Todoroki lost to this man. When he lost, he retained his dignity and his pride. He’s certain that, if their situations were revered, he wouldn’t have been able to do the same. He’s never lost, but those fights never felt like victory.

Laying on his back, a weight lifted off his chest by the kid next to him, Todoroki didn’t realize that losing could feel like victory.

“That’s dumb,” he said. “Why a hero?”

“Because heroes are cool and awesome! They’re strong and reliable. When you see them, you immediately think that everything is going to be okay! I want to be that kind of hero. Someone that can always save people with a smile on my face!”

It was so corny. It was so cheesy.

And Todoroki laughed for the first time in years. It was a quiet thing, choked by the pain in his sides as he tried to digest this information.

[ “You can be your own man.” ]

His mom, he realized. His mom said that to him, didn’t she?

“...Five days ago,” he started quietly, “There’s been a lot of fights. Even more than usual. They said they’re trying to prepare for graduation.”

He didn’t know why, but he was certain that Midoriya would listen to him. He was certain that if he spoke freely like this, it wouldn’t be something that he would be pitied for. It was a foreign concept, to think that someone was there for him, but Midoriya was more of a solid person than anyone else he met his age.

“Five months ago…Everything was the same as now. I got up, went to school, skipped and fought or played at the arcade all day, and got home once it was dark.”

Midoriya was here.

“And… five years ago, I… I wanted to be a hero, too. I wanted to save my mom from her miserable marriage. And I thought that I could do it…”

Todoroki Shouto told Midoriya everything.

-

Just like that, Todoroki found himself getting crepes with this strange boy named Midoriya every Monday. On occasion, two others joined them. On other occasions, they met up even more often.

### **Convie \*Spinner’s Friend**

“Oh, you’re working today too?” Midoriya asked when he came to get his signature.

As always, he signed it as though he was the manager.

“Yeah, thought I can say the same to you,” the lizard man said.

Midoriya gave a small laugh. “Bills aren’t going to pay themselves.”

The two gave a tired laugh in response. And this became another new thing that Midoriya started to look forward too. Once the paperwork was filled out, they began to unload the delivery.

“Are you a student? You look young,” Spinner said, handing some of the boxes down so that Midoriya could stack them onto a wheelaway.

“Yeah,” the young man nodded, “That’s why I only work during the weekends.”

“Oh, I see,” Spinner nodded back, “Me too, I only work deliveries on the weekend. I have a different job during the week.”

Midoriya, between school and work, honestly thought that he was too to function at times. He knew it was primarily because he always overestimated his body, and whenever he thinks he’s strong enough, he gets a rude awakening instead. Running two jobs just to make ends meet? He offers his quiet thanks to Deku-kun’s dad for taking care of majority of the bills again in his head.

Green eyes found the gecko man working as hard as he always did, and then turned back to the cardboard box he was stacking. His hair was pulled back tightly into a ponytail, and he had a towel around his neck to wipe at the sweat that formed. He moved efficiently, despite the tired slump to his shoulders, like he had been doing this for a long time.

This was better than a life a villainy, wasn’t it? Working hard for a greater purpose, being a functioning member of society?

Then, suddenly, Spinner’s walkie on his belt went off.

“Hey! Iguchi! You better not be slacking off! I told you that we gotta cut our hours, so if you go overtime, the gas is coming out of your pay!”

“Yes sir, I’m well aware-”

“Well-aware! Then get moving! We don’t have the time to waste! I know thats probably very hard for someone like you to understand, but most people …”

The supposed manager kept talking and talking. If anyone else were to talk at the volume Spinner’s direct supervisor was talking out, they would be yelling, but Spinner’s hollow eyes made him think that this was his regular speaking tone.

Between Villains and Heroes, Midoriya has never met someone who looked the way Spinner did. That hollow emptiness in his eyes was something he didn’t realize a person could look. He had saved people on the cusp of despair, took on their unresolved conflicts, and mourned the loss of life with others. He had never seen that kind of look.

If he had to describe it into words, then his was the face of someone who survived day-to-day and has nothing in their life aside from that.

But surely, this was better than a life of crime, right? It was better than terrorizing thousands and millions of people?

These days, Midoriya didn’t know. He’s certain that, when he gets back, he still wouldn’t know.

### **Dabi Speaks**

All of his exhaustion seemed to melt right off of his shoulders when he opened the door and saw light in his home. He wondered if he’ll ever be able to live without this warmth now that he had it, and walked in.

“I’m back,” he called out.

“Midoriya! This guy! Fuck him!” Shigaraki snapped back, storming up to him. He grabbed his school bag out of his hand, all while snarling about how unresponsive Dabi was today too.

The young man didn’t bother suppressing his smile as he took his shoes off and followed him in. Midoriya watched as Shigaraki carefully placed the bag down in the living room and flopped down onto the couch, all while scowling and glaring at Dabi on the other end of the couch.

The man looked as impassive as he remembered leaving him in the morning. Midoriya was just glad that he was moving around like a person would, it made him less dolllike, and told Midoriya that he did have some form of will to live, and wasn’t going to just kill himself by not doing anything.

Ah, home sweet home.

“Really?” he asked, taking off his jacket. “Sounds like you guys got along great today, too then.”

“Who said we’re getting along!?” Shigaraki snapped back.

Midoriya smiled back, and the older man scowled even harder. Surprisingly, making people this flustered was actually a lot of fun. He’s beginning to see the appeal.

“Hm, I was thinking curry today,” Midoriya said and the other man groaned.

“All we eat is curry.”

“If you want to eat something else, you should make it,” Midoriya replied back sweetly.

With some more grumbling, Shigaraki and he started dinner.

-

Dinner is a quiet affair, as it usually is. It was almost endearing how focused his enemy-in-another-world got when it came to slicing onions. He still tried to measure everything perfectly with the cups instead of dumping everything into the pot, despite how many times they’ve done this now.

Today, however, their topic of discussion was about the next thing they should put in their curry to make it taste different.

“Hm… we don’t usually put chicken in it, maybe we should try it with the Extreme Spicy flavor.”

“God no, my ass still hurts from that,” Shigaraki replied back, groaning at the memory. Midoriya giggled in response and avoided the taller man’s lazy swing to him. “Are we ever going to stop eating curry?” he asked again. “Like, maybe we can eat fried rice? Sandwiches? Literally anything else? God, all we eat is curry.”

Still, the man eats everything off his plate, scraping it down like it was something delicious, and Midoriya was grateful.

“It’s all I know how to make,” Midoriya replied like he always did, a smile on his face like this was something particularly endearing. “It’s hard to teach an old dog new tricks, you know.”

Shigaraki blanched. “You’re in middle school.”

He took a big mouthful and chomped down happily, ignoring that empty pang in his chest at the reminder.

“We should get more potatoes next time.”

“We have rice, why are you adding potatoes to the curry anyways? Isn’t there already enough carbs in there for you? What are you going to do if we get fat?”

“Potatoes are vegetables,” Midoriya replied, “so it’s healthy. I’ll just run harder.”

Shigaraki made a face, but before he said anything, the man next to him spoke up.

“It’s good either way.”

There was a long silence and they both spun around to face him. Dabi looked up at them, blue eyes flitting between Midoriya then Shigaraki and then back to the dish in front of him. He put another spoonful into his mouth.

“You can-”

“-fucking speak?!”

The two exploded almost simultaneously.

“I thought you were mute!” Shigaraki snapped out. “You little bitch, you could talk this whole time?!”

Dabi shrugged back, leaning away from the yelling man. His expression was blank, as he shoveled another spoonful of curry into his mouth. He looked so familiar in the moment, but Midoriya couldn’t quite place it.

“I’m glad you like the curry,” Midoriya spoke up suddenly, beaming brightly. He’ll just focus on what he does know.

The sight of him and his smile had them pulling back on their emotions, and something quieter settled into their being instead.

From then on, Dabi spoke a little more. Not a lot, but a little more. It would be a long time before the damage that took Dabi’s voice away was fully healed, but it was a small nudge in the right direction. In those moments, Midoriya honestly wondered if maybe they were in the wrong this whole time.

Perhaps people could be saved by kindness. Perhaps anyone could be someone that needed to be saved. Perhaps those who became villains became so because they had no other choice.

Then, perhaps, Midoriya could save them in this world, when he couldn’t in the past.

Coming out of the baths, Dabi yawned and rubbed the back of his neck.

He didn’t know why he spoke during dinner. It wasn't like his opinions were important, and it wasn’t like they were expecting him to speak. He doesn’t know why he felt that anyone wanted to hear him anymore.

But, he thought as he walked into the room, watching as Shigaraki and Midoriya argued about adding sweet potatoes into the curry before turning to him. It just might be different this time.

This time, there was a dumb kid who didn’t know how to keep his nose out of other people’s buisness.

