### **(July) Dinner Party**

Izuku groaned when the doorbell rang. He pulled himself up from the table and made his way over to open the door, and stared in absolute shock as Shimura stood there. He stared and stared, and the older man looked at him and then the doorframe and then back to him.

The taller man shifted a little, and Izuku’s eyes flitted to the nearly bursting plastic bags in his hands. It looked like they were filled with food and drinks.

“...Let me in.”

“O-oh, right,” Izuku said, stepping back to let his housemate in. He hesitated again, and bit the bullet, “What’s… all this for?”

The older man gave him a withering glare.

“You forgot already? Well, whatever, the others will be here soon enough.”

“...Others?”

The doorbell rang again, and accompanying it was the frantic slamming of the door.

“Fucking nerd, open the fucking door up! This shit is heavy! The meat is all going to go bad!”

Operating on instinct, Izuku yanked the front door open and gaped back when Bakugo scowled back at him. Behind him, Yamada gave a happy wave as he lifted the plastic bags in his hand.

"Special delivery! Don't worry, Aizawa is going to get the cake."

"Cake?"

“Christ, you’re a shit host. And go outside and help fucking round-face and turbo-engine with the ice box!”

“Y-Yes sir!” he cried back, slipping on some slippers as he ran outside. What the fuck was going on?

"Put your fucking shoes on!"

"R-right!" Midoriya blurted back, nearly tripping over his foot as he rushed out, barely remembering to do just that.

“Midoriya! Help!”

He stared in no little amount of shock as Uraraka came forward, holding several bags of snacks of some sort, and watched as she threw a glance back.

“Shinsou-kun is helping Chisaki with the meat pan, but I don’t know who is helping Iida with the drinks!”

Before Izuku could ask why Chisaki had a meat pan, why Shinsou was helping Chisaki, or why anyone was here at all, he only heard that Iida-kun needed help and went running towards the stairs to his apartment unit.

Imagine his shock when he saw Stain and Iida, each holding one side of the giant ice box, walking up the stairs. It was a combination he never expected to see, in any capacity.

“Oh! Midoriya-kun!” Iida said, a bright smile on his face as he waved, “You might want to step a little to the side while we come up,” he said.

Numbly, Izuku did just that.

“Hey,” Stain said, “Spinner said he’ll be a little late. He has my gift.”

“Late... ?” Izuku replied back. "Gift…?"

“Nii-san said he and Toyomitsu-san will be by with Tsukauchi and the others after their late night shift. Please let me know if they overstay their welcome,” Iida said, slightly out of breath but with a wide grin. As always, it pinched his heart a little to see the innocent shine on his face, but experience made it a lot easier to return that grin with one of his own.

“I knew we should have done this at the estate,” Shoto sighed, coming up the stairs holding several insulated bags. “There’s no way we’re all going to be able to fit inside of your apartment.”

“It’ll be a cold day in hell because I go back to the compound,” Dabi replied back, also with his own assortment of insulated bags as he wiped his excess sweat off his face and onto his shirt sleeve.

“Hey, Izuku!” Natsuo cheered, coming around the corner to climb up the staircase with Fuyumi behind him, both of them were carrying insulated bags.

...Should it worry him that they all had so many insulated bags? Why did they have so many insulated bags anyways?

The four looked at him and gave him a variety of waves and grins. It was in that moment, with their smiles side by side, that Izuku is reminded that they are family. It’s a humbling and a little lonely to think about, but he’s ultimately glad that they get along much better.

He’d never know this for certain, but maybe it was easier to forgive people in a world without heroes.

“Wha… What brings you guys around?” he asked, almost forgetting himself even as everyone seemed to pile in.

Dabi and Shoto frowned, in the exact same way at the exact same time, but before they could say anything, a young girl came running to hug him around the waist.

“Izu-nii!”

Eri’s smile could end all wars, and Izuku felt his chest threaten to burst at the sheer magnitude of joy he felt when he saw her toothy grin. Without thinking much about it, he lifted her up by her pits and spun her around with a loud laugh. She shrieked back, and thinks that there is no greater honor than to be able to hold her like this.

He was certain that her laugh infected him, and he was glad that this part of her hadn’t been ruined.

“Hey, Eri!” he said brightly. “What brings you here?”

“Happy birthday, Izu-nii!”

Izuku’s smile froze and he put her down.

“...Birth...day?”

“I told you he would forget,” Chisaki’s smooth voice came through as he stepped forward with a grill under his arm. He tipped his head forward to the young man, a bouquet of flowers in his arms as he extended it towards him, “Happy birthday, Izuku. The others send their regards.” He eyed the off-duty police officers to the side, “We’ll swing by again later.”

Izuku blinked back.

“...My birthday…?”

There had to be a mistake. They were here for him? For his birthday? How could that be?

“Yeah, Izuku, it’s your birthday, that’s why we’re all here,” Shinsou said. “Are you okay? You look green.”

“Wait, no, I…”

"Amazing. Telling him we are here for a birthday party short-circuited him."

"Izu-nii," Eri chimed in happily, "You don't have to spend your birthdays alone anymore because I'll spend them with you!"

His eyes started to water.

"Oh god, now he's crying."

"Hey, assholes!" Shimura called from three floors above at the railings, "If we wanna eat by six, we gotta start cooking now!"

"Stop fucking cursing in front of minors!" Dabi snapped back.

Walking by Izuku, he gave him another look, pausing just long enough to ruffle his hair before heading up.

"Don't just gawk there."

Izuku, numbly, nodded and let Eri lead him away by the hand. He rubbed at his eyes, and wondered if it was Deku-kun crying or him.

It couldn’t be him. His birthday wasn’t for another week and a half. So it must be Deku-kun’s birthday. He could hardly believe that they were a week apart in age, or that Deku was actually older than him. But he swallowed the dismay and guilt at accepting someone else’s birthday gifts as his own.

His tiny apartment was packed. They were overflowing and snapping at each because elbows were in each other's ribcage and no one could turn or move more than a foot and a half in any direction. His windows were all open but it remained too hot with all the food and bodies packed in.

"We are never doing this again here," Tokoyami said darkly. Beside him, Koda nervously eyed the way Shigaraki was yelling at Aizawa, and the unattended fire that Yamada was pouring more lighter fluid into. The resulting burst of flame had several of them reeling backwards. "There are way too many people here. This is a fire hazard."

“Yeah, we’re going to die,” Kaminari said, as though he had already accepted his fate.

And while Izuku agreed, he doesn't think he has ever been in a place with this much life before. Everyone had given him one or several pats on his head and his back, he's gotten hugs and an overwhelming amount of warmth. While Eri and Chisaki had left earlier, it didn’t ease the crowded space by much.

His table was packed with food and there weren't enough room for the people around it.

"...Oi, Deku," Kirishima said, handing him a handkerchief. "It's okay. It doesn’t actually bother us that much."

"Yeah," Izuku said quietly, taking the offer to wipe at his eyes. "It is, isn’t it?"

### **Picnic (Spring)**

“Hawks,” Shigaraki said, “Can you get next saturday off?”

“Uh…” he ran his schedule off the top of his head.

