## Second Semester

### **Picnic**

“...What are we doing?”

“We’re going to have a picnic,” Midoriya said, pulling the backpack out of the back of the car.

Aizawa squinted at the mountain in front of them.

“No, I got that part. But…” next to him, Yamada peered up at the mountain with no little amount of trepidation.

“...You woke us up at 8 AM on our day off to climb a fucking mountain for lunch?” Aizawa deadpanned.

“The view at the top is going to be amazing!” Midoriya chirped back, his eyes shining. And when he saw the expression on the other adults, dimmed a little, “And I just… wanted to share that with you.”

The present adults gave him a withering look, and for a moment, Midoriya thought that they would get back into the car and drive back. He wouldn’t blame them either. Now that he was here, in the moment, he understood that this might not have been a great idea. They probably had better things to do than waste their rare day off climbing a mountain with him, huh?

“...With the face of an angel, you say some really scary things, huh?” Shirakumo asked, cocking an eyebrow at him. He looked back up at the mountain. “Wow, I haven’t even seen a mountain since that time Yamada got so drunk he threw up all over Aizawa during New Years.”

“Oh my god, just shut up,” Aizawa sighed, rubbing his face with his hands.

Shigaraki gave a long yawn and Dabi rubbed the back of his neck as they closed the trunk of the car.

“Let’s get going, or else we won’t make it to the top by noon,” Dabi said.

Midoriya grabbed the backpack from Shigaraki. For the most part, everyone came with a small pack containing their supplies of choice.

“I asked everyone to come, so I’ll carry the lunch,” he explained.

Shigaraki looked doubtful. “Okay, but let me know when you get tired and we can switch.”

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Hahahahaha, famous last words.

Not even five kilometers from their starting point, and Shigaraki felt like his legs were made of jelly. Who said they should climb a mountain?

Oh right, he narrowed his eyes where Midoriya led their group with ease. Him.

However, he wasn’t alone, and about quarter of the way up, they stopped for lunch. At a pitifully low elevation, they ate the lunches that they brought. It wasn’t anything special of course. Shigaraki just put together some onigiris, but now that they were in the mountain, he realized how dry these made his mouth. They brought energy drinks, but it made them even more dehydrated.

The only one of them that brought water was Midoriya, and that was hardly enough for all of them. At the sight of it, they decided that the young man should keep his water for himself. Luckily, there was a vending machine nearby, and Midoriya offered to grab drinks for them all.

Shirakumo slapped a wad of bills that Midoriya tried to decline, but a stern glare from Aizawa sent him away with a long sigh.

“...You’re not going to smoke?” Shigarkai asked.

“I’m too tired to smoke,” Yamada almost whining, from where he was face down on his bag. Without looking up, he pointed at Aizawa, “And he quit.”

“You quit?” Dabi arched an eyebrow at him. “You?”

“If I had known I’d be climbing mountains, I would have quit sooner,” the man replied back, throwing a stink eye at Yamada.

“You know it’s love when you try to be a better person for them, right?” Shirakumo asked, waggling his eyebrows. “Funnier since it’s illegal.”

“Yeah, like how you replaced all your shoes with green laces and wear green ties on the weekends?” Aizawa shot back. “You’re not even subtle.”

“Don’t be such a sourpuss. At least I don’t need a reason to change my underwear.”

“It’s called being economical. Not that you would understand. I saw your newest collection of dumbbells.”

“He’s not interested in either of you so fuck off,” Shigaraki snapped out.

“...It’s just a joke,” Aizawa said, even though no one believed him.

Shirakumo’s smile was so sweet it felt like something was rotting. “Yep, just a joke.”

“What’s a joke?”

They all turned to where Midoriya stood, holding several water bottles in his arms. It was clear that he grabbed some sports drinks for all of them as well. His smile was curious as he looked at them. He kneeled to place the drinks on the ground, and Aizawa didn’t miss how he didn’t neglect to grab some of their favorite flavors and regular drinks.

“It’s nothing that a kid like you should worry about,” Aizawa snapped back.

Most people would have flinched or at least frowned at his cold attitude, but Midoriya’s smile just turned warmer.

“Then, I guess I better enjoy my youth,” he replied back.

“Yeah, with a bunch of unfit old men on the side of a mountain,” Yamada sighed as he rolled over. “Oh nice, I love fruit punch. You know, this is really good with some coconut rum.”

Midoriya’s smile didn’t even twitch.

“You’ll treat me when I’m old enough, right?”

And Yamada laughed even louder.

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“Alright,” Aizawa declared as , “Next year, we’ll get to the top.”

“Oh, we should time it for the cherry blossom festival,” Shirakumo pipped in.

“Ooooh, that sounds good!” Yamada snapped his fingers.

“Didn’t they complain the whole way down?” Dabi asked, but the amused smile on his face didn’t relent.

“Make sure you don’t grow up to become an adult like that,” Shigraki said, motioning to the three.

“I don’t know,” Midoriya said, beside himself in joy at the innocent tinge to their scarless-features, “I wouldn’t mind being that happy.”

Even if they didn’t make it to the top of the mountain to eat lunch, even if they didn’t even make it halfway, the fact that they wanted to come back again meant more to Midoriya than anything else. In another world, he wouldn’t have ever dreamed of an opportunity like this, so he would do his best to protect it.

And, should Deku-kun wake up, he hoped that he would get to enjoy these kinds of experiences too.

### **Second Year-senpai**

The thought didn’t occur to him until the man had pinned his chest against the wall with his foot. It was rare that he would get apprehended so easily, or even caught-off guard, but now that this puzzle piece slid into place, everything made sense. His body locked up, and was actively trying to shut him down.

It was almost laughable what an oversight this was. After all, it wasn’t just the people around him who needed to be saved, but Deku-kun too.

“Hey there, cumrag,” the senpai said, digging his heel further into his sternum, “Oh boy, I was so excited to see that you were still coming to school. Almost missed you for a second, you know?”

He dragged his toe under Midoriya’s chin, forcing him to look up at his lecherous grin. Even if he didn’t have a name for this man, his body clearly had some memory of him.

How could he have ever forgotten that the senpai who made those videos, collected those pictures, and even sold Deku-kun’s body out like it was his, would be at this school?

“Our favorite money bag has returned.”

So, Midoriya supposed that this was the next thing he would have to deal with, once and for all. What would he need to do so that this man stops his way? It didn’t matter if he only stopped messing with Deku’s body, he needed to make sure that no one else would ever have to suffer from this again.

And if he could make sure that he gets a list of distributors and purchases, he’s certain that Stain would be more than happy to finally put an end to this on that side. Child pornography and forced prositution were awful, awful things.

...Should he go with it? If he plays along, it’ll make getting the information and evidence that he needs much easier. But, he doesn’t know if he has enough mental fortitude to get through it, and he doesn’t want Deku’s body to get desecrated anymore.

No, he shouldn’t consider that an option. Deku’s body had enough physical trauma to last several lifetimes. There was no need to put him through any more danger because it would be easier for him or something. However, even as he thought that, he couldn’t get his body to respond. The edges of his vision were starting to blur, and even though the foot came off his chest, he couldn’t muster any strength in his fingers.

It’s been a while since he’s been helpless.

“Man, I heard you made a name for yourself, didn’t ya? As the Strongest of Aldera? Well, got news for you, baby doll,” the name didn’t fail to make his shudder, even though it was a term of endearment he has never heard before, “High school is a big place.”

He heard the sound of clicking, and even though he didn’t see it, knew it was a box cutter just from the sound. This must have been a normal occurrence. With his eyes closed, he could see the scene with startling clarity.

His shirt was suddenly torn open.

“Oh? What’s the matter? You were covering up our lovely memories?”

His undershirt was cut open, and he could still breath normally through his nose without a problem. The sudden rush of cold air even in the post-summer heat was not a shock. This must be normal. He leaned in, trailing his lips against his neck and then suddenly biting down as hard as he could.

How awful was it that Midoriya didn’t even flinch at this?

Shit, he shouldn’t just sit there and judge the situation. He needed to fight back. There was a fucking high schooler here that was making money off of kids like Deku who had nothing and on one. God, he couldn’t even move his fucking fingers-

But suddenly, the man backed off.

“Perfect. See you around, Dekun.”

He didn’t doubt it for a second. This man, he was smart. And that was going to make this that much more harder to deal with. He left, the door of the empty classroom shutting behind him, and then the shaking began.

He lost. He had completely and utterly lost.

Fear is an emotion that can override everything else in the human body. It’s a lingering emotion that’s etched into Deku’s body and bleeds from Izuku’s mind. And the aftermath shockwaves were enough that Midoriya crawled to puke into the closest trashcan. Unable to stop shaking, four hours after school let out, he tried to find warmth even as the sun began to set.

By the time he had regained some feeling in his body, he pushed himself to sit-up. He couldn’t even get up to his feet. Pathetic. He wiped at the sweat, and then realized that he was crying. Had he been crying this whole time? He wasn’t even hurt.

Fuck.

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The door clattered open, and Midoriya flinched, but didn’t move otherwise.

“Hey, what are you still doing here?” The voice belonged to one of the teachers, and the thought that a teacher here made him calm down a little.

He took a deep breath, centering himself.

“God, kids these days are just a mess,” he sighed, like it was a pain in the ass. “Stop vying for attention and get out of here. We gotta lock up the school.”

Unsteadily, he got up to his feet, but the words lingered in his head. He imagined he doesn’t look that great, and he knew that he didn’t have a very good reputation, but surely, the teacher didn’t mean it like that.

“And close your uniform. You’re a shame to this entire school.”

No wonder Deku-kun thought and believed that he was alone. If these were the type of people who he had in his life, people who wronged him and people who acted like he was in the wrong, of course he thought that he was alone. The thought made him uncomfortable and angry all at once, but the fear from before hadn’t completely dissipated away.

He walked out of the room, when the teacher suddenly slapped his ass. What the fuck.

He jumped and spun around, all but ready to fight back when he saw the grin on his face.

“See? You’re fine. You were just acting up, weren’t you? Too bad for you, I’m not interested in some scarred brat. Get out of here.”

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It was a blur, and then he was home. Standing in front of the door, he waited for a long time before the door opened and Shigaraki was staring him right back in the face. With his phone out and in his hand, he looked pissed like he was on his way out to run an errand. How long had he been standing here, staring at his door?

“There you were! We thought you had gotten lost or some…” all the mild irritation on his face melted away into a cold anger. “...What happened.”

Right, Midoriya thought. His shirt was ripped open, and he was holding it closed with one hand. The senpai took his belt, among other things, and he didn’t change his shoes before getting home so he was in his dirty slippers and ripped socks. He must have looked like a mess. He was such a scatterbrain, wasn’t he? He didn’t even have his school bag. He must have left it in that classroom.

The thought of it had a shiver running down his spine. Facing this, Deku-kun went to school everyday?

A hand grabbed his shoulder and he jerked back to the present time. He stared at Shigaraki’s red eyes.

“Hey,” he said, his voice low and warm in a way that it didn’t sound like Shigaraki at all, “You’re home now. ...Go take a bath, alright?”

Slowly, the words processed in his mind and he nodded back. He walked in, saw the clean carpet and looked down at his dirty socks. His trembling hasn’t stopped, but the warmth of his small apartment began to seep back into his body. He took a deep breath, feeling a little calmer.

Home. At some point, this became home.

“Oh, welcome back,” Dabi said, his heavy gaze landing on Midoriya, before he took his jacket off and back to hang in the closet.

“I’m back,” Midoriya said, a little breathless. “I’m… I’m home.”

The tears rolled down his face again, and he angrily rubbed them away. Even if it was just a mistake, even if he wasn’t meant to be here, there had to be something that he could do. To give up because there’s no answer right now isn’t the kind of person he is.

He had something to protect here.

He went for the bathroom, weary but a lot more confident in what he could do.

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After a shower, Midoriya took a moment to take a look in the mirror. Probably because of how often he went to Recovery Girl to get himself looked at, his patchwork job of scars don’t look as bad as they used to. On top of the older wounds and the words carved onto his skin were his recent fuck-ups, ranging from all the times he’s been shot, burned, stabbed, and some other stuff. Bruises, new and healing, decorated his body sporadically, and his body looks less like a victim and more like a fighter. He doesn’t know if it’s better.

The same way he had to get used to this body, he wonders if Deku-kun will have to get used to this body as well, when he returns. The thought stayed with him for a second before it flushed away, and he got out of the bathroom.

Dinner went without a hitch. They were a little quieter than usual. Fried fish, fresh rice, a side of miso and pickled radishes, it smelled as good as it tasted.

“Dinner was delicious, thank you,” he said, getting up from the table to put his dishes away.

Shigaraki slammed his hand down onto the table, alarming him. He clutched the dirty dishes closer to him, protectively, and the older man snapped back.

“That’s it?!” he demanded. “That’s all you have to say?!”

“W-what else? Uh! It tasted really good! It’s uhm! Rare for you to make fish-”

“This isn’t about the fucking food, Izuku!” Shigaraki snapped back. “Isn’t there something you want to say to us?”

A little more calmer, the haze of irritation flowed in instead. Midoriya furrowed his brows.

“What do you want me to say?! How am I supposed to ever just know what you’re thinking if you don’t tell me?”

“How was your day!?” Shigaraki snapped back.

“It was fine, thank you! How was yours!?”

“Great!”

Dabi placed his head in his hands, shaking a little.

“What?!” they both turned to shout at him, and he threw his head back and laughed. He wasn’t the kind of person that had a strong laugh, because it sounded more like he was pushing air out of his mouth than anything. If someone couldn’t see his face, they would just assume that the man was having a hard time catching his breath or something.

“Oh my god…” he wheezed out. “You guys are ridiculous.”

He leaned back in his chair and looked up at Midoriya as his laughter calmed down. Even though he was laughing, his eyes looked uncharacteristically sharp. He met those eyes, wondering what could have possibly made Dabi look so hostile.

“You know, we never really said anything when you came home bruised and banged up before,” he explained, he placed his chopsticks down on his empty bow. “but this was the first time you cried about it.”

“Ah, I’m just a crybaby,” Midoriya tried to laugh it off.

“Maybe,” the man agreed, even though it looked like Shigaraki was ready to lunge at him and possibly beat that laugh out of him, “but maybe not. Izuku, we just need a name. Then you don’t have to worry about anyone again.”

The young man paused and he stared at them, wide-eyed and almost fearful. He dropped his gaze to his plate, thinking about something awful from a time that didn’t happen and he shook his head.

“That won’t solve anything,” he said quietly. And then, he gave them a smile, like they were blind and wouldn’t be able to see how hard he was trying to force a smile on his face, “It’s just some schoolyard fight, don’t worry about it.”

The good mood completely dissipated at this point.

“Can we at least know what’s going on?”

The silence was stifling, and then Midoriya spoke up.

“It’s a senpai from middle school,” he said slowly, carefully. “But there was a slight misunderstanding. Once we clear that up, I’m sure it’ll be fine.”

“Alright,” Shigaraki bit out, “And if he doesn’t get the clue. We’ll step in.”

It was non-negotiable, and this was something Shigaraki and Dabi could agree on without a problem. This was their home, and the people that they lived with were the closest things to family that they had. They won’t let anyone try to meddle in that.

### **Roommates - post Mido meeting Senpai-san**

“What the fuck,” Shigaraki hissed when he was certain that Midoriya was in the shower. “What,” he made wild hand gestures at the direction that Midoriya left in, “What the fuck!” he was yelling, but whispering.

And Dabi, who spent an entire lifetime in a house built on violence and expectations, frowned back.

Defeat, they both decided, was not a good look on Midoriya.

### **Chimera & Ryuku \*the Cabin in the Woods**

the one where Deku ends up in a dog-fight with quirk-enhancing drugs

taken because they thought he had a quirk, and was crowned as one of the Strongest (also because he pissed off a lot of people and they wanna see him break).

“It’s alright,” Midoriya said, his voice soft even as his blood filled Chojuro’s mouth. The shock of warm iron seeped into his mouth as Midoriya’s hand came to his head. “It’s okay.”

The drug suddenly drained out of his system, leaving him with nothing but the utmost respect he had for a kid half his size to hold his own against his berserking self. He loosened his jaw, feelings his teeth pull back from the broken, bleeding mess he left the kid and his shoulder in.

“You see?” Midoriya said, “Everything is fine.”

Chojuro had seen many people in his lifetime. People who paid an insurmountable amount of money to kill another person, people who beg to be spared in exchange for double his current pay, people who smile when someone dies, and people who remained delusional to the last second.

But people like Midoriya, who was clutching at his broken shoulder, blood oozing from in between his fingers, was a certain brand of kindness that never lasted. People, who can smile so gently after being wronged and injured, are the type of fools who die the most pitifully.

He hoped his hand up to him, where he was carrying two broken pill bottles.

“I didn’t know how many I needed to use. I hope you’re not going to OD. How are you feeling?”

And now, Chojuro was indebted to this man.

“...Why did you help me?” he asked.

The child relaxed back.

“Well, if you can ask that, then I guess you’re fine,” he said. He slowly got up to his feet, “C’mon you’re the last one.”

“...The last one?”

The kid looked at him and gave a helpless smile. “The cops are coming, so if you want to leave, you need to go now. You can’t get caught, right?”

“And you?”

“There’s… something I have to do downstairs,” Midoriya explained quietly.

“...You’re not very bright, are you?” he replied back.

This wasn’t his deal. This wasn’t his problem. This kid was dumb and idealistic, and that was the only reason why he was saved. He was helped because he was pitiful. That’s it.

“I’d rather be stupid than live in regret,” the kid replied back, a smile on his face. “Get out of here.”

“Your name?” he asked. It wasn’t because he was curious, but if the kid died here and there, he would know whose name to find so that he can get him some flowers or something.

Not that he would stay in Japan any longer than he had to. He had to leave. If he had known that retirement was going to be such a pain in the ass, he wouldn’t have bothered. And this kid was giving him such an easy way out. There was no reason to stay.

The kid smiled back, as though he knew something about Kojuro that Kojuro didn’t before he left.

He told himself that as he left. On the way out, he saw the rest of the fighters, people that he tore apart in his maw, blazed chunks of, and others that he didn’t get to fight at all. They stared at him for a moment and then back to the building.

“And Midoriya?” one of the, a woman with a dragon quirk, asked fretfully. “Is he… still in there?”

Judging from the phone in her hand, Chojuro assumed that she was the one who had tipped the police. He needed to go then.

“Yes,” he nodded, figuring that someone should say it.

“Oh no,” she said. She threw another, hesitant look at him, and then nodded her head, “Get out of here if you don’t want to get caught.”

And she ran back into the place that held her prisoner.

A person who made other people face their fears was a dangerous one. It was better not to get involved. It was good to leave. It was the best possible situation for him. To ensure his continued survival, he needed to leave right now and pretend this whole mess never happened. He knew about this drug and would have to be more careful about it in the future. There’s other things that he should do, for his life and career.

But Chojuro had long since stopped caring about things like that. These days, all he wanted was something interesting.

“...His name is Midoriya, huh?”

### **Arrest (Reprise) \*Meeting Naomasa**

And everything would have been great, except…

Midoriya ran his hand through his hair, took a deep breath, and realized that there were a lot of flashing lights. The tall-tale sounds of the police siren rolled into the room and he didn’t even get a chance to curse when the door slammed open.

Standing in a room of about 15 men around the room, Midoriya Izuku stared at the police force that came in. When did the police force get here? Why were they here? Did the kids he sent out finally get some back-up? If that’s the case, great, but he imagines he looks awful.