### **Yamada & Shirakumo \*My Other Teacher is a What?**

“My oh my, I didn’t realize that my little hero was a part-timer.”

Midoriya physically jerked when the voice snapped him from his book. He stared in gobsmacked horror as his former homeroom teacher stood before him. Next to him was his English Teacher from freshman year. And on the other side was another blond he has never met before.

“Oh, Shota, is this the stray you were talking about?” the never before seen blond said.

“He’s young,” Yamada added.

“Hey, leave my little hero alone,” Aizawa’s familiar voice came out, ruining the image he once had about his former homeroom teacher.

Before he knew it, his eyes were watering.

“Aw, you made him cry.”

“Hey, now, don’t cry,” Yamada said, lifting his hands in a placating way. He turned to hiss at his long time friend, “Oi! Apologize, you made the kid cry.”

“This kid,” Aizawa said slowly, “I think he’s retarded.”

“No, I’m pretty sure it’s normal to be terrified when a guy with a face like yours comes for them.”

“Ooh, Oboro got you there, Shota.”

The two blonds grinned at each other, and Aizawa shot them a tired look. It was familiar in a painful way, and Midoriya did super well keeping back his tears.

“If this is all, the total-”

“I want some cigarettes too,” Aizawa said. “Hizashi, you’re paying.”

“Ehhhhh?”

“Yeah, you made the least today,” the other blond laughed.

Unlike the others, Midoriya didn’t know who this was. But as it was now, the sight in front of him was too nostalgic, all he needed to do was blur the some of the features and he could really believe that he’s a dumb first year with lofty ideals all over again.

“Wait, shouldn’t you be paying since you made the most, Oboro? Why’s the poorest one of us paying?”

“You agreed to the terms.”

Yamada groaned loudly.

Midoriya checked them out, hoping that they had completely ignored them. But when he went to hand them their receipt (Yamada paid), his former English teacher grabbed his hand. His eyes snapped up to the eyes behind the shades, and he felt a chill run down his spine at the intensity of his gaze.

“Shtoa looks like a sourpuss, but it’s because he is,” he said. Midoriya tugged on his hand in an attempt to free himself, but it was futile. He watched in absolute horror as the man turned his hand to press his lips against his knuckles and give him a wink, “But I’m a very gentle man.”

Another shudder rolled right down Midoriya, one that he recognized from a lifetime of being blasted for sticking his nose where it didn’t belong.

Fear.

They left with this laugh. It was the same sound he heard in the corridors as a first-year. It was the same sound, but he couldn’t suppress the fear that locked his body into place. What was the matter with him? No matter how strange, how weird, how bizarre everything was, Midoriya had no control over his body.

What was going on?

### **Dabi \*late night**

“I’m back,” Midoriya said, more out of habit than anything.

“Welcome back.”

He stared blankly back as Dabi had poked his head out to greet him. It was a little unsettling, to see that scarred face in his house after a lifetime of fear and battles, even if the scars weren’t nearly as bad as he remembered, but Midoriya closed his eyes and forced himself to relax. He had to relax.

The Dabi in his memory was the epitome of calm and power. The eye of the storm, if you would, as the entire world burned to ashes around him.

But the Dabi in front of him could barely meet his gaze last week but now he was trying to.

“...Yeah,” Midoriya said, repeating himself, “Yeah, I’m back.”

People, he reminded himself, are not inherently evil. It’s the recognition that he has about people who share their voice and face that will make him believe that they are something they are not.

At the same time, if someone had saved Dabi, he wonders if the Dabi who burned himself into nothing in his world could have been saved. The thought made him feel lonely.

“Dabi, you know, I think that’s the first time you looked at me before I looked at you.”

“...I thought this earlier, but you say some embarrassing stuff, huh?”

“Huh?”

He didn’t answer him, leaving for the living room and leaving Midoriya behind in the doorway.

In his surprise, he tripped over his shoes and sprawled onto the ground.

### **Lunch: Shinshou + Bakugo + Midoriya**

It was an unspoken law that Midoriya sat alone at lunch. He sat at one of the empty lunch tables in the furthest corners of the cafeteria. He sat by himself and far away.

Shinsou placed his tray on the table in the seat across from his. Destroying his silent world with the screech of metal scraping against the ground, and sat down. He looked at Midoriya and then arched a brow.

“...What? Is someone else sitting here?”

“No, no, no,” Midoriya said, shaking his head. “No one ever sits there.”

The purple-haired male stared at him, as though expecting something else, and Midoriya gaped back like a fish.

“...Aren’t you afraid of speaking back to me? I could just control you.”

“Ah… Yeah, I guess you could,” Midoriya responded, nodding his head, “But… Caring about something like that is too tiring to do,” and then he quietly added, “for both of us.”

Shinsou’s face was blank, devoid of all emotions as he looked at his store-bought bento.

“...I could ruin your life with some well phrased commands,” he said, not that he’s ever done it.

He tried not to stare, wondering how it was possible that someone could become more and more relaxed in his presence when it was usually the opposite. It was especially worse if they knew what his quirk was, and Shinsou couldn’t honestly remember when the last time he talked to someone who knew what his quirk was.

His own parents tried not to talk to him.

“Then you would have by now,” Midoriya replied back, he flashed Shinshou a smile, “But you haven’t.”

“...Like you said,” Shinsou said, picking up his sandwich to bite into, wondering why he felt like he was flying, “It’s too much of a hassle. There's not much of you left to ruin anyways."

Midoriya laughed back, the sound was quiet, and Shinshou almost joined him. He’s never felt like this before.

A bag dropped down to Midoriya’s right and Bakugo scowled at both of them.

“Fuckface,” he said to Midoriya, and then turned to Shinsou and squinted, “and whatever the hell you are.”

“...Bakugo,” Shinshou narrowed his eyes back. “The name is Shinsou.”

Midoriya, a sensing that there would be a battle of epic proportions depending on his next words, spoke up. “Hi Kacchan, how was your suspension?”

“A fucking joke,” the blond replied back. If he thought he was upset at the fact that Shinsou was sitting with them, he was absolutely livid at Midoriya. “It was an in-school suspension, so I got to hear about all your fucking shit,” he said. He grabbed the man into a headlock, “You dumbass! I told you I’d come back you in any fight, and your fucking shitty ass just had to get detention and now I see you eating lunch with the fucker that put you in there?!”

“Ow, ow,” Midoriya winced, pawing weakly at his arm, but despite what he said, there was a smile on his face, “I’m sorry for worrying you, Kacchan, I promise I’m okay-”

“Don’t you ‘Kacchan’ me! Who said I was worried!?” He pulled harder on the young man’s neck, uncaring at how Midoriya wheezed.

Shinsou, until this moment, never realized that someone could laugh while being strangled. While he had always wanted friends to call his own, he also hoped that their craziness wouldn’t rub off on him in the slightest.

(In a few years, he would think back to this moment and have a good laugh. To think, he used to be so naive.)

“On a more serious note, though, if you sit with me, people are going to start saying … bad things about you.”

“Like they don’t already?”

Midoriya opened his mouth and then closed it.

“Point. But, just saying.”

“More importantly,” Bakugo said, turning his scowl against him, “Once you start hanging out with this piece of shit,” his arm slung around Midoriya’s shoulders, trapping him and his stupid smile under his arm, “you’ll never have peace again. This fucking calls at all hours in the morning and nags worse than my mom. You better prepare your ass because your life will never be the same again and you’re going to gain at least twenty pounds.”

“...Duly … noted.”

“I’m not that bad,” Midoriya whispered, but was promptly ignored.

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"I… I think you're pretty courageous, Shinsou-kun," he said. "You have the courage to come and sit with someone you didn't even know."

### **(Sept) Enter Stain**

"...uhm… Uh… Hey!"

Something inside of Midoriya, something foreign that didn’t belong to him, bubbled over and his eyes turned to the man in front of him.

These days, Midoriya had a new theory. Maybe, people live like this because there are no heroes. There is no hope that a stranger can come swinging out to help. As a result, people operate with the idea that they and only they could survive. People began to think and believe that they are alone.

And they believe that the only way to stay afloat would be to drown someone else.

So Midoriya took a deep breath and swallowed everything down.

He extended his hand out to the person on the edge of the bridge. He definitely doesn’t recognize him with a nose, or his red-scarf or his array of weaponry, but he did recognize the lost expression on his face. He’d try. If It didn’t work, he’d go home and pretend that it didn’t bother him.

“I… I don't know what you're doing here. But I… I don't want to be the kind of person that pretends I don't see that there is something wrong. So uhm… Do… Do you want to talk about it?"

“...Does it look like I want to talk?,” and Midoriya almost jolted when he heard his voice. He knew this voice. He could swear that he could just hear someone mocking him up above, and he felt all of his inside shrivel up inside of him.

“...Well,” Midoriya said through the lump in his throat. “I want to listen. And… if it really is the last thing you’re going to do, telling someone your story can’t be that bad.”