Normally, the weekends would include him going out and partying or clubbing and mainly selling his fame and reputation, but he had stopped doing that since he moved in. Since he’s moved in, however, they usually spend Saturday cleaning up the apartment and stocking up their fridge. Coming to a conclusion, he nodded.

“Yeah, probably,” or at least, nothing he can’t cancel, “What’s up?”

Were they going to join Midoriya in some crazy adventure? Were they going to go eat out with everyone? With Midoriya, the possibilities and the people that he met were endlessly entertaining, so Hawks definitely didn’t want to miss out.

“We’re going on a picnic. You good at climbing a mountain?” Shigaraki asked.

“What?”

-

“I-I’m fine, really,” Midoriya said, even as he stared at the swelling mess of an ankle.

“Nah, this is sprained,” Yamada whistled. “It’s fine.” He looked up to where Shigaraki was heading the trail, and shouted out, “Oi! Let’s turn around!”

Incredulous sounds of protest were heard, as Midoriya reached for the blond. His hands gripped his shirt tightly, his tracksuit that he got for the sake for their biannual picnic wrinkling under his grip.

“No, it’s fine. It’s-”

“What happened?”

He looked to where Hawks’ easy smile and Twice’s excited figure came into view.

“I just need a small break, then I’ll be fine-”

“Izuku,” the blond said, his hands squeezing his cheeks as he brought their faces closer, “We can take a break here and go back down, alright? You want some water?”

“No, no, really, I can go on. I-”

He couldn’t let Hawks’ and Twice’s first picnic with them end like this. Not because of him. There was so much that this world robbed them off, and he wanted to give them something.

“I-”

“Wow, that looks bad,” Hawks noted as he came up to him. A hand dropped to his shoulder, and Midoriya saw Hawks smile on his sweaty face. It should be a crime to look that good while sweating, but if anyone could pull it off, it would be Hawks. “C’mon, I’ll help you down-”

“You can barely get halfway up without losing your breath,” Aizawa snapped back. “Move. I got him.”

“Really,” Midoriya said, his voice getting quieter, “I’m fine. It’s okay. I’ve done worse so-”

“If you’ve done worse before, then you should know better by now,” Aizawa said sternly. He crouched down in front of Midoriya, so that his back was facing him, and opened his arms up, “C’mon, before Yamada starts crying.”

“Boo hoo hoo,” Yamada sniffled loudly. Shirakumo, who finally made it to them, made a show of collecting him into his arms and rubbed his back.

“There, there, we’ll protect our Problem Child” he said, wiping at his eyes and sniffling dramatically.

“See? Look what you’ve done,” Aizawa said, even thought a crooked grin was appearing on his face. “Now they’re going to be inconsolable.”

As though those were the wards they were waiting for, the two threw their heads back and wailed loudly to the sky.

Midoriya didn’t know if there was a Shirakumo in his world, but he hoped that he was someone who laughed and cried just as energetically as the one in this world. Well, he didn’t know everything about his teachers from freshman year, so maybe they were all still friends that met up and got dinner together. He hoped so, especially if they were this happy.

“Now, as punishment, I’ll carry you down.”

With that, and Dabi’s stern expression from further away, Midoriya’s arms came around his neck and was lifted onto Aizawa’s back.

He was definitely thinner than the Aizawa-sensei that always came to defend him from the media as a student. Somehow, he felt just as reliable.

“Ah, it’s fine. I can just wrap it and be done-”

Aizawa’s hand squeezed down on the swelling and Midoriya hissed back.

“What about now?” he asked dryly. His eyes came up to meet Midoriya’s confused expression and he gave a small huff. “Just shut up and accept it. What, are you scared to owe someone or something?” He reached over to grab the wrappings to begin. He took the ice pack off his leg and passed it to Midoriya to hold.

“I… I just feel bad,” the young man said quietly, eyes resting on the precipitation beading on the package. He still can’t believe that Shigaraki packed an extensive first-aid kit. “I really wanted to go up and eat lunch with everyone.”

“...Izuku, we can eat lunch whenever. We’ll come back and climb this mountain again whenever. It doesn’t matter to us,” he said, wrapping his ankle in a gentle way.

As he finished, he slowly maneuvered Midoriya’s foot down. He placed his hand on his other thigh, close to his knee and leaned into the young man’s space. Their noses almost touched, as Aizawa’s eyes met his.

“All that matters is that I get to have you.”

Red eyes flitted from Midoriya’s green eyes to his lips and then back up. He tilted his head a little more, leaning in dangerously close, until Yamada’s loud, encroaching voice came running to the car.

As though nothing had happened, Aizawa leaned back and packed away the rest of the kit.

“Hey there, little Listener! And Shota, I guess,” Yamada said, poking his head in, “You guys done? Let’s eat.”

“Yeah, lemme just finish this up,” Aizawa replied back. He rummaged through the contents, but didn’t move from his place in front of Midoriya. After a moment, he looked back at Yamada, “I’ll handle it, you should go ahead.”

“Eh? Ah, but you carried him down, so I’ll take care of getting him to our lunch table.”

“I carried him since I knew neither you or Shirakumo could do it,” Aizawa replied back, his voice blunt and hard as stone. “I’ll take care of it.”

“Shota, don’t be greedy,” Yamada said, and Midoriya was certain that he would start stomping his face when he pouted. “You’re not the only one that started working out after that first picnic.”

“You guys what?”

“Oh, I wasn’t supposed to say that,” the blond said. He looked from Aizawa to Midoriya, and with a sheepish grin, slinked away.

Which left Midoriya and Aizawa alone again. He stared at the host, who rubbed his temples with a deep sigh.

“He did that on purpose, that little fuck,” he muttered to himself. His lips twisted down into a scowl and his cheeks turning a rosy red.

“Was it supposed to be a secret?”

He scratched the back of his head as he stared at the floor of the trunk next to Midoriya, “Not a secret,” he admitted. “And it wasn’t because of you, either.”

Midoriya’s patient smile stared back at him, and he gave a long sigh.

He looked at his hands.

“You were a big part, the final push, I guess. But I… I did it ultimately for me,” he said quietly. “I feel it too, like for the first time, this is my body that I can do whatever I want to. I know exactly what I can do and how much farther I can go.”

He opened and then closed his hands. With a deep breath, he motioned to Midoriya’s bandaged ankle.

“I’ve gotten pretty good at this, right? I’m not that guy you saved in that alleyway anymore.” He gave him a crooked grin as he reached out to ruffle his hair in his hand. “I’ll take care of you for the rest of your short life.”

“...Why does everyone assume that I’m not going to live long?” Midoriya asked, the beginning of a frown pulling at his lips.

Aizawa’s grin turned more exasperated. “That’s what you’re going to focus on?”

“Oh! I mean, thank you for the offer but it’s really unnecessary,” Midoriya added, giving him a polite bow as best he could while sitting. “It’s not saying much while I’m like this, but I promise that I’m actually super reliable!”

The large hand, thin and boney, grabbed the top of his head, and with so much familiarity that Midoriya could cry, he shook his head.

“Listen to me when I speak,” he growled out.