But he didn’t feel awful until he saw the unmarred face of Tsukauchi Naomasa.

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“Do you understand?” Tsukauchi almost snapped back, “Your actions had some serious consequences. Your shoulder will never fully recover.”

“It’s okay,” Midoriya told him, hoping to sound reassuring as he gave a smile, “since I didn’t lose everything.’

From the pinched expression on Tsukauchi’s face, it was clear that he didn’t like the conclusion that he came to.

“So it’s okay, I’m just glad that everyone else got out. But, uh, could I ask for a favor? I know I’m not in any place to say anything, but I thought it wouldn’t hurt to ask.”

“...Well, I can’t promise anything, but I can hear you out,” Tsukauchi said, nodding his head, “What is it?”

What would this crazy teenager, who almost single handedly took out an underground fighting ring dedicated to test a dangerous quirk-enhancing drug, ask for? Professionalism aside, he was curious.

“I would like to remain anonymous. I know, given my age, I can get some shelter from the media, but I really wanted to make sure of it. Please, especially Stain-ah, Akakuro-san, please don’t tell him about my shoulder. And the other survivors, it’s enough for me that they’re okay. They don’t need to know who I am.”

Mercy, Tsukauchi thought. Was this kid crafty or was he destructively kind? It was a hard call to make, but Tsukauchi would like to think that he was good at getting a grasp on people. He was a rare breed, the type that made Tsukauchi’s job harder because it was always kind people who became victims.

“...I’ll do my best,” he said.

“Thank you,” he said, relief painting his features, “Thank you so much.”

When Tsukauchi was this kid’s age, he was spending his first night in jail after getting into a streetfight with the local motorcycle gang. He was a bit of a wild youth back then, with a chip on his shoulder the size of Tokyo and a hunger to smear the town in blood.

People said that he was terrifying as a child. That he didn’t have a lot of control and was ready to spring into action no matter what happened. From the reports he had read through, the kid in front of him was in back to back fights just like all the adults and made it to the Final Four. He, according to eye-witness testimonies and the video feeds, never reacted to the drugs that he was given. He remained relatively sober and clear-minded from the moment he entered the arena to the bitter end. He then configured a clever escape plan, alerted the authorities, freed all the prisoners, imprisoned the ring-leaders, and then kept the data in pristine condition.

Yet, the kid would be written down as a victim.

Tsukauchi didn’t know who the scary one really was.

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“And that’s the kid that got you into the force?” Tsukauchi asked bluntly.

Akakuro nodded curtly. “Yes sir.”

“...At ease,” his supervisor said, and while Akakuro didn’t stand at attention anymore, he still looked tense like a drawn bowstring.

He rubbed the bridge of his nose and sighed deeply. No wonder Akakuro was always so stressed. He didn’t want to think about what Midoriya got into on a regular basis, if he could be so calm after being kidnapped and put into an illegal fighting ring.

“Shouldn’t kids… I don’t know, be in school? Care about dating? Their acne? Like, the worst thing they do is shoplift? Not get stuck in the middle of an underground quirk-enhancing drug ring?”

Akakuro stared at him for a moment longer and then looked back down.

“”He’s… eccentric,” he decided on at last.

“He’s a problem-magnet,” Tsukauchi replied back. “But… as awful as it is, if he didn’t deal with it so neatly, collecting data and evidence for our end too, it made our job easier,” he said. He looked at Akakuro and nodded, “Which means it’ll get through the courts better, and justice will be served. The guys who were running this won’t get away with it.”

Akakuro nodded back, solemnly, and Tsukauchi shook his head.

“No, no, no matter how you dice this up, this is too weird. Is that… Is he really a 14 year old?”

Akakuro, for the first time since joining the force, broke his blank exterior and gave a crooked grin.

“I don’t know any other 14 year olds other than him, so I won’t be able to tell you,” he said, almost proudly.

How reassuring.

Tsukauchi would have to keep an eye on him then, but ultimately, he respected it.

Still, when he and his team was given an honorary mention and a medal was sent to their office, he couldn’t help but feel dirty every time he saw it.

### **Permanent Damage**

Midoriya thought it was a little funny actually. Everyone always made a deal about permanent injury and the like, but when it came down to it, it wasn’t too bad. It was just his shoulder. It stung a little if he raised it too high, but it wasn’t anything physical therapy couldn’t help.

And in comparison to the number of people who could have died, who could have torn each other apart for entertainment, he didn’t think that this was too bad. He’d make the same choice again, again and again.

However, he did feel bad for Deku-kun, who would have to live with the choices that Midoriya made for him. Still, he didn’t think that Deku-kun, who had lived his whole life suffering for no reason, would stand by and watch other people suffer like he did. He didn’t want to think that he, in any universe, would be like that.

“Permanent damage is a big deal, isn’t it? I’m surprised you’re up and about.”

Midoriya nearly jumped out of his own skin when he heard that voice. He sucked his breath in through his teeth and stumbled backwards. He would have fallen over entirely if it wasn’t for a hand, a giant paw as big as his lower back, wrapping around him and stabilizing him.

“C-Chimera-san,” he whispered out.

“Yo,” he said, as he stepped back. “How have you been?”

“Just uh… fine, I guess,” Midoriya said, trying to take a step away from the man. He could have a full foot between them but Chimera’s arm was still on his back.

The man stared at him for a while, his lips stretching into a grin of some sort, a kind of grin that made Midoriya’s insides shrivel up.

“Truly?”

“Yeah.”

Chimera shifted the hand on his back up, and placed it right above the shoulder that he bit, just a few days ago.

“Because I thought that this was permanent.”

He felt all the color drain out of his face. Midoriya clenched his jaw as he narrowed his eyes. He knew that there was no way he was going to win this fight, if they started to fight. There was no way that they could fight without a hundred things getting damaged, or worse, someone else getting caught up and getting hurt as a result.

“What do you want?” he asked quietly, eyes narrowed.

“Me?” Chimera chuckled, a rich sound as he stepped back to reach into his pocket and pull out a business card. “Oh no, I think I should be asking you that.”

He stepped forward to place the business card into his hand. As soon as his hands were free, one of them came to cup Midoriya’s chin. As best he could, the student tried not to flinch and pull away. It helped that he was so surprised at the turn of events that he gaped like a fish instead.

“What,” Chimera’s criminally deep voice reverberated through the space between them, “do you want?”

“...What?”

“You’ll never heal from that wound. Not completely, at least. I would know, I’m the one that dealt it. Isn’t it alright that I help out where I can?”

“No, it’s really unnecessary.”

The blunt and sudden answer was met with silence. Chimera stared at him, his eyes widening as he started to laugh. He pulled his hand back, wrapping his arms around his belly as he gave a full-body laugh. The sound was bright and echoed in the empty corridor.

“There are plenty of people in the world that would be dying to have me in their debt,” he boasted, crossing his arms in front of his chest as he pulled a cigar out.

Without really thinking about it, Midoriya stepped forward to snatch it away. He handed it back to him.

“I don’t care what you do. I don’t care, but don’t smoke at a hospital,” he said. And hopefully not sounding as panicked as he felt, added, “And go find someone that wants your… skillset if you want to use it so badly.”

There was a brief moment of silence, and Midoriya was certain that this was it. He was going to die right now. A fiery, pitiful death filled with pain and despair. This was it.

“...My skillset, huh?” the chimera chuckled in front of him. “Do you even know who I am?”

Midoriya opened his mouth, ready to say that he was a villain that wanted to turn society inside out before he stopped himself. That wasn’t him. That wasn’t this Chimera, was it? How could he be a villain when there are no heroes? So then, if he didn’t have that, what would he be? His mind raced through all the people who he met so far, and what happened to the people who looked different than others.

“...Homeless?” he asked quietly.

Chimera stared at him for another moment and then started to laugh again.

Midoriya always had the misfortune to meet guys like him, who laughed at everything when he was serious. It was as terrifying as always, and he wished that his misfortune would just end already. He swore that he would be a better person, and that he would start doing the right thing, so can the whole world just cut him a break already?

“Hm… Well, I suppose you’re not completely wrong,” he said. “But I was talking more about how I make my money.” He took a step forward, “I’m sure that there’s someone you wish to get rid of, don’t you? Let me take care of it for you.”

Ah, is that what this was all about?

“I didn’t save you so you don’t owe me anything,” Midoriya stated curtly, lifting both hands in front of him in a completing gesture. “There’s no one I wish to be harmed so your point is moot. Let’s just let this go and pretend we never met, if that makes it easier for you.”

“Geez, you’re a tough customer,” he sighed, tipping his head back.

He thought for an extra second before he looked back at Midoriya.

“I won’t charge you,” he said, like that would make it better.

Midoriya shook his head again.

The older man’s ears twitched, showing his agitation before he spoke again. “In my line of expertise, my reputation and word is what sells me. And, well, I’m bored anyways. Until your arm fully heals, I will act as it.”

“No, I really don’t want this. And I’m sure that you don’t actually mean that either,” Midoriya said, more than uncomfortable with the situation. He thought that, at worst, he would squeeze a favor or something, but now his words had twisted into including his permanently damaged arm?

“Then… the name carved on your back. Can you tell me with certainty that you don’t feel anything for that individual?”

Green eyes widened, and he stared at the older man. The amused expression was much more sinister now, and Midoriya took a deep breath. Straightening out no matter how much it made his shoulder ache, he spoke clearly and firmly.

“Yes.”

“Good,” Chimera said, amused and pleased all in one. “It would have been boring if that was the case.”

And in that second, Midoriya would begin to wonder if this was better than a villain. At least with a villain, things were predictable. A villain’s action was geared to make a message, destroy something, humiliate someone, and altogether do things that most people wouldn’t do.

But Chimera wasn’t a villain. From the sounds of it, he was a dangerous man who did dangerous things and was proficient enough that he was paid to do it. He was a special brand of danger, and made even worse because he wasn’t doing this for the ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ reasons. It didn’t feel like he did it because he had to, blackmail or coercion or anything.

He was bored.

And now, he thought that he could alleviate that boredom through Midoriya.

Shit.

“You don’t mean that,” Midoriya said, feeling his courage desert him. “Please leave me alone.”

Chimera chuckled, a rich sound.

“Soon enough, you’ll end up in this kind of position again. When that happens, I’ll be there,” he promised.

It would have been so much more cooler if Midoriya knew and liked him. As it was, he felt like he just appended a new stalker to the long list of people that he thought he knew.

-

The next day, at the hospital, a nurse commented on how someone must have left him an impressive bouquet of red roses, even though no one signed into the visitors’ log. He placed his head into his hands and suppressed the urge to scream.

Why couldn’t people just be saved quietly and move on with their life? Or better yet, why can’t they just not need to be saved every four days?

Although it may be considered bad manners, Midoriya slipped away by noon. It was a waste of hospital supplies to be used on him, after all. He could go ask Recovery Girl for a boost when he swung by to help her clean up again.

### **Return**

The following days felt so peaceful that Midoriya felt like he could cry.

His shoulder ached so bad that he kept waking up at night, and even though Shigaraki and Dabi didn’t say anything, he knew that it kept them up too. Neither of them said much about the time he was gone, and he was just glad that the apartment was standing like it did before.

Were these really the same people who were so angry and dissatisfied with the world that they tried to destroy it all? In his head, he knew that the answer was no, but his heart had a harder time accepting it.

However, peaceful days were haunting. It felt like something was breathing down his neck, pressing down on his shoulders with a chill that no jacket could protect him from. It reminded him of how selfish he was, for making a home in someone else’s body. It shamed him for enjoying his time here when he knew it wasn’t his.

At this point, even if he did go back, would he be able to still claim that he was a hero? He was slowly and surely breaking apart Deku-kun’s body. He had a long list of stalkers that were coming for him. There was nothing heroic about that.

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### **Saving Oyaji**

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...Oyaji?

Midoriya turned around, his eyes meeting the older man behind him, and how red his shirt was. He looked, where he saw that flower, the same flower on Chisaki’s business card, and felt something fall into place.

“...Are you… Eri’s grandpa?”

The man’s head snapped up.

“...You know Eri?”

Midoriya blinked and turned back forwards. The wheels in his head churned about what the Right thing to do was. He could already hear Officer Stain chiding him, telling him that if he was going to jump into trouble to call the cops. He knew that, but he knew Chisaki. This wasn’t something that he could carelessly introduce the police too. While thinking that, while hearing people run through, he saw Eri’s grinning face in the corner of his mind.

And she was beautiful. Unmarred by child neglect and abuse, she shined brighter than any jewel in the world.

Change of plans, then.

He turned back around, and reached for the older man.

“Y-You! Who the hell are you-”

“A hero,” Midoriya said, worthlessly brave as his smile trembled on his face. The look must have been pitiful, because the head stared back in shock. “This way.”

-

“Okay, if you go straight, you will get to a street. There should be a taxi there,” he said.

“A… taxi?”

“Yeah,” Midoriya nodded. In his head, he hoped that Aizawa wouldn’t mind him being late to work. He wiped at his mouth. “And I’ll take care of them.”

He pulled his jacket off and turned to the man.

“It’s a little uhm… dirty, but if they’re chasing by scent, it should buy you another moment.”

He gave a grin.

“Then, have a good day!”

And he turned back to run.

### **Asking for help - Bakugo & Stain**

Guys like this, Stain thought to himself, have so much pride that they lose sight of everything around them. Born with talent and hard-working, Stain knew what kind of guy this spelled out. It was honestly a shock that Midoriya was so close to him.

Or rather, it was a shock that this guy kept other people around him.

He looked down to where Bakugo placed his head on the ground.

“Please,” he said, “There’s… There’s so little I can do now. It’s so frustrating. Help me. Please.”

Prideful bastards like Bakugo would only lay his pride down for other people.

He stared at the guy.

“...I’m sorry,” he said, because he’s never said a word he didn’t mean, “but I can’t do that.”

Because if he could, Midoriya would have never been in this kind of position.

“And you too. Get rid of that thought that you can’t do anything because you’re not an adult. Adults are plenty powerless too.”

### **Asking for help - shoto & Enji**

Enji would have never guess that Shouto would come to him like this. He took too much after him.

As it turned out, it was because Shoto had something, someone, that Enji never had. Never knew he was missing.

### **Post Oyaji**

“...Is that him? The kid that Eri loves so much? The kid that has you running all over Tokyo?”

Chisaki felt it again. That feeling of dread accumulated into something dangerous as it sat painfully in his gut. Keeping his head down, he answered honestly.

“Yes, sir,” he said.

If Oyaji asked for his head, Chisaki had to deliver. Hopefully, he’ll die on the way there. Surely, if he accidentally ran into Shigaraki or Dabi, they could arrange that for him.

“His gaze is the temperature of his kindness,” Oyaji said. “Take care that it doesn’t run cold.”

Chisaki lifted his head, eyes wide in his shock. In front of him, his boss gave him an amused grin.

“Well?”

“Yes sir,” Chisaki dropped his head again. Something in his chest loosened and he felt like he could breathe again.

“Good, and bring him for dinner one day. I’m sure Eri would love that.” Oyaji said, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. He gave a crooked grin to Chisaki, who returned it with a smile of his own. “The kid that managed to make you relax, I would like to dine with him. Make sure to send him my regards, for saving my life and all.”

-

“...Excuse me?”

“It’s for you,” Kurono said, looking too tired to be awake and walking around. “From Kai-aniki.”

“Overhaul?” Midoriya gasped. He looked down at the box that Kurono was holding and then back to his face, “For me?”

“Yes,” Kurono said, “It’s… a symbol of our gratitude,” he explained.

Midoriya hesitated, but took the box. It was a rather large box, ordained in bright red wrapping paper with faint gold phoenixes decorating it. The ribbon that wrapped it up was sheer gold, and the entire thing looked more expensive than his entire flat and everything in it. Given its size, he didn’t think that it would be so light.

Immediately, he didn't trust it.

“I’m uh… thanks? Message received?” he tried, and looked back to Kurono. “But off the record, why?”

“For saving Oyaji,” Kurono said, his voice soft. His gaze turned warmer than anything Midoriya ever expected to receive from a yakuza man. He took a step backwards and gave a full bow. “We understand that this gift is insignificant in comparison to our feelings, and wish for you to understand that we will never forget this debt. May you look upon this and always know that we will have your back.”

“No, please forget about it,” Midoriya whispered, his face draining of color. “Please, let everyone forget about it.”

Kurono straightened and gave a smile, something too kind and gentle and Midoriya hated how handsome this man was. What was he looking at that he could look so unguarded? Weren’t they enemies? Midoriya thought that they were making eye-contact, but Kurono was clearly thinking about something else. He had to. Midoriya couldn’t think of why else he would look so tender.

“...You are a kind man. Off the record and family matters aside,” he said, reaching for something in his breast pocket, and pulling out a white business card with a smile, “I wish to be your support one day.”

“Haha…” Midoriya laughed weakly, but took the card, feeling surreal.

It was Chisaki’s business card, but Kurono’s number was scrawled onto the back.

“...Are you sure you can’t just forget about it?”

Kurono laughed back, like a chime on a summer day, quiet and melodic. “When you’re of age, we’re going to take you to every bar in the city,” he declared.

“No, you really don’t have to,” Midoriya tried.

### **Senpai-san (2) - Tamaki’s Connection**

“Senpai!”

Midoriya flinched, and his entire body immediately focused on the courtyard. His heart trembled in his chest weakly, and indeed, standing in front of Tamaki was Deku-kun’s lovely senpai. His scars itched.

He tried hard not to think about it. Because from pictures that he didn’t want to look at but couldn’t bear to delete, he knew that there were multiple perpetrators. Come to think of it, it made no sense to think that this senpai was the only person, or even did all those photoshoots by himself. It wasn’t possible, unless his quirk made it so that he could duplicate himself.

A dull pang echoed inside of his chest. If it was his pain, he might have felt some tortuous amount of trauma. In reality, it made him feel like someone was scraping his insides out of him, and he was just hollow.

### **Yaoyozuro’s Birthday Ball \*Sept 23**

“Thank you,” she said, her eyes shining. “For the first time, I feel like this day is mine.”

“It starts here, Yaoyozuro-chan,” Midoriya said, his eyes bright and warm in a way she’s never been looked at before, “That’s the good thing about being alive, you know? From now on can be a long, long time.”

She stared at him for a moment longer and laughed.

“Deku-kun, could I ask for one more gift?”

“Eh?” curious green eyes look at her and she smiled back.

Of course, a girl as rich as her would have anything she ever wanted. She could understand that shock.

“...If it’s in my ability to do so,” Midoriya replied back, “then I’ll be happy to do so.”

“Momo,” she said, like she was waiting for those words. “I’d like it if you would call me Momo from now on.”

Predictably, his face flushed at the prospect, and she treasured it.

“...I guess I could do that for you, Momo-chan.”

### **Extra Cash & Yakuza Attention**

“...If you needed the money,” Chisaki said, “I would have been happy to find accommodation for you.”

“Somehow, I don’t imagine you as the type of person to be happy to do anything for someone else.”

“...You get cheekier every day.”

“Thank you,” Midoriya said, giving a polite bow.

Chisaki stared at him and then snorted. A small smile graced his lips and Midoriya thinks that a Chisaki without all that Villain-hazah and hellbent on purging quirks from the world is a very relaxed adult who is comfortable in his skin.

“So, how much?”

“Eh?”