He thought that he knew who this was, but now that his mind was calming down from the initial shock, understood that it couldn’t be.

“Kid, didn’t someone tell you to not talk to strangers?”

“You’re not a stranger.”

He paused, slowly turning to face Midoriya.

“Alright,” he said, “Then who are you?”

“A hero.”

This was a world without heroes and villains. So in this world, there is no Stain. There was never a need for a man to stand up to try and tear the peace of the world. There was nothing to stain here.

Right now, the lost businessman standing at the edge of a bridge, looking at him like he had two heads, was Akakuro Chizome. And if Midoriya ever goes back home, he wondered if he’ll be able to look his Iida in the eye and let him know that he had a dream where he gave Stain a choice.

And Stain chose him.

“...And this is…?”

He looked to Aizawa and then to Stain next to him, and then back to Aizawa.

“Uh….” he couldn’t call him Stain, now could he? “A guest?” he replied back.

“Don’t answer my question with more questions,” he replied back, voice dry as he arched an eyebrow at him. “Whatever, we got another mouth to feed, right? There’s no way we have enough rice.”

Midoriya shrugged back, “We can order some pizza.”

“You want,” Aizawa leaned in and squinted at him, “Curry with pizza?”

Green eyes traced his former teacher’s face, and no one would know what he saw, because he softened up further.

“Yeah, that sounds great.” He turned to Stain with that same tender expression, and the returning gaze, the fascination and curiosity, that Stain had made him feel dirty.

“I’ll order it then,” Aizawa said. He stepped to the side, presumably to let them in, but his narrowed gaze didn’t leave Stain’s face.

Midoriya dropped his eyes as his courage and his voice deserted him. He gulped dryly and felt his fingers tremble. What was he doing?

“The bathroom is down the way,” Midoriya continued, taking his shoes off and sliding his jacket off. He stared at the plastic bag in his hand and then gasped. “My ice cream!”

At that, the spell or whatever dispersed the tension and Midoriya ran for the kitchen.

“Ahhhh! My ice cream!”

Aizawa stared at Stain for another moment and then turned away.

“...I don’t know what he did to you,” he said, slowly. His eyes flickered red as they met his gaze again, “But know that you’re outnumbered here.”

Despite everything, the absolute scorn on Aizawa’s face was enough to solidify Stain. In all honesty, the look of disdain on his face was something he was used to, and it was comforting. He could deal with rude assholes. He could deal with misplaced anger and people being upset at him or because of him.

He cannot handle the kindness that Midoriya exudes, and at the same time, thinks that it’ll be so easy to lose himself to it.

Dinner was a whirlwind of an affair. It was just as loud as an office drinking party, despite having a quarter of the number. However, there was no alcohol, and all the insulting thoughts were said at face-value while making sure everyone ate their fill. Prickly people but kind gestures, he realized suddenly.

“Here’s my number,” Midoriya said before he left, “Give me a call whenever you wanna chat.”

Akakuro nodded, numbly, and looked down at his phone. Among the sea of coworkers’ numbers that were shared out of necessities, there sits a name that doesn’t belong. He could imagine the gossip and ridicule that would come out if someone figured out that this was his.

He knows this, and yet, doesn’t think he’s ever had something more precious.

When he got home, his phone buzzed and his immediate thought was that it’s work and his heart dropped to his stomach. The warm feeling from dinner dissipated in an instant. When he checked his phone, there’s a message from Midoriya wishing him sweet dreams and a sticker of a small bear sleeping.

Akakuro slept with his phone in his hands that night. When he woke up, it was the first thing that he saw and for the first time in a long time, felt peace.

### **Warmer nights -**

Midoriya wasn’t too sure what he should be thinking, was this normal? Maybe this was normal villain behavior? Should he excuse it? Should he stop it?

He didn’t know. No wait, maybe he did, he just needed to retrace his steps.

Let’s see… School ended and after a quick outing, he came home at about 4 pm. Then, Shigaraki and Dabi informed him that they were going to buy some more eggs, and he joined them. By the time they came back, prepared and ate dinner, it was 7 pm.

He didn’t have work that night, so he was sitting at the floor table doing his homework, like he normally did. Dabi was on the tattered couch behind him, sitting in the corner with his legs extended to take up the entire cushion. It was their normal, at this point, and their quiet was comforting. The sound of his pencil scratching paper, pages being turned, and the occasional rambling mess that Midoriya became when he got way too invested in his work.

But Dabi never complained. He assumed that it was because he was super engrossed with his book. He’s glad that someone was enjoying the books. He’s seen Dabi read just about every single genre, like he was just going through all the books. Midoriya, on occasion, joined him, because he thought it was sad that all the books were just waiting to be used.

And after his post-dinner bath, Shigaraki would join them, usually with a book of his own. He really likes manga and light novels. But today was different, and led up to the biggest dilemma of his life right now.

Shigaraki, after his bath, grabbed the novel he was reading earlier, sat down next to Midoriya, and then laid his head down. In Midoriya’s lap.

Midoriya stared at him, watched as Shigaraki forced his arm up a little and laid his head down on the thickest part of his thigh. Was this normal? Was this normal, acceptable villain behavior? Is this how villains were and he just never knew because he never knew any before he became a hero?

Opening the book, Shigaraki placed it on his head, so that Midoriya’s vision of him was obscured by the gaudy cover of a busty swordswoman with a shaggey looking man on her shoulders.

He stared for a moment longer, but the warmth on his thigh was comforting. They were both alive. It was a striking thought, and he didn’t understand why that was the first thing that came up in his head.

“...If you're not going to read, put the book down,” he said, “that’s bad for the spine.”

Why did he say that?

Better question, he thought with shock as Shigaraki did just that, why did he listen?

He stared for another moment, before he dropped his hand onto Shigaraki’s head. Red eyes widened comically, but didn’t stop him, even if he froze. The manga rested next to his head, closed and in arm’s reach. Did he trust him? Was that what he was showing? That he trusted Midoriya? It was…

He didn’t know what this feeling was.

He ran his fingers through his hair, it was even softer than it looked. His own hair wasn’t that soft, but they use the same hair-products, right? Amazing.

“Don’t… look at me like that,” Shigaraki said. “Don’t you have to do your homework?”

Flustered, Midoriya jerked back to attention. “R-Right,” he said. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable.” He looked back to the problems, they were so easy but he had lost all focus. It was hard to read in terms of math and equations when, out of the corner of his eyes, he saw how red Shigaraki’s face had turned. It must have pissed him off. It honestly surprised him that he was still laying there. No, the most surprising thing was that Midoriya hadn’t been turned to dust.

“It’s… fine,” Shigaraki replied back, too quiet for Midoriya to hear over his muttering.

Dabi, on the couch, snorted.

From then on, he couldn’t help but think that they had gotten closer. Was this… normal? This had to be normal villain behavior right? Even if they weren’t villains because villains weren’t real in this world?

Just this morning, right when he finished breakfast, Dabi reached over to collect his plate.

“Huh…?” he looked up, and the older man placed his hand on his head. He ruffled his hair, and then walked to the sink, and started to wash the dishes. Absentmindedly, he reached his hand up to touch where Dabi just did, feeling it tingle all the way down.

Did he do something to him? He didn’t know.

“You’re going to be late,” Dabi said.

“Oh, oh!” Midoriya sprung up to his feet, “Oh!” He ran out of the room, and promptly forgot about the strange way his housemates were acting until it happened again.

And then, this too, became normal.

### **New Neighbors**

“Hey! What a coincidence!”

Midoriya felt all the color drain out of his face as he realized that he recognized the people moving in to the apartment complex next to him. When did the Otoshis’ move out anyways?

The two blond, devilishly handsome grinned at him as they pulled boxes into their apartment, accompanied by a cloud that held a stack on its own. He didn’t like this. Yamada pushed the glasses up higher on his face while Shirakumo visibly brightened at the sight of Midoriya.

“Stop yapping and get to…” Aizawa trailed off as he walked out.

He looked more like Midoriya was used to seeing him, with his hair all out and covering his face, exhausted looking bags under his bloodshot eyes, and the sight made his eyes water. He felt himself freeze, however, his heart churning uncomfortably as he gulped uncomfortably.

“...Ara? Midoriya-kun?” His voice didn’t drip in as much sarcasm as he was used to hearing since he got here, and if Midoriya closes his eyes, he thinks that he could pretend that he was back home and was going to be lectured for sticking his nose in someone else’s business again. “What a lovely coincidence.”

That image shattered, leaving just the host next door that had the same face and name as his former homeroom teacher.

“Our lease just ended,” he explained, “but we were just so lucky that there was an opening here. We just had to move in.”

His words dripped in sarcasm and every bit of his demeanor felt like poison hidden under a layer of honey.

“Oh,” Midoriya said.