But, eventually, he was picked up, like a princess, and no matter how hard he tried to fight and splutter and argue, Aizawa’s smug grin only seemed to intensify.

-

“I can-”

“-If you’re going to tell me that you’re going to walk up the four flights of stairs to our apartment, I’m going to hit you,” Dabi said, cutting Midoriya off.

Midoriya closed his mouth. The florist rolled his eyes as he turned around for the young man to get on his back.

“Are you sure?”

“C’mon, the faster we get up, the faster we’re home.”

Still, Midoriya’s fingers hesitated, and Dabi wondered why. Was this something he could ask? He wanted to know though. He wanted to know everything there was to learn about Midoriya, even the things that the young man might not know about himself.

It was unfair to think that, when he wasn’t exactly open about himself. However, he would tell Midoriya anything he wanted to know, should he ever ask. Unfortunately, he didn’t think that Midoriya was the same. There were things about himself that he didn’t want to share. As much as he wanted to be understanding, he was too selfish and greedy to think that.

And other times, like when he realized that Midoriya knew someone who looks at him the same way he does, he felt like the ground was unsteady under his feet.

Grip tight on the man’s legs, he climbed up all four flights of stairs. He didn’t complain about the death grip on his shoulders, and hoped that one day, he would have earned that trust.

### **Enji tells Rei**

“...Rei,” he said suddenly, “Are you busy?”

His wife looked up from her book and tilted her head. Was it that surprising that her husband came to talk to her? Thinking on it, yes, it was. Enji tried not to let the shame creep up into the forefront of his mind.

“...There’s something that I wish to discuss with you.”

In that moment, Rei honestly thought that he was handing her divorce papers. She opened the manilla folder though, and stared at the information inside.

“...You looked into him? Isn’t this private information?” she asked, a familiar anger beginning to bubble up inside of her.

“Just read it,” Enji scowled at her. And then, after a moment of just glaring at each other, sighed.

Rei was never one to listen to him, but this wasn’t something that he couldn’t onto by himself anymore. His expression pinched, and he dipped his head forward in a show of his sincerity.

“Please.”

Rei frowned, it was rare for Enji to plead. It was rarer than him smiling.

She looked at the papers.

The part of her that respected Midoriya, the child that brought the smile back to Shoto’s face, wanted to throw the papers back in Enji’s face. The rest of her was stuck on the fact that Enji was pleading.

So she read it.

She read the file on “Midoriya Deku” and wondered who this could be talking about. It was a report on the violence in his life, the tallied analysis based off of the police reports conducted, and the compiled information from school information, and the accumulation of it all spelled out a tragedy. She looked at it and then at Enji. On another person, she would have said that Enji looked like he was in pain since learning about Midoriya, but she knew Enji too well. That expression on his face was foreign but not completely unrecognizable.

Enji had, at some point, decided to take responsibility for this boy. At some point in time, he looked at Midoriya and recognized and began to value him in his life. He had to, because Enji looked like he was disappointed in himself.

The entire situation, from learning about Midoriya Deku to Enji’s humanity, was bizarre. She almost wished that it wasn’t real.

“...What… what did you want me to say now that I read this?”

“I don’t know how to help him,” her husband said quietly. ‘Please help me.”

Rei looked at Enji, feeling just as lost as he looked.

The two of them together brought together a jagged family. The closer they tried to come together, and they tried, the harder they pricked and prodded against each other. As a result, they tore at each other until the only thing that was left was ten years of open, festering wounds.

Looking at each other, they had no idea where to even begin.

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“Shouto,” Rei called out, “You know, you should invite Izuku-kun over for dinner again.”

Shouto looked at her, his blank expression twisting in confusion.

“Why?”

She winced.

“Aw, why not? I like the guy.”

Rei could have hugged Natsuo for his perfect timing.

“We usually go out with everyone for dinner,” Shouto said slowly, narrowing his eyes. “And he has work on the weekends.”

Rei’s smile turned even more strained.

### **Graduation Viewing**

“Congratulations!” Midoriya laughed, presenting Tamaki with another bouquet of flowers to join the several others he had.

Tamaki stared at him, a bright grin stretching across his face. The pride and joy in his expression didn’t fit the image of Suneater he had in his head, but he thought it looked very nice.

“Thank you!” he said, genuine and completely different from the sarcastic senior that Midoriya met at the beginning of the school year. “But just because I’m graduating doesn’t mean I’ll be gone forever.”

Green eyes shined, and he wondered how the Tamaki back at home was doing. Obviously, he kept in touch with Mirio and kept tabs on Tamaki and Nejire, but how was he doing? Since he felt to become a hero, was he happy? Did he smile like this at his graduation?

He grinned at Tamaki.

For as long as he was here, he’ll keep an eye out. He’ll do better with the whole, ‘keeping in contact’ thing too. He’ll do his best, going Plus Ultra.

And then, hopefully, it’ll be easy for Deku-kun to fall into those habits and fall in love with the wonderful people the same way Izuku did.

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Just like that Midoriya became a second year in high school for the second time.

### **(July) Dinner Party**

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The taller man shifted a little, and Izuku’s eyes flitted to the nearly bursting plastic bags in his hands. It looked like they were filled with food and drinks.

“...Let me in.”

“O-oh, right,” Izuku said, stepping back to let his housemate in. He hesitated again, and bit the bullet, “What’s… all this for?”

The older man gave him a withering glare.

“You forgot already? Well, whatever, the others will be here soon enough.”

“...Others?”

The doorbell rang again, and accompanying it was the frantic slamming of the door.

“Fucking nerd, open the fucking door up! This shit is heavy! The meat is all going to go bad!”

Operating on instinct, Izuku yanked the front door open and gaped back when Bakugo scowled back at him. Behind him, Yamada gave a happy wave as he lifted the plastic bags in his hand.

"Special delivery! Don't worry, Aizawa is going to get the cake."

"Cake?"

“Christ, you’re a shit host. And go outside and help fucking round-face and turbo-engine with the ice box!”

“Y-Yes sir!” he cried back, slipping on some slippers as he ran outside. What the fuck was going on?

"Put your fucking shoes on!"

"R-right!" Midoriya blurted back, nearly tripping over his foot as he rushed out, barely remembering to do just that.

“Midoriya! Help!”

He stared in no little amount of shock as Uraraka came forward, holding several bags of snacks of some sort, and watched as she threw a glance back.

“Shinsou-kun is helping Chisaki with the meat pan, but I don’t know who is helping Iida with the drinks!”

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“Oh! Midoriya-kun!” Iida said, a bright smile on his face as he waved, “You might want to step a little to the side while we come up,” he said.

Numbly, Izuku did just that.

“Hey,” Stain said, “Spinner said he’ll be a little late. He has my gift.”

“Late... ?” Izuku replied back. "Gift…?"

“Nii-san said he and Toyomitsu-san will be by with Tsukauchi and the others after their late night shift. Please let me know if they overstay their welcome,” Iida said, slightly out of breath but with a wide grin. As always, it pinched his heart a little to see the innocent shine on his face, but experience made it a lot easier to return that grin with one of his own.

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His table was packed with food and there weren't enough room for the people around it.