“Your debt here,” Chisaki clarified, motioning to the building, “How much was it?”

“Oh, I’m not here because I’m in debt,” Midoriya said, feeling oddly touched that Chisaki was trying to make smalltalk. In another world, this man reformatted the sidewalk to kill him. Here, the sidewalk remained steady underneath their feet.

“...Then why are you here?”

“It’s a nice job with flexible hours,” Midoriya said.

“So you do need cash.”

The young man laughed outright at that, “Doesn’t everyone?”

There was a long silence, and it wouldn’t have bothered Midoriya normally, but Chisaki’s eyes were boring holes in his face.

“Is something wrong?”

“...Normally, people are dying to have me in their favor,” he said.

“I don’t think there’s much about our relationship that could count as ‘normal’.”

“You have a response for everything, don’t you?” the yakuza scowled back. “As unfortunate as it is, I can’t let this go. So just let me repay this debt, and you will never hear from us again.”

The young man paused at that and then turned to him, “What debt?”

“Getting Eri out of that kidnapping case.”

“Wha…?” Midoriya couldn’t believe it, “That was months ago. And you bought me coffee, remember?”

“Then, the incident with the dress.”

The young man felt his face burn at the memory, and he spluttered. “You came and got us out!”

“You would have saved yourself eventually,” Chisaki deadpanned back, “We just happened to be there at the right time. I never got you a new dress either.”

“I said I didn’t want one!”

“And then for saving Oyaji.”

“Yeah, and you got me that new jacket.”

“You never wear it, so it doesn’t count,” he shot back. “And then there was that incident with the dog-”

“You weren’t even there!” Midoriya cried out, trying to register what the fuck was happening.

“I should take responsibility for my boys,” he replied back, looking much too amused about the entire ordeal.

There was a brief second, and Midoriya didn’t know how he could look so smug without changing any of their facial features.

“Then, what would be enough?” he finally shot back.

There was a long pause, and Chisaki honestly couldn’t come up with anything else to say.

“...Well, let me know then,” Midoriya said, grinning back as the tides changed. “It would do everyone some good if you were free from debt.”

He never knew that someone could look so annoyed but so pleased, but Chisaki could pull it off with style.

-

“...If I didn’t know any better,” Kurono said, “Kai, I would think that you are just using the debt as an excuse to talk to him.”

The yakuza stilled at the words, caught so far off-guard that all the white around his eyes were showing. For a brief moment, Kurono thought that he would die, and pay for his imperitance with his life. Perhaps being with Midoriya rubbed off on him too, and now he was going to pay with his flesh. He turned slowly to his childhood friend.

“I see.”

“...Kai, if you want to leave this world, you can. You will have Oyaji’s blessings,” his childhood friend reminded him.

“No, I owe too much to him. I have to do this.”

Kurono stared at him for a moment longer and looked back at the ground. “Then, what are you going to do about Izuku? Are you going to… bring him here?”

It wouldn’t be hard. It was clear that Midoriya already had half a foot within the underworld, and Chisaki had no doubts that he probably had more connections elsewhere that could prove to be incredibly useful. However, when he thinks about the shade of red Midoriya becomes with a sudden compliment, he already knows the answer.

Chisaki spoke confidently, “If he wants to come here, it has to be of his own accord.” It wouldn’t mean anything unless Midoriya wanted them, him, the same way.

He tried really, really hard not to imagine a future with Midoriya, since it made his heart waver.

“Alright, Kai. Then I’ll support that decision, too. I’ll let the boys know.”

“Yeah,” Chisaki said quietly. He kept his gaze down at the ground even as Kurono left, and wondered if he could become someone’s <Overhaul>.

### **Picnic (Autumn)**

“We did it!” Yamada yelled at once they got to the top. “Look! Look at that view! We did it!”

There was a brief silence, and Midoriya had thought that Aizawa would have grouched, and Dabi would have mocked. However, there was this pleased smile crossing everyone’s tired expression, and Midoriya wondered if he could box this feeling to keep forever.

Later, when Shirakumo whipped his phone out, declaring that they needed to take a photo to commemorate this moment, he realized that the answer was much simpler than he thought.

Sitting, finally, at the overpass at the top of the small mountain, eating Shigaraki’s packed lunch and their lukewarm tea, Midoriya hoped that Deku-kun could feel this feeling, and return home.

### **Gentle the Gentle Convenience Store Worker**

“Hey, are you okay? Gentle?”

Gentle? Who? Him?

Danjuro Tobita slowly opened his eye, the one that wasn’t swelling and aching, and stared at the young face that looked back at him.

“Okay, it’s okay. It’s going to be okay.”

Several groaning was heard around him, no way, did this child take care of all of the people that came for him?

Impossible, right? There were three of them and the kid looked young. He had a split lip, but it looked like it was half-healed. It couldn’t have been an injury from this fight.

“Can you hear me?”

He groaned back and the kid gave a sigh of relief.

“Do you need an ambulance?”

“N-no,” he managed to stutter out. He can’t pay for that.

“Okay, what hurts?”

Everything.

“I-I’ll be fine,” he said.

Eventually, he got it out. He asked, “W-Who are you?”

The kid looked at him, his relief turning into something encouraging as he gave a wide grin.

“I’m a hero.”

And Gentle, for just a second, forgot about the pain and the wrong and the whole world.

### **Twice Closing**

Bubaigawara Jin got a job at a Host Club, in the back helping with mainly the backroom and kitchen work. It’s not an easy job, and he feels the weariness settle into his bone with every passing hour. He sweats through his nice shirt, and he doesn’t get many breaks.

Still, as he passed the crates of booze in or walked by the kitchen, he might catch those emerald eyes, a small smile, and he felt energized in a way he’s never felt before. Hard days are hard days for everyone, but the pay is good and he finally finds a group of friends who don’t mind that he is himself.

This time last month, he was looking for cans on the ground to survive to see tomorrow. He was honestly contemplating committing a crime just so that he could go back into jail.

And now? He goes home with three of the other hosts, and lives right next to the guy who gave him this opportunity in the first place. He has a savings account that, even though he accidentally left his bank book out on the kitchen counter, no one steals from.

He had people that asked him how he was doing, made sure that he had enough to eat and drink, and people that he did the same for.

Words will never be able to fully capitalize on how much he feels indebted to the young man, Midoriya Izuku, who cried when he said that he was grateful for being alive.

### **Post-Twice - Saving Someone ShigaDeku**

“You can’t save everyone,” Shigaraki said.

Midoriya ached when he heard that from Shigaraki. He dropped his gaze to the ground and he nodded, “I know,” he said.

“Then what?”

“I just… If I can reach them, I feel like I should just do what I can-”

A hand reached for his and yanked it forward. Pulling up his palm up to his face, where long scars stretched were tucked under his sleeves, Shigaraki forced him to stare at it.

“Is this what a hero is to you? Someone who would… Who would willingly sacrifice themselves for a stranger? What about the people here? Do you even remember that we’re here?”

It felt like Shigaraki’s cold and lonely hands came around his heart, and it was dissipating with ease under his touch. The older man took a bold step forward, eyebrows pinched as he shouted out.

“What about us?! What about the people who have to wait for you!? Do you think that we’re saved, sitting back and seeing you get this injured?!”

Green eyes were wide, because he didn’t know. He didn’t know when Shigaraki’s feelings of nothing and emptiness had warped so completely like this. At what point, did the man stop being Shigaraki, the Symbol of Fear, and became Shigaraki, his roommate that worried if he didn’t return for the night?

As inappropriate as it was, it brought him relief. Shigaraki, in some world that wasn’t his home, was capable of feeling after all. He could feel worried. He could feel so worried that he would get frustrated and angry once the relief that Midoriya was alive faded.

“Sorry,” Midoriya said, “I’m working on that part.”

“That’s not…” Shigaraki released him. His hands pushed into his hair and he tousled it roughly, “Augh! I don’t know what to do! I don’t know what to say! I’ve never felt like this before and I’ve never met anyone like you before!”

He sighed, dropping his hands to his side as he looked at the young man.

“I don’t even know how to help you,” he said. “Or first-aid or anything.”

Midoriya stared at him, a slow smile on his face.

“It’s okay,” he said. “You did enough.”

With the way Shigaraki’s shoulders slumped, it didn’t look like relief. It looked like defeat. Midoriya frowned, but he couldn’t really say that Shigaraki was once a megalomaniac psychopath hellbent on destroying hero-society, right? That would be rude, especially since that wasn’t this Shigaraki.

So instead, he gave a wide grin.

“I told you when we first met, it’s my selfish wish. You don’t owe me anything.”

Their conversation was cut there, when the door opened and Dabi came in.

### **Enter Himiko Toga \***

The only memory Midoriya has of Himiko Toga’s smile is pain. Either he’s in pain or someone else, but there was probably blood involved.

Still, seeing her without a smile was also plenty scary too.

### 

### **Dinner Party**

Sometimes, Midoriya hated being right. This was one of those times.

The house of Himiko was just as awful as he had guessed. The strained smile that Toga gave him that day haunted him for a reason, and he swore to himself that he would return it to her, any means necessary. And so, Midoriya trashed the rest of his dignity, apologized to Deku in his head, and donned a maid outfit, pretending to be a maid for Momo’s tea party.

He was incredibly grateful that he had rich friends who knew how to play the higher society game. So, incredibly, damned, lucky. He wouldn’t let this sacrifice in vain, and he has no idea when Momo’s personal maids began to like him, but was incredibly grateful that they were going to put their livlihood on the line for him and his stupid hero-streak.

He swears that he’ll save Himiko.

-

On that day, Himiko will stared at the maid who served her tear just a few hours ago like a newborn baby seeing the world for the first time. The awe in her eyes were palpable as the maid took out all four of the burly men twice her size and possibly three times her weight in a few seconds. She moved like a fairy, and her long skirt did nothing to hinder her movements.

Her long green hair tumbled down around her, the curls only seeming to magnify her beauty. She snapped around, her eyes looking for her next target, and then the curls came to rest around her. The world slowed down just a little more.

“Excuse me, Miss,” she said, kneeling down in front of her like she was a knight, “I’m sorry that I was late.” One of her hands came behind her, the other hand in front of her heart as she bowed her head forward. “Are you alright?”

The blond stared back, mouth agape, and slowly nodded.

“Good,” she said, her smile soft and genuine even though Himiko is certain that she has never even talked to her before. “This is… a little presumptuous of me, but please forgive me.”

With that, she came closer to Himiko and lifted her up like a princess in her arms. Himiko thinks that the embrace of another human, even if it’s a strange maid with a killer roundhouse kick, is a warm thing. And the sunny smile she gives her even while blood is trickling down her temple, is the most beautiful thing she’ll ever see in the world.

She wrapped her arms around the strange maid’s neck, and realized with a shock how thin she was. How could someone so much smaller than her be so strong? She didn’t know.

She couldn’t help but think that she didn’t want this moment to end.

-

“My lady,” the maid said, her voice barely a whisper, “This is as far as I can take you. Please run straight, and you will reach the manor. Lady Momo will be there.”

Toga thinks she would be happy if she went deaf, because she would have heard this maid’s voice at least once.

“Will we meet again?” she asked quietly, feeling like a child again.

The maid’s eyes stared at her for another moment, and a warm smile stretched onto her face.

“Of course. As long as you desire it, I will always come and save you.”

She’ll never forget those green eyes, the first time that someone looked at her and saw her and smiled. She once read in a book that a prince would come and have a princess locked up in a high tower, but thinks that they were wrong.

A real prince wears a maid uniform and fights with his fist. His eyes are like gems and he’s smaller than her. And a real prince wasn’t a man at all.

### **Maid v Bird**

“Hey! Give that back!”

Midoriya, after jumping the wall surrounding Yaoyozuro’s mansion, had told himself that all he needed to do was sneak somewhere quiet and change his clothes. Then, he would be free to head into work, and return Nemuri’s borrowed clothing back to her. And then he’ll work until sunrise, share a pocari with Spinner, and return home to sleep for the next 18 hours.

That’s it. That was all he had to do. There was no need to walk around in this filthy and ripped maid outfit and wig any longer than he had to. He was literally carrying a change of clothes in his bag. Please, all he wanted was some peace and quiet for ten, no three minutes. That’s all he wanted.

And Midoriya always seemed to have the shittiest luck, since he heard that voice and was turning around before he knew what he was doing.

The supposed thief ran right by him, so he did what he always did, and grabbed him by the shoulder. The sudden shift of his gravity, as well as the unsaid question “what the fuck is this maid doing?” provided to be enough support. Midoriya kicked the back of the thief’s leg, and yanked his arm behind him, forcing him onto the ground. For good measure, Midoriya kneeled on the thief’s back, and forced his arms painfully behind him.

The sound of the thief’s chin hitting the ground made him wince, but this was a throw he’s done countless times before. This man will not die. His chin was not broken. His nose on the other hand…

“Oh, thank you so much…”

Midoriya looked up where the presumed victim of the theft came up to him. He stared a lot longer than he should have because the last time he saw Hawks, it was a grisly scene. His eyes watered at the sight of the blond, whole and alive, and felt a hundred thousand things that resulted in saying just one thing.

“Anytime.”

His voice cracked, sounding more like a croak.

The blond looked at him curiously, the smile on his face wide but the look in his eyes was piercing. The Hawks he remembered was a better liar, at the very least. He hoped that it meant that this Hawks had an easier life, one where his life wasn’t at stake because he worked too hard.

As hard as it was to be on the receiving end of that pensive stare, Midoriya didn’t fault him for it. Truly, no one was probably more suspicious than him here. The threat was apprehended and Hawks would get back what was taken from him.

But still, with his heart shaken, Midoriya abandoned everything and ran away instead.

Once he got about a block and a half away, he ducked into an alleyway between stores and took a moment to rest. He was dry-heaving or he was crying, he wasn’t sure which, as he crouched down and tried to find some order in his emotions. Tried to find order in the way that Hawks had a whole face and his entire body.

Tried to find order on the fact that there was a tattoo of a snake on his neck.

“Hey, there Little Miss,” a very familiar voice that he didn’t want to hear right now called out, “You alright?”

Maybe it was because Midoriya just saw Hawks with less of a wingspan than he ever wanted to see on him (but at least he had his wings), or maybe it was because it was another reminder that a world without villains (and heroes) still wasn’t peaceful. Maybe it was because he was sick of all these strangers strutting into his life with familiar faces and spiritless eyes that Midoriya recognized far too well.

Regardless of why, Midoriya sniffled loudly as he lifted his face to stare at Yamada Hizashi, who stared right back.

“...Izuku?” he said, breathless in a way that Midoriya has never heard this him before. In his world, he would say that Present Mic would never sound like that, but this Yamada Hizashi was not Present Mic.

It was strange to think that his (not) teacher could be so quiet or so caught off-guard. He imagined it has to do with the fact that he had found Midoriya’s cross-dressing ass crying in a dingy alleyway. Actually, the longer he thought about that, the more it made sense that the older man was confused. On Present Mic, it would be “concern”. On this man, the stranger who shared his features, it was “confusion”.

Still, he sniffled again, and wiped at his eyes. He stood up, and tried to force a smile. Looking at Present Mic, the way he did, he managed to pull himself together.

Move on, Midoriya. You can’t have a pity-party and get back home.

“Ah, hey there, Yamada-san. I uh… I messed up,” he sighed, and looked up at the man. He scrubbed at his face once more and straightened up, “And I lost my bag.”

The blond stared at him for another moment and then spoke again, “Well, the bar’s just down the way. Go get a change of clothes from there.”

### **Yamada’s reliability**

One day, Midoriya wouldn't hide his tears and would run into his arms to cry instead. Yamada thought that probably because, when those green eyes landed on him, he thought and truly believed that someone wanted him. Just. At all.

Midoriya looked at Yamada like everything he said was important. No matter how tired or upset or frustrated he got, he always managed to pull a smile up for Yamada. He looked at him and smiled, like he saw something worth smiling about in Yamada. He wasn’t an accessory to have on his arm, he wasn’t some guy he owed money to, he was just Hisashi.

And Yamada figured that Midoriya could trust him to just be Izuku.

Which would be dumb, because who would rely on a deadbeat host like him? Fuck, Aizawa didn’t trust him to feed the cats, Shirakumo laughed him out of the apartment when offered to cook once, and they still don’t know where Kayama lives, even though they’ve all known each other since middle school. The thought that the dumb, trouble-magnet of a high schooler would rely on him should have him reeling back in disgust.

But at the same time, the bitter taste of disappointment remained. It hollowed out a part inside of him, and it panged to remind him that he was empty. It was faint, like smelling the lingering scent of perfume right before he tosses his clothes into his wash, but it was there.

And he didn’t know what to do with that thought.

-

“...So, is this what you’re into?” Yamada eventually asked.

“Please shut up,” Midoriya replied back, hiding his face in his hands.

“It’s fine,” the blond lifted his hands up, “I think it’s hot.”

“Oh my god,” Midoriya moaned into his hands.

But that expression from before was gone now. His bloodshot eyes, no doubt from how hard he was rubbing at his eyes, were the only inclination that he had cried at all. Yamada was glad that he could at least do this.

Midoriya huffed, an exasperated smile on his face, and Yamada was relieved to see it. The world would be a dark place if the sun stopped shining.

“So, why were you in this anyways?”

“Ah, it was a part of the job.”

“...A job,” Yamada kept his voice light but his head spun.

...Midoriya needed money?

No, he supposed that makes sense. Dabi and Shigaraki pretty much have no income, and he can’t imagine (with how often Midoriya does get into trouble) that their hospital bills could be considered affordable. On top of that, school. He’s seen how much they could eat, had to pay that bill once or twice, and the thought makes the world slow down around him.

Kids, especially growing children, were expensive.

Suddenly, that yakuza, that Overhaul, popped into his mind, and he felt cold again.

“...If you needed money, why didn’t you just take some more shifts?” he asked, keeping his tone light.

Midoriya blinked back and looked down at his hands in his lap. The smile he had turned somber and Yamada almost regretted asking.

“...Ah, they’re not really… paying me with money,” he said. “I needed something from them, so it just sort of ended up like this.”

Yamada just stared at him. What did that even mean?

When their eyes caught each other, Midoriya wilted a little, but didn’t budge.

Of all the things that Yamada wanted to be when he grew up, he never thought ‘reliable’ would be one of them. On occasion, he missed who he used to be, a person who was satisfied with the people he had and the people he was with.

Because the distance between him and Midoriya was painful.

### **(post) Helping Gentle - Twice**

For as long as Twice had been alive, being honest was the mark of a ‘good person’. It was why he, who couldn’t make up his mind and felt like his body would split apart because of it, wasn’t a ‘good person’. He was the person that people pointed at and told kids to not turn out like instead.

So Midotiya, who was the goodest of good people, was a good person and all the things that came with it. Like when you buy a phone, it has special features, like a camera and internet capabilities or whatever it was that people put in their phones now. It was the same thing, but people. Good people, they’re honest and capable, reliable and enjoyable to be around, and they don’t take twenty minutes to decide what kind of sandwich that they want but can’t so they get into a fight with the asshole who asked if he was ready to order.

Twice, who had been walking next to Midoriya when the young man suddenly dropped his bag on the ground and sprinted for the street, jerked in shock. He watched, because where most people wouldn’t have noticed that a white soccer ball was rolling towards the street, Midoriya had started to sprint.

A child, chasing after a ball as big as his chest, toddled onto the street. There was a car parked, so the upcoming driver didn’t see the child until he was already in the street. His tiny hands came to grab the ball, and it peered up at the car, when Midoriya rushed in to grab him and hurtled across the street.