“Oh? That’s all you have to say?!” Shirakumo started to pout and Yamada started to stomp his feet. However, all other sounds seemed to slowly drown away though, and the entire display felt like it was a thousand feet away instead of eight.

“C’mon, throw us a party!” Yamada said.

Sometimes, Midoriya feels unbearably lonely.

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Letting the hosts next door meet his roommates… letting people with the faces of his teachers’ met people with the faces of the worst villains in history, went a lot better than he thought.

For one, no one died. And then, no one got hurt. They were snarly and glared a lot and made a lot of back-handed comments, but no one died.

Amazing.

### **Unwanted Job**

Midoriya looked from the mess of the living to Yamada’s face, the bright thing he was, and then sighed.

“Fine.”

And so he got another job, taking care of the apartment that his high school teachers (from another lifetime) and their friend, rented out.

He said job, but really he was paying back a debt. They’ve helped him out plenty of times since he’s gotten here.

For example, they were a physical, constant, breathing reminder of what he had left behind.

### **Dabi & Fire**

It was a complete accident that occured after a series of unfortunate events happened to line up. From the fact that he didn’t sleep well, the fact that he was beyond exhausted and felt a bone-weary tiredness that he couldn’t explain, his bad mood seemed to only get worse from there. The book he had been going through had a shittier than usual ending, Shigaraki was extra-moody, and everything just seemed to be wrong.

So, when Shigaraki bumped into him, even though he knew it was an accident, he unleashed his fire.

In that instant, he could have killed Shigaraki. In that brief instant, he would have burnt the apartment into a crisp.

And instead, Midoriya stood in front of him. Shigaraki was sprawled out behind him, as though he was yanked out of the way, and Dabi stared in shock as Midoriya’s eyes met his. The young man stood, a grimace on his face as he raised his arm to take the direct hit from Dabi’s hand against his forearm.

In games and stuff, it’s so obvious that fire wins against earth. As an example, fire could torch down a forest and leave nothing but ashes in their wake. Dabi knows this and has lived that life. He’s burned almost everything he’s ever known in his life. From his homework to his family members, he’s burned anything and everything until he just ran away from it all. Surely, now that there is nothing important to him and he had nothing, he wouldn’t burn anything anymore.

So the last thing he expected was to realize that he cared, as his fire reached out for someone so kind and dumb and gentle that they invited a stranger into his life without any questions. The idiot, in this equation, was him.

But at the sight of those green eyes, his fire extinguished itself.

His mouth is dry. The ashen remains of Midoriya’s sleeve remained on his tattered arm, before the young man dropped it. If Dabi wasn’t acutely aware of how much pain his fire caused, he would have said his housemate wasn’t injured at all.

And instead, he took a step closer, his eyebrows furrowing closer together as he put the burned arm behind him and extended his other hand towards Dabi. In his eyes, he didn’t look angry or upset. He wasn’t scared. It was an expression that he remembered seeing on Midoriya’s face before, but seeing it was too strange, he couldn’t believe it.

“You good?” he asked, like Dabi was some lost cat that was too scared to come out from under the couch.

Concern. Midoriya was concerned.

“I-I-”

“Don’t fuck around, you need that looked at!” Shigaraki shouted, surging forward. He grabbed Midoriya, but the young man didn’t tear his gaze away from Dabi. In turn, the older man just felt even more lost.

“It’s okay,” Midoriya tried, and Shigaraki scowled back.

“It’s fucking not, let’s go-” he hissed, dragging him out of the kitchen.

“I…”

“And you,” Shigaraki said, pointing at him, “Sit down and take deep breaths!”

Normally, he hated listening to this guy, but somehow, his body did just that.

“It’s okay,” Midoriya said quietly. “It’s not your fault. You don’t have to take responsi-”

“Can you just,” Shigaraki snapped back, “just-just shut up.”

His hands were trembling, and Midoriya sighed. He placed his hand on Shigaraki’s shoulder. Slowly, agonizingly slowly, he wrapped it around his back and pulled him in closely. With the man as stiff as stone, it was probably the second more awkward hug he ever had to do in his lifetime.

“Thank you,” he said quietly. “It’s okay. It doesn’t hurt.”

It didn’t. He’s way too accustomed to pains much worse than this. And it seemed that this body of his was the same. Pain, he wasn’t a stranger too. And besides, nothing hurt more than the expression on Shigaraki’s face right now.

“But, more than me, Dabi’s going to be shaken. Do you mind checking in on him for me? I think your voice can reach him.”

“...Aren’t you angry?”

“Why?” Midoriya frowned back, “It’s not like he did it on purpose. I jumped in, on my own. Why would I blame anyone else for my own actions?”

Shigaraki’s red eyes stared at him for a long moment, before he stood up, and left.

Midoriya had, apparently, chased Shigaraki away. And so, the other man rubbed the back of his head as he came back to the kitchen a few moments later.

“He said it’s fine,” Shigaraki explained.

What a lie.

Dabi spent his entire lifetime with his own flames. He knew how awful they were.

After a brief second, he looked at Dabi’s face and back down to the ground. He leaned against the kitchen counter, opposite to where Dabi sat at the dining table, and the arsonist didn’t look up from the ground.

“...I didn’t think you could make that kind of expression. That’s good.”

He jerked at that, his eyes coming up to glare at Shigaraki. Looking at him from between his bangs, Dabi couldn’t keep the gaze and dropped his eyes again.

“....It’s a good thing,” he said, “It means you’re human. For a long while, I thought you were just a doll.”

His hands flinched under the table, and he’s certain that Shigaraki didn’t notice. He didn’t seem like the type to pay that much attention to him like that.

“...Why aren’t you answering me?” Shigaraki asked. “What, do you think that you’re undeserving to live since you singed the guy who took you in? You’re a lot weaker than you look, huh? Are you going to run away now, hide away until the next dumbass takes your sorry ass in?” Dabi’s eyes lifted at that, a cold look as though his eyes were replaced with ice. The other man rolled his eyes, “Don’t be so conceited, you piece of trash.”

With that, the man pulled his archery-gloves off and picked up a spoon next to him. Dabi’s eyes widened as it disintegrated to nothing. Shigaraki opened his hand up, as though to show that there was nothing in his hand as his lips curled up into the most unfriendly smile he’s ever seen.

“You’re nothing.”

The coldest words were also the ones that were the most comforting.

“...I won’t use it anymore.”

“Eh?”

Midoriya stopped peeling the potatoes to stare at Dabi. After a long moment, he figured that he had hallucinated hearing Dabi speak and turned back to the task at hand. He was lucky that the skin on his arm was burned, instead of his hand, because it would have made this much harder than it needed to be. Shigaraki left to use the bathroom, and Midoriya dutifully ignored everything that he said before so he could start dinner. Right as he began cutting again, Dabi did speak up.

“I won’t… use my quirk anymore.”

Ah. It would have been better to be hallucinating.

Midoriya turned to Dabi again, thought about the uncanny resemblance he had to someone he couldn’t place, and gave him a smile. He thought about all the times that they’ve spent together, and all the things that he’s heard about this man, from this world and the last. And then, he came to stark realization that the more he learned about Dabi, the less he knew about him.

And well, if that’s the case, then he knows what he should do.

“...I think that’s fine. You should do what you want to do, and I don’t think you came to that decision lightly,” he said, “but it's a little sad too.”

“...What?” Dabi gave a pointed look at Midoriya’s arm, sloppily bandaged and showing some of the tender skin underneath.

“It’s a little presumptuous of me to say it,” Midoriya said, scratching his cheek a little nervously, “but I thought it was a little sad since that means it’ll be colder.”

The older man paused for a little, letting the words ring sink in.

He wonders if Midoriya knew that the family made of fire quirks had some of the coldest dinners. A family forged from ice that had some of the most heated fights. They were a family who found it suffocating to be alone, but they were cursed when they were together. It’s been something that Dabi never realized until he was found by a stranger in the rain.

“...You don’t want to kick me out?” he asked.

“...Why would I?”

Dabi’s expression twisted in a way he’s never seen before, but he looked away. Midoriya, figuring that he wouldn’t be speaking for a while, spoke up instead.

“Dabi,” he said, “I’m thinking of making the curry extra spicy today.” He gave him a small smile, “Don’t tell Shigaraki, okay?”

The taller man stared at him for a longer moment, and finally, cracked.

The first victory Midoriya would ever have against Dabi was the laugh that he let out, quiet and wheezy, in his kitchen one Thursday afternoon when his arm was stinging from a burn.

### **Aizawa makes Dinner**

When Midoriya came over to his neighbor’s home this time, he smelled food and it suddenly reminded him that he hadn’t eaten anything since breakfast. In response, his stomach rumbled and his mouth salvated. He barely managed to get his feet out of his shoes and ran right into the doorframe but he stumbled in, his heart in his throat.

And saw Aizawa.