"...Oi, Deku," Kirishima said, handing him a handkerchief. "It's okay. It doesn’t actually bother us that much."

### **\**(July) Visiting Mom***

“Where are you going?”

“I’m going to visit someone,” Midoriya replied back. “I’ll be gone for the day. Watch over the house for me while I’m gone, okay?”

“No wait,” Dabi frowned, “but where are you going to be? Who’s going to be with you?”

Midoriya stared at him for another moment and then burst out laughing. Never one to outwardly show his irritation, Dabi tilted his head instead and waited for the man to calm down.

Wiping a stray tear from his eye, he continued, “Really, don’t worry about it. I’ll be back sometime tonight. Oh man, you sounded like an overprotective brother for a moment there-”

“Then, should I come with you? You wouldn’t make me worry, right?”

The laughter died down, and the young man smiled.

“...I’ll be in the next town over. There’s someone I have to apologize to,” he said. “It’s going to take all day, and it’ll be really boring.”

“Knowing you, you’ll end up at the center of a crime syndicate.”

He winced, but after that stunt a few months ago, thinks it’s a justified response. He rubbed the back of his neck.

“I… Sorry, Dabi,” he said at last, “I want to be alone.”

“...You have your phone?”

“Huh? Yeah, it’s right here-”

“Just keep me updated then. Be back for dinner.”

Midoriya blinked owlishly before he grinned back.

“Thank you,” he said.

Dabi stared at him for a moment longer, before he reached out to ruffle his hair aggressively.

-

This year, meeting Deku’s mother was just like meeting Deku’s mother last year too.

Except, when he was walking out, there was a man who grabbed him by the arms.

### **Creepy stalker (?)**

idk i might make it nine’s older brother, who is university professor that <3 inko.

and saw ‘inko’, actually Midoriya, and goes absolutely Full Psycho Stalker. Hires Kamui as a Private Eye to stalk Midoriya. Eventually gets put down by the police (Stain is Unhappy) and Nine comes to him like “yo so sorry about this” & eventually hears about midoriya from gossiping nurses.

btw Shigaraki works for Scissors. And Dabi works for Kamui’s folk. So.

Midoriya hires Sakamata because he thinks that the stalker is dangerous.

in reality, 3 groups are stalking him. NotDangerousButSuperCreepy!Professor, and a group that Chimera is looking into like “yo you got a name for yourself in the underground… how?” [ie the guy from vigilante or it’s the professor?] and brava (who is like, Gentle’s a ...fan of who?)

[yoshino inoue -> ie the VA’s name ]

### **Hiring Sakamata**

“...Hello?”

“...Sa…” the voice cut out, coughing once before it came back, “Sakamata-san?”

Sakamata pulled his phone out to physically check the unidentified number.

“Izuku?”

He couldn’t believe it.

“Ah, yes, this is Izuku. I-I’m terribly sorry for bothering you so late at night-”

“No, not at all. I was just surprised. For a while, I thought you were just going to ignore me until I hunted you down myself.”

Of course, Sakamata was definitely not doing that. He wasn’t slowly making his way through all the possible people that Midoriya could have been in contact with. He wasn’t keeping tabs on the whereabouts of all the high schools in the area until he could cut down to the one that mattered the most to him. He was going to carefully bide his time, and jump in as soon as Deku before the young man could even ask.

Needless to say, he got very busy trying to just find the shadow of a teen named “Izuku.” By the time he found any trace of him, it was long after the events had occurred.

“Haha, I guess we just kept missing each other,” he said, nervously. Truly, he had to be the worst liar ever.

“Well, I sincerely doubt that you’re calling to check in on me,” Sakamata said, eager to get to the meat of why this man finally called on him, “What gives?”

“I was hoping to get some advice, actually,” he said.

“Alright. I’m free tomorrow evening,” he said, motioning at his secretary.

Said secretary leapt up to his feet and began to scramble around. Heh, that’s what he gets for eavesdropping so shamelessly. The man ran about until he showed Sakamata his tablet screen, and his boss narrowed his eyes. Damn words were too damn small. Well, it looked like he would be wrapping everything up by four, considering travel time and the time to freshen up...

“Does six work for you? Let me know where I can pick you up.”

“Oh, no, it’s just a question. You don’t have to clear out your schedule-”

“Are you rejecting me? I guess I was the only one who missed the other.”

From the pinched expression on his secretary’s face, it was a low blow. Or cringey. He wasn’t sure what would be worse.

But whatever, he said it. It had been a long time since he’d gotten rejected, but it’s fine and he can deal with it. Of course, it had also been a long time since he put himself out there like this, but that's another story for another time.

A long sigh came through, “Thank you for making the time for me. I’ll see you tomorrow then.”

Sakamata’s grin was so wide his face hurt, even though Midoriya hung up almost immediately afterwards.

“...Sakamata-san,” his secretary said, eyebrows pinched and shoulders sagging.

“It worked,” he said, radiating with joy. “Go order me a new tie. It should… match a forest green.”

“Sakamata-san…”

He took a deep breath and bowed forward.

“Yes sir.”

-

Standing in a crisp suit with a bouquet of roses, ranging from white to red in color and tone Thursday evening, wasn’t how Sakamata thought his week would go. However, standing at the park entrance, right in front of the backseat car doors to his expensive and sleek black Mercedes, he couldn’t think of a better way to spend his time. Even his own men were excited at the prospect of seeing *him* again.

“Gang Orca-san!”

He looked up, because what the fuck was a Gang Orca, and he felt something in his heart tighten when he saw the person he had been waiting for.

“Izuku,” he greeted with a frown, “You look like shit.”

The last time he saw this kid, he walked like he carried the world on his shoulders as he limped after brawling (and winning) with his men for the better part of an hour. Spitting out blood, his eyes glowed with a determined fire but he never forgot his manners. Midoriya had carved his name into Sakamata in an instant.

“Is it that bad?” Midoriya asked back, rubbing the back of his neck in an endearing way. He sighed and then gave a helpless smile back at the older man. “Well, you look good though. Did you come from somewhere?”

He wished he could say the same. Midoriya looked like he hadn’t slept in days. He was pale like he hadn’t seen the sun in a while, and thin in a way that made it feel like the wind would blow him away. Sakamata didn’t really think about it, concerning the area that the kid lived in and his eagerness to always do the Right Thing, but perhaps his home life was worse than he thought.

He wasn’t sure when Midoriya became one of His, but there was no going back now.

Could he just steal him away? It was probably morally ambiguous, but he had the money and the means to do it and get away with it. It would be fine as long as the parents don’t fight him on it, right? If they didn’t care that their kid was out till early in the morning, supporting broken bones and spewing blood out of his mouth, then they wouldn’t care if he took him, right? At least, if Midoriya stayed with him, he would fill out more. He would get the proper training and nutrition so that he didn’t look so bone-weary tired. And all his employees adore him already.

Filing the thought for his secretaries to look through, he stepped back to pop open the car door.

“Let’s go,” he said.

Midoriya eyed the car and then looked back at him. Right when he looked like he was going to fight him on this, the older man shook his head.