Several tire screeching sounds, a symphony of honking, and a lot of yelling later, Midoriya was next to Twice again.

The drivers all took turns yelling and screaming as they drove off, screaming this and that about how dim the future looked for having children like him, and how ashamed his parents must be of Midoriya. The woman of the child had slapped Midoriya across the face, accusing him of attempting to kidnap her child, and her child was crying too hard to be consoled. The young man nodded, bowing politely to anyone who had something to say at him.

All in all, it was a situation that made Twice frown. The young man looked at him and took his bag back, looking a little tired and haggard than before, but ultimately, he was still smiling.

It didn’t make sense. If Twice had gone and saved the kid, then he would understand the scowling and the yelling. Granted, Twice wouldn’t have bothered, because it wasn’t his problem if someone else’s kid died. He handed Midoriya’s bag back to him.

“Sorry about that. Thanks for waiting though, and holding onto my bag.”

Midoriya was polite. He had good grades and sprinted into oncoming traffic to save a dumb kid chasing a ball.

“Whoa, we might need to run if we want to clock in on time.”

Still, he was yelled at like he was a waste of space. He was yelled at for interrupting everyone else’s day. He did his best to help someone else and was severely reprimanded for it. All the people walking by shook their heads and otherwise walked away. Despite the fact that Midoriya was a ‘good person,’ he was treated like Twice was.

“Are you okay?” he blurted out, which was stupid. Of course he wasn’t okay. How could anyone be okay?

“Hm. Yeah?” the young man replied back, tilting his head.

“No you’re not.”

Because Twice wouldn’t be. When he saw that lady point and yell at Midoriya, hit him with her purse as she ushered her child behind her, he wanted to fight. He wanted to sock that lady in the face and show her a tragedy.

“Really?” but Midoriya didn’t complain or excuse himself or anything. He nodded along, bowed, and apologized for saving her kid, and accepted her abuse.

“Aren’t you angry?! You saved that lady’s kid! And she acted like such a fucking bitch! Aren’t you pissed?”

Green eyes blinked at him.

“Oh, yeah. I guess.”

“You guess?”

The young man shrugged back, “I went in because I thought the kid might need some help. That kid is fine now. I did what I wanted to do.”

The blond stared at him, his mind racing to process what was said. His head was starting to hurt from how hard he was thinking.

“I… What? That’s it?”

“I wanted to save the kid. The kid’s fine. There’s no problem.”

“But… everyone was yelling at you and everything. No one… No one even realized it or cared.”

Midoriya shrugged back, “That’s fine. I don’t really care about recognition or things like that. I just didn’t want to see a kid die today. I saw that I could have done something, so I did. It all worked out. No one’s hurt.”

Which wasn’t fair when he said it like that. Twice didn’t want to say that he wanted the kid to die, but really, he didn’t care about it either. Kids die all the time. He just would have seen one die in front of him this time, and he would have forgotten it by dinner.

“Hurt?”

But he couldn’t get over it.

His hand snatched Midoriya’s wrist, yanking it towards him so that they could both see how the swelling mess of blood oozed from his hand and wrist, probably from when he fell.

“Don’t lie,” he said, voice quiet. Because Midoriya was a good person. And good people didn’t die.

“It doesn’t hurt. It just looks like that.”

“How do you think I feel, seeing you hurt?” Twice asked. “Seeing you hurt and then seeing that bitch yell at you-”

“-Twice-”

“-You don’t care and you don’t have to care. You might not feel or you’ve stopped feeling, but I..” his free hand came up to his chest, clawing at it. “I don’t know.”

The feeling of losing something that he had was foreign to Twice. For a long time, he didn’t even have anything worth losing. For so long, in fact, that he totally forgot what this feeling was and what the name of this feeling was until it came tumbling out of his mouth.

“I care.”

He shook his head.

“...My life was meaningless, you know. I just… I just kept getting duped by everyone, again and again. I… I got yelled at for being myself, but when I was myself, everyone told me to shut up and go away. People said that I can’t control myself and that I contradict myself, but it would be convenient if they were me and that hurt my head to think about.”

His grip tightened as though to reflect the way his heart pulsed. The grip must have been bruising, but Midoriya didn’t even flinch.

“I don’t get it. How come that kid, who doesn’t even get what just happened, get to have you save them, but I had to wait until I was 30 to meet you?”

There was a beat of silence. It was a stupid question. It was even stupider that he pinned it on Midoriya, who was half his age and size. It was even more stupider (stupidest?) that he would do this after getting so upset of the fact that someone yelled at Midoriya with stupid questions.

He released Midoriya. He knew he needed to apologize. He knew, but it got stuck in his throat because he didn’t know what to do with all the feelings bubbling up inside of him.

“I can’t say anything about the past,” Midoriya said, “since we obviously can’t go back and change it. And I can’t see the future, so I can’t tell you much about that either. But while I’m here, right now, I can tell you that we’re together. We’re okay.”

Twice stared at Midoriya for a long moment.

“Right now,” he repeated.

“And that’s enough for me. I can work for a better future, but ultimately, those are all things based off of what I do right now.”

“Does that help?”

Midoriya shrugged back helplessly, “I’ll let you know.”

The unspoken promise, the certainty that they’ll know each other and still talk to each other in that distant future, was a dupe. Was most definitely a dupe.

But unlike before, Twice willingly fell for this one.

-

They were late, and received a harsh scolding from Aizawa. Actually, they just waved Twice off, told him not to do it again, and told him to be careful when commuting with Midoriya. Then, Aizawa pointed at Midoriya and lectured him.

The young man gave a sheepish smile, rubbing the back of his head, and if he didn’t see if for himself, Twice would have never thought that this was the kid that pitched himself into oncoming traffic to save a stranger.

### **Gentle’s (attempted) Gratitude**

“G-Good morning!”

Midoriya jerked before he came to a stop. Next to him, Bakugo’s back started to tense tightly as he glared down at the man who stopped them.

“Good… morning?”

“Stop seducing old men. We’re going to be late to school,” Bakugo said, his eyes never leaving the stranger.

“W-What do you mean seducing?” Midoriya gasped back, his face turning bright red. “Kacchan, I’m sure that’s not it at all.” He turned back to the taller man. “Is there something wrong?”

“N-not at all!” the man replied, and Midoriya felt like he should know this man. It was starting to gnaw at him, “I truly apologize for bothering you, but I thought it was fate that we were to meet again.”

This time, the blond next to him actually growled, but the man didn’t make any show that he noticed.

“I’m really grateful for your help the other day. It’s not much but,” he produced a small envelope towards him, “I didn’t think it would be right to abandon someone who had helped me so kindly.”

Midoriya lifted his hand up and pushed the envelope back towards the man.

“It’s kindness because you don’t owe anyone afterwards,” he said. “I’m glad that you’re alright though.” He gave a polite bow, and waved goodbye with a bright smile, “See you around!” He turned to his friend, “Let’s go, Kacchan.”

The blond gave one last scathing look towards the stranger before he turned to follow Midoriya out.

Tobita Danjuro stared after his receding back, thinking that the world was a much brighter place than he initially realized.

### **Tamaki \*Plans for the future**

“You… want to become a policeman?”

“Yeah,” Tamaki said. His face turned pink as he looked away, “It doesn’t suit me at all, does it?”

Looking at Tamaki now, Midoriya would never think that.

“No,” he said. “You’ll be a great hero.”

“...I said I wanted to be a policeman.”

“And you’ll be great at that too.”

Tamaki looked at Midoriya, a hundred times more confident than the Takami he remembered, and he laughed, long and loud and proud.

It was a sound that made his eyes well up.

A world where there are no heroes is a world where Tamaki holds his head up high. Midoriya isn’t sure what to do with that conclusion.

### **Hawks - Bird & Thunder**

“You have a nice face but a twisted personality, huh?” Midoriya asked, he didn’t get a chance to get close to Hawks before everything exploded back into his face, but he really didn’t think that the man was like this. Granted, he’s certain that anyone would say that about him and Deku-kun.

“...Then, why did you agree to come over?” Takami asked quietly.

“...Honestly?” Midoriya replied back, and when golden eyes cut a line from the ground to his face, he was shocked that he didn’t start bleeding. “You looked like you didn’t want me to leave.”

Hawks stilled, and Midoriya grinned back.

“So I stayed.”

-

“...Midoriya, if you know that it’s going to be a bad idea, why do you do it anyways?”

“Uh… cost-benefits?”

“You want me to believe that you actually think about what you do before you do it?”

“If you weren’t going to believe me, why did you ask?”

“I wanted to know what you looked like when you lied.”

Midoriya paused. His brain functions shut down and Hawks won the round.

“Whoa, color me surprised, you’re a sore loser?”

Their tone was light, but the underlying bit of a sharp edge remained.

Midoriya turned to Hawks, waited patiently for the man to return the stare.

“Then, Hawks,” he said, “I wanna know what you look like when you believe me.”

The blond stared at him, eyes wide and for a moment, it looked like the most Real thing Midoriya had seen on Hawks’ face since he got here.

The controllers laid limp in their life, the game sfx drowning out the pitter-patter outside, and Hawks dropped his gaze.

“And what? What are you going to do with that?” he asked, his voice carefully devoid of all and any emotions, like it had been washed away with the rainstorm.

“I think it’ll make you the most handsome-ist man in the world,” Midoriya said, a boyish grin on his face, “like a hero.”

The blond stared at him, his eyebrows creasing in confusion and his lips twitching as he tried to find a joke and ended up with a breathless, “What?”

“The first people that a hero has to believe in is themselves.”

“And what, you think that I’m a hero?”

“I think that you can be a hero. I think you can be a villain.” Old memories played in Midoriya’s head like a grainy film, the things that he didn’t ever want to forget already starting to fade like a worn photograph. “You could be a spy or a teacher or an agent or a murderer.”

Because Midoriya knew about the handgun that he carried around. The wallet that he returned smelled of gunpowder. Midoriya knew. He knew and for a long, long time, tried to suspend his belief because this wasn’t Hawks.

“You can be the Pro Hero Hawks, Number Two in the nation,” Midoriya said, and then he lifted the controller in his lap, “and you can be Takami Keigo, who wipes my ass in Mortal Kombat.”

The blond stared at him for a long, long moment. He opened his mouth. After a second, he closed it. The words spun in his head, and Midoriya hoped that his [truth] would be Takami’s [right]. He would like it, if at least in this world, he could be some sort of support for this man.

“...You know we’re playing Tekken, right?”

The young man’s head snapped to the game, “Serious?” and in that moment, totally missed on the expression that flitted past Takami’s face.

-

“Why am I #2?” he asked.

“Hm?” Midoriya smiled, “Because I’ll be number one.”

### **Stray Bird**

“Oh yeah, Hawks,” Midoriya said, coming back into the room. He reached into his bag and pulled out a small envelope. “This is for you.”

“Hm? My, I love gifts,” Takami said, crossing the living room in an instant. He took the envelope with an easy smile, wondering what it could be, and his entire body froze when he saw what was inside the envelope.

“You pretty much live here anyways,” Midoriya replied back, “Lemme know what kind of curry you want for dinner, okay?”

“No more curry!” Shigaraki yelled back from where ever he was, further in the apartment.

“Wow, now he can hear me, huh?” Midoriya deadpanned, looking towards the direction that the voice sounded from. Distracted by that, however, he completely missed the expression that crossed on Takami’s face as he regarded the key in the envelope.

“...You sure?” he asked quietly.

“You’re here enough anyways,” Midoriya said, without looking back at him. “This way we can go back to locking the windows again.”

Takami didn’t know what kind of expression he was making at the moment, but his face hurts from how much he smiled afterwards.

Officially, he moved in the next day, much to Dabi’s and Shigaraki’s combined vexation.

### **Housemate #4(?)**

“Alright, let’s lay down some ground rules,” Shigaraki said.

On the other side of the table, Dabi looks just as imposing with his arms crossed over his chest and a firm frown on his face. Midoriya finds relief on how well they were all getting along, and how comfortable they were that they were emoting now too.

“First of all, you gotta chip in for the rent-”

“-You guys don’t pay rent.”

Shigaraki paused and he turned to Midoriya, who was blowing on the hot rice before putting the spoonful into his mouth. He chewed, and realizing that the conversation stopped, looked up innocently.

“What?” he asked.

“Well, then you gotta chip in for the food,” Dabi jumped into the conversation.

“You guys don’t pay for the groceries either,” the youngest at the table said. He went for the soup next, giving a happy hum as he bit into the vegetables. “Oh, wow, the radish came out really nicely.” He remained ignorant to the dry looks that Dabi and Shigaraki was sending him, and Hawks bit down on his lips to keep from bursting into laughter.

“Well, I guess you’ll have to do chores and shit,” Shigaraki decided on, and right before Midoriya could say anything, Dabi stuffed his mouth with another radish.

“If it’s delicious then eat it quietly,” he growled out, and then, a sickenly sweet smile came onto his face, promising nothing but death and retribution. “Okay, Izuku?”

And in the face of the thinly veiled threat, Midoriya giggled

“Yes sir,” he said through a mouthful of vegetables.

The sight should have been disgusting, but no one would have guessed that from the look on Dabi’s face.

He chewed through his food and gave a warm smile at Hawks, completely ignoring the others at the table.

“As long as you clean up your mess, don’t destroy my books, and eat everything that’s given to you, you can stay as long as you need to.”

And since he gave his word, and no amount of grouching from Shigaraki or pouting from Dabi would change his mind.

“Sounds great,” Takami said, “I probably make the most out of everyone here.”

And the face his roommates made, all of them, when he showed them his pay, had him laughing till he cried.

-

Takami is a handsome man, and he knows it. There aren’t many people that could look at his flawlessly handsome features and not give in to his demands.

“Maa, Izuku, do you want help with that?”

He reached over and grabbed the plates out of his hands. He relished in how that surprised look became a smile and happily trotted off. With a killer grin, he took it to the kitchen where Dabi was washing them. The scalding look that he gave him made his grin widen, if that was at all possible.

“Get that smile off your face before I melt it off.”

“Nah, you wouldn’t,” Takami shot back, “Izuku likes it too much.”

Dabi scoffed at that, “Don’t call him that.”

“Why not? He doesn’t mind.”

His jaw clenched hard, and Takami relished it. In another world, he would be the one under Dabi’s thumb, but here, things were different.

Here, in this apartment, they were almost friends.

### **New Roommate & Furishing**

“No, I said we can’t!”

Dabiand Shigaraki stopped cold as they turned to Midoryia in their surprsie.

### **Hawks & Scars**

Somewhere, deep in his mind, it made sense that Midoriya would have his own share of scars. People aren’t as strong, and aren’t as fluidly-trained like Midoriya was, if they didn’t need to be. Typically, if you needed to be strong, it was because there were some excruciating circumstances that led up to that.

But there was a clear gap between logic and reality, because Hawks freezes where he stands when he catches Midoriya’s foot. The young man had limped into their flat, and Shigaraki took one look at him before firmly telling him to “stay right the fuck there” and “do not get blood on the goddamn carpet”.

Still, Shigaraki was pale as he rushed to the bathroom for their first-aid kit. Dabi, abandoning his book on the couch, wandered into the kitchen to grab a bottle of water for him before helping him sit down. With his legs towards their tiled entrance, he sat down on the carpet with a long sigh. Evidently, he was tired.

However, he wasn’t too tired that he didn’t give Takami a small smile and a wave, and asked how he was.

“Doing fucking peachy, unlike you,” Shigaraki snapped out as he finally returned. He had the first-aid kit and two small towels. He threw the towels at Dabi, who caught it without looking, and squeezed by Midoriya to kneel in front of him. “What did you do?”

Midoriya gave a little laugh, like there was nothing wrong at all, and reached for the kit. “I got it, don’t worry-”

“Just shut up and tell me what you did,” Shigaraki said. “I’m taking your shoe off.”

“It’s ugly-”

Despite everything, Shigaraki’s hands were gentle as he undid all of Midoriya’s laces slowly, pulling them to ease his injured foot out as slowly as possible. Still, Midoriya didn’t even bat an eyelid even as the disgusting “slurch” sounded. His formally white socks were soaked in a violent red, and the stench of it reached Hawks from where he stood a few feet away.

Dabi and Shigaraki visibly recoiled.

“It just looks that bad-”

“What did you do?” Dabi asked, squinting at it.

“Stepped on some glass-”

“You tried to amputate your foot with glass,” Shigaraki pitched in, as though to clarify. He moved his hand up to his face, disgust written all over his face. “Fucking christ, don’t you need to go to the hospital?”

Midoriya shrugged, like he didn’t know the answer, and added, “I mean. I guess it stings a little. To be honest, I didn’t realize that it was bleeding so badly until I dropped something and I realized the trail I left behind-”

“You were just, trailing blood? How long were you walking?”

The young man, a freshman in high school, opened his mouth to reply, and his eyes flickered up to the contorted expression that Shigaraki had. His eyes softened and he gave a small smile.

“Don’t worry, I’m fine,” he said. “It just bled alot.”

Takami never considered himself a queasy person, and could handle gore-movies (both being in them and watching them). But he was uncomfortable with the easy attitude that Midoriya held about all of this when he could smell the blood across the distance.

“Doesn’t it hurt?” he asked, unable to help himself.

“...Honestly? Not really,” Midoriya said. “There's just a lot of blood because I got caught by-” he cut himself off, but they heard it clear as day.

“...You-”

“It’s fine,” Midoriya said. “I dealt with them. They’re fine,” he said, answering questions that they didn’t ask. He shook his head, “I promise I’m fine. It just looks bad.”

They looked pointedly at him and then to his sock.

Shigaraki pulled off the thing, and Hawks watched in sick-fascination as the fabric resisted it and stuck to the wounds. Something clinked, falling to the floor, and they stared at the nail.

There was another pause.

“Oops.”

“Izuku-” Dabi sucked in a deep breath.

“What the fuck-” Shigaraki hissed.

“Look, I can explain-” Midoriya tried.

And all Takami could see was the webbing of scars coating his ankle like a bracelet. There was a mess of healing flesh, overlapping awkwardly and encompassing the extent of his feet, and Takami suddenly felt cold in his realization that he doesn’t know anything about Midoriya.

## Winter Holidays

### **Midoriya’s suddenly out of debt - Chisaki**

“...What did you say?”

Hojo looked uncomfortably from his immediate boss to the bags of money on the table and then back.

“It said… that it’s money for Midoriya Hizashi. It was left at one of the stores,” Hojo explained quietly. He extended his hand to pass a note to him. “But you should look at the letter it came this.”

Chisaki tore it open. In the default font from any writing program, printed on white paper, was written clearly.

[ Midoriya’s debt is cleared. ]

A cold chill ran down Chisaki’s spine. The last he checked, Midoriya was preparing for exams and the winter holidays. His hours at the host club were cut back, and he spent several hours with his friends at a library studying after school. Eri had been pouting and begging for Midoriya to be invited to their annual Christmas dinner party, and Midoriya had also promised to set aside some time for the young girl.

But the last time that he physically saw Midoriya was at least a month.

“How much?” he asked.

Hojo hesitated, but relayed the number.

Did Midoriya look any different? Maybe a little more tired. Maybe a little more exasperated. However, Chisaki couldn’t think of anything that would lead to this.

This was no small amount of money to just drop off at a bar. And more importantly, the number of people that knew that he, Chisaki, had bought out Midoriya’s entire debt was minimal. He made sure of it. But still, someone had clearly brought the entire amount for Midoriya.