Aizawa looked at him, looking surprised, before his eyes went to the pot In front of him and he looked away instead. In another world, Midoriya would have swallowed his tongue in shock at seeing his former homeroom teacher sheepishly making food in his kitchen.

In this world, after all this time, Midoriya is faced with a crushing amount of disappointment when he realized that it wasn’t his mother or his father. And then, slowly, that feeling was replaced with something else, something just as warm when Aizawa started speaking.

“I… got hungry, but I … made too much,” he mumbled out, staring at the pot with all his thoughts, “You can have some, I guess.”

Someone had made dinner for him. In his home.

Someone was waiting for him, in his home, waiting for him to come home so that they can eat together.

His eyes felt hot, and his throat constricted painfully. He couldn’t see well anymore, and when Aizawa looked up from the pot, a rare expression of alarm crossed his face.

“I… You don’t have to if you don’t want to!” he blurted out.

“I want it!” Midoriya yelled back, covering his face so that he couldn’t see how hard he was starting to cry, “I want it! I want it!”

“O-Okay, I got it just shut up!” Aizawa snapped back. And after a moment yelled out, “And go wash your face!”

“I will! Whatever!” Midoriya snapped back, running to the bathroom. He spilled a couple of more tears while he washed his hands and scrubbed his face.

And then, he came running back out. When he saw Aizawa placing two bowls of steaming soup down, he felt his eyes water all over again.

“I told you that you don’t have to eat it, stop crying!”

“No, I’m going to eat it!” Midoriya snapped back, unable to help himself. “You can’t stop me!”

The man gave him another look, and then sighed back, as though forcefully expelling the fight out of him as he took his seat. He picked up his spoon, already digging in and stopped as he looked at Midoriya.

The young man stared at the soup, the meager thing made of water, pepper, some chicken, and potatoes, like it was so much more and it made Aizawa even more uncomfortable. He knew that he didn’t put a lot of effort into it. He knew that he probably should have just gone out and gotten take-out instead of subjugating this kid to his cooking, but it was clearly too late.

And he wanted to do something for him. This is what he gets for having such a half-assed attitude about this.

“Thank you for the food,” Midoriya said, picking up his spoon and taking a bite.

And no matter how many recipes he googled and tried, he really regretted the fact that he didn’t put in real effort. Some of the potatoes weren’t fully cooked. They were all lopsided. It tasted like water with pepper. The chicken was stringy.

Bu before he could stop eating and make Midoriya stop eating, he looked up and noticed that the young man had cleaned his bowl.

“It was delicious,” he said. “There’s more, right?”

“Wha… don’t fucking patronize me,” Aizawa growled back, “What do you mean it taste good? There’s nothing-”

“It’s fine,” Midoriya said, taking his bowl to the pot on the stove. “I think it’s fine. It’s everything I ever wanted.”

“You-”

“I haven’t had homemade food made for me in a long time,” he said. “Please let me have this.”

“...If you get an upset stomach, it’s not on me.”

-

Midoriya wanted to go back to all the people in the world, either one, and shake them hard. He wanted to laugh and cheer and rub it in their face that no one is a lost cause. A good deed can roll over to propagate more good deeds. Kindness isn't a dead end.

Hard work doesn't lie.

He wasn’t wrong. All Might wasn’t wrong.

Saving people is more than pulling them out of a burning building or answering rescue calls. It wasn’t about cleaning up beaches and parks, and it was more than just following the laws like anyone would. It was helping someone out and remaining by their side with unconditional trust and watching them return that trust with kindness of their own-

That was why Midoriya tried so hard to save people.

Laying on his side, groaning as his stomach rolled and twisted painfully, Midoriya thought that this was kindness.

“I told you, you shouldn’t have eaten that. I can't believe you ate all of it,” Aizawa sighed, and despite complaining and constantly reminding Midoriya of his shortcoming, he ran his fingers through his hair and brought out another blanket for him. They were careful to keep a wastebasket nearby.

“But if he lives, we will finally have someone in the world that can live through an entire serving of your food,” Yamada replied back, rubbing Midoriya’s back. “You sure you’re quirkless?”

Midoriya mumbled something back, but it came out as incoherent garble.

“Problem child,” Aizawa said, the same way his Aizawa would have.

This time, when he buried his head against his lap and cried, it wasn’t because his stomach hurt.

-

Aizawa ran his fingers through the sleeping Midoriya’s hair, like he used to for the stray cats he saw on the way to school as a student. Back when he was Midoriya’s age, actually. And if that didn’t make him feel old…

“What up, Shota? You ready to adopt him? I think we should get a collar in yellow,” Shirakumo said with a wide grin.

“Stop adopting other people’s kids,” Aizawa shot back.

“Aw, you don’t mean that,” the blond laughed, crossing his hands behind his head. He looked down at where Midoriya slept comfortably with Aizawa’s thigh as a pillow before he reached to pull a blanket over him. “Look at him, you really think that he’d be out here if he had worthwhile parents?”

Painful memories were being prodded.

Aizawa sighed back. He didn’t even think that he was capable of being remorseful, but when he thought back to those moments, his actions weighed heavily in his heart. Each and every interaction that he and Midoriya shared built up to the people that they knew, and he didn’t doubt that he didn’t have a pretty image in Midoriya’s mindscape.

Still, the young boy didn’t protest when he came over to help with chores every week like clockwork.

Even if it was because he was used to this treatment, it spelled out a pitiful existence. His eyes trailed to his neck, now that he was sober and close enough to be this close to Midoriya, and could see ugly scars peeking out from where his clothes failed to cover him.

“... Looks like I was the ignorant one,” he muttered quietly. He wondered what kind of Midoriya had to live, so that his eyes would remain so bright. It was becoming more and more clear to Aizawa everyday that very little went Midoriya’s way.

### **Weather \*clothing**

“It’s going to start getting cold,” Midoriya said when he came home. “I don’t really know what you guys like to wear and stuff, but to not have anything at all is bad.”

It was still hot, but winter will be here before they know it. With that in mind, Midoriya wanted to make sure that they will be ready.

“...I don’t know if you guys want to go outside,” he said, “And I don’t want to pressure you. But I do need to know. Do you want to go shopping together or should I just bring something home and hope it fits?”

“Whichever is easiest,” Shigaraki said.

Midoriya was scared he was going to say that. But, remembering how he found him, didn’t blame him. He nodded back, “Alright. Dabi?” he called out, “We’re going to head out on Saturday. Do you want us to pick anything for you?”

“...I can pick my own clothes,” Dabi said, “Those host guys already came by with a bunch of apparel anyways. Shigaraki can’t fit in most of them, but it works fine with me.”

Midoriya made a reminder to get them a gift in a few weeks, maybe some oranges or something.

“Wow, that’s nice of them,” he said, overwhelmed by their kindness.

The other two exchanged a glance, clearly not agreeing with him.

“Yeah, they definitely did this out of the ‘goodness of their heart’,” Shigaraki deadpanned.

### **Meeting Eri (and Chisaki)**

A car rolled up, and Midoriya stood up.

“Sorry, Eri-chan,” he said, eyeing the new guests that were stepping up to him, “It looks like things are going to get a little bumpy, alright?”

“...Midoriya...ni-chan?”

“Ah, I see you found my niece.”

His stomach dropped as a painfully familiar memory overlapped over the one he was seeing right in front of him. Except, with Eri clutching to his pants leg, and them being by the riverbed.

But here he was.

“I’m sorry for all the problems she must have caused. C’mon, Eri. Let’s go home.”

Oh fuck no.

Midoriya stood in front of Eri, protective and determined. He tensed his body, and regarded the way a specific light seemed to gleam on Chisaki’s eyes. Surely, it must have been a play of the light, because the Chisaki, the Overhaul, that Midoriya knew only showed anger and annoyance. But right now, he clearly looked interested in something.

“I’m not going back!” Eri shouted.

Chisaki took a deep breath, looking as though to wonder why he was even here at all. For a moment, he looked like an overworked young man instead of a villain with a terrifying ambition. “Eri-sama, no one is angry about the pudding-”

“No, you’re lying! I didn’t even know that it was yours! If you wanted to save it that badly, you should have eaten it first!”

Midoriya blinked slowly and then clapped his hands once to gather the attention back to himself.

“I… I’m really sorry, but what’s going on?”

“You don’t know what’s going on but you’re a part of this?” Chisaki asked, squinting his eyes at him.

Midoriya shrugged helplessly, “This black benz has been following her around and tried to take her before. I thought you were a part of that.”

“...A what?”

“Yeah! You can’t be mean to Izu-nii! He saved me!” Eri shouted out, standing defiantly in front of Midoriya.

His heart ached at the sight, and wonders how the Eri back at home is doing. If given enough time to heal the wounds on her heart, would she become this outspoken? Would she throw fits over eating pudding and then try to run away from home?

“Then, princess, would you like to head back to the estate with us? I’ll let him go if you come back home with us. The boss, your grandfather, is very worried as well.”