“I don’t have the time for this. Just follow my schedule.”

“Oh, right.”

Midoriya looked so defeated when he said that, but he obediently climbed in. Sakamata got in afterwards and motioned to the driver to start making their way to their reservation. He looked at Midoriya, and the way he looked around the car in childish awe.

What was he thinking? If he took this kid away from the dangers he sprinted to, would it still be Midoriya? If he could remove all the danger from around him, could he look at Sakamata like that?

He gave a low sigh.

He had to pick up someone really troublesome, huh?

“...Boss, we are here,” the driver said, aftering coming around to open the door open for him.

Sakamata gave a curt nod, and climbed out of the vehicle. After a moment of pause, he turned back to where Midoriya hadn’t followed him. Without thinking much about it, he extended his hand out to the young man.

“C’mon,” he said. “We don’t have all night.” Even though he really wished that wasn’t the case.

However, Midoriya defied all expectations, as he always does. Instead of looking repulsed at the fact that Sakamata’s sweaty hands were large and webbed, he took it without hesitation and didn’t even blink twice at it.

If the bright-eyed look his driver was any indication, this was something that would be told to the rest of the company as soon as he turned his back. He didn’t pay them to gossip, those damn bastards.

He narrowed his eyes at his driver, and the man dipped his head into a bow. Midoriya, bless his heart, thanked him profusely for the safe travel and the two gushed about the car. Well, the driver gushed and Midoriya was earnestly impressed. If Midoriya wasn’t careful, the rest of them would kidnap him instead.

He cleared his throat and gave his driver a meaningful stare. The man nodded back curtly, and after getting a chirpy farewell from Midoriya, left with the car.

“And uh… where is here?” the student asked, eyeing the tall skyscraper in front of him.

“I’m hungry,” Sakamata said, “so we will be discussing this over dinner. ...Are you not hungry?”

Just then, his stomach growled and Midoriya’s face turned scarlet. The larger man had the decency to cover his face when he tried to stifle his laughter.

“I-I’m really not dressed-”

“Relax, this is a place that doesn’t mind how I look,” the man said smoothly. “They won’t care how you're dressed since I’m the one that brought you.”

“...I…” Midoriya looked up at him, before his confusion gave way to a determined gaze, lit up by the lights of the hotel in front of them. “I won’t let you down!” he declared boldly.

With another gaze, he turned to walk into the hotel. He shortened his strides so that the young man wasn’t jogging to keep up with him, and relished in the warm gaze that he gave in return.

The good mood of the dinner took a nosedive when Midoriya finally explained why he called him up so suddenly. He supposed that it was wistful thinking that Midoriya just wanted to meet up with him just to talk. Even in the private room, with the city nightscape sprawled out to their side, Midoriya took two bites of the delicious foot before turning to business. Sakamata figured that there had to be a lot of things going on if this kid asked for help but…

“So, I was wondering if I could hire your expertise to help me protect them.”

...as it turned out, it wasn’t even for himself.

“You know, my services aren’t cheap,” he said.

“I have some savings.”

A dull pang echoed in his heart. Midoriya was a responsible kid, but reckless when it came to the possibility of helping someone else. He figured that was the case before, and after following the breadcrumbs of cases that he left behind, he had formed that theory. Right in front of him, however, the certainty.

He didn’t like it.

“It’s just for a week. I’ll have everything figured out in a week. But I can’t… I can’t be in two places at once,” he explained.

“And what are you going to be doing for the week then?”

There was no response. Sakamata stared at him, unsure what to make of the emotion that sat in his gut.

He couldn’t believe it. Most times, he’s counting down for the business dinner to end. His mood soured so quickly when people strayed from the business talk to bring up personal issues. He hated it when people tried to butter him up by bringing in unnecessary details.

And here he was, asking for details not pertaining to the job.

“You don’t need to know that for the job.”

He could hardly believe it. He was becoming the person that he hated the most. And at the center of all of it was the growing frustration that some 14 year old boy didn’t trust him. He shouldn’t care about it. This shouldn’t bother him.

He took a swing of his water. He felt so fucking pathetic.

“But thank you for considering it,” Midoriya said, and Sakamata hated his gentle gaze. “You’re really helping me out.”

“Just a security detail, huh?” he thought to himself, looking at the outline that Midoriya had lined out.

If he hadn’t experienced that craftmind before, he would have said that this kid had a wild imagination. If he didn’t meet the witnesses that experienced the Force of Nature that was Midoriya, he wouldn’t have believed it.

Staring at the details on the paper, it only confirmed it. The kid was ridiculously good at what he did, to a meticulous level. The information was detailed in a way that made Sakamata wish that Midoriya could come with him to every meeting.

He tucked the papers back into the manilla folder. The case was too easy. His services were a waste here. The offered pay was lower than anything he had to do before (although it was enough that he had to wonder where Midoriya had that kind of money).

He didn’t hesitate to take it.

### **The one where (almost) everyone met up**

“...Takami-san?”

Takami jerked out of his stupor, his eyes turning to the person he was talking to. “Yes?”

“No, I just… did you see someone you know?”

The blond, despite himself, turned his head to where he last saw the shock of green. He couldn’t see it anymore, but the thought couldn’t stop nagging him. If that was Midoriya, who the fuck was that whale-guy that he was with? How many people did he know? Why doesn’t he ever share?

Was that why he was coming home late now? Was he involved in trouble again? Was that guy trouble?

“...Takami-san?”

“Ah, sorry, sorry,” the blond said, turning back to his companion and shoving the thought away. “Guess I’m more tired than I thought.”

His agent frowned and sighed. She shook her head and looked down at her tablet.

“I’ll cancel everything for the rest of the day and tomorrow,” she said, “Go get some rest.”

“Eh? No way, I’m fine-”

“Go,” she snapped back. “Your wings have been fluttering for a while and it’s annoying. If there’s someone you’re that desperate to see, then go.”

The blond stared at her for another moment, trying to register what happened. However, before she could change her mind, he nodded.

“Thank you,” he said, his grin replaced with an earnest expression that looked strange on him. “I’ll make it up to you later-”

And without another word, he turned back to run.

Across all the gray sidewalks and neon lights, he looked for that green.

-

“Today, at work, there was this guy that came in. He was huge, some kind of… animal quirk that made him look the way he did. Killer suit though. Looking at him, I felt like I could feel how rich he was from where I was behind the registrar. Standard thing, right? Except he got this ridiculous bouquet of flowers, a huge thing filled with roses, white, pink, and red. I would know, since I wrapped it. He said it was for a friend that he wanted to be noticed by,” Dabi said.

He touched the petals of one of the roses sitting at their kitchen counter. He rubbed the soft petal between his fingers, his expression carefully blank as he kept talking.

“Imagine my surprise when I came home and here it is, in my kitchen.”

He turned to Midoriya slowly and Midoriya kept his eyes on the ground.

“I didn’t even know that you had ties to some port-mafia boss.”

“Sakamata-san isn’t mafia,” Midoriya immediately defended, turning to frown at Dabi. When their eyes met, he saw the exasperated expression on his roommate’s face and deflated. “Uh. I mean-”

“Sakamata-san, huh?” Dabi replied back, his voice neutral. “Could have fooled me.”