And Midoriya probably didn’t even know that his father was in debt.

Chisaki looked back at the bag of money, as though waiting for it to detonate.

Midoriya, he wondered, what the fuck did you get involved with?

### **Burning Apartment**

Midoriya Izuku could just hear Iida yelling at him. It doesn't matter where they are, some things don’t change at all. Against the crackling fire and soft cries for help, it’s a wonderful soundtrack.

The apartment was burning up, but when he heard those screams for a child indoors, he moved without thinking about it. And so, after throwing his bag at Bakugo, he ran up the stairs without much more thought other than that someone was up here, unable to get out of a life-threatening situation.

So naturally, he ran to save them.

“It’s okay!” he yelled out, “I am here! Don’t worry! Someone is here to help you! So just hold on!”

### **Hospital**

Midoriya was avoiding hospitals for a reason, you see. The more people that began to gravitate into his life, the harder he tried to avoid this place.

“...You tried to kill yourself before?”

He regretted opening his eyes on that day, but this was something that he had to face. He knew that. Even if this wasn’t his body, and this wasn’t his world, and those weren’t his choices, this was still the reason why he was here. With that in mind, he took a deep breath and turned his head to his newest guest.

Next to him, Jin’s hands trembled on the bed, right where they were making paper cranes. The assortment of colorful paper that his friend brought it scattered across the white sheets. Would it have killed Bakugo to wait the two minutes it would have taken him to get Jin out of here? He really didn’t need this in his life right now.

“...Yeah,” he said, never one to run.

“Not… not just once either, right?” the blond asked, his voice shaking.

And Midoriya, who has never learned how to lie to him, said, “Yeah.”

Bakugo stared at him, and closed his eyes. He took a deep, slow breath, and Midoriya was again reminded that this wasn't his. He would like, if at all possible, for his Bakugo and this Bakugo to meet, and hopefully teach his Bakugo some breathing lessons. He really, really needed it.

“You fucking shithead,” Bakugo said, sitting down heavily in the chair next to his bed. He buried his face into his hands. “Jesus fucking christ.”

“...It’s okay, Kacchan,” Midoriya said quietly, “I’m here. You don’t have to worry about that anymore.”

“That’s not something a guy in the hospital should be saying.”

If he could, he would reach out and rub his back. He would let him know that he was okay now and that he wouldn’t try that anymore. But he couldn’t.

He wasn’t this Bakugo’s Midoriya.

### **Izuku meets Enji and it goes about as well as planned**

Izuku stared at the screen, placed his head in his hands and took a deep, long breath. This was okay, right? His teacher would forgive him, right? In a place like this, they need a Symbol of Peace, and since he was supposed to inherit that title anyways, this was okay, right? It was fine, right?

Whatever, what was done is done. He had no choice now.

Flipping through his discharge papers, however, he wondered how the fuck he was going to pay for tuition now, and wondered if he really needed to dip into his savings. He really hoped not. Whoever sent him into the hospital, he wants to go and beat the shit out of-

“Everything is already paid for.”

“...What?”

“Yes, someone has come and already paid the total fee up front.”

Midoriya’s head reeled at the information, and the first thing he thought was oh god, Dabi killed someone and brought that money in so to make sure that Midoriya wouldn’t die trying to pay off these bills. What a great guy. Except not. Good thoughts. Shit actions. Midoriya wheezed a little.

Someone died so that he could live? No, that went against everything he stood for. Surely, Dabi wouldn’t do that…

But he knew that Spinner would.

He groaned, and sighed.

“Do you know who? So that I can at least thank them?”

The receptionist gave him a small smile and nodded. “It says here that it was paid off by… the Todoroki Estate.”

Midoriya’s jaw dropped and his eyes bugged out.

Were he and Todoroki that close? No way, that wasn’t likely.

“I’m really sorry, but I need to make sure the line keeps moving…”

Midoriya snapped out of it and then nodded, “Ah, sorry about that,” he said. And left the area.

He couldn’t belive it. Todoroki paid off his entire hospital bill? In one go? He knew that his classmate was rich and well-off, but he didn’t think that he would waste it on Midoriya. Well, he better go thank the guy and make sure he understands to never do this again since it was such a waste of money-

“Excuse me, Midoriya Deku-kun?”

He turned over his shoulder and nearly swallowed his tongue as the man named Endeavor, Todoroki’s father, stepped forward in his intimidating suit and no flames and Midoriya honestly didn't know who this was for a moment.

“I would like to have a word with you." It was not a suggestion.

Oh fuck. Midoriya thought. It wasn’t Todoroki, his quiet classmate, but Todoroki, his father, who paid for his hospital bills, didn’t he? The business tycoon that looks as big as one of his buildings.

He would have much rather it have been the younger one. Any of them.

-

“H-Hello,” he said, so nervous that he feels like he will land himself back into the hospital.

“I would rather you didn’t,” Endeavor, except not Endeavor because he was in a sharp business suit, said and Midoriya wanted to hit himself, how could he have said that aloud.

“Haha…” he wanted to cry.

“Don’t be so nervous, I just wanted to… chat with you.”

Midoriya didn’t know anything about this Endeavor aside from the things that Todoroki-kun (the youngest) said and based on what Todoroki-kun (the eldest) didn’t do.

“I see.”

“One of my sons has… escaped my radar,” he said. “And I learned that he was living in an apartment with you.”

Endeavor was a shit dad, he knew this. He’s always known this. It seemed that it was a constant of some sort, because he was someone who was incredibly strong and successful in the things that he wanted to do and being a dad wasn’t one of them.

It took All Might falling to change this man. It took the end of an era for him to change his mind and his attitude and at least try. And thinking of that, the pain of old wounds and the pain of healing wounds, he looked at Endeavor.

“...I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You’re not a fool. You think I wouldn’t know about the child who outranked my son in the High School rankings?”

“I didn’t think you cared about your kids at all,” Midoriya said before he could stop himself.

Endeavor, very, very, very slowly turned his full attention back to him. Unlike the Endeavor he grew up watching on television, this Endeavor did not burst into flames.

Still, the area around them felt hotter. It could just be his anxiety.

“...Is that so? Did Touya say that?”

“No,” Midoriya said, shaking his head, “Not at all. It was an observation, but I’m glad to see that I’m wrong.” His hands were trembling, but he did his best to keep his stare level and not burst into tears.

“Then, I suppose you wouldn’t mind returning him back to me. I would like to keep my family together.”

Endeavor slid an envelop to him. Opening it up, Midoriya saw the receipt for his hospital bill and felt his heart stutter.

No way.

“I heard your father is on an extended business trip. It must be hard to work for a small company that doesn’t have enough manpower to match their ambition. I can’t imagine how hard it must be for him to continue supporting your lifestyle across the sea.”

No, no, no. Endeavor would… He wouldn’t.

But the truth was right in front of him, and he didn’t realize that he could still be disappointed until this moment.

“...You’re a smart boy,” Endeavor said, his voice deep and clear. “You understand what I mean, right?”

No one knows this, because no one cares to notice this, but Dabi hates clear skies. He pulls the blinds closed and he avoids it at all cost. But just last month, they all went on a picnic and he mentioned that he was glad the weather was so nice. Looking at the crystal blue eyes staring him down across the way, he understands why.

“I would rather be in debt than sell another human being,” he said. Instead of thinking about what he was saying, who he was saying it too, he instinctively chose to protect the guy he found in the rain that one time, all those months ago. “The debts that I have are mine. Thank you for your generous offer, but I will find my own way.”

“...Then, your shift starts at 7 AM sharp at the main headquarters in Tokyo,” Endeavor said. He stood up, and pulled on his suit lapels, even though it wasn’t even rumpled. “And you will work under me until you pay off your hospital bill.”

With that, Midoriya received the receipt of his awful hospital bill. The older man left, clearly having better things to do now that he was done. And Midoriya realized that he had paid for their meagre coffee. Swallowing the bitter tang in his mouth, he made it out of the cafe and down the street before his eyes caught on it.

ENDEAVOR Corporations.

### **New job \*admittance**

“I got a new job,” Midoriya announced at the dinner table as he passed out the bowls of curry. “So I might be coming home late.”

“...Another job?” Dabi asked.

“Are you finally quitting that fucking host club?” Shigaraki asked, more than happy about the possibility.

“Eh? Ah no, it’s… It’s more like I owe a favor, really” Midoriya said, not quite able to admit that he was working for Endeavor, and it was to pay off hospital bills. He somehow didn’t think that these two would take it so well.

Especially not Dabi. And he was making great lengths than the man he found in the rain all those months ago. Shigaraki and Dabi almost felt like friends now too, so he would protect this.

There was a pause, and the two briefly exchanged glances.

“You get in trouble again?” Dabi asked, his narrowed eyes squinting at their roommate.

Midoriya shrugged, “I’m actually almost out of it,” he said, trying his best not to lie through his teeth.

### **Temp slavery**

Midoriya once worked under Endeavor. It was a long time ago, but he treasured those memories.

Working under Todoroki Enji was like working under Endeavor, except they weren’t saving civilians from villains and terrible accidents. So if anything, the pace was slower than he remembered, but no less rigorous. The reports that came were heavy duty and needed a lot of attention to detail.

After several jobs that only needed manual labor, and a very dull schoolwork, Midoriya was more than happy to have something to challenge him mentally. Ecstatic at the challenge, Midoriya dove right in.

-

Hours were rough. He went to school to sleep, and then came straight to Endeavor’s office to work until it was late at night. Some nights, he worked until morning light at the UA Host Club, and most nights he barely made it home to eat dinner with his kind and considerate roommates.

“...You look like shit,” Shigaraki said as soon as he came in.

“Thanks, glad to see you too,” Midoriy replied, yawning as he stumbled into the kitchen. “That smells great.”

“...Go take a shower,” Shigaraki scowled back, wrinkling his nose, “You smell like shit.”

“Yesss sirrrr,” Midoriya drawled out, yaning one more time as he walked towards the bathroom.

“Oh, welcome back,” Dabi greeted, his blue eyes narrowing at the sight of him. “You look like shit.”

“Thanks, Dabi,” Midoriya deadpanned as he grabbed a bathrobe and headed into the bathroom. He’ll probably wear real clothes once he comes out, but right now, shower.

When he gets out of the bath, they would eat dinner together. Even though it was two in the morning. Because they all came from families where no one waited for the other, and refused to listen to Midoriya’s quiet suggestions.

He never knew how nice it was for someone to just ignore his feelings. It was nostalgic.

### **Hawks & Mido \*to be selfish**

“Isn’t it fine?! It’s okay to be selfish!! It’s okay to put yourself first!” Hawks said, nearly yelling in his face.

Midoriya wasn’t personally ever close to Hawks. They’ve eaten together once while he was still a Pro, and have never shared the same space longer than an hour. They’ve never talked to each other privately. Of course, he respected the man and had the honor to watch him work a few times, but that was the extent of it. He’s pretty sure that Hawks had only used his Hero name, if that.

In a really distant kind of way, Midoriya thought that it was a little funny to be told this by the man who was reared to be a hero.

“You’re right, it’s fine. There’s nothing wrong with living how you want,” Midoriya said, slapping his hands away, “This is my selfish way of living.”

“...You’re crazy.”

Yeah, the Takami in front of him could say that.

### **Todoroki Dinner**

“Izuku.”

Midoriya looked over where Todoroki stared back.

“...Do you wanna come over for dinner?”

He blinked back. What?

“Today?”

His friend nodded.

“...And Kacchan?” he couldn’t help but ask.

“No,” Todoroki replied back, and after a brief second, spoke up again to clarify further, “Just you.”

He gave a confused noise, and Todoroki looked down at the ground. He took a deep, slow breath, before he straightened. Turning to fully face Midoriya, uncaring about the fact that they were standing in the middle of the sidewalk, he dipped his head just a little bit forward into a bow. Like this, he pleaded.

“Please.”

“Oh, sorry, I was just surprised. You don’t have to do that,” Midoriya said, snapping out of it. He didn’t like to see his friends humble themselves like that, not for him, not for this. “But uhm, I don’t mind, but are you sure?”

He made a motion to his split lip and black eye.

“I’m not… really uh… guest material.”

“...I want my family to meet my friend.”

Midoriya felt his heart ache.

He’s never been able to say no to people. How could he start now?

-

The Todoroki Estate was just as big and intimidating as he remembered. His memory could be a little fuzzy, since he’s only been here a handful of times before there was nothing left of this place at all, but from what he did remember, it was nostalgic.

“... Are you crying?”

He almost flinched out of his skin and spun to where Shoto stared at him in horrified shock. Coming to, probably the wrong conclusion, he crumpled into guilt.

“...S-sorry, I didn’t realize that you-”

“No, no no,” Midoriya said, raising his hands and shaking his head furiously. He scrubbed at his eyes and gave a grin, “It’s just a really nice place. You have a… a really nice place.”

Shoto frowned at him, and he calmed down a little more.

“Sorry, I… what I meant to say was…”

He looked at Todoroki, eyes a little wet as he grinned.

“Thanks for,” being alive, being here, being strong enough to trust, being kind enough to reach out after a lifetime of hurt, “inviting me over.”

His friend (it was okay, right? They were friends, right? Even if he was to go away and Deku-kun came back, they would be friends from then on, but right now, they were friends, weren’t they?) stared at him for another moment and then nodded.

“...Thanks for coming over,” Shoto said, a small and shy smile gracing his lips. He pulled the door open and took a deep breath to call out, “I’m back.”

“Oh! Shoto, welcome back! And… and is this your friend?”

Fuyumi is as beautiful as ever. It could be because she looks absolutely overjoyed or maybe it was just because she was alive and it was a sight for sore eyes, Midoriya isn’t certain.

And then, from the back, he heard her.

“Ara? Shoto brought a friend over?”

And Todoroki Rei, without hospital machines attached to her and without any assistance, stands with a wide smile on her face. She’s not as thin as he remembers her, filling out instead of standing like a hollow skeleton.

“Welcome! I’m Shoto’s Mom, go ahead and just call me ‘kaa-san’,” she said, energetic in a way he’s never seen her before. If he’s not careful, he was going to lose all control over his tear-ducts. He took a deep breath, forcing himself to breath. “I hope you don’t mind Mapo Tofu.”

Even her voice sounded kind.

“Izuku always eats spicy food with Bakugo. I don’t think our regular is spicy enough for him,” Shoto said, taking his shoes off and stepping into the foyer.

“Is that so? Alright, I’ll keep that in mind for next time. But come on in, Izuku-kun, was it?”

In a world where there are no heroes and villains, Todoroki Rei is the warmest member of the Todoroki Household, and Midoriya thinks that the sound of her laugh filled in at the cracks of his breaking heart, widening the cracks with her kindness.

“...Izuku?”

Midoriya jerked back to the present and took a deep breath. He didn’t want to look at them, since it was painful. But he didn’t know the next time he would see them, so he wanted to burn this into his memory and hold it in his heart and to death.

“...Izuku, are you okay?”

His eyes found Shoto’s worried, heterochromatic eyes, unmarred by scars and young, and dropped his gaze to the ground. He took a shuddering breath. He was his friend.

Idiot. Way to make a first impression, he chided himself. Now they’re going to think that Shoto is friends with some freak. And they’re not wrong, but he didn’t want them to think that from the get go.

“Sorry, I guess I’m more tired than I thought,” he said quietly.

It was a shitty excuse at best, but more than excuses, he wanted to put his best step forward. Can’t change the past, gotta keep going forward. He straightened to give a polite bow, falling into a familiar pattern while he tried to recenter himself.

“Hello, my name is Midoriya Izuku. Thank you for having me today.”

“Oh, no need to be so stiff!” Rei said brightly, thankfully moving on from his initial hiccup, “Come on in! You can hang your jacket wherever. Go wash your hands and let’s eat dinner!”

Shoto took his jacket from him, and he smiled in his gratitude. He took his shoes off and trailed after his friend, thankful that (even though it was a little weird for him to do this) Shoto didn’t stray more than a foot away from him. His constant presence, as painful as it could be at times, was a blessing in these moments.

By the time he got to the bathroom, he felt a little better. Cold water helped. His hands trembled a little, and he hoped that he no one would notice. And if he did, maybe he could lie and say that he was cold or something.

-

“Oh, you’re Shoto’s friend? Nice to meet you.”

His head spun. Natsuo, with his arms attached to him, looked at him. His hand was extended towards him, to shake his hand, and Midoriya got lost in his good health

There were no scars, there was no injury, he was whole and had two eyes and this couldn’t be Natsuo. He was there when they had to put pieces of him in a body bag. He was there. He was one of the first people to respond to that call, and he was the one who had to break the news to the rest of the Todorokis. But right now, in front of him, with a small smile on his face, was undeniably Todoroki Natsuo.

He never got used to this. He’s been here for a few years now, right? He still wasn’t used to this. Why wasn’t he used to this? He should have known better.

His eyes watered, and Natsuo’s eyes were so clear and wide that he could see his own reflection tearing up. The college student leaned back, his eyes darting to his brother for help, but Midoriya swears that he won’t fuck this up.

With that said, he all but threw his hand forward, clattering his chopsticks against his rice bowl, but he grabbed an awkward handful of Natsuo’s fingers.

“N-Nice to meet you,” he said, his voice embarrassingly high-pitched.

One day, they could laugh about this, and he swears that he’ll protect the unseen “One Day”.

“Uh yeah,” Natsuo said, awkwardly shaking his hand (or maybe he was shaking it off? He didn’t know), and Midoriya had to remind himself to let go of those warm fingers. “You uh… good?”

“Yeah, the uh, the Mapo tofu is just spicy,” he lied. He tried to lie.

He couldn’t really taste the food, in reality. He just felt as though the whole world was mocking him, but he was so grateful for it, if only because he got to see the Todoroki’s again.

Shoto, who was much better at reading him in this world than he was comfortable with, said, “Natsuo-nii, we have more in the kitchen. Do you want me to get it for you?”

“Huh? Ah nah, don’t worry about it. I got it,” he said. His eyes flickered from Deku to his brother and then his mother.

“You’re going to join us?”

Midoriya sounded way too hopeful for a friend coming over for dinner.

“Of course he will. It’s rare for Shouto to bring friends home,” Fuyumi said, a pleasant smile on her face as Natsuo’s lips twisted upwards into an awkward grin of his own.

And then, the door opened and he froze.

Wait, wait one minute. Someone else? And then, he wanted to hit himself in his stupidity as Endeavor came walking in. He was so stuck and shocked in the fact that all the Todoroki’s he remembered meeting sat together and ate together and were together-healthy mostly sane and alive-that he had totally and completely forgot that this man was his employer.

“We have a guest… Midoriya?”

He stared at the man who stared right back at him.

And then, staring at him, Todoroki said, “You know him, Izuku?”

“Uh.”

“Deku?” Endeavor rolled the world in his mouth like it was something he didn’t want to eat. “You?” He narrowed his eyes at him.

Oh no, Midoriya realized suddenly, he never introduced himself as Izuku to Endeavor, did he? And since Endeavor was official and played by the law, he knew that the lawful name for this body was Deku.

“Yes sir,” he said weakly. “That’s me.”

“Izuku is our guest,” Rei said, speaking up. Her face was peaceful but her tone was cold, “We should treat him with respect, and call him by his name.”