She hesitated, and looked up at Midoriya. The young man moved to stand in front of her. He’s not a fool. Taking on Chisaki right now, especially if he fights the way he remembered him to, will result in a painful demise. That wasn’t taking into account the people behind them. If he wanted to survive, the best and easiest thing to do would be to hand Eri over. His next best option was to call the cops and delay enough time for someone (if anyone) would come.

However.

“Eri, do what you think is right,” he said simply. “And I will take care of the rest, okay? Trust me.”

He used to be a Hero.

There was a brief pause, as Eri’s eyes stared up at Midoriya. She thought carefully about something and her eyes dropped to the ground. Her hand gripped his pants leg, and then, she took a deep breath before releasing him. Midoriya, truly and honestly ready to fight to the bitter end and run away with Eri from the Yakuza, looked down in surprise.

Her large eyes turned to Chisaki, “I’m sorry for eating your pudding. I’ll go home now.”

Chisaki’s eyebrows nearly touched his hairline in his surprise as he eyed Eri to Midoriya and then back down.

“..Eri-hime, are you sure?”

“...I don’t want to be a coward,” Eri said, her eyes shining as she stared at Midoriya. “So when we meet again, you should buy me a candy apple since I’ll be stronger!”

Her eyes were filled with a strength and conviction that Midoriya found inspiring. It was a little embarrassing, that he could be so easily moved by a few words, but a tight knot in his heart loosened. In a world without heroes and villains, she doesn’t want to go home for a few hours because she ate someone’s pudding. In a world without heroes and villains, she thought that doing the right thing was apologizing for eating someone’s pudding.

Midoriya smiled back at her and stepped back. He crouched down in front of her and extended his pinky out to her. Where he was from, he had to explain this to her, but here...

“Let’s pinky swear,” he said.

“I’m too old for this!” Eri protested, her cheeks flushing a bright red. “I’m not a baby!”

Midoriya blinked back in surprise, “Ah, really?”

He must have looked terribly pathetic though, because the four year old extended her pinky out. “But I can make an exception,” she said.

Their fingers locked, her tiny finger barely able to even curl around his, and he doesn’t know how to explain this bittersweet feeling in his heart. If Eri had never experienced what she did, would she be more like this Eri in front of him? The Eri that never needed a hero, was this her?

“Thank you,” he said. “I’ll be waiting.”

She grinned, proudly showing off her pearly whites before she turned to Chisaki.

“Le… Let’s get you into the car,” Chisaki said, barely managing to recover as he gave a curt nod to one of the other men. She climbed into the car, with one last wave to Midoriya, but without complaint. He looked back at Midoriya, who stepped forward with his phone out.

“Here’s the picture of the vehicle make, model and license plate,” he said, feeling a little sad that there would be no place for him in Eri’s life here. But still, he hoped that a world where Eri tried to run away from home over pudding is kinder than the world where Eri couldn’t run away. He smiled and gave a polite bow, “Thank you,” he said. “Please take care of Eri.”

Where he was from, Chisaki Kai was the boss of the Shie Hassakai. Here, Chisaki Kai is the exasperated underling of the current Shie Hassakai boss, and possibly the primary caretaker of little Eri. Meaning, Eri is still the blood granddaughter of the Shie Hassakai, and instead of the Eri he knew, was a young girl with an alright amount of control over her quirk.

“...If you have a moment, would you like to get some coffee with me?” Chisaki asked, “I would like to ask you some questions about this vehicle and who you are.”

“I couldn’t do that,” Midoriya said, shaking his head, “Please enjoy your evening with Eri-chan.”

“...You would be doing me a great favor for this,” Chisaki said, positioning himself to stand between Midoriya and the car, effectively blocking his eyesight of the young girl. “I do not want to ask twice. I promise to guarantee your safety. I would like the opportunity to discuss this. Of course, I suppose I can’t force you, and we can schedule another date instead.”

And Midoriya was a curious kind of guy. More than anything, he was a little hypnotized at the sight of his former enemy, the way he was. After all, in a world where he woke up and ate breakfast with Shigaraki and Dabi, maybe Chisaki wouldn’t be an enemy either. Still, his eyes drifted to the gloves on Chisaki’s hands, the black face mask on the bottom of his face, and his heart wavered.

Still, the fact he could see Eri’s bright eyes and loud laugh with clarity was probably the only reason why he agreed.

(And also the fact that he was certain that Chisaki wouldn’t let him go if he left. And he really, really, really didn’t want to weather the storm of trying to explain how he got involved with the yakuza to Shigaraki.)

“Please, this is on us,” Chisaki said, motioning at the seat in front of him. Midoriya eyed the menu and politely ordered some hot tea. It would do well for his nerves, and it was the only drink that didn’t make him balk when he saw the price.

Golden eyes didn’t move from his face, even as he ordered a coffee. Please, Midoriya wanted to beg, please stop staring at me. Even the waitress looked uncomfortable.

“Let’s start with the basics,” Chisaki said once their order came.

They sat down in a far corner of a family restaurant, right by the window, and Midoriya figured it was so that they remained in clear view of many people. He didn’t know if this was done for him or for Chisaki’s underlings, but didn’t mention it. He counted the number of people here, and was grateful that no one was seated in their immediate vicinity. While he’s relatively certain that he can escape alive, he didn’t want to destroy the venue or sacrifice civilians in the meantime.

“My name is Chisaki Kai. I’m a member of the Shie Hassakai. Eri-sama is my boss’s granddaughter. As it may be, I’m in charge of her for the time being.”

As thought to demonstrate what the Shie Hassakai was, he pulled his sleeve up just slightly, showing the tips of a tattoo that Midoriya is certain that the Chisaki in his world never had. He took a drink of his coffee, as though to place in a pause for Midoriya to make his conclusions.

Interesting.

He was careful not to stare too long, and at Chisaki’s inquiring stare, realized belatedly that he was yakuza. He was showing Midoriya, as discreetly as possible, that he was yakuza.

Was he giving him a way out?

“Oh,” Midoriya said, oddly touched at the rather humane action that Chisaki took. “Is that why that van was following Eri-chan?”

Gold eyes lingered on his face, looked almost perplexed and he nodded curtly. Given to him like that, and knowing that Eri didn’t want to go home because she ate someone else’s pudding, Midoriya opened his mouth to give a very detailed account of what happened. He told them the near exact timestamp of each and every instance he caught that van tailing them for the better part of two hours. He told them of the thugs that tried to take Eri out, and how Eri chose not to go to places with high population density.

The older man looked even more surprised, and Midoriya stopped too.

“...Is something wrong?”

“...I can’t help to notice how attentive you are to details,” Chisaki said, “Yet you have yet to tell me anything about yourself.”

“I’m just an anyone,” Midoriya said, “Just some random guy that saw a girl getting tailed by a suspicious car.”

“In all honesty, I think that’s what makes you the most suspicious person. You didn’t even blink when you saw my tattoos. You knew who Eri was, from the moment you approached her, didn’t you? So tell me,” Chisaki asked, his gaze sharp enough to cut someone, “who are you?”

“If you have to call me a name, Midoriya is fine,” Midoriya said, hoping that their search will come up with nothing. He wasn’t lying, per se, after all. He could feel his heart quiver in fear, but he swallowed it all down. In this battle, the one who broke composure loses. “And I don’t feel comfortable giving a stranger my personal information.”

There was a long pause. And Chisaki suddenly started to laugh.

“Is that so?” he said, laughing so hard he covered his face as though to smoother the sound. He looked so deceivingly young and innocent that for a moment, Midoriya didn’t see any overlap with the bastard that experimented on children. “Yes, I suppose I am a stranger. Then, this stranger shall answer any question of yours. As a thank you for giving me such ample entertainment.”

The light danced in his eyes. On another person, it wouldn’t have worried him as much.

“...Any question?” Midoriya asked, unable to stop himself. Nervously, he licked his lips.

“Yes, I would like to leave the ‘Strangers’ label behind, and to do that, I must first earn your trust, correct?”

It made sense, but Chisaki was the one to say it. Well, Midoriya wasn’t going to look this gift horse in the face and in his anticipation, went all in. He had to know, and he had a feeling that Chisaki wouldn’t lie about this. His family’s reputation was on the line, after all.

“What do you think about quirks?”

“Quirks?” the man looked surprised at the question, like this was something outside of his expectations. He took a moment to collect his thoughts and recompose before answering it. “They’re just another part of us. Some are... more useful than others, admittedly, but that’s just a matter on how well a person is equipped to use it. Many are thrown away because of their quirks, and others are used for them. My boss often says that anything that could be done with a quirk can also be done without. Personally, I share that sentiment,” he explained.

Midoriya, momentarily, felt so incredibly light-headed that he took a slow, shaky breath. The world around him slowed down for a moment, and he leaned in with a desperation that he couldn’t control. The older man arched an eyebrow at him, but didn’t move from his position.