There was another moment of silence. Blue eyes bore into green curls.

“He’s a bodyguard. Works… at some security company,” Midoriya said eventually, giving up.

Dabi arched an eyebrow at him.

“We met by accident. Don’t worry about it. We just met up for dinner and stuff.”

“Oh, a date.”

“No, no, no, not at all. He doesn’t like me at all. I’m just taking advantage of the situation. He’s not like that. I just… I’m just selfishly using him to my own ends.”

Dabi almost lit the entire bouquet on fire.

“Really?” he asked, turning back to the younger man, “then, what do I have to do for you to take advantage of me?”

Confusion flooded the younger man’s expression. The sight of it made something tighten inside of him.

“Dabi, what are you-”

“You’re getting involved in something dangerous again, aren’t you?”

“Don’t worry, I won’t get you involved,” he said quickly, as though that was the problem.

In an instant, Dabi was shoving him backwards and against the wall. His hands gripped his shoulders to ensure that he couldn’t escape. Midoriya yelped, surprised, but it was hard to hear when Dabi raised his voice.

“That’s not what I was worried about, you fucking idiot! Did you think that I wouldn’t help? Why didn’t you talk to me? Why didn’t you say that you wanted help? What...” he stared, lost and confused. The fight deserted him as his face twisted into something painful. “Just… what am I to you?”

Uncertain what to say, Midoriya spoke the truth.

“You’re Dabi.”

Dabi’s hands tightened even further, bordering on painful, before his hands relaxed. He gave this huff of a laugh, like he couldn’t fucking believe the shit that Midoriya said.

“Right,” he said quietly. “I’m just Dabi.”

Midoriya’s hand caught his hand. Eyes peered up at him, worried.

“Dabi, are you okay?” he said.

“Let me go.”

“No.”

When Dabi looked up to start yelling again, Midoriya shook his head again.

“You don’t look like you want to be alone right now.”

And it was amazing that Midoriya, somehow, said the words that Dabi had been waiting for.

### ***Creepy Stalker End (?)***

“I’m used!” she screamed, “I’m broken! No one will ever want me!”

She sobbed, her hands covering her face as she cried.

More than any punch or kick, her words hurt him the most.

“Why did you have to come?” she cried, “Why did you have to tell them? Now, I’ll only ever be a victim. If you had to butt in, why couldn’t you have actually saved me?”

And he realized that he was wrong the whole time. Heroes or not, villains or not, this world wasn’t that different from his in the slightest. The person who loses, even if heroes came, were always the victims. If heroes could not save the victims of the incident, then they should instil hope into them. It was a hard lesson, but one that Aizawa-sensei never strayed from.

His hand came up to his heart, and he wondered how Deku saw himself.

### **Used and Broken**

“...Is it better to be with someone who’s never been together with someone else?”

Shigaraki’s knife slid against the cutting board before it came to a halt, Dabi choked on his water, and Hawks’ jaw unhinged.

The three looked towards each over before they turned their full attention to Midoriya, who was finishing his homework.

“What… brought this up?” Hawks asked slowly.

“...Ah, some of the guys in class were talking about it,” Midoriya lied, still unable to forget the way that girl was crying. Well, it wasn’t exactly a lie, since the boys did talk about this, but that was another life time ago when he didn’t get it and didn’t care.

“Phew,” Shigaraki sighed. He resumed cutting. “I

“Hm, personally, I think it’s better to be experienced. There's less unreasonable demands and fantasies and stuff,” Hawks spoke up. He crossed his arms over his chest and leaned back, “But I get what people mean by the ‘first-time’ should be special.”

“But if they don’t… if they’ve… already had their first time,” Midoriya said, placing his pencil on his notebook to stare at the older man, “then it’s not… not a bad thing, right?”

His hand was shaking, and he wondered if it was him or Deku-kun.

“I don’t think it’s that big of a deal,” Hawks said, his eyes turned to Midoriya, and a gentle smile began to stretch across his face. “Some people really care and some people really don’t. But for me, I just want to be with someone who wants me as much as I want them. We can figure it out from there. That’s why we call it love, right?”

Seemingly satisfied with the answer, Midoriya nodded slowly.

“...The person that you like is a lucky person, Hawks,” he said, giving him a blinding grin.

The thought of his loved one must have been amazing, because the blond’s smile melted down to something even more gentle. Just the sight of his eyes, raw and open to the world, made Midoriya’s cheeks heat. Hawks was always a dangerously handsome man, but sometimes, he looked at Midoriya like that, with a gaze that he couldn’t decipher and an emotion that he couldn’t name.

He gave Midoriya a tired smile. He must have been exhausted, but he was still fielding Midoriya’s questions. Gratitude didn’t even begin to describe the feelings he had.

“Yeah,” he said quietly, “Something like that.”

Dabi snorted loudly.

“What about you? Do you care?”

The young man shrugged back. “I never really thought about it.” When he thought and daydreamed bout being with someone, he figured that his first time would be someone else’s first time too. Because it was romantic and he didn’t have to worry too much about making a fool of himself. But the last tie he thought about that was Jr High, the first time around.

But that wasn’t the case for Deku-kun, who was once nick-named as a public toilet.

“I think it’ll be unfair of me to have expectations that I can’t meet,” he decided on instead. Feeling a little lighter, he returned to his work, ignorant to the way his roommates stared at each other.

### **Stain Finds Clips**

The last thing he expected was to see Midoriya on the screen.

The small smile the kid used to give him is overlapped with the dead-eyed view of the same kid in front of him. He stared for much too long, too shocked to do anything else but stare in absolute horror as the clip of someone forcing their way into that kid's body appeared on the computer monitor. The sound was quiet, like it was plugged into a pair of headphones and set to full blast, but he knew that he would never unhear it.

He saw the lifeless look in his eyes, the tired slump of his body, and if Stain wasn’t familiar with the vulgar scars that danced along Midoriya’s chest, he wouldn’t have ever thought they were the same person. But the more he stared, the more he saw.

The more he saw, the less it made sense.

"Oh fuck!" One of the men yelled out.

"Shit, the cops!?"

He remembered Midoriya's little laugh when Akaguro once told him that he would protect him and only felt the roar in his ears call for blood.

-

When he came to, Tsukauchi and his new black eye was staring back at him.

"... You with us now?" He asked quietly. "You really gave us a scare you know. We almost had to call the whole operation off.” He passed him a bottle of water, looking weary and tired as he sat down on the seat, staring at Akaguro sternly. “Here's some water. Tell me what happened so I can try and save both our asses to the Chief."

Akaguro stared at the cup of water. He doesn't know when, but he felt like his entire life could be explained in terms of Midoriya, the kid who once asked him to step down from the ledge. He doesn't know how to feel about that.

He drank the water and tried to sort through his thoughts.

"...On the monitor," he said quietly. He had a good idea on what had happened, but he didn’t think that he had ever lost his temper like that since he was a child. "...I know the guy who was on the monitor."

Tsukauchi gave a long, suffering breath. "I see. So it is Midoriya-kun, right?"