Midoriya jerked at that, and wondered if it’s okay to prey on someone’s kindness like this. It feels shameless, and looking at Endeavor’s face, doesn’t want to be another reason why people shouldn’t like him. He doesn’t want to be the reason why this family doesn’t get along.

“Ah, no it’s okay. It’s like a… street name for me,” he said. Shoto shot him a look across the table, and he laughed, cringing at how awkward he sounded. “A-anyways, nice to meet you again, Todoroki-san,” he said at last. “I’m glad that we are finally meeting on better terms.”

“You guys met before?” Natsuo asked, frowning. It was clear that they were all trying to figure out when and where a guy like Endeavor would meet Shoto’s friend, and couldn’t figure it out.

But that was fine.

“Yes, he helped me out of a bad situation,” Midoriya said, truthful and honest because that’s how he felt at first, even if the feeling didn’t last for long. “And it saved me from another hospital bill.”

The look on Endeavor’s face told him that this was a man who was fine with being the villain. He recognized it, and the sight of it made him feel nostalgic and sad, all at once.

“Did he pay you to say that?” Shoto asked.

The familiarity of the words, coupled with the drastic differences in setting, had Midoriya laughing back.

“No, of course not. Do I seem like that kind of person?” Midoriya asked, shoulders shaking. To his relief, Shoto accepted his words then. Figuring that he averted this trainwreck, he turned to Rei, “The mapo tofu is delicious,” he said.

“...Are you going to eat or just stand there?” Shoto asked Endeavor, eyes sliding up to him for a brief second before looking down at the plate.

The man straightened at the words while his family stared in shock. It was the closest thing to an invitation from his family he had ever received, Midoriya is certain.

"I wanted Izuiu to meet my family," Shoto clarified, as he continued to eat.

Still, after a beat of silence, Fuyumi clapped her hands together and tried to stand up.

“Hey, let me get it for you-”

“It’s fine, Fuyumi. I… I can get it myself.”

-

Just like that, the dinner started.

“So, Izuku-kun,” Rei said, turning the attention to him, “How did you meet Shoto?”

He stared at her for a moment, his mind reeling. He should lie, right? He should lie? He and Shoto should have coordinated a story before they came in, shouldn’t they?

“We met in the street,” he said, assuming that it would be better if they didn’t say the whole truth. “And it turned out that we liked the same flavor of ice cream.”

“After he pummeled me and Bakugo’s asses in an alleyway,” Shoto added, almost fondly.

There was a stiff silence and Midoriya slowly turned to his friend. Why? Why would he find such pride in something like that? Why would he ever say something like that to his family? Even if he didn’t know that he was working for his dad, why would he just sell him out like that? That really isn’t something to be proud of.

“Huh,” Natsuo said, eyeing Midoriya. “You didn’t peg me as a fighter.” He was clearly taking this whole thing much better than Midoriya was, and he wasn’t even there for the incident.

“I’m not that amazing, I just happened to catch Todoroki-kun off guard-”

“He used my own ice against me and by the time I tried to use fire, it backfired hard. When that warehouse caught on fire and everyone else left me behind, he was the one that pulled me out, even though we were just fighting,” he continued. “You should call me Shoto right now,” he added belatedly as he eyed his friend. “We’re all Todorokis here.”

There was a long silence. Midoriya could feel his appetite withering. He wanted to cry. Yes, he did that, but it was different hearing that from his friend as he explained how they met to his parents. Good god, he didn’t ever consider the thought that Todoroki recalled their first meeting with such fondness, but it really, really, really didn’t make him feel any better.

“Shoto, we’ll talk about this afterwards,” Rei said, almost sweetly. To his credit, his friend wasn’t even fazed, and kept eating like there was nothing wrong with the fact that they casually broke several laws and were now best friends and eating with each other’s families.

“Oh wow, that’s amazing!” Fuyumi said. “You must have a really strong quirk, huh?”

A pit opened up in his stomach, and dropped his gaze to his plate. He hadn’t… felt like this in a while. He knew, in his head, that there was nothing to be ashamed of. It wasn’t something he could control. It was, all things considered, a pretty good thing

Still, it weighed on his tongue like lead and he said.

“I’m quirkless.”

He hasn’t needed to say it in a while. And before, the only times he said it was like a weapon. But right now, in the house of his friend, he was just himself.

“...You fended off… Shoto,” Natsuo said slowly, “Without a quirk?”

“I uh…” Midoriya stuttered and stammered, “I was lucky?”

“Lucky enough to win all 18 times we fought?” Shoto said.

“You were unlucky?” the young man tried.

“So, all the wins I’ve had all this time was just luck, huh? I guess I’m just not strong at all.”

“I-I didn’t mean it like that,” Midoriya flustered. “You’re not weak! You’re plenty strong!”

“You were amazing then too. I never would have thought to make a gas bomb to use all the air before I could get to it. I really pay attention in chemistry now, you know.”

“Wait, you said we wouldn’t mention that anymore! And you should be paying attention in class regardless!”

“And I still remember how you broke my arm twice, too.”

“You said it wasn’t broken!”

And in that moment, Midoroya realized that Shoto was smiling. He was doing a crap job hiding it against his bowl, but regardless, he saw it too late. Shit, he thought, he walked right into that one. God, Shoto was teasing him and he fell right for it. Augh. Wasn’t he the older one?

Desperately, he turned to Fuyumi for support. Because a long time ago, she always took his side. But then wasn’t now, and instead, he saw her wide eyes instead.

“Oh!” Fuyumi snapped her fingers, “Shouto’s been in and out of the hospital two years ago. It was you?”

“No one else could,” Shouto said, and if Midoriya dared to think it, sounded proud. Why was he so proud of this? Why was he so happy about this?

“I uh… I think that’s really overestimating me,” Midoriya tried, one last time.

“Izuku’s the top of the top-tier. He’s modest and one hell of a fighter. He’s undefeated in the area.”

Natsuo whistled, and Midoriya stared at Shouto. Shouldn’t he be on his side? But Shouto’s eyes, when he looked at Midoriya, had this incredibly pleased glint in his eyes.

“I’m not undefeated,” he said quietly. “And I’m not that strong, I just… take opportunities as they happen.”

“That’s a formidable quality in a person,” Enji suddenly spoke up, catching everyone off guard.

“...Thank you,” Midoriya dipped his head, out of habit. “I want to use it to help people.”

“...Help them into the hospital,” Shouto tried to clarify.

The expression Midoriya shot his friend could only be described as helpless, but there was something friendly about the entire ordeal that seemed to throw the entire family off. Maybe it was because Enji didn’t mind that his son brought home the reason for his increased hospital visits, maybe it was because Shouto had brought home a friend that he was teasing, or maybe it was because it was the closest thing to a normal family dinner for the Todoroki.

“...Well, I’m glad that you aren’t sending him as often anymore,” Rei said, her voice gentle.

“There’s no point since I know I won’t win,” Todoroki said, looking oddly happy about the whole thing.

Everyone at the table threw a glance at Enji, like they were expecting him to say something, but Midoriya spoke up.

“...If you ever really find a reason to beat me, I think you will,” he said. “It’s just that, when we were fighting, I wanted to win more than you.”

Todoroki stared at him and then nodded.

“Really?” Natsuo deadpanned, “In a fist-fight?”

Midoriya nodded, “Yeah, because Shoto had a lot of people with him, but no one seemed close to him,” he explained curtly, the hot feeling of anger beginning to shimmer as he thought about it, “So I had to win. I had to win so that he didn’t have to be alone anymore.”

There was a long silence as Midoriya lost himself in that moment again, and realizing that they were all just staring at him, flushed again.

“I-It’s a lot more purer than it sounds! Honest!”

The silence was deafening until Enji chuckled. He quickly moved his hand up to cover his mouth, as everyone stared at him like he grew a second head. Still, the older man didn’t seem to notice as he eyed Midoriya across the table.

“A hero complex, indeed.”

“It’s not a complex!” Midoriya squeaked back, feeling his face burn hotly. Seriously? First Shoto and now Enji? They’ve never been like this before, and he spent a lot of time with all the Todoroki in his original timeline.

“Do your folks know about this?” Rei asked, her voice soft like an angel.

He thought about his mom, in another world, and gave a sheepish smile.

“I try not to worry them too much,” he said, rubbing the back of his head, “So I need to get stronger so I don’t worry anyone anymore.”

Fuyumi placed her hands on her chest and sighed deeply, no doubt thinking something highly of him. He couldn’t do it in the last world, but he entertained the thought that it’ll be nice to live up to those expectations until he has to leave.

-

“You don’t have to help with the clean-up,” Rei said, a pleasant smile on her face.

“No, I think it’ll kill Midoriya if he doesn’t help,” Shoto deadpanned. And then, as though recalling something funny, his lips cracked into a small smile, “This is easier for everyone if we just let him do this.”

“I… I’m not that bad…” Midoriya tried, futilely, to defend himself.

Shoto snorted even louder, and passed him some of the plates.

### **Christmas - ChimeraDeku**

“I know you’re there,” Midoriya called out. “Chimera-san.”

“You know, with the way you say that, it doesn’t sound like you were the one who called me.”

The young man tipped his head back and took a long, deep breath.

“You’re right. I’m happy,” he deadpanned.

He placed his hand into his pocket and pulled out a small box. Looking back at the older man, he extended the small gift wrapped in a dark green wrapping paper and a dark maroon ribbon. The corners were rumpled, and it was clearly wrapped at home by someone who…

Ah, he eyed the bandages on Midoriya’s fingers. That’s why.

“Merry Christmas,” he said, his expression morphing into something warm.

“I didn’t get you anything.”

“I know.”

The older man scowled back, but felt his chest twist downwards even more. What was this kid’s problem?

Chojuro, more than ever, thought that Midoriya had no idea who he was or what he did. Or at least, the full extent of it. He couldn’t. He eyed the box before he lifted his hand up to accept it, and green eyes shined. With a smile as gentle as the snowfall around them, Midoriya gave him a polite bow before he left.

If he did know, there was no way he would be able to smile at him like that.

Chojuro clutched the box to his chest, and wondered how such a small thing could weigh so much.

Curiosity got the best of him, and he tugged the ribbon apart and ripped through the paper. Carefully, because he didn’t want to leave any evidence that he was ever here, he tucked the trash into his pocket. He’ll throw it away later.

He stared blankly at the box of mints and suppressed a snort. With the hand that he would normally get his cigar out, he popped one of the small mints into his mouth. It was, by no means, a replacement. But with all the twinkling lights and the wrapping weighing in his pocket, he wasn’t looking for a smoke.

Giving a quiet hum, he rolled the mint in his mouth. Perhaps Midoriya had done something to these, or maybe it had been too long since he had a mint, but it released a warmth throughout his chest.

(If his partner was still alive, he would have gaped at the thought that Chojuro trusted someone enough to eat something that they gave him, vacation or not.)

### **Near Years - Concert**

They definitely didn’t have a permit for this.

### **(January) Liar, Liar \*BakuMido**

“...Who are you?”

Something cold settled into Midoriya’s heart at those words. He turned over his shoulder and smiled softly at the spitting image of his childhood friend. Except not, because the last time he saw Kacchan,

“...Kacchan, are you losing your memories already? I-”

“Who the fuck are you?”

His hand came out to grab the front of Midoriya’s shirt, jerking him and forcing him to stare at him.

“I said, ‘who the fuck are you?’ and I want a fucking answer right now.”

Midoriya thinks that this must be a universal constant. The Bakugo who has an unwavering gaze who can see right through him had to be a universal constant. The sight of his red eyes that cut through any bullshit that the world could throw at him was something that he always relied on.

Thank god.

“I… I don’t understand you. You say things even though they’ve never happened. You call me that stupid name. You show up one day and fucking… change everything and make me hang out with those annoying shits and I-”

“But I thought you liked Kirishima-kun and the others?”

“Shut up! I’m not done!”

And as always, when Bakugo yelled, Midoriya’s expression softened and just as always, Bakugo seemed to get even angrier. His grip on Midoriya’s collar tightened as he shook him a little harder.

“And you make that fucking face. What am I supposed to do? What am I supposed to say? Why don’t you talk to me? We’re friends, aren’t we?!”

A few years ago, Midoriya would have wept at the words.

Right now, he felt tired. This wasn't supposed to happen. First of all, Bakugo was saying this to the wrong Midoriya. Couldn’t he wait a little longer so that he could get Deku-kun here instead? Well, he supposed it was fine. And more importantly, he honestly felt a little flattered that Bakugo would say something like this.

“Fucking say something!”

Even if he and his Kacchan are never able to become friends, he hopes that Deku-kun and the Bakugo here could be. He thinks that, if he could give that back to him, he would be forgiven for all the wrongdoings he has done with Deku-kun’s body.

“...If you don’t want to say anything to me, then how can you call us friends?”

Midoriya stared at him for a moment and then smiled back.

This was good. Awful since Midoriya will never be able to take these words back, but good because Bakugo will be fine without him. Safer. Even better because Deku-kun would be okay. They would have each other in a way that he and his Kacchan would never have.

“Kacchan,” he said, “I’ve never called you my friend.”

After all, this wasn’t his Kacchan. This was a Kacchan that looked like his Kacchan. And he added this to the list of things that he needed to apologize to Deku-kun about, because he put that awful expression on Deku-kun’s Bakugo.

The hand on his front fell limp, and Midoriya pushed the hand away from him. He looked away, rubbing the back of his neck and keeping his eyes away. He didn’t have any fond memories of Bakugo, either of them, but he didn’t want this to be a memory. He didn’t want to remember this expression, especially if this is one of the last time he will see it.

“You get it, now right? Sorry about this and stuff, I really wanted to keep this up until we graduated,” he lied. He didn’t know what would happen actually. But looking at Kacchan like this always made him feel bad.

“You know, it took me some time, but I’ve been watching you for a while.”

He tilted his head to the side and Bakugo’s eyes were so sharp that Midoriya was surprised he didn’t get cut.

“You rubbed the back of your neck when you told that little girl that you weren’t hungry. You rubbed the back of your neck when you told Round-Face that you were going to go to the bathroom when you ditched class instead. You… you only rub your neck when you’re lying.”

His heart stopped for a second, his smile slipping off his face as he stared at Bakugo.

“And I guess that’s what you really look like, huh?” he asked, those red eyes piercing straight through him.

Another universal constant must be that he could not escape Bakugo’s gaze. His eyes would always find him.

“Whoever you are,” Bakugo said, “I don’t care.” This caught Midoriya by surprise, and his eyes widened accordingly. “And I don’t really care what happened to Deku. Since, the person that called out to me and annoyingly stuck to me since then was you,” the blond continued.

He jutted his chin out, his red eyes shining as a grin befitting of a Bakugo came onto his face. He took a step forward, and looked absolutely delighted when Midoriya took a step back.

“So bring it, you fucking delinquient. I’ll take all of you as you are, you fucking twig. I’ll make you accept my fucking friendship even if it goddamn kills you."

“...What?”

Clearly satisfied with the look of fear on Midoriya’s face, he turned on his heel and walked away with a wave, leaving Midoriya to wallow in his confusion.

The new year started in a flurry of emotions, none of which make any sense to him, but he’s certain that it’ll come back to bite him in the ass.

Because, for the first time since he got here, he thought that he would be okay if he stayed.

### **(Post)Unwanted Rock Concert - Enji’s Reaction**

“Preposterous,” Enji spat out, the words like acid and it melted the reporter’s expression in front of him.

“P-pardon?”

“You have a question to ask and you’re asking if I’m ashamed of my son?” he asked, voice low and eyes narrowed.

And what were people expecting? Were they expecting him to lose his temper and yell? What were they expecting?

Even the reporter, who asked that question, had no idea.

But for certain, no one would have ever expected Enji to scowl and say what he did say.

“My Shouto is a smart child, of course he is, he is the product of Rei and I’s marriage. You think that he’ll resort to delinquency like this? Of course he’s not! My son is not a delinquent! The fights he picks are the ones that will shape him to be a better man! If he’s a part of a concert, he would have told me and I would be there instead of answering your preposterous questions! Are you done?!”

The reporter opened his mouth, and then closed it.

“Come to think of it, Fuyumi said that she would be cooking a large dinner. I am sure that my well-established and beautiful daughter has dinner waiting for my family tonight. Yes, I understand, you must have a lot of questions, but I am a very busy man I do not have the time to waste with the likes of you.

The reporter turned, very slowly, to the security lining the doors, but they all refused to meet his eyes.

“It’s going to be a grand feast because my other son, Natsuo will be there. He has a long list of accomplishments, and is well on his way to be a better man than I could ever be. My son…”

And just like that, four hours passed.

-

Shoto covered his face, “That dad of mine,” he sighed.

Midoriya, covering his face in a poor attempt to hide his smile, nodded along.

Next to them, their friends were rolling and slapping the ground in their laughter, all watching the news segment that was trending on the internet and various social media.

“I’m glad that he’s uh…”

“Annoying?”

“I was going to say doting.”

Shoto rolled his eyes. And then shrugged, “Fuyumi-nee mentioned that… she didn’t realize that he even noticed or cared about some of that stuff.”

He did, Midoriya knew but couldn’t say.

“...Do you?” he asked quietly, “Mind?”

His friend looked at the ground, “I think… this time last year, I would have,” he said, watching his ice cream melt in front of him.

Midoriya handed him a napkin, and he took it with a wistful smile.

“...And now?”

The smile he gave the ground was the equivalent to anyone else screaming and cheering, Midoriya was certain. And his friend turned his gentle gaze towards him. It was so painfully familiar that it squeezed the smaller man’s heart at the same time it tried to overwhelm him with nostalgia.

“...I don’t know what you did,” he said, “And I don’t know how you did it. But thank you, Izuku.”

His heart aching, Midoriya managed to smile right back.

“What are you talking about?” he said, “I didn’t do anything.”

Really, he thought, he couldn’t do a goddamn thing.

### **Vacation Plans**

“..Izuku,” Dabi brought up suddenly. “You’re in high school now.”

“...Yes?” Izuku agreed, hoping that he didn’t sound mocking when he agreed because he was just surprised.

“Don’t you … want to go and do stuff?” Dabi asked, waving his hand carrying the groceries in a really vague manner.

Midoriya looked from the grocery bags and then back to Dabi, “Did I forget something?”

“No, I mean,” the older man cut himself off and looked away.

“It’s not like you to be shy-”

“-who’s being shy-”

“But if there is something you don’t want to talk about, you don’t have to force it.”

Dabi looked as though he swallowed a lemon as he dragged his eyes away from Midoriya and scowled back. Suddenly in a shitty mood, Midoriya’s lips pulled into a frown. He swears that this man has some awful mood swings.

Vaguely, in a voice that was much quieter but still persistent, he wonders if Dabi was like this for the League back in his world too. The thought makes him feel a little lonely, (because if not him, then who listened to him?) until Dabi spoke up again.

“You’re in high school now, so it’s okay if you want to take a break from working so much,” he said quietly.

“If it’s about the burns, I’m fully recover-”

And then, as though frustrated with his own meekness, Dabi spun around and marched right up to him, stopping with only a few feets between them as he shouted out, “It’s not that!”

Midoriya bit his tongue in surprise, and reeled back as Dabi raised his voice. The older man looked surprised too, like he wasn’t expecting to raise his voice. He took a deep breath and shook his head. Awkwardly, he shuffled backwards.

“I… I didn’t mean to yell just…”

“It’s okay,” Midoriya replied back. He stepped closer, eyes warm as he regarded the older man, “Take your time. I’m here.”

Dabi stared at him for a long moment and sighed.