“So you don’t… think that quirks are a disease that should be purged from the world any means necessary? Even if that means you have to experiment on kids?” Midoriya asked in a sudden rush of words.

To his defense, the thought was suffocating him.

Chisaki is a man who had learned that being surprised is a weakness. He had lost men to that weakness. As it was, he was careful to keep all the emotion off his face and remain as calm and as collected as he was when he first came in.

“Midoriya-kun,” he said very slowly, “I… Where the fuck did this come from?” he asked. And as soon as the words left his mouth, closed his eyes.

He took a deep, slow breath. In order to remain calm, he must get oxygen to the brain. He clearly spoke much too loudly, as the entire restaurant seemed to fall silent. He took another breath, pinching the bridge of his nose with his fingers. He waited for the ambient noise of other patrons to return before he tried again.

In front of him, those green eyes stared at him earnestly. The stare was so open and honest that Chisaki felt like he was intruding on his private thoughts. At the same time, it made the entire situation even more strange, since this was clearly something this kid was truly invested in. Did Eri say something? Shouldn’t most kids ask for a favor from the yakuza? Maybe a dumb couple of questions, like if he killed someone?

“My apologies, I didn’t mean to… make that outburst,” he said, finally able to regain his tight reign on his emotions.

He took a sip of his coffee and finally managed to compose an answer.

“No, even if I managed to... do all of that, why would I execute it? That would mean that I would have to get rid of myself, and my quirk, as well. At best, it’s hypocritical, and at worst, it’ll change society as we know it. Nothing good comes from a sudden overhaul like that.” He really tried. He really should be getting a bonus for dealing with the shit that he deals with. Because. What the fuck.

How did this conversation derail so badly?

The young man stared at him for a while, his eyes welling with tears as though he was the one that was saved. His eyes dropped to his lap, and Chisaki doesn’t think he’s ever met someone (or ever given news to someone) who cried because they’re happy.

“Yeah,” the kid said, breathless as he sniffled, “That would be, wouldn’t it?”

Great, the kid who saved Eri and put the entire Shie Hassakai under his debt was a fucking nutjob. However, to not do anything would bring upon shame onto Oyaji’s reputation, he didn’t mention it. Instead, he sighed and hoped that this kid had a lot of worldly desires so they can fix this as soon as possible, and hopefully cleanly.

After all, Chisaki has been in this business to know well enough that the scars on Midoriya’s hands came from a particular kind of trouble. He would have to do his own digging later. Maybe he could pawn it off to Kurono or someone.

“So, what would it be?”

“Pardon?”

Maybe he was just stupid. It would explain a lot of things. Like how calm he looked in the presence of a yakuza man, because in reality, he didn’t understand what was going. He can work with stupid. He doesn’t want to deal with crazy. Resolutely, Chisaki made a decision.

“What would you like in return for saving Eri-sama? We would like to repay this debt of gratitude.”

“...Debt of gratitude?” Midoriya repeated and then tilted his head, like it was a foreign concept. Right before Chisaki could open his mouth to offer some examples, he crossed his arms in front of his chest and then tilted, “I don’t have anything that I want from you,” he said.

Shit, Chisaki thought. This would get dirty if he’s not careful.

“...Is that so?”

Midoriya nodded, “Anything that I can ask for, I can do myself,” he said. “And the things I can’t do by myself,” his expression turned exceedingly warm as he regarded the yakuza man in front of him, “has already worked out for me.”

Indeed, no one would look at the young man and think that he was some young student sipping coffee in the late afternoon with some yakuza scum.

“Thanks, but I’m good. I’m glad Eri’s safe, though. That she will be safe. That’s… more than enough.”

He gave a grin to Chisaki and he chuckled, like they’ve known each other much longer than these last few hours. The experience was foreign, and it made something twist in his gut.

“Thank you, Chisaki-san,” he said, like Chisaki did so much more than buy him a drink (that he didn’t even touch).

And just like that, Midoriya left, somehow leaving Chisaki with way more questions that he knew what to do with.

### **ShigaDeku-kun \*watching**

Deku-kun didn’t know it, but for a long time already, Shigaraki’s eyes were always looking for him.

“Something wrong?”

Shigaraki blinked at him, and then frowned. “No, why?”

“You keep looking at me.”

Midoriya placed his pen down and stared at him.

“What’s up?”

“....It’s nothing.”

The young man stared at him for another moment. It was clearly not ‘Nothing.’ Not being trusted stung a little, but he’s not too sure why. Even now, after everything, the questions persisted in his head.

Was this okay? Was this really okay? Is this really okay? Should he even save Shigaraki? Even if he did, could he live with himself when he gets back?

No, this and that are different. This Shigaraki wasn’t a villain. This Shigaraki was some kid he found in the dumpster.

He looked at Shigaraki and patted the place next to him. After a moment of reluctance, the older man moved from the couch to his side. He looked back to his homework.

“...Your quirk only activates when all five of your fingers touch the target, right?” he asked.

“Uh… yeah…? How did you-”

Midoriya, boldly, grabbed Shigaraki’s arm and placed it on the table. If Shigaraki wasn’t fighting him, then he had reason to believe that he wasn’t opposed to this. Well, now that he thought about it, the question was dumb. Shigaraki was still in the archery gloves he always had on. The ones that Midoriya got for him.

With his hand on the table, and ignoring Shigaraki’s wide eyes, Midoriya’s wrapped his fingers around the back of Shigaraki’s hand. It was almost annoying how much smaller he was than Shigaraki, but he supposed that the less of his hand he took up, the better. As it was, he squeezed the hand under his, feeling it twitch like Shigaraki didn’t know whether to slap him away or not.

As it was, he didn’t move.

“Take your time,” Midoriya said, “I am here.”

One day, Midoriya knew that he wouldn’t, but today and tomorrow probably. Maybe even next week and the next month. Up until he leaves this world, he will be here. If Shigaraki needed him, or even wanted him, to help. To be saved.

Then, Midoriya could say that no one came and saved Shigaraki in any world. Shigaraki saved himself.

Shigaraki’s entire form trembled next to him, but Midoriya pretended that he didn’t notice and went back to multiplying.

### **Officer Stain**

"You…. You did what?"

Akakuro looked at him and grabbed his cap before giving him a small bow. He looked at his badge, like he couldn’t believe it himself, and then gave a shy smile. Midoriya felt his brain short-circuit at the thought that Stain could feel shy.

This was (one of) the last things he expected to be confronted with on his way home.

"I became a cop. I… I wanted you to be the first to know." He took a deep breath. He wasn't the type to get nervous about things like this, but something about the way Midoriya looked at him always made him feel vulnerable. "I just wanted to thank-"

"Oh! You did it!" Midoriya threw caution to the wind as he rushed to run up to the older man. As though remembering something, he jerked to an awkward stop, just a few feet apart. His arms were outstretched, like he wanted to hug him or something, and Midoriya quickly pulled his hands behind him. The excitement in his eyes hadn’t diminished in the slightest. Standing so close to him, Akakuro is suddenly reminded of how small Midoriya was. Shouldn’t the sun be bigger?

He stared at him for a moment and dropped his hand onto Midoriya’s head. He ruffled the deceivingly soft curls in his hands, and wished that expressing his gratitude was easier than cursing someone out. He wanted to grab Midoriya and spin him around. He wanted to laugh as loudly as Midoriya did and tell him about the test and how hard it was and that his smile was what kept him going every day.

"Yeah."

"We were going to order pizza, do you want something else?"

"No."

"Plain cheese, right?"

"Yeah."

Midoriya beamed back, his smile so big that Akakuro worried he would hurt himself, and moved to start walking in the direction of his apartment. His hand went for his pocket, probably to pull his phone out and call Shigaraki about the change for dinner.

Suddenly, Akakuro grabbed him by the shoulders to stop him. He knew that, if he didn't say it right now, he would never be able to say it. He knew that, and even if Midoriya didn't believe him now, he was prepared to spend the rest of his life getting him to.

"...Stain-san? You change your mind on dinner?"

There, he said it. His nickname. The first thing that Akakuro felt like was finally his.

"I…" he took a deep breath, like he could suck the courage out of the air and convert it into his own. It must have worked, because he was able to force out, "I didn't know what else to do. But I want to make the world a better place. There's a stain on the world, and it has gone too far unnoticed. I want you to live in a safer place. And I want to… to be a part of that peaceful future with you."

Akakuro took a step away from Midoriya, and gave him a full, proper salute.

"Thank you again," he said. "Truly. I will never forget what you did for me that day. I swear to you that I will definitely repay this favor-"

"This is what you want to do, right?," the young man asked, cutting him off, and then waiting for Akakuro to straighten. His smile, impossibly kind and patient, somehow turned brighter, "You don't owe anyone anything then. Congratulations on your hard work and achievement!”