He couldn't bring himself to say anything, so he nodded.

"...I figured that would be the case, so I already told the chief. I… we will figure out the tape," he said. He looked Akaguro right in the eyes. "We're going to stop… whatever that was. But for now, you’re on probation. Go to him and bum off him for a week, okay?"

Akaguro would happily blow off his entire pay if it meant he could express to his partner how thankful he was for him. How did he know that, right now, he wanted to go see that smile? Perhaps it was obvious. People rushed for the last-known place that they associate with comfort when shit hit the fan, right?

"You… If it is Midoriya-kun… we will need to talk about that, too. So if you… just take some time okay? It won’t be easy, so go remind yourself why you’re doing this."

It wasn't said, but if that was Midoriya, then there were a thousand things that they needed to cover. Starting with the fact that there were videos of Midoriya being gang-bang’d and mutilated, there was a long list of perpetrators that Stain would hunt down. Given the fact that the kid hasn’t even finished his first year of high school, this had to have been filmed in middle school. Aside from the obvious child pornography laws that would explode out, this was going to haunt Midoriya for the rest of his life depending on how widely distributed this video was.

But more importantly, he literally saw Midoriya yesterday. They had a late-night snack together at the oden stand that Stain found and thought he would like (and he was right, Midoriya was over the moon when he took that first bite). He literally saw Midoriya, in that sweater and jeans even as the summer heat started to fade.

He felt physically ill.

-

“...Stain?”

“...Izuku,” he said quietly.

Akaguro still has to check the number plates on the apartment doors to get to his place, but he doesn’t even know which number plate was Midoriya’s yet he’s never been wrong.

“You’re back!” he cheered. Immediately, the sight of his smile was overlapped with the exhausted expression on the video, and Akaguro felt his heart twist. “We just finished dinner, but we made way too much. You’re probably really hungry, right? How was your shift? Come on in-”

Akaguro grabbed Midoriya’s wrist, and when Midoriya didn’t flinch but just turned curious eyes up to him, he realized that he didn’t know anyone stronger than Midoriya. His eyes were bright, clear and radiant, and the sight that used to bring peace to his thoughts were now tainted.

“I’m sorry,” he said, because someone needed to say it.

Midoriya stared back and his expression turned into confusion.

“...It’s just dinner?” he said, “But if you’re really sorry, can you go buy some more rice for us?”

He stared a little harder, the frustration bubbling up and he didn't know what else to do but stand there. Maybe this was wrong. Maybe it was a kid that looked like Midoriya, And yes, that was awful and they still had a lot of work to do, but it wouldn’t be Midoriya that stood in front of him.

There had to be something...

“I saw the video,” he said quietly, after a long moment of looking for what he should say, “Where… where you were in middle school.”

All the color in Midoriya’s face drained, and Akaguro felt the cracks in his heart widen. It was Midoriya.

“...Let’s… take a walk,” he said quietly.

-

They sat down at some bench in the park closest to Midoriya’s apartment at some odd hour in the evening. There were plenty of young people, specifically couples, that were also here, but no one seemed to notice them.

They sat there in silence, as they did the whole walk here. To his defense, Akaguro tried hard to think of something to say, but came up with nothing in the end. He didn’t know what to say or how to say it. He didn’t know what the [right thing] to say was, or how he was going to inform Midoriya about the investigation process.

“...I’m sorry,” Midoriya said quietly, gathering his attention in an instant. “I… probably sounded really insincere, right? All the times that we did talk.”

“Why are you sorry? You, of all people, shouldn’t have to be sorry.”

“I think someone should apologize for putting that look on your face,” Midoriya shot back. He gave a soft sigh, eyebrows pinched in concern as he looked up to the man next to him. “It’s okay. It was a long time ago. I didn’t even know you back then so-”

“Are you comforting me? Are you seriously trying to comfort me right now?” Akaguro didn’t know if it was his heart or his voice that broke. He was starting to lose touch.

“Yeah,” he said. “Because I don’t need it.”

“I should be the one to comfort you. They… You-You looked-” Akaguro cut himself off. His throat felt tight, but his eyes remained dry. Filled with a misplaced anger, he doesn’t know what to do with all this emotion he’s never had before. He covered his eyes and took a deep breath. He couldn’t lose himself. Not in front of Midoriya, who actually had something worth crying about.

“Yeah,” the young man said with a shrug, like this wasn’t his problem or something. “I got better. So it’s fine. You don’t have to worry about it anymore, okay?” He leaned in to stare at Akaguro, eyes still filled with genuine concern, and Akaguro doesn’t understand how he dared to find comfort in that.

Akaguro didn’t know what kind of expression he had, but Midoriya’s hand reached to his. Hands half the size of his were warm and scarred, but they held Akaguro’s tightly. It was proof that the two were in the here and now.

“-but you didn’t even look like you wanted to be saved,” Akaguro blurted out.

Green eyes widened before they slowly dropped to their hands. He took a deep breath and met the policeman’s gaze. “Yeah, but it’s okay. I’m okay. It doesn’t bother me anymore,” he said, voice certain in a way that made Akaguro feel like a lost kid at the amusement park. “I’m here. Don’t worry, okay?”

One day, Akaguro swore to himself. One day, Midoriya won’t need to be strong, and he wouldn’t need to comfort someone else after facing trauma.

On that day, he’ll be there to make sure of that.

-

“I don’t know what you said to Izukun here,” Yamada said, bright and dandy although his eyes promised a painful death, “And I really don’t care.”

Akaguro stared back, and felt the piercing gaze from behind those obnoxious orange sunglasses.

“But you know, you should really watch yourself. Just because you’re a cop doesn’t mean you’re untouchable, you know?”

There was no veritable proof, but Akaguro has no doubt that some of the strays that Midoriya collects have a certain type of darkness to them. He knows this, since he used to be one of them, too.

“And making people disappear is what we were known for. If you catch my drift.”

To so boldly threaten a police officer, Akaguro has no doubt that Yamada would live up to this threat even if he was up against the entire JSDF. While Midoriya had a perchance to invite a certain type of danger to him, he also knows how to find a way for the most dangerous ones to stay loyal to him. If it had been anyone else other than Midoriya, Akaguro would have been concerned.

He almost wants to tell Yamada. And then he wants to turn in his badge so they can go on a crusade to find all the people who have ever dared wrong Midoriya in such an irreversible way.

He thinks about the smile on Midoriya’s face, and decides to trust the young man who saved him all those months ago instead.

### **Date with Nine**

“H-hello,” Midoriya said, ducking his head into a small bow as their eyes met.

Nine, and Midoriya had a lot of memories of this man, none of them good, stood up. He gave an amiable smile as he motioned to the chair in front of him.

“Thank you for meeting me today,” he said.

“Oh, uh, not at all. I was surprised that you contacted me. Is everything alright?”

“Yes,” the older man said, eyes warm like the afternoon sun pouring in from the window next to him. “Everything is great. I just wanted to spend some time with you.”

### **Future Plans ( 2)**

“Yeah, I thought about the future and stuff,” Midoriya said, nodding. He tipped his head back away from the soup he was stirring. “But apparently, I can’t join the police force.”