“...Let’s go home,” he said quietly.

The young man with his impossibly clear eyes stared right back -right through him-before he nodded.

“Okay, let’s go home.”

-

Dabi had a lot going on in his head. It used to be a little easier, back when he hated everything and the whole world could be categorized with hot or cold. It was a little more simple, even if he hated everything. So when he ran out of the house, he went with full intentions on leaving this earth by dawn.

And then Midoriya stood over him, umbrella in hand, and he got a nickname.

Dabi.

And nothing had been the same since.

“I want to return it to you,” Dabi suddenly broke the silence between them, a block in front of the tiny apartment where he learned that home is a warm place. It’s not hot. It’s not cold.

“...Return what?”

“You… I… I don’t think it’s bad… Living anymore,” Dabi said, slowly. He tried to fight off the blush, because he wasn’t embarrassed for feeling like this anymore, and he didn’t want to be someone who couldn’t say his true feelings. He was sick of being a coward. “I want to return that favor.”

“It wasn’t a favor,” Midoriya said, frowning. “I did it out of my personal, selfish reasons. I don’t want anything from you.”

Kindness is an annoying thing. It’s another thing that he learned from Midoriya. Kindness is an annoying and frustrating thing. And Midoriya stands at the top as the most infuriating type of kindness.

He took a step closer to the young man, until Midoriya’s face was just inches from his chest. The angle Midoriya was bending his neck so that he could maintain eye contact looked painful, but Dabi couldn’t find it in himself to show any more restraint.

“That’s the thing,” the older man said quietly. His hand came up to grab Midoriya’s wrist, his thumb rubbing against that one scar he never forgot about, and felt the young man stiffen. “I want you to want something from me."

He took a step back, ashamed but determined, and Midoriya was beginning to think that he was finally meeting Todoroki Touya.

### **Aizawa & Midoriya’s Low Standards**

"He's not a bad person," Midoriya tried.

"Yakuza," Aizawa hissed back.

"But that doesn't mean he's a bad person," the young man stressed out. "He doesn't experiment on children!"

A pair of hands came to grab his shoulders, and Midoriya let out a small "eep" as Aizawa shook him hard. With bloodshot eyes, lips pulled down into a snarl, the older man snapped out-

"Why is it that, every time I see you, your standards for a decent human being drops a little more?"

Midoriya spluttered because they didn't drop. What kind of terrible-

“They haven’t dropped,” he said, quiet. So quiet that he didn’t know if he whispered it or thought it.

Aizawa sighed, dropping his hands as he crouched in front of him. The scene, somehow suddenly, overlapped with a very precious memory from a long time ago.

“I can’t believe this,” he sighed.

He leaned back and ran his hands through his hair, pulling it out of his bun and letting it rest around his shoulders. In an instant, it looked far too familiar, even if his Aizawa never had such shiny and healthy-looking hair, but it felt like alcohol to his festering wound.

Their eyes met, and Aizawa chuckled. “Well, I guess it’s worthless to ask you to stop now. You’ll just jump in regardless now, right?”

And Midoriya wanted to scream and beg him not to say it. He wanted to curse and yell because this was such a sacred memory to him and it should have been a sacred memory to Deku as well but-

“Well, it’s fine, you Problem Child. I’ll watch over you.”

He didn’t know whether he wanted to cry or laugh.

[... I’ll watch over you. You understand, Problem Child?]

In this world or another, Aizawa was a reliable adult.

### **Dabi’s Hospitalized**

Midoriya came running into the room, uncaring of anything and all else. He slammed the door open with little preemptive action or acknowledgement and he only saw Dabi.

The man stared back at him, a wry grin stretching across his face as he gave a lazy wave. Nothing about him looked as urgent as the text seemed. He wasn’t even in a hospital gown, but was in one of the VIP rooms in the hospital. Sitting in his jeans and t-shirt, looking as though he was on his way to get some more cucumbers from the store, Dabi looked fine.

“Hey, Izuku,” he said.

“You… you’re okay?” he wheezed out.

“Just a broken finger,” he said, lifting his other finger where his pinky finger was broken. “A biker ran into me, and I didn’t break my fall well.” And, as though he already knew what he would ask, continued with a little smile on his face,“Yeah, the biker is fine too. Kid wasn’t even injured.”

“Oh,” Midoriya said. He sank to his knees at the doorway, tears beginning to stream from his face as he covered his face with his hands. “I...I saw the text, and I…” he sniffled loudly as his voice broke. “Oh thank god.” He sucked in a sharp breath, nearly choking as his relief washed over him like a tidal wave.

“Izuku, don’t block the door,” Dabi said, voice quiet and warm despite his words, “Don’t worry, I’m ready to go.”

The young man sighed, a grin stretching onto his face as he rubbed his face again. He looked at his hands in his lap, “I… One sec, I just lost all the feeling in my legs,” he said, a little embarrassed.

“Need a hand?”

He froze, and his head snapped up. How did he miss this?

Also in Dabi’s VIP room were people that he ate with recently. The entire Todoroki family, with the exception of Shoto and Rei, stood in front of him, staring at him with an expression he wasn’t prepared to see.

No way.

It couldn’t be.

Behind him, he realized that it was Endeavor and Fuyumi. They looked shocked and surprised at him, a little annoyed on Enji’s side, and he felt lightheaded.

“...Izuku?” Dabi’s voice called out.

“Ah… haha,” Midoriya pushed up to his feet. His eyes locked in on Enji’s, remembering that shitshow of a dinner party and that awful temporary internship, and took a shaky step back. His gaze dropped to Natsuo’s hand, and dropped his gaze to the ground. He could feel his eyes watering again, but this time, he’ll be crying for different reasons. “W-What ah… I’m sorry that you had to see that-”

Oh no. Oh shit.

“Don’t be,” Dabi said, getting up and walking over to him. “C’mon, let’s go home.”

“Go?” Midoriya frowned back. He looked at the man approaching him, and then to the other occupants, and then back to the supposed patient. Blindly, his mind raced as he tried to find something coherent to latch onto. Hospital. Patient. Doctor. Oh! Bills! “Uh, wait, I gotta go and pay the-”

“They’re covering it,” Dabi said, spinning him around so that they were both facing the door, and then wrapping his arm around Midoriya’s shoulders to minimize how much he could turn.

Without meaning to, Midoriya leaned into that familiar warmth. His eyes watered again as he remembered that pit of fear that dropped when he saw that fucking text-

“Then, shouldn’t we at least say goodbye-” but still, he was a good kid that was raised with good manners. And also because leaving before Endeavor dismissed you could lead to bad things happening to him later on.

“No.” He can’t quite say the same for Dabi.

The man’s words were final, and his eyes were cold. He was not going to budge on this. He didn’t want to talk about this. He didn’t look anywhere but the door. He wanted to leave. Midoriya looked up at him from his awkward position, unable to push away the memories of another lifetime.

“Dabi,” he tried one more time, his voice quiet. Ice blue eyes dropped their gaze to his face without moving his head, and Midoriya hoped that his words could reach him when his heart couldn’t, a universe ago. “I’m glad you’re okay.”

He watched Dabi’s expression melt down into something he was more accustomed to seeing now. Gone was the homeless guy laying in the rain on the side of the street, and instead was the Dabi that replaced his heating unit at home. He watched the way his shoulder relaxed, and he nodded. The arm around his shoulders loosened into something more friendly.

“...Yeah, you would,” he said, his voice barely a whisper as he gave a lazy grin.

As best he could, Midoriya waved at the other Todorokis’, hoping that they would notice how he can’t look at them. His heart ached.

In his world, Todoroki Touya died and became a villain named Dabi.

In this world, he stole Todoroki Touya from his family and made him Dabi.

### **(?)To Dump (?)**

Midoriya made it to the parking lot before he just couldn’t. His head spun, and he hated himself.

He wanted to take that away. He wanted to break that. He made that choice, and in turn, took that option away from Dabi. He did this out of his own selfish green.

Because, at some point or another, he liked having Dabi in his life. This wasn’t even his life, but he was trying to force his own personal greed onto it.

It scared him. He didn’t want to be comfortable and happy and content here. He wanted to go home. He needed to go home. He knew that he would have to give this back to the Original Deku of this universe eventually. He knew that. It didn’t matter how happy everyone here looked, or the fact that they were all alive and in good health. None of that mattered.

It wasn’t his.

And no matter how many times he repeated that in his head, it wouldn’t stick. As a result, he cried next to a tree behind a car, sobbing uncontrollably. His tears carried no weight, because his feelings were superficial. This wasn’t his, and this didn’t matter to him.

It wasn’t fair.

In his world, he didn’t even have a Dabi he could call his own. Natsuo was dead and there wasn’t much left of Fuyumi. The Shoto here laughed loudly and couldn’t beat him in arm-wrestling. He’s missing someone that wasn’t his-that wasn’t real-that wasn’t for him.

So he’ll cry it all out right now. He’ll get rid of this awful feeling sitting on his chest, and he will return back to that hospital room with a grin on his face. He’ll be supportive and happy that everyone in this world is going to be much happier than his world.

Which was fine, this Deku clearly deserved it.

This was fine.

Scrubbing his face, he got back up. He was fine. Look at how fine he was. He wasn’t going to let this hold him down-he wouldn’t hold anyone back.

His phone buzzed, and he pulled the breaking thing out of his pocket. There was a single message.

come back

Heart filled with an emotion he shouldn’t be feeling, he did just that. This time for certain, he’ll cut himself off. He needed to.

If he likes anyone here anymore, he might actually consider staying.

### **Todoroki Family Meeting**

“Oh, Izuku came to pick up Touya-niisama?” Shouto nodded, “That makes sense, since Touya-niisama is living with Izuku.”

Everything seemed to stop.

“What?” Rei said, shocked and looking ready to open a guest room as Midoriya’s.

“What?” Natsuo gasped, looking ready to pack a bag and move into Midoriya’s.

“What?” Enji demanded, upset that he didn’t even know.

“What?” Fuyumi whispered out, a hand at her mouth. After a second, her hand dropped to her heart, “So that’s why he could smile.”

“W-why didn’t you say anything?” Natsuo stammered out, looking at their youngest with betrayal.

Heterochromatic eyes met his evenly, and bluntly, Shouto replied, “Because he looked happier.”

There was a long silence between them.

### **Enji & Dabi - Coming to Terms**

Enji figured that he wasn’t welcomed.

“Welcome to Nishiya Florist…”

Still, looking at Touya’s bright blue eyes, he couldn’t bring himself to have enough shame to leave. He gave a curt nod, but his mouth wouldn’t open, as though his lips had been melted together.

“Ah, what are you looking for? We have flowers that are great for women you married but didn’t love, and other consolidation flowers for the kids you finally remembered existed.”

And then, a sudden thud was heard.

“Dabi, you little shit! Stop treating rich-looking customers poorly!” a man, presumably the manager, howled at Touya, his son.

But when he did it, Shoto snapped. Here, Touya just scowled.

“What do ya want, pops?” he hissed out, “You said they’re not customers if they’re not paying.”

“Your shitty attitude is what’s turning them all away!” he shouted back. “Does Midoriya know that you’re this awful?”

“Yeah, of course he does,” Touya snapped back, puffing his chest out and grinning smugly while the manager muttered darkly. “Now, you gonna let me do my job?”

The manager looked from Touya to Enji and then back. After a second, he sighed and patted him on the shoulder once, keeping his hand there to squeeze it, and Enji watched with a start when Touya relaxed.

“Don’t push it, part-timer.”

The manager stepped away.

“He acts like that, but he means well,” Touya said, a growing grin on his face. He slowly turned back to him, “So I trust him. He’s such a good guy that he’ll accept someone like me to watch his storefront.”

His smile remained, but it was cold. Enji had to remind himself that Dabi was a fire-quirk user, like him, but it felt like that was where the similarities stopped.

“So, what do you want, esteemed customer? It’s not like you’re here to see me. Unless you are, and then you came after finding out where and when I worked so you can corner me for your question, right?”

Enji hesitated. Touya’s words were harsh. He couldn’t even see it anymore, the child that barely came up to his knees and bragged to everyone they met that he inherited his dad’s quirk.

The words he wanted to say remained clogged in his throat.

“Recently. I was told that we don’t know anything that we don’t know. When I say it aloud, it sounds really obvious, right? But it’s true and I forgot that. We don’t know, and that’s why we ask. So we can know. Somewhere down the line, I never asked about you because I didn't see the point in knowing anything about someone who didn't want me.”

Still, Enji could not find the right words, or any for that matter, to speak. He knew that the first step would be an apology, but now that he thought about it, he didn't remember how to.

Another silence stretched between them. With a long suffering sigh, Touya stood up. He walked around the counter and leaned backwards against the register.

Where the son took in his father’s features, the father kept his eyes glued on the ground.

“I didn’t know until I started working here, but flowers are hard to take care of,” Touya started, completely derailing their conversation. “There’s a lot of them, so you have to really know the difference. Some need more sunlight, some actually grow better if they have saltwater sprayed on them, things like them.” His gaze fell to the flowers in the store, and a lopsided grin came onto his face, “And there’s even a flower that’s stronger than anything else in the world. No one can cut him or threaten him or hurt him in a way that he’ll wilt.”

Enji had thought that Touya would yell. Maybe shoot fire. Kick him out and tell him to never come back.

“I like that flower. I wanna see it bloom. I wanna show him that helping me wasn’t a waste. I wanna be as strong as him one day, so that he doesn’t have to feel like I have to be protected. I want to do the protecting instead, and make sure that he never does wilt.”

Touya didn’t look frustrated though. He looked healthy. His grin was bright and it made his face glow. Looking at him, Enji understood that it was an expression he had never seen on his son. Any of them.

“So it’s fine. I’m okay. I used to be angry, and I used to hate you, but I don't feel anything for you now,” he told him. He passed a bouquet of flowers, an assortment of brightly colored flowers, red, yellow, white, and oranges of petals belonging to flowers he couldn’t name, with a wide grin on his face. “The things that happened before made me who I am now. And I’m happy now.”

“...Touya, I-”

“Right now, I’m someone’s Dabi,” he interrupted him, his grin turning amused. “So, Todoroki-san, we don’t have to have anything with each other. As a stranger, I can tell you this whole-heartedly.”

It would have been better if Touya yelled at him.

“Todoroki-san, please be happy somewhere far away from me where I never have to see you again.”

It would have been easier to accept someone’s malicious words and their hurtful language. It would have been much easier and much better, because then, Enji could just say that he tried and then move on. He did what he needed to do, he put up the visage that he tried, he could check that off his list and then move on.

Instead, he received a warm forgiveness that would last for as long as they didn’t know each other. He was given an opportunity to see that wide grin on Touya’s face, and he was forced to face the thought that he could be happy. He could forgive too.

And Enji wasn’t ready for that kind of chance in his life, when wallowing in his self-pity and anger was as easy as it was habitual.

### **Dabi - coming home after cutting off contact**

"...Dabi, go home."

"Oh? You're cutting my hours?"

"I don't have time for this delivery," the shopowner sneered back. He passed two flowers, wrapped delicately with a blue ribbon, "Midoriya ordered it. Go get it to him. Sign it out tomorrow morning when you return."

Dabi wondered why, as soon as someone thought something was wrong with him, they flung him at Midoriya. Well, he took the flimsy excuse into his hands. He'd take it.

"What a slave-driver. Well, I'm out for the day."

"And Dabi," the shopkeeper said, "It's okay to be weak." He placed his hand on top of Dabi's head, ruffling it like how he wanted it, back when he was six and didn't understand that love wasn't equal. "You'll always be a little brat to me."

"Shut up, we've only known each other for a year," Dabi said, even though he didn't pull away

"What an ungrateful brat. Bring Midoriya and your other strays with you next week, Hiji-ji said he'll treat you to ramen as your hospital release."

He left and Dabi left, feeling as though the world was finally his.

-

"Izuku!"

He raised his hand, waving the young man at the center of his motley crew of lost teenagers.

As selfish as it may be, Dabi would claim the entire shine on Midoriya's face when their eyes locked and he beamed.

"Dabi!"

"Hi Dabi-san," the assortment of strays replied back. He waved at them.

### **Enji tells fam**

"Touya said he's fine," he explained. "And he's happy."

### **Natsuo in the middle of the night & Natsuo v Aizawa**

First of all, Natsuo would like to point out to anyone who wanted to listen that he normally didn't frequent bars like this. He was a relatively good kid that didn't go beg his upperclassmen for drinks. If he had known that dorm life was going to end up like this, he would have...

Actually, he doesn't think anything would have changed. He definitely wouldn't have stayed at home. And short of becoming a social recluse, he would still be out here, helping his seniors get home after getting shit-faced. He really hated how, just because he was the biggest guy here, he was automatically given the worst of manual labor.

"Man Natsuo, you have such a nice body," drunkard-senpai said. "I bet you got like... ten girlfriends."

No, actually, Natsuo barely had one in middle school.

"Rich and handsome, this isn't fair. It must be soooooo nice," he sighed.

And again, Natsuo would have to listen to things like this. The things that people always think as soon as they meet him. The things that people could only say in groups or when they're under the influence. All these things-

He took a deep breath, and got his senpai home.

-

Rubbing his neck, Natsuo was crossing back across campus to get to his shitty studio apartment when he passed an alleyway.

There were four different alleyways that Natsuo had to pass from drunkard-senpai's residence to his. Just from the shitty lighting and distance from the street, it was reeked of suspicious activity. This feeling was doubled when he saw anyone in them. But it was nearing two AM and Natsuo just wanted to get a few hours in before he had to get to his nine AM lectures.

But nothing in his life could ever be easy.

He watched in morbid fascination as he watched a fight between four people and one ended with the single-fighter as the victor. He watched as dread pooled in his gut. Everything according to physics and logic stated that the single-fighter should have lost, since they didn't have the numerical advantage, but the person who was making sure everyone was laying on their back and checking their heads for serious injury was the solo fighter.

Natsuo knew people who would throw their so-called 'best friend' and 'lovers' aside to further themselves. It was a bizarre sight.

Until the kid turned around, and Natsuo felt the whole world slow down.

"...Midoriya?"

The young man whipped around, staring at him.

“...Natsuo…?”

-

“...So you uh… get into back alley fights often or something?”

Midoriya looked at him, hesitant and uncertain as he looked from the where they were watching the ambulance pile the boys in the alleyway into their back.

“...N… Not really,” he said.

Natsuo gave a huff, not quite a laugh, but more like he was too surprised to do anything else other than laugh.

“Oh really? And that’s why you beat up a bunch of guys by yourself in the middle of the night and even called an ambulance for them? Even going as far to let everyone know that they took each other out and were not an endangerment to the people around them, right? Wow, could have had me fooled.”

Midoriya flinched back, and Natsuo took a deep breath.

“But, as the guy who kept throwing other Shoto into the hospital, I guess that it makes sense.”

The young man buried his face in his hands, as though he was found with his fly down and not after a street fight he won.

“Please forget that.”

“Forget? Why would I do that?” Natsuo asked, “Yeah, it surprised me and I wouldn’t have expected it, but it’s pretty cool, isn’t it? Beating up all the people you don’t like and all of that.”

Midoriya rubbed the back of his neck.

“I would rather be remembered as someone who never needed to fight.”

The white-haired man frowned. “If we could live in a world like that, then we wouldn’t need to fight at all.”

Midoriya nodded, a twisted smile curling onto his lips.

“Yeah… I guess so.”

A hand came to his shoulders.