“...Thank you,” Akakuro said, hoping that his smile was just as bright.

### **Shigaraki’s Job**

Shigaraki got a job at a family restaurant in a rougher part of town, ironic since it’s next to a huge hospital. It doesn’t care about service and things like that, so he ends up fitting in a lot better than anyone expected him to.

For a guy who was too lazy to tie his hair so it was out of his eyes, the owners never expected him to work hard. The way he collapsed into his seat during breaks, and the way he glared at people but didn’t half-heartedly do his work said a lot about him. This was a kid who never worked before, but now has a reason to.

However, the clincher for this was that Shigaraki was unofficially getting lessons on how to cook.

“Kid!”

He scowled, a feral look but turned to glare at his new boss. The woman took one good look at him and laughed brightly.

“That’s a good look on your face!” she laughed. “You’re not shit, so I’ll see you tomorrow at the same time!”

The kid looked dead on his feet, a thin layer of sweat on his brow. Still, he hasn’t complained once since they started, and the Boss could appreciate that kind of honest and earnest energy. He gave a curt bow, and it was clear that this was someone that never had to show proper respect like this before.

“Hard day at work?”

Shigaraki, his face buried in Midoriya’s lap as the young man did his homework on the couch, grunted back. The student laughed, his hand moving from flipping the page of his textbook to ashen locks.

“Good work today.”

Somehow, between the gentle ministrations on his head and the warmth of the body under his head, the tensions melted off of his body. Just like that, he was asleep.

His neck ached when he woke up, but he still felt refreshed.

### **Dabi’s New Job**

“And your… quirk is cremation.”

“Yes.”

“And you want to… work here. In a flower shop.”

Dabi paused and sketched a nod.

“...Why?”

“I… I wanted to learn how to be gentle,” the young man said, lifting his hand up to stare at it. “There’s someone I don’t want to disappoint.”

“Yeah, but that doesn’t mean that we’re going to let a liability into our store.”

Dabi’s hand curled into a fist on his knee and he nodded. The man made a fair point, and now that he had something he could call <precious> to him, he understands what the man meant. At the same time, he didn’t want to look Midoriya in the eye and realize that he had disappointed him.

“Get out of here, we don’t need any help from the likes of you.”

“I…”

Dabi stood up and turned to leave when the sudden, persisting image of Midoriya holding a package of curry in his hands. No, they couldn’t eat like that anymore. He didn’t want to let Midoriya think that this was an alright way of living. His pride? His dignity? He threw all of that away the moment a middle school brat found him like an abandoned cat and he willingly followed him home.

He turned around, losing himself for a moment he dropped to his knees.

“I…” he bowed his head forward, not close enough to consider that it was on the ground, but enough to express how much he needed this. “Please,” he said. The words felt foreign coming from him, and for a moment, he felt like he was someone else.

“Get out of here, kid.”

His heart in his stomach, Dabi gritted his teeth and got to his feet. His fingers itched with the urge to burn, but his heart just felt cold. He grabbed his things, and walked out to the front so he could leave. He felt his throat constrict painfully, and his stomach churned as he tried to figure out what he was going to say to Midoriya.

He had very little solace to know that he had the entire walk home to formulate an explanation that wasn’t, “you picked up a fuck-up, kay I’m going to go drown my woes away with all the grape juice in the apartment.” He clenched his jaw tightly, it sounded bad enough in his head but to say it aloud to Midoriya?

Day 18 of the Job Hunt and he’s finally gotten a call back. He finally got an interview. And he just. He put his head down and fucking begged and he...

And as though sensing Dabi’s growing dread, Midoriya stood outside of the florist stop. His back was towards the glass windows and Dabi hesitated.

“Get outta my store if you’re not gonna buy anything,” his interviewer called out.

Dabi wanted to glare at him. He wanted to stomp and yell and burn this whole place down. He wanted to live up to the stereotype people had when they saw people like him, scarred and a high school flunkie. Instead, he took a deep breath and stepped out.

“Hey,” he said, breathless as Midoriya whipped around to stare at him.

He doesn’t know what kind of expression he had on his face, but a smile bloomed across his face as their eyes met.

“Dabi,” he called out, and Dabi didn’t realize that someone could put that much emotion into a single word. As it was, he managed to pull a little smile when the warmth exuding out of Midoriya reached his chest. “...I saw you in there but I didn’t want to interrupt. But I figured we could walk home together,” he said.

Dabi stared at him, quietly wondering how long Midoriya had to be waiting out here, and then wondered if he had been worried or something. The thought that someone was worried enough that they would come out to find him, however, had his heart betraying him. Pounding incessantly loud in his chest, he wondered if Midoriya was able to hear it. He better keep his distance just in case.

“Yeah,” Dabi nodded, “Let’s go home.”

Midoriya didn’t pry. He didn’t ask. Dabi was thankful for that, and then the door behind him swung open.

“You start Monday, part-timer! Get here by noon!”

Dabi froze, spinning around so fast that he almost got whiplash, but by the time he locked eyes with his interviewer, the man was sneering at him as he closed the door and flipped the ‘open’ sign to ‘close’. On the inside, the interviewer’s wife waved at him with an amiable smile.

What had happened?

“You got the job?” Midoriya gasped, pulling his attention back to him.

“I got the job?” Dabi was confused.

“You got the job!”

“I got a job.”

And so, Dabi started working at the local florist.

“...I can’t believe we’re taking him in,” the older man sighed back. “Why did you decide to change your mind?” he asked.

Next to him, his wife giggled as she leaned against his arm. “Didn’t you see it? The way he looked at that boy? You used to look at me like that.”

The older man flushed darkly, and clicked his tongue. “Whatever. We’ll see if he’s really for real.” He flexed his hard wooden muscles, muttering under his breath how awful it was that their little flower shop lost their little boy but gained a fire child instead.

She laughed, a sound that made him smile even after all the years that they spent together.

### **Middle school graduation**

Middle school graduation was a lot happier here than he thought it would be. It was definitely a louder affair than the last time he did this, since the last time it was just him and his mom in their little apartment surrounded by All Might effigies.

There is no mother Midoriya this time. Actually, none of his blood relatives are there.

Not his father or his mother or anyone. It’s just him and his friends, and their families.

The people that used to pick on Deku-kun stayed away. He’s glad that they have enough sense to not try and taint this nice memory for all of them.

That’s what he thought until he realized that he was asked to go to his classroom. Something about his homeroom teacher calling him in to give him his graduation-note, signed by him. Midoriya didn’t think twice and gave a nod to the young girl that came for him and he headed up.

“Midoriya, where are you going?” Aizawa asked.

“Oh, my homeroom teacher is calling me,” the young man said.

“Alright, hurry up. We got reservations at the restaurant you like so much.”

“You guys can just go ahead,” he said.

The man reached out and smacked him upside the head, it didn’t hurt or anything, but the gesture was so familiar that he felt his eyes water up.

“If you have the time to cry, get going. Hurry up.”

The young man stared at him for an extra moment, taking in his clean features and his three-piece suit. He doesn’t mean to, but sometimes he gets so lost between this world and the last. And sometimes, he can’t help but think that he was going to miss this Aizawa-san when he goes back.

“Okay,” he said, a smile on his face as he turned around.

So when he gets to the classroom, he’s already distracted by other thoughts. It’s probably the only reason why he failed so specatulously at recognizing that the classroom wasn’t empty, or that the door locked behind him, or that his teacher wasn’t there at all, or the chair that came swinging at his head.

Really, if he wasn’t so used to physical trauma, he might have been knocked out by that.

As it was, he turned around to stare at the person that tried to knock him out with a chair.

“...Really?”

Then the others came yelling and swinging. The thing that was nice about his class was that there weren’t people with bright and loud flashy quirks like Bakugo. He was really an exception. So, things like longer fingers or detachable limbs, wielded by children no less, doesn’t feel threatening.

It helps that most of these kids have never experienced a fight before. Smacking them in the nose, causing a sudden gush of blood to come dripping out of their nostrils, is a surefire way to end the battle with minimal casualties.

In about 15 minutes, Midoriya will leave the classroom, blood splattered on his uniform, a lump on the back of his head, a split lip and bruises on his knuckles.

A fitting graduation gift, he supposes.

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“Midoriya, there you…”

Midoriya gave a nervous smile, shrinking back a little at the way Aizawa’s words trailed off.

In an instant and three loud explosions later, Bakugo’s hand grabbed his chin. He jerked Midoriya’s face, left and then right, with the promise of death in his eyes.

“Who?” he growled out, low and quiet in complete contrast to the explosions coming out of one of his hands.

“Nothing, nothing,” Midoriya said, pulling his face out of the grip. He lifted his fist up, displaying all the bruises he collected, “and I already returned the favor. Let’s go, Kacchan.”

He walked up to Aizawa and gave a smile.

“I’m hungry after that.”

## [End]