Shigaraki’s head snapped over from where he was cutting through all the vegetables, “You? Wanted to be a cop?” he asked, incredulous. And then, after a brief moment of consideration, nodded, “No, you’re definitely the type. Probably thinks that cops are good and shit.”

Midoriya gave a little huff of laughter, eyes shining in their mirth. “Of course, the police are there to protect the people, you know.”

Shigaraki rolled his eyes, “In a perfect world maybe.”

“So, why aren’t you?” Aizawa asked, not even pausing from where he was peeling potatoes in the corner of the room.

“Huh? Oh, they did a background check and said I was too high-risk,” Midoriya replied back.

“Oh wow, and they didn’t arrest you?” Aizawa asked.

“Why would Tsukauchi… oh!” Midoriya snapped his fingers, “No, no, it wasn’t because I went all Vigilante on them,” he said. “I’m pretty sure they all know too, but they’re super nice to let me keep going, huh-”

“Then what did they find in your records that they can’t have?” Shigaraki said, frowning.

“Ahhh….” Midoriya drew the sound out for a bit and then turned the fire off. “The soup’s done-”

“Why’d you bring it up if you didn’t want to talk about it?” his roommate snapped out.

“It’s just,” the young man hesitated, wringing his hands together. “Uhm… Don’t be angry, okay?”

There was a long silence.

“...They said that I was high-risk because there’s a lot of uh… videos of people I’m in contact with doing really bad stuff floating around. And it makes the background check really hard,” he continued. His hand came up to rub at his arms, “And I end up in the hospital too often.”

“Those are some shitty excuses,” Shigaraki, who doesn’t know the content of the videos of what happened to Midoriya, replied back. “This just goes to prove that they’re shitbags. They probably don’t want someone who will make a decent change in the world.”

Midoriya figured that it was gross to be with someone who’s been used as a public toilet before, but doesn’t know how to explain it to Shigaraki. So instead, he smiled.

“You think really highly of me, huh, Shigaraki?”

The way red eyes widened, before the bright flush that crawled onto his face, was a new memory that Midoriya would treasure.

“I’m just messing with you,” he giggled out. Aizawa snorted, and he wondered if, in another world, he and his teacher could have gotten this close.

The thought leaves him, as always, a little hollow on the inside.

“What happened to your farm?”

“My farm?”

Midoriya blinked slowly and then tilted his head to think about it. Shinsou stared at him with no little amount of fondness.

“My farm!” he exclaimed with glee, and then, after thinking a little harder about it, groaned. He sat back down, “Can’t leave the apartment,” he said. “No farm for me.”

He placed his head on the table and groaned.

“We would have been great farmers, too,” he sighed.

Sympathetically, and Midoriya was certain that Shinshou was the only person that could feel any form of sympathy here, his friend gave him an awkward pat on the back.

“There’s plenty of other things that you could do,” he tried to reason.

“Like…?”

“...Like something,” Shinshou replied back after a long moment of deliberation.

He snickered when Midoriya groaned back. He peeked up at him and smiled against his arm. He was glad that Shinshou was finally in a good enough place in the world where he could joke about these kinds of things now. He was glad that they were friends, he was, really.

But he had a Shinshou back at < home >.

With how crazy everything was here, he had completely put his <getting back home> plans on the shelf, but now that he finally felt like everything was going to be okay for everyone here, he can go back now. They were all taking steps in the right direction, and they were starting to really step out into a better world.

It might just be because he’s impatient, but he does want to go home. He wants to return this world to the Deku-kun that he stole this from. He was certain that Deku-kun going to be okay now. It could be a little lonely at times, but he wouldn’t be alone anymore.

The phone that used to only be filled with vulgarities and insults has been completely replaced with pictures and videos of people who instinctively smile when they see him.

He leans back against his seat, taking in the small smile on Shinsou’s face, and returns it with a smile of his own.

He wants to go home.

### 

### **Shadow of Him**

In the corner of his eye, he would see a shadow. When did this begin? He didn’t know. It was quite possible that he’s been here this whole time, and Midoriya was only now recognizing it.

And then, one day, he looked out the window and thought about what a nice day it would be to eat lunch outside, and he saw himself.

Or perhaps, what he saw was Deku.

Standing in a hospital gown, hair matted and covered in dirty bandages, Midoriya was forced to stare at his other self-it had to be him *as he was when he woke up here, all those months ago. At the gates of the school, those eyes* exhausted and devoid of life - stared back at him. It wasn't angry. It wasn’t accusing.

He was just staring at him. Haunting.

“Midoriya-kun?” he heard distantly, “What are you doing?”

And then, the him from a few months ago-but it couldn’t be\*turned around and Midoriya didn’t hesitate. He unlocked the window and, without any regard for anyone or anything else, he jumped from the second floor.

He rolled off the jump, and broke out into a blind sprint. He didn’t know how to explain it but that he needed to do this. If he let this ghost-this illusion\*get away now, he would regret it for the rest of his life.

-

Moreso than blindly running, he felt like he was possessed.

He got hit by a car and he just got back up and kept running. He ran through some signs, tripped over several things, got dinged by a bike, and he kept running. He ran through several buildings without regard for anything. He fell hard when he jumped over the railing between the wildlife and the road, and skinned his entire arm on the fall down. His uniform was ripped and stained. There were probably twigs in his hair.

But he didn’t feel tired or hungry or thirsty, and instead just ran like it was the only thing he knew how to do.

He doesn’t even realize that it’s way in the middle of the night until he plunges into the water. What? Water?

No way, did he seriously run from the school to the port? That was… a long distance, wasn’t it? No, no, that’s not what mattered right now.

### **[afterwards] sakamara & fear**

Sakamata wasn't one to feel fear. It came with his experience and his work. The people he considered precious are all people that are more than capable of taking care of themselves. And even then, their numbers didn't amount to anything higher than four.

The things he wins and the things that he lose are all things that he has come to terms with. Nothing lasts forever. Trying to convince himself that there was something he could not live without would be inviting that fear to take over his entire being.

It was not something Sakamata wanted.

Fear paved way to desperate measures. Desperation fueled fear. This torrental cycle was poison to the mind, and corroded even the sharpest of minds.

Even though he knew that, Sakamata clutched Midoryia's body to his chest, and forgot what it was like to be alone.

"S-Sakamata-san, the ambulance is here."

But could he trust them? If he released Midoriya right now, would he ever see Midoriya again? Sakamata never intorduced himself to Midoriya's ring of close aquantaines and certainly not his parents, so if Midoriya died, if Midoriya never smiled again, then he wouldn't even be notified of the funeral.

At once, Sakamata had too much to lose.

"Sakamata-san!"

He jerked, and in front of him was Iguchi, Midoriya's referal who was slow on the uptake but earnest in his work.

"When he wakes up, we have to lecture him," Iguchi explained sternly, "but he will wake up sooner if we give him to the doctors. Midoriya's stronger than he looks. He will get better."

The logic was sound, so Sakamata released Midoriya. However, the same way that Sakamata wasn't one to feel fear, he was also a stranger to hope.

### **m**