“C’mon, my apartment is around the corner.”

“Oh, no, it’s okay. I’ll be fine.”

“Wouldn’t you worry about someone like that? You even called an ambulance for them after you did them in,” Natsuo sniped back, ignoring the way the smaller man flinched at the words. “I have a first aid kit, and my roommate’s a nurse. C’mon, it won’t hurt-”

“He said no.”

Materializing seemingly out of the shadow, a hand grabbed Midoriya’s wrist and yanked him behind him. The young man yelped, but all Natsuo could focus on was the thin man that suddenly appeared. Piercing red eyes narrowed at Natsuo, as the man tucked the young student behind him and to the two blond behind him.

“I…” Natsuo stared at him, seeing the expensive suits and the messy bun on his head, frowned, “And what’s it to you?”

This guy didn’t look like a student. He didn’t look some convenience store owner, and now that they’ve stood here for a moment, Natsuo could smell the booze and expensive cologne radiating off of him. If anything, Natsuo should be shielding Midoriya from him.

“A-Aizawa-san,” Midoriya stammered out. “No, wait, it’s not what you think-”

“Not what I think?”

Briefly, red eyes went from Natsuo’s face to the young man behind him. His lips pulled back into a scowl, eyebrows furrowed as he all but hissed out the rest of his words.

“When someone says no, it’s common courtesy to let them go,” he turned back, his scathing wrath as bright as the streetlamps around them, “I didn’t think that someone of your age would be incapable of that.”

“Oi, Shota,” one of the blonds behind him said. “C’mon, already there’s an ambulance over there. Let’s bounce before the cops get here.” Despite his words, however, Natsuo could feel his sharp gaze through his orange shades.

“We can just make them take another passenger,” Aizawa spat out.

“And I’m telling you that Nezu-san told all of us to stay out of prison for a week.”

“No, really, it’s not like that. It’s actually my fault, so please let him go,” Midoriya’s voice spoke up, “I-It’s really not what you said. Natsuo’s not like-”

Aizawa turned to Midoriya so fast that Natsuo honestly believed that the kid was the one in the wrong.

“I’m sick,” Aizawa spat out, his voice as quiet as a whisper but harsh like drought, “and tired of seeing you hurt.’

“...Well, Midoriya,” Natsuo spoke up. He’s been and seen enough bar fights to know how this one was gearing up to be. It wasn’t going to be pretty, and he was certain that these colorfully dressed hosts cared about him. “...We’ll talk later.”

And as he left, he could hear the quiet hissing of, “How? How do you end up in these situations every goddamn week?”

And he learned something about the boy who brought a smile back to Shoto’s face. A lot of things, actually. Or rather, confirmation on one thing (he’s a damn good fighter) and new material otherwise (because he didn’t think that Midoriya would charm a few hosts, Aizawa probably only looked away because he had two others backing him up). He took a deep breath.

### **Saving Hawks**

Getting enemies wasn’t a shock. It wasn’t hard. There were jealous fools everywhere. However, it was a little rare for these cowards to come together and attack him like this.

-

Hawks never thought he could feel this much relief and dread in the same moment. After all, who else but the person that he cared for the most could have found him and saved him? Who else but the kid who took down a bag-snatcher in a maid outfit could come flying in like a cartoon hero from the states?

But unlike superheroes in comic books, Midoriya doesn’t have any special superpowers. Unless kindness was a superpower, then Midoriya would be the greatest superhero that ever lived. And well, even then, he’s certain that nothing would have changed.

Hawks had always thought that he knew the limits of the human body until he saw Midoriya brawl. Then, he thought that he knew too much, and that Midoriya was a much better fighter than he ever thought.

“Are you okay?”

“...What?”

“...Well, you look okay. You should be careful, you know?” Midoriya said, his worried expression turning into that tender smile Hawks knew him for, “As a handsome man, your face is your first priority, right?”

His tone was teasing as though he didn’t have a split lip and his knuckles were bruised and scabbing. The blond gulped, and suddenly, the weight of the situation fell on him.

This kid came running in to fend off eight adults and he won. He did that for Hawks, a guy he’s known for a couple of weeks before he passed him a key to his apartment. He did that for Hawks, despite how often the blond annoyed him and pestered him and caused mayhem for him and his roommates.

And that really, really scared the blond.

Just looking at Dabi and Shigaraki, he knew that he wasn’t special. This wasn’t something that Midoriya did for him, because he was special to him. This was something that Midoriya just did.

“...Why?” he asked quietly, “Why did you come?”

Midoriya’s tender smile turned into a confused one, like he didn’t understand why Hawks was asking. For him, it must have been obvious that this was what he did. Hawks was strange for thinking differently. He must have come up with something as his cheeks turned a little red. The sight of his embarrassed self was normally enough to pull a teasing remark or six from the blond, but he couldn’t muster it out right now.

Right now, he couldn’t focus on anything other than the fact that Midoriya was here.

“To be honest, I saw you out of the corner of my eye. It’s going to sound super starkerish, but I swear that I wasn’t stalking you or anything, I really did just see you out of the corner of my eye! And I saw those guys take you into a van, so I followed you-”

“No, why did you come here to help me?!” Hawks finally snapped back. “Why didn’t you call Dabi or Shigaraki? Why did you come here, by yourself? Why did you save me?”

His yelling must have shocked Midoriya. But that wasn’t fair. Hawks was the one that was shocked and confused. Why would anyone, especially someone like Midoriya who seemed to have connections with powerful people everywhere, decide to come alone to help him? Why did he come at all?

What if this didn’t go well? What if Hawks had been staring at Midoriya’s lifeless body on the ground instead?

The blond didn’t know how he would live after that.

The young man stared back, eyes wide in his surprise. He looked down at the ground, as though trying to find the answer there before he gave a small sigh.

“...The truth is...I want to be a hero,” he admitted. “But when I saw you get taken, I didn’t think about what a hero would do. Actually, I didn’t think at all. I guess… all I saw was that someone needed help so I just ran.”

The blond would never understand Midoriya or the way he thinks. This was something that he was willing to accept. He would never understand Midoriya, and he would never meet someone quite like this man for the rest of his life. That was fine. Having one Midoriya in the world was enough.

But Hawks also understood from that moment on that he would never forgive himself if something ever happened to Midoriya because of him.

“You’re crazy, you know that?”

Midoriya forced a laugh, not even putting in much effort, but his eyes were impossibly bright as he eyed Hawks.

“I’m glad you’re okay, too.”

### **Hawks & Deku - 2 ways to care about heroes**

“You know Deku,” Hawks said, as they sat on the swingset in a park when the moon hung over their head, “you scare me.”

Midoriya looked up from the ground to the blond next to him. His exhausted mind tried to formulate a response, but the best he managed was a quiet, “Eh?”

Tiny wings fluttered just a little bit, as the older man gave him a lopsided grin. “Yeah. You scare the fuck out of me.”

The use of vulgarity wiped some of the sleepy grogginess from his mind and he felt a little more alert. “What? Really?”

Hawks nodded again. “Yeah. You have some powerful friends. Not just in the means of influence, but also in actual physical might,” he said, running a hand through his hair, “and you still came, single-handed and unarmed into a fight where they had kidnapped a full grown man. You didn’t… stop to think for a second?”

“I did,” Midoriya replied back, a frown on his face, “If they’re strong and organized enough to take a fully grownman like they did you, I knew that they were dangerous.”

“And you didn’t think to… call the cops?”

“If they’re that organized, I figured that the cops would already know and choose not to do anything.”

“See? That. That scares me.”

“Huh?”

“You knew. It was someone terrifying. Someone that could whisk me away in the middle of the day, powerful and influential enough that the police would turn a blind eye. That someone, you understood how dangerous they were, and you still decided to fight them. And then, you won,” Hawks gave this huff, like he was still processing how he felt about it. “Yeah, that’s pretty scary.”

He got off his swing and moved to stand in front of Midoriya. He kneeled down to look up at the younger man, as both of his hands came to the chains of the swing and held it tightly. Which was funny, because Midoriya wasn’t going to run from him.

“That kind of strength doesn’t come out of nowhere.”

The conversation could have leaned to something dangerous. If Hawks asked, Midoriya wouldn’t be able to lie. On occasion, when he saw his bloodstained Hawks overlap with the one in front of him, he felt his heart clench. At the same time, he knew Hawks. If this Hawks was anything like the Hawks he remembered, then this Hawks would do anything and everything to help.

For all Midoriya knew, that could get dangerous.

“I didn’t think that you wanted to go.”

“I didn’t,” Hawks agreed, smile gone and eyes sharp, “you’re right about that. But that doesn’t mean that you had to do something about it.”

Green eyes blinked back. It didn’t ever register in his mind that it was a possibility. If someone needed help, and he could help, he helped. That’s it. As simple as breathing. As natural and blinking.

“Oh.”

“Yeah,” Hawks huffed, his smile returning in an exasperated way. “Oh,” he parroted back. He gave a wide grin, standing up and releasing Midoriya’s swing to put his hands in his pockets. “But you know, it’s fine.”

“Huh?”

Midoriya, who was expecting to be lectured at and scolded again, blinked back dumbly.

“You’re not going to stop. There’s nothing I can do or say that will deter you in the slightest. That’s fine. I’ll just support you instead.”

It was like there were two ways people worried and fretted over heroes. The first was what Shigaraki and he did, a few months back when Shigaraki was beyond-himself in his worry. To this day, the memory sits like a patch of sunlight in his heart.

The second way was this.

Hawks grinned back, bright like he could replace the sun in the sky, as he spoke, “I got your back.”

And it broke Midoriya’s heart, because that’s exactly why he died in the first place.

### **Chisaki-san’s Dinner Plans**

Chisaki Kai, he thinks in terms of Ashida, is a Mood™.

What else does he have to explain the anomaly that is Chisaki Kai? He was a man who clearly doesn’t care about the whole patient thing, but is profiting off of it so that he can put some funds into the…. Experiments that he is conducting. He’s a part of a group that’s a part of a group, and while he had no idea how he would ever win against a guy like him, he knew that he would figure it out or die trying.

It wasn’t ideal, but he didn’t know what else he could do.

So, the fact that Chisaki looked at him much differently than the Overhaul he remembered had to be a blessing.

Bonus since it seemed like he wasn’t experimenting on children.

He felt like an absolute ass for thinking that, but it sounds like they take in <undesirables>.

People who tried to kill themselves but failed. People who ran a long debt with the Yakuza so they sell their children away. People who were unwanted and then lashed out at society. People that were just in the wrong place at the wrong time and crossed Chisaki when he was in a bad mood.

Eventually, Midoriya will save them too. He hasn’t gotten there yet. He’s a hero, every person he can’t save is someone that he has killed.

He knew that it’s selfish and hypocritical. He knew. But he wanted to save those that are in arms reach. He wanted to save as many people as possible. And not just save, but reassure them that the world wasn’t filled with just awful things, and that their minds could be their own worst enemies. Things like that. Things that Midoriya would have wanted to hear.

“Well, Midoriya-kun, what happened this time?”

Chisaki’s voice broke him out of his thoughts, and he looked up to see the man walking in. The man took off his face-mask, and placed it on his desk before taking a seat.

Midoriya, with his hand to the bleeding cut on his neck, gave a sheepish smile. Honestly, he thought that Setsuno would take care of it for him again, but he supposed that Chisaki wanted a break from whatever it was that he did.

“...I see. Is it the same people again?”

Midoriya tilted his head to the side so that Chisaki could get a good gaze on the new cut on his neck that ran from his earlobe to his collarbone. Golden eyes narrowed, looking so annoyed and so disgusted that it honestly shocked him that he didn’t call Kurono right then and there. As inappropriate as it may be, Midoriya couldn’t help but think that some things just don’t change. It looked as though the older man was still as disgusted as always with blood and grime, but at least he didn’t break out into hives.

“...Honestly,” the older man sighed, reaching over to grab Midoriya’s chin to get a better look. Midoriya didn’t protest even when his neck was held at an awkward angle, and the yakuza leaned back. “You should have taken my offer. You wouldn’t have to live like this.”

Midoriya chuckled at that, “I’m a terrible roommate,” he said, voice scratchy after he got kicked in the neck three times too many, “You’d try to kill me by dinner.”

Chisaki's fingers on his chin twitched, pausing for a brief split second, before he continued like nothing was wrong. He must sound worse than he thought. “Perhaps, but at this rate, it’s not like you’re going to last till lunch. Well, it looks like it wasn't deep. A lot of blood but nothing too serious. Eight.. No, six stitches will be enough."

He was really grateful. Not only was this a lot cheaper than a hospital, but he always felt like he was wasting good supplies to the people who really needed it. Whereas when he came here, it always felt like they were going to give him the absolute minimum amount of service. If it's just four, he'll be fine as long as he takes it easy. So he’ll be extra vigilant not to jump out of anything higher than the second story for a week.

“Let’s see that arm.”

He grabbed him by the wrist, and Midoriya was glad that he had such a high pain tolerance. Another person would be screaming at Chisaki’s uh… bedside manner.

“These are pretty clean cuts too. Nothing broken, but these are some bad bruises,” he said, and pulled off his glove.

“Ah, you don’t have to worry about those,” Midoriya said, tugging at his arm, “It doesn’t hurt that much.”

“...Izuku-kun, I’ll take good care of you.”

He blinked, and tilted his head.

“Sorry, I got a lot of strays to take care of. I don’t want to dump them onto you.”

Chisaki’s eyes, golden in color, always made Midoriya feel like someone had melted gold to pour into his eyes. It was a color that shined and these days, they looked brighter. But Midoriya had no doubts that if he fell in, he'd die miserably.

The sight of it made Midoriya smile.

“...Thanks for the help, Chisaki-san,” he said.

-

“Good as new,” Midoriya chirped as soon as Chisaki gave him the okay.

“I would rather if you stopped meeting up with me only to get patched up. Why don’t you stay for dinner? God knows how you got Hojo and Rappa to get so attached to you.”

Midoriya laughed back, the thought of seeing them made him giddy. To think, in another world, another place, they would be in a relationship like this. It felt like a dream, like glass, but if ever thought to get used to it, it would dissipate and break against concrete reality.

“...I wanna see them too,” Midoriya replied back, “Maybe I-”

His phone buzzed and he gave Chisaki an apologetic smile as he checked it. It was an automatic text message from his burner phone. Someone had used it.

He stared and a thousand possibilities ran through his head before he unlocked his phone and remembering whose company he was in, stood up.

“Sorry, something just came up. Looks like I gotta go deal with that,” he said. And gave Chisaki a smile, “What should I do for you this time? For this?”

Hopefully, it wouldn’t be more than a couple thousand yen. Any more and he would have to hit the ATM to pull it out of his savings, and he really, really didn’t want to do that. Time was tight. But, he wasn’t the type to swindle the people who were helping him, who would continue to help him, and he wasn’t going to start now.

“...Come over for dinner later this week.”

Midoriya’s eyebrows hit his hairline, “Uh…..”

Chisaki turned around, but it was too late and Midoriya could see how red the tips of his ears were turning.

“And bring your stupid strays.”

“Uh….”

“Well? Or should I just take your arms completely away?”

“No, uh, that’s fine,” he replied back, trying to swim through his mind to figure out what the fuck just happened. He gave a nod and stared at Chisaki’s back before a laugh bubbled out of his throat. “Hm, we’ll come swing by Wednesday. We’ll come around four so we can figure out how much food we need.”

“Yeah, whatever,” he replied back, “Just get out of here and go get injured already.”

Midoriya didn’t think he would be able to stop smiling even if someone were to punch him across the face right now. He pushed the window that he crawled in through, and gave another airy laugh, still reeling from the shock of what had just happened.

Wow. He thought. He was going to be eating dinner with Chisaki.

He let gravity pull him out of the window, landing easily two floors below. For now, he had to push aside those giddy feelings and move on,there were people to catch, his burner phone to find.

And Wednesday will come.

-

Wednesday came, with a disgruntled Shigaraki, an impassive Dabi, and Midoriya with an impressive black eye.

“...I haven’t seen you in a week,” Chisaki sighed, staring at Midoriya’s face. His eyes took careful notice of the scar on Midoriya’s neck, looking several months old even though he remembered stitching it not too long ago.

The young man rubbed the back of his head sheepishly.

### **Valentines’ Day - Momo’s confession & Dabi’s OOF**

"I really like you, Midoriya-kun! Please accept my feelings!" Yaoyorozu finally managed to get out after seven minutes of stuttering and stammering.

Midoriya stared at her for a long moment, his jaw slowly unhinging as the words sank into his heart and he stared in open-mouth awe at Yaoyorozu.

Because, if anyone could love a molten mess of a human being, if anyone could love a lost soul in a splintered body, it would be someone as tender-hearted as Yaoyorozu.

At once, his heart broke. When someone kind and forgiving met someone irreversibly broken, it would hurt her. It wasn't something that he wanted to do to her. Far away in his heart, he hoped and prayed that she would find happiness.

"...Momo," he said quietyly, "I'm sorry. I cannot accept your feelings."

Her eyes watered, but she didn't cry. She nodded, and with quivering lips and a shaky voice, spoke up.

"C-Could I... I ask why?"

Midoriya thought to the hesitant way she used to look at him. He thought back to the Yaoyorozu, surrounded by wealth and peers but never smiled.

"...I think that you have mistaken your feelings or... gratitude and admiration for love. It's easy to mix them up, but that's not what I'm looking for."

She stared at him for a long moment, confusion marring her face as she looked from one corner of the ground to the other and then looked hopelessly back at Midoriya.

"H-How do... How would you... How could I differentiate?"

If Midoriya was a good person, he would have dated Yaoyorozu. He would have dated her and done his best as a boyfriend, and patiently wait for her to realize that on her own and for them to break up on good terms. But Midoriya, who went misisng for days at a time, or might return to his universe some time in the future and leave the traumatized Deku behind to traumatize the rest.

He dipped his head forward.

"I'm sorry."

She took a deep breath. Her hands came up to her face, pushing at the corners of her eyes as she tried to regain control over herself. In the end, it failed her and she turned around, running off as fast as she could.

-

Dabi leaned against the wall, torn between cheering because Midoriya was still single and despairing because he had heard him clearly. Midoriya rejected her because he thought that she might love him, but wasn't in love with him.

Wouldn't he be the same?

He took a deep breath. How was he supposed to prove that the feeling he had wasn't about admiration? The box of chocolates that he had in his hand felt heavy and mocking.

Should he be glad that he got to see this? That he didn't have to bear the humiliation of being told he didn't know what he was feeling? Was that better?

At the very least, some high schooler had more courage than him. She had the courage to face rejection in the face. He couldn't even do that.

Standing against the wall, listening to Midoyia's quiet sigh, Dabi wondered if anything had changed from when he was a child listening to his parents fight to now.

When it counted the most, his courage deserted him and he was nothing more than a spectator.

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. It's been a while since he felt so disappointed in himself.

### **Tamaki Figures Out**

Tamaki stopped to

“...It was you?”

Tamaki slowly turned to him.

“...They did this to you?”

Yes, Tamaki was not an active participant. Yes, Tamaki never personally laid his hands on Deku-kun’s body. Yes, these were all facts. But Tamaki did know. He knew that his friends were doing this. He knew and he didn’t do anything to stop them, even though they would have all listened to him without complaint.

From his rapidly paling features, Midoriya understood that Tamaki knew that.

But there was nothing to say. Nothing to forgive. The person who was harmed wasn’t here.

### **post**